

CHAPTER 11

TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Rather, it is precisely because the past has not been self-consciously objectified and sublated into the present that it may sneak into the present “from behind,” as it were. The non-accumulation of ideas as tradition and unprincipled and irrelevant infiltration of “traditional” thought are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.¹¹⁵

—Maruyama Masao

The collapse of conventional values after Japan’s defeat in World War II caused great psychological disorientation, spawning a boom in nihilism and existentialism brought in from the West. On the other hand, after the U.S.-led occupation forces restored freedom of speech, those arrested during the war for opposing the state ideology, including Japanese Communist Party leaders, were released from prison. The JCP quickly spread its influence, and liberal and modernist thought, which had been suppressed during the war, regained vigor.

Ōtsuka Hisao’s Modernist Theory

One of the champions of postwar modernism was Ōtsuka Hisao (1907–1996). An economic historian, he continued assiduous research under the influence of Marx and Weber even during World War II, and after the war, drawing on his extensive knowledge, he sought to offer a model of the modern person who should form the foundation of democracy. In this project, he drew on the work of Max Weber (1864–1920). Economic historians even before the war had avidly read Weber, and in postwar Japanese academia Weber’s work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* became the bible of Japanese modernist theory. The Marx versus Weber framework was a major theme of postwar debate. While Marxism was growing increasingly radical, advocating violent revolution, Japanese modernists took Weber as their authority.

¹¹⁵ Maruyama 1961, p. 11.

Weber's *Protestant Ethic* portrays modern capitalism as peculiar to Western Europe, arguing that its spirit was nurtured by the Calvinist religious ethic. According to Calvinists, salvation by God is predetermined, and only God knows who will be saved, so in order to be assured of salvation all they can do is to live an abstemious life of hard work and virtuous deeds. The development of this secular asceticism led to the rise of the spirit of capitalism. Therefore, says Weber, the spirit of modern capitalism, unlike the money-making orientation of the typical wealthy merchant, anywhere and in any age, is such that wealth accumulates from total devotion to work and that capitalism develops by using money productively instead of wasting it.

Weber's stress on the importance of religion in modernization greatly attracted scholars and intellectuals who could not accept Marxist materialism and the inevitability of violent revolution. In addition to the idea of secular asceticism, Weber cites Calvinism as having emancipated people from "magic." Only by conquering the magic of Catholicism or premodern thought, says Weber, will there emerge a rational and internalized modern ethos (spiritual character).

In postwar Japan, Weber's idea of modernization was thus seen as more than simply a matter of economic or religious history; it was accepted as very practical and workable. Those who followed Weber concluded that Japan's modernization had ended up being shallow, plunging the country into a reckless war because a genuine, deep-rooted modern spirit, such as found in the West, had not developed. The further advance of capitalism might cause problems, but they reasoned that Weber considered capitalism in its emergent stage to be the ideal form of modernization. Ōtsuka was the leading advocate of the Weberian theory of modernization in Japan, and his ideas are clearly presented in his 1948 book titled *Kindaika no ningenteki kiso* (The Human Basis of Modernization).¹¹⁶

In order to promote economic democratization, Ōtsuka argues, the political identity of the people must be firmly in place, and "the people must be broadly identifiable as the modern, democratic human type."¹¹⁷ Borrowing Weber's terminology, he compares the "modern Western European ethos" with the "Asian ethos," delineating the "ethic of internal dignity" in the former and "ethic of external dignity" in the latter. He writes, "in Asian ethics 'saving face' is more important than anything else."¹¹⁸ "By contrast, what is most critical in the ethic of modern society is the so-called radical 'evil' deeply rooted in human nature."¹¹⁹

You may be bewildered to come across "radical 'evil'" all of a sudden here, but that line of argument somehow recalls American anthropologist Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946). Benedict's book, which exerted considerable influence over American

116 Ōtsuka 1968.

117 Ōtsuka 1968, p. 12.

118 Ōtsuka 1968, p. 17.

