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What Is Modernity?
Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi

edited, translated, and with an introduction
by Richard F. Calichman



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something like differences in infrastructure, that is to say, to the distinct principles of development (or expansion) of both society and consciousness. Yet perhaps he is pointing to something even deeper than this, what might be seen as the difference between those who are aware of their status as *slaves* and those who are so *slavish* as to refuse this awareness. It seems to me that Lu Xun regarded Japanese literature as *slave* literature, for its aspirations were those of the *slave* becoming the master. This is what I sense in his use of the words “differences in national conditions.” The extreme *slavishness* of Japanese literature lies in its inferiority complex, as evidenced by the fact that, from the Nara period onward, Japanese culture failed to ever free itself from Chinese influence, and has indeed never even become conscious of that failure. This *slavishness* can also be seen in its dependency upon others, for it has sought (in vain) to overcome this Chinese influence precisely by incorporating European culture. Japanese literature possesses a deep-seated instinct that makes it fear independence and freedom, and that moreover blinds it to its own *slave* nature. We can see this, for example, in the writing of the word “France” in Chinese characters as opposed to *katakana*, in the rather blithe or unthinking daily use of both Japanese dictionaries and Chinese-Japanese dictionaries, and finally in the unwitting contempt for China implicit in so-called “Sinophilia.” What must be studied here is the different kind of backwardness characteristic of that Japanese literature that sees Lu Xun as backward, despite the fact that he freed himself from *slavery*.

In his later years Lu Xun wrote several pieces in Japanese where, in both form and content, he appealed to the Japanese people. Yet Japanese literature never responded to these writings, despite the fact that Lu was very popular at this time. It seems to me that Lu Xun is necessary for Japanese literature, but this necessity is such as to in fact finally make him unnecessary. Without this latter aspect, it becomes meaningless to read him. What I fear is that Japanese literature will turn Lu Xun into an authority, that it will transform this poet of the people into an icon or idol of bureaucratic culture. This danger is a real one. Indeed, have I not myself here considered Lu Xun simply in terms of a Lu Xun type?

(January 1948)

Chapter 2

WHAT IS MODERNITY? (THE CASE OF JAPAN AND CHINA)

The Meaning of Modernity

Lu Xun is the founder of modern literature. It is impossible, regardless of the conditions, to say that Lu Xun precedes modern literature. (Let us here keep the *ambiguity* of the word “modernity” so as to avoid a method that begins through conceptual determination.) Although there is much of the premodern within Lu, this very presence of the premodern means that he can only be called modern. This point becomes clear in comparing post-Lu Xun and pre-Lu Xun writers. Several types of groundbreaking pioneers existed before Lu, but they were all isolated from history. Because of this isolation they were never considered pioneers. It was only after Lu’s emergence that it became possible for them to be so considered. In other words, Lu Xun’s emergence signified the rewriting of history. For such phenomena as the birth of new people and the ensuing total renewal of consciousness take place historically, whereas the awareness of these things necessarily comes after a historical era has passed.

Oriental Modernity

It must first be recognized that Oriental modernity is the result of European coercion, or is something derived from that result. Because the term “modernity” designates a historical era, it would be confusing not to use this word in a

historical sense. Civil society existed in the Orient from long ago, prior to the invasion of Europe. The genealogy of bourgeois literature can be traced back to the Song period (and perhaps even to the Tang period). Particularly at the time of the Ming Dynasty, civil rights had in certain respects extended to the point where bourgeois literature was able to forge a type of free man that was virtually akin to the Renaissance man. (Ming bourgeois literature had a profound influence on Japanese Edo-period literature.) Nonetheless, it cannot be said that this bourgeois literature is immediately related to the literature of today. While present-day literature undeniably stands upon this legacy, it in a sense also began by rejecting that legacy. Or rather, what allowed the legacy of bourgeois literature to be recognized *qua* legacy, that is to say, what made tradition into tradition, was a certain self-consciousness. The direct moment that produced this self-consciousness was the invasion of Europe.

When Europe brought over to the Orient its modes of production, social institutions, and the human consciousness that accompanies these, new things were born in the Orient that had never previously existed. Although Europe did not bring these to the Orient in order to give birth to those new things (today, of course, the situation is different), that was the result. I do not know if the European invasion of the Orient was based upon the will of capital, a speculative spirit of adventure, the Puritan spirit of pioneering, or yet another instinct for self-expansion. In any event, it is certain that there existed in Europe something fundamental that supported this instinct, making the invasion of the Orient inevitable. Perhaps this something has been deeply intertwined with the essence of what is called "modernity." Modernity is the self-recognition of Europe as seen within history, that regarding of itself as distinct from the feudalistic, which Europe gained in the process of liberating itself from the feudal (a process that involved the emergence of free capital in the realm of production and the formation of personality *qua* autonomous and equal individuals with respect to human beings). Therefore, it can be said that Europe is first possible only in this history, and that history itself is possible only in this Europe. History is not an empty form of time. It includes an infinite number of instants in which one struggles against obstacles so that the self may be itself, without which both the self and history would be lost. Simply being Europe does not make Europe Europe. The various facts of history teach that Europe barely maintains itself through the tension of its incessant self-renewals. That fundamental thesis of the spirit of modernity that states that "the doubting self cannot be doubted" is undeniably rooted in a psychology of people who are located (who have located themselves) in such a situation as this.

Let us acknowledge that it is Europe's essential self-expansiveness (leaving aside the question of what the true form of that self-expansiveness is) that, on the

one hand, revealed itself in the movement to invade the Orient (and that, on the other, produced its unlikely child, the United States). This is the manifestation of the movement of European self-preservation. Europe's capital seeks to expand markets while its missionaries are committed to expanding the kingdom of God. Through incessant tension, Europeans attempt to be their own selves. This constant activity to be their own selves makes it impossible for them to simply stop at themselves. They must risk the danger of losing the self in order for the self to be itself. Once liberated, people cannot return to their originally closed shells; they can only preserve themselves within activity. This is precisely what is called the spirit of capitalism. It grasps the self in the course of its expansion through time and space. The notion of progress, and hence the idea of historicism, first came into being in modern Europe. These were never placed in question until the end of the nineteenth century.

In order for Europe to be Europe, it was forced to invade the Orient. This was Europe's inevitable destiny, which accompanied its self-liberation. Its self was confirmed inversely by encountering the heterogeneous. Although Europe's longing for the Orient existed from long ago (or rather, Europe itself was originally a kind of mixture), the movement that took the form of invasion occurred only with modernity. Europe's invasion of the Orient resulted in the phenomenon of Oriental capitalism, and this signified the equivalence between European self-preservation and self-expansion. For Europe this was accordingly conceptualized as the progress of world history and the triumph of reason. The form of invasion was first conquest, followed by demands for the opening of markets and the transformation to such things as guarantees of human rights and freedom of religious belief, loans, economic assistance, and support for educational and liberation movements. These very transformations symbolized the progress of the spirit of rationalism. From within this movement were born the distinctive characteristics of modernity: a spirit of advancement that aims at the infinite approach toward greater perfection; the positivism, empiricism, and idealism that supports this spirit; and quantitative science that regards everything as homogeneous.

It was natural that in the eyes of Europe, for which everything is homogeneous, the movement of European self-realization was regarded in terms of such objective principles as the influx of higher culture into lower cultures, the assimilation of such lower cultures, or the natural adjustment of the gaps between historical stages. The European invasion of the Orient produced resistance there, a resistance that was of course reflected in Europe itself. Yet even this could not change the thoroughgoing rationalist conviction that all things can ultimately be objectified and extracted. Resistance was calculated, and it was clear that through resistance the Orient was destined to increasingly Euro-

peanize. Oriental resistance was merely the essential element that made world history all the more complete.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century a qualitative change occurred within the movement of European self-realization. This change was perhaps related to Oriental resistance, for it occurred when Europe's invasion of the Orient was nearly complete. The internal contradictions that prompted Europe to its self-expansion came to be recognized. At the same time that world history was approaching its completion with the comprehension of the Orient, the contradictions of this history surfaced through the mediation of the heterogeneity contained in the Orient. It was recognized that the contradictions that led to progress were the same contradictions that prevented progress. And when this realization occurred, European unity vanished from within. The chief causes of European dissolution can be seen from various sides. The result of this dissolution, however, was the emergence from within Europe of three worlds that opposed Europe at the same time that they opposed one another. The contradictions of capital (i.e., the material base) led to the negation of capital itself, as manifested by resistance in Russia. The New World, which was previously a colony of Europe, exceeded the European principle by gaining its independence. It then opposed Europe by becoming ultra-European. And third is Oriental resistance: through its continued resistance, the Orient appears to have produced non-European things that are mediated by, while at the same time exceeding, the European.

