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Julia Adeney Thomas

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THE CAGE OF NATURE: MODERNITY'S HISTORY IN JAPAN

JULIA ADENEY THOMAS

ABSTRACT

"The Cage of Nature" focuses on the concept of nature as a way to rethink Japanese and European versions of modernity and the historical tropes that distance "East" from "West." This essay begins by comparing Japanese political philosopher Maruyama Masao and his contemporaries, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Both sets of authors define modernity as the moment when humanity overcomes nature, but Maruyama longs for this triumph while Horkheimer and Adorno deplore its consequences. Maruyama insists that Japan has failed to attain the freedom promised by modernity because it remains in the thrall of nature defined in three ways: as Japan's deformed past, as the mark of Japan's tragic difference from "the West," and as Japan's accursed sensuality, shackling it to uncritical bodily pleasures. In short, Maruyama sees Japan as trapped in the cage of nature.

My argument is that Maruyama's frustration arises from the trap set by modern historiography, which simultaneously traces the trajectory of modernity from servile Nature to freedom of Spirit and at the same time bases the identity of the non-Western world on its closeness to nature. In other words, nature represents both the past and the East, an impossible dilemma for an Asian nationalist desirous of liberty. By revising our historical narratives to take into account the ways in which Western modernity continued to engage versions of nature, it becomes possible to reposition Japan and "the East" *within* modernity's history rather than treating them as the Other.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1944, Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) hurriedly finished the third and final essay of the collection *Nihon seiji shisō shi kenkyū*¹ and left Tokyo to join the Imperial army. It was not ardent adherence to the values of the greater Japanese state that prompted Maruyama's obedience to his draft notice. Indeed, through his essays, Maruyama, who would ultimately become twentieth-century Japan's leading political theorist,² had launched a partial critique of the system

1. These pieces were originally published in *Kokka gakkai zasshi* (1940–1944) before being collected in *Nihon seiji shi shisō kenkyū* [Research in Japanese Political Thought] (Tokyo: Daigaku Shuppankai, 1952). Translated by Mikiso Hane as *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). All quotations unless otherwise indicated are from Hane's translation.

2. Testaments to Maruyama's importance and his independent stance during the heated debates of the postwar period can be found in Sasakura Hideo, *Maruyama Masao ron nōto* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1988); *Gendai shisō: Tokushū: Maruyama Masao* 22, no. 1 (1994), a special issue of *Contemporary Thought* devoted entirely to commentary on Maruyama's ideas; Andrew Barshay, "Imagining Democracy in Postwar Japan: Reflections on Maruyama Masao and Modernism," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 18 (Summer 1992), 365-406; and Rikki Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy* (London: Routledge, 1996).

he would serve, despite wartime censorship.³ Central to his criticism of Japan's totalitarian system was the idea that Japan had not yet escaped nature's hegemony. Indeed, prewar and wartime ideology made the Japanese nation—its politics, culture, values, and people—the embodiment of nature, equating the existing national community with nature itself. Within such a system, Maruyama argued, autonomous individuals could never hope to flourish because of the extraordinary difficulty of imagining their world other than how they found it. If nature was defined as Japanese culture and Japanese culture as nature, there was no authority for challenging the status quo unless one turned, subversively, as Maruyama did, to resources outside Japanese tradition, resources suspect as unpatriotic as well as lacking the justificatory force of nature and culture. In short, according to Maruyama, nature still dominated Japanese ideology, deforming the modernity for which he somewhat ambiguously yearned.

The very same year, in the more secure surroundings of Los Angeles, California, Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) were engaged in a similar project.⁴ They too sought to understand the foundation of the immense, destructive state power that had emerged in the twentieth century, particularly in their German homeland. They too made nature an important category in their analysis of the failed hope for freedom. However, contrary to Maruyama's analysis, the triumph of totalitarianism rested in their view on human mastery of nature, not on nature's mastery of the human. Horkheimer and Adorno bemoaned nature's utter subordination to the apparatuses of human reason, arguing in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that systems of knowledge originating in ancient Greek ideas of reason had conquered "terrifying nature, which was finally wholly mastered."⁵ Even the natural pleasures of the body, they asserted, have been commandeered by the state which administers and corrupts them. No longer an active subject, mysterious and beyond human control, nature is made pure object, a dissected corpse which only too late we discover to be our own. In coming to terms with modernity in the mid-twentieth century, both the Japanese and the German writers depict the eradication of nature from political consciousness as the sign of the modern. Maruyama longs for this not-yet-realized modernity in Japan while Horkheimer and Adorno shrink from modernity in California. For Horkheimer and Adorno, nature's absence, at least its absence as an independent realm separable from the apparatuses of reason, technology, and state power, produces nothing but oppression. They link the subordination of nature to the totalitarian power that reigns over all aspects of life in the modern

3. Maruyama's army unit was stationed near Hiroshima on the day the atomic bomb fell, August 6, 1945.

4. Jürgen Habermas rightly describes *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as "an odd book," cobbled together in large part from notes taken by Gretel Adorno during discussions between Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. It was eventually published in 1947, three years after its completion, by Querido Press in Amsterdam. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse on Modernity*, transl. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 106–107 for a brief history of Horkheimer and Adorno's text and its extensive influence despite few sales.

5. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, transl. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1987), 105.

state. Reason has triumphed over nature; humankind is liberated from the natural realm to the realm of pure reason, a reason which, paradoxically, becomes as fearsome as nature ever was. Horkheimer and Adorno warn that “it is as if the final result of civilization were a return to the terrors of nature.”⁶ Maruyama, on the other hand, judges modernity’s triumph over nature in almost exactly the opposite way. For him, true modernity provides individuals with autonomy by liberating them completely from nature. Totalitarian power is aligned not with nature’s overcoming but with its continued presence. He holds the lack of overcoming, the lack of complete liberation from nature, responsible for Japan’s plight. If Japan had only achieved modernity, if nature had only been completely subordinated, a different, independent idea of the subject would have emerged, and Japan might never have found itself engaged in the ghastly fifteen-year war for dominance in the Asian continent. Having identified much the same nexus between nature, power, and freedom,⁷ the Tokyo professor *cum* military man sees nature as oppressive, while the Frankfurt School refugees see its subordination as oppressive. For Maruyama, Japan is totalitarian because it has *not* eradicated nature from politics; for Horkheimer and Adorno, Germany is totalitarian because it has.

How are we to explain this difference? It is certainly not that wartime Japan was totally dissimilar from wartime Germany. Indeed, much of Horkheimer and Adorno’s account of totalitarian politics would describe the Japanese state just as well as those European states suffering from what they define as “the extremes of Enlightenment.” For instance, Horkheimer and Adorno portray “the West’s” situation as one in which “the individual is wholly devalued in relation to the economic powers, which at the same time press the control of society over nature to hitherto unsuspected heights. Even though the individual disappears before the apparatus which he serves, that apparatus provides for him as never before.”⁸ Japan also had developed systems of control that subordinated individuals and raw materials to collective goals. In Japan, too, the standard of living had risen to unprecedented heights. As this comparison indicates, modern industrial uses of nature’s material resources do not automatically determine nature’s ideological use. Harnessing nature to the purposes of the state can be done as a natural activity in the name of nature, as it was in Japan,⁹ or as a rational activity objectifying nature, as described by Horkheimer and Adorno.

6. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic*, 113. Slavoj Žižek observes the same Hegelian paradox in postmodern Europe where “elevating a contingent Other . . . into an absolute Other” breeds excessive violence. Žižek writes, “the final arrival of the truly rational concrete universality—the abolition of antagonisms, the mature universe of negotiated coexistence of different groups—coincides with its radical opposite, with thoroughly contingent outbursts of excessive violence.” Slavoj Žižek, “A Leftist Plea for Eurocentrism,” *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Summer 1998), 1000.

7. For the purposes of this essay, following Isaiah Berlin, I do not attempt to distinguish between liberty and freedom. See Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960) 121.

8. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic*, xiv.

9. For a discussion in English of the emphasis on the countryside and agrarian values in early twentieth-century Japanese ideology and the tensions between it and requirements of total war, see R. P. Dore and Tsutomu Ouchi, “Rural Origins of Japanese Fascism,” in *Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan*, ed. James William Morley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

These divergent evaluations of the ideological roots of mid-twentieth-century totalitarianism stem, I will argue, not from differences in the political and economic environments of Japan and Germany, nor from the technological capacities of these societies, but from the different place each nation is assumed to hold in a history of modernity. These writings of 1944 share the assumption that modernity consists in overcoming nature. Although twentieth-century theories of modernity rarely consider their indebtedness to a conception of nature as the starting point of history and as the antithesis of freedom, it is obvious in the writings under discussion here, at least, that concepts of nature structure concepts of modernity and its promise of liberation. For Maruyama, Japan still hesitates at the threshold of this great historical adventure from nature to freedom, while for Horkheimer and Adorno, Germany—or, rather, Europe—has already passed along modernity's promising trajectory only to discover horror rather than liberty at its end.

In coming to terms with the largely unrecognized potency of concepts of nature in discussions of modern history, I will focus on the wartime and immediate postwar writings of Maruyama Masao. For Maruyama, his students,¹⁰ and select others of his generation,¹¹ discovering the intellectual underpinnings of autonomous subjectivity for Japan was the principal desideratum. In this quest, nature was the enemy in at least three ways. First, nature figured as the past which Japan needed to transcend to become modern. In Maruyama's intellectual history of the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), discussed below, he describes what he sees as the failure in Japan of “invention” (*sakui*) to emerge as the primary political value, a failure which results in the continued premodern assurance that existing institutions are manifestations of nature. Second, nature was a mode of speaking about the difference between Europe and Japan. Following the well-worn dichotomy between “East” and “West” inscribed by Hegel and many others, Maruyama's work longingly depicts “the Western” triumph of Spirit and its realization of Enlightenment, while Japan (or “the East” or “the Orient”) languishes in the thrall of nature. The dichotomies of East/West, Nature/Culture, Premodern/Modern, and ultimately Oppression/Freedom reinforce each other, with all approbation reserved for the second, anti-natural terms. Third, nature in the form of the body and its sensuality obstructs the formation of an autonomous political subject. This carnality insures the political conformity of the individual who is too immersed in physical sensations to develop the necessary awareness of his or her political position. According to Maruyama's critique then, nature is Japan's deformed past, the mark of Japan's tragic difference from “the West,” and Japan's accursed sensuality shackling it to uncritical bodily pleasures.

10. For instance, Maruyama's student, Ishida Takeshi, extended Maruyama's analytic use of “nature” to an analysis of the oppressive family-state system developed at the end of the nineteenth century. Ishida Takeshi, *Meiji seiji shisō shi kenkyū* (Studies in the History of Meiji Political Thought) (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1954).

11. Weberian economic historian, Ôtsuka Hisao, Maruyama's friend and contemporary, argued that physical conditions in Japan, particularly the abundant productivity of the rice paddies, militated against individualism.

With this enormous burden of guilt, it is no wonder that nature is anathema. While I fully recognize the intellectual power of this analysis, I will argue that Maruyama and other mid-twentieth-century thinkers, in conceiving of modernity and modern subjectivity as absolutely anti-natural, ill-served the liberty they sought. In the conclusion, I will consider another, more productive way to think of modernity's relationship with nature.

II. TERMS AND CONTEXT

Before plunging into an analysis of Maruyama's argument about modernity and nature, it is perhaps best to begin with some preliminary notes about Japanese terms. When Maruyama targeted "nature," the term he employs is "*shizen*," the modern meaning of which ranges, as does its English equivalent, from the concrete ("the natural environment" [*shizen kankyō*]) to the abstract ("natural law" [*shizenhō*]) to spontaneous human instincts, emotions, or characteristics (*shizen na*). Although crucial to Maruyama's analysis of intellectual history from the seventeenth century, "*shizen*" did not actually become standard in Japanese until the 1890s.¹² Before that time, the term appears to have been rather uncommon, trailing a Taoist heritage in a country where Taoism existed as a relatively minor strand in the grand heterodoxy of Japanese philosophies and religions.

The generally undogmatic approach to ideas in early modern Japan allowed many views of nature to coexist. Besides Taoism, concepts of nature arose from sources as diverse as Buddhism, with its sense of an infinite cosmos and the illusory quality of the world around us, and Shinto, with its practical concern for ceremonies that marked the agrarian calendar and the natural cycle of birth and death in human families. However, Confucianism was more important than these other three traditions, and *shizen* was never a preoccupation in Confucian studies. As historian Hino Tatsuo comments, "In the nine classics [of Confucianism], you cannot find one example of the use of the word 'shizen.'"¹³ Instead, the mainly Confucian writers whom Maruyama studies relied on a diverse array of terms and phrases to express ideas of nature. Tokugawa Chu Hsi Confucianists¹⁴ speak of *tenchi* (heaven and earth), *tenten* (the truth of heaven), *tenka* (all under heaven), and *tenri* (heaven or nature's law), and *honzen no sei* (human nature). "The way of heaven and earth" was expressed with terms such as *tendō* and *tenchi shizen no michi*, and "the principle of nature" with *jōri*, *tenchi seibutsu no ri*, and *tenchi no jōri*. Given the capacity of Japanese orthography to represent the sound "ten" with *kanji* other than that for "heaven," opposition to orthodox polit-

12. For a discussion of when *shizen* becomes the standard term for "nature" in Japanese, see Yoshida Tadashi, "Shizen to kagaku" (p. 342) and Sagara Tōru, "Preface" (p. iii), both in *Shizen*, ed. Sagara Tōru, Bitō Masahide, and Akiyama Ken, volume 1 of *Kōza: Nihon shisō* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1983); and also Minamoto Ryōen, "Komentō," in *Shizen no shisō* (Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 1974), 42-55.

13. Hino Tatsuo, "Soraigaku ni okeru shizen to sakui" in Sagara Tōru, Bitō Masahide, and Akiyama Ken, ed., *Shizen*, 193.

