

The Language of Masao Maruyama

Kenzaburô Ôe

1.

In 1983, I spent a semester at the University of California, Berkeley. For one who began life as a working novelist while still young, those days are inscribed in my memory as a time of liberation from a narrowly closed world. One weekend, about a month into my stay, a letter containing an invitation was delivered to my office: "I understand that you are interested in trees. The Berkeley campus is blessed with rich and varied flora. As one who esteems the delicate aesthetic sensibilities of the Japanese, I would be pleased to give you a tour of the campus. I won't take you on a forced march, so you may wear a kimono if you wish. In fact, I would welcome it."

Awaiting me that Sunday in front of the brush cherry hedge bordering the Women's Faculty Club was a handsome young man. Because I was staying at the Women's Faculty Club, and perhaps because it is difficult for a foreigner to distinguish male from female in Japanese names, our young man was led to thoughts of gallantry.

Others, too, besides this young man, were kind to me. The specialists in Japanese history in particular went out of their way to welcome me, a complete academic amateur, into their midst. It was from them that I learned that Masao

Maruyama, who had spent the previous semester in Berkeley as a visiting scholar, had left behind a message concerning me. "Please look after Mr. Ôe," he directed. "He is the student of a dear friend of mine."

I am honored to be called a disciple of Kazuo Watanabe, a scholar of French literature. I lost my esteemed teacher, who was a specialist on François Rabelais, a few years ago. One of the goals of my stay in Berkeley was to escape the stagnant literary environment of Japan—we refer to that world as the *bundan*—so that I could work unhindered on a book on Watanabe. That work, which stands out in my memory—A *Humanist in Contemporary Japan: Reading Kazuo Watanabe*—was in fact finished while I was here.

To be sure, Watanabe was a friend of Maruyama. But I myself was not personally close to this distinguished historian of political thought. And for that reason, Maruyama's message that I be "looked after" came as something of a surprise. If anything, in fact, his use of such a quintessentially Japanese expression almost seemed inappropriate for a thinker of his stature.

Following Maruyama's death, his personal notes from his later years—I imagine these were not intended to be made public—appeared in book form as *Dialogues with Myself*: In them I discovered, again much to my surprise, a passage referring to me.

The passage was written in 1969, after Maruyama had been hospitalized due to heart failure and hepatitis—these had been brought on by overwork during the student unrest at Tokyo University:

Of late, in connection with the protests at Tokyo University—no, at universities throughout the country—the tide of public pronouncements rejecting postwar democracy has hit a peak. Maybe it's better to say that a peculiar phenomenon is occurring in which we find almost no attempt, from within critical circles, to speak directly in defense of postwar democracy. (This despite the fact that the freedom to reject it publicly is based on the acceptance of postwar democracy itself?) Kenzaburô Ôe and a few others are among the very rare exceptions here.

That Maruyama regarded me not just as the student of a dear friend but as a fellow "postwar democrat" is a matter of great joy to me. Urged on by this

sense of joy, I am pleased to help in inaugurating what is destined to become a new tradition by speaking as the first Maruyama Lecturer.

2.

Now, since I am a novelist, what I have to offer today is not an academic discussion or critique of Maruyama's field of specialization. While I was in Berkeley, the office next to mine at the Center for Japanese Studies belonged to Professor Robert N. Bellah. The story of how the wonderful friendship between Maruyama and Professor Bellah was formed is well known: Maruyama, his "attention provoked and fighting spirit stirred" by Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion*, wrote a splendid critique, to which Bellah then responded. Many others in this country also developed scholarly ties, and ties of friendship going beyond scholarship, with Maruyama. I do not imagine that they, or their successors, harbor any expectation that I would offer opinions concerning specialist matters. If I were to do so, they would no doubt share the surprised disappointment of the youth waiting, in the shade of the brush cherry by the Women's Faculty Club, for a girl of delicate aesthetic sensibility to appear before him.