Oriental resistance was reflected in Europe. Nothing can escape Europe's eyes insofar as it exists within the *framework* of modernity. At each crisis in which Europe becomes conscious of its internal contradictions, those things that rise to the surface of its consciousness are always recollections of the Orient that exists latently within it. Europe's nostalgia for the Orient is one of its contradictions, and it is forced to think this Orient the more explicit these contradictions become. Orientalists have always existed, but they were never more apparent than during the crisis known as the *fin de siècle*. This is the crisis of European dissolution, which has continued up to the present day. Although Europe has comprehended the Orient, it seems to have felt that something remains that cannot be fully comprehend. This is something like the root of European anxiety. I have a feeling that it might be the continued resistance of the Orient which provokes that anxiety.

However, it is open to question whether Europe has interpreted this situation as I imagine it. Perhaps it has not. In the final analysis, the Orient is for Europe the rear: it cannot be seen with the eyes. Just as I cannot understand Europe in the same way that I do Russia (my understanding passes through the school of Futabatei Shimei), so Europe can only understand the non-European half of

Russia through its European half. Although the Russian Revolution was a product of Europe's own contradictions, Europe feared it on account of that half of Russia which it could not see. Analogously, this quality has forced Europe to recognize the dominance of the United States (i.e., pure Europe). It is certain that today's problem of American-Soviet opposition is in certain respects a more advanced reproduction of the historical legacy of the European opposition between Europe and the Orient.

Regardless of how Europe has interpreted it, Oriental resistance has continued, and it is through this resistance that the Orient has modernized itself. The history of resistance is the history of modernization, and there is no modernization that does not pass through resistance. It was through the Orient's resistance that Europe recognized its own triumph in the course of comprehending the Orient within world history. This triumph was conceived in terms of cultural, ethnic-national, and economic superiority. The Orient recognized its defeat within this same process. Defeat is the result of resistance, and there is no defeat without resistance. Hence the continuation of resistance is the continuation of the sense of defeat. Europe advanced one step while the Orient retreated one step. Retreat went hand in hand with resistance. For Europe, this movement of advance and retreat was conceived of as the progress of world history and the triumph of reason. Defeat was decisive when this way of thinking came to act upon the Orient through its resistance, and this at the time of its continued sense of defeat. In other words, the Orient recognized defeat within its own sense of defeat.

A certain development was required before the Orient recognized defeat within its own sense of defeat, however, the condition of which was its continued resistance. Defeat takes place only when there is resistance; but even when there is resistance, the sense of defeat is recognized only when that resistance is continued. Defeat is a one-time occurrence. There is no direct relation between this one-time fact of defeat and the recognition of it. Rather it is often the case that one is led to forget the fact of defeat, resulting in a secondary defeat at the hands of the self—a defeat which is therefore all the more decisive. Here there is of course no consciousness of one's sense of defeat. Such consciousness arises through a secondary resistance that rejects this secondary defeat. It is here that resistance becomes double. For there is both resistance against defeat and resistance against the lack of consciousness, or the forgetting, of defeat. This is also both resistance against reason and resistance against the nonrecognition of the triumph of reason. The triumph of reason must be recognized, but this can only occur through such double resistance. What Europe conceived of as the triumph of reason was secured with its own step forward, which itself took place on the basis of Oriental resistance. Europe is only Europe in its incessant tension, just as reason can only be reason in its step forward. It is obvious that such

an advancing reason cannot be reason in its step back. If this were possible, however, then it would not be true reason but merely the reflected image thereof. Hence if reason were to reveal itself, it would do so only in resistance, that is, in the rejection of this image. In other words, the revealing of reason would take place only in an absolute sense of defeat. (What can be said here of reason can also be said of freedom and consciousness in general. Furthermore, I suspect that what can be said of consciousness can also be said of matter, but I am not sure on this point.)

If we suppose the existence of a third eye that was neither European nor Oriental, Europe's step forward and the Orient's step backward (this relation is essentially one of heads and tails) would be seen as a single phenomenon. It would be seen as a natural phenomenon equivalent to that of mixing together liquids *A* and *B*. This is precisely the concept of the fusion of eastern and western culture (and the varieties thereof). This concept is abstract in its abstraction of values. But even apart from this, our very supposition of a third vantage point represents a European form of thought. It is a product created from within Europe's advance. Nevertheless, as Europe is Europe only in its incessant tension, it can be said here that Europe is Europe only in the advance that exists within the equivalence between European advance and Oriental retreat. Hence this European form of thought is valid only within the instant of that advance. But this thought is conceived of as truth by virtue of the fact that the instant is conceived of as permanent. This concept of the permanence of the instant comes from the effort (i.e., the movement) to make it permanent. In other words, it comes from the instinct for self-preservation according to which Europe desires to be itself. It goes without saying that this concept is invalid within that retreating Orient in the context of the equivalence between European advance and Oriental retreat. As with consciousness in general, such a European form of thought is naturally reflected in the retreating Orient. But what is reflected is an image, itself unproductive. In the mixing of liquids *A* and *B*, consciousness on the part of liquid *A* would not allow it to arrive at the concept of its mixing with liquid *B*. If this were the Orient, it would merely sense its own self-loss.

The Occident and the Orient

Europe and the Orient are oppositional notions, just as are the notions of the modern and the feudal. Indeed, there are differences in the categories of time and space between these two pairs. I shall leave these points aside, however, as my field is neither logic nor historical philosophy. Such conceptual understanding, and hence the ability to judge these formal differences, first of all

belong to modern Europe. In other words, they are products of continued tension. The Orient essentially lacks the ability not only to understand Europe but also to understand itself. What understands the Orient, and so brings it to realization, are those European elements within Europe. What makes the Orient possible is situated in Europe. Not only does Europe become possible in Europe, the Orient also becomes possible there. If Europe is represented by the notion of reason, then both reason and unreason (i.e., nature) would be European. Everything belongs to Europe.

As I have written, the understanding that Europe and the Orient encountered each other at a certain spatiotemporal point—thereby initiating the movement (or mixture) of advance and retreat—is an abstract one, for it supposes the presence of a transcendent, or immobile, vantage point. However, such abstraction cannot be described as foreign to the concept of truth. In the Europe of infinite advance, that which was previously outside history is consumed within it through European self-expansion, thus becoming historical. Europe gives content to the abstract through its transformation of history. Although abstraction represents a risk for thought, it is not nonsense. As with scientific hypotheses, it becomes true if confirmed by experimentation. Or rather, it might be more correct to say that such risk originates in the anticipation that this abstraction will be confirmed. Even if something exists outside of time and space, it would no longer be transcendent if time or space were to extend that far. Hence even fictitious things are potentially not fictitious, as they may someday become actual. For such things are in keeping with the course of movement. (Here I am thinking of the simplest types of East–West cultural discourse, but the same principle holds for more complex cases, which merely come with various additions.)

Thus of course the image produced in the Europe of advancement is not produced in the retreating Orient (within the equivalence between advance and retreat). Nor can the risk of thought that is abstraction be produced in the Orient. The equivalence between advance and retreat is instantaneous. This is the instant of tension in which Europe becomes Europe (and in which the Orient disappears as the Orient). The instant is a limit, a point within history that lacks extension, or rather it represents the place (which is not an expanse) from which history emerges. Hence it is in fact wrong to describe the instant in terms of that movement in which advance equals retreat. Because all consciousness emerges from the instant, however, even this image of equivalence between advance and retreat naturally comes from it—if derivatively. Thus this image is itself European.

