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IRVING CORTAZZI

BRITAIN & JAPAN:

Biographical Portraits

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Maruyama Masao (1914–96) and Britain: An Intellectual in Search of Liberal Democracy

RIKKI KERSTEN

Maruyama Masao

SEARCHING FOR THE SOUL OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

ON THE FRONT COVER of Dorothie Storry's biography *Second Country*, is a photograph of two friends standing together, both sporting spectacles and wide beaming smiles, arms around each other's shoulders, the very image of friendship.¹ The one wearing the kimono is Maruyama Masao (1914–96), whose dazzling intellect and penetrating analysis marks him out as one of modern Japan's greatest thinkers. The one in the tweed coat is Richard Storry (1913–82), one of Britain's leading historians on Japan, whose book *A History of Modern Japan* introduced the post-war English-speaking world to an understanding of Japanese history that was not characterized by malice or prejudice.² Between them, these two scholars would engage in pioneering analysis of the past war and its implications for the future of Japan, producing seminal works on Japanese fascism and nationalism.

Rooted in friendship, it is important to remember that this Anglo-Japanese embrace was both personal *and* intellectual. When we

MARUYAMA MASAO (1914–96)

examine the lives of these two men, we can quickly discern the common threads of their life experiences, and more importantly, identify a certain ethical and spiritual affinity that informed their characters. It was this essential personal bond that paved the way for Maruyama to both influence, and be influenced by, the constellation of ideas and expertise that centred on St Antony's College, Oxford, notably the Far Eastern Studies Centre (later the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies). Although Maruyama only visited England twice, his friendship with the Storrays was sustained through several visits the Storrays made to Japan. It was a friendship forged during animated debates between Storry and Maruyama in the pubs of England and the hot springs of Japan, and one which made a formative impression on the intellectual output of them both.

Maruyama Masao is known to the international community of Japan scholars as a formidable intellectual whose name was synonymous with democratic thought in Japan, especially during the first fifteen years following Japan's defeat in 1945.³ When we examine Maruyama's copious writings on this subject,⁴ we learn that his concept of democracy was liberal in hue, influenced chiefly by the British articulation and enactment of liberal democracy. Moreover, Maruyama's analysis and deconstruction of fascism and nationalism as they appeared in his lifetime were informed by his understanding of the fundamental dynamics of a truly liberal democracy. It was not structures or institutions that fascinated him, but the ghost in the machine, the intangible yet powerful forces that manifested themselves as observable (but not necessarily rational) political behaviour. This was the philosophical and normative yardstick by which he judged the political history of his country, and for this reason alone it is important that we understand the key factors, experiences and thought systems influencing his approach. Britain and British thought are central to this endeavour.

Maruyama's contemporaries and critics castigated him for the perceived extraordinary sway that 'foreign' ideas had on his intellectual assessment of Japanese political thought and history. For instance, one of Maruyama's most influential works, *Nihon no shisō* (Japanese Thought),⁵ drew the ire of many because of what some saw as his apparently uncritical advocacy of Western intellectual history and development as the correct model for Japan. People's historian Irokawa Daikichi attempted to counter the impact of Maruyama's influential thesis on Japan's so-called Emperor System fascism by noting Maruyama's European proclivities: 'His is a purely European ideal that, when treated as a universal, leads to a negative view of the diverse patterns of traditionalization that existed in China and Japan, and for that matter, in Europe as well.'⁶ In effect, he was accusing Maruyama of

finding Japan to be insufficiently European. Thus, in Maruyama we confront the apparent incongruity of an academic specialist in Japanese political thought whose intellectual orientation was supposedly utterly 'European'.

While Maruyama's writing style in his native Japanese was Germanic in the complexity of his expression and the lengthy circuitousness of his lines of thought, his heart and mind were oriented towards the task of facilitating the indigenization of liberal democracy into Japan. On the other hand, we can agree that in depicting the context for this indigenization process, Maruyama saw inadequacy and incompleteness in Japan's achievement of modernity as the most significant obstacle to Japanese society's ability to withstand or turn back the fascist tide in the 1930s. Through the rubric of history and modernity, Maruyama sought with his work on fascism in particular to create a valid foundation for Japan and Britain to be comparable as like to like in their capacity to procure and nurture a liberal-democratic soul.⁷

