

Deconstructing Nationality

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

Nationality and the Politics of the “Mother Tongue”

Naoki Sakai

INTRODUCTION

The myth of Japan’s monoethnic society no longer goes unquestioned. It is becoming increasingly common to see Japan as neither constituted by a single ethnic group nor as making up a homogeneous society. What this means is that the view that once seemed so self-evident has been cast into doubt. Japan is no longer seen as a monoethnic nation, with a high degree of cultural conformity, which will not have to deal with problems related to racism and immigration, for example, that exist in multi-ethnic societies such as the United States and Australia.¹ Regardless of whether one lives in Japan or not, the image of a single ethnic society has long constrained the thinking of those who are interested in Japanese society.² And yet it seems we have somehow begun to free ourselves from the spell, cast upon us since the era of the Second World War, of this myth of Japan and the discourse on Japanese culture it has implied.

In which direction, however, are we being freed? Indeed, what does it mean to be freed from the myth of the monoethnic society? Above all, how do we understand the collapse of this myth?

If, as a result of the gradual internationalization that has made foreign workers a not uncommon sight in Japan, Japan has already ceased to be a monoethnic society, does this mean that, up until the 1970s, such a myth was to a certain extent correct? Or was it merely the case that Japanese were simple-minded enough, until quite recently, not to have noticed that there were within Japan, not only those referred to as “foreigners” or *gaijin*, but also resident Koreans, Ainu, and Okinawans? Alternatively, if we had possessed sufficient knowledge of Japanese society (gained through books

and other audiovisual media that informed us of the existence of minority peoples) to know that it was something of an exaggeration to refer to Japan as monoethnic, would this myth ever have cast a spell on our consciousness? A thoroughgoing problematization of the myth of the monoethnic society, however, can never rest with merely empirical attempts to illuminate its truth or falsity. The myth of the monoethnic society is not a matter, in other words, of people forgetting about the existence of different ethnic groups that reside in Japan. On the contrary, what constitutes this myth is the very assumption that, since the Japanese people are one ethnos, communication of ideas and sentiment among them is guaranteed from the start. What I am calling a myth refers to the very situation in which such an assumption makes it possible for people to attribute meaning and intentionality to their everyday actions. This myth entails, moreover, the preconception that one ethnos can be simply recognized as distinct from another. In other words, the myth of the monoethnic society is accompanied by the epistemological myth that ethnic identity can be directly and objectively experienced within everyday life. At the core of this myth of the monoethnic society, we can find the epistemological myth that ethnic identity is an experiential fact. From this is born the convenient conviction that, among Japanese, mutual understanding and natural compassion are possible. Conversely, from this myth is also born the belief that, "among foreigners" one is bound to experience discomfort and impediments to smooth communication.

We may agree that persons who have an intense conviction of their own "Japaneseness" often seem to be those who have visited foreign lands and have, themselves, been plagued by anthropophobic feelings toward foreigners. Yet, when we probe the source of the vaguely defined "foreigner" of these encounters that give rise to shyness and anthropophobia, we find that the encounter may have been with a North American male or some other person. On the basis of the narrator's extremely limited experience, such encounters will often be freely augmented so as to emotively sustain his or her sense of identity as "Japanese." In the case of Japan, neither Koreans, Thais, nor Indians are implied in this conception of "foreigner." Or perhaps, even if they are implied in the conception of "foreigner," this does not entail a palpable emotional content. I have the vague memory of a commonsensical understanding—however strange as a concept—widespread until about the year 1960 within the environs of Tokyo (I cannot be certain of areas outside this) according to which the terms "foreigner," "American," and "whites" were held to be equivalent to one another. This sense of "foreigner," which perhaps conversely determines that of "we Japanese," is entirely devoid of any conceptual coherence. Nevertheless, it is something that emotionally sustains the self-consciousness of individual "Japanese." While it is certainly the notion of "foreigner" that defines "Japanese," as its conceptual opposite, the sentimental persuasion that one is "Japanese," which we mistakenly think of as an actuality, is not

a self-evident concept. Moreover, it is overwhelmingly the case that this emotional conviction itself is what provides the internal reality of being "Japanese." In other words, the sense of being Japanese cannot be analyzed according to a methodology of the history of ideas, which would seek the origins of the "Japanese" through chronologically pursuing the name or concept of "Japanese."

