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JAPAN

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Japan is commonly evoked as an example of technoscientific modernization, of a tumultuous yet ultimately successful adoption and adaptation of paradigms originating in the West. One of the enduring images of Japan, among both Japanese and non-Japanese, is that of a land in which ancient traditions coexist harmoniously with highly advanced, sophisticated, even futuristic technologies. Such an imaginary reinforces a fundamental dualism between tradition and modernity, and between East and West, in which Japan succeeds in mixing, fusing, balancing, or mediating (the actual mechanism usually remains unclear) contradictory worldviews, historical experiences, and cultural paradigms. As such, Japan's technoscientific modernization has frequently been presented not only as the exception among non-Western nations but as a model for them.

There are a number of problems with this imaginary. It presumes, in the West, unitary experience and linear development of both science and technology. It also presumes a unitary Eastern or Oriental worldview or cultural paradigm. But such unities are metaphysical, as are the binary oppositions of East and West, and tradition and modernity. They appear ready to crumble at the slightest touch of empiricism or historicism. Yet, if such metaphysical unities and oppositions nevertheless prove exceedingly persistent, even though they seem out of touch with contemporary realities, it is due not only to our psychic, ideological, or subjective investments in them, but also to practices, techniques, institutions, and discourses that ground and perpetuate them. As a consequence, it is not possible or desirable to dismiss this imaginary as sheer fantasy. Rather, we need to scale down the scope of rhetoric and analysis, and explore actual practices, institutions, and discourses.

This is where the study of science and literature in Japan has something to contribute to the understanding of the real experience of science, technology, and modernity, not only in the context of Japan but also in the broader contexts of the non-West and global modernity. As a first step, we need to pluralize the basic terms for discussion: not science but sciences, not technology but technologies, not literature but literatures, and not the nation but nations or peoples. This latter move – discussing Japan in terms of nations or peoples – runs counter

to the received and entrenched imaginary of Japan as a mono-ethnic nation, yet we cannot ignore that the modern Japanese nation was from the outset an imperial nation with multi-ethnic aspirations (Sakai 2000), especially since Japan today officially recognizes its multi-ethnicity – in the context of Ainu peoples, although not, unfortunately, vis-à-vis Okinawans, resident Koreans, and other minorities.

Pluralizing these terms, however, is but a first step. We must also consider how unities such as the nation, science, and literature have emerged, and how institutions, practices, and discourses have grounded and sustained them. On the one hand, such an approach demands some manner of historical account of scientific discourses and techniques and of literary institutions and practices. On the other hand, it requires some consideration of how we propose to study the interaction of science and literature.

Of these unities, the unity of science remains the most persistent and problematic today, both in historical accounts of the sciences and scientific discourses in Japan, and in the emerging field of literature and science. Historians and literary scholars have gradually become more accustomed to pluralizing literatures and peoples, even if they are not yet entirely comfortable with them. It has never been uncommon to acknowledge literary movements and schools (naturalism, Romanticism, diabolism, modernism) and varieties of fiction (detective fiction, science fiction, J-lit). And it has become more common to acknowledge peoples in Japan, in the context of minorities, or populations (women, children), or both. But we hesitate to pluralize sciences.

There are good reasons for this hesitation. The history and philosophy of science are heirs to an intellectual movement that began, largely in the mid-nineteenth century, to speak in terms of science rather than sciences. Ian Hacking (1996) gives a persuasive account of the historical emergence of this idea of the underlying unity of the sciences, detailing the theses that have developed in support of it. In addition, in response to this heritage, those who wish to stress the impact of the sciences on the formation of modern societies tend to posit a unified, almost deterministic historical force, whether their intent is to extol science or to rue its excesses. The result is a tendency to think in terms of a monolithic technoscientific modernization, and thus in terms of unified, far-reaching, all-encompassing rationalization, with a relentlessly instrumental relation to nature and social exchanges. Thus the idea of the unity of sciences accords with and reinforces a massive modernity thesis. The desire to acknowledge the efficacy of the sciences tends unwittingly to encourage a lumping together of diverse fields of rationality under the rubric of science, frequently in the guise of a modern technoscientific condition. Whether our aim is to laud or castigate them, we hesitate to speak of plural sciences or of fields of rationality because we fear losing sight of their efficacy.

