

# Maruyama Masao on (Failures of) Transition in Japanese History

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**M**aruyama Masao 丸山眞男 (1914–1996) was one of the most influential thinkers of twentieth century Japan; he also exerted—and still exerts—a significant influence on the reception of the Japanese history of ideas world-wide. This is true with regard both to his works on Tokugawa intellectual history, and to his political essays about post-World War II Japan.

Maruyama's writings, while covering hundreds of years of the history of Japanese thought, have an essential characteristic in common: they all focus on certain periods in the past or in Maruyama's own time when essential historical changes either actually occurred or, on the contrary, could have occurred but "lagged behind." In his writings he was looking for both the forces that could spur on Japanese society in its "progression" and the obstacles that had "delayed" it.

Terms like "lagging behind," "delay" or "progression" presuppose a specific understanding of the course of history which is of a clearly philosophical character. Although these philosophical presuppositions can only be understood from the point of view of 19th century European historical thought, this philosophical background to Maruyama's early career is rarely examined in detail. This is quite understandable in the light of the practical character of his approaches, which certainly do not constitute a philosophical "system." Still, omitting the philo-

sophical aspects from an analysis of his thought can lead to the failure to recognise the interconnectedness of his readings of different periods in Japanese history.

In this paper I will examine (1) Maruyama's interpretation of Tokugawa Confucianism, focusing on the separation of "public" and "private" as it appears in Ogyū Sorai's 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728) work and disappears in Motoori Norinaga's 本居宣長 (1730–1801) writings. Proceeding to his understanding of his own time, (2) I present his explanation of the relationship between state and individual in Japan during and after World War II, pointing to the links between that analysis and Maruyama's studies on the Tokugawa era. Finally, (3) I turn to the examination of the introductory notes of Maruyama's 1948 university lectures in which, as I will show, the two aspects of the history of ideas and contemporary political and social theory are directly linked. I will argue that the scheme in which he saw history in the first decades of his career comes close to the Hegelian interpretation of historical progress, while his understanding of the role of individuals in this process develops the Hegelian system into new directions. With regard to these new viewpoints, I will point out similarities between Maruyama and Max Weber in terms of their understanding of the role of historical sciences in shaping history and society.

### “DIVIDED CONSCIOUSNESS”

Maruyama became a university lecturer with the support of Nanbara Shigeru 南原繁 (1889–1974), who wanted to develop a new method of teaching the history of ideas free from the influence of nationalist government propaganda.<sup>1</sup> The first studies Maruyama published in the early 1940's were not simply free from such influences: in these works he took a stand against extreme nationalism, not by criticizing it, but by looking for its roots in late Tokugawa Japan.

1. On the atmosphere of the time cf. MARUYAMA 1974, xvi ff. Cf. KARUBE 2008, 75ff.

As Kersten remarks, Maruyama found it boring to study the history of thought in itself,<sup>2</sup> and indeed, what he started to investigate was much less the pure history of ideas of the past. He was looking for paths that led from that past to his own day, proving that these stretched much further back in time than it would seem in the framework of any interpretation that accepts (or is based on) the idea of simple turning points in history like “revolutions” or “restorations.” Thus, Maruyama emphasized the unbroken continuity of history, but not as a homogeneous flow of events: the background to this analysis lay in 19th century German dialectical interpretations of history. While I cannot attempt to give an overview of German thinkers who influenced Maruyama’s thought,<sup>3</sup> it is important to stress that he is known to have been significantly influenced by a wide range of authors, including 19th century philosophers of history and society, as well as their turn-of-the-century successors, thus historical and social thinkers like Karl Mannheim or Max Weber; I will return to the latter later in this paper.

As it is usually mentioned in the literature on Maruyama, Marxist theories had an important effect on his thought in the 1930s. It must be stressed, however, that Japanese Marxism was not a merely economic approach to the understanding of society but,

[p]aradoxically enough, Marxism as a grand theory of modern idealism, *which bore the name materialism*, performed for the Japanese academic world the role that the subjectivist stream of epistemology from Descartes to Kant had played in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Also because of this characteristic of Japanese Marxism, and especially in the context of the present investigation, it is not the “idealist” understanding of Marxism, but the direct Hegelian influence that is much more important to us now. To quote Maruyama again,

2. KERSTEN 1996, 51.

3. For an outstanding overview cf. SEIFERT 2017. For a comparative analysis on Weber and Maruyama cf. TAKIMURA 1987.

4. MARUYAMA 1974, xxiv. Maruyama’s emphasis.

it was only at the university that I first encountered German idealism, more specifically when I attended the seminar of Professor Nambara in which he used Hegel's *Vernunft in der Geschichte* as a textbook. Hegel attracted me enormously... and it was largely under the stimulus of such works as *Phaenomenologie des Geistes* that I wrote my pre-war articles on the intellectual history of Tokugawa Japan.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly *shisōshi* (思想史, “history of ideas” or “history of thought,” usually translated as “intellectual history”<sup>6</sup>) is in this context very closely related to the understanding of “history” as such in general. This does not mean that the terms “history” and “history of ideas” would be synonymous, or that non-ideological factors would not be decisive in the course of history. To understand Maruyama's standpoint, however, it is important to recognize his conviction that ideas do play a central role in historical processes. This understanding has its roots in 19th century German thought and its 20th century legacy, as in the views of Weber, according to whom “very frequently the ‘world images’ that have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest.”<sup>7</sup> Weberian sociology and its interpretation of history is important in our present context as it locates the sphere of these “ideas” in the functioning of society,<sup>8</sup> a region that was in the focus of Maruyama's interest as well.

