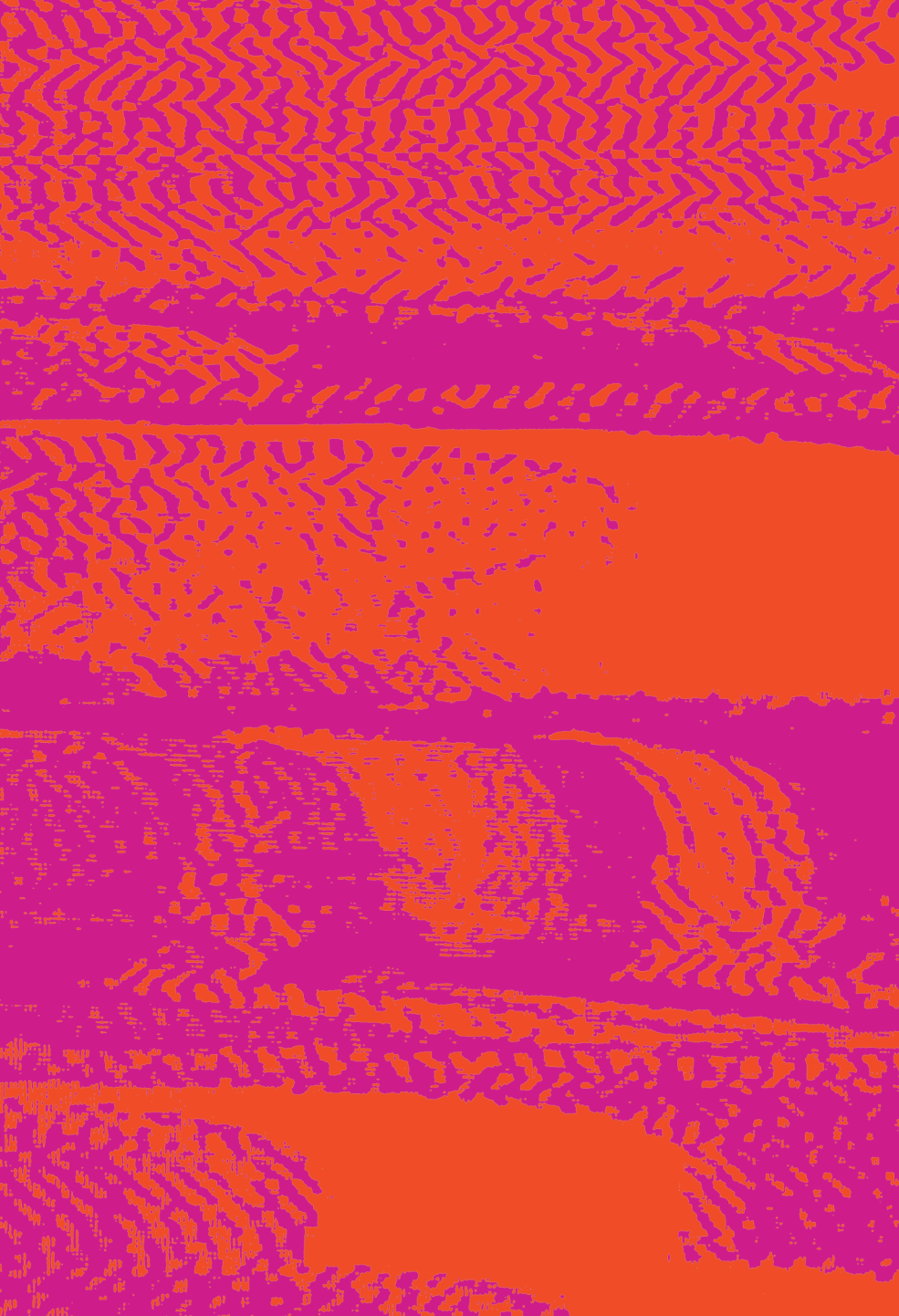


# Universality and Particularity:

## What is Asianness?

Naoki Sakai  
Sun Ge



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## Preface

The publication of this book, *Universality and Particularity: What is Asianness?*, is not a trivial matter. On one hand, this modest and concise publication contains a small segment from the recent thinking of Professor Naoki Sakai and Professor Sun Ge, two scholars I admire greatly. On the other hand, it represents a significant aspect of our practice at the Inside-Out Art Museum. That is we stay attentive to intellectual practices that are parallel to the pioneering practices in the field of contemporary art.

On the afternoon of January 28, 2018, the Inside-Out Art Museum held two keynote speeches and a dialogue under the theme of “Universality and Particularity: What is Asianness?”. This event was the closing program for the exhibition, *Discordant Harmony: Observations of Artistic Practices in East Asia at the Transition between the 1980s and the 1990s*, held at the Inside-Out Art Museum from November 4, 2017 to February 4, 2018.

The two distinguished speakers were Professor Sun Ge, Researcher at the Literature Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Professor Naoki Sakai from the Department of Asian Studies and Comparative Literature, Cornell University. These two scholars, both with long-termed commitment to academic research and articulation of Asia-related issues, presented their latest thoughts from their work in two respective keynote speeches. Following their respective speeches, they carried out a dialogue about the historical process of Asia since the modern period. Their thought-provocative conversation touched upon issues regarding the relevance of Asia as a category of perception in light of the current international political dynamic, and the new reality of a fastly fostered Asian unity. Two professors elaborated on the transcendental perspectives that the notion of Asia could provide in terms of entering our regional histories, and of re-examining the issues left out in the assumed relationship between universality and particularity.

Both the exhibition and this academic program were deeply inspired by the original and imaginative intellectual practices in the narrative of Asia by

Professor Sun Ge and Professor Naoki Sakai. In addition to the exhibition *Discordant Harmony*, this discursive event continued to put forward the notion of Asia and Asian theories as an intellectual horizon. As such, they have the potential to problematize existing categories and orders, and thus provide windows into the contemplation of subjectivity. We also wish to fully recognize the significance of the predicaments we have encountered in the practice of Asia and their historical origins, through this intellectual journey.

After the event, Professor Naoki Sakai's entire lecture script, only half of which was delivered during his speech due to the time constraint, has been translated into Chinese. Both his complete English text and its Chinese translation are published in full length in two separate editions. At the same time, we have transcribed the speech of Professor Sun Ge, and invited her to revise the transcription. Professor Sun has expanded her talk and contributed the expanded version to this publication. Therefore, although this is a small book, it is of no light weight. I would like to thank both scholars for their willingness to accept my invitation to the event without knowing me before. They have committed themselves to a meaningful dialogue in Beijing and allowed us to create this publication out of this occasion. I am grateful to both of them.

Inside-Out Art Museum is dedicated to developing a locally grounded practice in the long run. Being locally committed doesn't mean confining oneself to a place defined by its immediate space and time. The Chinese perspective that we concern ourselves with is one that's part of a global horizon. This means that we are interested in China within multiple connectivities. From this perspective, we maintain our connections with all corners of the world and with our own historical process. In the day-to-day practice of the museum, I intend to open up more possibilities and pathways to better understand ourselves and to better understand our historical origins and the ideological foundations on which we stand. The publication of this small book represents such anxieties and aspirations. It is our hope that with the making of such a publication, we are able to take a small step along a prolonged journey.

Carol Yinghua Lu  
Beijing, April, 2018

# **What is Asia? On *Anthropological Difference***

Naoki Sakai

I would like to begin my presentation with an expression of gratitude to the organizers of this event, Director Carol Yinghua Lu, Curator Tiange Yang, and my longtime friend, Professor Sun Ge. It is indeed a great honor to be given the opportunity to speak as a part of the project “Discordant Harmony.” I understand that many important topics have been raised, analyzed and discussed in this project, of which I only know a small part; since I cannot touch upon too many issues within the time allotted, please allow me to concentrate on two questions today. I tentatively formulate the first question in terms of “‘What is Asia?’ with regard to the problems of *anthropological difference* and theory.” If time still remains, I will deal with the second question by addressing issues of political aesthetics surrounding those of sentiment and fantasy, in relation to the general tendency sometimes referred to as “the inward-looking society” observed in many post-industrial societies, including Japan, nowadays.

I  
For more than a century, we have often observed that the nations of democratic parliamentarianism repeatedly move, quite frequently, in and out of quasi-fascistic political formations. The United States of America is no exception to this general tendency among nation-states. 15 years ago, immediately after the event of 9/11 – indeed, I am not talking about the Chilean coup d’état in 1973 but the September 11 attacks organized by the Islamic terrorist group al-Quida – American society was over whelmed by a jingoistic fever in which an extreme form of patriotism dominated mass media and public opinion. Under such a political climate, I prepared a manuscript for a public talk. It was this quasi-fascistic atmosphere that compelled me to write and publish it in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. Before its publication, I delivered its abbreviated version orally at the University of California at Irvine in June 2002. When I gave this lecture, I noticed

that there were comparatively few Asian or Asian American students in the audience. The few students of apparently Asian-background who attended my lecture did not stay until the end. It was obvious that Asian and Asian American students were suffering the tremendous sense of insecurity at that time. The high degree of anxiety was also observed among the students of non-European ancestries at Cornell University around that time.<sup>1</sup>

In less than 15 years, another quasi-fascistic political formation has returned. Today, I would like to approach the topic of fascistic formation and politics of minorities from a different perspective. Thereupon let me go back in historical time to the early 1930s when we were overwhelmed by jingoistic fever and the patriotic rhetoric of anti-immigrant racism.

It was an era, somewhat not dissimilar to ours, when the word “Asian” carried its emotive and sentimental connotations in conjunction with the populist idiom “Europe for the Europeans.” A weird collective belief, thanks to which such an idiom gained wide popularity, convinced the public that European civilization was in crisis because it was somewhat contaminated by Asian and African elements coming from the outside of Europe. European public accepted this belief even though they could not tell how the geographic territory of Europe could be identified, where Europe ends and non-Europe begins culturally, politically, racially or ethnically, on what ground the civilizational or cultural identity of Europe could be asserted in the same manner as that of a nation-state in terms of territorial borders marking the outer limits of Europe. They knew that Europe was not a nation, yet they were willing to confuse the identity of Europe with that of a nation such as Germany. As we know, Jewry was projected as a symbolic sign and evidence of the contamination of Europe by non-Europeans, and movements demanding the cleansing of the European civilization of contamination by cultural, civilizational and ethnic parasites gained wide and fervent support in many countries in Europe.

<sup>1</sup> A part of this manuscript was published in *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2010, pp. 441–464.

Because, more than once, I have discussed the formation of this fantastic vision called “Europe” and how it became such an important word elsewhere, please allow me to by-pass many questions political, sociological, religious, and cultural concerning Eurocentrism today and instead concentrate on one topic: the peculiar affinity between Europe and theory. Furthermore, while acknowledging that it is equally feasible to discuss it in conjunction with Africa or Americas, let me approach the problematic nature of Europe from the perspective of Asia. In other words, what I want to pursue today is a question of Asian theory and European humanity.

If not completely oxymoronic, the pairing of theory and Asia, as in Asian Theory for instance, may strike many readers as a sort of quirk or a defamiliarizing trick. At best, it can have the effect of exposing the presumption often taken for granted in fields dealing with some aspects of what we understand in the name of Asia, namely that theory is something we normally do not expect of Asia. Precisely because this sense of oddity invoked when theory is associated with Asia is no more than a certain presumptive or conditional reflex, neither theory nor Asia receives rigorous scrutiny; both are by and large left rather vague in conceptual articulation in this instance. Rarely have we asked ourselves why we are not unsettled about this feeling of incongruity, where this discomfort derives from, or how one could possibly explicate reasons for our taking this underlying presumption for granted. As long as it remains presumptive and refuses to be further articulated conceptually, I suspect that it turns into something one might well call a “civilizational spell,” and it will continue to cast a curse on us. In other words, we will remain haunted by this presumption about theory and Asia. In this chapter, you will find a brief meditation on how we might disentangle ourselves from this spell.

So, why do we feel odd about the unexpected combination of theory and Asia in the first place? Or, with more of an emphasis on our analytical attentiveness, how can we manage to evade a sense of oddity about the fact that we are accustomed to feeling strange about the combination of theory and Asia?

It must be said that there have been some attempts to explicate why theory and Asia do not go hand in hand; quite a few writers have attempted to offer some reasons or justifications for it, even though, since the end of the Second World War, only a comparatively small number of openly conservative or reactionary thinkers have dared to justify why Asians or non-Europeans are disqualified to speak or conceptualize theoretically. Yet, as the common sense prevalent in academic institutions in the North Atlantic as well as Asia holds it, it has been widely upheld that what is called “theory” is somewhat proper to Europe, and later, as the United States assumed its global stature, also to the North Atlantic.

In the early 20th century, a number of prominent intellectuals addressed the question of Europe’s commitment to theory. Immediately Paul Valéry and Edmund Husserl come to mind. For example, Husserl argued that Indian or Chinese philosophy could hardly be regarded as authentically “philosophical” because the life attitude that Indian and Chinese philosophers embodied was not genuinely “theoretical.”<sup>2</sup> For Husserl, Europe was not merely a geographic category; the geographic territory ascribed to it is far from adequate to define it. Unlike “empirical anthropological types” such as the Chinese, Indian, Eskimos, or even the Gypsies roaming around territorial Europe, he continued, Europe is a historical unity of peoples that shares a certain kinship or modality of being human, a European humanity, which distinguishes them from humanity in general. And it is absolutely impossible to conceive of this European “man” without his commitment to theory, which has been handed down in the name of philosophy from the ancient Greeks through to the 20th century. Of course, here is an archetypical declaration of *anthropological difference*, without which the idea of European humanity would be unintelligible.

For Valéry and Husserl, theory was undoubtedly something that characterized the European Spirit or the spiritual shape of Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Husserl repeatedly argued that theory is exclusively European. See, for instance, “The Vienna Lecture” included as an appendix to *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, D. Carr trans., Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1970, pp. 269–299.

They both referred to the crisis of theoretical or philosophical reason on the grounds that the Europeans cannot fashion themselves as such without a commitment to theory. What they perceived in the 1920s and 1930s was a crisis of the European man, the widespread reality all over Europe that Europeans were ceasing to be European in this specific regard. In other words, they were horrified that Europeans were getting less and less distinguishable from such anthropological types such as the Chinese and the Indians.

To my knowledge, the statement that we normally do not expect theory from Asia has been put forth on a number of occasions, and some people – Valéry and Husserl included – have wanted to raise this issue as part of their assessment of the contemporary world.

What is significant about the historical mission of European humanity for Husserl, for instance, is that, in his late works, notably his posthumous work collected and compiled under the title of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, the entire venture of his phenomenology was reformulated as a historical movement of the European spirit, as a teleological project that was at the same time a recourse to the past origin of European humanity on the one hand and an infinite ecstatic self-overcoming in the future on the other. Clearly, just before his death and under extreme political adversity, Husserl wanted to present his phenomenology as a historical embodiment of the mission for European humanity, and he attempted to speak as the ultimate representative of the spiritual shape of Europe. Yet, his Eurocentric mission seems plagued with a number of political and philosophical contradictions which I would like to explore in order to indicate the issues involved in my larger project “Dislocation of the West.”

Let me start by offering a brief historical assessment of Husserl’s ambiguity about racism and the international background of the early 1930s. We cannot overlook that he wrote about the crisis of European humanity in the political climate of fascism. It is more than probable that he offered his diagnosis of the crisis of European Sciences as a condemnation of fascism in Europe.

As soon as the Nazi Party dominated the *Reichstag* of Germany in March 1933, it passed a number of legislation including the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. These were measures aimed at excluding anti-Nazi and non-Aryan elements from public institutions such as universities, schools, the judiciary, and the civil service. These Nazi policies were in accordance with the populist outcry of “Europe for the Europeans,” that was spreading all over Europe around that time. Indeed, the life of Edmund Husserl, an internationally renowned philosopher at Freiburg University, was deeply affected even though he was already in retirement from 1928 from a position of professor in philosophy, one then inherited by his equally renowned student, Martin Heidegger, himself a Nazi Party member. Being a Jew born in Moravia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Husserl was denied access to university libraries and was no longer allowed to publish in Germany as a result of these newly-implemented Nazi policies.