What proves difficult is retaining a sense of the very real efficacy of the sciences without calling on the metaphysical unity of science or the metaphysical

dualisms that often accompany it (West versus East, modernity versus tradition). Yet we get a better sense of the efficacy and impact of the modern sciences when we think in terms of specific fields of rationality rather than a massive overarching rationalization or modernization. The case of Japan is particularly instructive here, because, even though both literary studies and science studies have tended to rely on and shore up the metaphysical unity of Western scientific modernity (and, by extension, the unity of the Japanese nation), it becomes empirically very difficult to sustain such unities when we take a closer look at science and literature together.

There have long been studies of the impact of science on literature, and Japanese scholars have produced such a prodigious number of studies that it is impossible to cite them here. Such studies have tended, however, to gauge the impact of science on literature largely in terms of a general problem of technoscientific modernity, with an emphasis on how individual writers responded to it. Yet, in a number of recent studies, there is as much emphasis on the analysis of science as on literature, which marks the emergence of a new paradigm of literature and science. Across such studies there is an implicit "disunification" and a localization of the sciences. In the hope of opening up the disunification implicit in this new paradigm of study in which science is taken as seriously as literature, I would here like to offer some general remarks about the relation between science, literature, and Japan. I will focus primarily on the large-scale adoption of Western sciences and technologies in Japan of the Meiji period (1868–1912), for this moment continues to establish the basic paradigms for thinking science in Japan.

Science, Japan

Prior to the revolution of 1868 that laid the foundation for the modern Japanese nation, the Tokugawa shoguns exercised tight control over the flow of knowledge and technologies in the domains unified under their rule, as a measure to maintain the balance of power among and over domains. If one of the semi-autonomous domains should have access to some technology of knowledge that empowered them, the overall balance would have been jeopardized. Nonetheless, for over two hundred years, the shogunate allowed for the study of Dutch sciences, simply called "Dutch studies" (*rangaku*). The impact of Dutch studies was highly localized in terms of scientific efficacy, and the underlying conceptualizations of the physical world were largely ignored, while the applications of such sciences were generally perceived as curiosities.

After the "opening" of Japan in 1853 to unequal treaties with the Western powers, the shogunate began to encourage books on Western science, but it was after the revolution of 1868, in which a group of low-ranking samurai abolished the shogunate and legitimated their authority to govern the new nation-state by placing an emperor on the throne as titular head of state, that a coherent set of

government policies for "enriching the country and building its defenses" (*fukoku kyôhei*) came into play. The emphasis fell thus on defense, on weapons factories, steamships, and shipyards, and then on industrialization. The government created a number of policies for the development of education in Japan, which entailed, on the one hand, hiring foreign instructors to teach in Japanese institutions of learning, and on the other, sending Japanese abroad to receive sufficient training to replace the foreign experts (Bartholomew 1989: 49–88). The 1870 regulations for study abroad placed emphasis on the general advancement of civilization in Japan, which included knowledge of Western manners, customs, arts, and institutions. But in keeping with the necessity for military and industrial development in order to overturn the unequal treaties, the majority of students went to the United States, Germany, England, or France to pursue natural sciences and engineering.