The myth of the monoethnic society functions perhaps through this emotional dimension. In other words, emotional convictions arising out of personal experiences that differ for each individual are, from time to time, constellated around the term "foreigner," in such a way that one becomes persuaded that the object, "foreigner," the antithesis of the conviction that one is "Japanese," actually exists. It is when various experiences of discomfort become the source of predicates (when, for instance, one is overwhelmed by the sense that "After all, foreigners are very different from us!") or when the discomforts and social obstacles that are organized around the schema of "Japanese" vs. "foreigner" become predicated of "the foreigner," that one's awareness of being "Japanese" comes into existence.

In this sense, examination of the myth of the monoethnic society would certainly not simply be a problem of postwar Japan. Rather, such an examination would lead us more broadly to an inquiry into the regime of fantasies and conceptual forces present when national identity is believed to be an actual sensation. In order to examine this regime, moreover, we must necessarily take up the problem of the representations of community within the nation-state, as well as the general problem of how sentimental feelings of solidarity are produced.

I would first like to suggest the following definition for the words "nationality" or "national polity" (*kokutai*): nationality is constituted through representations of community conveyed through a regime of fantasies and conceptual forces; it is the sentimental feeling of the "we" enabled by these regimes within modern national communities. I align "nationality" and "national polity" since the word *kokutai* was first introduced during the early part of the Meiji period as a translation of "nationality." Fukuzawa Yukichi, for example, asserted the necessity of a consciousness through which the national populace could be regulated and unified in his rebuttal of the arguments of *Kokugaku* (National Studies) scholars who insisted that Japan's superiority lay in its nature as a state in which politics and religion were fused, based on "a line of emperors for ages eternal." In addition to the "flawless" imperial line, Fukuzawa said, it was necessary to have, on the national level, "a structure in which things are collected together, made one, and distinguished from other entities." *Kokutai*, according to Fukuzawa, was "a race of people of similar feelings, the creation of a distinction between fellow countrymen and foreigners, the fostering of more cordial and stronger bonds with one's countrymen than with foreigners. . . . In Western countries it is called 'nationality.'" Fukuzawa's "nationality" was, moreover, to be expressed through certain emotions (*kokutai no nasake*):

"A sentiment of nationality may originate in similarity of physical characteristics, or religion, or language, or geography. Although the reason may differ from country to country, the most important factor is for a race of people to pass through a series of social forms and share a common past."³ This represented a nearly exact rendering of John Stuart Mill's 1861 explanations of "nationality" and "the society of sympathy" displaced onto the situation in Japan.⁴ The definition of "nationality" varied, as the sentiment of nationality was derived from the sameness of race, the permanence of the governmental body, language, or customs. As Oguma Eiji has described, it was on the basis of these different definitions that various and quite distinct discourses of nationality consequently developed in Japan. There were also instances in which "nationality" was translated by words like *kokusui* or "national essence."⁵

It cannot, of course, be concluded that Fukuzawa's interpretation has dominated views on "national body (*kokutai*)" in Japan since the Meiji period. It is necessary to refer to his views, however, in order to understand why "nationality" has played such an important role as a device by which to produce the sense and sympathy of being "Japanese." Fukuzawa realized, moreover, that it was impossible to construct the nation without a distinction between Japanese and non-Japanese. In this sense, we can say that he regarded the "division between self and other" as important. Although Fukuzawa rejected a type of Christian image of the Emperor denoting "impartial and universal brotherhood" (*isshi dōjin shikai kyōdai*),⁶ it was later conceded that the sentiment of nationality should accompany the expansion of the Japanese empire and extend beyond merely the residents of the Japanese mainland. In this way, "impartial and universal brotherhood" came to be understood as implying a broad universalism that extended beyond the Japanese archipelago. In the history of the modern emperor system, up until the inauguration of the New Constitution in 1946, the first half of the phrase "impartial and universal brotherhood" (*isshi dōjin shikai kyōdai*), that is, "one gaze, equal love" (*isshi dōjin*), was irreparably associated with the figure of Emperor and symbolically represented the very relationship between the Emperor and the individual subject, between the state and individuated Japanese, as one between the one who provides love to his subjects individually and the one who demands such love. It is no accident that the figurative representation of the relationship between the Emperor and his subject (a parent and his or her baby) eerily resembled that of the shepherd and the lost sheep. It is precisely in this respect that the modern Japanese state has been an actualization of what Michel Foucault called "pastoral power."⁷ Yet, as is well known, Japan's defeat in World War II and the loss of the Japanese empire meant that, once again, the "sentiment of nationality" came to be based on the myth of the single ethnic society living within the discrete boundaries of the Japanese archipelago. The argument that consciousness of "we Japanese" has existed since ancient times, so often found in *Nihonjinron* and the imperial histories—an argument

