

Okakura Tenshin [Kakuzô] and Aesthetic Nationalism

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Introduction

Okakura Kakuzô (1862–1913), also known by his sobriquet Tenshin, was that curious and specifically Meiji human product of Japan after the overthrow of the Edo military clan government or *bakufu*: a student of Chinese, ‘Western’, Indian, and Japanese ideas, interested in both art and theories of the state; a government bureaucrat; a man of ideas; a poet and writer in both Japanese and English; an art educationalist; an art world administrator and art movement ideologist; a curator; an art historian; both an ultra-nationalist and an internationalist as well as a cross-cultural entrepreneur; and an impassioned lover of children, women, and art. There are greater thinkers and writers of the Meiji period such as Nishi Amane or Mori Ôgai, and there are more profound thinkers on Japanese art and aesthetics who come after him, notably the philosopher Kuki Shûzô, who wanted Okakura to have been his father. But there were few Meiji figures like him who combined action and ideas with such intensity and with such broad appeal in both his lifetime and down to today across many artistic, intellectual and political groups (right and left) within Japan. His books in English were widely read in Europe and North America for the quintessence of a modern Japanese aesthetic attitude. They were also the material sign of an exchange between the specifically modern art cultures of India and Japan, the first

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such horizontal exchange in Asia.

In general, as seen by Miyagawa Torao in 1956,¹ Okakura should be seen politically as the holder of ultra-nationalist thought, but in the field of art as a modern person of culture who made great contributions to the creation of art in a civil society. Questioning Okakura's ideas forces Japanese critics like Miyagawa to face up fundamentally to criticising the later thought of the wartime period. In Japanese intellectual history this marked both a continuation and a rupture between the modern (*kindai*) and the contemporary (*gendai*) as historical periods, so understanding Okakura now marks a critical recuperation in Japanese thought of a continuity with Meiji, and with Japanese modernisation against external imperialist pressures and their cultural forms.

What is Aesthetic Nationalism?

In Theory

I have analysed elsewhere the application of notions of nationalism in regard to understanding modern Asian art.² Relevant here is the notion that nationalism is articulated on two levels, that of the intellectual who deploys literary concepts and abstractions of cultural essences in defining the nation, and that of a quasi-religion on the level of a people or a community of unspecified faiths which articulates a sense of belonging to a past which stretches into, and constructs, a future. As Anderson has pointed out, 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined'. As Carroll notes, nationalism should be considered a culturalist ideology which transcends difference where, relevant here

at the core of transcendence in the fashioning of the imagined community lies the problem of the aesthetic as a political phenomenon, of art as the model for self-creation, manifestation, and self-recognition of a people.³

It may be suggested that Okakura is simply arguing, through inflated and inflammatory rhetoric, for the genealogy of aesthetic

ideals which the Meiji state could represent. This would be to misplace the ethical imperative towards the future of those ideals,⁴ ones which Okakura, from a conservative position, oriented towards the creation of contemporary art. Okakura's shifting between the levels of Japan and Asia had the consequence that he could agree that the state's core mission was the use of pedagogy to acculturate its citizens to its past, but that the imagining of a disinterested space had its 'proleptic formal moment of identification',⁵ not with humanity per se, but with a Japan-as-Asia which was somehow outside that humanity. For the origin it claims is never there to be found, just as it is, in the strata of an accumulated and recently excavated past. It is always constructed, frequently requiring the invention of new signs which mask this construction. This is why, as examined by both Redfield and Anderson, the nation requires monuments to those who sacrificed themselves for it, and why, I think, the ground from which the objects spring which carry this monumental function may be so contested.

In Japan

The basic modality of Okakura's thought is to capture what Meiji Japan had lost under the impact of Western imperialism and 'transform the pre-Meiji past into a repository of cultural value'. If the theorisation of the culturally authentic and the establishment of an hermeneutic frame which allows it to be projected into the future is the foundation of aesthetic nationalism, that is, it is both a reconstitution and a projection of the past, then, as Pincus adroitly indicates, Okakura was the first major Japanese thinker 'to discover in cultural theory an adequate substitute for politics', and to understand 'modernization as the occidentalization of the world'.⁶

But whatever the forward-looking, and potentially aggressive, quality of aesthetic nationalism, it continues to oscillate between two positions. One can be based on what ideologically appears to it to be a truer or more precise grasp of the past which draws from a very broad range of historical contexts out of which those values seen as 'ours' arose. The other is to privilege 'ours' from

the beginning by association with a particular mentality, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries usually also to link this determinatively with the culture and language of a specific race, with some finite set of ascriptions. These uniquely privilege both the values carried by an aesthetically conceived body of the culture-state-nation-race, and the particular and closed set of origins which (in construction) pretend this is a natural or essential body.