But where is the guarantee that this image is European? What is the basis of judgment according to which something is said to be European or Oriental? Isn't truth universal? In the final analysis, won't my words lead to a kind of

agnosticism or relativism? I too am struck by such questions, questions that are perhaps related to issues of epistemology or psychology. But I am ignorant of these fields, and so cannot pursue matters in their direction. I recognize the importance of this questioning, but my own task lies elsewhere. I am simply trying to answer the questions that have been posed to me (i.e., my own present questions) based on what I know experientially, using my literary intuition as a key. Or rather, I am not so much trying to answer these questions as to merely grope my way toward them.

However, if I were asked whether truth is relative, it seems that now, that is, in my present circumstances, I would have to say that it is relative. I know this experientially. What is true for me is not true for officials and scholars, and what is true for them (or what I believe to be true for them) is often not true for me. I know this from experience, but upon reading Lu Xun I found that he sensed the same things, although with much greater precision than myself. This confirmed the substance of my experience, providing me with a key to answer my questions.

It was on this path that I encountered Lu Xun. My encounter with him was an event, one that I shall not, however, go into here (although thinking about this encounter will also provide a key). In any case, what I am thinking of here and now is that my judgment on the relativity of truth might itself be European. I do not know this. Previously I wrote the words "to know," but this is not a knowing in which I could assert that truth is relative. It is through the act of knowing that I do not know. I feel as if I understand what Lu Xun means when he repeatedly writes, "I do not know anything."

It seems that in the Europe of infinite advance truth itself is developmental, and I suspect that truth consists only of those things that develop. Hence I suspect that truth does not appear as such in the Orient (as situated within the equivalence between advance and retreat). This can be understood when viewed historically.

In Europe not only matter moves but spirit as well. Spirit is not the shadow of matter, nor is matter the shadow of spirit; rather it seems that each is a substance in the sense of a subject of self-movement. The self-movement of spirit certainly seems recognizable, as there is an incessant activity of going beyond oneself, such that no concepts ever stop at the place of concepts. Rather they are advanced like chess pieces. But it seems that not only chess pieces advance, as the very board that sets the pieces in motion advances alongside them. Although this advancing is not uniform, those pieces that stop will always begin moving again. There is absolutely no final stoppage. This is true of all pieces, such as reason, freedom, humanity, and society. Perhaps the concept of progress burst out of this movement in the form of self-representation.

No such self-movement of spirit existed in the Orient; that is, spirit itself did

not exist. Of course there was something resembling spirit that existed prior to modernity, as for example in Confucianism and Buddhism, but this was not spirit in the European sense of development. However, even this disappeared with the advent of modernity. Proof of this can be seen by viewing the history of words in Japan, for words here either disappear or *fall into decay*. The word "civilization" becomes the name of a sponge cake while that of "culture" becomes the name of an apartment or a cooking pot. Such apartments *decay* from ferroconcrete to wood, they never advance from wood to ferroconcrete. It is true that new words are born one after another (while new words become necessary inasmuch as words *fall into decay*, they at the same time cause the *decay* of old words), but this is due to the fact that they are originally rootless. Thus while it appears that new words are born, in fact they are not. Do words exist that have sprouted new shoots through growth and ripening, splitting apart naturally from the weight of their content? Of course there are some words that have neither disappeared nor *fallen into decay*. Yet a close look reveals that these words have been nourished externally, and live only as long as such nourishment is not cut off. Such words are not productive in themselves.

Given that words are the representation of consciousness, doesn't the fact of their rootlessness mean that spirit itself is not developmental? Doesn't this mean that culture is unproductive (and hence not culture)? Even though I raise these questions, I lack the answers to them. My questions are old, and many people have answered them. There have been people who argue that new words have roots, while others argue that they do not. The former locate these roots in the various substancelike things that they bring. While I might find this argument persuasive, it seems to me that roots themselves do not move. The latter attempt to transplant the various roots that they introduce externally, but I have yet to see a case where transplanted roots actually grow. In addition, there have been those who argue in favor of growing words from their native soil since transplanting is unsuccessful. But this soil can only be introduced externally; no sprouts have yet emerged from it.

Repetition and Development

This can be said not only for history but also for individuals. While there is a difference between historical laws and the laws of individual spirit, a certain relation exists between them (although I am uncertain as to the nature of this relation). There is thus a relation between the absence of historical development and the absence of individual development. Few writers in Japan have transcended themselves, projecting out from their work. Even more notable than

their small numbers, however, is that such people rarely emerge in history: they appear and then disappear. Darkness must be strong in order for light to be light, but in Japan the border between light and darkness is *ambiguous*. (This is related to the problem of individuality, but even if I began from this point I would still come across the place where I discovered Lu Xun.) Naturally there do exist things that resemble development. Development exists within fixed coordinates, but there is no development of the coordinates themselves. Writers are generally faithful to their concepts (in the sense of sincerity among I-novelists) but careless in their language (in which case, concepts themselves cease to develop). Although contradictions emerge with development, they are rare, in history or in individuals. Hence that which appears to be development is in fact repetition; it is merely a shadow cast by some hypothetical substance.

The method by which one poses questions such as "What is culture?" or "What is spirit?," raising then certain representations of culture and spirit and setting off in search of the things to which these representations correspond (turning back if they are not found), already indicates the direction of spirit in which one anticipates an entity in the outside world and conceptualizes it as something given. This is perhaps the reverse of the direction of European movement: the direction of movement itself is reverse. Here is the relation in which what advances on the one hand retreats on the other.

Within this movement of advance and retreat, it is natural that the concept of advance is created from within the course of advance, or rather that spirit itself is constituted in an advancing manner. Within the course of retreat, however, there is naturally no self-consciousness. For within the course of advance only that spirit which is constituted in an advancing manner (i.e., true spirit) is productive. In the course of retreat, spirit does not emerge as such. Rather it is generally the case that what arises in the course of retreat is the consciousness of advance. For the concept of advance formed within the course of advance permeates retreat due to its advancing nature. Advance is easily accepted in those places where there was originally no spirit. This unproductive and fixed concept is there seen as something substantial.

However, there is a coming to consciousness of retreat in these same places. The concept of retreat also emerges from within advance, as the opposite notion that projects advance upon its counterpart. Hence the concept of retreat correlates with that of advance. Yet when this concept of retreat is accepted into the course of retreat it loses that correlativity, such that each concept becomes fixed as an isolated substance. In the course of retreat, the two substantial concepts of advance and retreat coexist without mediation, and hence without contradiction and its consequent unification. Here lies the source of that *slave* sentiment which lacks subjectivity in the sense of the coexistence of a superiority and inferiority complex.

Such a phenomenon seems common among the Oriental nations, as well as among the backward nations of Europe. The difference is merely one of degree, since there exists neither a pure Europe nor a pure Orient. However, the phenomenon emerges most clearly (perhaps it appears this way only for me) in the case of Japan. In this sense, Japan is the most Oriental of the nations in the Orient. In another sense, of course, Japan is the least Oriental of these nations. This "other sense" does not refer to any quantitative comparison of productivity, as is often claimed. Rather I am thinking of the notion of resistance in the Orient, and in Japan's case resistance was scarce. This scant resistance is related to the remarkable speed of capitalist development in Japan. But it is also tied up with the fact that what appears to be progress is at the same time *decadence*, and what appears to be the least Oriental is at the same time the most Oriental.

Resistance in the Orient is the historical moment at which Europe becomes Europe. Without Oriental resistance Europe would be unable to realize itself. This point can be understood in the context of individual consciousness, for consciousness emerges in resistance. The existence of A depends upon its exclusion of non-A. Europe's invasion of the Orient could not take place unilaterally. Movement or activity means that the self changes the other at the same time that it is itself changed. Movement involves range, and is perceived through this range, but it is not continuous like a stream. Movement is mediated by resistance, or is perceived within resistance. Resistance gives rise to movement and is thus the moment that completes history.