whereby Japanese seek the origins of their own communality within the past—was in fact anticipated in Fukuzawa's definition of "nationality." The absurd myth that consciousness of "we Japanese" existed since ancient times has been, in fact, the necessary condition upon which a "sentiment of nationality" has been brought about.

While keeping these historical circumstances in mind, I will now examine the regime of representations of community constituted through the apparatuses of fantasies and imagination within the modern national community. It will also be necessary to investigate the imagined sense of "us" enabled by these apparatuses, as well as the series of devices—such as national culture and national language—that have played such an important role in relation to the "sentiment of nationality."

NATIONAL CULTURE AND ETHNIC CULTURE

Let us, for the moment, set aside the vague notion of culture as an omnipresent medium existing within a national or ethnic community. Instead, let us begin by calling into question those views, which immediately link culture to a nation or an ethnicity. In their place, let us conceive of cultures as modes of behavior or regimes of practices. Swimming, for example, a regime of practices based on certain modes of bodily action, could be considered as a culture. Common experiences are produced among people who are able to swim, to the extent that one could say that a certain incommensurability of experience, based on cultural difference, separates them from those who cannot swim. Likewise, cultural differences may be said to exist between people who can drive a car and those who cannot. We all know how extremely common it is for things understood by people who are able to drive to not be grasped, no matter how exhaustively explained, by people who have never previously driven. Hence, swimming or automobile driving could be said to constitute "cultures." When culture is seen in this way, we realize that many "cultures" coexist, like patchwork, within our societies. Such examples also make it clear that, in our everyday lives, we constantly encounter "cultural differences" that might give rise to incommensurabilities among people. Moreover, we can easily assent to the fact that the "culture" of swimming cuts across differences of ethnicity, nation, and race. This should make it clear that, while nation-states can produce various "cultures" that are broadly shared among their citizens (standardized language is one example), no organic unity necessarily underlies the various cultures produced in this manner. Education in the national language facilitates the production of a language generally held in common by national citizens. But an annual school dance (held at the same educational facility) no doubt also plays a large role in fostering intergender relations as well as a culture of sociability. This does not mean there is an inherent relationship between national language and dance parties. (Schools that do not hold dance parties nevertheless offer instruction in the national language.) Thus,

while it is possible to recognize the existence of "Japanese culture" as a random assemblage of various "cultures" within Japan, it does not follow that this assemblage is an organic unity that bears the essence of Japanese people. Here the differences become clear between our position and that of so-called culturalism, in which group and culture are seen as overlapping. Culturalism postulates cultural difference only between the interior and exterior of a certain national or ethnic community. It should also now be clear that it is only by means of a certain institutionalized discourse that culturalism comes to locate certain differences uniquely to the boundary between the inside and outside of national collectivities. It is culturalism, in fact, that has invented the notion that the sphere of the collective and that of culture overlap, in disregard of the infinite number of cultural incommensurabilities that already exist within a community.