14. "Chu Hsi is the older romanization of what is also referred to as "Zhu Xi" or Neo-Confucianism. I use "Chu Hsi" here in order to be consistent with the standard translation of Maruyama's work.

ical and social hierarchy could be expressed merely through the creative choice of other *kanji* sounding like “ten” but meaning something else, such as “to revolve” or “to change.”¹⁵

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Japanese terminology had been further enriched by contacts with European missionaries, particularly those of the Jesuit order, who sought to translate the Catholic doctrine that nature is the creation of a omnipotent, single God. The Latin *natura*, for instance, was expressed as *tenchi banbutsu* and *tenchi jitsugetsu*. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, after two hundred years of very little contact, Japan again embraced a range of European ideas. More conceptions of nature were introduced as democrats urged individual “natural rights” or *tenpu jinken*, while social Darwinists thought “evolution” (*shinka*) and “natural selection” (*shizen tōta*) provided a scientific basis for understanding national development and international relations.¹⁶ As this diverse nomenclature indicates, nature was multivalent during the period Maruyama studied.

Why then, despite this plethora of “natures” in Japan, did Maruyama rely on “*shizen*” to make his argument? There are, I think, two answers to this question. First, “*shizen*” was the term of choice for many of his wartime antagonists, the ultranationalist intellectuals such as Watsuji Tetsurō, Tanabe Hajime, and others from Kyoto Imperial University whose work blended strands of Zen Buddhism and German phenomenology in support of Greater Japan. “*Shizen*”’s propagandistic uses are evident, for instance, in *Kokutai no hongī* [The Essential Principles of the Nation]. This odd bricolage of a book was compiled, in part, by Watsuji and published in March of 1937 by the Ministry of Education for use in all schools. It is worth examining this official document in some detail for its deployment of *shizen*.

One chapter of *Kokutai no hongī* explicates national character by referring, first of all, to Japan’s superlative physical environment. It opens with the declaration of Tokugawa Chu Hsi Confucian Yamaga Sokō (1622–1685) that “the water and land (*suido*) of the central kingdom [meaning Japan in this instance, rather than China] surpasses that of all other nations,”¹⁷ and quickly becomes a

15. Physician and political philosopher, Andō Shōeki (1703/6–1762?), who envisioned a world of small egalitarian communities where everyone worked the land, emphasized nature’s cycles and the constant ebb and flow of life, by writing *tenchi* and *tenten* with altered orthography. Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Modern Japan*, 256, n. 29. Neo-Confucian naturalist Miura Baien (1723–1789) also used such *kanji* in writing *tenchi* to impress upon his readers the fluctuations of nature. Minamoto Ryōen, “Komentō,” *Shizen no shisō* (Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 1974), 46.

16. In the early 1880s, political activists Baba Tatsui and Katō Hiroyuki conducted a fierce debate over the relative value of “natural rights” and “social Darwinism.” See Baba Tatsui, *Tenpu jinkenron*, reprinted in *Meiji bunka zenshū*, ed. Yoshino Sakuzō, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1927) and Katō Hiroyuki, *Jinken shinsetsu*, reprinted in *Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki*, ed. Uete Michiari (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1984). I discuss this debate in “Nationalizing Nature: Ideology and Practice in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,” in *Japan’s Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Politics, 1900–1930*, ed. Sharon Minichiello (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 114–132, and in *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming 2001).

17. *Kokutai no hongī* (Tokyo: Monbusho, 1937), 91.

peaeen to Japan's physical circumstances. The country's "temperate climate," its "beautiful mountains and rivers," the "spring flowers, autumn tints, and the scenic changes accompanying the seasons" all garner praise. From time to time, the authors admit, natural calamities (*shizen no saika*) such as earthquakes and typhoons do occur in Japan, but the Japanese people respond to such disasters with fortitude, never with fear or despair. Indeed, the Japanese people repay nature's destructive rampages with ever greater devotion. While the strife-ridden "West" mythologizes its clash with nature, *Kokutai no hongii* insists, Japanese legends bear no trace of such discord. The islands of Japan provide a veritable paradise (*rakudo*) in which to live. The authors adduce poetry on cherry blossoms as evidence of this almost utopian life. From claims about actual climatic conditions to aesthetic appreciation, this chapter works to substantiate the particularities of the Japanese people on the basis of Japan's physical environment.

The intensity of the relationship between the Japanese people and *shizen* described in this work has some of the marks of first passion in the rapturous insistence on the uniqueness of the object of love. *Kokutai no hongii* declares that Japan relishes a "beautiful nature not seen in other countries" (*takoku ni wa mirarenai utsukushi shizen*). But even "love" seems a weak-kneed, inadequate term to describe the bond with nature, though loving nature (*shizen o aisuru*) is something all Japanese people are said to do.¹⁸ The section of *Kokutai no hongii* on "Harmony between the People and Nature" (*Hito to shizen to no wa*) pushes the ascribed attachment beyond first love to an even more intense state of faithful intimacy. The daily lives of the people, the annual festivals, family crests, architecture, and gardens all attest to an "exquisite harmony" (*bimyō no chōwa*) with nature. This array of customs, however, captures only the outward manifestation of the people's intimacy with nature. Below the surface of daily life, the coalescent devotion between the Japanese people and nature unites consciousness itself with physical experience to such an extent that one cannot be separated from the other.¹⁹ At some mystical level then, the nature of these islands and the nature of the awareness of those who live on them are the same thing. Moving from the physical environment to customary and aesthetic practices to consciousness itself, nature (*shizen*) unifies all aspects of Japanese existence. Maruyama never refers explicitly to this wartime view of a nationalized nature represented by the term *shizen*. Instead, he focuses on the ideological uses of nature two centuries earlier; but in choosing this term he implies the contemporary object of his critique.

The second reason that Maruyama masks the plethora of "natures" in early modern Japan with the single term "*shizen*" is that he wants to attack a monolithic entity, antithetical to freedom at all times. In other words, nature is not only bad in the current ideology expressed in *Kokutai no hongii*, but it has always been bad in exactly the same way. By making "nature" the same throughout in his history, he is not called upon to explore the possibility that different conceptions of

18. *Ibid.*, 54.

19. *Ibid.*, 55.

nature might lead to different political consequences, or that some forms of nature might even create a space for freedom. In short, Maruyama is committed to the conception of modernity as the universal historical arc from nature to freedom, and does not wish to complicate this story by implying that there were multiple forms of nature since such a view might imply multiple forms of modernity. This being the case, Maruyama relies on the single standard term, *shizen*, which unifies all things of a Japanese nature, past and present, from the physical environment to popular consciousness.

III. JAPAN'S DEFORMED PAST: NATURE VERSUS INVENTION

Let me now return to Maruyama's wartime essay, "Kindai nihon seiji shisō ni okeru 'shizen' to 'sakui'" ["Nature" and "Invention" in Modern Japanese Political Thought]. This investigation of the internecine quarrels of Tokugawa (1603–1868) Chu Hsi Confucianists proceeds "in terms of two concepts, nature (*shizen*) and invention (*sakui*)."²⁰ These two concepts are pitted against each other, "nature" being embraced by orthodox Chu Hsi Confucianism, and "invention" by Ogyū Sorai and his followers. As Maruyama says, the aim of both schools of thought was to support the Tokugawa shogunate and to quell disorder and disobedience, but the two schools' theoretical justifications were antithetical. While Chu Hsi Confucianism equated the existing feudal hierarchy of the bakufu with "the *natural order* itself,"²¹ Ogyū Sorai insisted that political institutions were not natural at all but rather the products of creative political leadership.

