

## Chapter 9

# The Pitfalls in the Project of Overcoming Western Modernity

## *Rethinking the Lineage of Japanese Historical Revisionism*

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In 1995, on the fiftieth anniversary celebrating the end of the Asia-Pacific War, Japan's prime minister Tomiichi Murayama stated,

during a certain period in the not-too-distant past, Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused enormous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly those of Asia. In the hope that no such mistake will be made in the future, I regard, in the spirit of humanity, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. (Okuno and Dore 1995)

That same year, Seisuke Okuno, a right-wing politician of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP), gave a different account saying,

at the time of the birth of the state of Manchukuo, there was a slogan such as "Five Races under One Union (*gozoku kyōwa*)."<sup>1</sup> [These races were] Japanese, Korean, Manchurian, Chinese, and Mongolian. These five races lived together. Later we rushed into the war with the US. Then I thought that we would construct the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. It was for the stability of Asia. We had to liberate Asians from the white colonial rule. It [regionalism] also became our slogan. Although we were defeated (in the war), all Asian countries were liberated. (Okuno and Dore 1995)

The latter is an example of "reckless remarks" that have been harshly criticized by neighboring Asian countries. Okuno and other conservative politicians, including Shinzō Abe and Tarō Asō (both became prime ministers),

gave similar accounts in order to “rectify” the “masochistic view of history (*jigyaku shikan*)” that they found in speeches like Murayama’s. To support their agenda, these politicians formed the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform in 1996 and the Group of Young Diet Members for Thinking the Future of Japan and Historical Education in 1997, providing them with a platform through which they worked toward a revisionist account of Japan’s history in order to downplay Japan’s war crimes and human rights abuses like the comfort women issue.

Almost one decade later, this revisionist urge resurfaced. In October 2008, Toshio Tamogami, Japan’s Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) chief of staff, was dismissed due to an essay in which he argued that depicting Japan as an aggressor state during World War II was a false accusation. Rather, Japan was drawn into the war by Chang Kai-shek and Franklin D. Roosevelt through a decoy that allegedly had been set up by the Comintern. Speculations arose why Tamogami had been appointed the ASDF chief of staff by Abe in the first place, as his cabinet promoted “a departure from the post war political structure.” The *Japan Times* conjectured that by appointing him, the administration intended to gradually disseminate such views to the public, despite official apologies by prime ministers (Hongo 2008). Thus, the revisionist discourse reappeared in Japanese political discourses.

According to Stanley Cohen (2001: 76–116), the official denial of human rights abuses by the state usually evolves as follows: 1) outright denial (it didn’t happen); 2) discrediting (the organization is biased, manipulated, or gullible); 3) renaming (yes, something did happen but the state was not involved or it was not massacres); 4) justification (it was morally justified). The root of these discourses, promoting the idea of Japan as the liberator of Asia, can be traced back to the ideology of Pan-Asianism during the 1930s and 1940s. In this respect, accusing revisionist remarks as thoughtless does not provide a comprehensive answer to the question as to why the discourse had appeared intermittently. This complexity arose because the Asia-Pacific War for Japan had a dualistic character, differentiating Japan from other colonial powers. Whereas Japan was an imperialist state, as it undeniably invaded other Asian countries, the underlying idea, which prevailed in Japanese intellectual life during this period, was to overcome Western modernity (i.e., Japan confronted Western discourses of superiority). In order to understand this duality, the idea of Asianism as a means to overcome Western modernity needs to be revisited.

In recent years, Western scholarship returned to Carl Schmitt’s work in his critique of the Anglo-American neoliberal global order (cf. Scheuerman 2006; De Benoist 2007). Whereas Schmitt’s ideological contribution to Nazism is well-known, his accusation of Anglo-American universalism is still of relevance today. He states that this international order tends to aggravate antagonisms, as politics tends to be confrontational. In the same

vein, Japanese intellectuals' wartime counterhegemonic discourse is worth re-examining because, although justifying Japan's imperial expedition is to be criticized, a thorough reconsideration can provide useful insights into understanding the difficulty of critiquing contemporary Western hegemony. For Japanese intellectuals at that time, the important task was to present an alternative international order against the "universal" West, examples of which the chapters of Seiko Mimaki, Ryoko Nakano, and Tetsuya Toyoda in this volume provide. For this purpose, Japanese intellectuals tried to develop a dialectical sublation (*Aufheben*) between the East and the West, considering the possibility of a new regionalism.