The influence of German historical thought, and specifically of its dialectical character, is strongly present in Maruyama's study, “The Sorai School: Its Role in the Disintegration of Tokugawa Confucian-

5. MARUYAMA 1969A, xv. Cf. SEIFERT and SHAMONI 1988, 12, in more detail cf. SASAKURA 2003, 125–34.

6. The term has a broader meaning than that of *Geschichte der Philosophie* in German, or that of “intellectual history” in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. It includes a large variety of “theories,” “concepts” and “notions” in which human understanding of “the world” and man's place in it is manifested.

7. WEBER 1946, 281. On Weber's influence on Maruyama cf. SCHWENTKER 1995, 239ff. and SEIFERT 1999.

8. For such a reading of the Weberian interpretation of history cf. TAKÓ 2016.

ism and Its Impact on National Learning,”<sup>9</sup> published in *Kokka Gak-kai Zasshi* 国家学会雑誌 in 1940. Maruyama opens the work with the Hegelian interpretation of China as the symbol of the “childhood of history.” The cause of China’s unchanging character, he explains, is the lack of real internal tensions.

With characteristic acumen, Hegel’s interpretation strikes the root of the matter: Chinese history remained “unhistorical” despite frequent dynastic changes, not because of internal dissension but precisely because it lacked such dissension. There is surely a close relationship between this and the place Confucianism held in Chinese history.<sup>10</sup>

Maruyama was well aware that for Hegel, China was not simply a country with specific physical borders but the symbol of the “Oriental world” as such. Still, he used the Hegelian verdict on China in a way Hegel himself could never have accepted. Based on Hegel’s idea, he pointed to the difference between the cradle and the heir of Confucian thought, that is, between China and Japan. The difference is that while China remained unchanged in its cyclical history, its heritage was put into movement in Tokugawa Confucianism. Therefore, the first Tokugawa study focused on how Ogyū Sorai turned away from neo-Confucian teachings, basing his thought on the philological study of “classical” Confucian texts instead. Regarding *Bendō* 辨道 and *Benmei* 辨名, Maruyama says:

In these two works Sorai attempted a fundamental reconstruction of Confucianism, which was on the verge of total collapse, by “politicizing” it. Did Sorai actually succeed in rebuilding Confucianism, or did he, on the contrary, in fact hasten its collapse?<sup>11</sup>

Maruyama’s answer is based on a dialectical interpretation of the history of ideas. Sorai, as he argues, did indeed “rebuild” Confucian-

9. 「近世儒教の発展における徂徠学の特質並びにその国学との関連」.

10. MARUYAMA 1974, 5.

11. MARUYAMA 1974, 75f.

ism by completely politicizing it,<sup>12</sup> but this meant, *at the same time*, “hastening its collapse.” For what Sorai “completed” in his critique of Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130–1200) “holistic” system was the separation of the “public” (公的) and the “private” (私的) spheres of life, strictly concentrating on the former.<sup>13</sup>

*The disintegration of the continuity between moral standards and nature... culminated in the Sorai school in the liberation of the private or inner life from all rigorism as a result of the sublimation of standards (the Way) in the political.*<sup>14</sup>

However, as Maruyama observes, this separation also had grave consequences with characteristics of the opposite kind: it prepared the ground for a critique of Confucianism in general. Motoori Norinaga, father of the school of National Learning (国学) caused “the principle of literature (that is, the sense of *mono no aware*)... to be validated as it stands as a political principle,” thus “politicizing literature.”

However, from the opposite viewpoint, the fact that literature was politicized while remaining literature meant that politics was aestheticized. Paradoxically speaking, it meant the “depoliticization” (*Entpolitisieren*) of politics. This is not just a paradox.<sup>15</sup>

Not just a paradox, as for Maruyama it was this internal tension, this dialectical chain of concepts reflecting each other in Tokugawa thought, that made it possible for an “Oriental” mode of thought to set off towards something new. This was something that earlier could only be observed in “Western” societies. By way of the change represented by Sorai, Confucianism took a step that it could not have taken through thousands of years in China. But this same step also constituted one of the last stages of Japanese Confucian thought, which was

12. MARUYAMA 1974, 92.

13. Cf. SASAKURA 2003, 127, STEVENS 2018, 59f.

14. MARUYAMA 1974, 106. Emphasis on the whole sentence by Maruyama.

15. MARUYAMA 1974, 171.

giving way to a new structure represented by Norinaga that did not defeat the former one but into which, to use the Hegelian expression, the former was “sublated” (*aufgehoben*).