In Maruyama's reading, Chu Hsi Confucian philosophy encourages entrenchment by holding up the mirror of nature to the feudal hierarchy. Nature's mirror produces a double reflection of shogunal authority: one image on a cosmological level in "the order of the universe (the Principle of Heaven)," or *tenri*, and a duplicate image in "man's original nature," or *honzen no sei*.²² Thus, despite all their superficial differences, the bakufu, the cosmos, and inner human spirit become homologous manifestations of identical *li* (or *ri*), often translated as "principle." The hierarchical order found in nature, such as the relationship between heaven and earth, is the same as the hierarchical order found in human society. Just as heaven is above and earth below, so too the ruler is above and the people below. It is crucial to understand that nature and culture are not opposing realms, not even analogous realms, but the same realm because the same metaphysical essence (*li*) inheres in both the physical world and human society, giving order to each despite different superficial manifestations (*ki* or *chi*). Within human society, the five human relationships—ruler/subject, father/son, elder brother/younger brother, husband/wife, and older friend/younger friend—all par-

20. Maruyama Masao, "Kindai nihon seiji shisō ni okeru 'shizen' to 'sakui,'" translated by Mikiso Hane as "'Nature' and 'Invention' in Modern Japanese Political Thought," in *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 191. This essay was one of the ones Maruyama published just before joining the army. See note 1. Subsequent citations refer to "'Nature' and 'Invention.'"

21. *Ibid.*, 201.

22. *Ibid.*, 198.

take of the same natural, hierarchical order. The virtue of benevolence displayed by those of greater status and the virtues of loyalty and obedience expected from those below help maintain this natural hierarchy, but these virtues are themselves natural, not disciplines imposed on the self in order to accord with nature. The result is a system of thought which makes all difference, all critique, and all strife unnatural without its being anti-natural or perverse.

For those accustomed to various European systems of thought where great tensions exist between culture and nature, mind and body, public and private, sacred and profane, the issues of will, belief, and desire loom large. By contrast, within the seamless world of nature-culture in much of Japanese thought, no particular emphasis falls on will, belief, or desire, since, ideally, no impetus is necessary to mediate between two halves of a fractured universe. The structure of longing is transformed in the absence of the profound stress created by opposing the primitive, the sexual, or God to culture, reason, or “man’s” fallen nature. Acceptance, sublime unquestioning acceptance, of natural order is the highest form of wisdom. Absolute harmony alone is natural, but it is not attained through effort. Instead, the casting away of desire, will, and self itself is what is required. As Maruyama sees it, the hierarchical, ethical, and political order is thus locked in a moribund rigidity by reliance on nature for justification. Chu Hsi Confucianism offers nothing but increasingly impotent resistance to change as Japan moves toward a proto-capitalist economy; indeed, it encourages a supine and uncritical form of political subjectivity.

Against this failure of Chu Hsi Confucianism, Maruyama posits as inevitable a turn away from nature to invention as the ideological support for the Tokugawa regime. He writes that in an increasingly unstable political situation, “when social relations lose their natural balance . . . a body of thought is bound to emerge that stresses the idea of the autonomous personality (*shutaitteki jinkaku*) whose task it is to strengthen the foundations that uphold the social norms and to bring political disorder under control.”²³

Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) and his followers in the *kogaku-sha* (School of Ancient Learning) fulfill this role by valorizing the acts of the Ancient Sages who, in the time before time somewhere in China, invented the social forms of rites and music and the economic activities of agriculture and weaving. The Sages’ inventiveness becomes the standard by which subsequent rulers are properly judged. In other words, will and desire are introduced into the political calculus by the recognition of invention.

The struggle between “nature” as championed by the Chu Hsi Confucianists and “invention” as championed by Ogyū Sorai takes on an almost allegorical significance. Maruyama hopes to discover in Ogyū’s position a dichotomy between nature and invention that is as complete and absolute as his own. However, by Maruyama’s lights, Ogyū fails to achieve a sufficiently definitive break with nature. His reliance on “an agricultural livelihood, a natural economy, a family-based master-servant relationship and so on”²⁴ restricts the powers of the

23. *Ibid.*, 206–207.

24. *Ibid.*, 222.

autonomous rulers to create new institutions. Maruyama writes, disappointedly, that “the Sorai school’s position is, really, in the last analysis, an attempt to produce nature by the logic of invention.”²⁵

In Maruyama’s consideration of Japan’s failure to achieve modernity, Ogyū’s failure becomes that of a tragic hero repulsed by his evil adversary. The sense of lost hope and the betrayal of narrative necessity is made even stronger because Maruyama describes exactly what that victory should have consisted of: “If the theory of natural order was to be completely overcome, no normative standards of any kind would be present in the background as the premise; instead, the starting point had to be human beings who, for the first time, invented norms and endowed them with their validity.”²⁶ Maruyama is emphatic about the need to ground autonomy in the complete rejection of nature and the complete acceptance of invention. Although Maruyama subsequently questioned the early Tokugawa hegemony of Chu Hsi Confucian thinking asserted in this early work, and in retrospect undermined the drama of Ogyū’s struggle,²⁷ the polemical difference between nature and invention is crucial to his critique of wartime and postwar Japan.

Maruyama’s disappointment with Ogyū is, in my view, ironic because Maruyama himself steps back from invention at the critical moment, unable, it would seem, to embrace it as the culmination of the historical process. For all Maruyama’s scathing critique of nature and his seemingly wholehearted embrace of invention, he too distrusts the contingency that results from introducing pure invention, pure will into political life. Maruyama’s ambivalence on this crucial point emerges in the key passage: “I have argued above that when any really existing order is justified by the idea of a natural order, that existing order is in its stage of ascendancy or stability, whereas when, on the contrary, *if justified in terms of autonomous personalities, it is in its period of decline or crisis.*”²⁸ Under this schema, the very modernity for which Maruyama strives must be a moment of “decline or crisis,” and autonomous individuals—the agents of invention—do little more than mark the transition. Like the Ancient Sages, they arise and act at the start of an era, only to sink back into the history-less miasma of a naturally-justified order.

The inventing subject that Maruyama describes is so unbounded that his or her continued autonomy promises only chaos. Indeed, Maruyama paradoxically refuses to countenance continually inventive subjects while at the same time blaming Ogyū Sorai for doing likewise. Indeed, his semiconscious ambivalence towards *sakui* implies an incipient critique of modernity not unlike that of Horkheimer and Adorno. The purely autonomous subject appears to threaten chaos no less surely than “the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.”²⁹ Although it remains unanalyzed, Maruyama’s discomfort with *sakui*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 210.

27. See Maruyama’s “Author’s Introduction” in Hane’s translation, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, xxxiv. See also Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570–1680* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

28. Maruyama, “‘Nature’ and ‘Invention,’” 228–229. Emphasis mine.

29. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic*, 1.

as the basis for autonomous subjectivity can be discerned in his hesitancy. In short, Maruyama's own autonomous individuals can do little else but invent nature unless they are to create continual decline or crisis, states for which Maruyama indicates little approbation, at least at this point in his thinking.³⁰

In this essay, Maruyama hints at the dilemma which will engage his critical faculties for the rest of his career. The problem comes down to this: What is the nature of freedom in a reasoned modernity? How are we to distinguish political and intellectual will—true *sakui*—from mere desire and bodily passion? How can a nation open itself up to democracy without making itself vulnerable to oppressive popular whims from below or to the exploitation of popular desire from above? How can one support subjective autonomy and yet restrain choice within reasonable bounds? These are not, of course, questions that Maruyama alone faced; they hedge in the path trod by all theorists of democracy, those who have experienced popularly-supported “fascism” perhaps most especially.³¹ Maruyama's exquisite consciousness of the dangers as well as the necessity of autonomy, and his occasional suggestion that intellectual leadership was required to counteract the dangers, led to charges of elitism later in his career, but, I would argue, even in this early essay a muted distrust of *sakui* emerges.