Okakura early on identified with the first position in the opening and unsigned article of *Kokka* in 1889:

Let us turn our eyes and observe the prospect of academic work in art. Eastern art history is still imprecise. Who is there who engages in historical writing and with regard to the communication and contact between our country and ancient Korea, China and the countries of Central Asia, who has analysed the combination of artistic qualities from what is available and precisely described the outlines of their historical derivation?? [Hereafter, translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.]

He also made clear the future, prescriptive orientation of such repositioning:

Kokka wants to preserve the true aspect of Japanese art and wishes to see Japanese art to evolve through its own special characteristics. Art is the art of the nation, and *Kokka* with the nation will not cease from promoting the protection of the art of this country.⁸

It is significant of the concessive nature of the second position that it should allow for foreign contacts and influence, only to de-privilege these via the attribution of the uniquely creative synthesising and homogenising quality of the people accepting them. It was put forward at exactly the same time by Kuki Ryûichi, actual father of Kuki Shûzô, a figure who remained a lifelong personal friend of Okakura, but would also prove in many ways to have been Okakura's rival in public ambition as well as private passion.

The elements of the arts and crafts derive from the blood of races. There are many aspects which we should demand of others and should not forcibly obtain [of ourselves]. Our Japanese race has had natural talents in the arts and crafts from ancient times. By

transforming all phenomena and in moving towards the separate field of painting and sculpture, by using the literature and culture of alien lands and then developing our own styles, being ever-changing we have not lost our original taste.⁹

Whereas in some constitutions of aesthetic nationalism the attribution of uniqueness might stop there and even be tempered with some historical contingency, the second position in Japan at this relatively early stage went further, and closed the comparability of the Japanese assimilation and transformation by its attribution to a unique and racially closed imperial line:

Through the historical reigns, that the imperial benevolence has for an elegant eternity ceaselessly promoted and continued literature and art, pushing these to sublimely beautiful reaches, accompanying our national essence of a single line for ten thousand generations, is [a situation] really without comparison in all countries.¹⁰

Bi-culturality

The contradiction in Okakura's thought, as much as his own personality, was that his own knowledge of Japanese art history was increasingly formed by a system of Hegelian dialectics which was not Japanese in origin at all. Bosanquet's *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art*, London, 1886, was in the library of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, of which Okakura was the director by 1891, and, whilst Japanese scholarship is unable to prove via the handwriting of the marginalia whether this was perused by him, there seems every likelihood that it was.¹¹

Moreover, in his own personal history Okakura had been brought up as a bilingual in English from childhood and showed a permanent interest in positioning himself before cultural others by the clothes he wore and his command of the foreign language.¹² There does indeed seem to be a cross-over between cultural cross-dressing and self-empowerment for, as Guth notes,

He believed even as he confirmed Western expectations of Japan, he could transcend them because his exceptional knowledge of English language and culture set him apart from other Japanese, allowing him to dictate the terms of his interactions with the West.¹³

As he explained to his son Kazuo,

From my first trip to Europe, I wore kimono most of the time. I suggest you travel abroad in kimono if you think that your English is good enough. But never wear Japanese costume if you talk in broken English.¹⁴

Indeed, after 1904, when he worked off and on in Boston, Massachusetts at the Museum of Fine Arts until his death in 1913, he joined the entourage of Isabella Stewart Gardner where, like some High Anglican priests, 'Okakura in his robes attained the status and freedom of an individual who transcended gender divisions'.¹⁵ Guth makes clear from many photographs, also found in the Japanese collected works of Okakura,¹⁶ that he wore, for example, very elegant Western clothes in Japan with Americans about 1882, and a Fine Arts School uniform of his own pseudo-antique 'Chinese' design whilst horse riding. In China in 1893 he travelled incognito wearing an artificial queue; 'Daoist' clothes were made for him in India in 1901; and he wore 'Daoist' clothes in Boston in 1904, and also in Beijing about 1906, in the original photograph of which he is shown alongside two senior Daoist monks (two Chinese figures at the left being omitted in Guth's reproduction); and he wore a fisherman's costume in Japan in about 1907, when he would spend his days reading whilst out fishing, a self-image which was turned into a sculpture portrait still kept at Izura where Okakura's remains are buried.¹⁷ He also wore Japanese kimonos in Boston variously between 1904 and 1913.