119 Ōtsuka 1968, p. 18.

thinking about Japanese culture during the occupation of Japan, defines Japanese culture as a “shame culture” and contrasts it with the Western “guilt culture.” When that idea was introduced to Japan, it was argued that a “shame culture” was a low-level culture concerned only with outer appearances and that Japan must shift to a “guilt culture” like the West. Of course, Ōtsuka’s is different from that rather crude argument. He writes, “[Japanese] must have an ethos that is deeply aware of the individual’s inner value and that respects humans as humans.”¹²⁰ The importance of the self-awareness of the individual was the core of the message of “My Individualism,” the speech that scholar and novelist Natsume Sōseki delivered to the students of Gakushūin, the peers’ school, in 1914 (cf. page 86 above). This issue, which Japanese intellectuals had tried to face in the early twentieth century, was brought up again, this time empowered by Weber.

Ōtsuka also interprets Weber’s argument about emancipation from magic from a very practical point of view. He includes in his book *Kindaika no ningenteki kiso* an essay entitled “Emancipation from Magic.” In it, he introduces an episode about a man who, calling himself a “god of fortune,” obtained apples by cheating a farmer, to show how the Japanese people were spell-bound by *Magie* (magic). Drawing on Weber’s *Ancient Judaism*, a collection of essays written in the early twentieth century, Ōtsuka emphasizes the importance of liberation from magic. He considers *Magie* to take its inherent form in the “ancient Asiatic social composition”¹²¹ and argues the necessity of a “bloody resistance and fight, for victory over” *Magie* (pp. 84–85). In a sense, this, too, is a major theme continuing from the days when Meiji-period Enlightenment thinkers grappled with their indigenous sense of religiosity and the Christianity from the West. The attempt at emancipation from magic at the superficial level in the world of discourse, however, ended up driving magic even deeper into the Japanese psyche.

Possibility of a Self-reliant Modernization

While Ōtsuka totally denied Japanese tradition and argued for adopting the Western ethos of Protestantism, it was Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) who reconsidered Japanese traditions of thought and sought to discover in them those elements that have the potential to develop and promote modernization. Maruyama collected a series of essays he had written in the closing days of the war and published them in book form as *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū*.¹²² While it was a specialized book on the early modern history of political thought, this work had a major impact on the reading public.

In the book Maruyama explored “the theme of how the orthodox worldview in feudal society came to collapse internally.”¹²³ Thereby he sought to “elucidate the

120 Ōtsuka 1968, p. 19.

121 Ōtsuka 1968, p. 94.

122 Maruyama 1952. Published in English as *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* in 1989.

123 Maruyama 1952, p. 369 (Afterword).

characteristics of the modernization patterns of, broadly, Japanese society and, narrowly, Japanese thought, vis-à-vis Western Europe on the one hand and Asian countries on the other.”¹²⁴ That is to say, in his view, the direction of modernization peculiar to Japan had already been formed in the early modern period. In this regard, Maruyama’s view is clearly different from so-called modernism theory that rejects all traditional Japanese thought up to and including the early modern period as “feudalistic.”

The “orthodox worldview” Maruyama refers to is Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism. In this system of thought, the order of nature and social norms are seen as following a coherent “li” (principle). From there the feudal social order came to be understood as the order of nature, as something unchangeable. Maruyama, on the other hand, identified the mid-Tokugawa-period Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai as the thinker who marks the start of Japanese modernization. Sorai thought that social norms had been contrived by the ancient sages. In other words, social norms were not natural but artificially created (*sakui*). The sages were absolute beings of the distant past, and in that sense the Way that they created was supposed to be universal and unchangeable. However, depending on historical circumstances, the ruler of any given time could “create” policies and carry them out, and society could thus be changed artificially by those in responsible positions. There was “an evolution from the Neo-Confucian idea of political/social order as natural order to the Ogyū theory that political/social order should be created by responsible people.”¹²⁵

The nature (*shizen*) versus artifice (*sakui*) dichotomy forms the core of Maruyama’s theory of modernization. The opposition of the two is represented in plain language, using “de aru” (to be) for *shizen* and “suru” (to do) for *sakui*. In a society based on a rigid class system like Tokugawa Japan, people were defined by their *being*—whether they were samurai, townspeople, and so forth—whereas a modern, meritocratic society revolves around the logic of *doing*. In the “being” society its members are not responsible for the way the society is; everything should be fine as long as they stay within the predefined boundaries of being. There, the social order itself is “natural.” In the “doing” society, by contrast, its members must take responsibility for what they do. Since their society itself is built based on what they do, it is the doers who must take responsibility.