In saying this, however, I do not know what resistance is; I am unable to fully penetrate into its meaning. I am unaccustomed to philosophical thought. All discussion would end if I were told that my thinking had in fact nothing to do with resistance. It is simply that I feel something within this notion, something that I cannot extract and logically construct. This inability is due to my own inadequacies; determining the meaning of resistance is not impossible as such. But I don't even know whether it is impossible in the first place. Ultimately, it seems possible. This cannot be known until one actually attempts such a determination, and so I can only assume that it is possible provided I do not abandon my efforts. And yet the realization of this possibility is so distant that I feel afraid, and I feel guilty for it. For me, the rationalist conviction that all things can be extracted is frightening. Or rather, what is frightening is the pressure of that irrational will that underlies this rationalist conviction. To me, this irrational will is European. Previously I lived without understanding my fearfulness for what it was. Yet I felt anxious as I sensed that many thinkers and writers in Japan—with the exception of a few poets—did not feel what I felt, that they were not afraid of rationalism, and that what they called rationalism (including materialism) did not appear to me as such. It was at this time that I encountered Lu Xun. I saw Lu

desperately enduring the same fears that I felt. What is more, I found in his resistance a key to understanding my own feelings. It was then that I began to think about resistance. If I were asked what resistance is, I can only reply that it is something found in Lu Xun. Such resistance is either scarce or absent in Japan. From that point I began to compare Japanese modernity with Chinese modernity.

I came to conceive of this problem in terms of the general expression “Oriental resistance” since I felt that what was to be found in Lu Xun also existed in other Oriental nations, and from this I could deduce the Orient’s general nature. However, I do not believe that such a general Oriental nature exists as a substance. For me, the argument over whether the Orient exists or not is meaningless, it is a regressive argument that takes place only in the minds of scholars. The real problem is that of the intellectual makeup of scholars, for whom this argument is conceived of as a matter of objectivist scholarship. This itself seems to symbolize the history of *decadence* in the Japan that belongs to the concept of the Orient, and hence also the history of *decadence* within scholarship in general. Actually, in terms of practice, such scholarship was and remains very forgiving of the militarists’ self-interests in the name of scholarship. (See the defense arguments of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial.) Like other concepts, the concept of the Orient may be understood as progressive at a certain period in Japan’s modernization (e.g., the time of the *Oriental Free Press*), but it fell straight into *decadence* thereafter. Naturally this *decadence* goes unnoticed by the subject of spirit who remains caught up within it. This subject becomes conscious of it only upon the projection of that (moving or active) concept of the Orient which resides in Europe. Yet this recognition does not lead to self-knowledge in the sense of understanding one’s own *decadence* within the progress of the other. For there is here no resistance, that is to say, there is no wish to preserve the self (the self itself does not exist). The absence of resistance means that Japan is not Oriental, but at the same time the absence of the wish for self-preservation (the absence of the self) means that Japan is not European. That is to say, Japan is nothing.

However, it must be said that the inquiry into the Orient’s existence does in fact emerge from a kind of resistance, as there is here an aspect of defiance against any concept of the Orient as self-evident. This aspect is correct *qua* scholarship, and was thus unpopular with the militarists. Yet when it sought to establish itself as scholarship, in which the thesis of the Orient’s existence was opposed to that of its nonexistence, i.e., when it became a method to compare extractions, this aspect *fell into decadence*. For such scholarship represents the sole scientific method, and in Japan this method can only *fall into decadence*. Here I am not being sarcastic or paradoxical, as I have no time for this. What scholars call progress in scholarship is for me the *decadence* of scholarship—

they simply cannot see this because they wear the spectacles of progress. Were they to remove these spectacles, they would see that progress is *decadence*. When concepts are extracted, they are already rotting. For those who think otherwise, please show me which concepts in modern Japanese history have survived without rotting. Which scholarship has not *fallen into decadence*? Which literature has not *fallen into decadence*? The history of modern Japanese literature is the history of man’s *decadence*. Were this not so, why were several poets destroyed for their rejection of this *decadence*?

Scholars for whom science consists in the extracting of concepts are merely situated within the concept of science. Writers for whom literature consists in the extracting of characters, and who believe that characters are ultimately extractable, are simply forcing the latter within the concept of literature. They do not think of the place that accommodates characters and allows them to move. For if they did, their scholarship and literature would no longer be realized. Hence it is the very fidelity to scholarship and literature that distances a person from scholarship and literature. In becoming a scholar in Japan, one may question everything except the final question—for if this were questioned, one would no longer be a scholar. Even if writers strip a character naked, they must leave on the final layer of clothing, for the character would disappear if they removed it. That is to say, the character is not originally present.

When in Europe a concept become discordant (i.e., contradictory) with reality (it always becomes contradictory), a movement occurs in which accord is sought by the overcoming of that contradiction, that is to say, by the development of place. Hence it is the concept itself that develops. However, when in Japan a concept becomes discordant with reality (this is not movement, and so not a contradiction), one abandons former principles and begins searching for others. Concepts are deserted and principles are abandoned. Writers abandon words and search for others. The more faithful these writers are to scholarship and literature, the more fervently they abandon the old and incorporate the new. Thus in Japan the failure of liberalism leads to totalitarianism, and the failure of totalitarianism to communism. Or again, the failure of Stalin leads to Mao Zedong, and the failure of Mao Zedong to De Gaulle. The failure of the materialist dialectic leads to the self-identity of absolute contradiction, and the failure of absolute contradiction to existentialism. Hence the following sentiment: “Where Tōjō Hideki failed, another may succeed—perhaps *me*.” Such things constantly fail, yet these failures themselves never fail. “Failure is the mother of success, so if you fail, just start over again.” “If your house burns down, just rebuild it, for brooding won’t lead anywhere.” “Better to have another child than to mourn the one who has died.” “What’s the use of pursuing war crimes after the defeat?” There is no failure of Japanese ideology, for it perpet-

ually succeeds by perpetually failing. It is an infinite repetition, which has been conceived of as progress. Indeed, there is no better word to describe it. Europeans are astonished at the speed of Japan's modernization, while the Japanese are astonished at how little damage they sustained in the war. Lu Xun said that even if we reject everything Japanese, we must at least study their "diligence." Indeed, there is no better word to describe it. It is just that Japan's progress is the *slave's* progress, its diligence is the *slave's* diligence.

Japanese culture is progressive and the Japanese people are diligent: this is indeed true. History has revealed it. The unconscious psychological tendency of the Japanese, in which the "new" becomes a standard of values and is seen as equivalent to what is "correct" or "right," cannot be understood apart from the progressive nature of Japanese culture. Japanese diligence manifests itself in the constant search for the new and the constant attempt to become new. Hence progress in scholarship is represented by the search for newer theories, while progress in literature is seen as the discovery of newer schools. Few peoples are as diligent as the Japanese in seeking out the new. There is present in Japan a logic of the new according to which the discordance of old theories or schools with reality is explained by the fact that the former have grown old: "They can no longer adapt to reality, and so we must get new ones. When something new becomes old, it must be exchanged for something even newer. This is the basis of fidelity to scholarship." The more conscientious people become, the more they think in this manner, for it is the conscientious who notice such discordance with reality. "Reality develops," they argue, "and so theories must develop as well." This "must" is a demand to "search" for new theories, which derives from the anticipation that new theories will be given. Such anticipation is based upon a psychological tendency formed within an environment in which new theories were given in the past, are still given in the present, and will continue to be given in the future. In other words, this is a problem of structure. Hence it appears self-evident that new theories will be given, and it is impossible to conceive of a state in which they would not be. Of course there do exist elements that oppose the new and reject the notion that new theories are to be given. But these come from the resignation to lag behind reality; they are the products of the desire to chase after reality. Idealists desperately chase after (the concept of) reality, abandoning one after another those concepts that no longer conform to reality; whereas the realists resign themselves to lagging behind reality, and simply search for theories that explain the reasons for this lagging. But neither the idealists nor the realists attempt to pull reality back to themselves. They do not try to bridge the discord between reality and concept by pulling reality back to themselves. Nor do they think about whether such a project is even possible in the first place. This possibility cannot be determined without trying, but such a

notion strikes them as foolish. For these idealists (including materialists), reality is something absolute and sacred, it is to be worshipped at the altar of authority. These idealists slumber within the concept that reality can be changed. For those who lack the experience of ever having changed reality, even this concept becomes a cushion for peaceful sleep. They see reality as something substantial, the infinite approach to which is scientific and rational. And indeed it is scientific and rational. It is simply that this science and rationalism belong entirely to the *slave*.