This institutionalized discourse is necessarily sustained by several rules, which we may now explicate. We should begin by bearing in mind that, by definition, any incommensurability is initially unintelligible to the person encountering it, and thus can be grasped neither in the form of a symmetrical binary opposition nor in the form of a particularity within a generality.⁸ One comes across cultural difference as something initially impossible to understand: impossibility of understanding, in this case, means, above all, an inability to predicate the experience of cultural difference through the use of existing categories. Such incommensurabilities are therefore neither given as "representations" nor as "phenomena." Neither are they apprehended as culturally specific difference, in the sense of being a difference between two particularities subsumed within the same generality. Such encounters do not present themselves to us as experiences of cultural difference or as problems of cognition, but rather as practical tasks. It is impossible, for example, to establish a "phenomenology of cultural difference." For an object of consciousness is regarded as a "phenomenon" only insofar as it is posited as something describable in terms of concepts; it is, so to say, placed in the field of conceptualization. Cultural difference is precisely what is *not* given in this manner, and thus does *not* rise to consciousness. From a culturalist viewpoint, however, cultural incommensurability is invariably seen as registered by consciousness. It is understood as that which can be posited as an object of the epistemological subject, and as a specific difference between two communities, which are presupposed in advance. Culturalism therefore attempts to ignore the practical relation to cultural difference by dissolving this latter within culturally specific difference.

Second, in classical logic, the concept of specific difference is based on the distinction between genus and species, and is used to differentiate between two particularities within a common generality. Within culturalism, however, these two particularities are invariably understood as properties of one community and another community outside it. For example, let us take the difference between a writing style that has developed honorific usage

and one that has not, or the often-cited cultural difference observed in the distinction between a style of painting in which the center is left blank and one in which it is filled in. In each case, we could understand what we observe as differences existing within distinct generalities (of the grammatical function of the personal demonstrative, or of the spatial arrangement of painting, respectively). Within culturalism, however, all of these specific differences will be reduced to the distinction between Japanese culture and non-Japanese culture. The result is that all the particularities that can be indicated by these specific differences are taken to be predicates of the single propositional subject, "Japanese culture." If we were to think of this in terms of figures of speech, we could say that, in "culturalism," specific differences are seen synecdochically as marks of the whole that is Japanese culture. The totality of Japanese culture can thus be represented by reference to a particular example. Of course, a question mark needs to be attached to the very assumption that there is a totality of Japanese culture, as tacitly premised through the use of the synecdoche.

Let us now take up a more complex argument from the actual development of discourses on culture. In these discourses, such terms as "Japanese culture," "Japan," and "Japanese people," are treated as propositional subjects. Various particularities are then made the predicates of these propositional subjects through the citation of specific differences, which are their properties. This procedure is quite common. That is to say, because within culturalism the propositional subject, "Japanese culture," has been established in advance as the theme (or *thetic* subject), it becomes impossible to problematize the very assumption that "Japanese culture" exists in the first place. Similarly, because the propositional subject is singly posited, Japanese culture must logically be homogeneous. The apparent appropriateness of the statement, "Japanese culture is homogeneous," is an effect of the fact that the view that regards national culture as heterogeneous has been logically excluded in advance. For the same reason, heterogeneity can only be found where other ethnic cultures are located within Japanese society, and it is immediately ascribed to such minority cultures as Korean or Okinawan ones. From a culturalist position, cultural heterogeneity can only be understood as the coexistence of different ethnic cultures.

Culturalism constrains debates on so-called multiculturalism as well as on national cultures. The view of culture as organic unity is just as much assumed by those who affirm multiculturalism as a return to ethnic cultural authenticity, as by those who denounce it as something that divides the national community into fragmented ethnic communities. Thus we see that culturalism can survive as an inversion of itself, especially in the form of those apparently anticulturalist arguments that oppose multiculturalism. The reproach of multiculturalism for fragmenting national societies is based on the premise that the unity of culture equals the unity of *ethnos*. What critics of multiculturalism fail to understand is that all social formations, not just multicultural ones, are composed of multiple cultures, and that this multi-

licity of cultures should not be conceived of as a numerical multiplicity of coexisting units.