One thing, however, is clear: in his uneasiness about *sakui* and modernity, Maruyama never returns to nature for solace. Although Maruyama occasionally indicates that nature might provide grounds for opposition, even revolutionary opposition, this concession comes grudgingly and is eventually dismissed later in his discussion. For the most part, Maruyama maintains that the form of politics authorized by nature is static, ponderously resistant to history, and that nature (*shizen*) itself is a monolithic and conservative concept, essentially the same in all political discourse regardless of time or place. Because of the failure of “invention” to overcome “nature” in the Tokugawa period, Japan's subsequent

30. In postwar works, Maruyama explores the idea of continual resistance to the state in a group discussion in “Nihon shakai no ideogiji to kōzō” (Ideology and Structure of Japanese Society) in *Sekai Hyōron* Part I (February 1948), 40-50, and Part II (March 1948), 26-43; and the idea of democracy as permanent revolution in “Fashizumu no shomondai” in *Shisō* (October 1952), translated as “Fascism—Some Problems: A Consideration of its Political Dynamics” in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 157-176.

31. I use the term “fascism” here advisedly. Although it is questionable whether the term ought to be applied to Japan at all (See Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995]), the term “*fashizumu*” was widely used in postwar Japanese discussions, including Maruyama's essay “The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism,” in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, 25-83, originally delivered as a lecture in June 1947. Japan's particular form of “fascism” has been characterized as “*tennōsei fashizumu*” [emperor system fascism] prompting a long-running debate. See, for instance, Komatsu Shigeo, “Nihon gata fashizumu” [Japanese Style Fascism], *Shidō sha to taishū*, vol. 5 of *Kindai Nihon shisō shi kōza* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1960), 277-326; Nakamura Kikuo, “Tennōsei fashizumu wa atta ka” [Was There Emperor System Fascism?], *Jiyū* 7, no. 12 (December 1965), 50-59; Ishida Takeshi, “‘Fashizumu ki’ Nihon no okeru dentō to ‘kakushin’” [Tradition and ‘Renovation’ in Japan's ‘Fascist Era’], *Shisō* no. 619 (January 1976), 1-20; Yamaguchi Yasushi, *Fashizumu* [Fascism] (Tokyo: Yuhikaku Sensho, 1979); Amano Keiichi, “*Tennōsei fashizumu ron' no genzai*” [The Current ‘Emperor System Fascism Debate’], *Ryūdō* (January 1980), 56-65; Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Kusa no ne no fashizumu: Nihon minzoku no sensō taiken* [The Roots of Fascism: The Wartime Experience of the Japanese Folk] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1987).

history is marred. Even in the twentieth century, Maruyama argues, Japanese political institutions are apprehended as both completely natural and wholly cultural. This seamless totality absorbs all possibility of critique since there is no basis outside Japanese nature-and-culture (except foreign ideas) from which to critique the state.

IV. JAPAN'S TRAGIC DIFFERENCE FROM "THE WEST"

If, for Maruyama, Japan's history is deformed, leading to the horrors of the war and repression, then it is important to understand the norm against which he measures Japan's tragedy. This norm is "the West," or, more precisely, the "stages of development and mechanisms of modernization" abstracted from the experience of Western Europe.³² Well versed in Hegel, Marx, and Weber, Maruyama, like many other non-Europeans caught in the complex discourse of "Orientalism," adapted the "universal" methods and narratives created by nineteenth-century European scholars of history.³³ Concepts of feudalism, revolution, and variants of the Protestant work-ethic entered Japanese scholarship on Japan, but these ideas were not always used to relegate Japan to the backwater of the "Asiatic mode of production" or "Oriental stagnation." Instead, as historian Stefan Tanaka has suggested, many Japanese scholars appropriated these concepts and applied them to China; in this way China then became Japan's orient, the true Asian backwater in contrast to a Japan that takes developmental precedence and rightfully claims dominion over its less developed Asian neighbors.³⁴

Some scholars, in describing the Japanese appropriation of the structures of European history, have insisted that Maruyama's vision is fundamentally Hegelian and that his quest is to insert Japan into the historical dialectic, not at its starting point, but fairly well along its trajectory to modernity. Historian Sebastian Conrad, for instance, suggests that Maruyama believes that "compared to China, already in premodern times Japan had achieved a lead in the process of modernization. This insight did not diminish Japanese backwardness with respect to Europe, but it reduced the project of catching up to a matter of time."³⁵ From this optimistic perspective, "the West" may exemplify the successful completion of a historical dialectic that ends with the triumph of Spirit, the consciousness and reality of freedom, but it is only a matter of time before Japan necessarily emerges at the same stage as the European forerunner. Time is all that separates "East" and "West."³⁶

32. Sebastian Conrad, "What Time Is Japan?," *History and Theory* 38 (1999), 78.

33. For one of the best discussions of this phenomenon, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and also "Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History," *Cultural Studies* 6 (1992), 337-357.

34. Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

35. Conrad, "What Time Is Japan?," 79.

36. Conrad has termed this the "temporalization of space" arguing that "Japanese historiography produced a chronometrical order and thereby positioned Japan in a way that colluded with Japan's emergence as a world power." Conrad, "What Time is Japan?," 82.

While there is certainly Hegelian coloring to the form of freedom Maruyama desires and to his grand narrative, a focus on his concept of nature rather than his view of historical time reveals a much less optimistic substratum to this thinking. As Hegel argues, “the History of the World begins with its general aim—the realization of the Idea of Spirit—only in an *implicit* form [*an sich*] that is, as Nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden, unconscious instinct; and the whole process of History (as already observed), is directed to rendering this unconscious impulse a conscious one.”³⁷ By this reasoning, Maruyama’s investigation of Tokugawa thought becomes an attempt to excavate that “profoundly hidden” instinct for freedom in Japanese history through the work of Ogyū Sorai, only to discover that the necessary dialectic was never initiated. Instead, Japan remains at the first stage of History, that is, in Nature. Nature, the unconscious of modern history, becomes, in Maruyama’s analysis, the ultimate and defining roadblock to Japan’s modernity.

This pessimism arises because Maruyama’s intellectual resources for understanding nature are not purely Hegelian. As his own references attest, he is also deeply indebted to the arguments of German political scientist Hans Kelsen, whose positivist influence is felt throughout the essay. This distinction is crucial. While Hegel’s history projects a universal dialectic that ultimately absorbs and expresses Nature within the triumphant Spirit, Kelsen is not interested in dialectics. Instead, Kelsen asserts the claims of positive law against natural law. For him, politics and history present “either-or” choices, not possible synthesis. In this regard, I think Maruyama is a true Kelsenian: a choice must be made between nature and invention; compromise or synthesis is illegitimate. The result is a far more negative view of Japan’s prospects in relation to “the West” than an emphasis on development or Hegelian dialectics would supply.