The rise of National Socialism in Germany, or more generally of Fascism in many European countries, Latin America, and Japan, provoked a widespread fear, not only within Europe and the Americas, but also in East Asia. As I have discussed elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> in Japan, for instance, a nation-wide anti-Fascist movement was organized against the dismissal of Takigawa Yukitori, only two months after the Nazi ascendancy to the national state. Minister of Education Hatoyama Ichirō – grandfather of Hatoyama Yukio, a recent prime minister of Japan (2009-2010) – dismissed Professor Takigawa Yukitori from the Faculty of Law at the Kyoto Imperial University for his alleged sympathy with Marxist scholarship and for his supposedly critical attitude toward family morality. In the same month of that year – May 1933 – Heidegger’s *Rektoratsrede*, rector’s address, was widely covered by Japanese mass media, and leading intellectuals of the day, Tanabe Hajime, Miki Kiyoshi, Tosaka Jun, Shinmei Masamichi and others wrote alarmingly about the rise of Fascism in Europe.

<sup>3</sup> “Transpacific Complicity and Comparatist Strategy,” in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2009, pp. 159-207.



It is easy to detect the sense of urgency with which Japanese intellectuals received the news of a Fascist resurgence around this time “*fassho*” was first coined in the Japanese vernacular and began to be used to denote the contemporary global trends towards ultranationalism and the theories of racial purity and, for the rest of the 1930s, the topic of Fascism continued to dominate Japanese mass media. The public debates about Fascism endured until the Japanese State officially endorsed the leading regimes of Fascist ideologies, Germany and Italy, when it signed the Axis Pact in September 1940, and a few months later other countries including those of the so-called Clerical Fascism – Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Croatia – joined this Pact, although the Japanese leadership was hesitant to openly endorse the ethnic nationalism and racist doctrines prevalent, especially prevalent in National Socialism. Even during the war, Japanese intellectuals and reform-minded bureaucrats except for a few ethnic nationalists such as Watsuji Tetsurō and Nishitani Keiji, whose presence was particularly significant in the history of postwar Japan remained critical of the racial policies of Nazi Germany and the anti-Semitism of Clerical Fascism. Of course, Nazi’s outright disdain for the yellow race made it hard for the Japanese to accept Nazism. But, more importantly, many Japanese intellectuals could not accept the basic tenets of National Socialism because they were concerned about the multi-ethnic imperial order that Japan was creating in Greater East Asia; they advocated the ideas of the East Asian Community and later the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere by claiming that it was Japan’s mission to liberate Asian peoples from the shackles of white supremacy.

In May and November 1935, Edmund Husserl was invited to give lectures in Vienna and Prague. According to Ludwig Landgrebe, Walter Biemel and others involved in the deciphering and compilation of stenographic manuscripts and notes left behind by Husserl, these lectures marked the beginning of the unfinished work we now know as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. One may well recognize in this set of manuscripts a further elaboration of the themes that

Husserl had already discussed in his previous publications, including *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* based upon the lectures he delivered in Paris in 1929. What distinguished the Vienna and Prague lectures from his in Paris was his open confrontation with the political climate of the time. In *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl addressed the question of modernity in philosophy, while in the *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, he reorganized his discussion of a set of topics concerning philosophy's historicity under a new directive or problematic that he summarized as "the crisis of European humanity."

It is not hard to understand why Husserl had to shift his emphasis between his lectures in Paris and those in Vienna. They took place in the midst of the period "Austrofascism" (1934-1938). A fascist fervor broke out not only in Italy and Germany but also in many parts of Europe – Portugal and Austria – which would be followed by Romania, Greece, Croatia, Spain and France. In Portugal, Antonio Salazar became prime minister and introduced an anti-parliamentarian and authoritarian constitution in 1932. In May 1934, Engelbert Dollfuss, then Chancellor, suspended parliamentary government in Austria eight days before Adolf Hitler did the same thing in Germany, and in the following year Dollfuss succeeded in replacing liberal parliamentary democracy with the doctrine of a Christian German corporate state. In July 1936, a civil war broke out between the Republicans who received support from the Soviet Union and Mexico and the Nationalists led by Francisco Franco, supported by Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Portugal, and Austria's Second Republican government. Eventually Spain would be seized under what historians call Clerical Fascism. Countries such as Slovenia, Croatia, and Romania followed suit, and violent anti-Semitism spread all over Europe. On June 10, 1936, a month before the Spanish Civil War started, Moritz Schlick, known as the founding father of Logical Positivism and the Vienna Circle, was assassinated by a deranged student for his affiliation with Jewish intellectuals. This was a year after Husserl's lecture in that city. A Catholic national newspaper *Schönere Zukunft* responded to the Schlick assassination

by insisting that “The Jews should be allowed their Jewish philosophy in their own Jewish cultural institute! But in the chairs of philosophy in the Viennese university in Christian-German Austria, there belong Christian philosophers.”<sup>4</sup> It was in such a political climate that Husserl delivered his lectures in Prague and Vienna. Husserl was a victim of the populist demand for “Europe for the Europeans,” but he did not hesitate to endorse the rhetoric of Eurocentric exclusionism when it was an issue of the spirit of European Humanity.<sup>5</sup>

Before involving ourselves in the reading of these attempts, however, we ought to return to the statement in order to clarify the sense of oddity that radiates from the presumption contained in it.

That we normally do not expect theory of a person if he or she is of Asia is in fact a negative corollary of another statement: theory is something that we normally expect of a person if he or she is of the West or Europe,<sup>6</sup> and the relationship between the first and second statements is generally called a contraposition in logic. Let us note that the first statement implied in this presumption – we normally do not expect theory if the speaker, thinker or knower is from Asia, a native of Asia, or a resident in Asia – is not thematically or primarily about Asia. Instead it is no more than a derivative of the general statement about the West or Europe.

<sup>4</sup>Friedrich Stadler, “The emigration and exile of Austrian intellectuals,” in *Vertreibung der Vernunft The Cultural Exodus from Austria*, F. Stadler and P. Weibel ed. (Wien-New York: Springer-Verlag, 1995), p. 15. Also cited in Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York, Vintage eBook, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>The question of the victim speaking on behalf of the victimizer has been explored in my “Two Negations: Fear of Being Excluded and the Logic of Self-Esteem,” in *Novel*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2004, pp. 229-257.

<sup>6</sup>It goes without saying that the West and Europe are clearly two distinct designations, and it is important to differentiate them historically. However, I must undertake the task of historically differentiating these two geopolitical, cartographic, racial, and/or civilizational terms elsewhere, mainly for lack of space here. Instead, as is commonly accepted in the use of Eurocentrism – one does not bother to fabricate such terms like Westocentrism or West-centeredness to differentiate the West's global domination from Europe's – I would like to allow myself to proceed provisionally in my demonstration in this article as if the West and Europe were interchangeable.

What is at stake in this persistent endeavor to distinguish Europe or the West from Asia is the very identification of the West, for its identity is in fact anxiety-ridden. One of the conditions under which Fascism gained over whelming popularity in the 1930s was the presence of a widespread angst among a certain social strata in many European countries. By the beginning of the 20th century, the mythological vision of Europe and its superiority in the modern international world had been firmly established among the inhabitants of Western Europe. Yet, in terms of cultural capital, economic accumulation, technological skills, and scientific knowledge, the middle and lower strata of European societies were far from self-confident about their putative superiority. As a result, they could easily be seduced by a scapegoating rhetoric. Indeed, in the interwar period, what symbolized the fantastic intrusion of non-Europe or Asia into Europe was the fantastic figure of the Jew. Let us not forget that anti-Semitism in the early 20th century was also a problem of anti-immigrant racism.

Eighty years later, in terms of cultural capital, economic efficiency, technological investment, and scientific knowledge, it is even harder than in the 1930s to claim that the middle and lower social strata of Euro-American societies are inherently superior to non-Euro-American or “non-white” populations. At the beginning of the 20th century, Max Weber asked this question: “Why, only in the West, could such a high level of mathematical and scientific rationality be achieved?” Today, no serious social scientists would even pose such a question, for it has completely lost its relevance. Nevertheless, scapegoating rhetoric is increasingly popular, not only in the United States and some member countries of the EU, but also in Japan.

As a victim of anti-Semitic scapegoating, Edmund Husserl responded to the Nazi vision of European civilization. When he was excluded from the putative membership of European humanity, he protested such fascist populism by reasserting the mission of European humanity, by insisting on a teleological commitment to theory, which he claimed the Chinese or Indians could never afford.

I have worked in the fields of area studies for the last four decades in the United States. They are fields in which the distinction of the West and the Rest has been the primary dogma: even today, some practitioners in these fields too often fashion themselves as Westerners, yet are they committed to the mission of European teleology? Are they proud of their theoretical expertise in comparison to that of non-Western scholars?

By now the failure of Husserl's response to fascism is only too obvious. One cannot undermine fascist scapegoating by insisting on anthropological difference between the West and the Rest, by declaring how one is unique, intellectually or culturally, in contrast to the non-West. Neither can an Asian intellectual effectively critique Eurocentrism with the uniqueness of Asian tradition and culture in contradistinction to the West. What must be kept in mind under the climate of fascist populism is that anthropological difference, the very distinction of European humanity and Asian humanity, is essentially and in the final analysis a figure of *ressentiment*.

However, as a matter of fact, the derivative character of the first statement in relation to the second is inherent in the designation of "Asia" itself.

As Takeuchi Yoshimi, a sinologist specializing in modern Chinese literature, observed more than half a century ago, the East – *Tōyō*, the Chinese compound for the Orient as opposed to *Seiyō*, the Occident – which he more or less assumed to be the representative of the Rest of the world, arrived at its self-consciousness as a consequence of its defeat by the West or Europe.<sup>7</sup> During his college days in Japan in the 1930s,

<sup>7</sup> For Takeuchi's discussion of Asian modernity, see Naoki Sakai, "Critique of Modernity: the Problem of Universalism and Particularism," in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 87, no.3, 1988; or its Japanese translation in *Gendai Shiso*, vol. 15, no. 15, 1987; Takeuchi Yoshimi, "*Chūgoku no kindai to nihon no kindai* (Chinese modernity and Japanese modernity)" (originally in 1947), in *Nihon to Ajia*, Chikuma Shobo, Tokyo 1993, pp. 11-57; also published under a different title "*Kindai toba nanika* (What is modernity?)," in 1948; English translation, "What is Modernity," in *What is modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, R. F. Calichman trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 53-81.

Takeuchi was immersed in the various readings about Hegel then available; these ranged from the Marxian reading, arguably best represented by Lukács, the Kyoto School readings (Tanabe Hajime, Miki Kiyoshi, and other philosophers of World History), through to modernization Hegelianism in Maruyama Masao, four years junior to Takeuchi, who published during the war but who would become a leading figure of the intellectual world after Japan's surrender. It is no surprise that Takeuchi viewed the historical destiny of Asia in Hegelian terms.

Negativity, without which reflectivity – not reflex, which illustrates the lack of reflectivity essential for self-consciousness to be accomplished – never originated in the East, and the absence of reflectivity was certainly implied in Takeuchi's word "defeat (*haiboku*).” He claimed that the East could never be conscious of itself before it was invaded by Europe. Asia came to its self-consciousness through its defeat. Only through the acknowledgement of its lost autonomy, of its dependence upon and subjugation to the West – or only in the mirror of the West, so to say<sup>8</sup> – could the Rest reflectively acquire its civilizational, cultural, ethnic and national identities. Historically the moment of defeat was actualized in the colonization of Asia, and it is in this respect that the modernity in Asia is unavoidably a *colonial modernity*. Takeuchi observed that, only when Asia was defeated, invaded, penetrated, and subjugated could she be emerged into modernity, so that, in Asia and for Asia, it is impossible to conceive of modernity without reference to colonial humiliation.

However, because of his uncompromising faith in the Enlightenment values of modernity, which could only be concretized in the institutions of the nation-state, Takeuchi could not envision the future

<sup>8</sup>Takeuchi Yoshimi, “*Chūgoku no kindai to nihon no kindai* (Chinese modernity and Japanese modernity),” op. cit., pp. 15-19; “What is modernity?,” in *What is modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, op cit., pp. 55-58.

of Asia – and by implication, the future of the Rest of the world – along with a historical trajectory other than that of historicism. Like many intellectuals of Asia and Europe who had their formative years in the 1930s, Takeuchi had internalized modern historicism to such an extent that, for him, an effective struggle against the colonizing forces of the West could not bypass the creation of national subjectivity. His furtive loyalty to Hegel prevented him from conceiving any other historical trajectory than that of historicism in which the actualization and appropriation of modern values must first require a radical negation of external forces, as well as of its internal heritage of a feudal past. Therefore, to be modern for Asia meant to appropriate the essence of Western modernity by resisting the West outside, and overcoming the reactionary heritage within. In other words, Asia must modernize itself by negating its own past as well as the West. Without any resistance to, or negation of the West, there was no prospect of modernity for the Rest of the world. Where else, he would ask, if not in the midst of a struggle against colonial powers and the oppressive remnants of the past, could one possibly actualize the concrete and practical senses of liberty, equality, and fraternity? He diagnosed Japan's modern history as a case where a genuine negativity was absent. This perhaps explains his excessive idealization of China. He thought that, unlike Japan which had imitated the West to the extent of reproducing its imperialism, China would actualize a truly authentic modernity by negating not only the West's intervention but also the remnants of its own past, such as Confucianism. Yet the dialectic, which he anticipated to lead historical conflicts forward, could not have made sense unless the externality of what Asia should resist had been postulated. For peoples in the Rest, then, modernity was considered a sort of historical movement which spatially consolidated the unity and substantiality of a political grouping called "the nation," by negating external forces, while at the same time temporally constituting itself as a subject, as an agent of self-determination, by continually overcoming its own past. This is why the dichotomy of "development

from within (*naihatsu*)” and “imposition from without (*gaihatsu*)” was the ultimate criterion for Takeuchi’s evaluation of modernity.<sup>9</sup>

In a schematization such as the one operating in his discussion of modernity, the unity of the nation depended upon the externality of what had to be resisted, which was more often than not mapped onto the cartographic plane. Just as with the Japanese invasion of China, that which must be resisted must come from the “outside” of the presumed integrity of the nation. A nation of Asia, such as China, was located within the reach of the West, but the West itself was external to it. The externality of what had to be resisted was thus comprehended in terms of the geographic distance between Western Europe and Asia. For Takeuchi, therefore, the West was postulated as an entity external to Asia, and the possibility that the West could be inherent in the Rest of the world was deliberately foreclosed. Perhaps, more importantly, we must note the other aspect of this foreclosure: deliberately excluded from consideration is the feasibility that the Rest is inherent in the West, the Third World immanent in the First World; just as the West is inherent in the Rest, the First World immanent in the Third world.

Furthermore, Takeuchi neglected two fundamental problems whose significance is recognized all the more nowadays.

Ultimately and in the last instance, is the West a geographic unity, whose contour can clearly distinguish its inside from its outside?

Those who belong to the West are generally recognized as Westerners, and they fashion themselves as Westerners. But how can one possibly distinguish Westerners from non-Westerners? Husserl argued that, even though Gypsies live in “territorial Europe,” they do not

<sup>9</sup> Against American scholars of the Modernization Theory, a number of Japanese social scientists and intellectual historians tried to offer a different model of modernization in the 1950s and 1960s. In “Asia as Method” (in *What is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, op cit., pp. 149-165), Takeuchi referred to Tsurumi Kazuko, who advocated for two distinct types of modernization: the *naihatsu* type “motivated from within” or “development from within,” and the *gaihatsu* type that imitates the outside model or “imposition from without.” As a critical endeavour against American Imperialism, Tsurumi’s attempt and Takeuchi’s endorsement must be appreciated, but what should be called into question is the topic of the inside and the outside underlying this typology.



belong to Europe. Then, among those who supposedly live in the West, who authentically and properly belong to the West?

Takeuchi was determined to view the relationship between the West and the Rest of the world as one of geographic externality, of a border separating two entities; even though he acknowledged the designation of Asia as an instance of colonial defeat, he nonetheless refused to comprehend it as a *relation* of mutual self-reflectivity, or mirroring. What he was totally blind to was the truism, namely, that so many of those self-fashioned Westerners cannot discard their pre-modernity or non-European features. No Westerner is purely or wholly Western. One who is regarded as Western is, after all, one who passes for a Westerner, and it requires a particular configuration of positionalities to do so.