The necessity of scientific development, and the single-mindedness of purpose needed to achieve it in a relatively short time, encouraged the idea that there existed in the West a unified science, the source of imperial power. Yet, while this concerted effort to master modern sciences and technologies in Western countries and to "catch up" with the imperial powers imparted a sense of a temporal lag between Japan and the West, those who went abroad found their host countries in the process of transformation. It was an era of university reforms, of institutionalization of academic disciplines, with a new emphasis on science-based technologies. Japanese visitors learned that the pursuit of science in France and Britain, for instance, had transformed dramatically in the past forty to fifty years. Rather than construing Japan as lagging hopelessly behind the West, we might, like the first Japanese visitors to the West, conclude that Japan was entering the modern scene of science at roughly the same historical moment. It is even possible to construe Japan's situation as conferring a certain advantage, as Nakayama Shigeru does:

> While science in 19th-century Europe was still in the main a cultural activity, rather than a practical means of achieving economic growth (as is well illustrated by the issue of the theory of evolution), the Japanese in the late 19th century held perhaps the most modern image of science: it was exclusively utilitarian and pragmatic, planned to enhance the national interest if not purely for profit-making, specialized and compartmentalized. (Nakayama 1984: 207)

We see here two factors that contributed to the sense of science as a unity. On the one hand, shifts in Europe and America toward pragmatic applications, institutionalization, and disciplinization reinforced the sense of an underlying unity, in the form of a pragmatically mechanistic stance, in which "the status of any particular discipline was roughly determined by the degree to which the problems it posed were amenable to mechanical solution" (Nakayama 1984: 96).

As Martin Heidegger would later argue, the formulation of knowledge on the basis of problem and solution constitutes a metaphysical position, insofar as everything is evaluated on the basis of optimization. He called this "merely technological behavior" (Heidegger 1954). On the other hand, the drive to construct a modern Japanese nation entailed an imposition of unity upon previously semi-autonomous domains, languages, peoples, and cultural practices, and the frankly utilitarian approach to the sciences in nineteenth-century Japan derived from and contributed to this push for national unity. Consequently, the idea of the unity of the nation found support in the technological behaviors or utilitarian practices that reinforced a sense of the unity of science, and vice versa. In sum, while neither the unity of the West, nor that of the nation-state, nor that of science is empirically given (but must be constantly adjusted and reasserted), the interaction of these three "codes" (their mutual translatability) produces a situation in which the empirical lapses of the one can be compensated for by recourse to the others.

Under such circumstances, the perception that the newly formed Japanese nation lagged behind the West in terms of its technoscientific development neatly dovetailed with Japan's military and industrial ascendancy. After Japan's victories over China (1894–95) and Russia (1904–5), Western nations spoke with a mixture of exaltation and trepidation about Japan's rapid advance. Non-Western nations began to see Japan as a model. Nonetheless, rather than see Japan's rise merely in terms of catching up with the West, we might build on Nakayama's comments and conclude that Japan's success was due not only to institutional factors, prior infrastructures, and canny government, but also to Japan's entry into the modern sciences at the time of the ascendancy of "merely technological behavior." The perception of a temporal lag between Japan and the West contributed to practices and discourses based on the *radical externality* of technologies and applied sciences.

Writing in 1911, one of Japan's most celebrated novelists, Natsume Sôseki, presented two modalities for understanding the dynamics of civilization and progress in the modern world. Sôseki used the term "civilization" to speak of modern progress, because, from the 1870s, the idea of scientific progress had extended to a range of practices, institutions, and domains of knowledge, under the banner of "enlightenment and civilization" (*bunmei kaika*), which became the catch-phrase for the modernization of society. In the West, Sôseki suggested, modern civilization arose internally and spontaneously (*naihatsu*), while in Japan it arose externally (*gaihatsu*) and thus remained artificial and awkward (Natsume 1911: 333–34). He stressed the externality of progress in order to highlight the malaise of Japanese modernity, which he saw deepening in conjunction with Japan's emergence as a military and industrial power. Similarly, Nakayama writes, "Japanese modern science was freed from its European philosophical roots: Japanese accepted the paradigms developed in Europe as self-evident and were concerned only with mastering them technically" (207). Looking at Japanese modernization from very

different angles, both writers emphasize the externality of technoscientific paradigms in Japan. Yet it is precisely such externality that translated into an ability to adopt the modern image of science, or technological behavior.