PARALLEL LIVES AND INTERSECTIONS: MARYUYAMA MASAO AND RICHARD STORRY

Maruyama Masao was born in Osaka-fu in 1914, marking the beginning of a life filled with historical coincidence and what historians call 'congruence'. Born in the year when the Great War began to tear through the fabric of Europe, Maruyama's life thereafter was littered with turning points of global significance: he entered high school as the 1931 Manchurian Incident heralded the beginning of Japan's aggression into China; in his second year Prime Minister Inukai was assassinated, and he completed high school as the Nazis came to power in Germany. Towards the end of his first year at university in 1935, Maruyama witnessed the intellectual witch-hunt that ensued when Minobe Tasukichi elaborated his 'organ theory' of the imperial constitution, which led to accusations of treason. Most poignantly, Maruyama belatedly learned that his mother had died on 15 August 1945 as he absorbed the dual shocks of the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima (where he had been assigned to an intelligence unit) and Japan's capitulation in the war. Maruyama's acute sensitivity to his socio-political environment was enhanced by his upbringing in a family where his father was a noted liberal (read 'radical' in the context of 1920s Japan) journalist, and his home a crossroads of progressive and liberal opinion in the short-lived era of Taishō democracy (1912–26). When Maruyama apparently turned his back on contemporary commentary upon his retirement at age fifty-seven from Tokyo University, many observers saw this to be out of character.

MARYUYAMA MASAO (1914–96)

The date 15 August 1945 would become an intellectual touchstone in Maruyama's writings on democracy, as he interpreted this moment as one of democratic reorientation and autonomous social renewal for Japan. He would wield this date as a weapon in the midst of the tumult surrounding the revision of the security treaty between Japan and the United States in 1960, demanding that the symbolism of 8.15 (as it was known in Japan) be activated consciously in the maelstrom of protest and political manoeuvring that was 1960. In a speech given on 24 May 1960, to a protest group that was on the brink of marching on parliament, Maruyama recalled the importance of 8.15 for those present: 'The principles and ideals that have been scattered throughout the democratic movement in the ten or so years since the war have all at once become concentrated in our hands.'⁸ He believed fiercely that it was only with the historical perspective of defeat and its intrinsic democratic opportunity that those engaged in popular protest could comprehend fully the historical significance of their protest, namely as the time when the people of Japan grasped the democratic opportunity of autonomous decision-making and action in the face of the government's authoritarian demeanour and indifference.

It was eerily significant that Maruyama's own death also occurred on that date of 8.15 in 1996. We pause for thought when we realize that news of his death was kept quiet for three days at his own request; Maruyama hated being extolled as what he disparagingly referred to as 'The Maruyama', and he knew that his ideas continued to attract controversy, including unpleasant attention from the radical right, even at the end of his life. The manner of his passing and his anticipation of probable reactions to it speak of an aching insufficiency in the fulfilment of Maruyama's democratic ideal in post-war Japan, one that his written works are left to confront minus the spark and intensity of his personal presence.

War was a defining experience for both Maruyama and Storry, and it was unquestionably a vital element that drew them together. Storry had been called up late, and like Maruyama, ended up performing an intelligence function. Storry was a step ahead of Maruyama though, in that he had taken the opportunity to teach in Japan before the outbreak of war.⁹ Storry thus had had the chance to see for himself the world that Maruyama and his generation were about to lose. Maruyama was called up late in 1944 by virtue of his elite status as a junior academic at Tokyo Imperial University, where he had enrolled in the elite Faculty of Law in 1934, later becoming an assistant professor and then professor. His mentor and supervisor, Nanbara Shigeru (1889–1974), encouraged Maruyama to specialize in the history of political thought in Japan. In retrospect, it is ironic that Maruyama felt such an intense reluctance to focus on his own country's thought,

because he felt there was so much to read in the worlds of German and French philosophy.¹⁰ In the end it was his attention to his nation's political ideas that defined him as well as his country.

What most astonishes people who encounter Maruyama's work is the fact that his most spectacular essay, 'The logic and psychology of ultra nationalism',¹¹ was written in the immediate aftermath of Maruyama's personal experience of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Intensely self-critical and highly original in its search for a political pathology for wartime Japan, Maruyama made his country-folk sit up and engage in critical questioning of their country with his opening query: 'What was the main ideological factor that kept the Japanese people in slavery for so long and that finally drove them to embark on a war against the rest of the world?'¹² Like Maruyama, Storry would upon repatriation enter the academic world, similarly inspired by his fascination with explaining Japan's war, to research and write a study of Japanese nationalism in the 1930s.¹³ We should take note that both men, having lived war and then painstakingly analysed it, held a common fear that fascism was not necessarily a phenomenon of the past for Japan.