While it is true that social formations invariably include incommensurabilities and discontinuities, this does not necessarily mean that societies must be divided into racial and ethnic units. The dominant critique of multiculturalism could not have emerged without a naïve acceptance of culturalist premises, and a conception of culture as something that overlaps with ethnic and racial groups. In fact, those who promote a particularistic multiculturalism adhering to the notion of ethnic and racial identities are complicit with their seemingly "universalist" critics who reject multiculturalism in favor of the unity of the nation in general. It is not only in the myth of the single ethnos, but in the form of nationalism that affirms the multi-ethnic nation, that culturalism exists.

The correlation between culturalism and racism, furthermore, is exceedingly clear. Since the myth of the mono-ethnic society is one of the logical conclusions of culturalism, it is better to think of this myth as produced through the perspectival device of culturalism rather than primarily as a proposition grounded in direct experience of Japanese culture.

But, above all, it is through narration that the Japanese culture is produced through culturalism as an object of knowledge; it is a means by which to organize the personal experiences of the narrator. Although the same can be said of any "sentiment of nationality," the lived and imagined reality of "us Japanese" cannot be dissected merely by indicating its logical inconsistencies. This is because belief in something called "Japanese culture" is interwoven with the very sense of "being Japanese." All attempts to grasp the institutionalized aspect of this sentiment will fail if they do not consider the manner by which such a narrative comes to be produced. This does not mean we should overlook the extreme violence, often revealed in racism and nationalism, that is potentially contained within culturalism as well as the "sentiment of nationality." But just as a "sentiment of nationality" produces the fantasy of a community of sympathy in which those compatriots who are injured are pitied and comforted in and by the community as a whole, so, too, does this sentiment invariably create a fantasized anxiety over, as well as pre-emptive discrimination against the intrusion of, "foreigners." It is this that needs to be taken into account when we analyze of the sense of "being Japanese." What is even more worrisome about this community of sympathy is the fact that fear of, and discrimination against, "foreigners" are frequently governed by a sentiment that "we" are the victims.

THE NARRATIVE OF NATIONAL CULTURE

Why do people wish to explain their own culture? And to whom do people wish to explain it? If "cultural difference" gives rise to difficulties in social interactions with foreigners and people of different ethnic groups,

explanation of the practices and customs of one's own society would no doubt be an attempt to smooth these over. But we could say this is no different from the situation in which a new member of a baseball team is taught team rules and baseball techniques by his seniors. The player enters the group and is expected to learn its rules and customs. Similarly, the addressee of cultural explanations would be the foreigner or immigrant placed in the position of learner. Because the role of "student" is, at the very least, premised upon absorbing the explained practices and customs, their acquisition is presented as positive and desirable—much like the knowledge transmitted in school from teacher to pupil.

Explanations of culture, however, do not take place in such situations. Let us take the narrative of so-called *Nihonjinron* as a typical cultural discourse.⁹ The scope of *Nihonjinron* is quite broad: it includes a branch of the comparative cultural discourse taught in university lectures as well as the genre of travel journal that thrives in tourist guidebooks and magazines. While it is difficult to discuss these collectively, it is possible to conceive of several distinguishing features when we consider the implicit patterns manifested in this genre.

First, let us consider the pattern of narrative address. For the most part, the scene of the narration of *Nihonjinron* is characterized by the *absence* of those foreigners and different ethnic groups that are its supposed listeners. Absence in this case does not simply mean that *Nihonjinron* is not narrated in a language directed at foreigners, nor that few foreigners live in those areas where it is produced. In fact, it is exceedingly obvious that *Nihonjinron* is not addressed to those newcomers to the collectivity called Japan, i.e., to foreigners. The addressees of this narrative are in fact Japanese: *Nihonjinron* takes the form of Japanese narrating to Japanese. Yet, even if "foreigners" are absent from the scene of narration, this does not mean that they are entirely removed from the narrator's consciousness. Foreigners, in the sense of all those people throughout the world who are not Japanese, are generally not present in this scene of narration. But the narration, in most cases, contrasts "Westerners" with Japanese and is premised on the fact that "Westerners" are the bearers of that culture that is being contrasted with Japanese culture. Thus, we have a form of narrative, appraising Japanese of the fact that they can never be anything but Japanese, premised upon the existence of the "Westerner" they are unable to become. Try as one might, one can never be more than a superficial imitation of a Westerner, because one's upbringing and cultural baggage are such that, in the end, a Japanese-ness deep within one's very body calls one back despite oneself—such is the basic thrust of most *Nihonjinron* arguments that fellow Japanese address to one another.