The idea of an alternative international order is gaining prominence in International Relations (IR) in its investigation of more pluralist world orders (Acharya 2014; see Watanabe in this volume). In this context, it is safe to say that overcoming Western modernity is still in progress and it is in this regard that Japan's wartime experience can provide insights for contemporary world politics. To understand wartime Japan's attempt to thwart Westernism, this chapter first revisits Hegel's Orientalism, which Japanese intellectuals tried to challenge in the first half of the last century. In doing so, then, the idea of Pan-Asianism in Japan is reviewed by focusing on the Kyoto School discourses.

### A REVERSAL OF SUPERIORITY: THE EMERGENCE OF WESTERN "UNIVERSALITY"

In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1956: 17–18) provides the first systemic inquiry into Western universalism by asserting that the essence of the spirit is freedom and that universal history is gaining consciousness about this spirit in a rational process. With regard to the "Orient," he insists that "the Orient has not yet attained the knowledge that spirit—Man as such—is free; and because they do not know this, they are not free. They only know that one is free" (Hegel 1956: 18). He continues:

The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning. History performs no circle round it, but has on the contrary a determinate East. . . . The History of the World is the discipline of the uncontrolled natural will, bringing it into obedience to a Universal principle and conferring subjective freedom. The East knew and to the present day knows only that *One* is Free; World knows that *All* are free. The first political form therefore which we observe in History, is *Despotism*, the second *Democracy* and *Aristocracy*, the third *Monarchy*. (Hegel 1956: 103–04)

This passage indicates Hegel's teleological view in which he maintains that rationality will gradually supersede irrationality, eventually achieving

freedom for all. This view is closely related to Hegel's Christian faith, as it resonates with his mode of treating history as theodicean (a justification of the ways of God) (Hegel 1956: 15). In this respect, the struggle with Oriental despotism had for Hegel a specific meaning like a just war of crusaders. He explains this point by drawing on the case of the wars with the Persians.

Greater battles, unquestionably, have been fought; but these live immortal not in the historical records of Nations only, but also of Science and of Art. . . . For these are World-Historical victories; they were the salvation of culture and Spiritual vigor, and they rendered the Asiatic principle powerless. . . . In the case before us, the interest of the World's History hung trembling in the balance. Oriental despotism . . . a world united under one lord and sovereign . . . on the one side, and separate states . . . insignificant in extent and resources, but animated by free individuality . . . on the other side, stood front to front in array of battle. Never in History has the superiority of spiritual power over material bulk . . . been made so gloriously manifest. (Hegel 1956: 257–58)

For Hegel, Oriental despotism represented an irrational pre-modernity to be overcome by the Spirit of Freedom. For him, the most pre-modern polity was China. Hegel (1956: 113) further defines Oriental despotism by stating that “the third important form—presenting a contrast to the immovable unity of China and to the wild and turbulent unrest of India—is the Persian Realm. China is quite peculiarly Oriental; India we might compare with Greece; Persia on the other hand with Rome.”

In Hegel's (1956) view, Chinese civilization marked the lowest level of world-historical development while European civilization was positioned at its highest level. The Chinese were nothing more than “people without history.” Rather than simply dismissing this crude binary, however, attention should be paid to the fact that his Eurocentric worldview still overshadows Western politics in the West as evidenced in Robert Kagan's (2008) claim of “the return of history.” In fact, Hegel's Orientalism was one of the byproducts of an ahistorical European modernity. Before Hegel, it was rather Sinophilic sentiments that had been dominant in Europe. For example, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1994: 45–46) expressed positive views about China in his *Novissima Sinica* (*Latest News from China*), arguing that “the Chinese Empire, which challenges Europe in cultivated area and certainly surpasses her in population, vies with us in many other ways in almost equal combat, so that now they win, now we” (also Perkins 2004). Thus, Leibniz believed that the Chinese exhibited a higher level of civility and law than the West. He saw them as the likeliest candidates for a conversion to Christianity. Leibniz (1994: 46) further states that

in the useful arts and in practical experience with natural objects we are . . . about equal to them, and each people has knowledge which it could with profit

communicate to the other. In profundity of knowledge and in the theoretical disciplines we are their superiors. . . . The Chinese are thus seen to be ignorant of that great light of the mind, the art of demonstration, and they have remained content with a sort of empirical geometry, which our artisans universally possess. They also yield to us in military science, not so much out of ignorance as by deliberation. For they despise everything which creates or nourishes ferocity in men, and . . . they are averse to war. They would be wise indeed if they were alone in the world. But as things are . . . even the good must cultivate the arts of war, so that the evil may not gain power over everything. In these matters, then, we are superior.