Honor Student Culture

Scholarship and literature, in short, culture made up of the products of human spirit, are conceived of by idealists as existing outside, as things that must be chased after and captured. Idealists are extremely zealous in their efforts to capture these. "Overtake, outrun!": this is the rallying cry of the champions of Japanese culture. "We must not lose, take the lead." They score points like honor students. In fact, those who used to be honor students in school became the champions of Japanese culture, where they educated the next generation by means of the honor student system and honor student spirit. Japanese culture is thus structurally an honor student culture. The bright students gathered in military academies and imperial universities, after which they ruled Japan. The slow students were no match for them, for they possessed an inferiority complex that in fact made them act more like these bright students than the bright students themselves. In Japan, private universities are more like national universities than the national universities themselves. Fukuzawa Yukichi's tradition had already disappeared while he was still alive. Hence a pyramid-shaped honor student culture was created that reflected the pyramid-shaped social structure known as "hierarchy." The top of this pyramid grew increasingly higher, and the bright students were proud: "Japanese armaments are the greatest in the world. Japanese cotton spinning is the greatest in the world. Japanese medicine is the greatest in the world. And Japanese ethnicity is the greatest in the world. We champions of Japanese culture who constructed this superior culture are qualitatively different from the common people (i.e., the backward students). We are the chosen. It is our mission to guide these backward people, just as it is our mission to guide the backward Oriental nations." Such thinking represents the logical development of the honor student complex. The honor students are thus subjectively correct. From this a conclusion emerges that reflects their dogmatic makeup: "Since our superiority derives from the assimilation of European culture, the backward common people of course will, and *should*, accept our cul-

tural charity.” This assertion is also subjectively correct. If the people refuse such charity, the honor students ascribe this to their stupidity and inability to incorporate superior things; it is due to their *stubborn* and conservative nature. This kind of leadership consciousness can be found not only among soldiers and politicians but within the labor movement as well. It isn’t just the soldiers and politicians who try to pull the people along with them; the liberation movements do the same through their honor student psychology. Such is the honor student nature of Japanese culture. But this nature is also represented by the fact that it was the imperial universities that produced the most radical thinking in Japan; that it was the champions of the student movement who succeeded as “ideological” prosecutors; and finally, that it was the members of the left who collaborated in wartime operations and formed the backbone of right-wing organizations. The roots of Japanese fascism lie in the very structure of Japanese culture, which includes within it both the left and the right.

Japanese culture is superior: this is absolutely true. It was built by superior champions and so must be superior. The honor students consider it superior, and so the people (the backward students) must agree. However, a notion exists among these honor students that Japanese culture is an imitation, without originality. But since, as they argue, imitation is in its own way superior, the “imitationist” camp is in the end identical with the “superiorist” camp. The honor students claim that Japan is capable of imitation precisely because of its superiority, or again that imitation itself is creative, i.e., superior. The people (the backward students) are persuaded by this argument. Yet the honor students admit that within this superior Japanese culture elements exist that are not superior: these are the backward students. Japanese culture would be perfect if it consisted only of honor students, and whatever imperfections it has can be explained by the presence of the backward students. Regardless of the honor students’ efforts, the backward students lower the general cultural level. How unfortunate, they say! The people (the backward students) react to these words with feelings of contrition toward the honor students for causing such decline. When the honor students achieve victory in international competition, the backward students share in the honor. They must cheer for the honor students, and they will. “The honor students will win because they’re superior. And yet they lost. How can this be? They lost because the backward students pulled them down. The backward students *stood in the way* of victory. The loss took place with the backward students, not with the honor students. It is they who bear responsibility for the wartime defeat.” Such is the logic of honor student culture.

Hence the substitution of players. But those who were substituted in were also honor students, for only honor students are allowed to play. This was simply a substitution of imperial university honor students for those from the mili-

tary academies. “While it’s true that the former honor students failed, this was not because they were honor students but because their methods were wrong: they forgot to take into account the backward students. The loss can be attributed to the inferior students, that is to say, the honor students failed to take them into account.” The new honor students try to redeem that failure by bringing the backward students closer to them, and the people (the backward students) can only thank them for this favor: “Even the honor students lost, but they lost because of us. They showed us favor, and we are guilty for letting them down. How can we not be grateful? We must try harder, we must obey the commands of the honor students and draw closer to them so as not to lose in the future. It would be shameful if we don’t raise the general average of this superior Japanese culture.” Such is the educational spirit of honor student culture.

“Indeed! Education will succeed. The backward students learned a lesson from the defeat and will now follow the example of the honor students and become clever. Honor student culture will flourish. There is no defeat for Japanese ideology, for it represents a superior spiritual force that turns even defeat into victory. Regard the superiority of Japanese culture! Long live Japanese culture!”

What if we consider that the wartime defeat was attributable not to the inferior but rather to the superior aspects of this superior culture? What would happen if we rejected this culture? What would happen if progress itself were seen as *decadent* and rejected? “Don’t be absurd,” the honor students would say. “That is unthinkable. Why do you insist on playing the fool and let progress slip by? The backward students would simply become more backward. It was we who saved these students by keeping the defeat in check. We rallied those people who gave in to despair and participated in strikes and black-market transactions by providing them with the goal of a cultural nation instead of militarism. But your calls for rejecting progress and the superior culture would simply make Japan into an uncultural nation instead. Our good will and hard work would then all be for naught, so stop being so reactionary!” And yet the backward students would protest as well: “We *are* fools. The war was lost because non-honor students were made into players. We cheered for these players and despaired when they lost. But we finally took heart when the real honor students told us that those players were *fake*. These honor students told us that we must all become honor students ourselves, and they were right. We must now turn over a new leaf and start studying. Please do not treat us like backward students, for we have severed our ties to those *fake* honor students who used to treat us like this.”

Indeed you’re right, you backward students! I’d like to join you, if it’s all right, for I think your views are absolutely correct. This is the only way to live in

Japan's honor student culture: backward students depending upon the honor students. If the backward students opposed the honor students, they would not only be attacked by them; they would also be isolated from the other backward students. As Lu Xun writes, "The most painful thing in life is to wake up from a dream and find no way out. Dreamers are fortunate people. If no way out can be seen, the important thing is not to awaken the sleepers" ("What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?" [Nala zou hou zenyang]).¹

I too am among those who wish to dream, never to be awakened. I want to avoid the "most painful thing in life." But I saw someone who was awakened, someone who experienced the "most painful thing in life": "to wake up from a dream and find no way out." This is Lu Xun. Although I was afraid to be awakened, I could not separate myself from Lu. He also writes, "We have no right to urge people to *sacrifice* themselves, no right to stop them either."²

I cannot but dwell on what Lu was awakened by and how he was awakened.

Humanism and Despair

There is a parable by Lu Xun called "The Wise Man, the Fool and the *Slave*" [Congmingren he shazi he nucai]. The *slave's* work is hard and he constantly complains. The wise man consoles him, "Your luck will surely improve before long." But the *slave's* life is hard, and he next complains to the fool, "The room given me doesn't even have a window." "Tell your master to have a window made," says the fool. "What an absurd idea!" answers the *slave*. With this the fool goes to the *slave's* house and begins tearing down a wall. "What are you doing, sir?" "I am making a window for you." The *slave* tries to stop him but the fool does not listen. The *slave* then shouts for help, and other *slaves* appear and drive the fool off. Finally the master appears and the *slave* informs him what has happened, "A bandit began destroying the walls of my house. I was the first to discover this and together we drove him off." "Well done," says the master. The wise man visits the master after this incident and the *slave* thanks him: "Indeed, sir, you are very prescient. My master praised me, so my luck *has* improved." The wise man seems pleased. "That's right!" he replies.

I think Lu Xun is writing here about the state of being awakened. He is writing about the "most painful thing in life," the pain of wishing to escape from an inescapable reality: "to awaken from a dream and find no way out." And yet I sense that certain conditions are necessary for the interpreting subject to inter-

¹ In *Lu Hsun: Writing for the Revolution* (San Francisco: Red Sun Publishers, 1976), 101.

² *Ibid.*, 104. Emphasis Takeuchi.

pret the parable in this way. These conditions, however, seem to be determined by the object (i.e., Lu Xun). Here I wish to avoid the trouble of examining this point in detail, for such a discussion would stray from my theme. Besides, it should be implicitly understood that my theme and interpretation of this parable are mediated by each other.