In *Nihonjinron*, the narrator, while using personal experiences of the West as a reference point, returns to his or her "Japanese" origins by awakening to his or her essence as Japanese. While the culture referred to as a point of contrast may be that of France, the United States, or Germany, the

differences among these entities are commonly obscured within a vague and all-encompassing notion of "the West." Let us note first that the cultures that constitute points of contrast here are national cultures, and that these European—and, moreover, "Western"—cultures are understood as an organic whole. The aspects of culture that cut across national communities (for example, certified public accountants, automobile driving, rock music, video games) are deliberately excluded from *Nihonjinron*'s view of culture. It goes without saying that this is because any position that conceives of Japanese culture as the equivalent of a unitary national community would be jeopardized if the Western culture it were contrasted with was seen as either diffusive or something that straddled different geographical areas. Previously, cultures that cut across national boundaries were lumped together under the notion of modern machine culture, which became a cultural index symbolizing the progress of the "West." (The industrial development of various countries of the so-called "non-West," of course, has now invalidated this conception of modern machine culture.) If we are looking at this trajectory, the "West" might be another name for capitalism. In this sense, any of those countries in which capitalism has made the most rapid advances, and that carry out the role of "center" in an imperialist division of labor, can be called the "West." As Iyotani Toshio puts it, the "West" is another name for anything that functions as a "center" within the configuration of power that is the modern world system. As such, there is no particular reason that it must designate such fixed areas as Europe and North America.¹⁰ Interestingly, the belief that the "West" is advanced and is a model to be studied often comes to merge with *Nihonjinron*. I use the phrase "come to merge with" because most advocates of *Nihonjinron* present themselves as opponents of Eurocentrism. This is precisely the reason why they argue against the Eurocentric demand that everyone become like the "West." On the contrary, they assert that actual experience has taught them that "Western" culture is not everything, and that, however much one tries to accommodate it, what is different is simply different. As I have already noted, such a "West" is occasionally conflated with "foreigners," and even sustains the everyday sense of "being Japanese" that is posited by contrast to being "foreign."

However, the demand for recognizing one's own particularity while rejecting the universality of the West arises in fact only under the hegemony of Eurocentrism. Recent works by scholars from so-called "non-Western" societies, such as Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments*, quickly reveal that the problem is not one of *Nihonjinron* alone.¹¹ The demand to be recognized in one's particularity is in fact complicitous with Eurocentric universalism. It has been necessary for me to consider how *Nihonjinron*'s mode of address produces a sense of one's "Japanese essence" in order to clarify this point.

It is precisely the demand to "become like a Westerner!" or to "acquire the standards of the West," that makes one aware of those historical and

cultural traces that have accumulated within the body that make it impossible, try as one might, to comply with this demand. Facing the command, "become like a Westerner!" the "non-Westerner" hears something like a cry of protest from his or her own body, which resists and defies this demand, forcefully bringing about an awareness of these traces. Such a reaction is comparable to those of people from the provinces who stammered when they were required to speak in standard Japanese. As Kawamura Minato's work has shown, people in colonies and annexed territories of the Japanese empire responded similarly when forced to learn the Japanese language.¹² Similarly, Tomiyama Ichiro has studied how Okinawans living in Osaka discovered their own "Okinawan-ness" upon receiving the command, "become Japanese!"¹³ It is only when one faces the demand to internalize the standards of the dominant group as part of a process of modernization that the particularist argument acquires the force of an emotional impulse that protests against these standards. This is true of the relations between metropolis and provinces in the nation-state, but also in the hierarchized relations between classes and genders. That the cultures of Asia, Africa, or South America are only very rarely proposed by *Nihonjinron* as points of contrast with Japanese culture can be explained by the fact that, unlike the encounter of a provincial with someone from Tokyo, that of a Japanese with someone from these areas is not conducted under the command that one learn the customs and modes of acting of this other.