Adam Smith (1976: 680–81) viewed China as being ahead of Europe writing that

the great extent of the empire of China, the vast multitude of its habitants, the variety of climate, and consequently of production in its different provinces, and the easy communication by means of water carriage between the greater part of them, render the home market of that country of so great extent, as to be alone sufficient to support very great manufactures, and to admit of very considerable subdivisions of labor. The home market of China is . . . not much inferior to the market of all the different countries of Europe put together. A more extensive foreign trade, however, which to this great home market added the foreign market of all the rest of the world . . . could scarce fail to increase very much the productive powers of its manufactures of China, and to improve very much the productive powers of its manufacturing industry.

As Giovanni Arrighi (2007: 59) points out, this criticism did not suggest that China should have followed the European path, but in neglecting foreign trade China could not follow its natural development. Hence, Smith's main aim was to argue that each country should follow its own path of development. Thus, Smith was still a far cry from Hegel's Orientalism. Even Montesquieu (1989: 310), who influenced Hegel's view on China, did not take such an excessive view like Hegel, stating

many things govern men: climate, religion, laws, the maxims of the government, examples of past things, mores, and manners; a general spirit is formed as a result. To the extent that, in each nation, one of these causes acts more forcefully, the others yield to it. Nature and climate almost alone dominate savages; manners govern the Chinese; laws tyrannize Japan; in former times mores set the tone in Lacedaemonia; in Rome it was set by the maxims of government and the ancient mores.

While Montesquieu certainly emphasized negative aspects about China, his point was to stress the instability of absolutism to promote the reform of French monarchy.

In fact, the formation of Hegel's Orientalism required some other important preconditions. One of them was the reversal of superiority between the East and the West. Another was the transformation of European politics from absolute monarchy to a bourgeois democracy. These transformations preconditioned the Hegelian philosophy of teleological history (Blue 1999; Hung 2003). Although Orientalism and sinocentrism seemingly share a similar cognitive center-periphery structure, they are in some respect different from each other. While sinocentrism has been a symbolic regional order with a long history, Orientalism is a byproduct of Western conquest and colonization of Asia. Recent developments suggest that the domination of the West in world politics has come to be less salient and that the Orientalist perception gradually weakened. However, as long as the West keeps its relative political superiority, the East still has to struggle with Eurocentric "universalism." Ironically, this struggle looks like the well-known dialectic between the master and the slave that Hegel (2004) depicts in his *Phenomenology of Mind*. Here, the question is: How can the colonized or semicolonized periphery achieve its freedom against Western domination? Early in the twentieth century, Japan, which overcame a peripheral status of Chinese tribute-trade relations and became the only non-Western imperial power, tried to overcome Western modernity not only materially but also ideationally. In this context, Pan-Asianism in Japan was a philosophical challenge against Western superiority.

### OVERCOMING MODERNITY AND PAN-ASIANISM AS A RHETORIC

Pan-Asianism was a political challenge to overcome as well as Asian pre-modernity and European modernity by aiming to sublate (*aufheben*) the dialectical opposition between the East and the West. However, this philosophical venture gradually degenerated into a rhetoric justifying Japanese imperial expansion in Asia and concealing the abuse of military violence. Today, Pan-Asian solidarity counters the slogan "casting off Asia, and joining the West (*datsua nyuo*)" that was declared at the beginning of the Meiji era (Matsumoto 2000: 47–52).<sup>1</sup> While perceptions of European countries and the United States as the most civilized states were imposed upon the Japanese, China and other Asian states were perceived to be half-civilized in Japanese intellectuals' eyes at that time. As Shogo Suzuki (2014: 56) notes, "in this context, Asia became Japan's 'uncivilized other': rather than something to identify with on the basis of a shared culture/civilization, it was something that Japan now identified against, and used to accentuate modernized, 'civilized' Japan's 'difference.'"