In Sorai’s philosophy, man’s inner sentiments were granted a negative freedom as what may be called the private sphere, but they became the keystone of the philosophy of National Learning. *Thus National Learning inherited the Sorai school’s private, nonpolitical side while completely rejecting its public side.*<sup>16</sup>

The result of the dialectical changes of late Tokugawa times was, he concludes, that politics, history and literature

acquired intrinsic normative standards, the first as “giving peace and security to the people,” the second as “positive proof,” and the third as “mono no aware.” This autonomy of cultural values is the emblematic form of the modern consciousness as a “divided consciousness” (Hegel).<sup>17</sup>

The emergence of this “divided consciousness” is, of course, a step forward in the historical progress of a people, but a step which is characteristically intermediate. “Divided consciousness” is, as Hegel wrote, an “*unhappy, inwardly disrupted* consciousness”<sup>18</sup> which

itself *is* the gazing of one self-consciousness into another, and itself *is* both, and the unity of both is also its essential nature. But it is not as yet explicitly aware that this is its essential nature, or that it is the unity of both.<sup>19</sup>

It would be a mistake to read too much into the term “divided consciousness” which Maruyama borrows from Hegel and to conclude, for example, that the relation between the Stoics and the Sceptics—the relation in which Hegel introduces the concept in his *Phenome-*

16. MARUYAMA 1974, 171. Maruyama’s emphasis.

17. MARUYAMA 1974, 184.

18. HEGEL 1977, 126.

19. *Ibid.*

*nology*—would be mirrored one-to-one by the relation between Sorai and Norinaga. What I would like to emphasize is that by stressing the Sorai School’s role in the progress of Japanese history of thought with the dialectical background rooted in the Hegelian system, Maruyama is not simply using Hegel’s framework as a methodological tool. He also says that Japan, by transcending the “childhood of history” represented by China, set off towards the progress observable in the West; that is, Japan took a step towards becoming part of *the same* history which Hegel had in mind: the history of mankind seen as one undivided progression, *Weltgeschichte*. For Maruyama, it is this unbreakable chain of history that Japan has a chance to enter by leaving its “childhood” behind, and this can only happen by way of the internal conflict displayed in the relation of the Sorai School and National Learning. Regarding the undividedness of this *Weltgeschichte*, it was, of course, the same unity that Marx was talking about when he assigned a central importance to *Weltverkehr* in his description of the capitalist mode of production. Still, as Kersten put it, “Maruyama at no stage attempted to include the materialistic base in the dialectical mechanism. Maruyama’s dialectic was at this stage an Hegelian animal, not Marxist as in the theory of historical materialism.”<sup>20</sup> The situation becomes more complex if we take into account that the “dialectical mechanism” as interpreted by Marx himself was much less deterministic in the sense of the autarchy of economic forces than it was in later (so-called “orthodox”) Marxism. To put it differently, Maruyama did not deny the role of economic forces, but stressed the role of intellectual processes. In this regard, Maruyama’s standpoint lay between that of Hegel and that of Marx, with an affinity to the former. On the other hand, as I mentioned above, Maruyama used the Hegelian tools of interpretation for purposes that were similar to those of Hegel only in a very limited sense. As Sebastian Conrad insightfully put it,

20. KERSTEN 1996, 59.



Maruyama adopted the binary oppositions—progressive West versus stagnating East—as structuring poles of his world-historical interpretation. In the course of describing this opposition, which based the structural defeatedness of East Asia on epistemological grounds, from the perspective of a Japan that had itself already become a historical subject, the connotations of the dichotomy were changed. Japan already had its own Orient to which the pejorative features of this meaning-constituting opposition could be assigned. In this way, Japanese history won, *ex negativo*, a progressive, in some sense “Western” direction.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Maruyama’s investigation of Tokugawa Confucianism followed the Hegelian interpretation of the history of thought only in the sense that he was analyzing it as a continuous, dialectical process of change. This change—as Maruyama saw it—was, indeed, *not* that of the “structure of the fundamental economic elements of society [that] remains untouched by the storms which blow up in the cloudy regions of politics” (Marx).<sup>22</sup> However, this dialectical process of change meant for Japan, as Maruyama interpreted it, a struggle for something the “East” as understood by Hegel could have never reached: a way out of its frozen “childhood,” a way to democracy.<sup>23</sup>

#### “NOT AN ACCIDENTAL PHENOMENON”

Before starting military service in 1944, Maruyama was busy working on the completion of his third essay on the Tokugawa era, “The ‘Premodern Formation’ of Nationalism.”<sup>24</sup> In this work, written in the midst of World War II, Maruyama again stresses the dialectical nature of changes in the Japanese history of ideas, this time in the last phase of the Tokugawa regime. “Before a people can become a nation”

21. CONRAD 1999, 375. [Translation by the author]

22. MARX 1976, 479.

23. In the section on “The sublation of civil society” below, I am going to return to the problematic aspects of Maruyama’s “Westernism” in relation to his views on autonomous human action.

24. 「国民主義の『前期的』形成」.

he starts, “they must actively desire to belong to a common community and participate in common institutions, or at least consider such a situation to be desirable.”<sup>25</sup> Such a situation became “desirable” in Japan in the second half of the 19th century when the country was endangered by foreign powers which it could confront successfully only if it could act as a coherent body. Such a self-defending national unity could, however, hardly be built on the “sectionalism” of the Tokugawa shogunate.