Maruyama and Storry shared both a life experience and a subject that would drive their research and teaching for the rest of their lives. Moreover, they did so with an intensity and passion that their contemporaries and acquaintances frequently commented upon.¹⁴ This unity of purpose and personality drew them together again in 1962, when Maruyama embarked on his first trip abroad and went as a senior associate member to St Antony's College and the Far Eastern Studies Centre, where Storry awaited him.

MARUYAMA AT OXFORD

Maruyama two visits to Oxford, in 1962 and in 1975, came at crucial times in his career and his intellectual production. The timing of these visits from the perspective of Maruyama's ideas makes us pay particular attention to his Oxford experiences.

The Maruyama that appeared in Oxford during what Dorothy Storry described as 'the coldest winter of the century' in October 1962 was at the height of his fame. He had been at the fulcrum of public intellectual activism in Japan since 1946, featuring in groups such as the Seinen Bunka Kaigi (Young Person's Culture Conference), Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai (Science of Thought Research Group), the Heidanikai (Peace Problems Discussions Group), and the movement against the revision of the Japan-US security treaty in 1960. Following on from his *Logic and Psychology* essay, Maruyama had penned several provocative analyses of Japan's fascism, combining his articulation of a

post-war democratic ethic with insights into its fascist antithesis. His work *Japanese Thought* would appear in a popular format in 1961, becoming a catalyst for intense debate concerning Japan's modernity, and Maruyama's 'European' fixation. A sign of his status by the early 1960s was his invitation as a visiting professor to Harvard University in October 1961, from where he toured Europe over the summer of 1962 before settling in for Michaelmas term at St Antony's College.

It is no mere coincidence that the first English translation of his work was his essay collection *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, which appeared under the imprimatur of Oxford University Press. In his introduction to this edition (dateline St Antony's College), Maruyama notes his embarrassment at 'writing a preface for a reading public whom he never anticipated when writing these essays, and whose cultural tradition has been very different from his own'.¹⁵ He also invited the reader to share the conundrum confronted by Japan's post-war intellectuals such as himself, who, in 1945, looked back at recent history and wondered how they who 'believed themselves more familiar with Western than with Japanese or Asian tradition' could possibly have fallen for the distorted mythology of Imperial Japan. Interestingly, he credits his father with setting him an example by refusing to entertain 'any attempt to order the intricate detail of the events of history into the conceptual straitjacket of any grand theory'. He concludes with a telling statement concerning his starting point for the appraisal of liberalism and its spirit: '[the fact that] the acting individual was the ultimate reality in society seemed to [my father] a self-evident truth'. He goes on to admit that he had always been most attracted by those in the middle ground between German 'historicism' and English 'empiricism'.¹⁶ At last we begin to understand the substance of Maruyama's 'Europe'.

We understand the locus of Britain still better when we elaborate Maruyama's views on liberalism. While at Oxford on this first visit Maruyama had extensive conversations with, amongst others, Isaiah Berlin, Christopher Hill, Bill Deakin, James Joll and, of course, numerous debates with his friend Dick Storry. The significance of British political thought for Maruyama's work is manifested most strongly in Maruyama's conception of autonomy as the linchpin of freedom.¹⁷ Echoes of Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty* appear repeatedly in Maruyama's work in the first couple of post-war decades, notably in his writings on modernity and modernization in the 1950s. The idea of the individual as focal point, autonomous in terms of value-definition and self-determination, likewise echoes John Locke in delineating the meaning of 'freedom' or 'liberty'. Maruyama invoked the active interpretation of freedom in his own reformulation of Locke, saying freedom is more than the mere lack of restraint, but is

instead 'the ability reasonably to decide for oneself'. The emergence of a new normative consciousness was the prerequisite in Maruyama's view for the development of the kind of modern consciousness where freedom could be accorded its true worth at the foundation of society. Active autonomy, the kind needed in post-war Japan, depended on the desire of individuals to act on the basis of values that were not imposed from above or from outside.¹⁸ It is this intellectual dimension of Maruyama's work that ties him most closely to a British as opposed to a broadly 'European' perspective on liberalism and liberal democracy.