Modern Japan, continued Maruyama, was not really a “doing” society, and the natural aspect of just “being” often reared its head, creating the characteristically Japanese systems of irresponsibility. The emperor was supposed to be the supreme authority in Japan’s wartime fascist system, but after the defeat, his role was not clarified, and the question of who was the person most responsible for the war was left undefined. It was this irresponsible “being” system that Maruyama condemned. After the war he

124 Maruyama 1952, p. 369 (Afterword).

125 Maruyama 1952, p. 228.

became famous among opinion leaders for his critical analysis of Japanese fascism and the progressive tone of his argument. But, basically his aim was to criticize the “being” system and seek to construct a “doing” society in which people responsibly create their own society.

In reality, things did not go so smoothly. After the government forced through the Japan-U.S. security treaty in 1960, defeating Maruyama’s ideas, he withdrew from the realm of journalism and produced works only at rare intervals. In his last years, he devised the theory of *kosō*, “old layer patterns,” which, he argued, run consistently through the history of Japanese thought. He came to believe that the irresponsible attitude with which people leave things up to nature is part of the current of thought continuing from antiquity. In this, one may perceive something of his despair and resignation after failing in his efforts to build a “doing” society.

Overcoming Modernity?

After the end of World War II, modernization became a major issue in Japan and people groped about, seeking now urgently needed models of modern man and woman. Oddly enough, there had been a movement only a few years earlier, during the war, for “overcoming modernity.” The postwar discourse on modernization skipped over the “overcoming modernity” discourse of the prewar and wartime period and simply pursued a modern sense of enlightenment.

“Kindai no chōkoku” (Overcoming Modernity) was the title of a two-day symposium sponsored by the literary magazine *Bungakukai* in 1942, soon after the opening of the war with the United States. It was later featured in the magazine and was the subject of a book published in 1943.¹²⁶ After the war, however, the symposium was seen as the root of all evil, denounced for developing the ideology for waging the war. While it is true that it became the occasion for many shallow statements fueled by the passions of the times, issues that are worth taking a second look at even today were also discussed.

Literary critic Kawakami Tetsutarō, who proposed the symposium, stated at the time, “The first issue we have to deal with by all means is the ‘modernity’ of the West. This then leads us to consider Japan, which is under its influence. From there, we will be led to examine Japan as it is inherently.”¹²⁷ He thus considered the issue in three stages: first modernity in the West, then the Western-influenced modernity of Japan, and finally “Japan in its inherent form.” The basic line of his argument rejects the first two, calling for a return to “Japan in its inherent form.”

¹²⁶ See also translations of various relevant essays in Calichman 2008.

¹²⁷ Kawakami 1979, p. 172.

Following the period of its rise in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “modernity” in the West invited fin-de-siècle decadence toward the end of the nineteenth century and then entered a period of serious, critical reflection in the twentieth century. Already in the nineteenth century, Marx, Nietzsche, and others had focused harsh criticism on traditional Western philosophy, and by the early twentieth century their influence began to grow conspicuous. Following the first world war that engulfed Europe and the ensuing international instability, ideas critical of Western modernity fanned the embers of widespread anxiety. German philosopher Oswald Spengler’s *Decline of the West* (1918–1922) immediately became a bestseller and French philosopher Paul Valéry’s 1919 essay “Crisis of the Mind” declared that Western civilization was in dire crisis.

Later, due to social unrest in Germany after defeat in the war and also out of fear of communist infiltration, the Nazis gained strength and ultimately took power in 1933. The Nazis themselves adored Nietzsche and championed Germanisation, criticizing the tradition of Christian-influenced Western culture. On the other hand, an even stronger sense of crisis spread, most notably among Jews of German origin. Edmund Husserl, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and others engaged in soul-searching discussions of Western thought and culture.

In this way, the sense of crisis of the twentieth-century West was not confined to the matter of modernity, but involved a rethinking of Western civilization in its entirety. The “overcoming modernity” discourse in Japan was based on Japan’s reception of Western rhetoric and responses to the crisis, and so the discourse itself was, ironically, an echo of the West. In so doing, however, Japanese paid little attention to ancient Greece and Rome or to medieval Christianity as had been done in the West; their attention was focused, rather, on “modernity,” reflecting Japan’s characteristic way of equating the “West” with modernity.