The subject of the parable is the *slave*, not *slave* nature but the concrete *slave* (strictly speaking, Lu Xun himself). All uniqueness would be lost if one were to abstract from the parable only that aspect of oppositionality in human nature represented by the wise man and the fool. The text would then be reduced to the general space of "humanism." It would thus become ordinary, something that could be found in either Europe or Japan. Lu was not such a humanist, as the fool would appear in his eyes as the "wise man." He was someone who rejected humanism (he rejected everything). While it is true that he hated the wise man and loved the fool, these two are indivisible: to hate the wise man *was* to love the fool. Lu does not see these two figures in terms of an opposition of values. Such a position of seeing—i.e., the humanist position—does not exist for him, for the fool cannot save the *slave* as the humanist might hope. The fool would be rejected if he tried to save him. In order to avoid rejection and thus save the *slave*, the fool must stop being a fool and become a wise man. The wise man can save the *slave*, but this salvation would be merely subjective. In other words, salvation for the *slave* consists precisely in nonsalvation, in dreaming without awakening. From the *slave's* standpoint, the pursuit of salvation itself is what makes him a *slave*. If therefore he were to be awakened, he would have to experience the "most painful thing in life," the fact that there is "no path to follow"—the self-awareness that he is a *slave*. And he would have to endure this fear, for he would lose that self-awareness were he to give up and seek salvation instead. In other words, having "no path to follow" means that one is awakened from a dream, whereas the presence of such a path is proof that one is still dreaming. The "most painful thing in life," awakening from a dream, occurs when the *slave* rejects his status as *slave* while at the same time rejecting the fantasy of liberation, so that he becomes a *slave* who realizes that he is a *slave*. This is the state in which one must follow a path even though there is no path to follow; or rather, one must follow a path *precisely because* there is no path to follow. Such a *slave* rejects being himself at the same time that he rejects being anything else. This is the meaning of despair found in Lu Xun; it is what makes Lu Xun possible. Despair emerges in the resistance of following a path when there is no path, while resistance emerges as the activation of despair. As a state this can be seen as despair, whereas as a movement it is resistance. There is here no room for humanism to enter.

Japan's humanist writers would not write "The Wise Man, the Fool, and the *Slave*" in the same way that Lu Xun did. Rather they would have the wise man

or the fool save the *slave*, or perhaps have the *slave* free himself by overthrowing the master. In other words, they would describe the moment of awakening as joyful rather than painful. In the eyes of such humanists, Lu Xun's darkness would appear as an instance of colonial backwardness that lacks the social conditions required for liberation. In Lu's eyes, however, such an "advanced" Japanese literature is represented by the figure of the wise man, that is to say, it is the literature of the fantasy of liberation. Yet the advanced nature of this literature would prevent it from recognizing this about itself. Indeed, even the darkest of Japanese writers strike me as perfectly bright when compared with Lu Xun. It is certainly true that their darkness stems from the lack of social conditions required for liberation, but Lu despises the wise man and rejects the fantasy of liberation. He endures the pain of being "awakened" while struggling against the blackness. He does not view the social conditions for liberation as something to be "given," for it was in such an environment as this (in which these conditions were not given in the past or present and would still not be given in the future) that his consciousness was formed. These conditions are not given because of resistance. Resistance means that they are not given, and so one rejects the fantasy that they could be. They are given only when resistance is abandoned, but this would mean the loss of the ability to reject the fantasy that they could be given. Here lies the difference between health through being conservative and *decadence* through being progressive. Japan's humanist writers all became *decadent*. (The few poets who rejected *decadence* were defeated.) And yet such *decadence* in no way touched Lu Xun, who rejected humanism.

The *slave* refuses to recognize the fact that he is a *slave*. He is a true *slave* when he thinks that he is not a *slave*. And he reveals the full extent of his *slavishness* when he becomes a master, for at that time he subjectively views himself as no longer a *slave*. As Lu Xun writes, "The *slave* and the master are identical." Lu also writes, "The tyrant's subjects are more violent than the tyrant himself" and "He who *enslaves* all others as a master would himself be content as a *slave*." The *slave* is not liberated when he becomes the master; this is liberation only in the *slave's* own subjective terms. The nature of Japanese culture can be understood if one applies this insight to it. In its turn toward modernity, Japan bore a decisive inferiority complex vis-à-vis Europe. (This inferiority complex was the result of Japanese culture's superiority.) It then furiously began to chase after Europe. Japan's becoming Europe, as European as possible, was conceived of as the path of its emergence. That is to say, Japan sought to emerge from *slavery* by becoming the master—and this has given rise to every fantasy of liberation. Today's liberation movements are so permeated by this *slave* nature that they cannot fully free themselves from it. Ignorant of his own status as *slave*, the subject of liberation movements remains trapped within the fantasy that he

is not a *slave*, and from this position he attempts to emancipate the people (the backward students). This subject attempts to awaken others when he himself refuses the pain of awakening. Regardless of his efforts, then, subjectivity fails to emerge, i.e., he is unable to awaken these others. He then looks to the outside in search of that "subjectivity" which ought to be given.

Such lack of subjectivity comes from the fact that the self is not itself, for it has abandoned being itself. In other words, it has abandoned resistance from the very beginning. This represents the superiority of Japanese culture. (Hence this culture's superiority is that of the *slave*, which tends toward *decadence*.) Because of Japan's progressive nature and superiority in having abandoned resistance, those Oriental nations that did not abandon resistance appear backward. People like Lu Xun appear as backward colonial types. In the eyes of Japanese literature, Chinese literature appears backward. And yet Russian literature, which like the latter did not abandon resistance, does not. That is to say, Japan sees only the aspect of Russian literature that incorporates European literature, while overlooking the aspect that resists it. Dostoevsky's stubborn Oriental resistance is overlooked, or at least was not directly reflected in the eyes of Japanese literature until it was reflected in Europe. Tolstoy's suffering in his attempts to become a fool is of no concern for that Japanese literature which does not experience such suffering; it does not become an internal problem of the self. Hence there is no attempt to understand Lu Xun, whose suffering was similar to Tolstoy's. A unified vision is lacking that could see in both these figures a moment of common resistance.

Spectators and Runners

People like Lu Xun appear as backward nation types, just as the Chinese literature that produces writers like him appears as a backward nation literature. Chinese literature is reflected in the eyes of Japanese literature as a backward nation literature, and this reflection is an accurate one. Accurate, truly "accurate." Accurate like a camera, "accurate" in showing time and space reduced to two dimensions. Japanese literature does not enter history in this way; it looks from outside at racehorses running the course of history. Refusing to enter history, it loses sight of the moment of resistance that fulfills history. Instead it clearly sees which horse will win. The Chinese horse is lagging behind while the Japanese horse quickly pulls ahead. Such is how things appear, and this view is an accurate one. It is accurate because one is not running.

People like Lu Xun only emerge through resistance. Lu represents a type that appears only in backward societies, like the societies of "Asian stagna-

tion" referred to by both European historians and the progressive historians of Japan⁽¹⁾. This is just like Dostoevsky, who emerges from Russian backwardness. Such people are formed when all paths toward progress are closed and the hope of becoming new is broken. They have the lowest of living conditions, in which old things do not *become* new but rather *are* new while being old. People like Lu Xun do not come from European society with its limitless progress. Neither do they come from Japan, which remains within the fantasy of progress. Not only do they not come from Japan, they are not even understood there. When Japan sees Lu Xun, he is distorted (like everything else) into a thinker of progress, a superior enlightenment figure. He is distorted in mirrorlike fashion into an enlightenment figure who desperately chased after Europe in trying to improve backwardness. He becomes a Chinese Ôgai. In fact, however, Lu is the very opposite of this. He is an opponent of such thinkers of progress as Hu Shi and Lin Yutang. As he often writes, "I am a man from the old days." Japanese thinkers of progress see this as a sign of Lu's *modesty*. They do not consider that it has its source in the structural differences between Japanese and Chinese modernity.