The social structure of Tokugawa feudalism itself... functioned as the decisive obstacle to the formation of a unified nation, and the corresponding sense of national unity. It was also the actual policy of the Tokugawa Bakufu to use this structure to the utmost to prevent the development of such a sense of national unity from below.<sup>26</sup>

The “feudal lords,” being afraid of losing their monopolized authority through the emergence of the consciousness of any lower class, remained *de facto* rulers, while from the need to form a nation there emerged “a demand for the concentration of power” on the one hand, and “a call for its distribution throughout the nation” on the other.<sup>27</sup>

As long as the autonomous existence of intermediary powers impeded the inward union of state and nation, the nationalism that was to overcome these intermediary powers sought to concretize itself in what can be called a dialectical process of unification, simultaneously embodying these two elements: centralization and extension.<sup>28</sup>

This “dialectical process” is, on the one hand, not that of a “spirit”; nor, of course, is it that of the economic structure. It goes on in the social sphere, so to speak, between the two poles of “ideal” and “materialistic” factors influencing the course of history. As it becomes clear

25. MARUYAMA 1974, 323.

26. MARUYAMA 1974, 332f.

27. MARUYAMA 1974, 363.

28. Ibid.

from Maruyama's frequent use of expressions such as "obstacles" or "impeding," he views this course from the perspective of a certain model; i.e., the model of a progression of events that are not happening by chance but *are bound to* happen sooner or later. This model, the reference point from which Maruyama reads Japanese history, is the Western world understood as the sphere where the one and only world history was believed to have reached its peak. As Barshay wrote, "for Maruyama, Japanese history appeared as a succession of thwarted breakthroughs to universality. Japan could have become a fully modern, democratic nation-state, but it did not."<sup>29</sup> The reason for this, however, as Maruyama saw it, was to be found in intellectual elements, namely in the *lack* of certain changes in Japanese intellectual history. He sees Japan as becoming a part of the one and only world history by struggling to become an actor in it as a unified entity. However, in the absence of such a unity formed "from below," that is, in the absence of a change that could be made based on the separation of "public" and "private," the imperial lineage became (or remained) the foundation of Japan's unity. This meant a partial transformation, a grandiose plan of social change from which society as such was excluded.

[T]he fact that the liquidation of the *pouvoirs intermédiaires* was carried out *without the active participation of the popular classes*, and, moreover, by the very elements that constituted those intermediate powers, had a decisive effect on the character of the Meiji innovations intended to give rise to a modern nation-state. In the continuing presence of external pressures, what Fukuzawa Yukichi called "the implantation of the concept 'nation' in the minds of the people of the entire country" now became the urgent task of the Meiji thinkers.<sup>30</sup>

It was at this point that Maruyama closed his study on pre-modern nationalism before the tragic end of World War II and, as I will argue, it was from here that he continued afterwards.

29. BARSHAY 2004, 213f.

30. MARUYAMA 1974, 367. My emphasis.

On August 6th 1945, Maruyama witnessed the devastation of the atomic bomb from a town near Hiroshima.<sup>31</sup> This day almost directly preceded the downfall of the political structure with its imperialist ideologies that had been making the people of Japan believe that “the land of the gods” had the mission to rule other countries. Maruyama was the first to take an intellectual approach to the question of how Japan had been led to such a state of affairs. In his famous 1946 essay “The Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism”<sup>32</sup>, a controversial work, he searches for the causes of ultra-nationalism which “succeeded in spreading a many-layered, though invisible, net over the Japanese people.”<sup>33</sup>

Although this work is rarely examined as part of Maruyama’s writings on the history of ideas, it can easily be read as the continuation of his questioning (in his Tokugawa studies) of how Japan arrived at the circumstances that characterized his own time. Maruyama finds the main cause for the Japanese type of ultra-nationalism in the lack of responsibility in all elements of governmental and social structures. Unlike in the West, where the “technical character” (技術的性格) of the state essentially differs from the moral aspects of the private sphere of life, in Japan the state “never came to the point of drawing a distinction between the external and internal spheres and of recognizing that its authority was valid only for the former.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, as we could add, turning back to the Tokugawa studies, the “implantation of the concept ‘nation’ in the minds of the people,” which for Fukuzawa would have been the task of the “enlighteners,” transformed itself into a kind of continuous “implantation” that reached not only the public but also the private sphere and represented precisely the opposite of “enlightenment,” i.e., nationalist propaganda.<sup>35</sup>

31. Cf. KARUBE 2008, 90ff.

32. 「超国家主義の論理と心理」.