The binary of the West and the Rest is often a matter of class difference and of cultural capital; the differential in the social positionality most often results from factors such as social class, education, and individual culture. Precisely because of the inherent instability of civilizational identity, the supposedly unchanging characteristic of individual's physiognomy, linguistic accent or geographic place of origin is fixatedly sought so as to naturalize and cement an individual's position in the system of classification dictated by the logic of *anthropological difference*. This is the reason that, while very perceptive to the implications of Eurocentricity in so many aspects of life in Asia, Takeuchi could not detect the workings of what elsewhere I have called "the civilizational transference," a mutual constitution of desire between the West and the Rest, in nationalisms in Asia.<sup>10</sup>

Although Takeuchi was unmistakably critical of the modernization theory, he could not avoid the cartographic imaginary that serves as a substratum for knowledge production, namely, the postulate of the area, upon which the modernization theory invariably relied.

<sup>10</sup> See: "You Asians," in *'We Asians' between Past and Future*, K. Kian-Woon, I. Arumugan, K. Chia, Lee Chee Keng ed. (Singapore: Singapore Heritage Society, 2000), pp. 212-246; "Civilizational Difference and Criticism: On the Complicity of Globalization and Cultural Nationalism," in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2005, pp. 188-205.

Therefore, his insight into colonial modernity could never go beyond a hierarchy premised upon the developmental teleology of modernization.

What Takeuchi somewhat shortchanged in his discussion about Asia was the self-reflective postulation of Asia. He failed to acknowledge that, essentially, Asia exists for the West's self-recognition. For peoples living in Asia, there used to be no clear distinction of Asia from Europe. Asia had never been an immediate designation for the Asians and, therefore, it could not have existed for them prior to the occasion of colonial defeat, an occasion that symbolized the very moment of negativity deliberately pinpointed by Takeuchi.

Since Greek antiquity, Asia always meant an ecstatic or outward orientation of Europe; it pointed to an area or people east of Hellenes, so that it was not expected to designate a fixed geographic location, a closed land surface or a determinate social group; instead it was meant to serve as a directional index only from the viewpoint of the Greeks, Europeans or Westerners. However, it is important to remind ourselves that, in the genealogy of Western or European civilization, Asia played a little or no meaningful role from the end of the Roman Empire until the era of Eurocentric modernity, simply because Europe was no more than a provincial periphery to the large metropolitan civilizations of Islam and Mongolia, and the Chinese and Indian Empires. In short, there was no such thing as Europe prior to the emergence of the modern international world and the rise of global capitalism. The idea of the continuity of Western civilization from Greek antiquity to the present, as invented by European racists in the 18th century, is dubious since most of what Western Europe claims today as its heritage from Greco-Roman antiquity was handed down from Islamic civilizations of pre-modern eras and many other non-European origins.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps, it may be misleading to say that the continuity of European civilization from Greek antiquity was invented by European racists, for one of the origins of racism is ascribable to the invention of Europe. See: Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization (The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985, Volume 1)* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

In antiquity Asia was a reference to the Greeks' geopolitical neighbours to the east: in Asia Minor or along the Tigris and the Euphrates; then those along the Indus and the Ganges were included, and eventually as Europe expanded its system of Eurocentric international law through global capitalism and colonialisms, the notion of Asia would extend to those islands in the East Indies, peoples under the reign of the Central Kingdom – China – and even as far east as the Korean peninsula and the islands of Japan. This expansion of Asia and the term's versatility amply illustrate the directional character of Asia, that is, moving away – *ex-static*, meaning a movement beyond or away from the self – from the presumed position of viewpoint.

Thus, Asia marks something reflectively social and cosmopolitan about how Europe could possibly be identified: is it ever possible to designate Europe without a reference to Africa, Asia and the Americas? Asia is an open kind of reference; it indicates the directional *relation* of the viewing subject and the designated object. Of course, the West too is such a directional designation and, in this respect, the East – the polar opposite of the West – and Asia are often considered interchangeable. Thus, when all the historical nuances and accidents are reduced, Asia simply signifies “the East of Europe.” Asia's referential function was based upon Europe's self-referentiality in the sense that to refer to Asia is to indicate the position of Europe or the West self-reflectively.<sup>12</sup> It is the very ecstatic nature of the West itself that Asia reflects upon itself. Neither the West nor the East can be a determinate location; both are a *relative* designation, so that what is determinate about this *relation* is the *microphysics of power relations* which makes the West and the East appear somewhat anchored, natural or preordained. What makes the West or

<sup>12</sup> Let me issue a disclaimer here. I do not believe that there is anything abnormal or exceptional in the derivative nature of the designation “Asia” in relation to Europe. Self-referentiality is impossible without the presence of alterity. Although the use of pronominals may well impose a prejudice on our analysis in this case, it is appropriate to say that “I” is a derivative of “you.” Unless “you” can be postulated, “I” cannot be “here.” See: Nishida Kitarō, “Ware to nanji (I and Thou),” in *Mu no jikaku-teki gentei* (Apperceptive determination of *mu*): *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū*, vol. 6, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo 1965, pp. 341-427.

the East determinate is the very conduct that takes place in these power relations at the very locale in which the West is *bordered* from the Rest. Nevertheless, neither of them is arbitrarily determined since, as Antonio Gramsci argued, these relations are hegemonic.<sup>13</sup> However, instead of the Gramscian term, I want to describe them in terms of the *microphysics of power relations*.

Well into the 19th century, many in Europe knew that there were numerous dynasties, theocracies, traditions and peoples in Asia. Europeans called people in Asia Asians, but they never expected Asians to call themselves so. It was never assumed that the Asians themselves knew they were Asians. Court officials serving the Nguyen Dynasty, Samurais of the Matsudaira clan, and merchants working in the port of Ningbo, must have been aware that they were expected to recognize themselves as subjects of Emperor Gia Long, of the Tokugawa shoguns, and of the Qing emperors respectively, but it is unlikely that they were aware of being Asian. What Takeuchi called “defeat” happened in Asia from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, as a result of which bureaucrats in Vietnam, soldiers in Japan, and schoolteachers in China came to acknowledge that they were all Asians. “Defeat” was not only a matter of competition or rivalry but of self-recognition and identification. Their identity was nothing but the consequence of an “imposition from without (*gaihatsu*).” Furthermore, the “defeat” brought about a distinction between Europe and Asia, the mutually-marked positionalities of Europeans and Asians. And the reign of these mutually-defining positionalities is often called the “colonial power relation.” Therefore, the “defeat” implies global modernity according to which the entire world was reorganized with respect to the modalities of self-recognition. The denotation “Asia” thus symbolizes the relationship of subordination; to call oneself “Asian” is to accept the positionality of servitude.

<sup>13</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoarse and G. Nowell Smith trans. (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 447.

I do not believe, however, that Takeuchi was entirely negligent of this truth about the dialectic of self-consciousness for the Asians. He wrote, "The Orient essentially lacks not only the ability 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, but the Orient also becomes possible there."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Takeuchi stopped short of an ultimate cognition of the political reality in which the demarcation of Asia from Europe as a separate entity, region, people or civilization is not only a consequence of "defeat," but also the very condition in which colonialism is preserved. He understood the intricacies of political manoeuvres and tactics well, but he never arrived at the ultimate conception of "power"; power does not actualize either in the voice of activity or passivity; it works in complicity. An inscription of Asia as an entity distinct from Europe is far from innocent, and a people in Asia may not be able to dispel colonial power relations, even if their national sovereignty is installed. On the one hand, Asia is a derivative of Europe's self-referentiality. On the other hand, the distinction of Asia from Europe is an effect of exclusionist and discriminatory "bordering" or border inscription. Accordingly, as soon as the Asians fashion themselves as such, the structure of heteronomous referentiality must be manifest in their identity. For the Asians, paradoxically, the desire for autonomy requires that they be heteronomous.

In this context, it is absolutely imperative for us to guard against the typical mistake committed by Husserl and many others: in the spatial configuration of Europe in relation to the Rest – Asia, Africa and the Americas – Europe should never be postulated as a subject that evolves linearly along the chronological line from antiquity to the present, that transcends itself to form a successive life of its own from the past to the future, and that generates its own living tradition.

<sup>14</sup> Takeuchi Yoshimi, *What is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, op cit., p. 59.

The West is not an enduring entity; it is no more than an accidental assemblage of power relations that cannot be synthesized to form an organic unity either spatially or chronologically. In this respect, it is through Europe's mythological obsession with its ancient Greek origin that the spiritual shape of Europe came into focus as a living tradition and as a teleology, with the historical mission to infinitely transcend itself by recourse to its archaic origin, while at the same time distinguishing itself from its exterior.

This mythological teleology of the West or Europe is involved in what I mean by the derivative character of the statement "we normally do not expect theory of Asia." Just as Asia is indicated from the implicit and self-referential position of Europe or the West, the oddity experienced about theory as associated with Asia is a derivative effect of another statement, namely "we normally expect theory of Europe." What we must call into question is this "normalcy," in the presumption of which we expect theory to be of Europe or of a European origin.

So far I have deliberately postponed the mention of two elementary questions; thanks to this reticence, my argument may appear persuasive up to this point. As a matter of fact, however, I am endorsing neither the autonomy of Asia as an active agent nor the victimization of Asia under Eurocentrism. What I am asking is how the civilizational designations of the West, Asia, Europe, and so forth, are still possible today. The two questions at issue are these:

First. Are "we" always and by definition secondary to or derivative of "you" ontologically, so that the European priority hidden in the designation "Asia" is a consequence of some disastrous logical or philosophical mistake? Is not the secondary positionality, as a matter of fact, the starting point from which we must always start?

Asia as an indexing function is nothing abnormal in its derivative and secondary nature; then what is not normal would be the modern system of geopolitical naming according to which the West has enjoyed the position of being the centrality of the global standard. Does the West not illustrate the inevitable performativity of indexing, namely, that the

centre of the world could only be designated as the West of somewhere else? Is the West therefore distinguished from such previous global centres of civilization as the Central Kingdom that claimed to be the centre without the regime of self-referentiality so that it could never have a positive outside, a realm outside the Central Kingdom? In this respect, the emperor of China was once literally the son of the Heaven.

Second. If one positively positions oneself as the origin of spontaneity, will one be able to demarcate the distinction between the self and the alternate?

Regardless of whether it is in dialectics or psychoanalysis, the self is always a secondary postulate, either to consciousness (in dialectics) or to the specularity of an image in the imaginary register (in psychoanalysis). In this respect, the designation of “Asia” behaves normally, so to say, and the problem of its derivative character, marked by the legacy of colonial “defeat,” derives not inherently from the postulation of Asia, but rather from the priority granted to Europe or the West. It is indisputable that the mutual determination of the West and the Rest involves power relations, but these should not be construed in terms of activity and passivity. Power relations that posit the West and Asia as designees are not governed by the causality of cause and effect, of spontaneity and receptivity; instead of the logic of causality or effectuating, they are rather organized by the logic of the middle voice.<sup>15</sup>

For our management of the analysis concerning theory and Asian humanity, we must shift our focus from Asia to Europe or to the West in a sort of counter movement to that of Takeuchi Yoshimi. For this reason, the questions I want to entertain are only reflectively and indirectly concerned with Asian humanity.

<sup>15</sup> In the modality of spontaneity or receptivity, the relationship between subject and object is construed either in terms of activity or passivity. Therefore, the proposition “A sees B” in the active voice is rendered “B is seen by A” in the passive voice. A social relation of “you” and “I” should not be construed in terms of activity and passivity. Michel Foucault’s attempt to comprehend power is important in this regard, for his notion of power is liberated from the constraints of the activity and passivity. It is an attempt to conceptualize power in the middle voice.

They are the following: on what grounds was theory considered as being European in origin? What sort of argument attempted to justify the presumption that theory is something that we expect of Europe or the West? How has this presumption managed to remain uninterrogated until now? What would ensue if the conditions no longer existed in which we normally expect theory out of Europe or the West? In other words, how can we possibly assess the disappearance of this civilizational “normalcy” and disenchant ourselves from the civilizational spell?

Now in the scope of theory and Asian humanity, it is possible to view a number of famous arguments that have attempted in one way or another to explicate why we somewhat presume that there ought to be some intimate link between theory – variously talked about under the headings of philosophy, modern rationality, scientific reason, commitment to the spirit of rigor whereby universal openness to knowledge production has been sustained, incessant return to the *arche* of the Greek origins and Europe or the West: Max Weber’s discussion on European modernity and the Protestant ethic, Paul Valéry’s insights into the crisis of the European spirit, Edmund Husserl’s inquiries concerning the crisis of European humanity, and Martin Heidegger’s attempt to rescue Western metaphysics, along with many others.

I have drawn tentative examples from the first half of the 20th century, during which the term *Europe* was gradually replaced by *the West*. The first half of the 20th century is significant in many respects, since then for the first time, the West or Europe became a topic of such intense debate. So it is in the element of crisis that Europe or the West was acknowledged globally as a domineering centre of the world. But, as soon as it somewhat succeeded in receiving the legitimacy of the global hegemony, it began to suffer from a confusionism inherent in its identity. Who are Europeans after all? Where does the West end and the Rest of the world begin? What constitutes the very border by which the distinction of the West from the Rest can be drawn?



It goes without saying that, in the cultural politics of nation-building in East Asia, *anthropological difference* has played significant roles that cannot be overlooked even today. Japan's postwar nationalism is a very good example in this regard, and, in order to consolidate the sense of national unity, it has relied upon the fantasy of national culture in contradistinction to the West. Japan's cultural nationalism, or one might also call it "ethnic nativism," is indisputably a by-product of the cultural institution based upon *anthropological difference*. Today I do not think there is time to delve into the structure of Japanese nationalism and its relationship to racism. Instead, please allow me to refer to the two main questions that have faced the Japanese nation in the last few decades: the nationalism of *hikikomori* (reclusive withdrawal) or what is sometimes referred to as "inward-looking society," and the historical responsibility best symbolized by the problem of Comfort Women.

In discussing concerns about the nationalism of *hikikomori* and the Comfort Women problem, I want to stress the importance of the feeling of shame; I want to emphasize how the issues of fantasy, sentiment, and feeling are essential to the politics of nationalism, particularly in Japanese relationships with countries and peoples in "Asia."

Of course, it is a matter of political choice as to whether one belongs to a national community or not. Furthermore, a national community itself changes in shape and constitution over time, so that the inside and the outside of the nation are re-inscribed and re-defined many times in history. Japanese history offers one of the most illustrative examples in this respect. Until the Meiji Restoration, there was no well-articulated notion of national territory, and hardly any national border existed in the northern end of the *Baku-Han* federation of the Tokugawa Shogunate and Domains. Of course, the multitude of people in the Japanese archipelago did not know they were of Japanese nationality, and the sentiment of national sympathy did not exist then. But, as Japan emerged as a nation-state and joined the

modern system of international law, the national territory had to be clearly defined for the first time. Yet, a series of alterations took place almost every decade from the 1870s until 1945, with the territorial annexations of Hokkaido, Okinawa, Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, Sakhalin, the Pacific islands previously occupied by Germany, Tsingtao, and Manchuria, as well as the areas the Japanese military had occupied during the Asia-Pacific war. Finally, as a result of the Defeat, Japan lost many territories and, as elsewhere stated, more than thirty percent of its population decided to drop Japanese nationality. Thus, the inside and the outside of the Japanese nation was repeatedly redefined, and what constituted this nation could never be determined unambiguously. Furthermore, it is essential to remember that the inside and outside of the nation are not necessarily restricted to issues of territorial sovereignty; the outside of the nation is differentiated from its inside not only in terms of geography, but also in terms of other factors such as cultural traits, racial features, linguistics identities, and religious affiliations. In short, the inscription of border is a matter of social encounter between one individual and another, or between one group and another, and this encounter, where the border separating the inside from the outside is inscribed, is always mediated by the techniques of fantasy, including cartography.

It may appear that the inside of the nation is distinct from its outside thanks to the geopolitical and geographic configuration of a space where two different kinds of people are distinct from one another because of their geographic locations. A membership of the nation, however, is never one of geography. Even if a space is divided by a national border, it does not follow that an individual located on one side automatically belongs to the nation while an individual on the other does not. It is supposed that the British live in a geographic space marked as territory governed by the British state sovereignty while the French live in a geographic space governed by the French State. Yet, this is no more than a supposition. Only when a border is articulated to the social relation of one individual to another does it acquire its social significance as a national border.