Japan attempted to extricate itself from Asia through consecutive modern wars that began with the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). Following the victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) that ironically awakened anti-Western imperialist nationalism among colonized Asian peoples, Japan consolidated an identity as the first non-Western modern nation-state and simultaneously as one of the Great Powers. Despite winning these wars including the Asia-Pacific theatre of the First World War (1914–1918), Japan encountered Western racism, as highlighted by the “Yellow Peril” discourse and the American Immigration Act (1924), realizing with a sense of humiliation that Japan could not exit from Asia (Suzuki 2014: 60–62). On the other hand, while strengthening its confrontational attitudes toward the Anglo-American hegemony, Japan could not restrain imperialistic violent impulses and plunged into the Second Sino-Japanese war in 1937, which triggered waves of anti-Japanese and Chinese nationalism, and finally into the Pacific War in 1945. Lasting half a century, the idea of Asianism gradually turned into a dangerous intellectual weapon to conceal the dualistic character of Japanese imperialism (an imperial power like Western major powers and a self-professed leader of the Asian nations against Western imperialism). As a culmination of this gradual development, two roundtable discussions were held in 1942–1943, epitomizing the “overcoming modernity” movement, in which Japanese intellectuals insisted that Japan had to surpass Western modernity to lead the construction of a better world (Harootounian 2000: 34–94; Williams 2004: 46–60; Calichman 2008).<sup>2</sup>

After the defeat in the Asia-Pacific War, however, Japan was submerged into the American Asia-Pacific security system. During this postwar period, notable scholars like Yoshimi Takeuchi began to oppose “Casting off Asia” by comparing the postwar development to Meiji discourses to escape from the community of despotic Asian countries. In this way, they rediscovered the idea of Asian solidarism, but this time to criticize pro-American policy (Sakai 2007: 234–81). In this context, postwar Asianism was a byproduct of the ideological struggle between the pro-American and pro-Chinese camps during the Cold War. In other words, this new Asianism reflected intellectuals’ desires to idealize the origin of Asianism. By contrast, during the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War, Asianism was utilized as a convenient signifier to support the war against Asians. Among the intellectuals contributing to this debate, it was particularly Kyoto School<sup>3</sup> scholars who tried to refute Hegel’s philosophy of history by presenting a new philosophy of history to justify the Pacific War. One Kyoto School scholar, Masaaki Kōsaka (1939: 38–39), for example, wrote:

The principle of Oriental philosophy is nothingness. By contrast, the principle of Western philosophy is existentiality based upon the nature, the God, or the

human. Here is uniqueness in the nothingness of the Oriental philosophy. . . . Although Japan, China, and India had intense cultural exchanges with each other, they did not form one world. In the East, we could not find the progressive development which the West had experienced from the ancient Greek civilization throughout the medieval period to the modern civilization. . . . That is one of the reasons why Hegel considered Oriental history as a pre-history of the world history (*Vorgeschichte der Weltgeschichte*). The East did not experience the Western type of development. But it does not mean that the East has neither principle nor history. The Oriental history was the foundation of world history as well as its pre-history. This was the reason why oriental history did not come to the surface. However, the world is now encompassing the East as well as the West. So it is reaching at the stage of one world . . . Japan now has to take initiatives for promoting this kind of change in the world order.

This statement seemingly challenged the Hegelian philosophy of history. However, as Wataru Hiromastu (1989: 57) points, Kyoto School arguments, including Kōsaka's in fact, had no substance and their terms such as "oriental nothingness" are too vague to be something more than rhetoric. The Asia-Pacific War as the decisive battle between the East and the West had a similar meaning for Kyoto School scholars as the Persian War did for Hegel. This battle in the interpretation of Kyoto School scholars was neither that between despotism and democracy nor that among imperialist powers. For them, it was a decisive battle through which a new world order should be established. Iwao Kōyama (2001: 376–77), another Kyoto School scholar, characterized the Pacific War as follows:

Although the idea of liberalism, which became a main principle of the modern European society, aimed at harmonizing the reality with the ideal, the actual liberalism estranged the former from the latter. On the one hand, the free competition leads to a world where the weak are the victims of the strong and inequality deepens. On the other hand, the principle of freewill is considered to be as an ideal of formal morality. Thus, the principle of liberalism led to a disorganized coexistence of the hollow ethical idealism with the brutal reality of power politics. It did not allow any moralistic power to be involved that could bring the eternal peace to the world.