People like Lu Xun do not come from Japanese society. Even if they were born there, they would not be able to grow. They would not become a tradition to be handed down. Within Chinese literature, of course, Lu stands alone. Yet his isolated figure can be seen and thus handed down: his image is clearly recognizable, it has not been buried in the surroundings. In Japan, however, what was once distinct gradually becomes buried. New things are constantly born and become old; never do old things become new. Futabatei Shimei and Kitamura Tôkoku are already buried, just as Ishikawa Takuboku's "socialist imperialism" is buried. Shimazaki Tôson walked from *The Broken Commandment* [Hakai] to *The Eastern Gate* [Tôhō no mon], he did not walk from *The Eastern Gate* to *The Broken Commandment*. Only the poet Nakano Shigeharu—who is the "he" of the line, "Korea was the land of his hopes"—inherited Akutagawa Ryûnosuke's discovery of Lenin's "Oriental locomotives that smell of flowers." When Takamura Kôtarô wrote, "There are no paths before me," he was standing in the same place as Lu Xun, who wrote, "The earth had no paths to begin with." Lu continued on, bloodied by thorns, while Takamura did an about-face and walked away.

Conversion and Tenkô

The phenomenon of *tenkô* is also a product of Japan's particular character. In the superior culture of Japan, one either *falls into decadence* as an honor student or falls into defeat by rejecting *decadence*. *Tenkô* invariably takes place when honor students act conscientiously. If they do not commit *tenkô*, they can no

longer be honor students since they lose their ability to incorporate new things. Conscientious behavior consists in abandoning communism for totalitarianism when the latter appears newer. If democracy comes, the progressive attitude most befitting the honor student is to follow democracy. *Tenkô* comes about through progress, and so is not shameful. Rather it is the refusal to commit *tenkô* that is conservative, and thus (as all the evidence suggests) reactionary. Lu Xun stubbornly resisted proletarian literature when it entered China, yet he proved over time to be more Marxist than the proletarian writers. This would be impossible in Japan. Japanese modernity began with *tenkô*: the antiforeign faction also advocated opening the country. Structurally, *tenkô* is inseparable from Japanese culture. Katô Hiroyuki, one of the Meiji pioneers, brilliantly changed his position from civil rights to evolutionary theory, thereby setting an example of scholarly conscience for the professors of the imperial universities who preserve the traditions of this superior culture.

Tenkô occurs where there is no resistance, i.e., no desire to be oneself. The person who holds fast to the self cannot change direction, but only walks his own path. However, walking means that the self changes. The self changes by one's holding fast to it. (That which does not change is not a self.) I am "I" and yet not "I." If I were simply "I," that would not even be "I." In order that I be "I," there must necessarily be a juncture at which I am outside of "I." This is the juncture at which old things become new and the Antichrist becomes Christian. This moment appears in the individual as conversion, and in history as revolution.

Conversion may resemble *tenkô* on the outside, but its direction is the reverse. If *tenkô* is a movement toward the outside, conversion is a movement toward the inside. Conversion takes place by preserving the self, whereas *tenkô* occurs by abandoning the self. Conversion is mediated by resistance, whereas *tenkô* is unmediated. *Tenkô* does not take place at the site of conversion, while conversion does not take place at the site of *tenkô*. Cultures governed by the principle of *tenkô* are structurally different from those governed by the principle of conversion.

As types, I believe that Japanese culture is based on *tenkô* whereas Chinese culture is based on conversion. Japanese culture never underwent the historical discontinuity of revolution; it never experienced new birth and the revival of the old by severing itself from the past. In other words, its history was never rewritten. Thus there are no new people. In Japanese culture, new things always become old without old things becoming new. This culture is structurally unproductive: it proceeds from life to death, never from death to rebirth. Hence Shimazaki Tôson did not walk from *The Eastern Gate* to *The Broken Commandment*, while Takamura Kôtarô did an about-face and walked away. Lu Xun's principle is not suitable for Japan, as can be understood by comparing

Futabatei's Shimei's *genbun itchi* movement with the Chinese "Literary Revolution" of 1917. It is commonly said that the "Literary Revolution" began with Hu Shi's vernacular movement, the introduction of modern European literature, and the destruction of Chinese tradition. This is correct, but the driving force behind this was more fundamental, for it negated the movement from within. Lu Xun was at the center of this force. Japan's *genbun itchi* movement did not seek to go beyond itself through internal negation, and ended with Futabatei's self-dissolution. Mori Ôgai's completion of this movement was imposed from outside. In Japan everything is completion, a one-time affair.

The Chinese Revolution of 1911 and the Meiji Restoration

This point can also be understood by comparing the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and the Meiji Restoration. The Meiji Restoration was certainly a revolution, but it was at the same time a counter-revolution. The decisive victory in the Seinan War of 1877 was a victory in favor of counter-revolution. In Japan, the revolutionary force needed to negate this victory from within was extremely weak—not in the sense of absolute quantity of force but rather structurally, so that revolutionary force itself came to be appropriated by counter-revolution. (See here E. Herbert Norman, *Soldier and Peasant in Japan: The Origins of Conscriptation*.) Although the Chinese Revolution of 1911 was similar in its equivalency of revolution and counter-revolution, its development was nonetheless one of revolution. It was a revolution in which the force of internal negation constantly sprang forth. For Sun Yat-sen, revolution was always to be conceived of as "failure." The 1911 Revolution negated the warlordism (a kind of colonial absolute monarchy) that was produced in its wake, after which it negated the bureaucratization of the revolutionary party itself. In other words, this was a productive, and hence a true, revolution.

The Meiji Restoration succeeded while the 1911 Revolution "failed" because it was actually "revolution." This is not to say that there were absolutely no elements within the former that saw its success as failure, and so tried to begin again. But these were either crushed or appropriated by the revolutionary leadership. The movement for popular rights was partly crushed and partly appropriated by the national rights faction, with the first "China *rônin*" among those who were appropriated. The revolutionary movements of the 1920s were the repetition of this, as they were partly crushed and partly appropriated for the purpose of invasion through the creation of a new "China *rônin*" (the South Manchuria Railway, etc.). There was, however, a difference: just as the national rights faction *fell into decadence*, so too did the quality of the "China *rônin*."

An interval of fifty years separates the Meiji Restoration from the Chinese Revolution of 1911. While this interval serves as proof of the superiority of Japanese culture, the qualitative difference between the two revolutions testifies to the nature of that superiority. There is no nation in the Orient in which revolution succeeded so easily as Japan. Japan displayed scarcely any resistance against Europe. While Russia incorporated capitalism only through the most barbaric resistance, Japan's encounter with capitalism produced less resistance than did the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Even during the most decisive defeats of the Sino-Japanese War, the reformist ideology among the Qing Dynasty's progressive bureaucrats remained one of "Chinese learning as substance, western learning as function." In other words, European dominance was conceived of in merely technological terms. In Japan, this would be comparable to the level of Arai Hakuseki. After China's defeat, various reform movements were initiated, such as those of Yan Fu and Kang Youwei (many Japanese historians overlook the fact that the Sino-Japanese War was a major turning point in modern Chinese history), but these were all crushed by the reactionaries. Kang Youwei's attempt to imitate the Meiji Restoration in China did not succeed. While Japanese students returning from abroad furthered their ambitions by being placed in high government positions, Yan Fu (who was the first Chinese to study abroad—China lagged ten years behind Japan in sending students abroad) was aggravated that his low official status kept him from applying his hard-won new knowledge. In China, reactionism was so strong that it prevented all reform from above, but this caused a revolution to rise up from below. As Lu Xun writes of the reactionism in 1900:

So there appeared Grand Secretary Hsu Tong, known as the flower of Confucian scholarship. He scoffed at mathematics as a study belonging to the foreign devils, and although he had to concede the existence of such countries as France and England, he refused to believe in that of Spain and Portugal. According to him, these were names invented by France and England, who were rather embarrassed themselves by the number of demands they were making on China. He was also the secret instigator and director of the famous Yi Ho Tuan Uprising of 1900. But the Yi Ho Tuan failed completely, and Grand Secretary Hsu committed suicide. Then once again the government felt there was something worth learning in foreign politics, law, and science. This was the time when I was so eager to go to Japan to study. ("Confucius in Modern China" [Gendai Shina ni okeru Kôshi sama])³

³ In *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1960), 4:177.