In 1937, prior to the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium and publications, the Ministry of Education published a document called *Kokutai no hongii* (Cardinal Principles of the National Polity), which criticized the Japanese reception of Western modernity as follows:

Foreign ideologies imported into our country are in the main the ideologies of enlightenment that have come down since the eighteenth century, or their extensions. The views of the world and of life that form the basis of these ideologies are a rationalism and a positivism, lacking in historical views, which on the one hand place the highest value on, and assert the liberty and equality of individuals, and on the other hand place value on a world by nature abstract, transcending nations and races.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ *Kokutai no hongii*, introduction; Gauntlett 1949, p. 52.

Such individualism, i.e., cosmopolitanism, the document warned, would lead to socialism and communism. This reasoning led to the rejection of the West (and therefore modernity) and the glorification of Japan's national polity (*kokutai*).

That was also the basic direction of the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium. While echoing the sense of crisis of the West itself, the debate was critical of Japan's modernity, which was an import of Western modernity, celebrating instead the "Japanese spirit." Not all the participants in the symposium were of that persuasion, however; their opinions varied. For example, from the standpoint that East and West were one before God, the leading Catholic intellectual Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko argued from beginning to end about "how modern people find God." The participant whose view of the times was probably most dispassionate was literary critic Nakamura Mitsuo. He pointed out how superficial Japan's reception of the West had been and criticized the advocates of the revival of the Japanese classics for "exalting our country's classics in the same way they exalted the West."¹²⁹ Nakamura's conclusion was ironic: "So perhaps now is the time to truly understand the West."¹³⁰

Cool-headed views like Nakamura's ended up being buried in the current of the times. Those jumping on the nationalist bandwagon did nothing but glorify Japan, and little progress was made in real research on Japanese thought, much less on the West. After the war, worship of modernism and the West began to flourish in Japan all over again, as if the "overcoming modernity" discourse had never even happened. This trend continued until only recently, and now Japanese thought is at an impasse for lack of an object of worship.

The Possibility of a Japanese Intellectual History

Research on the history of Western philosophy even in Japan has made significant progress, as it has on the history of Indian philosophy (intellectual history) and the history of Chinese philosophy (intellectual history). What about Japanese intellectual history? Certainly, from before the war a field that can be called Japanese intellectual history was opened up by outstanding scholars like Watsuji Tetsurō, Murakami Tsunetsugu, and Tsuda Sōkichi. There were also those who studied the subject from a Marxist point of view, such as Nagata Hiroshi and Saigusa Hiroto. It is doubtful, however, that the intellectual traditions of Japan really provided nourishment for the formation of Japanese thought. In most cases, traditional thought has been either despised and ignored as a relic of the past, or, conversely, one-sidedly glorified, as by the ultra-nationalists.

In such circumstances, it was Maruyama Masao who for the first time came to grips with the history of Japanese thought after reflecting upon methodology. Little wonder

129 Kawakami 1979, p. 163.

130 Kawakami 1979, p. 164.

that his works were so well received for their fresh approach. The response was to place absolute trust in Maruyama, but the irony was that it cast a spell over all subsequent research on Japanese intellectual history. There are naturally problems with Maruyama's works, like those of any other. In the first place, the worldview of Neo-Confucianism was not established as the orthodox position in early modern Japan as Maruyama thought it was. It is doubtful, therefore, whether it is appropriate to see Ogyū Sorai's sage-creation theory as an early modern advancement. Maruyama tried to understand Motoori Norinaga's National Learning (Kokugaku) as an extension of the development of Sorai's creation theory, but his interpretation of Norinaga was not as well reasoned as that of Sorai, and it is difficult to conclude that Norinaga's Kokugaku was an inevitable development in Sorai's thought.

In the case of Japan, it would be wrong to argue that an enlightened modernization process was hindered by an anachronistic emperor system.

Today the framework of Japanese intellectual history developed by Maruyama no longer stands. It must be asked from the outset whether it is appropriate to consider early modern Japan from the point of view of modernization in the Western sense. Maruyama spoke of self-reliant modernity, but "modernity" in this case was modeled after the West, and the question of whether a similar modernity existed in Japan prior to the introduction of Western culture was itself premised on Western modernity.

It is recognized today that Western modernization was neither ideal nor pure enough to be a viable model. Modernization in places outside the West is totally different from that in the West. Such regions modernized in response to the emergency of having no other choice in order to resist the violence of the Western powers' appetite for empire. People in such non-Western areas have to grapple with how to preserve their identity even as they introduce the advanced civilization of the West.