Taken together the evidence is for a personality who wanted to show mastery of 'their Western' discourse as well as representation of 'our Japanese' or more broadly 'our Asian' discourse at the same time. This indicates a desire for a double hermeneutic empowerment, as if the aesthetic contest with the 'West' was never transcended or translated to a higher plane or, in Hegelian language, was never sublated into a universal, but was a continuous re-deployment of the contest with the 'West', whether the domain of discourse was at home or abroad. Some would see this as hybridity of a latently post-colonial kind. I am not sure it is, since

this would require privileging the culturally interstitial in a way which was exclusively available to neither 'Western' hegemony nor presumed common 'Asian' values.

Two anecdotes may suggest why we should see Okakura as tragically bound to the double binary—mastery of the 'West' when in the 'East'; mastery of the 'East' when in the 'West'—rather than liberating himself into a relatively unbound or less restrictively bound third space. When on a trip with the American Bigelow he went to a concert of classical music and is reported by Bigelow as having said after a Beethoven symphony, 'Only in that music is the West superior to the East'.¹⁸ When he went to see Swami Vivekananda immediately on his arrival in Calcutta in January 1902, he is reported to have told Ms Mcleod who had accompanied him from Japan (and to whom he had had given the lectures in Tokyo which were written up as *The Ideals of the East*): 'Vivekananda is ours. He is an Oriental. He is not yours'.¹⁹

The first anecdote indicates Okakura's deep-seated rivalry in opposing, or giving very limited and begrudging recognition to, 'Western' cultural forms as against the 'Asiatic'. Only very few of the former are found worthy of positive appraisal, rather than the inclusion of those Western forms in a set including the 'Asian' which allowed re-appraisal of both. The latter anecdote points to a deep-seated prejudice that nothing allowed the 'Western' follower access to the 'Eastern' swami like the 'Asian' values which were presumed to unite one Japanese—who had been in written contact with Vivekananda since before his arrival—with the common cultural ground of the 'Asian'.

Unitariness of Asia

Okakura's most celebrated work, *The Ideals of the East*,²⁰ written in 1901–02, has been widely analysed in many languages (probably the most comprehensive and thoughtful study in English has been that of Notehelfer in 1990).²¹ The premises of this book and the need which brought Okakura to proclaim them include the following:

1. Asian culture is a unity, a continuum in large part only

comprehensible or tangible to Asians, of longer time scale and greater richness and depth than that of the West.

Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilizations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas....

Arab chivalry, Persian poetry, Chinese ethics, and Indian thought, all speak of a single ancient Asiatic peace, in which there grew up a common life, bearing in different regions different characteristic blossoms, but nowhere capable of a hard and fast dividing line.²²

2. Japan has a special, historically conditioned role in preserving and manifesting this unitariness.

It has been, however, the great privilege of Japan to realise this unity-in-complexity with a special clearness....

The unique blessing of unbroken sovereignty, the proud self-reliance of an unconquered race, and the insular isolation which protected ancestral ideas and instincts at the cost of expansion, made Japan the real repository of the trust of Asiatic thought and culture.

Thus Japan is a museum of Asiatic civilization: and yet more than a museum because the singular genius of the race leads it to dwell on all phases of the ideals of the past, in that spirit of living Advaitism [non-Dualism] which welcomes the new without losing the old'.²³

3. Artistic advance is the result of cultural conflict, conceived in terms of war.

Technique is thus but the weapon of artistic warfare; scientific knowledge of anatomy and perspective, the commissariat that sustains the army. These Japanese art may safely accept from the West without detracting from its own nature. Ideals in turn, are the modes in which the artistic mind moves, a plan of campaign which the nature of the country imposes on war. Within and behind them lies always the sovereign-general, immovable and self-contained, nodding peace or destruction from his brow.

... We await the flashing sword of the lightning that shall cleave the darkness. For the terrible hush must be broken, and the

raindrops of a new vigour must refresh the earth before new flowers can spring up to cover it with their bloom. But it must be from Asia herself, along the ancient roadways of the race, that the great voice shall be heard.

Victory from within, or a mighty death without.²⁴

4. Asian cultural re-generation, with Japan's experience as its most concrete model, and Japan as its cultural leader, must come through a revised consciousness of what is already there in the past as cultural essence.

... to clothe oneself in the web of one's own weaving is to house oneself in one's own house, to create from the spirit of its own sphere.

... To him [the Indian ascetic] a countryside does not consist of its natural features alone. It is a nexus of habits and associations, of human elements and traditions, suffused with the tenderness and friendship of one who has shared, if only for a moment, the joys and sorrows of its personal drama.