From Japan's viewpoint, this reactionism of 1900 was almost *comically* barbaric. In the same year, Japan joined the Allied Powers and occupied Beijing in the name of civilization. Japan was that civilized. The extent of its civilization can also be seen from the impressions Lu Xun received while studying there, which I see as related to the similarities between the China of 1900 and the Japan of 1945. As Lu writes (continued from the previous citation): "I gained my wish and went to the Kobun College founded by Mr. Kano in Tokyo. . . . One day Dean Okubo summoned us and announced: 'Since you are all disciples of Confucius, today you may go and take part in the ceremony in the Confucian Temple at Ochanomizu.' I was amazed. I remember thinking: 'I came to Japan just because I had lost faith in Confucius and his disciples. Do I still have to worship him here?' There must have been many others, I imagine, who were amazed and reacted similarly."⁴

Such is the nature of civilization. Chinese reactionism of 1900 caused Lu Xun to have "lost faith in Confucius and his disciples," yet Japan was so civilized that it prompted him to think, "Do I still have to worship him here?" It was undoubtedly this very civilization that led Japan to 1945.

Everything about Japan is problematic due to its course of progress as determined by the Meiji Restoration. The problem is the superiority of Japanese culture, which allowed the Meiji Restoration to succeed. Japan's leaders were superior: their progressivism was strong and their reactionism relatively weak. In brilliantly overcoming the single crisis that was the Seinan War of 1877, Japanese progressivism completely severed the roots of reactionism. In so doing, however, it also severed the roots of revolution itself. In China, the force of reactionism was so great that it stifled even those dissident activities within the bureaucracy. This drove the revolution lower and lower, allowing it to spread its roots among the people at the bottom. In Japan, however, even the people's movement was sucked upward by an open conduit, beyond the military academies and imperial universities, where it withered and died.

Where does the superiority of Japanese culture come from? It comes in part from the superiority of its leadership and infrastructure. And it would not be wrong, for all that, to seek its ultimate cause in such quantitative factors as that of productivity, since certain things do come to light in this way. Yet I have a sense that something remains unexplained by these answers. In the Orient's encounter with Europe, why did Japan alone show no resistance? Can this be explained merely through such homogeneous factors as productivity? Europe's invasion of the Orient extends across time and space, and so the cutting of this extension at a spatiotemporal point results in these entities becoming deter-

⁴ Ibid.

mined, actual things. Thus while resistance at this point may also be understood as something individual, can such individual differences be explained as homogeneous? Indeed, various types of people emerge from this individual resistance. These types would include, roughly speaking, Lenin and Gorky, Sun Yat-sen and Lu Xun, Gandhi and Tagore, and Kemal Atatürk and Ibn Saud. (However, such discourse presupposes a point from which these people can be seen as types.) In Japan, nothing exists that can be called a type. That is to say, Japan lacks resistance. Put more forcefully, the Japanese type is precisely this absence of types, just as Japanese individuality is the absence of individuality. It seems to me that Japan's lack of resistance vis-à-vis Europe is due to the structure of its culture. Japanese culture faces the outside, always waiting for new things. Culture always comes from the West. This was the case with both Confucianism and Buddhism. Hence Japanese culture waits. National isolation is embraced, not rejected. Edo-period bourgeois literature cannot be understood without regard to the bourgeois literature of the late Ming: this includes all Edo writers, such as Matsuo Bashō, Ihara Saikaku, and Takizawa Bakin. The scholars of National Learning rejected tradition, but this did not change the structure of Japanese culture. It merely cleared the way for Europe, which assumed the role of new master without any resistance. Just as Japanese capitalism is borne upon feudalism, so too is Japanese modernity comfortably borne upon the structure of Confucianism (or a structure of infinite cultural reception). This grounding relation is so perfect that Japanese culture is not even conscious of it. Proof can be seen in the revival of the study of the Chinese classics, whose teaching authority had been revoked during the revolution/counter-revolution of the Meiji Restoration. This is represented in the activities of such people as Motoda Nagazane, but it is also related to that civilization which forced Confucianism upon Lu Xun.

I suspect that Japanese culture lacks within its traditions the experience of independence, and that as a result independence is not perceived as an actual feeling. Japan has never received things from the outside as pain, it has never received them in its resistance to them. He who does not know the taste of freedom is satisfied merely by the suggestion that he is free. The *slave* is a *slave* in thinking that he is not a *slave*. The pain of "being awakened" is foreign to Japanese culture. Otherwise there would be no reason to introduce such drugs as modernity, despair, and existentialism so as to try to awaken it.

Ultrationalism and Japanism were once fashionable. These were to have banished Europe; they were not to have banished the *slave* structure that accommodates Europe. Now modernism is fashionable as a reaction against these ideologies, but the structure that accommodates modernity is still not problematized. Japan, in other words, attempts to replace the master; it does

not seek independence. This is equivalent to treating Tōjō Hideki as a backward student, so that other honor students remain in power in order to preserve the honor student culture itself. Doubtless both the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War were won because of the superior part of Japanese culture. And doubtless if Japan had lost these wars, the losses would be due to that same part. It is hardly possible that only the 1945 defeat should be attributed to the backward part of this culture. Those who claim that 1945 was a mistake are trying to preserve Japan's honor student culture; it is just that they recognize the honor students of the imperial universities rather than those of the military academies. Leaving the *slave* structure of Japanese culture intact, they merely substitute the part that rides on top. This then does not become a negation of Tōjō. It is also impossible to negate Tōjō when one stands upon the same ground from which he grew. It is impossible to negate Tōjō by opposing him: one must go beyond him. To accomplish this, however, one must even utilize him. One must risk one's life for true independence, and every moment of resistance must be grasped in order to accomplish this, regardless of how insignificant these moments may be. Even the frailty about Tōjō that serves as a camouflage must be utilized, not negated. In order to do this, however, one must endure the pain of "being awakened." This *sacrifice* cannot be forced upon others.

The following words are found in Norman's *Soldier and Peasant in Japan*. Of the books I've read recently, this one made a particularly deep impression, striking me as virtually a work of art. It hits home through the weight of its content. The text possesses a formative logic, with the wealth of its resources rising up like a Rodin sculpture. It is classically beautiful in its abundance of life force. Toward the end of the book, when the militarists become the tool of capital (which lagged behind European capital) and set off for the mainland invasion, the inevitable process of barbarization on the part of the modern army is captured in precise psychological realism: "The common Japanese man, himself an unfree agent enrolled in a conscript army, became an unwitting agent in riveting the shackles of slavery on other peoples." After this Norman adds, "It is impossible to employ genuinely free men for enslaving others; and conversely, the most brutalized and shameless slaves make the most pitiless and effective despoilers of the liberties of others."⁵

While reading these lines I recalled Lu Xun, who time and again wrote exactly this same thing about his own country. Norman, who probably has not read Lu Xun, clearly loves Japan and the Japanese people. His love is different,

⁵ E. Herbert Norman, *Soldier and Peasant in Japan: The Origins of Conscriptation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1965), 53.

and perhaps even greater, than that of Lafcadio Hearn and Bruno Taut, and as a foreigner it reaches an extreme. Without this love Norman's research would not have crystallized so brilliantly. I think these lines are invaluable, and I regret that I lack the words to respond to them. Lu Xun, however, has offered a response. How ashamed I would be without Lu Xun! In a line concerning the absence of records about the people of the Oki Island Commune,⁶ Norman criticizes virtually the entirety of Japanese scholarship. I do not know how Japanese historians will respond to this criticism. I only know that such a brilliant grasp of the structural defects of Japanese culture on the part of a foreigner represents for me a point of departure.

The Third Period

This is what Lu Xun has written:

But however fine the phrases of those splendour-loving scholars, or however grand the expressions they use in their chronicles, such as "the rise of the Hans," "the age of Han expansion," or "the age of Han resurgence," while appreciating that their motives are of the best, we cannot but feel their wording is too ambiguous. A much more straightforward mode of expression would be: 1. The periods when we longed in vain to be *slaves*; 2. The periods when we succeeded in becoming *slaves* for a time. These periods form a cycle of what earlier scholars call "times of good rule" and "times of confusion." . . .

But are we all like the men of old, to be content forever with "the good old ways"? Are we all like those classicists who, dissatisfied with the present, long for the peaceful days of three centuries ago?

Of course, we are not satisfied with the present either, but that does not mean we have to look backwards, for there is still a way forward. And to create a third type of period, hitherto unknown in Chinese history, is the task of our young people today. ("Some Notions Jotted Down by Lamp-Light" [Dengxia manbi])⁷

(April 1948)

⁶ *Ibid.*, 40753.

⁷ In *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, 2:135-136.