33. MARUYAMA 1969B, I.

34. MARUYAMA 1969B, 5. Cf. CONRAD 1999, 16f.

35. The “liberalism” of the Meiji period, especially that of Fukuzawa Yukichi, is, of

If we attempt to look at Maruyama's views on pre-war nationalism through the lens of his studies on the Tokugawa era, we can say that the Meiji reforms meant, in a specific sense, an official unification of the spheres of "public" and "private" separated by Ogyū Sorai, and thus the legitimization of a "holistic" and undifferentiated structure that was embodied for Maruyama in Motoori Norinaga's teachings. Of course, we find no direct reference to these thinkers in the study on ultra-nationalism; still, we cannot miss Maruyama's emphasis on the relationship between "public" and "private" in the Tokugawa studies on the one hand and in the ultra-nationalism essay on the other.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, recalling what has been said about the relationship between Ogyū and Motoori with regard to these spheres, it might not be far-fetched to refer at this point to the way in which Motoori's views on the essentially Japanese elements of the early myths and novels were (mis)used for the aims of imperialist propaganda from the Sino-Japanese war on.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, if it is said that the "stagnating" character of China as embodied in the "holism" of the "Zhu Xi mode of thought" could not actually be transcended with the changes of the late Tokugawa period, not even with the Meiji restoration, then one can understand imperialist propaganda and the ideology of totalitarianism as such also as a certain kind of "holism," in the sense of being turned inside out compared to that of earlier centuries. For Zhu Xi and his followers it was precisely the overarching scheme of *ri* (理) which unified everything, including—but not limited to—the country and its people, while since the Meiji era it was the political unity of the *kokutai* (国体) that embodied heaven and earth, dissolving all things into itself—including the individual subject. As Maruyama says,

course, in itself paradoxical, as its purpose was to "implant" something "into the minds of the people" which is per definitionem against all kinds of "implantation" from above. (For an insightful formulation cf. HOWLAND 2002, 22. f.) Maruyama is frequently criticized for setting this aspect aside when referring positively to Fukuzawa. (Cf. SAKAMOTO 2001.)

36. Cf. STEVENS 2018, 121f.

37. CALMAN 1992, 54f.

“Those things,” writes Hegel, “that are free in an interior sense and that exist within the individual subject must not enter into the pure view of the law.” It was precisely the sanctity of such an interior, subjective sphere that the Japanese law failed to recognize. On the contrary, inasmuch as the law of the land in Japan arose from the “national polity,” which was an absolute value, it based its validity on inner or contentual, rather than on external or formal, norms and was thus free to operate in all those interior realms from which law in the West had been excluded.<sup>38</sup>

This also has “a converse implication: private interests endlessly infiltrate into national concerns.”<sup>39</sup> This was the way in which personal and national affairs became identified, with the emperor as a symbol for this two-faced unity.

The reason that the actions of the nation cannot be judged by any moral standard that supersedes the nation is not that the Emperor creates norms from scratch (like the sovereign in Hobbes’s *Leviathan*) but that absolute values are embodied in the person of the Emperor himself....<sup>40</sup>

Thus, morality could never be internalized in the individual subject, which means that the value of any kind of action could be measured only on the basis of its relationship to this embodiment of absolute value. “[B]y extending this logic [of relative proximity] to cover the entire world, the ultra-nationalists engendered a policy of ‘causing all the nations to occupy their respective positions.’”<sup>41</sup> Such a process “spiralled upwards from the time of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars,”<sup>42</sup> and lasted until the capitulation in 1945.

As reflected in these brief examples, the characteristic that the Tokugawa studies share with the ultra-nationalism essay is to be found in Maruyama’s interpretative technique, i.e., in his searching for and

38. MARUYAMA 1969B, 6. Cf. STEVENS 2018, 64.

39. MARUYAMA 1969B, 7.

40. MARUYAMA 1969B, 8.

41. MARUYAMA 1969B, 20.

42. MARUYAMA 1969B, 21.

analyzing colliding ambivalences which, not in spite of but actually by their collision, constitute a step forward in the dialectic progress of the history of ideas. The fact that Maruyama saw the nature of historical processes as essentially dialectic becomes clear once more at this point. Similarly to the way Sorai's thought reformed or "politicized" Confucianism and *at the same time* "hastened its collapse," the changes of the Meiji era reformed or "modernized" the Japanese social structure and *at the same time* "hastened its collapse." How convinced Maruyama was of the necessity of the chain of events occurring in this dialectical manner is well proven by the postscript he added to the ultra-nationalism essay in 1956. There he accepts the criticism regarding the one-sidedness of his 1946 views, but categorically denies "that the pathology [he had] outlined in discussing the spiritual structure [精神構造] of the Emperor system is merely an 'exceptional phenomenon' produced by the frenzy of an 'emergency period.'"<sup>43</sup> Instead of going into details, he closes the postscript by quoting Hegel's *Philosophy of History*:

The corruption [of the medieval Church] was not an accidental phenomenon; it was not the mere abuse of power and dominion. A corrupt state of things is very frequently represented as an "abuse".... But when accidental abuse of a good thing really occurs, it is limited to particularity. A great and general corruption, affecting a body of such large and comprehensive scope as a Church, is quite another thing.<sup>44</sup>

Such a quote, used as a symbol of Maruyama's views on a decades-long process in Japanese history, also proves that his references to Hegelian dialectics are not simple phrases taken out of context. Still, it has to be noted here that the "corruption of the medieval Church" was not a mere "spiritual" corruption: Hegel refers at this point to the institutional structure, an aspect that would certainly be in the focus of a "materialistic" interpretation. And indeed, Maruyama was strug-

43. MARUYAMA 1969B, 23.

44. HEGEL 1956 cited by MARUYAMA 1969B, 23. I shortened Maruyama's quotation of the full passage.

gling with the difficulty of finding a balance between the two poles of Hegelian and Marxian thought. However, although he did not try to make a final choice between the two viewpoints but attempted to understand the mutual influence between the different factors, he emphasized the effect of “ideal” factors on “materialistic” ones. Here again we see him approaching the Weberian method as it appears in *The Protestant Ethic*—with the important difference that Weber harshly rejected all accusations of “Hegelianism.”<sup>45</sup>

This way of historical interpretation is the background against which Maruyama’s historical investigations appearing in the studies on the Tokugawa era and his political theory presented in the study on ultra-nationalism are directly connected to each other, and which is of central importance in his thought, reflected not only in the way he understood the past, but also in how he set the tasks of the present.