Accordingly, it is in fact misleading to say that the inscription of border is, above all else, an event of a geographic nature. The national border is an apparatus of social discrimination, so that, each time a person encounters another, it must be inscribed and re-inscribed as an institution that attributes certain social relations to the geographic relation. To stress this social aspect, I have preferred to rely upon the verb “bordering” than the noun “border.”

From the outset, therefore, the distinction between the inside and the outside of the nation is a trope, a metaphoric linkage to multiple variables, such as geopolitical configuration, administrative classification, social hierarchy, racial classification and police surveillance. And, of course, we cannot overlook the workings of the pastoral power and various apparatuses of biopolitics such as the modern regime of translation. Above all else, we must be aware that the totality of the nation remains unrepresentable unless the inside is distinctly configured from its outside. The representation of the national community emerges only when insiders are distinguished from outsiders. When we have no apparatus whereby to achieve this as well as to thereby discriminate against outsiders, it is impossible to represent the totality of the nation in fantasy, and, after all, it is most often in fantasy that the totality of the nation is rendered representable. It is an imagined community in this sense, too. For this reason, nationalism constantly needs the figure of the outsider. In respect to the Japanese public’s perception of their relationships to China and South Korea, this imaginary of the national community is powerful. Whenever the issues of colonial responsibility are reported to be raised by South Koreans or Chinese, the whole fantasy of aggressive outsiders wanting to humiliate Japanese nationals is time and again invoked by right-wing mass media. Of course, reactionary forces such as those of Shinzō Abe would not miss such a chance to capitalize on the anti-Korean or anti-Chinese sentiment.

So, to comprehend the inward-looking tendencies of nationalism and the surge of anti-immigrant racism in many post-industrial societies, we must investigate how the trope of the national border functions in our col-

lective fantasy, or how the inside of the national community has been narrated, and is modified with fantastic episodes, and articulated to anxieties concerning people's precarious conditions in their everyday life. Certainly, this is one reason why I deliberately chose the topic of "the nationalism of *hikikomori*" today. We need to understand why a large number of people are persuaded by fantastic episodes in which they believe they can withdraw into the security of a secluded community, into the sanctuary of a utopian refuge to be exempt from any fierce competition in a neoliberal market, or into the communal comradeships of an in-born village. There is very little correlation between the actual *hikikomori* who suffer from reclusive withdrawal and those advocates of anti-immigration propaganda, yet, the theme of *hikikomori* is invoked against the backdrop of an enclosed space, a certain bordered area which one is reluctant to leave, as if a border, a wall, or a barrier insulating the enclosed space from the outside offers protection from intruders or outsiders. Provided that the most dominant image of a community in the modern international world is the one of the nation as well as the modern family, it is no surprise that the space thus imagined is, almost without exception, equated to the national community. Nonetheless, let us keep in mind that this way of fantasizing the national community is rather exceptional but also idiosyncratic of this era in which anti-immigrant racism, reactionary populism, and anti-intellectual conservatism are prevalent.

In present-day Japan, the dichotomy of the inside and the outside is articulated to the sanctuary of the national community in specific ways. The old fantasy of the nation under the universal gaze of the emperor is now projected onto the ethnic nation where people are unified through a fantastic sense of *communion*, in contrast to the outside of the national community where the intimacy of national comradeships is replaced by the logic of the survival of the fittest. Thus, the binary opposition of the inside and the outside is re-articulated, with the binary of the inside being the place of comfort and security versus the outside as the place of brutal rivalry and harsh competition. It is under this fantasized

configuration of the nation's inside and outside that the interior of the national community is modified in the collective fantasy with a connotation of "the sanctuary for comfort," to allow a withdrawal from an outside fraught with merciless competition and neoliberal ruthlessness.

Of course, regardless of whether someone is situated inside or outside the national community, one is in actuality never endowed with the sense of *communion*. One lives separated from others in an extremely atomized social environment, yet this fundamental distance between people makes it possible to live and work together in modern social formations. Competition is the fundamental reality of modern life.

We are fully aware that, in everyday life in a modern capitalist society like Japan, the vision of communality based on equality as portrayed by the dictum "One Gaze Equal Mercy" is no more than a figment in the sky. For those of us living in the modern society regulated by the dogma of specific identity, to insist upon the security and intimacy in the personal relationship characterized by the dogma of relational identity is tantamount to a withdrawal from the public realm that is dictated by individualism and meritocracy based upon competition. As we live more thoroughly engaged in a public realm dominated by meritocracy and individualism, we might be tempted all the more to fantasize the idealized vision of a national community – let us recall that John Stuart Mill called the nation "a society of sympathy"<sup>16</sup> – where everybody is harmoniously integrated into the peoplehood in a state of personal comradeships while the outside is presumably a scene of bloody battle where the only dictate is the survival of the strongest. Yet, it is essential to remember that we have no means by which to distinguish purely on empirical grounds the inside from the outside of the national community. This very distinction can never be independent of the politics of sentimentality and fantasy.

<sup>16</sup> John Stuart Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government" (1861), in John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Considerations on Representative Government*, H. B. Acton ed. (London: Everyman's Library, 1972), pp. 188–428.

It is not because of some malice, hidden plot, or intrusion that one is deprived of the sense of communal belonging and empathy that should be enjoyed on the inside of the national community.

The premise that the nation is a community of equal members where unconditional fraternity and sympathy prevail is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the social collectivity called “nation.” The essential feature of the nation consists in its imaginary and fantastic dynamics. While, as I argued above, the nation is a community of strangers, each of its members is directly affiliated with its totality in imagination. The imaginary character of the nation does not mean at all that this collectivity is either illusionary or arbitrary; on the contrary, it endows the nation with its own objective existence that reinforces the fiction of territorial state sovereignty in the modern international world. It is precisely because of this imaginary character that the national community is an objective and substantive existence for which people are willing to kill and die. And this historically specific form of collectivity – let me stress once again that the nation is particular to the modern international world is in essence an aesthetic construct. It is because of this aesthetic dynamics that this social formation assumes a tremendous capacity to induce its members to aspire and act – i. e., to fantasize collectively and politically for the vision of this community. Accordingly, the dynamics of the national community lies in this potential capacity to inspire its members to fantasize their communality.

It follows, however, that the interior of the national community thus fantasized is not something empirically determinable; its inside cannot be delimited solely in terms of geography; nor is its border identifiable only in cartographic terms. Nevertheless, people aspire to consolidate the fantasized realm of the national interiority against its outside, particularly when many of them are under distress, when the perception of social disparity and economic inequality is intensified, and when an increasing number of members of the nation feel left out in capitalist competition games.

They desperately seek to re-establish the fantasized interior of the national community by marking its border, reifying the separation between the inside and outside, and eventually building a physical obstacle to prevent the fantastic sense of national solidarity from being eroded.

It is generally agreed that Fascism is a tendency inherent in nationalism; it manifests itself in anti-parliamentarian authoritarianism, violent oppression of oppositional forces, racist identity politics, the rhetoric of anti-immigration, mythological insistence of national origins, and so forth. The word "Fascism" is notorious for its overuse as a pejorative since the defeat of the Axis Powers in 1945. The historical context of today's politics is vastly different from that of the early 1920s when the term itself was put forth as a name of a political agenda by Benito Mussolini in opposition to liberalism, Marxism and anarchism. Nonetheless, the word somewhat captures the urgency and exclusionist violence with which contemporary radical authoritarian anti-immigration politics has been associated, but it is clear that this term should be used with deliberate precaution.

No doubt the fantastic tropes of the national community are extensively appropriated by Fascist politics. It is in this respect that this politics relies upon the basic vocabulary of nationalist tropics and is indissolubly entwined with nationalism. What we refer to as Fascism sketchily and equivocally today would be hardly comprehensible without this fantastic dynamics of the imagined community. Fascists' exclusion of immigrants, hostility toward ethnic and sexual minorities, and insistence on the rhetoric of racial purity are motivated by the fantastic seclusion of the inside from the outside of the national community and are all played out in terms of the basic vocabulary of the tropics of the imagined community. Therefore, the most telling example of Fascist tactics is the building of a physical wall on the national border, by which the intrusion of negative elements including illegal immigrants and narcotics are supposed to be blocked. Even though it is repeatedly proven how irrational, useless and ridiculous the idea of the border wall is in terms of economics, sociology, criminal justice, and jurisprudence in

general with respect to immigration and race policies, the constituency of jingoist devotees repeatedly returns to this symbolic expression of the very division of the inside and the outside of the national community. Not only among the supporters of Donald Trump in the United States, but also among the followers of anti-immigrant movements in Europe, the symbol of the border wall speaks volumes.

What I want to suggest by the nationalism of *hikikomori* is marked by the resurgence of the collective fantasy of the imagined community as well as the increasing demand for an economy in collective fantasy that reinforces the unambiguous and decisive distinction of the inside and the outside of national community, for a fantastic dynamics somewhat reminiscent of that of “One Gaze Equal Mercy.” I believe it is against the backdrop of the fantasy of the national border that the problems of “shame” are acquiring significance once again.

The problem of the Comfort Women or Wartime Sex Slavery guides us to comprehend how intimately the issue of the nationalism of *hikikomori* is associated with the phenomenology of shame. It also helps us in our search for mediation between collective aesthetics as a social formation and individual’s emotive and sentimental reaction to the legacies of history. I am not concerned with the Problem of the Comfort Women as a challenge to overcome or surmounted for Japan. Rather, I want to underline the productivity of shame from the perspective of decolonization.

So far, in my Japanese publications, I have repeatedly emphasized that the Comfort Women Problem was like a bliss, an exceptional gift, to the people with Japanese nationality. A great number of Japanese still regard the Problem of the Comfort Women as a sort of natural disaster to be dealt with among themselves without involving foreigners, as if the problem were like a family dishonor not to be revealed outside the family. Regardless of whether one likes it or not, it has already been publicized internationally. And more importantly, to the extent that this is a problem of the political responsibility of the Japanese nation, it necessarily involves people who do not identify with that nation, outsiders to the Japanese national community.



In this respect and also thanks to the fact that the gravity of this problem was publicly enunciated for the first time when in 1991 the Korean comfort women sued the Japanese Government for its responsibility for the system of comfort stations which it established across the territories occupied by the Japanese military during the latter half of the Asia Pacific War (1937–1945), the problem appears instigated by foreigners – let us not forget that the Korean comfort women who actually sued the Japanese Government were, as a matter of fact, Japanese nationals recruited into the system of the comfort stations – who came from the outside of the fantasized interior of the Japanese nation. Precisely in this sense, the problem is an exceptional gift from the outside world that prevents the Japanese from withdrawing into the fantasized interior of the imagined community. In other words, the Problem of the Comfort Women is a remedy offered in the feeling of “shame” for the nationalism of *hikikomori*.

Moreover, the problem cannot be discussed without reference to sexuality and masculinity. One cannot overlook the significance of the word “comfort” in the deliberate choices made the military comfort stations (*jūgun iansho*) and the military comfort women (*jūgun ianfu*): these women were supposed to provide the soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy with certain “comfort,” and this sense of comfort must have been comprised of a number of emotive and sentimental gratifications for the soldiers who needed the comfort women; the comfort of not being constantly scrutinized and scolded at by superiors; the comfort of being in an intimate and private relationship; the comfort of being in secure away from the battle grounds; the comfort of being sexually recognized as a male by a female and thus treated as an individual; the comfort of being worshipped as a man representing an imperial force in a colonial relationship by a woman belonging to a nation or people apparently subordinate to such an imperial force, and so on. Immediately it becomes obvious that what was euphemistically portrayed as “comfort” that a soldier was to enjoy as a male client at a

comfort station was irresolvably associated with the exaggerated self-esteem and self-confidence one would boast of when identifying with a powerful imperial nation. Sexuality, masculinity and (imperial) nationalism were thus articulated to one another in such a way that an individual's masculinity and self-esteem would not dissociate from his membership of an imperial nation. Neither masculinity nor self-esteem is independent of the status of the nation to which one belongs in the international world.

This is why an inquisition into the status of the comfort women and the calling into question of the very normalcy of military prostitution is perceived to be an embarrassment for those who regard themselves as male and identify with the Japanese nation. What is at stake is the fact that those held somewhat responsible<sup>17</sup> – not necessarily responsible for the actual criminal conducts of sexual slavery, but rather for being affiliated with the imperial nation that once committed such conducts – are made to feel ashamed in confronting the Problem of Comfort Women. Crucial here is the feeling of shame with which one is urged to respond to people who question the Japanese responsibility for the system of comfort stations.

The first issue to be taken into account in outlining a possible passage toward decolonization is how to invoke the courage with which to expose oneself to the gaze of foreigners (non-national), those who do not belong to the interior of the nation. This would be the first step toward

<sup>17</sup> Let us not forget that the vast majority of those who were involved in the creation, expansion, management, and maintenance of the system of comfort stations, as well as those who recruited comfort women, benefited from works at the comfort stations or received the services of the comfort women are dead, so that the question of responsibility cannot be equated to that of criminal guilt. I do not believe that those born after the Asia Pacific war but who share the Japanese nationality can be immediately accountable for the problem of comfort women. It is not because they are of Japanese nationality that they are responsible for the issues of the comfort stations today. It is important not to yield to the rhetoric of "guilty by association." The Japanese people born post-war are not criminally liable for the various criminal behaviors connected to this system. Yet, I claim that these Japanese are responsible, politically, to those who insist upon the Japanese responsibility for the comfort station system and on Japanese colonialism. In other words, I believe, the Japanese must respond to those who call into question the responsibility of the Japanese nation. And the Japanese must respond by either clearly and rigorously explaining why and how they are not guilty of the crimes, or by admitting why and how they are implicated in the legacies of colonial responsibility. Simply put, the problem of responsibility must not be confused with that of guilt.

the outside of “the society of sympathy,” of a community of those who gather together by sharing a sense of collective self-pity.<sup>18</sup> Yet, let me emphasize, once again, that the very image of a national community as an enclosure, a space marked by a definite borderline, is only viable at the dimension of collective fantasy. There is no such entity called “the Japanese nation”; there is no outside of Japanese national community unless it is deciphered in terms of fantastic imagery evoked by the trope of the nation. The exterior of the nation is rendered tangible when one encounters the otherness of others through the experience of shame, and the exteriority that one thus encounters is fundamentally different from the outside that is spatially representable. In other words, even among one’s countrymen, you can come across a foreigner, non-Japanese, who might well guide you to the outside of the nation.

In the context of postcolonial subjective technology, therefore, the significance of “shame” cannot be overstated; “shame” is the first step to an encounter with a foreigner, to the experience of exposing oneself to the gaze of foreigners, of those who do not immediately reside in the interior of the national community. Apparently, “shame” signifies a modality of encounter with others, a modality of social action in which to be liberated from the confinement of “*hikikomori*.” Through the humiliation and embarrassment in shame, you are in touch with another person, a foreigner, and the very otherness of the other; in the feeling of shame, you are helped and changed, opened up, and led out of the incarceration of *hikikomori* by others. Thus, “shame” is a concept that illustrates the fundamental sociality of our existence. Being in touch with exteriority, while being helped by others, you are simultaneously helping and changing them. For “shame” is neither active nor passive voice of activity. To be helped by others is to help them; to become able to be helped by others is to become able to help them; it is to enter a different dimension where the communality called “nation” no longer matters.

<sup>18</sup> The idiom “the society of sympathy” was coined by John Stuart Mill.



# Creating New Universality

Sun Ge

Firstly I would like to thank the Inside-Out Art Museum for providing me with such a wonderful opportunity to meet with so many young friends who are fond of thinking and to converse with my old friend Professor Sakai. It is actually our first time to be both present at an event like this in China. We used to be in similar conversations in Japan and in the U.S., but today's event carries a much different meaning for me, as I'm also one of the hosts.

Before the event, Professor Sakai and I didn't exchange our ideas concerning our topics. Therefore we did not know the content of each other's lecture. But I'm very much excited after listening to his speech, as I found that although our speeches would not overlap in content, they would actually share the same *problématique*. Professor Sakai has just discussed a very important problem concerning epistemology, that is, how the global intelligentsia perceives the humanity and the world is constructed by the fundamental mental-framework of Eurocentrism, which is, in turn, accepted uncritically as certain existent criterion by Asian intellectuals. In response to the first question posed by one of our young friends, Professor Sakai said that although Husserl had been resisting European racism and the rising Nazism, his resistance remained, nonetheless, one within the Eurocentric framework. I think that, to some extent, it is the common fate of the critical intellectuals of the Western world (including North America) who, in their criticism of Euro-or American centrism, are forced to speak in the framework that has been agreed upon.