As such, it is really not possible to determine whether Japan is more or less modern than other countries in terms of its technoscientific development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The experience of the externality of technoscientific paradigms meant that Japan was, depending on what criteria we accept, at once behind and ahead of Western sciences. While there surely exist indices (however flawed or suspect) for measuring modernization, Sôseki's comments serve to remind us of something immeasurable at work in the modern experience of the radical externality of scientific paradigms and technological applications.

As such examples suggest, the Japanese experience of the radical externality of technoscience resulted in a profound dualism. Alongside the slogan "enlightenment and civilization" appeared another watchword that captures the seemingly inevitable bifurcation of scientific reason, *wakon yôsai* or "Japanese spirit, Western techniques" (coined in the years leading up to the Meiji revolution). This dualism reprises and subsumes other familiar dualisms that inform the modern experience of sciences and technologies, but in Japan it was, above all, the dualism of spirit versus matter (Cartesianism) that proved most amenable in negotiating the radical externality of sciences. Techniques were seen as part of a mechanistic worldview and practices that dealt with what was extensible in space, substantial, and subject to manipulation, while spirit or soul remained inextensible in space and thus belonged to a separable "spiritual" reality. Adding geopolitical categories to the mix – Japan versus the West – made for a situation in which Western modernity itself appears as a form of Cartesianism predicated on dualism (transcendent metaphysical subject or God versus physical world of matter). Once dualism is imputed to the West, Japan appears, in contrast, as a realm of non-dualistic spirit, substantially different from Western materialism, even as Japan adopted those very materialist techniques.

Not surprisingly, a great deal of Japanese thinking about modernity, science, and technology in the twentieth century would build on Nietzsche, Bergson, and Heidegger, and a strong current of vitalism, in the form of a search for non-dualistic understandings of reality, would inform Japanese articulations of modernity, both literary and philosophical (Suzuki 1995). So profound is this current of thought that a contemporary Japanese theorist, Azuma Hiroki, in his conceptualization of manga and anime, characterizes Western modernity as Cartesian (a transcendent subject overseeing the technical manipulation of extensible materials), in contrast to Japan's postmodern rupture with and collapse of that very dualism (Azuma 2000).

For a number of reasons, then, the Japanese experience of modernization became one of the radical externality of sciences and technologies, which was negotiated through recourse to a fundamental dualism. Dualism, however, was

frequently disavowed by imputing it to the West, to Cartesianism or a mechanistic worldview, which inspired a search for properly Japanese non-dualistic modes of thought and experience. Thus, at the turn of the century, for instance, writers and philosophers turned to Buddhism (especially Zen), and, stripping it of its rituals and specific systems of practice, reconceptualized it as the site of a uniquely Japanese form of non-dualistic thinking that also promised to ground a new kind of scientific understanding (Sharf 1993). Such instances highlight how the putative unity of the West became inextricable from the unity of the Japanese nation and from practices, discourses, and institutions that at once grounded and were grounded in the unity of science. Today, the study of sciences in Japan needs not only to challenge these received dualisms but also to think non-dualistic approaches differently.

Here it is useful to recall that a number of historians and philosophers have deliberately challenged the characterization of modernity as Cartesian. Foucault (1970), for instance, situates Cartesianism within the classical regime, arguing that it was the breakdown of classical grids of universal knowledge that prepared the way for the emergence of disciplines centered on disciplinization of human bodies as the ground for knowledge. While it is not particularly useful to posit a definitive break between the classical and the modern at the level of Cartesianism versus disciplinization in the manner of early Foucault, the challenge to the characterization of modernity as Cartesian is an important first step in moving beyond the image of modernity as a massive and unitary rationalization, toward an analysis of specific fields of rationality, without dissolving the sciences into social practices in general.