What I propose to do is to speak about Maruyama's way of using words—as Saussure would put it, his *langage*, or employment of language. I will do this by taking as my main text Maruyama's last major work devoted to public enlightenment. This was his Reading "An Outline of a Theory of Civilization" (which presents a detailed and far-ranging commentary on Yukichi Fukuzawa's 1875 masterwork of that title). Speaking as a novelist whose central concern is the use of words, I will address this aspect of Maruyama's work. Rather than explaining my method, let me instead offer an illustration by actual example.

It comes from a work entitled *The World of Masao Maruyama*—this too appeared after his death—which contains an essay written by Maruyama, then nine years old, following the Great Kantô Earthquake of 1923. In it we find this small masterpiece:

In the earthquake, the districts of Fukagawa and Honjo were hardest hit. On the day of the quake, the principal of Sarue Elementary School on Fukagawa, thinking that since his school was built with reinforced concrete it would be safe, gave shelter

to many people and their belongings, filling up the school gymnasium with people and baggage. Instead, the fire that broke out after the earthquake came bearing down ferociously upon them. So the principal, sensing disaster, determined to get the refugees out to safety along with the other teachers. He entrusted the Imperial Portrait to his vice-principal, and saw to it that he escaped to safety together with the others, but, realizing that he himself would not have time to get away, prepared himself to die. We understand that later he was found dead, sitting upright on the school athletic field, keys in hand and arms folded across his chest. Refusing to escape merely to save himself, he first assisted others, but unable to escape in time, suffered this cruel death. But what a beautiful story this is!

Where, holding what, and in what physical posture did the dead man meet his end? With its sharpness of description and sensibility in characterizing the man's death as a beautiful one, this passage displays the distinct features of Maruyama's prose, features that run through his entire life's work. What I propose to do is to "read out" this essence of Maruyama's use of words, already clearly present in this composition, as it presents itself in *Reading the "Outline of a Theory of Civilization."*

Now, as I've said, I will be offering my remarks from my perspective as a novelist, touching on my personal reminiscences as I proceed. At this juncture I'd like to introduce two texts: both are written in 1957, one by Kazuo Watanabe, whose name I mentioned a moment ago, and another by Maruyama, concerning the same person, the one containing quotations from the other. The essays in question are eulogies to E. Herbert Norman, the Canadian diplomat and historian of Japan. As it happens, there is an English translation of Maruyama's essay by Ronald Dore, so some of you may already be familiar with it.

The historians present here will know that Norman, who arrived in Tokyo along with American occupation forces, was provided with materials concerning Andô Shōeki's *The Way of Nature and Labor* by Masao Maruyama, then only recently returned to Tokyo University after being released from service at Army headquarters in Hiroshima. For his part, Watanabe, the eldest of the three

with Norman between them, was on intimate terms with Norman, who was deeply versed in classical European languages and culture.

In 1956, Norman had been named Canadian ambassador to Egypt, and had worked hard to prevent the expansion of the Suez crisis. However, learning that he had become a target of the red-baiting organized in a United States Senate committee by J. Robert Morris, Norman leapt to his death from the roof of a building in Cairo. Quoting from Maruyama's essay, Watanabe mourned his friend's death. I quote two passages:

It is because we knew him as a 'quiet optimist,' as someone determined never to overlook the brighter sides of human life or the forward-looking movements of history, that the thought of that thing which tortured his mind as he hovered on the cliff-edge of death makes one hide one's face in horror." Reading these sentences into which my friend Maruyama, who knew Norman so well, poured out his heart, I was literally choked with tears.

Here is the second passage:

Coming to the end of my own poor effort, I beg to be permitted to use as my own the words taken from the conclusion of Masao Maruyama's splendid eulogy: "And if Herbert Norman, who so loved the good in men, and who had such faith in the power of reason to persuade men, has ended his short life in the midst of fanaticism and prejudices and intolerance, what should we do—we who remain behind?"