Professor Sakai has been making every effort to break this framework, and that is why he concluded at the end of his lecture by saying that today, in fact, it is no longer necessary to distinguish between Europe and Asia. What I believe to be the underlying message of his lecture is the insight that if we are to overturn the presuppositions that have been imposed upon us for centuries by Eurocentrism, we will first need to clear away race-based classifications such as Europe and Asia.

While I extend my sympathy and support for Professor Sakai's campaign, I would also like to propose another approach. Superficially, this approach may seem to be the opposite of the *problématique* proposed by Sakai, that is, I would like to place emphasis on the necessity of Asia as a conceptual existence. Our reflection then moves on to the following question: In search for a new landscape of human history, isn't it necessary for us to adopt an introverted understanding of Asian historical experiences and resort to modes of thinking qualified as "Asian" in a conceptual instead of ethnological sense? What I mean by an "Asian" way of thinking is not equivalent to the way "Asian people" think. It is rather a reflective construction in contrast to any substantial mode of thinking: In other words, Europeans, Africans and Americans can all think in an Asian way. It is, however, still to be emphasized that the "Asian" mode of thinking, instead of being a transcendental logical inference, is by nature based on Asian history, a result of regional circumstances. Just as the fact that Western-centrism is indeed the product of the historical process of modern Western world while not necessarily a privilege exclusively designated for Western people, the "Asian" mode is not substantial and specific to Asia's historical experiences as well. As I believe, it is only by promoting this "Asian" approach to thinking that we are able to resist Western-centrism in a truly effective manner.

Now I would like to turn to two questions. One is how we can make use of Asian historical resources in building up another model of theoretical speculation with regard to universality and particularity. The second is whether a new form of theory can be created if Asia wants to produce its own theory.

First things first. Up until now, universality has always been one of the most frequently used terms. As a premise but has also been the evaluation, universality is not only used by young university students, but also been transformed into a criterion for evaluation of scientific works. For instance, a good academic article has to proclaim its extent of universality in its discussion of particularity. That is to say, thoughts without

universality are considered valueless, and at best remarked as an *ad hoc* research. Universality is, however, never seriously questioned. No serious reflections have been made on what the alleged universality is.

It used to be popular to talk about “universal truth valid in all parts of the world” during the Mao era and such expression went largely unquestioned by anyone. Even today, intellectuals are using the same mindset to comprehend universality. What is universality? Universality is a kind of universal value that can cover lots of, even all, particularities. If one should claim that he/she is not seeking universality, his/her research will not be appreciated, at least by his/her fellow academicians. But something that covers all particularities can only be abstract. In the case that it is concrete, it is not possible to be distinguished from particularity. Therefore, universality, when represented in argumentation, is often understood as a theory, especially a theory that comes from the West and that has been the target to which Professor Sakai was inviting more criticism. Asian scholars have always been in consensus that theory comes from the West while experience comes from Asia. I believe that this is also the cliché that Professor Sakai has been battling in regional studies in America.

There has been, within the academic world, an abundance of articles that try to examine the universality of Western theory by empirical tests of particularity. Today, these articles, mostly, have been proved to be of no originality at all. If we abandon such a way of conducting research, if we abandon the habit of uncritically presupposing universality of theory, we should then ask once again: Is it possible that universality is represented in other ways? In fact no one lives in universality. If we reflect more deeply, we may find that everyone lives in particularity. There is no need for proving this point I guess. If someone tells you: “I’m a man of universality, and all my behaviors correspond perfectly to the abstract values,” I think that your first reaction is to get away from him as soon as possible. Even if he is not lying, he would be the most boring and even the most detestable man as he would lack completely in personality.

There used to be a discussion among American geographers. At the time, the ideology of science was still in its heyday and all disciplines were looking for laws and regular patterns. The heated topic of the time was whether geographers should, in their geographical research, collect geographical features shared by all regions or focus on those peculiar features. The discussion led to some very interesting conclusions. Firstly, geographers reached a basic agreement that studying the omnipresent laws is only the primary step of geographical research, as such study carries very little information and can seldom satisfy the curiosity of a geographer. Hence, such study is not so valuable. The second conclusion is that what geographers really like are those features that are seldom known and seen. It is only through the study of such features that we may find something new, something that no one had known before that can help us form new knowledge. Then the problem is, when people are studying those particular features, these features are often not repeatable. So what should we do in order to share such geographical features with people other than the researcher himself who do not have any knowledge of them? In other words, is it possible for an object represented in a status of particularity to become the link that connects many people without resorting to abstraction or elaboration on universal laws? This would lead to a potential theoretical question, that is, is it possible to construct a different way of perceiving universality?

The American geographers did not drive the logic to its conclusion, as for them, the relationship between universality and particularity was not what concerned them most. But it is when they began to question the universal and homogeneous values that they had taken a crucial step forward. This step resulted in the construction of the theory of similarity and this similarity is not tantamount to sameness or homogeneity. One American geographer, Richard Hartshorne, gave similarity a very interesting definition that disrupted our ordinary sense of knowledge. Similarity, he said, is the major difference left after trimming down all those branches similar to one another. At the same time, he argued that



the most excellent research of geography should not be one that would be macroscopic enough to comprehend the whole universe but rather a case study of particularity that would reveal the similarity inherent in such particularity.

His remarks serve as a clue for us to push forward our reasoning through this perspective. To be specific, if we do not believe that universality is necessarily an abstract value, we may achieve another sort of universality through our quest for similarity, which also means difference.

But the problem still lacks a solid foundation even if we have reached this stage. Where can we find this foundation? By acknowledging that particularity is nothing but difference in relation to similarity, we see also, in fact, the objects that share certain content while differ in most of their characteristics. Quantitatively speaking, the number of objects being compared must be two in minimum. We all know that universality and particularity have been for a long time dealt with as two opposite categories. Out of good intention, our philosophers have also invented another category called individuality to even make the opposition more real. Individuality, for them, is used to produce universality out of particularity. There is a saying that goes like this: particularity that can be abstracted into universal value is individuality, while all exclusive particularity resistant to abstraction is nothing more than particularity. Therefore in the realm of critical intellectuals, particularity is often connected with cultural conservatism, with the exclusive racism criticized by Professor Sakai. The logic underlying such particularity is: as our culture is particular, it is therefore not comprehensible by others; it cannot be abstracted into some universal element that can be shared by other cultures, and is consequently exclusive. From this perspective we may infer further that even cultural relativism has its problem: now that every culture is relative, why could it not stick to its own path without interfering with others? There used to be a period when it seemed to be politically incorrect to emphasize particularity and relativism, as such position would appear to be against the world-view of universality.

In fact, the problem lies neither in particularity nor relativism. It only appears due to the fact that we have only in mind universality and particularity as two opposing concepts while universality is assigned higher merits and understood, without sufficient discussion, as abstract values that cover everything.

However, particularity can never be eliminated, as the world is abundant in particularity while universality has no concrete existence. Universality is only produced by one's mental activities and is nowhere to be found in empirical world of reality. That is what I said just now about someone telling you that "I'm a universal man." In reaction you will think of him either as crazy or of bad intention. Universal man does not exist. It is a product of mind and cannot be perceived by our senses. All what we see is particular, specific human beings. What's more, we tend to like people of different personalities, and the word "personality" is nothing other than unique "particularity."

In fact, it is quite valuable and important to retrieve common elements from particularities and to even transform them into homogeneous elements. This is what we call generalization. The capability of generalization forms the basic requirement for human communication, a fact that does not need demonstration. Even when people are expressing specific experiences that are very particular, they still have to generalize given the fact that language is in itself the result of generalization. But when generalization turns out to be valued, the alleged universal value no longer constitutes a generalization but rather a hegemonic narrative. This is because that in so doing, the value that should be generalized out of the diversified human beings is surreptitiously replaced by some particular value produced in certain parts of the world, which is further amplified into the value valid for all human beings. Such is the case of Eurocentrism, and represents the real situation of human knowledge best described as "Europe with theory, Asia without" that Professor Sakai has been talking about. Being confronted with such a reality, we find that European theory which is a particular

product of human mind, has turned into a universal value. While Asian theory, equally a human mental product, is not regarded as theory, because it differs in its form from European theory. This point will be discussed in more detail in the second question.

Since as late as the end of 19th century, the internalization of Western Europe and the United States in Asia was almost achieved after WWII through a violent process. Their colonial rule and material plunder had become an inherent part of Asia. At the same time, the internalization was accompanied by the colonialization of knowledge, best represented by the fact that even the word “Asia” was originally a gift from Europeans to Asians. What made a difference in such a process was the awakening sense of subjectivity in various regions of Asia, which led to the transformation of these internalized Western European values, especially the productive ones, into the intellectual weapons of many peoples in Asia. The process was very complicated and hardly distinguishable by looking at any single entity. That is to say, internalization was not the unilateral penetration of European and American influence into Asia, but rather a process of communication enacted by both parties, a process that the colonial suzerains such as Western Europe and America had not experienced before. Therefore, it is a topic uniquely imposed upon Asia to rethink the problem of universality in such a process, a topic which is shared neither by Europe nor by America. Why? Because among all the continents of the world, there is only Asia that cannot be simply imagined as a single entity. We are well aware that there is also diversity within Europe, especially when we take in its Eastern part and even Russia into its scope. However, even if Europe is, in fact, not a cohesive imagined community, it does possess the conditions for it to be imagined as such. As Europe is dominated basically by the Greek civilization, it is much different from Asia where many kinds of civilizations coexist, roughly divided into three: Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Islam has many factions and a complex structure. Buddhism does not stand for the Hindu civilization as the dominant religion in India is Hinduism rather than Buddhism.

Buddhism however is more popular in regions beyond India and covers a vast territory. In all, the coexistence of three types of civilization is a basic given, and they are not in any way merged into one to form the basis of a single narrative as there is in Europe.

Professor Sakai just mentioned a very interesting case, that is, in the 1930s, Japanese militarists, in implementing their Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere policy, were well aware since the beginning that the program would never be achieved in a manner based on a single race system. This reminds me of the fact that Japan had from very early times established institutes dedicated to the research of the Islamic civilization. In fact, their study of Islam is apparently relevant to the plan of conquering North-western China. Japanese militarists saw quite clearly that the monotonic imperial ideology would never be able to rule over Asia's racial diversity.

However, it cannot be inferred from this case that the Japanese government understood and respected Asian diversity, as its study of different peoples aimed ultimately at maintaining the single interest of the Japanese state. We may therefore say that although with regard to race, the Japanese government behaved differently as compared to Nazi regimes in Europe, their understanding of the relationship between diversity and unity was fundamentally identical. In other words, even if they had observed and even taken into consideration diversity in reality, they nonetheless placed an almighty unity over such diversity.

When the Second World War ended, a chain of movements for national independence took place in former colonies all over Asia, culminating in the First Asian-African Conference (Bandung Conference) of 1955. But the call of the Conference for equality of all peoples and nations did not succeed in effectively establishing a new international order. The problem had been for a long time the concern and alarm for Asian intellectuals. In 1950, Indian Prime Minister Nehru delivered a keynote speech at an annual conference for Asian-Pacific studies where he said: "Nationalism is a double-edged sword. It is a good thing when we had not achieved independence. But after that, it may be transformed into the energy of expansion."

Thus we face a problem that is still to be solved by humanity. In fact, as movements of independence in Asia and Africa have gained more success, we see increasing narratives of universality which set out to replace the old European American universality. I once heard a joke that in American academies, white people are talking about particularity while ethnic minorities are concerned with universality.

However, a new race or a new territory in replacement of a former hegemonic power is not a new alternative. Its essence is to achieve the old purpose by new forces. Therefore, the imagination of universality based upon replacing European and American hegemony by a new one is for me problematic.

Perhaps, given the current historical circumstance, an attempt to construct another kind of universal values is feasible. Here I talk about values instead of imagination. The original universal values, unitary and abstract, were in fact the amplification of European particularity and imposed upon all human beings. Due to the hegemonic relationship in the past, such universal values were elevated to a supreme status. So in constructing a new set of universal values, it is first necessary to relativize existent imagination of universality. This by no means implies that I want to negate it totally, as it is the product of a specific phase of history, which has its own contributions to history. But its limit, its hegemony, even its damage to daily life is no less evident. Therefore we need to make the existent imagination of universality relative before thinking of constructing another universality, as the new universality should not serve the purpose of replacing the unitary universality.

As I would imagine, the new universality is the incomplete agency, which gains its significance only by resorting to different kinds of particularities. To put it simply, when two particularities meet, they both possess some particular parts which cannot be copied or transplanted and only belong to themselves. But they possess at the same time the difference which is intelligible to each other, which is therefore similarity.

Under such circumstance, through the medium of universality, or, through intelligible differences, we strive to enter into the realm of the particular, and such is the function of universality. To put it again in another way, universality is only the tool that leads us to different particularities so as to comprehend those particularities instead of separating us from particularities. Hence, universality is not the highest end but rather the agency, an opportunity of thinking whose meaning is dependent on particularity. I should stress here that such agency or opportunity is indispensable although superficially it depends on particularity to achieve its complete significance. When we regard universality as the agency for us to enter particularity, we value the function of universality as the key to particularity, which helps mark the difference between insistence of particularity and the attitude of exclusive relativism.

Such arguments may be a bit too abstract, so I would like to give you an example based on my personal experience.

There is one year when I was lecturing professor in Heidelberg, Germany. Heidelberg is a small city with a small population. There are not many people to encounter as long as you are not in the downtown district. In many countries in Western Europe, there are separated pathways for bikes and pedestrians, and so is the case in Germany. One day, I was careless enough to be walking on the paths for bicycle, but as there was no one in the street I was completely unaware that I was on the wrong path.

Then someone riding a bike was approaching behind me. The cyclist, seeing that I was walking on the bicycle path, was very unhappy. He was knocking on the bell and protesting to me loudly. In fact, the path was broad enough for him to pass. If he should have been a Chinese, he would not have bothered at all. Hopefully no one in the audience will say that it is a case of racial discrimination against Chinese by the German, as in fact I have noticed in several occasions similar reactions between two Germans.

The example may be a little bit extreme in demonstrating the function of “rules” in the daily life of German people. Most German people cherish the rules in social life, even if when the observation of them is not necessary in a particular circumstance. Of course, not all Germans behave in this way, but such a mode of behavior has its solid foundation and forms a kind of social atmosphere.

Based on the story told, we may now continue our discussion of universality. When there was no need to observe the rule but I was still scolded at by the German, I would have felt wronged and unhappy. The reaction represents the repulsion of two particularities, as according to the Chinese custom, as long as I am not walking on the motorway, I am not violating any traffic rules and not to mention the fact that there was almost no one in the broad street and thus my mistake would hinder no one. If I only think in this way, there would be no universality. But I can also switch to another way of reasoning: what made the German angry was not his own inconvenience as I did not block his way, but rather my violation of the rule. Every society has its rule, but each social rule functions differently and is expressed in different manners. For Chinese like us, rules such as obeying traffic light and giving way to pedestrians have already existed long ago. Most of people find no difficulty obeying them but the social atmosphere which prioritize rules has not been formed. In other words, when we do something, our first consideration is not rules to obey but the practical circumstances we are in. When crossing the street, we tend to think in terms of a dynamic equilibrium: as long as pedestrians, vehicles and electric bicycles have left space for each other, there is nothing to be condemned even if there is a violation of rules involved. For Chinese, there is no rule when there is no accident. Thus a Japanese friend of mine once told me: For you Chinese to cross the road, you have to look at people and vehicles; but for us Japanese, it is the traffic light that we need to look at. As to the example of that German as I told you just now, such difference is all the more evident.

Now we may go back to our topic. When we look at the different attitudes toward “rules” between Germans and Chinese, “rules” are the universality that serves as the agency of discussion. But we cannot discuss the concept solely in an abstract sense while not mentioning the different ways of perception between Germans and Chinese with regard to traffic rules (or in other words, the different position of rules in both cultures). As by doing so we would render the meaning of the concept void and the universality will be incomplete. From the example above, we see the “similarity” (also difference) of “rules” in different cultures. Only by finding such differences can we understand the complete significance of “rules” in German and Chinese societies. It is through the agency of “rules” that we arrive finally at the implication of difference itself.