... The task of Asia to-day, then, becomes that of protecting and restoring Asiatic modes. But to do this she must herself first recognise and develop consciousness of those modes. For the shadows of the past are the promise of the future.

... It was some small degree of this self-recognition that re-made Japan, and enabled her to weather the storm under which so much of the Oriental world went down. And it must be a renewal of the same self-consciousness that shall build up Asia again in her ancient steadfastness and strength'.²⁵

5. Asian culture comprises states of knowledge and artistic expression which are non-oppositional and not grasped by conflictual or individualist notions of cultural identity.

... the Tao, the great Mood, expresses Itself through different minds and ages and yet remains ever Itself.... The art of living, whose secret lies not in antagonisms or criticisms, but in gliding into the interstices that exist everywhere.²⁶

Before examining these premises and their various implications, I should note two crucial issues in the generation of this text. The first is that Sister Nivedita wrote the introduction and edited the English manuscript. This had been written up from

lectures given in Japan in 1899–1901 to two other followers of Vivekananda, including Josephine Macleod, who had put Okakura in touch with Vivekananda before Okakura's visit. In a manner which now, I should make clear, is culturally distant and unfamiliar, Vivekananda and Nivedita represent that peculiar cross-over between Hindu reformism and socialist politics (even quasi-revolutionary politics in Nivedita's case), whose rhetorical style is only fully to be grasped by reading their texts. The very language of these mixes high religious appeal to Hindu ideals with burning social concern and a fierce hostility to colonialism. Nivedita in particular vigorously opposes the passivity which she sees has infested Indian society and led to its domination by the British, and requires a far more 'Aggressive Hinduism', the title of one of her pamphlets. The tone and the language of *The Ideals of the East* are permeated by precisely that evangelical intensity associated with a politically impassioned religious convert: so much so, that it is very difficult to think that this book would exist in its present form and style without Nivedita.

The second issue is that *The Ideals of the East* was edited and revised in India at the same time as Okakura was drafting *The Awakening of the East*, a text which was first published posthumously in 1939 in Japanese and then in English translation in 1940. The tone of this text is even more extreme, one may even say hysterical, than *The Ideals of the East*. It was apparently written by Okakura for his Indian friends. It would also appear from several reminiscences to have been the result of many conversations with them. Part of the vacillatory quality of *The Ideals of the East* is thus that it moves towards extreme statements without actually culminating in them. The full vigour of the collective position between Okakura and his Indian friends about Asian nationalism is left to be expressed in *The Awakening of the East*, and this vigour was presumably among the reasons why the latter text had such appeal to ultra-nationalists in the 1930s. Its extreme language may also have been the reason why it was not published in the English-speaking world in Okakura's lifetime, and also the reason why Nivedita, among his Indian friends, was under British political police surveillance.

To return to the five premises raised above, it should be clear that some of these are in contradiction, such as that between the notion of an Asian pacificity (5) and the notion of art progress only developing through conflict (3). If the latter had not been present in Asian art then would the pacificity which supposedly characterises it have developed? And indeed if Asian culture had such a unity (1), why then should Japan in particular be endowed with such an historic role in preserving it (2), (4)? Part of the reason why Okakura was apparently relaxed about the co-presence of these contradictions was his dialectical method of thought, absorbed via Fenollosa's original Hegelianism and his teachings on the social Darwinist Herbert Spencer in the late 1870s.²⁷

Indeed parts of several of his texts emphasizing the rebirth of Asia based on a renewed consciousness represented through its art creation read like glosses on Bosanquet's prefatory essay to his translation of the Introduction to Hegel's *Philosophy of Fine Art*, which Okakura may very well have read. For example: 'Spirit exists in the medium of consciousness, not in a peculiar kind of matter.'²⁸

... Art liberates the real import of appearances from the semblance and deception of this bad and fleeting world, and imparts to phenomenal semblances a higher reality, born of mind.²⁹

It is also clear that the prominence given to art as the realisation of an idea hangs on an inward spiritual state which by implication is the result of a broader cultural history:

... that the level and excellency of art in attaining a realization adequate to its idea (or "as spirit and in spirit"), must depend upon the grade of inwardness and unity with which Idea and Shape display themselves as fused into one.³⁰

But Okakura's art historical method is more broadly informed than simply a second- or third-hand take on Hegel. Kinoshita notes that Okakura's research method found in his lectures on art history from the 1890s is supported by four theories which were prevalent as the method of historical recording in nineteenth-century Europe:

1. Nationalism (the phenomenon of art manifests itself through

systematisation by state units).