Both Maruyama and Kelsen begin by posing a contrast between nature (as natural law) and invention (as positive law). It seems at first that nature might occasionally represent a point from which to critique existing structures of power, but both authors quickly retreat from that possibility to insist that nature as a political concept always justifies the existing state.³⁸ Maruyama argues:

Generally speaking, as soon as natural law is related to the actual social order, it encounters an “either-or” (*Entweder-oder*) characteristic. Either by rigid adherence to pure doc-

37. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, transl. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1956), 25.

38. On this point, Maruyama overstates his case in insisting that “Kelsen denies the revolutionary character of natural law” (Maruyama, “‘Nature’ and ‘Invention,’” 199n.). While Kelsen is generally a staunch ally in Maruyama’s cause, Kelsen does, at times, concede that natural justification can be sought for a range of political purposes. In *General Theory of Law and State*, Kelsen writes that “the doctrine of natural law is at times conservative, at times reformatory or revolutionary in character” (Hans Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*, transl. Anders Wedburg [New York: Russell & Russell, 1961], 11). In other writings, however, Kelsen restricts natural law’s general reformatory or revolutionary powers: “the character of natural law doctrine in general, and of its main current, was strictly conservative. Natural law as posited by the theory was essentially an ideology which served to support, justify, and make an absolute of positive law, or, what is the same thing, of the authority of the State” (Hans Kelsen, *Natural Law Doctrine and Legal Positivism*, transl. Wolfgang Herbert Kraus [New York: Russell & Russell, 1961], 416-417).

trine it becomes a revolutionary principle directed against the concrete social order, or by its complete identification with the actual social relations it becomes an ideology guaranteeing the permanence of the existing order.³⁹

But, later in his argument, the revolutionary possibility is muted when nature is exclusively tied to the conservative task of justifying an “existing order in its stage of ascendancy or stability.”⁴⁰ This “either-or” quality which gradually loses its revolutionary alternative can only apply to nature because Maruyama and Kelsen conceive of nature as half of an absolute binary opposition.⁴¹ There are no hybrids, no hermaphrodites, no entities composed both of nature and of will or reason. The diametrical opposition between nature and invention locks political action into a rigid pattern in which the only options are revolution or acquiescence. No latitude for continual negotiation between the two alternatives is provided. Ultimately, however, no matter which choice is made, natural law will be completely absorbed by positive law and the state of nature by the State. Even the difference between nature and invention disappears during the State’s ascendancy when it invents a form of nature congenial to itself. (Here the family-state form of community [*kyōdōtai*, the Japanese translation of *Gemeinschaft*] propagated in Imperial Japan comes to mind).

This “either-or” approach to nature colors Maruyama’s understanding of European history as well as his views on Japan. In his reading, Europe must provide the beacon of a de-natured politics, and yet Enlightenment philosophers frequently speak of nature and its cognates such as “natural rights,” “natural law,” and “the state of nature” in their discussions of political liberty. Maruyama wishes to ally himself with this tradition, especially its concern for individual freedom, but he must in some way reconcile its naturalized views with his own analysis of autonomous subjectivity as both free and anti-natural.⁴²

Maruyama succeeds in this goal by performing the curious operation of transferring the concepts of “natural rights,” “natural law,” and “the state of nature” to his own category of “invention.” He declares, “Insofar as the logical core of the natural law of the Enlightenment was the ‘theory of social contract,’ it belongs clearly to the category of invention in my classification.”⁴³ Later, he elaborates this point:

Let us stop here long enough to note that the theoretical basis for this doctrine of liberty and popular rights is the natural law of the Enlightenment. Since the latter taught that the

39. Maruyama, “‘Nature’ and ‘Invention,’” 199. German in the original.

40. *Ibid.*, 228.

41. The “either-or” structure which is so vital to Maruyama’s thinking in this essay also contributes to his understanding of East and West, Japan and non-Japan, and his struggle to bring the two entities into some sort of correspondence. His difficulties in this regard led to charges of his being anti-Japanese.

42. Maruyama discusses Enlightenment philosophers not only in his 1944 essay but in later works, returning to them through essays on Fukuzawa Yukichi and considerations of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes in relation to Japanese liberalism. See, for instance, Maruyama Masao, “Nihon no okeru jiyū ishiki no keisei to tokushitsu,” [The Formation and Characteristics of Liberal Consciousness in Japan] originally published in *Teikoku daigaku shinbun* (August 1947); reproduced in *Senchū to sengo no aida* [Between War and Post-War] (Tokyo: Mizuso Shobō, 1976), 297-306.

43. Maruyama, “‘Nature’ and ‘Invention,’” 249, n.15.

rights of men are natural rights, it would seem superficially that we should classify it as a theory of natural order. But a more careful examination shows directly that the opposite is true. The “rights of man” in question are not rights embedded in any actually existing social order. On the contrary, they are concrete embodiments of the autonomy of man, who can establish a positive social order. Thus the theory’s insistence on the a priori character of natural law necessarily implies the view that any positive law derives its validity from its original establishment by man.⁴⁴

The main thrust of this statement underscores the artificiality of any social order, but, in the course of this argument, Maruyama interprets Enlightenment thought such that natural law and natural rights (the passage slips between them without distinction) become the same thing as social invention. He claims that to speak of nature in this tradition is simply to use a code word, albeit a misleading one. Given his “either-or” categorization, Maruyama embraces nature in this Enlightenment form, only to insist that it is not nature at all.

Maruyama’s re-reading of “nature” to mean “invention” in these texts is at odds with the approach of Hans Kelsen. The German positivist abruptly dismisses the discussions of natural law and natural rights as a psychologically suspect desire for the divine, breaking readily with the Enlightenment philosophers whom Maruyama hopes to enlist. Kelsen decrees the logical impossibility of coexisting systems of natural and positive law and decries natural-law advocates as irrational.⁴⁵ He argues that to appeal to nature suggests an underdeveloped “personality-type” given to a “fundamentally pessimistic mood of self-consciousness, not weak in itself but directed, so to speak, against itself.”⁴⁶

What appears to underlie Kelsen’s fierce anti-naturalism is a deep suspicion of religion. His advocacy of positive law and concern for *Realpolitik* makes him revile appeals to any standards beyond reason: “This longing for the ‘beyond,’ which is merely an ideological concealment of fear and flight from present existence, makes man consider the entire world as it is given to him by his senses and reason, not only as worth nothing, but even as nothing.”⁴⁷ Nature and the divine both function as a “beyond” offering an escape from hard truths. Those attracted to such distractions reveal their inability to fully comprehend the real-life conditions of law, government, and their own relation to authority. From Kelsen’s point of view, a fully-formed rationalist would take no pleasure in the flights of imagination that project kingdoms of authority beyond the human world. His suspicion that advocates of “nature” harbor pseudo-religious desires marks him as a part of the long movement to dethrone the Christian god, secularize the world, and celebrate human reason. Indeed, Kelsen as a consummate positivist hails just that victory of “enlightenment” that Horkheimer and Adorno later abhor.

But in the end, despite their differences, Kelsen and Maruyama share, indeed advocate, a particular, anti-natural version of modernity. They both seek to unbind the Prometheus of human reason from the chains of tradition, religion,

44. *Ibid.*, 313.

45. Kelsen, *Natural Law Doctrine*, 411.

46. *Ibid.*, 424.