Kōyama states that "the Anglo-Saxon world order" would collapse sooner or later and would be replaced by a new world order. Kōyama (2001: 396–97) claims that the new order would not be a confederation of states or an empire, but "the world of particularities (*Tokushuteki-sekai*)" that was composed by co-prosperity spheres (*Kyoei-ken*) or large blocks (*Großraum*, *Koiki-ken*). Kōyama (2000: 246–47) further explicated this idea of expansive regionalism as

statism and one-worldism (cosmopolitanism) have coexisted in modern world-history. The principle of state sovereignty leads to statism while the principle



of individualism leads to one-worldism. However, we are now facing a new historical conjuncture that cannot be understood by these principles. It is the phenomena of the co-prosperity sphere or the expansive region. The venture to construct an Asian Co-prosperity Sphere as well as a larger European block is a part of this new world order. . . . Other large blocks will follow this path. Thus the abstract confrontation between statism and one-worldism will disappear.

A similar idea of regional community—the East Asian Community (*Toa kyodotai*)—had been proposed early in the 1930s by members of the Showa Research Association (*Showa kenkyukai*) like Kiyoshi Miki, Hotsumi Ozaki, and Masamichi Rōyama. It has been argued that the idea of the East Asian Community was invented and refined to legitimize the Second Sino-Japanese War after the China Incident of 1937. For these intellectuals including Kōyama (2000: 382–87), however, the incident as well as the Pacific War had world-historical significance. Rōyama explains that the idea of the East Asian Community ventured to overcome the limit of Western modernity. Pointing out that Western nationalism cannot provide the ultimate principle for world peace, he writes

We must give birth to the unity of the East by overcoming nationalism. However, where does the power source come from? We notice the main engine in the expansion of Japanese Nationalism over the Asian continent. . . . The principle immanent in the Japanese launching into the continent is not Western imperialism but regionalism for protecting and developing Asia. . . . As the world is now dividing into several equilibrium regions of organic unity combining nature with culture, a new world order based upon regional communities is emerging. That is not an extension of the balance of power logic that had been fashionable during the nineteenth century. It is rather the construction of a new world civilization that would correct the unevenness of the world and provide the foundation for welfare for all. (Rōyama 1941)

In the end, by employing this reasoning, they merely legitimized Japan's imperialistic expansion in Asia. While the idea of Asian regionalism might contain the possibility to become an intellectual way to overcome the Hegelian philosophy of history, it only resulted in another ideology to conceal Japan's desire to be the hegemon in Asia. In other words, the seemingly noble idea of Asianism was swallowed not only by its hollow ideal, but also the harsh reality of power politics.

## THE LOGIC OF VIOLENT PATERNALISM IN ASIANISM

Why did the efforts of overcoming Western modernity degenerate into a reproduction of violence? One reason is because it fell into a “Hegelian trap,”

in which the slaves as rebels followed the master's violence, reproducing another master-slave relation. In this way, the venture to overcome Western modernity and construct a new world order resulted in an unfinished vicious circle, as Japan resorted to modern violence and tried to become the master in Asia. In this regard, Kitaro Nishida, founder of the Kyoto School, made an interesting comment on the prospect of the Japanese philosophy, while conversing with Miki.

*Miki:* We did not have our academic philosophy in Japan. If we have it in the future, how should it be?

*Nishida:* We must break through the Western philosophy. Philosophy should take the academic form. Although there are Confucianism, divination lore, and something like that in China, we cannot find a breakthrough from them. Buddhism has some good elements, but there is also a blockade. So we must break through the Western philosophy and get to the heart of the matter. Why is the Japanese military now strong? It is not because of Japanese traditional military tactics because we learnt Western military strategy and tactics. Why not does academic philosophy not the military? As we adopt the Western military strategy, we must at first do philosophy in the Western way. Then, we have to break through it thoroughly. (Miki and Nishida 1968: 486)

This dialogue indicates the fundamental difficulty that Japanese intellectuals were facing. Indeed, the irony was that overcoming modernity was only possible by following the path of modernity. Only by thoroughly mastering the Western way, Nishida's reply seems to indicate Japan can overcome Western modernity. In doing so, their venture was caught in the Hegelian trap and the effort only reproduced and strengthened modern violence.