2. Democracy (reinforcement of realism by the viewpoint of the citizen and masses not centred on the court).
3. Individualism (view where all works revert to the results of individual artists).
4. Developmental historical view (method for grasping phenomena and analysing them where art phenomena are part of the causal relations of history).³¹

Kinoshita also notes that Okakura must have learnt a lot from the historian Suematsu Kenshō of the government's Historical Bureau, who had himself absorbed these theories from Zerffi, *The Science of History*, 1879.

Kinoshita indicates various reasons for the phrase 'Asia is one', so beloved later by ultra-nationalists. The Edo painter and theorist Kano Yasunobu's *Shodō yōketsu (Essentials of Calligraphy)* includes the phrase 'banbutsu hitotsu nari' ('the ten thousand things are one'), which borrows from Daoist thought. No doubt Okakura substituted 'Ajia' for 'banbutsu' as an elegant turn of phrase. For Fukunaga Akishi, in Daoist thought the 'many' comprises the 'one'. The notion of 'unitariness' is thus probably adopted by Okakura as a kind of literary conceit in the same way as he dressed in a 'Daoist' manner.³² *The Ideals of the East* should read 'Describing art history as a whole are the various ideas where the art of Asia is one'.³³

Kinoshita thinks 'Asia is one' stands up in a diagram of opposites, 'Asia vs Europe', which comprised two possible developments. One was a direction which raised the ideal as transcending the domain of art history, the other was to place 'Asia is one' within the domains of beauty and art and try to grasp an art history from that. This position might also be expected to extend to a critique of modern ideals such as in the recording of art historical facts as posed in the four theories habitually deployed in his time. For Kinoshita, Okakura's use of 'Ideals', untranslated into the plural in Japanese and left as 'ideal', is an extremely Hegelian usage.³⁴ Okakura does not through this usage speak of an 'ideal' as a purpose or desired state which must be attained. I would say his usage is more as a criterion of

thought for positioning concepts and, by extension, art objects considered as the embodiment of those ideals in the world. Unlike other ultra-nationalists, Okakura was concerned in the 1889 extract from *Kokka* to try to describe a Japanese art history of a whole, considered by around 1900 as in an integrated domain called 'Asia', and not just the particular isolated phenomena found in India, China, or Japan. This was the case however much he felt constrained to privilege Japan as the culmination, as much as historical reservoir, of tendencies passed from the first two cultural domains. Hotta Yojûrô, an ultra-nationalist, noted later in 1937 that Okakura's comment that 'the highest [state] in the art of the world was in India, China and Japan' meant that the influence which had hitherto been seen as coming from Greece to Asia was re-written as 'influence towards Greece and Rome'. Okakura's noting that 'the spirit of Japan was to accumulate and protect the heritage of Asia over 1500 years' was an awakening of Japan 'from Asia as World Art'.³⁵

Kinoshita notes in conclusion that the phrase 'Asia is one' records that the plural appearances of Asian cultures are one system, or the eyes of one web, and that the writing of an overall Asian art history is possible. Indeed the final page of handwritten notes on the draft manuscript which became *The Awakening of the East* includes the phrase 'We are one', so indicating this book was intended for Indians in support of their anti-British activities. But it also indicates that there was contact between Asians as long as humanity, the 'one', proves the length of that history.

Biographical background to thought

I have avoided introducing an important element of personal biography into the interpretation of Okakura's thought because I wished this to have its own intellectual dynamic. However, there is no doubt the intensity of his passionate attachment to an underlying Asian unity had, in addition to its intellectual basis in opposing the 'West', a psychological origin as well. This seems to have been due to a need to return to a primordial unity after separation. His life was full of these separations and returns. His

own father's separation from his clan to move to Yokohama, where Okakura was born (Aoki Shigeru has found a text which also gives Okakura Kakuzô's place of birth as Tokyo),³⁶ was followed by Okakura's own separation from his father, both physically and in culture through his having mastered English before his studying classical East Asian culture. The latter he accomplished by mastering the textual decoding practice of turning *kanbun* or classical Chinese into Japanese. This is in conflict with his hatred for the constricting effect of Tokugawa rule on Japanese culture, which most developed and disseminated the use of *kanbun* among the samurai class. Okakura wanted to return to ideals of Japanese art which would equal or go beyond those of ancient Greece.