The later Foucault is a good point of reference, in the seminars in which he meticulously differentiates three different modes of exercising power: sovereignty (juridical power acting primarily to assure submission at the level of subjectivity), discipline (disciplinary power exercised on the bodies of individuals, often via segregations), and security (biopower aimed at the governance of populations) (Foucault 2007: 12). While such a schema affords only a tentative point of departure for the analysis of different fields of rationality, it does have the great advantage of delimiting, and of opening possibilities beyond, the analytics of the West versus Japan, which tend to remain focused on questions of sovereignty and subjectivity, on questions of how power acts on the imaginary. Yet, even though the sciences affect and enter into regimes of sovereignty and discipline, the experience of the radical externality of technosciences tends to dovetail with biopolitical and technopolitical regimes of security and population control.

Science, literature

One of the crucial events in the formation of modern Japanese literature was a series of debates about reforming written Japanese called "unification of speech

and writing" (*genbun itchi*). Initially the debates addressed general script reforms, but it was in the realm of literature that *genbun itchi* subsequently unfolded into a sort of movement (Twine 1978). While the idea of unifying speech and writing may appear to constitute a call for a phonetic system of writing, phonetic scripts and styles of writing already existed in Tokugawa Japan. As many commentators have pointed out, *genbun itchi* was less about phonetic writing per se, and more about the standardization, simplification, and homogenization of both writing and speech, for the purposes of scientific communication, general literacy linked to newspapers and other modes of mass communication, and standardized education in Japan and in its new colonies. It was a matter of linguistic modernization, comparable to debates and movements in China and Korea as well as those around the vernacular in Europe, North America, and South America.

Linguistic modernization in Japan frequently adopted the language of catching up or being on a par with the West, yet, as with Japan's technoscientific modernization, Japan's reformations were roughly coeval with similar transformations in the Americas and in Western Europe, where the shift from classical languages toward vernacular materials in universities was happening at about the same time. Japan's "unification of speech and writing" is best seen as part of a global movement of linguistic modernization related to the institutionalization of vernacular literary studies and scientific disciplines, in which Japan might be seen as ahead in some respects (literacy rates, respect for education, rapid formation of efficient postal systems and newspapers) and behind in others.

Until Karatani Kôjin's epochal reinterpretation of *genbun itchi* (1980), the movement was largely construed in terms of democratization, because increased access to literacy and new publication venues were integral to the rise of new political and social movements in the Meiji period, as well as to the spread of education. The received view of *genbun itchi* conflated linguistic modernization with democratization. In contrast, Karatani writes of a radical and irrevocable inversion of the (premodern) semiotic constellation that resulted in the "discovery" of interiority, which consisted, in effect, of a naturalization of the ascendancy of subject over object (akin to Cartesianism). At the same time, Karatani demonstrates, this modern interiority made possible an objectification of the subject, in which the subject becomes most remarkable in its anonymity, which is highlighted against the newly invented paradigm of landscape.

The simultaneously subjectified and objectified subject in Karatani's account of modern Japanese literature recalls Foucault's account of Man as combining an empirical and a transcendental side within the human sciences, a double figure that is at once the subject (agent) of history and culture, and its object. Yet where Foucault stresses how this doublet serves to organize disciplinary knowledge of the human in response to the breakdown of the universal grid of the classical era, Karatani places greater emphasis on questions of (national) sovereignty and (Japanese) subjectivity rather than on discipline, even when he explores, for instance, the impact of tuberculosis on literature. Where Foucault

shows the disciplinary ground for humanism and the human sciences, Karatani exposes the semiotic ground for Japanese nationalism, thus casting doubt on histories that conflate democratization with modernization. Karatani's approach raises some important questions for the study of Japanese literature and science.