47. *Ibid.*, 425.

social context, and physical circumstances. In so doing, they exemplify a powerful strand of social-scientific thought, and stand at the culmination of an intellectual tradition which gradually shed all sources of authority except the self. They also participate in the constitution of a vision of European history as the standard model against which to measure the progress of other regions.

On a more concrete, political level, this “either-or” analysis also came to provide Maruyama with an excuse for not having opposed the war more vigorously. In reflecting later on why he and others did not challenge Japanese “fascism” (as he terms it), he suggests that in an “either-or” world, the middle ground provides no leverage. Japanese intellectuals never actively struggled against fascism, Maruyama insists, because they were never sufficiently westernized, never sufficiently denatured. Instead, they were caught between two worlds, sad, weak hybrids capable at best of “passive resistance.” As Maruyama explains in 1947:

in Japan the intelligentsia is essentially European in culture, and unlike its counterpart in Germany, could not find enough in traditional Japanese culture to appeal to its level of sophistication. In the case of Germany to exalt nationalism meant also to take pride in the tradition of Bach, Beethoven, Goethe, and Schiller, who at the same time provide the culture of the intelligentsia. These conditions did not exist in Japan; inasmuch as the European culture of the Japanese intelligentsia remained a culture of the brain, filling only an ornamental function, it was not deeply rooted in thinking or feeling. Hence it lacked the moral courage to make a resolute defense of its inner individuality against fascism. On the other hand, its European culture would never permit it to respond to the low tone of the fascist movement and to its shallow intelligence. Such a lack of thoroughness, coupled with the intellectual detachment and isolation of the intelligentsia in general drove it to a hesitant and impotent existence.⁴⁸

In a world organized through the opposition of East and West, Nature and Culture, Fascism and Freedom rather than along a developmental or dialectical model, hybrids such as Maruyama's generation were powerless to act—or so Maruyama maintains. Occupying the middle ground does not provide the strength of synthesis, but it does provide the convenient excuse of paralysis. If modernity is defined solely as the temporal trajectory from nature to freedom, Japan's claim to advanced development over China and the rest of Asia can serve the purposes of national aggrandizement and claims to eventual parity with “the West,” but this definition would also imply that intellectuals had partial responsibility. I do not mean to argue that we must emphasize nature over time in defining modernity, or to insist that Maruyama was really more indebted to one matrix rather than the other. The important observation here is that these two levels of understanding modernity create different forms of Orientalization, different forms of history, and different judgments about responsibility.

V. JAPAN'S ACCURSED SENSUALITY

In the aftermath of the war, Maruyama did not abandon his attack on nature. He not only republished his wartime essay, “‘Nature’ and ‘Invention,’” but he broad-

48. Maruyama, “The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism,” 59-60.

ened his critique of nature to include eroticism and sensuality. In an essay in the October 1949 issue of the magazine *Tenbō*, Maruyama defined the faults of postwar literature and postwar politics in terms of *nikutai* or carnality. This essay, entitled “Nikutai bungaku kara nikutai seiji e” [From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics], bemoans the obsession with sex and sensuality in Japanese literature, arguing that the overwhelming concentration on the body denies the subject’s free agency or spirit. “In Japan,” Maruyama writes, “the spirit is neither differentiated nor independent from perceptible nature—of course I include the human body as a part of nature—and so the mediating force of the spirit is weak.”⁴⁹

Maruyama does not view bodily pleasure as a possible counterpoint to authority. Indeed, given the lack of tension between mind and body in Japanese thought, the pleasures of the body were never in themselves considered a particular source of sinfulness, and therefore were never opposed quite so directly to goodness or spirit or society as in societies dominated by Christian thought. Even today, there is comparatively little consternation in Japan over the wide range of human sexual practices and appetites, including pornography. The realms of erotic desire and fleshly longing do not axiomatically serve as a liminal space where the boundaries of social authority over the individual can be observed and tested.⁵⁰ Instead, embracing “the body” is, for Maruyama and others, simply another evasion of political and artistic responsibility for the indolence of unself-reflective nature.

Using much the same logic that he employed in analyzing the failure of Tokugawa political thought, Maruyama suggests that where “the spirit is not functionally independent of nature,” the possibilities for creative politics are dead.⁵¹ Literature produced by truly independent spirits would forego disjointed images of flesh in order to project a world beyond the givens of the current social environment. This fictional world would serve to remind readers that “the public order, institutions, *mores*, in short the whole social environment” are created by human beings, a fiction, *not* a natural reality.⁵²

It is important to recognize that Maruyama does not fault fiction for its fictionality. Fiction or “making things up” is allied to “invention” in its capacity to project other worlds and to recognize the contingency of established institutions. Indeed, Maruyama famously calls democracy itself a “fiction” not, of course, to dismiss it, but to insist that it requires willful imagination to bring it into existence. Given this sophisticated conception of fiction, it is puzzling that Maruyama did not consider the possibility that nature itself might serve as a fic-

49. Maruyama, “From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics,” in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 251. Maruyama’s negative evaluation of the body is directly contrary to the views of Horkheimer and Adorno who argue that the separation of the intellectual from the sensuous “means the impoverishment of thought and of experience: the separation of both areas leaves both impaired.” Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic*, 36.

50. Although one could argue, for instance, that Ōe Kenzaburō uses the sensuality of eating—indeed overeating—to symbolize social dissent in *Man’en gannen no futtororu* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1967). Translated by John Bester as *The Silent Cry* (New York: Kodansha International, 1974).

51. Maruyama, “From Carnal Literature,” 252.

52. *Ibid.*, 255.

tion or indeed that “the state of nature” was just such a fiction in Enlightenment thought rather than a synonym for “invention.” If Maruyama had deemed “nature” a “fictional” construct, he might have viewed the “state of nature” as a desirable fiction that illuminates the created quality of society. As a fiction in this sense, nature might serve not just as that which we needed to be liberated *from* but also something which might itself require liberation, the conceptual liberation *of* nature so that it can refer to a realm outside the current bonds of society. If it referred to something at the edges of civilization,⁵³ it could illuminate the boundaries of the “status quo.” Maruyama might even have spoken of the liberation *to* nature where an autonomous individual could remove him or herself in part from the confines of society in order to rethink its perimeters.⁵⁴

However, as Maruyama's analysis in “Nikutai bungaku kara nikutai seiji e” suggests, he continued to celebrate a form of invention totally divorced from nature. For him, nature has no redeeming political functions: Nature is not the pre-societal condition of individuals in the state of nature before they form cohesive social groups; nature is not a set of laws or rights that impinge on the positive statutes, constitutions, and the institutional configuration of the state; Nature as the body is not an erotic playground outside of and, possibly, contesting the demands of society and the state; nature is not a “fiction” against which to measure and critique current circumstances. Nature is a cage, and the freedom Maruyama seeks from this cramped enclosure is absolute. For the sake of absolute freedom, the autonomous subject must strip itself of its past, its physical and social environment, its very flesh and limbs. In Maruyama's terms, since any actual manifestation of culture, governance, or sensuality becomes axiomatically “natural” and unself-reflective, all are anathema to liberty.