Okakura has a later history of separating from and rejoining his wives. He left Japan and his first wife to visit Europe and America on official missions and on the boat on his return from America in 1888 was entrusted with the care of the then pregnant wife Hatsu (or Hazuko) of Kuki Ryûichi, then Minister at the Japanese Legation in Washington. An affair began between them which appears to have lasted until about 1898, and was the subject of a scurrilous letter circulated in that year forcing Okakura to resign as both Head of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and as Head of the Fine Art Section of the Imperial Household Museum. We should note for the moment that this post also carried with it responsibility for writing the first official art history of Japan, which would be published in French translation at the Paris World Exposition in 1900, and later the same year in the original Japanese.

Okakura's relationship with Hazuko may be glimpsed through the recollection of his visits by Kuki Shûzô, who lived with her around 1895-96 and often saw Tenshin at his mother's house in Negishi, which she may have taken in order to be near him.³⁷ Kuki last saw Okakura at a house of his mother's in 1903-04, and last saw Okakura himself when, feigning ignorance, he passed him in the corridor while he was studying at Tokyo University, where Okakura in April-June 1910 gave his lectures. Kuki's personality itself was split between an intense eroticism and a

religious spirituality³⁸ and this may be seen as derived from his idealization of Okakura. But the split or tension in Kuki also curiously resembles Okakura's own distancing between a longed-for cultural unity in the past, and a tendency towards the abstract idealization of contemporary Meiji Japan as the contemporary representative of the vestiges of that unity and its creative potential.

It would appear that Kuki Ryûchi refused Hatsu a divorce although they lived separately, but she was effectively abandoned by Okakura, lost her sanity, and was confined to a mental hospital, where she died in 1931. Okakura had returned to his own wife about 1898, having fathered a second son in 1895 with a different mother. Okakura left for India in 1901. He subsequently had many other platonic attractions to non-Japanese women, such as his older woman patron Isabella Stuart Gardner in Boston and his young poetess correspondent in India, the widow Priyambada Devi Banerjee.³⁹ The relationship with Gardner, Devi, and Hazuko appears in Okakura's last work, the operatic text 'The White Fox' of early 1913. Yet his ability to secure affection and love from his family despite his irregular, sometimes wild, behaviour and peripatetic foreign travels is testified by his younger brother, wife, sister, daughter and first son Kazuo being present at his death, and Kazuo having later devoted himself to two volumes of biography.

Intellectual tendencies

Okakura was a bureaucratic activist who wrote polemics and reports in his twenties, but in his thirties, when separated from direct policy influence after 1898, wrote more considered if equally polemical texts. Several Japanese scholars have placed Okakura in the intellectual currents of his time, particularly as to whether the identity of Japan should be to exit from Asia or be further projected into it.⁴⁰

It was *The Awakening of the East*,⁴¹ written in 1901–02 and unpublished in Okakura's lifetime, which was to embody most particularly the imbrication of his thought in ways which saw Japan as expanding into Asia as the representative of the restitutive re-assertion of 'Asian' values. The major propositions of this

work may be grouped as follows:

1. Asia achieves its contemporary identification in mutual humiliation before the 'West' with which 'Asia' is inevitably in a zero-sum relation; what the 'West' gains in glory 'Asia' loses in shame.

Brothers and Sisters of Asia!

A vast suffering is on the land of our ancestors. The Oriental has become a synonym for the effeminate, the native an epithet for the slave. Our lauded gentleness is the irony which alien courtesy owes to cowardice. In the name of commerce we have welcomed the militant, in the name of civilization we have embraced the imperialistic, in the name of Christianity we have prostrated before the merciless.

... The glory of Europe is the humiliation of Asia! The march of history is a record of the steps that lead the West into inevitable antagonism to ourselves.⁴²

2. The subjugation is both of an economic system which enables the vastly increased replication of material goods, as much as of spiritual and intellectual enervation which has allowed this situation to come to pass.

Industrial conquest is awful, moral subjugation is intolerable. Our ancestral ideals, our family institutions, our ethics, our religions are daily fading away. Each succeeding generation loses moral stamina by contact with the Westerners.

... We have bowed to their armaments, we have surrendered to their merchandise, why not be vanquished by their so-called culture?

... Shame to our mothers that they bore a race of slaves! Shame to our daughters that they shall wed a race of cowards!⁴³

3. Asian countries are separated by lack of external contacts and concentration on internal problems, between which the European languages have inserted themselves together with the prestige of their knowledge systems. Thus despite the underlying historical unity of Asian cultures and many structurally similar features of their societies and sometimes direct commonalities of religion and other beliefs there is a

lack of mutual knowledge.

The mutual isolation of Asiatic countries prevents them from comprehending the appalling situation in its total significance. Engrossed in bewildering struggles of their own, they disregard the fact that the self-same misfortune has befallen their neighbours.