#### “THE SUBLATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY”

In 1948, Maruyama gave lectures on the Japanese history of ideas at Tokyo University. In his introduction, he explicitly stated that the ideal way to investigate the history of ideas lies between the extremes of Hegelian idealism and Marxist historical materialism.

The weakness of the first [idealistic] view [is that] it loses the historical character [歴史性] of the *history* of thought

Protestantism	}	synthesis [統合] → Hegel
Universalism		

45. Cf. TAKÓ 2016, 236. Maruyama also referred to Weber directly with regard to “the pluralism and irresponsibility of power in wartime Japan” (MARUYAMA 1969C, 125). In his 1949 essay on the “Thought and Behaviour Patterns of Japan’s Wartime Leaders” he quoted Weber’s description of Russian bureaucracy, adding that its characteristics are true not only for the Tsarist system (cf. SEIFERT 1999, 389).



The second view—*reflection theory*—loses the independence [独立性] of *thought*, and while it stresses [the] age-specific uniqueness [時代的一回性] [of thought] it forgets about [its] significance for the present.<sup>46</sup>

These two extremes, i.e., the historical character of the history of thought and its significance for the present, are the two poles between which the individual has to find a way to understand his or her world. “Existence,” Maruyama says, “is social existence, and society is the space in which individual human actions are blended with each other... Human action is neither purely idealistic, nor purely materialistic...”<sup>47</sup> The point Maruyama is making is, thus, not simply that one should be *thinking* between the two extremes, but that one is necessarily living between them. Only by realizing this is it possible to provide a meaningful interpretation of history, and to act in the present according to that meaning.<sup>48</sup> To put it differently, it would be meaningless to examine the history of thought without realizing how that history affects us; on the other hand, we could not properly understand our circumstances without considering them as historically formed (“historically” understood here in a very broad sense, including the history of ideas, *shisōshi*). Thus, what I called Maruyama’s “struggling with the difficulty of finding a balance between the two poles of Hegelian and Marxian thought” above, here becomes a chosen position for an ethical imperative. As Maruyama told his students, referring again to an example from the context of the church, but this time taken from Marx,

[a]ny kind of historical awareness [歴史的認識] is self-awareness [自己認識] as well. As soon as the present comes to a self-critique on the proper level, it becomes able to have an insight into the past (the prerequisite making it possible to correctly understand the past. Marx, *Introduction*

46. MARUYAMA 1998, 5. [All quotes from the 1948 lecture have been translated by the author.]

47. MARUYAMA 1998, 6.

48. For Maruyama’s views on individuals as creators of their history—as opposed to the orthodox Marxist view—in the debate on “subjectivism” (主体性) cf. KOSCHMANN 1981/82, 62.4ff., and KERSTEN 1996, 96ff.

*to the Critique of Political Economy*: “The Christian religion was able to reach an objective understanding of earlier mythologies only when its own self-criticism had been accomplished to a certain degree. Likewise, bourgeois economics arrived at an understanding of feudal, ancient and oriental societies only after the self-criticism of bourgeois society had begun.”<sup>49</sup>

In Maruyama’s eyes, the tragic end of World War II was the event that finally made such self-critique possible for Japan, after the long delay he described in the Tokugawa studies. One of the most striking statements he made in the ultra-nationalism study, also in this regard, was the following:

August 15 1945, the day that put a period to Japanese imperialism, was also the day when the “national polity” [国体], which had been the foundation of the entire ultra-nationalist structure, lost its absolute quality. Now for the first time the Japanese people, who until then had been mere objects, became free subjects and the destiny of this “national polity” was committed to their own hands.<sup>50</sup>

To put it more sharply, this means that Japanese citizens had become free individuals not *in spite*, but *as a result* of the fact that Japan lost the freedom it was fighting for at the time the country was trying to introduce or better “to implant in the minds of the people” the Western notion of “nation state.” Since the Confucian fundament of the Tokugawa regime was shaken, there were different structures, all of which claimed—or have since been claimed—to be struggling for the independence of Japan. Motoori Norinaga already had such a structure in mind when he was developing the intellectual background for an independent Japan, but instead of replacing the adoration of the illusion of a far-away Chinese past with a consciousness of the pres-

49. MARUYAMA 1998, 7. (The quotation is based on MARX 1973, 106. I altered Nicolaus’ translation according to Maruyama’s citation.) On “self-critique” in Maruyama based on the works of Western philosophy cf. UEMURA 2007, 358ff. For a critical reading cf. SAKAI 1998, 68ff.