What then can exist completely outside the cage of nature? What but a denuded landscape and a disembodied spirit? In his distaste for nature in all forms, Maruyama comes perilously close to investing life itself with the iron chains of unfreedom. Negating this “nature” results in the absolute freedom found only in death. Maruyama is indeed a “utopian pessimist” as historian Andrew Barshay has so aptly called him.⁵⁵

VI. THE ENLIGHTENMENT FROM THE FAR SIDE OF MODERNITY

From our current perspective, we now bear witness to the dangers of this immodest mid-twentieth-century vision of freedom, not, I think, because of our superi-

53. Robert Pogue Harrison suggests that the most likely origin of the term “forest” “is the Latin *foris*, meaning “outside” and argues that forests in Europe provide an external perspective on society. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 69.

54. I am here indebted, in part, to Charles Taylor's distinction between the liberation *of* nature and the liberation *from* nature in his review article, “Logics of Disintegration,” *New Left Review* 170 (July/August 1988), 110-116. However, I expand on Taylor's terms and use them rather differently.

55. Maruyama's vision is radically democratic in that all people must contend with nature, yet he is inevitably pessimistic in that all institutions cloak their inventedness in claims to normative, natural status. Andrew Barshay, “Imagining Democracy in Postwar Japan: Reflections on Maruyama Masao and Modernism,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 18 (Summer 1992), 406.

or wisdom, but simply because we stand at a different place. The critique of the rational subject launched by Horkheimer and Adorno has hit home in our experience; the sorrows of pure subjectivity are manifest in our power to destroy our societies, ourselves, and our environment. While Horkheimer and Adorno forecast universal disaster and barbarity, Louis Dupré describes the loss in individual terms: “In becoming pure project, the modern self has become severed from those sources that once provided its content. The metaphysics of the ego isolates the self. It narrows selfhood to individual solitude and reduces the other to the status of object.”⁵⁶ Even Maruyama, for all his defense of modernity, hints at this problem when he suggests that if an existing order is “justified in terms of autonomous personalities, it is in its period of decline or crisis.”⁵⁷

In the face of modernity’s societal and personal predicament, what resources are available to us to make good our losses? Was modernity doomed to spawn disaster? Was its only possible history a deterministic trajectory away from nature and into chaos? Horkheimer and Adorno answer this question in the affirmative, excoriating the entire thrust of European history from the Ancient Greeks to the Final Solution. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the only recourse they offer borders on the re-embrace of mysticism. More than half a century later, the question is still before us, but we are also free to find other avenues of approach. We can seek neither to condemn nor praise modernity, but to reinterpret it. Dupré suggests as much when he writes:

While [earlier writers] exalted rational objectivity, moral tolerance, and individual choice as cultural absolutes, we now regard these principles with some suspicion. Undoubtedly there are good reasons to distrust the equation of the real with the objectifiable, progress with technological advances, and liberty of thought and action with detachment from tradition and social bonds. But should we attribute all such excesses to the original principles of modern culture?⁵⁸

Dupré returns to a pre-Cartesian moment to find an alternative origin for modernity in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century before the Enlightenment. Likewise, Stephen Toulmin lays claim to the late Renaissance as the initial literary and humanistic phase of modernity, preceding the scientific and philosophical quest for certainty that began in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁵⁹ Both authors broaden the possibilities of modernity by emphasizing its partnership with certain forms of nature.

Taking this lead from Dupré and Toulmin, we can develop an alternative history of modernity where nature is not a mere starting point or the antithesis of freedom, but continually balances some of the excesses of modern reason and invention. Freedom is thus redefined: it need not be absolute to be valuable. Existentialist theologian Paul Ricoeur has suggested that “Freedom is not a pure act, it is in each

56. Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 119.

57. Maruyama, “‘Nature’ and ‘Invention,’” 228-229.

58. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 1.

59. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 23.

of its moments, activity and receptivity. It constitutes itself in receiving what it does not produce: values, capacities, and sheer nature."⁶⁰ If we accept this view, it may be possible to carve out a limited space for liberty while accepting nature, defined as the past, the joys and limitations of bodily existence, and the physical environment. Such a "nature" would circumscribe but not wholly determine the course of action, creating a limited, but nonetheless worthwhile, freedom.

There are indeed losses in adopting this position. As critics of modernity—and particularly of democracy and liberalism—have vociferously pointed out, the result is a form of split subjectivity, a product of both nature and culture. In *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, Pierre Manent laments this split subjectivity which he terms "duplicity." He argues that, since Montesquieu, "we remain radically *divided*, the dividing line between natural man and the citizen is now within us."⁶¹ Working only within the European tradition, Manent sets out to describe this divided modern self as a reaction against God and to denounce the misfortune and corruption that he believes "the democratic project" has spawned in the face of "man's natural desire . . . to bring this duplicity into unity."⁶² As Manent sees it, "This division or duplicity guarantees that no end, no good, can require anything of man. What nature gives, cannot be ordered by it; what sovereignty orders, it cannot give."⁶³ In short, the ultimate responsibility for responding to an end or a good remains with the individual, a circumstance that Manent abhors. Ironically, Maruyama's wartime Japanese state resembles the world Manent desires (without its Christian overtones.) As we have seen, Japanese ideology brought nature and sovereignty together, and its people, in achieving unity, did not suffer the strains of a divided consciousness.

The situation of the duplicitous modern self has its rigors, it is true. It may even be admitted, as Ricoeur does, that "there is no logical procedure by which nature could be derived from freedom (the involuntary from the voluntary), or freedom from nature. There is no *system* of nature and freedom."⁶⁴ We may be caught perpetually straddling this ungainly divide. This may appear too insecure, too exacting, and too exhausting, but it may still be that continual renegotiation between nature and invention is our best bet. Freedom has never been synonymous with comfort.

Not only does renaturalizing modernity create a different form of subjectivity and a different form of freedom, but it also suggests a different form of modern history, no longer a trajectory from nature to freedom, from East to West, and certainly not an "either-or" choice. Focusing on the continuing presence of nature in modern thought, even when relegated to the position of seldom-revealed subconscious, would allow us to describe more precisely Japan's and the West's particular confrontation with modernity. Perhaps Japan's modernity

60. Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 484.

61. Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, transl. Rebecca Balinski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 64.

62. *Ibid.*, 115.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 19.

was of a different rather than a later or lesser sort than “the West’s”; perhaps Japan’s modernity reveals that the problems of modernity cannot be solved within “the West” without reference to “the East.”⁶⁵ If, as Fredric Jameson comments, “in different historical circumstances the idea of nature was once a subversive concept with a genuinely revolutionary function . . . ,”⁶⁶ a return to modern history with an expansive view of nature’s multiple ideological possibilities seems in order.

*University of Wisconsin,
Madison*

65. Manent implies that the solution to the problems of democracy and liberalism is a return to Christianity as a social value and to a fully integrated sense of self within that religious outlook, but such a solution would only be possible if European modernity had remained as hermetically cloistered from the rest of the world as Manent’s history suggests. Today, it is impossible to think seriously about the issues raised by European political philosophy entirely from within its original tradition, because modernity, democracy, and liberalism are now the products of global miscegenation and any conceptualization of these ideas must take these non-European inheritances seriously.

66. Fredric Jameson, “Reflections in Conclusion,” in Ernst Bloch *et al.*, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1986), 207.

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³² **What Time is Japan? Problems of Comparative (Intercultural) Historiography**

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