Even more ironically, this modern Japanese identity was consolidated by paternalistic reasoning. Kyoto School scholars emphasized that a superior Japan had the destiny and the responsibility to protect inferior Asians from Western imperialism. In this way, they validated Japanese rule in Asia. However, Kōyama (2001: 372) argues that

If we lack critical self-reflection about our culture and strong self-reliant spirits to support it, it is impossible to nurture the powers of resistance against invasions by Western great powers. But Asian countries including India lack this critical self-reflection and self-reliant spirits. China is also short of them. Only Japan has them. That is the reason why Japan has the special mission to play a pivotal role in the transformation process of world history. In this sense, the modernization of the Japanese state in Asia should have *world-historical significance*.

Despite the emphasis of the importance of self-reflection, Kōyama praised the superiority of his own culture. This paradox was often repeated in

overcoming modernity discussions. While intellectuals insisted that Japan invading Asian states was different from Western imperialism, it still was a reproduction of European imperialism. By aiming to surpass the Western problem, Japanese imperialism ended up exposing its own backwardness. In order to camouflage violence, they repeated the logic of paternalism by insisting that Japan has the destiny to protect “backward” Asian countries through its military might. In the Asianism discourse, some Marxist intellectuals such as Ozaki and Miki equally adopted this paternalist attitude in their argument about the East Asian Community. While they admitted that this community should be based upon horizontal cooperation among nations, they emphasized that Japan needed to play a leading role in it (Ozaki 2004: 205; Miki 2007: 53). In the end, regardless of ideological differences, their common desire was to ensure Japanese hegemony by arguing for Pan-Asianism and renouncing Asian nationalism.

The struggle to overcome modernity came to an abrupt halt after Japan’s defeat in 1945. However, the myth of “the Pacific War for liberating Asia against Western imperialism” ironically survived in Japan under the protection of the American world order partly because of the Cold War. Conservatives share the historical perception that Japan had been defeated only by the United States, but not by Asian anti-Japanese nationalisms. This limited perception provided the condition for the re-emergence of historical revisionism to deny Japan’s responsibilities for their wars in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, the myth of “the Pacific War for Asian liberation from Western imperialism” was resurrected with the rise of revisionist right-wing populist movements since 1995 to which I have already referred in the introduction. The irony is that because of this movement, Japanese identity as part of Asia became even further ambiguous because of Japan’s hostility toward China and Korea.

## CONCLUSION

What was Western modernity for those who advocated the idea of Asianism? Kyoto School scholars insisted that atomic individualism, liberalism, and the Anglo-Saxon world order had created modern problems such as alienation and inequality. According to them, the new world order had to be established to solve these problems. As Rōyama (1941) points out, the East Asian Community was needed in order to overcome nationalism and the Western system of modern nation-states. By contrast, the East Asian international order like the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was supposed to be an alternative order to the Anglo-American hegemony-led unjust one. However, overcoming modernity was just a change of rhetoric, not of substance.

While a failure, the problem they identified was certainly inherent in Western modernity and some European intellectuals, such as members of the Frankfurt School, shared this consciousness. Moreover, most of those problems, particularly the inherent contradictions of the system of modern capitalism and nation-states, remain. It is even possible to argue that this *problématique* has worsened under the proliferation of neoliberalism, following the end of Fordism. Post-Fordist neoliberalism imposes flexibility on each subjectivity while promoting dissolution of the social safety net and brings about high degrees of social uncertainty. Increasing ontological anxiety eventually leads to right-wing populist politics of exclusion (e.g., anti-immigration), which resembles racist discourses like the “Yellow Peril” at the beginning of the twentieth century. This highly disciplinary tool of social control and exclusion of marginalized people sometimes leads to a state of exception where people have to endure bare lives as a *homo sacer* in Agamben’s words. Neoliberal governmentality creates an informal sector at an enormous scale, which leads to failed governance in which vicious cycles of violence becomes normal in resonance with the War on Terror (Tosa 2009). As a reaction to such a situation, the project of overcoming Western modernity is still in progress.