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In the case of Japan, it would be wrong to argue that an enlightened, hopeful modernization process was hindered by an anachronistic and irrational emperor system. "Irrational" as the emperor system might have been, the Meiji version was a modern construct, and in it the sovereign's role was very different from that played by predecessors during the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868). Japanese modernization—the role of the emperor included—must be understood as a whole.

Japan's early modern period was, in fact, a time of the development of rationalism and secularism such as found in Western modernity. The dominance of secular ideas in particular is a marked feature of that phase of history and was linked to Japanese modernity. Not only that, but the period was a breeding ground for orientations that would pave the way for the greatly magnified the emperor system and emperor worship in the modern period: the *kokutai* (national polity) ideas of the Mito school and the

emperor theory in the Fukko (Restoration, or Revival) Shintō movement initiated by Hirata Atsutane; the cult of Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the shogunate; the “living *kami*” worship as part of folk belief, and so forth. Along with these, there were also other distinctive developments that did not necessarily connect to the modern period.

Before examining the framework of the development of Japanese intellectual history, I would like to consider the basic question: is it even possible to understand the history of Japanese thought in a coherent way in the context of the entirety of Japanese history? Maruyama Masao did bring a new perspective to the history of early modern Japanese thought, but he did not show how that thought was connected to, and different from, thought of the medieval period. Later he tried to extract as an “old layer” (*kosō*) patterns of thinking that had recurred in Japanese thought since ancient times. Certainly, this attempt shows his intention to grasp Japanese thought in the broad context of history, but he failed to present a basic framework for intellectual history by showing how the “old layer” manifested itself over the course of time. What he demonstrated, rather, was the difficulty of delineating Japan’s intellectual history per se.

Maruyama pointed out the absence of an ongoing or axial continuum in the history of Japanese thought. Buddhism prospered in the medieval period, but in the early modern period Neo-Confucianism took its place. In the modern period, in turn, Western thought became predominant. He argued that the mainstream system of thought thus changed with each period and each time, and continuity with the past was cut off. A standard with which to grasp the flow of change over the course of history, such as afforded in the West by philosophy or Christianity, did not exist. Ideas of the past were not consciously accepted as tradition, but summarily cast aside with the embrace of each new system. Even then, ideas of the past did not completely vanish. “Rather, it is precisely because the past has not been consciously objectified and sublated into the present that it can sneak into the present ‘from behind,’ as it were. The non-accumulation of ideas as tradition and unprincipled and irrelevant infiltration of ‘traditional’ thought are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.”¹³¹ For example, in arguments on current issues, the ancient classics *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were suddenly evoked out of historical context, or the Buddhist idea of *mujō*, or impermanence, was irrelevantly cited. Even the “overcoming modernity” debate ended up being turned into a nonsensical admiration for “Japan.”

Maruyama was thus pessimistic about the possibility of gaining an understanding of the history of Japanese thought in its entirety. Recent progress in research, however,

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131 Maruyama 1961, p. 11.

suggests that the flow of that history may not necessarily be discontinuous. The early modern period, for example, shows the very rich development of thought revolving around not just Neo-Confucianism but also Buddhism and Shintō, and connected with Dutch learning, National Learning studies, and so on. Such developments were not in the least isolated but often mingled, sometimes engaging each other in debate, and forming close networks. This rich body of thought was linked partly to Buddhism-centered medieval thought and partly continued into the modern period. As this indicates, it is not impossible to detect continuities in Japanese intellectual history. If we read, for example, Tajiri Yūichirō's recent work, *Edo no shisōshi* (A History of Thought in the Edo Period),¹³² we can see that he has opened up a new path to understanding early modern thought in the context of the history of Japanese thought as a whole.

Japanese thinkers have invariably been so involved in studying the West that they neglected to seriously engage with the history and ideas of their own country. They themselves are to blame for such negligence. They must squarely face Maruyama's criticism that such an attitude will prevent Japanese thought from accumulating as tradition. So what is needed to remedy the situation? Efforts to tackle this challenge have not been sufficient, but at least some researchers are making progress toward that goal and we can hope for good results in the future.

The Dynamism of *Ken* versus *Myō*

Besides research on the development of specific schools of thought in each period, we need to clarify the ethos that governed each age in order to grasp the overall picture of Japanese thought. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, I have proposed an alternative to the conventional humanity-versus-God scheme, suggesting a picture in which the *ken* (exposed, thisworldly) realm of ethics extends outward to the *myō* (the shadowy, otherworldly) realm world of the Other that cannot be grasped from *ken*. By adopting this idea of *myō* we can explain the worldview of today and, based on it, understand the historical development of our worldview. Here I would like to examine this scheme in a bit more detail.