... It is wonderful how little we know each other. We blab in all the languages of Europe,—which one of us has learned a single Oriental tongue besides his own?

The lack of a common literary vehicle for Eastern scholarship, a natural distaste for expression in a foreign tongue, the disdain of cheap notoriety by hasty generalization, the absence of communication and interchange among our thinkers, is a standing barrier to the formulation of the fundamental principles of our common civilization.

The unity of Asiatic consciousness in spirit and form is most apparent in our art whose subtle refinement far transcends the amateur coarseness of Western creations.⁴⁴

4. In Asia there is a primordial sense of community and a cooperative order which has been subverted by Western competitiveness which provides no social order in the place of what it has overthrown to its own advantage.

But now the West comes as a perfect stranger, subverting the order which she is powerless to replace, imposing a scheme which we consider as utter ruin. Victory or Death?

... The Chinese ideograph for a family represents three persons under a roof and in itself signifies the Eastern triad of her, mother, and child in contradistinction to the Western duet of man and wife. It involves at once the triple relations of paternal care, marital helpfulness, and filial obedience, bound together in indissoluble bonds of mutual loves and duties, which when widened into the social-ideal, flower into that Benevolence, Brotherhood, Loyalty, and Courtesy which constitute the beauty and fragrance of Asiatic life.

... Truly we have not that crude notion of personal rights guarded by mutual assertions—that perpetual elbowing through the crowd—that constant snarling over the bones, which seems to be the glory of the Occident. Our conceptions of liberty are far higher than these.⁴⁵

5. The only way this humiliation may be overthrown is by a revised consciousness of what it means to be 'Asian' like all the other cultures resumed under this tutelary unity, and this consciousness will only be provided for by an outward assertiveness, including military means if necessary. Some Japanese scholars like Takeuchi⁴⁶ suppose that Okakura thought military force was un-Asian or anti-Asian. The original English texts of *The Ideals of the East* and *The Awakening of Japan* discussed later do not support this supposition. That is, unless we are to allow that Okakura's romanticism led him to manipulate English metaphors flagrantly, the full import of which did not concern him.

Our recovery is Consciousness. Our remedy is—The Sword.

... The West on the other hand through its incessant thirst for domination has developed the concrete notion of nationality in each of its limited territories'.

... But wondrous is the irony of fate! European imperialism has itself furnished the weapons by which it will be destroyed.

... Our constant contact with them has disclosed to us that the bully is a coward, that their power lies in undue prestige not in individual prowess. Our acquisition of scientific methods has taught us we can compete with them whenever there is fair play.⁴⁷

6. Japan has appeared on the horizon as the harbinger of a new *Pax Asiatica*. If the Japanese could accomplish so much, what more could be done by the greater populations of China and India? They only require leadership of a kind which Japan's example (if not Japan itself) could provide.

... the brilliant resurrection of Japan is very instructive as an instance of Asiatic revival.

... The sun has risen again in the East to dispel the night of despondency.... Forty millions of self-sacrificing islanders have accomplished this, why should not four hundred millions of China, and the three hundred millions of India be armed to stay the further aggression of the predatory West?

And a mighty Asiatic peace shall come to clothe humanity with universal harmony. And Europe shall receive the blessing of Asia given with a freer if a firmer hand.⁴⁸

7. A great crisis now hangs over Asia; it has to choose to abandon the political tinkering introduced in response to 'Westernization' and with an outspoken and uncontested return to 'Asian' values. Those who do not make this leap of faith will suffer a spiritual death.

The hour has come when the leaders shall cease to dream of constitutional measures or economic protests....when the alien prestige shall be broken by mystery and the silent deluge of overwhelming millions shall flood the land in a single night.

The cowards shrink before the brilliant image of freedom. The cautions [sic, I think should be 'cautious'] pause on the threshold of a great revolution. Do they prefer Death in Life or Life in Death? A crisis has now arrived in our history that the dread ordeal has to be faced.⁴⁹

Dynamics of Projection:

How much Okakura's residence in the USA for longer periods, apart from his many short-term visits earlier, changed his perceptions of what he should communicate to non-Japanese audiences remains unclear. But by 1905 there is a begrudging acceptance on his part of a need to write more positively about Japanese aesthetic ideals, rather than just engage in negative dialectics via his perceptions of the 'West'. This came in *The Book of Tea*, where he immediately drew a contrast between the warlike Japanese Code of the Samurai and Teatism:

which represents so much our Art of Life. Fain would we remain barbarians, if our claim to civilization were to be based on the gruesome glory of war. Fain would we await the time when due respect shall be paid to our art and ideals.⁵⁰