Can we not say, then, that the interest in Japanese culture, as well as the fervor with which Japanese essence is constantly narrated in *Nihonjinron*, derive from the fact that it is fundamentally a narrative of "excuse"? It is, moreover, within this narrative of "excuse" that the unity of that national culture known as "Japanese culture" has come to be articulated.

We can call this narrative one of "excuse" because the existence of various commands constitute the preconditions for confirming oneself as Japanese, and the particularity of Japanese culture is offered as an explanation for the impossibility of complying with these commands. Moreover, if we were to speak dialectically, the preconditions themselves are elided in *Nihonjinron*, and only the explanation is posited as an immediacy. Thus, we can see that the particularity of Japanese culture is not immediately given in experience but is evoked as a reaction, the refusal of a demand. Japanese culture is constituted only within dialectic mediation. Without the effort to execute these commands, there would be no self-consciousness of cultural essence itself. Nor would there be any consciousness of cultural origins in the sense of bodily nature as that which resists the execution of these commands. In order to become conscious of oneself as Japanese, therefore, one must execute these commands under threat from a non-Japanese "other." The explanation constantly repeated within *Nihonjinron* to the effect that, "I am Japanese"—which means that Japanese have such-and-such customs and cannot escape from such-and-such a disposition—is in fact prefaced by the following: "You demand of me that I act, feel and think like you, and

yet it is impossible for me to satisfy your demand." This is uttered within the form of address of an "excuse," that is to say, a "demand for love," in which forgiveness is begged from the other person in the form of an apology for one's inability to satisfy the stipulated expectations. The "Westerner," who is generally this other, however, is absent from the scene of narration of *Nihonjinron*.

The preceding argument, however, should not be taken to constitute the command to "become civilized" as immediately "Western," while the disposition and habits of those who are unable to follow such a command are not immediately "non-Western" or "Japanese." There must first exist a certain apparatus of fantasy that posits as "Western" those whose demands cannot be accomplished, and considers as "Japanese" the inability to accomplish them. To take either the "West" or the "Japanese" resistance to it to be such immediately existing realities is to ignore the necessary existence of this mechanism. In other words, an apparatus of fantasy must take individual experiences of frustration within the modernizing process and "represent" them through the schema of binary opposition between the "West" and "Japan." Such a regime transforms these experiences into a narrative in which the desire to return to the national community "Japan" may be satisfied. This regime, which treats these experiences of frustration as equivalent to representations of binary oppositions between cultures seems to me to be analogous to the schema of "translation" through which the relationship between the *operation* of translation and the *representation* of that operation are reversed.¹⁴ This regime of fantasy has long since been institutionalized. The culturalist discourse of *Nihonjinron* comes to seem natural only when efforts to articulate another regime by which to invalidate the schema of binary opposition of "West" versus "non-West" are lacking.

Discourses of national culture also assume that in the course of history people have experienced deep losses, and that it is impossible to grasp the origins of these historical losses without tracing them back either "genealogically" or "archaeologically." (It might be better to conceive the temporality of these historical injuries as inverted, much as trauma is understood within psychoanalysis. This tracing back, then, would not merely involve a retracing of chronological time.) If we want to go beyond simply reproaching culturalism and undertake a more fundamental critique, we must unearth the history that produced it. We must be attentive to the way *Nihonjinron* forecloses interrogation of appropriateness of the very command that "we" can never satisfy. *Nihonjinron* removes the possibility of historicizing this command, concealing the fact that the operation of providing cultural representations is always political.

But let us return again to the question of whether "Western" standards are really "Western."