I hope you can all recognize, if only from the English translation, that these passages, both that of Watanabe and that of Maruyama quoted by him, share some profound similarities. For ten years following Japan's defeat, Watanabe and Maruyama alike addressed much of what they wrote to students and young intellectuals. Watanabe especially argued for "tolerance," while Maruyama spoke about democracy. And these major themes of theirs were directly connected. Strongly aware of the wartime isolation and powerlessness of specialists in various fields, Maruyama strove consciously to create a prose that could unify intellectuals—who formed, as he memorably put it, a "community of contrition"—along horizontal lines as they set about rebuilding Japan.

Watanabe and Maruyama, the one a specialist in French humanism, the other a political thinker widely versed in the writings of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, and Carl Schmitt, were both masters of a prose that brought into Japanese the stylistic sensibilities of European languages, and in so doing created a new form of written Japanese.

Here I feel bound to recall one other painful event that bears commonly on the life experience of both Watanabe and Maruyama. I refer to the damage done to these two great intellectuals and educators by their experience of the university unrest of the late 1960s. I do not doubt that within certain limits the student struggles of that time played a positive role. But neither is there any doubt in my mind that Watanabe, at least, was deeply disappointed by his realization that, despite his years of effort, the spirit of tolerance had failed to take root among the younger generation of intellectuals.

In the notes from which I quoted earlier, Maruyama writes about his experience of the university protests. And though it doesn't appear directly in his notes, there is a word that I think Maruyama must have called to mind repeatedly during this bitter time: when the student joint-struggle council at Tokyo University laid siege to the Law Faculty where he taught, Maruyama remained in the Meiji Newspaper Archive, of which he was then director, in order to protect it, sleeping on a mattress in the stacks. It is believed that the deterioration of his health brought on by this episode was responsible for his retirement from the university. The word I refer to is *enbô*, which may be translated as "jealousy" or "envy." Let me call your attention to the following passage in Maruyama's work on Fukuzawa's Outline:

It is unclear from where Fukuzawa took this notion of "envy," or whether it stemmed from his own life experience. I don't think there is any word in European languages that quite corresponds to it. Provisionally we can translate it as *ressentiment*, but its meaning is broader than this. Simply put it refers to the "palace chambermaid" complex or mentality.... For Fukuzawa, every human quality was relative; he saw good and bad as reverse sides of the same coin. For him, frugality and greed, valor and rudeness, sagacity and frivolousness—all of these qualities, through

their workings in concrete situations, could become virtues or vices, you see? But there was one quality alone that was an absolute evil. And that was "envy." A totally negative value, there was nothing in envy that could lead to anything productive.

I have no intention of arguing that the movement among Japanese students from the late 1960s to early 1970s to reconstruct the universities was motivated only by what Fukuzawa termed "envy." I also believe that there was some merit in the criticisms leveled by students at Japan's intellectuals during that period.

What I want to say is that the criticisms made of Maruyama at that time—and not only by students, but also by younger intellectuals who had by then gained the right to speak out in journalistic circles—were often intensified by "envy." For that reason, I am grateful to the organizers of this occasion for being given the opportunity to speak about Maruyama in a setting far removed from this kind of "envy."

3.

Ten years after his experience of the university conflict of 1968, twenty years after the demonstrations against the U. S.-Japan Security Treaty, and a full thirty years after the publication of his landmark essay, "The Philosophy of Yukichi Fukuzawa," why did Maruyama again take up the work of lecturing on Fukuzawa—and to a limited audience of young people at that? I offer my own ideas here, which I ask you to take as the imaginings of a novelist.

In my view, the reason lies in Maruyama's experience as a participant in the anti-Security Treaty Movement, (known in Japanese as "AMPO"). Through his experience of the 1960 protests, Maruyama watched as the idea of democracy, which he hoped had been given impetus by Japan's defeat and for whose realization he had worked, was trampled underfoot by Japan's government and parliament. He recognized, furthermore, that a crisis marked by the revival of the ideas that had sustained the old regime had now come about in actuality. Along with this, however, his experience as a participant in the citizens' movement of 1960 confirmed his hope that Japanese were capable of continuing their pursuit of democracy as permanent revolution.