50. MARUYAMA 1969B, 21. Cf. BARSHAY 2004, 213.

ent, he replaced it with another illusion of the Japanese past. Such was the structure of the Meiji governmental system with all its innovations imported from the West, as it went on implementing these innovations within the legacy of the Tokugawa system. And such was the structure of the extreme nationalist government of the most recent past that, in the name of a powerful Japan, took all actual power from the people as it completely destroyed individual autonomy. There is an unresolvable internal tension between this power structure, still derived from the teaching according to which the authority of the emperor stems from the imperial lineage going back to the Sun Goddess, and individual freedom: a tension that can no longer be eliminated by exalted slogans that are still simply glossing over the conservation of the system's "feudal" (封建的) background. It was not a kind of planned "modernization" that could give way to a real, essential change, but the total collapse which ended the war. But such a change can only be the product of continuous human action. An important "element influencing Maruyama's attention to action was," as Kersten puts it,

the belief that it was only through action that new norms, ideas or values genuinely permeated the individual psyche and became intellectually indigenised.... The individual of postwar Japan had not only to realise his status as an individual, but also formulate values which would propel him to act, as a subjective, motivated entity, to realise and legitimise reform.<sup>51</sup>

Such action, as Maruyama saw it, had never been possible before, either in Tokugawa times, or during the Meiji era, and especially not in the midst of nationalist war-time propaganda. Thus, both the so-called "feudal" structure of pre-modern Japan and the Meiji transition period are topics one has to investigate not (simply) in order to understand them, but in order to actually overcome them, to take part in their "sublation."

51. KERSTEN 1996, 103f.

In the historical circumstances of contemporary Japan it is claimed to be an indispensable task to overcome the deep-rooted remains of feudalism that still characterize several parts of society. However, *at the same time*, it is no longer a case of *modernization* pure and simple that is on the agenda: it is nothing less but the sublation [止揚] of modernity, the sublation of civil society [市民社会]. The historical, subjective power [歴史の主體の勢力] to sublimate civil society has come to appear, internationally and nationally, a power that can no longer be hidden from anyone's eyes.<sup>52</sup>

Maruyama is using here, again, *shiyō* (止揚), the Japanese translation of the Hegelian term *Aufhebung*, designating the process during which a certain level of historical development is transformed into a new one not by being destroyed by it but by becoming a part of it. However, this “sublation” appears here as a “task,” i.e., something that can be consciously completed, that one can choose to do. Here Maruyama is leaving behind the limits drawn by Hegelian dialectics, and also those of historical materialism,<sup>53</sup> while his ideas regarding the role of human beings in the progress of history are, at this point, even closer to the thought of Marx himself in the sense of his *revolutionary* ideas. The events of 1945 created a new tension, a tension that created conditions for the actual change Japanese society had been unable to undergo in spite of its continuous struggles since the 18th century. To make this change happen was the task for the members of society as a whole.

This dual task—modernization [近代化] and present-creation [現代化] *at the same time*—has become the most serious and challenging responsibility of the democratic revolution in our country, but still, this historical context provides such ideal conditions for the scientific awareness

52. MARUYAMA 1998, 7.

53. For Maruyama's call “for the transcendence of Marxism in both political theory and practice” cf. BARSHAY 2004, 233ff.

[科学的認識] of Japanese feudal society that they must be considered uniquely perfect.<sup>54</sup>

Here it becomes clear that Maruyama's Hegelianism did not mean that history would be guided or determined by any kind of external power or "spirit" in the Hegelian sense. What Maruyama emphasized, instead, through his essentially dialectic interpretation of history, was the fact that we are unable to understand our age and the historical significance of our deeds unless we understand and interpret the continuum to which this age belongs, and that we are the actors on whose decisions the future depends. Here we discover another parallel that I have already mentioned in another context, namely that between Maruyama and Weber, this time with regard to the latter's insistence on "value-free" science. Although such a freedom from fixed values is usually labelled "relativism," the considerations behind Weber's call contradict that. The reason why the scientist must put objective tools in the hands of free individuals is, in fact, that this is the only way for those individuals to make responsible decisions. The scientist *as a professional* must be as objective as possible so that those to whom he is providing objective *tools* for their decisions can actually behave as *free* individuals. On the other hand, as an individual subject, i.e., as a citizen, the scientist equally has the very strict responsibility of making the decisions everyone else must make. To put it differently, the fact that the scientist is working objectively as a professional and subjectively responsible as an autonomous individual are not contradictory but, on the contrary, mutually presuppose each other. As Maruyama told his students,

[a]lthough Weber objected vehemently to value judgments getting *mixed* with scientific understanding, that is precisely why he explained that the scientist as a citizen has the responsibility and duty to make his

54. MARUYAMA 1998, 7.

own value judgments clear. He emphasized that what he hated the most was the cloak of political indifference or a relativism of the view of life.<sup>55</sup>

This view is also reflected in Maruyama's post-World War II writings, strongly linking them to his studies on the history of ideas. At a point in his famous *Nihon no shisō* 日本の思想 ("Japanese Thought"), Maruyama analyzes the two-sided character of the Meiji era, i.e., the process of intellectuals' leaving the villages for Tokyo or Tokyo for the West on the one hand, and the masses' staying in the "feudal" towns among the same circumstances as in Tokugawa times. It is in this regard that Maruyama cites Fukuzawa Yukichi's words regarding Toyotomi Hideyoshi's rise:

[It is] like someone's leaving his damp field in the lowlands, moving to dry high country. For himself this might be convenient, but it is not like *bringing soil to the lowlands and thus turning them into dry high ground*. Damp still remains damp....<sup>56</sup>

Applying this quotation to the works by Maruyama that were examined above, we can say that he warned against any kind of interpretation that engenders the illusion of eliminating the "damp lowlands," when we are only moving out of them. Still, what Maruyama most vehemently emphasized was not that "damp remains damp" anyway and that it is only the necessary progress of the times (the movement of a "Spirit," not to mention that of "economic forces") that can change circumstances. On the contrary, in his political essays he stressed that it is our task to actively participate in the "sublation" of the damp land, that it is our *choice* whether we "bring soil" to it or not.

As Maruyama's critics frequently point out, in his understanding this "soil" could only be of "Western" origin. This view, which emerges in many of his writings and was also accepted by Maruyama himself,<sup>57</sup>

55. Students' notes cited by MIYAMURA 1998, 275. [Translated by the author]

56. Fukuzawa Yukichi's *An Outline of Theories of Civilisation* (文明論之概略) cited by MARUYAMA 2010, 26. [Translated by the author]

57. Cf. BARSHAY 2004, 214.

is justifiably considered problematic as a certain kind of “orientalism” that applies the Western cliché of “Oriental stagnation” to all parts of Asia *except* Japan. Koyasu Nobukuni makes a critical remark on the same issue when he marks the two poles of a more or less homogeneous period of “theories of modernization” (*kindaikaron* 近代化論) with Fukuzawa Yukichi on one end and Maruyama Masao on the other.<sup>58</sup> Due to the tension between Maruyama’s struggle for individual autonomy based on Western notions and this kind of “orientalism” that goes, as it seems, hand in hand with it, there emerges a kind of internal “dialectic” within Maruyama’s thought as well. As Rumi Sakamoto writes,

[d]espite Maruyama’s representation of the modern subject as a free, autonomous, and objective existence that stands outside an ideology, it is in fact dependent on the external context of the discourse of civilisation and modern nation-states, which developed as a part of the modern European self-consciousness.<sup>59</sup>

The consequences of this internal tension are evaluated differently in the literature on Maruyama’s works. However, it must be admitted by any approach to Maruyama’s oeuvre, critical or not, that the same ideas that helped him examine the traditional schemes of Japanese thought were themselves also schemes, having their own limitations and presuppositions which were, indeed, significantly different from those of Japanese thought, but in many ways also significantly more rigorous than the latter.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

My purpose in this study was to examine the philosophical presuppositions in the background of Maruyama’s early interpretations concerning certain central transition periods of Japanese his-

58. KOYASU 2003, 144.

59. SAKAMOTO 2001, 153.

tory. Using the example of his studies on the Tokugawa era and the 1946 essay on ultra-nationalism, I pointed to the interconnectedness of these views, constituted mainly by the mentioned presuppositions stemming from European philosophy of history, primarily in Hegelian dialectics. I argued that it was on the basis of these concepts that Maruyama refused to accept any sudden, programmatic “reform” as an actual change in history. As it was shown, his studies in the 40s and the early 50s were significantly influenced by Hegel, while I also pointed to the ambiguity of Maruyama’s application of Hegelian dialectics, stressing the importance of his understanding of the human actor as a conscious creator of his or her history. This notion, which was already present in the Tokugawa studies and gained central importance in his writings after World War II, obviously transgresses the Hegelian limits of human action. At this point, the revolutionary ideas of Marx have a much more significant effect on Maruyama’s views of history. In this sense Maruyama was, very similarly to Max Weber, taking a position “between the two extremes” of idealism and materialism. In this respect, Maruyama made it his own task to preserve the “historical character” of the history of thought and to stress the “age-specific uniqueness” of thought, *while* at the same time calling attention to “its significance for the present.”

This unity of historicity and “present-creation” (現代化) enabled Maruyama to shed light on his time from a new angle—even if, indeed, he illuminated that present through a “Western prism” that was bound to break light in a specific way. There is no doubt, in fact, that once Maruyama started to investigate Japanese history as a continuous progress towards joining the one and only *Weltgeschichte* as it appears in Hegel’s works, he chose the “West” as a reference point or ideal for his interpretation of Japan. This causes the strong internal tension inherent in his thought. Saying that an Asian country can be part of “world history” already indicates the negation of the Hegelian thesis on Asia as the departing point of history or “unhistorical history.” Still, although this negation did fit into Maruyama’s reading of world



history, a “restart” of world history—or the start of “another” world history—on an “Asian” stage would have been utterly inconceivable for him. This is because such a notion would have made it meaningless to talk about the unity, that is, the *oneness* of “world history,” the unity which Maruyama interpreted Japan as becoming part of. Thus, “paradoxically speaking,” while a *complete* denial of Hegel’s views, i.e., the denial of the existence of one world history, would have meant the denial of Maruyama’s own interpretation of Japanese history, the *partial* denial of the Hegelian system, i.e., the denial of the idea of the “end of history,” was a prerequisite of it. “This is not just a paradox.”

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