By the time Maruyama visited Oxford again in May and June of 1975, his situation had altered dramatically. Not only had he retired from the University of Tokyo, but he had done so in the aftermath of the deeply traumatic university disturbances of 1968-69. Like several other countries (we think immediately of the barricades in Paris and the campus at Berkeley in California), at the end of the 1960s Tokyo became an epicentre of violent, anti-establishment protest led principally by students. By then, Maruyama represented everything that carried the label 'Establishment': he was a distinguished professor at the most prestigious faculty in the most elite university in Japan. His post-war intellectual influence and reputation in Japanese society and academe rebounded on him with a vengeance, as he personally became the target of mob attacks, intimidation and physical bullying at the hands of students in the lecture room. Graffiti mocked him as he entered the hallowed blue gates of Tokyo University's Hongo campus, and he was so concerned that mobs would desecrate the archives of the Historiographical Institute that he spent several nights sleeping in the Institute's basement. In an infamous confrontation with students at the entrance to the Law Faculty, he asked the helmeted mob whether they intended to do what even the fascists in wartime Japan had never attempted. His rage upon discovering after the barricade lifted that his books and his study had been ransacked speaks of his bewilderment at what post-war Japan had become.¹⁹

The strain of these events worsened what had always been a fragile state of health for Maruyama. His early retirement in 1971 was officially on medical grounds, and Maruyama spent many months post-retirement recuperating at home. During this time, Maruyama entered wholeheartedly into what many observers perceived as a completely new research direction. No longer overtly concerned with the contemporary world, Maruyama apparently 'retreated' to the distant past of Japanese political thought, embarking on research into the 'ancient layers' (*kosō*) or '*basso ostinato*' of Japanese historical culture. While commentators continue to debate Maruyama's 'change of direction', we can also discern essential continuity. Maruyama was trying to identify and deconstruct the intellectual currents, *habits* and

thought patterns that influenced the process of indigenization of imported thought in Japan. This had been the underlying enquiry behind his controversial 1961 book *Japanese Thought*. Now retired, somewhat shell-shocked and intellectually rejuvenated, Maruyama returned to Oxford to share his new research with his British colleagues.

Maruyama presented his Oxford seminar on 'The structure of *mat-surigoe*: the *basso ostinato* of Japanese political life' at the Far Eastern Studies Centre, where Dick Storry was now Director. This lecture would subsequently become the lead contribution to the festschrift for Storry.²⁰ This remains the only English translation of Maruyama's work on 'deep layers', and its presentation to a British audience occurred at a time when Maruyama was exploring and outlining this new research. Once again, the Oxford experience would be intellectually pivotal to Maruyama's scholarly development.

In his presentation, Maruyama defined the *basso ostinato* as the recurrent pattern of indigenizing and in the process modifying imported thought systems, meaning 'the original is transformed, but in a predictable way'.²¹ Through the analysis of ancient political terminology, Maruyama attempted to reveal a 'structure of political consciousness in ancient Japan',²² with the implicit premise that this structure could help explain political thought in Japanese history more generally. His earlier insightful studies into the pathology of ultra-nationalism and fascism found an echo here too, as Maruyama's etymological analysis identified inherent understandings of power relations embedded in ancient political terminology. His finding that 'in ancient Japan government was defined not so much in terms of the rulers, as in terms of the subordinates'²³ underlined his belief that power is essentially relational, and those removed from it possess their own peculiar responsibility for how they allow it to be packaged, legitimized and exercised. Effectively, those removed from power are complicit in its utility. Once more we see threads of consistency here, when we recall Maruyama's stark assessment in 1956 of the responsibility that accrued to the ordinary people of Japan for 'welcoming' the wartime fascist regime: 'Can people absolve themselves from the moral responsibility of having followed fascism?'²⁴

Maruyama drew attention to the significance of the 'bass note' that emanates from this conclusion, namely that it demonstrated a separation between the locus of political power and political legitimacy. We come full circle, to his first post-war essay on ultra-nationalism, when we read that in Maruyama's view 'these bass notes... were bound to obscure the locus of ultimate responsibility concerning matters governmental'.²⁵ His concluding words were a clarion call to democratic activism and autonomy: 'the one who offers service, is the actual

wielder of power'.²⁶ The centrality of the autonomous individual as a political actor outside of politics remained at the centre of Maruyama's own system of thought. But how did Maruyama 'indigenize' this notion? Many would assume that individualism is an essentially Western conception. Maruyama frequently lamented the nature of Japan's fascism and ultra-nationalism as a condition that involved the ethical and spiritual subjugation, even the absorption, of the individual into the State. Japan's fascism is often depicted as particularistic and culture-bound to such a degree that arguments continue to rage in academia over whether 'Emperor system fascism' can be compared with the fascisms of Europe. Maruyama may have written of thought and behaviour patterns that were culturally embedded, but he never doubted the essential universality of liberal democracy and its enemy. To come closest to his thought concerning liberal autonomy and the individual, we need to consider Maruyama's writings on fascism.