But the problem, by far, is only half-solved. In my example, we see that German people tend to think of rules in absolute terms, a habit that is recognized almost by everyone. But the flexible sense of rules of Chinese people seems to have never been treated positively, including Chinese people ourselves who tend to think that not obeying rules is a face-losing character of Chinese. So everyone is working to establish the authority of rules. This implies that originally we have two attitudes towards rules, but people are prone to use one single standard to judge them. In this way, we not only miss the opportunity to enter into Chinese particularity through the agency of universality, but also have secretly replaced the function of universality, making it the single, abstract value that rises to the commanding height.

We may well think of it this way: when the German and I revealed different attitudes towards rules by our way of conduct, I need to understand the true reason of his anger and protest. When I try to think this way, difference leads me to the particular German culture. From this point on, we can reflect on a few issues concerning German history and reality. By doing so, we enter into German particularity mediated by universality. But in turn, we still need the same process to enter into the understanding of the Chinese particularity.



Rules are not the ultimate authority in Chinese society. But the fact does not imply that there is no rule in China, but rather there is another sort of collective unconsciousness concerning the use of rules. To a large extent, rules in China are functioning in a more flexible fashion through agreed-upon customs, the reason why Chinese society could maintain dynamic equilibrium despite its apparent disorder. Of course, this sort of mechanism in Chinese society consumes more efforts of thinking, as there is always a large space for self-regulation beyond the established rules which are often lax and vague. This is different from those societies where rules tend to be made absolute. Such a system leaves much room for illicit behavior but also preserves the condition for free creativity of individuals. If we simply attribute disorder to China's "lack of rules of law," it would be very hard to find a remedy for the negative effects of Chinese culture of rules, not to mention its benefits. In essence, it is to blame the fact that we have amplified German culture of rules and adopted it as the single criterion of measurement. What we need to do is to abandon the preset "universal" standard and enter with caution into the particular status of China.

In fact, we can observe from the above example that normally it takes some efforts to enter into the logic of the other. Regardless of your nationality, German or Chinese, the more common reaction is to either agree with the German sense of rules or reject it. But the question why Chinese do not regard rules as the absolute authority is not construed by Westerners, even by Chinese themselves, as an issue. The phenomenon is directly linked to our understanding of universality. If people tend to believe that there is one perfect mode, the problem, then, is about either imitating it or rejecting it. Imitation is mostly needed by this unitary universality, the reason is more than evident; where we need to be careful is rejection. Some would believe that rejecting, or even confronting with the way of thinking that is in power is equivalent to insistence on diversity, as the stronger always refuses to understand the weaker. But this attitude is still a variant of unitary universality, as, like the latter, it also seeks for its own absolutization and enclosure vis-à-vis other particularities.

As I mentioned above, the universality we are pursuing is not something transcendental, but only indispensable as the medium that leads us to the pursuit of one specific particularity. Therefore, it may be better to set aside the discussion of powerful and powerless, and to define the basic characteristics of universality at the moment when two cultures encounter as entrance with a sense of equality into the logic of the other by cutting off existent premises.

When I define the form of universality in such a different manner, doubts naturally arise: 1) is the universality which only attains its complete meaning through particularity a resistance to the abstract, single universality? And 2) can such universality that is not up to abstraction earn its status as theory? In fact, I have encountered such questions in various occasions.

My answer to the first question is quite simple, that is, there is no need to combat the single abstract universality. Abstraction is an important form of human intelligence. It is useless to negate it totally. What we need to combat is the mentality of regarding it as the only suitable form of theory. To observe carefully, we may find that absolutization often means the abstraction of certain particularities into absolute universal values, and to impose them upon other particularities. This is where the problem of cultural hegemony is involved, of which there is no need for further demonstration. What we need to do is actually to make relative abstract universality and understand it as one form of universality. It is in fact a process of “de-valorization,” meaning that we can discuss universality in terms of abstraction, but the discussion can be also carried out in other ways. There is no hierarchy among the ways of discussions. The question to follow is consequently this: now that the abstract universality is not to be totally discarded, what is its relationship with what I talk about today of the universality as an agency of particularity?

We are now facing the second problem of today’s discussion, that is, whether it is possible for Asian theory to create new forms.

The saying that Asia does not have theory actually means that Asian intellectuals are less apt at discussions on the metaphysical level. Asians are not good at theoretical thinking: this saying would reveal that the thinking has the same origin as the idea that universality has to be abstracted into one. If we admit generally that universality can be either metaphysical or empirical (形而下), it would be necessary to draw a connection between the two kinds of universality, a work that is being done by some Asian intellectuals.

Most of us know Chuang Tzu *On the Uniformity of Things* (齐物论). Simply by reading the title, what can you infer? Possibly we may think that it discusses how to sort out all kinds of particularities, finding sameness while preserving differences, to finally achieve a status of “uniformity,” a status of synthesis. But in fact, it turns out that the chapter actually emphasizes the non-uniformity of things. That is to say, there is no single criterion valid for everything in the world, so “correctness” should not be a matter of concern. But everything still possesses its inner law, which stipulates that everything depends on each other while pursuing its own good. Such status of “pursuing one’s own good” (各从所好) would not require homogeneity, but it calls for diversity that resists single standard of judgment. Therefore, Chuang Tzu said “The great way is not named; great discriminations are not spoken” (大道不称, 大辩不言). Here, however, we should also understand it on another level, that is, the status of “pursuing one’s own good” requires the circulation of everything. At the same time, Chuang Tzu also said: “Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be some distinction. This is called the ‘transformation of things’.” (周与胡蝶, 则必有分矣。此之谓“物化”) Transformation of things is nothing more than the distinction of things constantly in motion in specific time and space. It is only when there is distinction that non-uniformity of things becomes natural. But the motion of distinctive things in turn permits the distinction to be transcended. By transcending distinction, things are transformed, but such transcendence should be understood neither as unification of all, nor as one thing superior to everything.

It stands for, in fact, the respect of diversity of things. For Chuang Tzu, transcendence would mean to cast doubt upon the “debate on yes or no” where each party tries to impose their judgment as being absolute. In other words, it is a doubt on the imposed abstract “universality.” Chuang Tzu believed that if there should be any universality, it must be ineffable, while those spoken out is only private discriminations which tend to cover the circulative nature of things.

What Chuang Tzu refers to by “the great way is not named; great discriminations are not spoken” is the universality abstracted into one. It is “void”, “nothingness.” Whenever it is spoken out, there must be distinction leading us to the realm of the particular. What is, then, the value of such ineffable “great way,” and “great discriminations” without concrete content? Its value lies in its affirmation of the non-uniform nature of things. Concerning this point, Japanese thinker Takeuchi Yoshimi had a more modernized way of illustration.

In 1961, Takeuchi lectured on “Asia as Method.” After the speech, someone asked him a question: the education of postwar Japan is an importation of American educational system in the name of democratic values. It has, therefore, some parts which are not suitable for Japan’s reality. In fact, even with the American democracy, the system shows increasing discrepancies. Thus, can Western democratic principles based on individualism be adapted to the reality of Japan? Would it not be possible to construct an education system of their own based on Asian principles?

I am afraid that few among our audience would object to this idea. This is also the problem we face in China today. What is intriguing, however, is that Takeuchi did not accept the idea without any reflection. Although in his speech he called for Asia’s own way, in answering the question he said: I do not believe that there are different types of human beings. Especially so in the modern age where shared characteristics are ever more manifest and men tend to become more equal. Therefore we need to stress the fact that culture is also equal.

Attention, however, should be paid to the fact that culture is not a castle in the air, it attains its reality by penetrating into man's daily life. Only the excellent values that benefit all human race can be called universal. But the West failed the task in the sense that it only produced the Toynbeeian idea which makes the world equal through conflict of civilizations. Excellent values such as liberty and equality are only the values internal to White societies. When they were imposed upon the rest of the world, the process was accompanied by violence and robbery. Therefore, we cannot expect the power of the West alone in sharing the excellent values that it created. Such is the limitation of the West, but this fact would not diminish the value of liberty and equality, values that should not be negated due to the limitation of the West. We, as Asians, are capable of raising the creation of the West to the level of all humanity, but the achievement requires first of all a reform of the West. By reform I mean that we form the subjectivity of our own while at the same time reshape that of the West, inducing a reversion on the level of culture and values. In this process, no entity exists, while subjectivity is in fact a method. Hence the title "Asia as Method."

There are many issues involved in the speech of Takeuchi. Here we are only going to discuss one of them, i.e., what he said about the equality of mankind and cultures. What he really means is that we should never judge men's value according to their level of development, because in terms of value, men are equal. The word "equality" used by Takeuchi is the ability of universality to abstract and to generalize. If such abstract universality can serve as a premise, it is only from its service as a premise that its value is derived: To acknowledge that human societies are equal in terms of culture. Here it is to be noted that equality is not equivalent to homogeneity. The non-existence of hierarchy among all kinds of values does not entail their homogeneity in content, since diversity of men and cultures must be admitted as a premise. Takeuchi used a modern language to elaborate an idea which bears much resemblance to that of Chuang Tzu. Universal values are necessarily the ones applicable to all human beings, but the result of application is not making all human beings homogeneous.

Therefore, equality is an attitude instead of a concrete criterion for judgment. In other words, equality has nothing to do with specific content, while for homogeneity it is not so. In this sense we may call equality the “great way.” Takeuchi believed that what Toynbee incarnates is actually the limitation of the West, as his model of conflict of civilizations is based on the homogeneous imagination of the world which regards Western modernization as the only feasibility, and on the external conflicts between different entities. Takeuchi emphasized the importance of the process in which the excellent values of humanity are shared and exchanged, more important than the origin of the creation. Put it in another way, excellent values for humanity are incompatible with the notion of ownership. To achieve this, we need to break down two epistemological obstacles: one is the evolutionist vision, which regards human history as a linear development. It means that we cannot say that there is only one sort of modernity: when you do so, modernity becomes the “privilege” of the society that originally invents the concept. It also means that it is only by meeting this single standard that men are able to catch up with the pace of evolution. Therefore, the only way to prevent excellent values of humanity from becoming privilege of some of its members is to break up with the presupposed linear conception of history. The other obstacle is the disregard of equality among different types of humans. In “Asia as Method,” it is the prejudice of Japanese towards Chinese that Takeuchi was criticizing. Discrimination entails the negation of equality among all types of human beings. Only by constructing a hierarchy among different types of men can the linear view of history make sense. It is therefore necessary to tackle the obstacle from its root, that is, the idea, which distinguishes humans as either advanced or backward. A new horizon would arise if the two obstacles are cast off: that is why in the early 1960s when Japanese economy was on its rise, Takeuchi was bold enough to say that China embodied a more modern spirit than Japan, an argument which amounts to a reversion of values.

A self-awareness about knowledge that does not see Europe or Asia as an entity is essential to break down the two epistemological obstacles. If such a habit of thinking is not formed, it will be quite natural to ask the question as asked by Takeuchi's audience: if Europe and America are hegemonic in nature and are imposing their way of living on underdeveloped countries by their hegemonic relationship, why can't we simply reject them? In fact, today's academic orthodox tends to agree with this way of thinking. When we talk about China against the U.S., we unconsciously presume two entities. Here lies the difference between Takeuchi and the one who raised the question. Takeuchi, when admitting the inherent properties of Asian civilization, also rejected explicit discussion of these properties in terms of Asia as an entity. He regarded such a sense of subjectivity as merely an operational function, so as to bring into discussion its circulation and openness. To be concrete, Takeuchi believed that although the subjectivity of Asia still awaits construction, its subjectivity should not be conceived as an entity. In other words, Asia should not be seen as a fixed "object." It is in fact a dynamic group of structures, a process which promotes the formation of subjectivity by constant self-negation. And such a process would help Asia realize human values that are not achievable by the West, or, in other words, break down the modernization pattern represented by violent global conquests so as to permit liberty and equality, as values in an authentic sense, to produce diversified human history. At the same time, the process will also lead to the "regionalization" of Western society, that is to say, a process of making it relative which transforms it into a part, instead of a standard, of human society.

When our reasoning goes this far, we have finished the first step of reflection, which permits us to determine the function of abstract universality. But the following step is even more difficult, that is, if we shall really have achieved such equalization (rather than homogenization) on an epistemological level and admit equality of humans and cultures, we would only have set down a starting point, a premise. In our next step to demonstrate particularities of cultures, we will not rely on

the starting point of abstract universality, but the insufficient universality as elaborated in the discussion of the first problem, which we may also call open particularity. On this point, Western theories only provide limited understanding, as such a subject of study can hardly be generated in the modern history of West. Therefore we need to turn to Asia seeking for new form of theory, i.e., a kind of Asian principle which I call “empirical reasoning” (形而下之理) as opposed to metaphysical reasoning. In other words, we seek a method, which produces theory through problems of very concrete particularities.

There is a very rich heritage left by our ancestors concerning empirical reasoning. In early Nationalist China, there was a debate on whether philosophy existed in Chinese history. The reason for such a debate is that the intellectual history in China concerns mostly empirical reasoning without much reflection on logical reasoning. But it is exactly such intellectual heritage that offers great insights for our construction today of new universality and our search for a new form of theory.

Li Zhuowu (李卓吾), a thinker of late Ming Dynasty, said that scholars should perceive the vacuum (真空) through the study of objects; but they should never try to perceive objects through objects. His words have concisely defined the essence of empirical reasoning. To perceive the vacuum through objects means comprehension through particular individual experiences. The key point, however, is that what Li tried to perceive through objects is not the “Way”(道) but the vacuum. If he should have said to perceive the “Way” through objects, it would have meant to extract abstract “universality” from objects, exactly the collective unconsciousness of today’s intellectual world. I believe quite a few people would replace his “vacuum” by the “Way” so as to accomplish the interpretation in a Western fashion. But Li refused to find the “Way” through objects, as there is always an object whenever you seek for something. Furthermore, when you try to perceive the “Way” through objects you unconsciously distinguish the “Way” from the object, and place the “Way” over objects.



Li explicitly refused such abstraction as he considered it to be a substitution of vivid reason as contained in objects into top-down external judgment. We can say that this is the intellectual project he pursued for his life.

The most difficult point here is how to understand Li's notion of "vacuum." In an essay he once wrote: "The vacuum is contained in clarity when it encounters a person of clarity. But it is not turned into clarity as when it encounters someone obscure, it is also contained in the obscurity without turning itself into obscurity." The sentence has to be understood in its context.

Li was criticizing some of his contemporaries who were obsessed with in the notion of vacuum as "the primal status without image" (无相之初). He pointed out that these people explained their failure to arrive at the status of vacuum by worldly distractions. They therefore believed that man must cast off all these distractions in order to return to the vast imageless emptiness. But once they pose a premise like this, the vacuum has already turned into a shaped entity, implying an alienation of itself. The vacuum does not have any shape, its representation relies on objects. It can, therefore, be either clear or obscure, while not being clarity or obscurity itself. Through all kinds of mental images, man can experience the vacuum, but his mental image could never be void. We can only understand Li's terms such as "no good, no trace," "no other, no self," and "no orthodox, no heresy" when we understand his approach. What he actually rejected was the premise of "distinction." The ideal rule since the ancient times of China can be concluded as "Mercy to all things as a whole." But what is this "whole"? To put it simply, it is what Chuang Tzu said of "the uniformity of non-uniformity" (不齐之齐). What kind of power will be destructive to this uniformity? The external rules artificially made and imposed from top. What late Ming thinkers were battling with was the rigid dogma of Confucianism imposed externally from the society. Li was seeking for the true non-uniformity and diversity. Therefore he used the word vacuum but at the same time refused to attribute to it an absolute status.

There is some centuries' cultural distance between Li's vacuum and Takeuchi's claim on "the equality of men." But they both reveal some very exquisite insights. They are both against creating "distinction" in human society, or in today's words, against discrimination.

When such attitude is established, we can go further to say that the universality as an agency is also realized.

We still need to push our argument further. I believe that there must be some friends who will object that the non-distinction principle is nothing but a claim of non-discrimination and cultural diversity. And we find lots of them in critical theories of the West. Indeed, politically incorrect attitudes such as hegemony and discrimination have been long before criticized by Western critical theories. But what is the most important is not to point out their incorrectness which only leads to more prohibited vocabulary. The problem we face is exactly that theory is not able to compete against social atmosphere. Be critical as they may, these theories are incapable of demonstrating effective paths to build epistemological structure where discrimination holds no place. Have we not seen enough of those who write with political correctness but act with narrow-mindedness?