In Japan's medieval period the realm of *myō* was omnipresent in the world of *ken*. The *myō* was a world of animistic deities (*kami*), Buddhist deities, and the dead, and was totally unknown to humans, and because of that no one could tell what calamities it might bring. How to interact with the *myō* was a major issue of the time. According to the cult of *goryō* that emerged in the early Heian period, the spirits (*goryō*) of those who died disappointed or harboring grudges were very dangerous to the living and needed to be appeased. A typical example was Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), introduced

132 Tajiri 2011.

in Chapter 6. After his death, fires started by lightning strikes, earthquakes, and other misfortunes beset the capital of Kyoto, and members of the Fujiwara clan died one after another in an epidemic. Terrified, people believed that the spirit of Michizane had become the god of thunder and caused such calamities. His wrathful spirit was eventually deified as Tenjin (“god of the heavens”) and Tenman Shrine founded where he came to be honored as a god of learning.

While the *goryō* were the spirits of special persons of influence who died unnaturally or in a state of anger, in those times the bodies of ordinary people who died were not really buried at all but were taken to the hills or other remote places and left there. Along with blood, death was abhorred as a form of defilement. Dead bodies were seen as something fearsome and beyond all human power; people simply tried to distance themselves from death. Among the elite of the Heian period, with the spread of the practice of *onmyōdō* (“the way of yin and yang”; a traditional Japanese esoteric cosmology), avoiding defilement became paramount. The various practices that governed daily life included *monoimi* (confinement to one’s house on an unlucky day) and *katatagae* (changing directions to avoid the worst direction on a given day). The rituals of esoteric Buddhism played a role in exorcising evil spirits.

The medieval period was a time when productivity increased, unutilized land was cleared, and fears of evil spirits somewhat lessened. Priests of the Ritsu and Pure Land sects of Buddhism were believed to be unafraid of defilement and possess a power transcending it; they buried dead bodies and their teachings produced new views of death. But the conviction that the otherworldly realm of *myō* had very significant meaning remained unchanged. Dreams were considered to be channels to the world of *myō*. The *Eshin-ni monjo*, letters of the nun Eshin, wife of Priest Shinran (1173–1263), recounts a famous episode in which Shinran, when he confined himself to the Rokkakudō temple for meditation, had a dream in which Prince Shōtoku (Asuka-period [593–710] statesman known for promoting Buddhism) appeared. The dream led Shinran to enter the Pure Land sect founded by Priest Hōnen. The same document also relates that Eshin realized, through her dream, that Hōnen was an incarnation of Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva and Shinran an incarnation of Kannon (Avalokiteshvara) Bodhisattva. This may sound nonsensical from today’s point of view, but at least in the medieval period, there was nothing strange about it.

Understandings of the world of *myō* thus underwent some changes with the passage of time. In the early modern period, the thisworldly world of *ken* gradually grew large—as a result of secularization. Toward the end of the medieval period the newly arrived Christianity spread its influence, and together with other religious forces, including the adherents of the True Pure Land sect who rose up against samurai rule (the Ikkō-shū uprising), it came to exert significant political influence. At first glance it seemed as if the *ken* world had been governed by the realm of *myō*, but, on the contrary, be it

in Christianity or in the Ikkō group, because of the emphasis on thisworldly activities the realm of *ken* expanded. Powerful rulers like Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu were deified, which also helped to expand the *ken* realm. With the infiltration of Confucianist morality, Buddhism too began actively teaching the ethics of thisworldly life.

So the territory occupied by *myō* appeared to shrink, but not to a degree that would allow it to be ignored. The denizens of the *myō* realm—apparitions (*yōkai*), ghosts (*yūrei*) and so forth—were given visible and dwarfed forms. They were, to borrow Jean-Luc Marion's language, more "idols" than "icons" and, rather than leading us to something that lay beyond them, they themselves were seen as having intrinsic substance and representation.