What was wrong with the Japanese venture to overcome Western modernity? As we have seen, it was partly due to their reproduction of violent identities of Western modernity. As they tried to break through Western modernity by relying on Western modernity, they brought about even more violence, in which we notice similarities with recent Islamic Jihadist movements. As far as we try to respond to the logic of power politics by power, we will continue to be held in captivity of it. Related to this point, Spivak (2008: 246–49) mentions similar points in her *Other Asias*.

These intra-national and international, economic and geopolitical divisions within our continent require the kind of critical regionalism we are taking out. If we do anything on the model of national sovereignty in the name of by now archaic nationalist struggles we are going to get replicas of the global game except now, truly in a same way, confined to our region. . . . Anti-colonial struggles are a thing of the past. . . . We cannot take national liberation as a model of anything more. . . . In the name of anti-colonialism you get the kind of national identity politics that can lead to fascism. . . . I want a critical regionalist world, but I don’t want these slogans . . . colonialism and national identity . . . to be avoided for us to use.

A simple anticolonialism only reproduces the logic of exclusionary national identity. If we want to truly overcome the brutality of exclusionary nationalism, open regionalism can be an option. However, we cannot overcome

power politics by following it. Kyoto school scholars made this mistake because they tried to overcome Western universalism by emphasizing the idea of Asian regionalism. The denial of Western “universalism” led them to another Orientalism or a mere “anti-Western Euro-centrism” (Wallerstein 2006). In order to aim for a better dialogue it is necessary to negate rather than affirm the negative. According to Theodor Adorno (1973: 158), “a negation of the negative is not an affirmation itself and that to equate the negation of negation with positivity is the quintessence of identification.” Indeed, the Japanese movement of overcoming modernity was the negation of negation with positivity. It proposed the idea of Asianism against Hegelian absolute Orientalism in order to construct a new world order. In doing so, however, Japan merely became a mirror image of the West. In order to avoid this trap, we need to have a consistent sense of non-identity (Adorno 1973: 5).

However, it is not easy to keep having such a consistent sense of non-identity. We then tend to exclude the heterogeneous other and reproduce violent collective identities in accordance with logic of the modern territorial states system. Now deterritorial neoliberal globalization paradoxically brings about the politics of reterritorialization like right-wing populism including Japanese historical revisionism that seeks for national dignity against the so-called *Jigyaku-Shikan* (masochistic view of Japanese history). Many people easily entrust themselves with the politics of exclusionary identification because they cannot put up with the uncomfortable situations with the heterogeneous other. In order to promote the project of overcoming modernity properly, we need to keep the consistent sense of nonidentity by reintroducing the excluded heterogeneous narratives. In doing so, we hopefully will be able to avoid a Hegelian trap and to open up the possibilities for a better “regionalism” in Asia.

## NOTES

1. Maruyama (1996: 214–19; also Watanabe in this volume) criticizes the popular interpretation that Yukichi Fukuzawa had advocated “casting off Asia, and joining the West” as too simplistic and wrong.

2. With regard to some of the arguments at the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium in 1942, see its English translation (Calichman 2008). Harootunian (2000: 34–94) interpretes the arguments as substanceless fantasy by situating it in the context of the cultural war of the Japanese spirit against materialist Americanism. On the other hand, Williams (2004: 46–60) criticizes Harootunian’s interpretation as “a monument to the intellectual disarray of neo-Marxism” while defending the Kyoto School. It seems that both interpretations are partly right and partly wrong, as we need to pay attention to the positive and negative side of this debate.

3. Jun Tosaka (2007) uses the "Kyoto School" for the first time in order to criticize Kitaro Nishida and Hajime Tanabe's philosophy as "bourgeois metaphysics" from his own Marxist perspectives. In this sense, "Kyoto School" implies negative connotations. In addition, as Saburo Ienaga (1974: 103–17) points out, both Kōyama and Kōsaka played a crucial role in justifying the Asia-Pacific wars as the *right-wing* Kyoto School, which was different from Nishida and Tanabe's positions. For English introductions into the work of the Kyoto School, see Heisig (2001) and Goto-Jones (2005).

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