Therefore, metaphysical reasoning alone could not solve the problem of intellectual hegemony. It constitutes by itself the practical necessity of empirical reasoning. Why? Because metaphysical reasoning requires clear and coherent logic, while experience from the reality never conforms completely to logic. Even if we have made the case for diversity in theory, it is still a product of logic, therefore separated by necessity from the illogical experience of reality. To establish an expanded theoretical thinking in the realm of illogical experiences, one can only train himself in theoretical thinking on the level of empirical reasoning, hence "perceiving the vacuum through objects."

Another example is also about Li Zhuowu, who wrote two essays dealing with two cases which appeared to be similar but from which he drew opposite conclusions. The first case involves a monk

Ruowu (若无, meaning "as if void") whose monastery was located in his hometown where he still had an old widowed mother with two kids. Ruowu, in furtherance of his meditation, planned to travel to Vajra Mountain to practice religion as a hermit. His mother wrote him a letter opposing his plan, saying that if he was truly devoted to religion, it would be the same to practice it anywhere, be it Vajra Mountain or at home. Why not practice it at home and take charge of the family? Li spoke highly of this mother by commenting that "great mother at home, true Buddha under your knees." The second case is about Huang An the Second Master (黄安二上人), who decided to resign from his political career, withdraw from secular life to practice Buddhist ideal while leaving his widowed mother at home. As the purpose of his decision was to repay his mother's love and care, Li praised him as exemplary in filial piety. In both cases, the son was a monk who left his widowed mother to practice religion. Both of them were not able to meet the responsibility of filial piety to take care of their old mothers. Li, however, had very contrasting remarks on the two, demonstrating the fact that when he made a judgment, it was not based on how things appeared superficially. He once said that if one was determined to pursue the "Way," he could achieve it by whatever means. Confucius and Mencius never became a monk, but they comprehended the "Way." Most people who practiced religion at home did not, however, achieve comparable accomplishments. Shakyamuni abandoned the secular world and went into hermitage to become Buddha, while most hermits would not necessarily become Buddha. His seemingly contrasting remarks are therefore examples of "perceiving the vacuum through objects." For Ruowu, staying with his mother amounts to religious accomplishment, while for the Second Master, abandoning the small filial piety to practice religion means the same. Removed from concrete circumstances and experiences, "becoming Buddha" could not gain its independent significance.

For the matter of vacuum, Li Zhuowu clearly insisted upon it. Vacuum is not a basket which contains all. It is not beyond the world as

it has neither shape nor trace, but it does serve as the link for everything in the world. But Li Zhuowu never told us what such link would be. He only told us that once it is prescribed of specific content, it stops serving as such a link.

In fact, Li had his very concrete perception of this link. He once told us the following metaphor: "Mercy to all things as a whole" is the "Great Way" without limit. Everyone is walking along this "Way" according to the original mind of each. Please recall what I just told you about my experience in Heidelberg. It is, then, easy for us to understand why a thinker like Li was primarily concerned with the realization of all the expanded original minds rather than a unified order when he was considering how everything in the world could achieve their own ends. Li would never delimitate a dividing line between routes for pedestrian and those for bicycles. That everyone can pursue their own ends was indeed his political ideal which also required the realization of dynamic equilibrium in a society. His vision, however, was hard to be turned into reality, as he was said to practice his ideal when he was the Governor of Yao'an, a town in Yunnan Province, by eliminating barriers imposed upon people. His experiment somehow was not successful. However, the point is not to examine his inexperience of governance, but to explore the basic political demands of Chinese society through his thinking and practice. The most intricate problem for China today is still the way of constructing such dynamic equilibrium. Li did not resolve the problem, and our contemporary citizens are still being troubled by it. What made Chinese not to draw a clear dividing line of pedestrian and bicycle routes should not be explained solely by realistic considerations such as population density. What we find at work is also the traditional way of Chinese to perceive reason and the way. "Mercy to all things as a whole" remains the political ideal that is haunting modern Chinese people, making it difficult to transplant the rule-based principles of the West to solve Chinese problems. Many more efforts are expected in the study of our tradition which is being transformed gradually into modern topics.

We shall now leave Li Zhuowu to return to our subject. It is very hard for one who is accustomed to regarding Western theory as the only form of theory to grasp the essence of empirical reasoning, as for them, theoretical reasoning means to extract concepts from concrete experience. The fundamental obstacle we face is a narrow sense of knowledge which we need to break through in order to open up new horizons for theoretical thinking. As this dimension resides inside concrete experiences, we can only recognize it by distinguishing it from those intuitive descriptions of experience. "Perception of vacuum through objects," or "distinction of objects through objects:" such is the dividing line between empirical reasoning and intuitive experience. In other words, universality is the agency that we need to identify from particular human experiences in concrete things and affairs. In this way, also as the *raison d'être* of empirical reasoning, our understanding of human life is enriched.

Asia is the most diversified region in the world. The reason why I am fascinated by the canon of Asia is exactly that Asia can hardly be united in an intuitive manner. Just as what I mentioned in relation to the first question, Asia carries several civilizations that fuse with and penetrate into each other, and are not possible to be rendered homogeneous or united. At the same time, most part of Asia has undergone an internalization of the West, as a result of colonization by the West. The process requires that Asia needs an open form, which may change its passivity into activity and rebuild its subjectivity. These historical conditions of Asia would offer the fertile soil for new theoretical thinking to grow. But to break away from the idea that Western theory is the only form of theory is the *sine qua non* for such development. Under such intellectual circumstances, how can we manage to produce theoretical thinking and intellectual resources, which correspond to our own history? To arrive at this, we should first of start questioning the premise of the question, by putting such a premise into question. In one word, I agree with Professor Sakai on the point that we will not be able to envision human future by resorting solely to Western theories.

Western theories have greatly contributed to human intelligence, but they only represent part of humanity given that the humanity as a whole is a multitude from its very beginning. Theory, be it European or Asian, is ultimately the intellectual capacity of human beings to find out invisible elements through the visible world. Fundamentally speaking, theoretical thinking is a sort of imagination, the capability of finding and developing questions. Its representation (whether abstract or concrete) and perception (whether through logical reasoning or experience) is, however, not the key issue that actually concerns “truth” found through different forms of theoretical thinking. Theory is not an end in itself. It is merely a tool to aid our thinking. Only when we have pursued the truth through different ways of theoretical thinking and found out that truth is in fact multi-facet, multi-dimensional, interconnected but not unified, can we say that universality has attained its own accomplishment.

## **Pull Universality down from the Altar**

### **Q&A**

Q1: My question is, did Husserl deduce a completely contrary theory as a consequence of him being kicked by Nazi out of his country or the European regime? Or should we say that he made a turn from his previous efforts of studying Nazism as a form of populism to a process of theorization? This part of the story for me is not so clear and I would like you to make a more detailed explanation, thank you.

NAOKI SAKAI: Of course, Husserl never supported the policies of Nazi. But in essence, the reason for his resistance is his adherence to the large principle that is, the European spirit or Western civilization. He rejected the Nazi policies by resorting to these large principles. He was perhaps never aware of the so-called Eurocentrism, but it is an element inherent in his reasoning. So this can serve as an interesting example for the politics of ethnical minorities. That is to say, when one is excluded from a community, he would exactly protest by invoking the founding principles of this community. In this sense, Husserl is a rather tragic figure; meanwhile, similar examples can be found in Islamic states of today. When they are taking reactions against the West, what they resort to is exactly the ideal pattern proposed initially by the West.

Q2: Please allow me to ask a question that has puzzled me for a long time. That is, I would like to know your opinion on the dictum “Chinese scholarship as the body, Western scholarship for application”(中学为体、西学为用). Especially its historical context and its relevance to theory.

NS: The saying “Chinese scholarship as the body, Western scholarship for application” is a typical reaction when Asia, Africa or any other non-Western country encounters the intellectual invasion of Europe.

The reaction itself is derived from the logic of maintaining the colonialist order of the West and the East, and is no more than an expression of discontent and resentment. In face of Western theory, whether we opt to stress its acceptance or rejection, or taking advantage of its beneficial part is actually a logic, which intends to preserve such a colonial order between the European civilization with Asia and other regions. Due to the time limit, I was not able to deliver the later half of my speech, but you can find more elaborations in the transcript.

I think Professor Sun has written a lot on this issue. I would just like to add one point that, to this problem, this logic, this mechanism of thinking, a Japanese thinker, also a scholar of Chinese literature, Takeuchi Yoshimi was highly sensitive. Japanese intellectuals believe that similar logic like “Chinese scholarship as the body, Western scholarship for application” is a logic of resentment. Although Asian intellectuals have struggled hard, it turns out that they were still defending the differentiation between the East and the West, resulting finally to the enforcement of the superiority of the West in Asian regions. Takeuchi was sensitive enough to this and put forward his own perception and critique. But as I think he didn’t go far enough, I also made some criticism of his arguments.

Q3: I have a question for Professor Sun Ge. Some years ago I went to an exhibition of photography. It was a grand exhibition and its theme was about Asia. In the prologue of the exhibition, I saw something, which for me was very ambitious, as it said that the goal of the exhibition was to build the so-called Asian subjectivity through the medium of photography. But I felt very disappointed after my visit. This is because what I found in these works was still the prevalence of the Western style. So I would like to take the opportunity to ask: What is the subjectivity of Asia that we are going to construct? I read about the theory of Homi K. Bhabha, of course through second-hand literature. If I understand it correctly, he made a point that is very similar to yours. In his theory of post-colonialism, he mentioned that when we are talking about constructing Asian subjectivity, we are in fact emphasizing the ne-



cessity of elaborating on the particularity therein and preserve such particularity. But his theory is not convincing enough for me. That is why I also have doubts on the opinion you just talked about, doubts that I cannot resolve on my own. When we want to talk about preserving particularity in a very philosophical and abstract manner, it is actually quite an easy thing to do. But whenever we go into the detail of the problem to ask what Asia is, we may forever be trapped by the problem of particularity. Just as what you have said, there's something that may be residual in our whole conceptual framework, because it is something not up to further deduction or generalization. But what are these features that are non-deductible? Is the problem of Iran, for instance, non-deductible? Are other countries the same? So finally, when we face the question of what Asian subjectivity is, this problem concerning particularity seems to come to a dead end. This is because here particularity is unlimitedly complicated. This reminds me of what I read about the theory of Fredric Jameson, that is, the universality (or in Jameson's term "totality") that we have been emphasizing is actually a Utopian existence. But why we need such a device? It is because when we talk about something, we need such a regulatory device, which is indeed inherently connected with certain discursive violence. Or put it another way, given the limited time and energy of man, the problem may never be able to return back to what we call the universality. We may be forever imprisoned in the particularity. I wonder how Professor Sun will solve the problem.

SUN GE: The question you raised is indeed an important one. In fact, when you talk about particularity, there's an evident presupposition that comes along with it. I mean, you believe that particularity is so complex and so trivial that we must bring it in front of, or even back to, universality. The universality here serves as the anchor of our thinking and provides us with a sense of security in our limited life span. But I would like to ask you, why is it necessary to have such a universality? In my lecture, I talked about the universality as the function of generalization, which is exactly what you said about bringing particularity back to this function of universality.

This is an important point, since without this function, our thinking may always remain in fragments. So in systematical thinking, everyone needs to make generalization, even including Chinese and Indian thinkers. But generalization on its own would not suffice to solve the problem. Just as you said, abstract discussions are useless in face of specific problems, while what we have to deal with everyday are these specific problems. Under such a premise, we find it necessary to introduce another kind of universality, a less sacred sort of it that will serve as a medium. To make my explanation more vivid, I would say that the latter sort of universality is analogous to a matchmaker whose duty is to bring future husband and wife together. Do we still need a matchmaker after marriage? No, right? But through the work of the matchmaker, a new community is born. Is this medium important? Yes. If it does not exist, particularities may never come together to form something new. The importance of universality lies exactly in its function of inducing the intersection of those concrete particularities. A further question would follow: after the intersection, is particularity still particular? This question leads us to the discovery of universality.

If this particularity should be transformed into universality, it should not cease to be particular. And it is only through the theory of empirical reasoning that we are able to deal with such special status of particularity and to endow it with the function of universality. This explanation is perhaps confusing for you, so I would like to give a simple example. Please recall the case of Li Zhi (Li Zhuowu), the thinker of late Ming. His case is a tricky one to deal with. Why? Because his judgement was never based on the dogmas of Confucianism. He once made completely contradictory judgement on two seemingly similar stories. Both stories concern a son who left his mother at home and went to become hermit monk. For the first story, he commented that if you really wanted to practice religion, why was it necessary to abandon your home? Confucius stayed at home and that did not impede him from becoming a sage. But on the second story, he remarked that you were perfectly correct to abandon your home as you were lucky to have a wise mother there.

Through simple metaphysical reasoning, you could only draw the conclusion that his remarks were self-contradictory. But with empirical reasoning (the process of which I cannot elaborate here), you will find coherence in his two judgements, but that coherence cannot be found on an abstract level. That is the way how Chinese philosophers think of and solve the problems. They deal with problems that are invisible and non-intuitive as well. The only difference is that they deal with them in a figurative, empirical manner. Under such circumstances, particularity turns out to be something very important and enticing.

Q4: Professor Sun Ge, you just mentioned that before universality is turned into a sort of hegemony, it is actually equivalent to the capacity of generalization. But after it is linked to certain values, it becomes hegemonic. Later on you raised the question about whether it is possible for us to imagine a community of values. So I would like you to make a more detailed distinction between the two “values” mentioned in the two contexts. Are they the same or different? Besides, if for a particularity to be associated with certain values it must be transformed into a community of values, by what means can it prevent itself from degenerating into hegemony?

SG: I think there are at least two forms of particularity, so it is impossible to discuss particularity in general. The first form of particularity is a self-enclosed, exclusionist sort of particularity that refuses to understand the particularity of others. This is exactly the particularity that some Europeans are emphasizing. Fundamentally, it aims at excluding people of other races by stressing the uniqueness of a race. We have to criticize such particularity as values, but there's another kind of particularity whose values depend on our assignment. And of course, such values are different than the first kind of values derived from the value assignment of the monopoly of Eurocentric universalism. But the word “value,” just like “democracy,” is by itself valueless. Its content can only be determined according to its context. This second sort of particularity, which I would like to call it the “open particularity,” can only

be determined by our action of value assignment. Let me give you a simple example. In March 2017, I went to the Kerala region in India. It is a very poor region, but the people there are very happy. I saw some Indians almost in rags selling flowers in front of a Hindu temple. But the smile on their faces was so real, so sincere. When I was walking along the coast, a group of young Indian girls came around me and began to cheer. Perhaps this was because they seldom saw Chinese people there. Later we also took some photos together. These people look very poor, and according to our Chinese values, their life is not successful. But I think they live better than we do, as they are happy, leading a life free of worries. This is the simplest example, of course, and we can find more complex ones. In these examples, we can see that values are embedded in the “open particularity.” This tells us that if values are not assigned to such particularity, it will never be possible to pull down the altar of universality. In reality, the process of value assignment is greatly influenced, in fact, by our monotonous, narrow understanding of modernity.

YANG TIANGE: There were already some sparks and conflicts of thought highlighted in the lectures of two professors. I think most of the audience members share my feeling that it is time for a conversation between the two scholars. Now I'll leave the floor to them.

SG: A somewhat selfish suggestion of mine is whether it is possible to ask Professor Sakai to talk more about Husserl's discussion on theory, his resistance in the atmosphere dominated by Nazi and his way of thinking. We cannot always be so lucky to have Professor Sakai with us as he has to come to China by a long-haul flight. Due to the time limit on the speech, he was not able to elaborate on many points and I think we should give him more time so that he can talk about his thoughts that he hasn't yet found the time to develop.

NS: There are a few points on which I want to build my critique of Husserl's Eurocentrism. The first point, as I have mentioned in my speech, is that

Husserl in his later years of theoretical career, emphasized the return to historical origin, or the problem of the origin of European theory and European spirit. Europeans should go back to their original history, according to him, and this origin should be Greece, where the basis of the whole European system of philosophy and theoretical tradition was laid down. He stressed it with much force. He wrote a book entitled *The Origin of Geometrics*. In that book, this point was underlined explicitly. Jacques Derrida, inspired by this book, translated the book into French. His critique of Eurocentrism may have been the result of his reading of Husserl's book.