Even in early modern times, interest in the *myō* realm remained strong. This-world-centered systems of thought asserting the standpoint of reason did appear—like Arai Hakuseki's Confucian rationalism and Yamagata Bantō's materialism—rejecting the notion of the spirit world of *myō*. But the Japanese intellectual world as a whole did not move in that direction. Indeed, Motoori Norinaga's National Learning and Hirata Atsutane's Revival Shintō (Fukko Shintō) that developed from Norinaga's ideas actively accepted the *kami* of animist belief and showed deepened interest in the world of the dead.

"The world of the dead," wrote Motoori Norinaga, "is a place of filth and defilement. We inevitably will go there when we die, and therefore, nothing in this world is more grievous than death."¹³³ He did not attempt to define the afterlife, but Hirata Atsutane went beyond Norinaga to try to build his distinctive view of death. He wrote: "The realm of the dead (*myōfu*) is not located separately from this world (*utsushi kuni*). It is located anywhere, right within this world, but it is so vague and mysterious that we cannot see it."¹³⁴ Hirata, thus refused to locate the afterlife in an underground or nether world or in the remote Pure Land; he superposed it upon this world, locating it very close to us. Specifically he wrote that the spirits of the dead "rest in peace in *yashiro* shrines or *hokora* (small local shrines) and if they are not there, they rest on the *okutsuki* (Shintō graves)."¹³⁵

From the ancient times, the dead had been considered fearsome and been isolated in places remote from human habitation. As the *ken* realm became dominant, however, the dead began to draw nearer to the world of the living. The dead came to be seen as not necessarily fearsome but close by, sometimes bringing benefit to the living. In this way, Atsutane's view of the dead was strongly tinged with early modern elements. From this argument one can catch a glimpse of his specific intention to seize the prerogative of holding funerals from Buddhism by establishing a Shintō view of the afterlife, which

133 Motoori 1991, p. 90.

134 Hirata 1998, p. 166.

135 Hirata 1998, p. 172.

had been not clear until then. Indeed, toward the end of the Edo period Shintoists led a flourishing movement to spread the adoption of *shinsōsai*, or Shintō-style funerals.¹³⁶ This suggests how central an issue the funeral ritual is in religion.

So intellectual history in the early modern period does not appear to have proceeded simply in the direction of the rational. Hirata Atsutane's revival of the "ancient way" later formed the core of the "revere the emperor, expel the barbarians" movement, leading to the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate and the restoration of direct imperial rule in 1868. It can be said, therefore, that the *myō* world not only maintained its important position in the early modern period but had significant meaning in modern times as well.

In the modern period, however, interest in *myō* was concealed. The members of the Hirata school were expelled from the new Meiji government and the advocates of civilization and enlightenment represented the new intellectual mainstream. The *myō* realm was erased—dismissed as a relic of the past—at least from the surface of public order. In their public world, intellectuals accepted the learning and sciences of the West and belittled the *myō* world as superstitious, resulting in a monistic *ken*-centered world. Some tried to reject the polytheistic *myō* world in their eagerness to come closer to the world of Christianity with its absolute God. The *shinbutsu bunri* policy of separation of Shintō from Buddhism, introduced after the Meiji Restoration, severed connections with the vague realm of *myō* and sought to cultivate "rationality" by inventing the repackaged "ethical religion" (a morality) of State Shintō. In Buddhism, too, mainly the Pure Land sects and Zen, which aspired to be rational religions that would attract believers even in the West, the *myō* realm was eliminated from the surface.

The presence of the *myō* world, however, did not vanish. It remained in the backdrop, as ever, even after being erased from the public and surface world of discourse. And access to it remained the preserve of Buddhism. Shintō did not succeed in seizing the right to hold funerals and thereby become involved in the *myō* world. Even in modern times Buddhism has continued to monopolize funerals. In the world of Buddhism, "funeral Buddhism" (*sōshiki Bukkyō*) was considered a relic of the preceding period and something that had to be concealed because it had nothing to do with the essence of Buddhism. However, it was precisely this "funeral" business that was the most important role Buddhism played in the modern period.

In other areas, too, the *myō* world performs a crucial role, though perhaps not recognizable at first glance. For example, the modern emperor system is sustained by the mysterious living-god quality of the *myō* world that cannot be explained by rational theories. The emperor won the strong support of the people for the first time in Japanese history—to such a degree that they worshiped the emperor. This form of the *myō* was no relic of the past, but its exemplar in decidedly modern form.

136 Under Tokugawa period law, only Buddhist temples had been permitted to hold funerals.