FASCISM AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF LIBERALISM

In his writings on fascism, Maruyama focused on invisible forces, such as thought, spirit and psychology, which had facilitated the fusion of self and state. While the timing, pace and manifestation of this phenomenon may have differed with each national and historical context, for him the reality of this common intangible dynamic remained. To argue that Japan's fascism was a culturally-determined, alien essence that was not amenable to comparison with European versions was unthinkable for Maruyama. The reason for this is that he saw the fascist dynamic as the antithesis of the liberal democratic one based on individual autonomy. If fascism wasn't universal, then neither was the spirit of liberal democracy. This is what drove Maruyama to restate in many essays why the superficial structures and institutions of fascism did not constitute the full story of fascism as a movement.

In *The ideology and dynamics of Japanese fascism*,²⁷ Maruyama enumerated the things that seemed to set Japanese fascism apart from those in Europe. The ideology of the 'family state' centred on the Emperor, the idealization of agrarianism as something 'Japanese' as opposed to the grasping opportunism and urban-centred capitalism of Europe, and the mission to liberate Asia from Western imperialism painted a very particularistic picture. Yet all of these aspects could also be taken as opportunistic devices to underscore Japanese cultural exceptionalism and supremacy *per se*, and not as a fundamentally different political beast. Japan's fascism did differ in the momentum behind it, admitted Maruyama, but the lack of a deified leader and a mass-based party such as with Nazism did not deny the label of fascism to Japan. Instead, Maruyama argued that Japanese fascism emanated 'from

above' rather than 'from below'. This was more a consequence of the relative strength and maturation of democracy and modernity in each society, than of cultural predilection. Regardless of the disparity in attributes, argued Maruyama, what mattered in the end was that the power of fascism lay in its ability spiritually to inspire, direct and control society. Instead of attributes, Maruyama therefore looked for the patterns of 'fascization' in society.

Maruyama urged his readers not to categorize fascism in a particularistic manner:

It is dangerous to think in a fixed manner of fascism as something specific to a certain period in history or to a particular region. . . we should not just look at the system or social forms taken by monopoly capital or the military or a right wing political party, but we should also look at the political function of fascism and the process by which it is universalized.²⁸

When an authoritarian, totalitarian regime was engaged in closing the social pathways that nurtured alternative collectives and autonomous value definition, it was engaged in the business of fascization. The result, to use Maruyama's terminology, was the 'cementation' of society into an amorphous, compliant monolith.

In Maruyama's view, it had been England's happy historical destiny to develop modern nationalism concurrently with the development of democracy. In place of the fusion of self and state that occurred in Japan's extreme manifestation of nationalism, this meant that English nationalism 'did not appear as a conceptual opposite to individualism and universalism, rather it fused somewhat naturally with them'.²⁹ Maruyama saw in this 'healthy' concurrence of democracy and nationalism an aspiration for post-war Japan. This only made sense if liberal autonomy, like its opposite fascism, could be accepted as a universal force, an attainable ideal, and an accessible identity.

THE JOY OF ARGUMENT

After his sojourn in Oxford, Maruyama went as a visiting scholar to Princeton before returning to Japan. It would be his last trip abroad. Despite his precarious health, Maruyama would produce some significant works in his final years, including a three-volume study of Fukuzawa Yukichi's *Bunmeiron no gainyaku* (An Outline of a Theory of Civilization), and a study of political compliance and resistance, *Chūsei to Hangekyaku* (Loyalty and Rebellion). He also grabbed the opportunity to debate with great thinkers of his era such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault and Ralph Dahrendorf. Even the

oncologists who treated Maruyama's liver cancer had to joust with his feisty intellect, as he tried single-handedly to overturn the Japanese taboo on informing cancer patients about the actual nature of their condition. True to character, Maruyama would have none of it. At the end of his life, Maruyama turned his hand to editing and correcting the proofs for his *Collected Works* (he refused to allow them to be called 'Complete Works'). While his editors and former students, many of them now senior academic figures in their own right, may have rued his insistence on checking and arguing the fine details of each chapter in each volume, I have no doubt that they each will have mourned the silence that accompanied his passing.