Clearly by 1905–06, when the book was written, Okakura has become aware of the mirror of perceptions between both sides of his binary divide into 'East' and 'West'. He also begins to play the knowing cosmopolitan in his perspicacious air about both sides of the mutual projection. In fact the tone of the book is so different from his earlier two that one would suspect Okakura has either mellowed in his attitudes, or always had multiple selves

to show to the world, and that from this period is exercised a rather different and ostensibly more tolerant tone:

Why not amuse ourselves at our expense? Asia returns the compliment. There would be further food for merriment if you were to know all that we have imagined and written about you. All the glamour of the perspective is there, all the unconscious homage of wonder, all the silent resentment of the new and undefined. You have been loaded with virtues too refined to be envied, and accused of crimes too picturesque to be condemned.⁵¹

At times he seems to be declaring that the 'East-West' culture wars are over, whether from exhaustion or irrelevance. What has been lost is a sense of the value of life, and lost in a whirl of mutual desire and contest between two civilizations:

Let us stop the continents from hurling epigrams at each other, and be sadder if not wiser by the mutual gain of half a hemisphere. We have developed along different lines, but there is no reason why one should not supplement the other. You have gained expansion at the cost of restlessness; we have created a harmony which is weak against aggression. Will you believe it?—the East is better off in some respects than the West!

The heaven of modern humanity is indeed shattered in the Cyclopean struggle for wealth and power. The world is groping in the shadow of egotism and vulgarity. Knowledge is bought through a bad conscience, benevolence practised for the sake of utility. The East and the West, like two dragons tossed in a sea of ferment, in vain strive to recover the jewel of life.⁵²

Okakura had long identified his thought with Daoism and it is no surprise to see this emphasized so much in his most positive book on Japanese aesthetics:

The Taoist conception that immortality lay in the eternal change permeated all their modes of thought. It was the process, not the deed, which was interesting. It was the completing, not the completion, which was really vital. Man came thus at once face to face with nature. A new meaning grew into the art of life. The tea began to be not a poetical pastime, but one of the methods of self-realization'.⁵³

Okakura turns tea into a Daoist empathy with life in the present

world, rather than any metaphysical 'other side' and its flawed reflection in the world of attachment as in Buddhism:

It is in the Japanese tea-ceremony that we see the culmination of tea-ideals. ... Tea with us became more than an idealization of the form of drinking; it is a religion of the art of life.... But the chief contribution of Taoism to Asiatic life has been in the realm of aesthetics. Chinese historians have always spoken of Taoism as the 'art of being in the world,' for it deals with the present—ourselves.⁵⁴

Two chapters of Okakura's book appeared in April 1905 in *The International Quarterly*, over a year before his second visit to China from late 1906 to early 1907, when he was to be photographed in Daoist costume with two Daoist priests. It is thus likely that the broader humanism so evident in *The Book of Tea* was either an alternative strain in his thought which only came to resolution during the seven last years of his life when he was travelling each year between Japan and Boston, or did in fact mark a more radical and overall shift away from his earlier bellicosity:

Nothing is more hallowing than the meeting of kindred spirits in art. At the moment of meeting, the art lover transcends himself. At once he is and is not. He catches a glimpse of Infinity, but words cannot voice his delight, for the eye has no tongue. Freed from the fetters of matter, his spirit moves in the rhythm of things. It is thus that art becomes akin to religion and ennobles mankind.⁵⁵

There even enters a note of regret at the limitations of one's own culture in appreciating art because all humans are culturally restricted in the kinds of art they may value. It is a note of regret, but with a humanist realism which is far more sympathetic and probably more sincere than earlier bombast:

Art is of value only to the extent that it speaks to us. It might be a universal language if we ourselves were universal in our sympathies. Our finite nature, the power of traditions and conventionality, as well as our hereditary instincts, restrict the scope of our capacity for artistic enjoyment.⁵⁶

It is of course possible that Okakura was thinking about his own mortality so that the book of tea would end with the suicide

of Rikyû: 'He only who has lived with the beautiful can die beautifully.'⁵⁷

One would have to conclude, like Tsubouchi, that, while *The Awakening of Japan* seems to support military force to assert national pride, this is reversed in the *Book of Tea*, which more directly expresses Okakura's position, and ends with a dignified yet tragic defeat of aesthetic value before military power.⁵⁸ But so far as I know Okakura never retracted any of his earlier militant texts or expressed reservations about their rhetoric, so we may have to presume that their contradictions remained unresolved for Okakura, as for Japan on the eve of the forcible annexation of Korea in 1910, and the First World War which began the year after his death in 1913.

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