Karatani's account serves as a reminder of the material limits of language, adding a dimension to the analysis of modern literature that often tends to drop out in accounts of European-language literatures. In this respect, his account bears comparison with that of Benedict Anderson, who posits the "fatality of language" as a material limit on the tendency toward the flat spreading of sovereignty characteristic of modernity (Anderson 1983). For Anderson, nation-ness at once discovers this flattening of hierarchies and stops it short at the boundaries of the nation, congealing it in the form of international relations and national identities. Nonetheless, Anderson sees in the emergence of vernacular literature and nation-ness a politically valuable experience of universal equality. In contrast, Karatani's emphasis on the semiotic, linguistic formation of Japanese subjectivity makes any bid for democracy feel impossible, fated in advance to succumb to ultra-nationalism. Such a stance is in keeping with Karatani's general suspicion of the public sphere as invariably yoked to the state.

We might also contrast Karatani's account of modern literature and art with that of Jacques Rancière, who emphasizes the emergence of an aesthetic regime that abolishes the hierarchies of the classical or representative regime by promoting the equality and anonymity of represented subjects and breaking down received connections between style and content (Rancière 2006: 81). While Rancière carefully distinguishes such aesthetic equality from political equality and democracy (53), he nonetheless sees possibilities for thinking and enacting democracy within the modern aesthetic regime. It is significant, however, that Rancière ignores questions about the material limits of language and about (French) nationalism in relation to (French) literature. Where Karatani speaks of the inversion of a semiotic constellation that imprisons the subject within national interiority, Rancière refers to aesthetic *revolution*. And like Anderson, Rancière sees the universal at play in the emergence of modern literature.

Such profoundly different takes on the political possibilities of modern literature derive a very different sense of the West and of modernity. Rather than simply concluding that Karatani is pessimistic about modernity and democracy or that Rancière is blind to nationalism, we might return to the experience of radical externality of the sciences in Japan. This experience is inseparable from a sense of the monolithic unity of the West and the corresponding prison-like unity of the nation. In other words, at stake in thinking about what Hacking (1996) calls the "disunities of the sciences" is the possibility of dissent and of democracy based on a kind of scientific equality, analogous but not identical to aesthetic equality in literature. As Rancière reminds us, such a possibility would also depend on transforming our image of democracy from that of a process of

conflict and consensual resolution toward that of dissent. Looking at fields of rationalities rather than the unity of science is thus crucial to thinking about what democracy might mean in the context of scientific modernity. As a first step, we would have to look at *genbun itchi* not in terms of massive rationalization or unitary modernization but in terms of formation of fields of rationality in the context of democratization and the emergence of anonymity.

Studies of sciences and literatures in Japan have already begun to break the stronghold of the unity of science, the nation, and the West that remains grounded in the unity of science. Studies of literature and of literary theory, for instance, have begun to build strong associations between specific fields of technoscientific rationality and specific writers or literary movements: Shimazaki Toson, naturalism, and regimes of hygiene (Bourdaghs 2003); Mori Ôgai, bacteriology, and historical fiction (Lamarre 1998); literary and evolutionary theories (Ueda 2008); Sôseki and new psychology (Murphy 2004; Lamarre 2008); Miyazaki Kenji, post-Newtonian physics, and ecology (Golley 2009); popular fictions and criminology (Kawana 2005; Seaman 2004); and Abe Kôbô and scientific classification (Bolton 2009), to name some salient instances. But if the "disunification" project remains difficult, it is because the real experience of the externality of sciences in Japan culminated in a technocratic state (Mizuno 2009) whose impact was subsequently disavowed in the post-war era of renewed prosperity by situating it safely in a militaristic past. Moreover, to embark on such a project, we would have to address the ways in which the two modalities that are frequently imagined to counter modern technocracy – the non-Cartesian and the non-Western – are actually coeval and frequently complicit with it. We then begin to see the sciences not exclusively in terms of sovereignty and subjectivity, or of disciplines and disciplinization, but also in terms of the transnational and technopolitical, beyond the comforting frames of Japan versus the West.

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