Secondly, what I think Husserl is fundamentally wrong is that he thought Europe existed since ancient Greece. In fact, contrary to what he would like to believe, Europe hasn't always existed since antiquity. The very ancient belief that Europe originates in ancient Greece is precisely the result of metaphysical thinking, the abstract theoretical construction that Professor Sun Ge has been criticizing. What we understand as Europe stems only from as late as the 16th century, simply because Europe created for the first time in human history the international world. The meaning of this international world can be understood in terms of East Asia, where Chinese dynasties subordinated other local polities. While in medieval Europe, there was a unified Church, since the 16th century, the old "imperial" order crushed. Of course, a crucial turning point is the Reformation after which there appeared in Europe many countries that we understand today as nation states. And the relationship between these states began to play a very important role in the international society. So, as a matter of fact, Europe has nothing to do with Greece or Rome. By the 16th century, European intellectuals still had to rely on documents from the Arabic world to learn Latin and Greek. In the so-called obscure age of the Middle Ages, this intellectual tradition was once suspended and Europeans need the Arabic world in their rediscovery of intellectual resources. In my previous writings, I have been emphasizing the fact that the concept of Europe is closely connected to the expansion and history of colonialism.

For instance, Europe discovered the Americas in the Age of Discovery, and thanks to Americas and Africa, it began to recognize its European identity. The point is also emphasized repeatedly in Takeuchi's book, that is, Asia is absolutely necessary for Europe to exist. But the concept of Asia originally was not a problem for Asians. For example, before the invasion of Western colonists, if you asked the Vietnamese of 17th century, they would not have any clue about what Asia was. This is also true with ethnic minorities in Southern China of that time. They might only know that they were the subjects of Qing Dynasty, but surely they had no sense of Asia, which was to them not a problem at all, either. Only when it comes to the 19th century, when these regions were colonialized by the West, did Asia begin to be conceived as a concept, a problem, and begin to possess certain substantial existence. Following Takeuchi's opinion, we find that he in his time preferred using the term *tōyō* rather than Asia. He pointed out that the concept of *tōyō* is constructed in opposition to *seiyō*. *Seiyō* brings about conflict and opposition, and *tōyō* is constructed as its oppositional concept. So if one wants to know *tōyō* or Asia, he must resort to *seiyō* or the West. The knowledge about *tōyō* resides not within *tōyō* itself, but rather, in the West. Virtually everyone who wants to talk about it must be aware of this structure, be aware that everytime one tries to revive the concept of Asia or bring it out again for discussion, he will always be restricted by this structure and forced to take it up as the starting point of discussion.

The third mistake (or misunderstanding) of Husserl is that he believed the Greek origin of Western history. In fact, for the West, the knowledge of their own past and the big lines of history were only established by the 18th century. Only by the time when European or Western states obtained a dominant position by conquering the world did they begin to form a coherent knowledge or construction of their proper history. Clearheaded European intellectuals such as Heidegger and Karl Schmitt knew perfectly well that this is essentially a construction, a metaphysical construction. But this construction is absolutely necessary given the component of their knowledge. That is why they were

obsessed with developing their own theories along this line of thinking. But Husserl was more naive than they were. He was probably never aware of this problem. In other words, he sincerely believed in it. I think metaphysical critique is all necessary. If we have to rely on concepts such as China, Asia and Western civilisation, we will never be able to break off the shackle of this metaphysical structure. In this sense, a critique of metaphysics will be a very important task.

My fourth criticism of Husserl concerns real world politics. I don't know if anyone of you has wondered why the U.S. is the hegemon in world academia and how it achieved such status? As late as 1960s, the ideal university and academic institution was based on the European model instead of the American one. Why America was able to replace Europe and dominate the production of scholarship and knowledge? I think the reason is that after 1960s, the U.S. invented a new paradigm or mechanism which allowed foreign students to study there. At the same time, those students were also provided with generous scholarships. If you go to the Silicon Valley and talk with the IT experts there, you may find that those people have no concern about their country, nationality, ethnicity or origin. Here meritocracy rules, and all kinds of identities are of lesser importance than anywhere else. In the 1960s, the hegemony over knowledge production moved from Europe to the U.S.. Now I think we should ask another question, that is, considering the development of capitalism in China, is it possible for China to invent a new paradigm of scholarship and attract talents from all over the world? Thanks to capitalism, I think, Eurocentrism is about to cease functioning, a tendency that European intellectuals are also well aware of. So the next question is, is it possible for China to replace America, to become the next center or dominator of knowledge production? To deal with this problem, notions such as European civilization, Asian civilization or African civilization are no longer important. We have entered into a phase that has already surpassed the problem of civilizations. I don't know if this is a good thing or bad thing. But at least this is the reality we are facing.

SG: I find the question of Professor Sakai a bit hard to answer. I'm not a policy-maker, neither a political one, nor an academic one. I think most of you know well about the university system of our country. To expect such a system to generate a new system that would replace the American system is for us more an expression of innocent zest and goodwill. But for me personally, the essential problem is whether it is beneficial for the humanity to have China replace the U.S.. The problem constitutes a realistic motivation to reinitiate the discussion of universality. Many Chinese people often have the feeling of being oppressed for a long time. When they see the chance of becoming the master, no matter how little it is, they will not hesitate to say that from now on, we are going to make everyone in the world speak Chinese. Indeed, Chinese tourists have become the master of the vendors all over the world. But such a way of thinking, from a cultural and intellectual perspective, is quite problematic. I say this not because that the chance is small. What is problematic is the wish to pump up one particularity to cover the whole humanity. Such things happened in history, resulting in two World Wars. Even today, the Cold War hasn't yet truly ended, with part of the world such as the Middle East being still in the situation of hot war. Taken these realities into consideration, what is the best picture for human life? It is not for us to decide, but we can say that we are at least entitled to think. If our liberal imagination is never developed, it will be impossible for us to make use of it even if the liberty is given to us, since we are born ignorant of what liberty is.

Professor Sakai has been deconstructing, while I have been constructing as most of you may have noticed. Still, I don't believe that you would think we are actually on two opposite positions. Why? Because any critique consists of deconstructive and constructive sides. But here I would like to propose a hypothesis that may be even more naive and idyllic than Husserl's. Perhaps, for European and American intellectuals, their solid premises have restrained to too far an extent their intelligence in its attempt of comprehending humanity. Moreover, their historical resources have been integrated into a unified body of culture (or even politics). So it



is natural for them to pay more attention to the work of critique from a deconstructive perspective. Today, we have a very brilliant example here. However, for intellectuals living in Asia, deconstruction is also important, especially the deconstruction of ourselves instead of the West. Of course, there are merits if you try to deconstruct the West, but I think it may be a more crucial subject to deconstruct ourselves, the university education in China and our barren and monotonous epistemology. After deconstruction, we still face the question of what to do. If by deconstruction we clear everything off our horizon, the result is not satisfactory as we will lose our anchor, and the situation will possibly return to the “state of nature” as Professor Sakai just mentioned. We would then return back to a new kind of Eurocentrism. This time, however, China becomes the hegemon. Why not, then, initiate a healthier construction? The process may be hard without collaboration from the side of Western theories. But wouldn't it be possible to take the initiative on our own and find alliances among anyone in the West who shares the prospect, so as to construct another sort of universality? And this universality will be tantamount to our new interpretation of the keyword “harmony.” The title of this exhibition is very interesting: *Discordant Harmony*. The keyword here is harmony, which is our goal, our premise. But have you ever thought about what harmony is?

The word in English can also mean the tuneful sound of the symphony. In reality, such harmony is hard to find. That is why Professor Sakai said just now that Husserl was not clever enough, since most of us believe that there should be such harmony in reality. But we must know that in reality there's another sort of harmony, which is actually more realistic. Just look at the Korean peninsula where harmony always rules before the tension should escalate. There are worries that a war could break out tomorrow. In fact, the politicians and people of both North and South Korea know far better than we do what harmony is. This is also harmony, as we call it. It's a kind of harmony scented by the smell of gun-powder, harmony full of tension, but it can prevent the conflict from escalating before something goes seriously wrong. Isn't the po-

litical situation in China so? Isn't it true with the world's political structure where there's always someone who gains and someone who loses? This line of thinking leads to a reconsideration of all of our premises. Of course, talking about harmony when we are talking about Asia is perhaps a bit off the point.

The significance of the category that we call "Asia" lies in the fact that it has, compared to all other continents of the earth, probably the most complicated components that are impossible to be reconciled into a unity. For instance, we have heard of the integration projects of Africa and Latin America. But very few people are calling for the integration of Asia, as its realization must be extremely difficult. If we just set it aside as a practical matter, it might be a loss for us, as a new kind of epistemology may well be produced by its territory and history. By criticizing Eurocentrism, we would by no means solve simultaneously the problem of how to view the world differently. Therefore, along with our criticisms, we need to do some construction. Construction in turn requires resources, and the resources stem exactly from the non-integrity of Asia. To be added to our consideration is a part of Asia closely linked to Europe, that is, the Mediterranean. The Asian part of Mediterranean is what we call the Asia Minor. Located in Asia, its cultural identity is in fact Mediterranean, within its history a period of Hellenization. Given such diversity, Asia's non-integrity and its openness is the starting point of our discussion. It's a point, which is entirely strange for the academic and intellectual training that we received in the past. So if we should allow such resources to lay waste, I think we would finally end up by thinking of the earth and the world in one single way. This is the ultimate motivation for me to discuss about Asia or even the Asian Principle. Of course, I have to repeat that I would never believe that Asia can only be discussed by Asian people. But there is a very basic problem that, those who care most about Asia are indeed some of the Asians in Asia.

NS: We should never forget that Asia is a multi-faceted concept, or even an excessively defined one. Depending on different contexts it can be given

different meanings. Whether we praise it or criticize it, its meaning or implication never ceases to change according to the change of the context. Don't forget that in criticizing the concept of "theory," it is important to acknowledge that its criticism is intimately tied with power relations, and by power relations I mean the mode of organization of human society or interpersonal relationship. The reason why I put much emphasis on the case of Husserl is that his case is hardly separable from the racism of today. We therefore cannot overlook this case when talking about power relations or power structure. Besides, if the concept of Asia is put into another context, Europe of 1930s for instance, its meaning will change significantly. It can also stand for a status where sovereign states of a clearly defined territory were lacking. So when we talk about Asia, we have to, first of all, understand that it has different meanings in different context. Then, we have to find out to what kind of power relations it is tied. If we neglect to do that, the discussion can be meaningless. What's more, power does not always mean coercive power, which forces others to do things they don't want to do. Sometimes, power can also mean a relationship of complicity, or the observation of social norms and common sense, which is another fashion in which power relations are represented. An example for this is that under the influence of the general atmosphere of the society which encourages hard work, young people are required to contribute his efforts to the society, to become part and parcel of the productive machine called society.

Q5: I have a brief question for Professor Sakai. In the current trend of economic globalization, most of the countries in Asia are developing countries. In our imitation of the West, we initially tried to absorb the Western ideas and thoughts of scientific and social development. Now we have begun to make some reflections, and believe that we should preserve some of our own thoughts and spirit. In this sense, conflict is unavoidable. My question would be, for Asia today in the face of such conflict, how should Asia deal with it? How to make sure that we have exploited the full potential of the so-called harmony? I think Japan has preserved its social culture quite well

during its social and economic development. It even found a very innovative way in integrating economic globalization and science into their social culture. So I would like to learn from Professor Sakai your opinion with regard to my question. Thank you!

NS: Thank you for the question. After listening to the discussion of the curators yesterday and seeing the exhibition of Inside-Out Art Museum, I was struck by the fact that from the 1980s to the 21st century, East Asia has really changed significantly. My first visit to Taiwan dates back to 1970s. At that time, average income per capita there amounted to only one fifth of Japan. But in 2008, their average purchasing power has surpassed Japan. Korea today has almost the same level of income as Japan. 30 years ago, Japan was still able to enjoy some of the legacies of the Japanese Empire. As Japan was also regarded as the buffering outpost to prevent Chinese and Soviet penetration, so the U.S. invested quite significantly in the country. That is why at that time Japan still managed to maintain some advantage. But after 1970s, the situation in East Asia, especially in Northeast Asia has changed significantly. A similar change that took place within the last three decades can be found in the concept of the West itself. In the 19th century we call it "Europe." It changed into the "West" since the early 20th century, which did not include the U.S. as part of it. But after the World War II, the UN Headquarters suddenly found its place in the U.S., in New York, and the U.S. becomes what we call the power center of the West. If 30 years should characterize the pattern of change, then China may become the next center in 50 years. In fact, the concept of the West does not have any substantial content. It is only the indicator of the center of a power structure, which is actually movable. It is the same with the concept of nation state. Even today there are still many Japanese who believe that Japan is a state that had come into existence since 1400 years ago and Japanese people are bound by this long tradition. But in fact, Japan did not exist before the 18th century when at that time people would not have known that they were Japanese if you should ask. They know nothing about

“Japanese” as the concept of nation state did not exist. It is the same with China at that time. So we can see that these concepts change over time. To keep up with the current pace of change, the concept of nation state itself is going to dwindle or lose its prescriptive power as a concept. This process is not necessarily worthy of praise, and I’m not championing here the disappearance of nation state. But, over the past three decades, East Asia (especially Northeast Asia) has undergone great change and I feel lucky that I’m doing relevant area studies. Northeast Asia will continue to be a fast changing center, as greater changes may follow. Nowadays, many European and American intellectuals and ordinary citizens are in fact very anxious about this tendency. I’m worried whether the resentment towards the yellow race would reappear in the future. So it is quite urgent for us to find ways to eliminate or alleviate this fear of East Asia, or more generally, of the non-West.

CAROL YINGHUA LU: It is indeed a busy and fruitful day of exhibition and discussion. Please allow me to make a brief summary. First of all, we have to thank again the two professors, Professor Sakai and Professor Sun, for their inspiring talks. I think everyone present is now fully stimulated by the new ideas, new approaches and new perspectives that have been discussed this afternoon. From the standpoint of our Museum, also of us curators involved in the exhibition of *Discordant Harmony*, the reason for initiating such an event is because we feel the urgent need to tackle an important challenge and barrier: during our artistic production, we are not only subject to the oppression of the Eurocentric ideological structure. What’s more, we are unknowingly subjecting ourselves to such influence due to our neglect and discrimination of ourselves. So we hope that through our public events and ongoing activities, it is possible to open up some new possibilities and new paths that can help us better understand ourselves, our job, and, the intellectual and historical basis that we are working on. These efforts will be very valuable for us. Finally, my sincere gratitude for our audience who stayed with us throughout the wonderful lectures of the two professors. Thank you!

*Universality and Particularity: What is Asianness?* has been published in Chinese and English edition

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The publication of this book, *Universality and Particularity: What is Asianness?*, is not a trivial matter. It contains a small segment from the recent thinking of professor Naoki Sakai and professor Sun Ge. Together they elaborate on the transcendental perspectives that the notion of Asia could provide in terms of entering regional histories, and of re-examining the issues left out in the assumed relationship between universality and particularity.

Following their respective speeches at Inside-Out Art Museum in Beijing, professor Naoki Sakai and professor Sun Ge carried out a dialogue upon issues regarding the relevance of Asia as a category of perception in light of the current international political dynamic, and the new reality of a fastly fostered Asian unity.

This discursive event put forward the notion of Asia and Asian theories as an intellectual horizon. As such, it has the potential to problematize existing categories and orders, and thus provide windows into the contemplation of subjectivity.

Naoki Sakai is Goldwin Smith Professor of Asian Studies at Cornell University. His publications include: *The End of Pax Americana and the Nationalism of Hikikomori* (in Japanese, Iwanami Shoten, 2017); *Translation and Subjectivity* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997). He edited a number of volumes including *Politics of Translation*, special issue of *Translation*, co-edited with Sandro Mezzadra (2014).

Sun Ge is Researcher at the Institute of Literature in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Her main publications include (in Chinese): *Why Shall We Talk About East Asia: Politics and History in Situation* (SDX Joint Publishing, 2011); *The Literary Position: Masao Maruyama's Dilemma* (Shandong Education Press, 2009); *The Paradox of Takeuchi Yoshimi* (Beijing University Press, 2005).