Most men in the business district of today's Tokyo wear suits. While probably all of these men know that the design of such suits originates in Europe, to wear a suit today is in no way taken as an indication that one is

dressing in particularly "Western" style and hence accepting the standards of the West. As has been remarked countless times, it is not at all the same thing that certain customs or articles of use originated in the West and that they are considered "Western" even now. This is also true of culture: while its origins can be found in some cases in the Japanese archipelago or in others in Western Europe, this does not at all mean that such approaches are an expression of ethnic or national identity. There are many Nintendo computer games produced in Japan, and yet most of the children throughout the world who enjoy these games do so without realizing that they are made in Japan. Of course this is one effect of transnational capitalism. But, even so, this situation is probably a result of the fact that computer games are not caught up within a discourse that emphasizes national culture. They are not, for example, like perfumes, which also spread across the world through the circuit of transnational capitalism, but are sold as a symbols of French national culture and national essence—and hence caught up within a discourse that does emphasize national culture. In both cases, however, the relation or non-relation to national culture is nothing more than a result of advertising and the image making of marketing. Anticipating, for a moment, the conclusion of this argument, let me propose that there is no reason whatsoever that culture must symbolize ethnos or nation in the absence of a discourse that attributes certain cultures to ethnic or national identity. Culture is, in the first instance, exactly like the suit or the computer game, in the sense that it is indifferent to its status as either "Western" or "Japanese." The investigation of cultural pedigrees is best left to the "connoisseurs" of the "culture state." The arbitrary linking of culture to ethnos or nation is a characteristic of discourses that are fixated on national culture and national character. Culture itself does not inherently bear the marks of either ethnos or nation.

We can proceed from this to ascertain that various entities lumped together as "Western" constitute an assemblage of elements from an array of different binomial oppositions—the "West" is in this sense overdetermined, since these elements cannot logically coexist with each other. It simply cannot be assumed that the "West" is an inherently unified substance. At times "the West" refers to the Judeo-Christian tradition, while at other times it refers to highly industrialized capitalist institutions. As mentioned earlier, the "West" may refer to "centers" within the configuration of power of the modern world system, or equally well to those parliamentary forms of government that are grounded upon the concept of individual human rights. The "West" refers at times to liberal democracy, at times to the hereditary privilege of those who are "white" in the racial systems of classification. It is exceedingly contradictory for all of these definitions to determine what the "West" is, insofar as each produces an entirely different object. It must be said, then, that the notion of "West" is based on a collection of mutually contradictory definitions. Or rather, that the "West" is the conviction that these mutually contradictory definitions can all be subsumed

within one totality, regardless of the fact that this is a patchwork, assembled quite arbitrarily, of entities that are sometimes called "Western" and sometimes not. In this sense, the "West" is a typical cultural imaginary.

What this cultural imaginary implies is a history in which it has been possible to force commands upon people in a threatening form. That we can only allude to this indirectly is because the multiple violences entailed in the separate histories through which such coercive hegemony was established remain with us in as yet unspecified forms. That the "West" is still seen as the source of commands to be obeyed is a legacy of histories of annihilation against those who could not internalize the demands of the system that established its coercive hegemony throughout the world—first peoples in the New World, and colonized Asian and African peoples. Although these regimes of domination were established neither simultaneously nor in one stroke, and involved entirely different historical processes and groups, the "West" has come to refer uniformly to the dominating force. This overlaps with the process through which the vague category of "the white race" is conceived as that which sustains the identity of the "West." The problem with this view of modernity as the era in which the "West" dominates the world, however, is that it leaves unanswered the question of whether there was a "West" prior to this as well. (Such a view is, of course, closely connected to the view that modernity established the "white man's superiority.") Such a manner of speaking is, however, mistaken. We should rather understand modernity as the process through which the unitary category of the "West" and the racial category of "white" were established. These categories of "West" and "the white race," moreover, not only concealed discrete histories of domination through violence, but appeared as their displacements. For, in addition to erasing the histories inscribed by overbearing force, the terms "West" and "white" perpetuate the lived sense of inferiority foisted upon peoples throughout the world through precisely that history. When the "West" is taken as uniform, therefore, the traces of complex struggles can no longer be seen. These include, for example, the history of colonial violence between the British and Irish and an infinite number of other discriminations and disputes between "whites," as well. In order to be recognized as "white," one identifies with one's "white-like" self at the expense of one's non-whiteness and excludes, in particular, other non-white groups. The historicity of the category "white" is suggested by the fact that, in recent history, those people possessing Japanese citizenship were treated in certain countries as "honorary whites." Of course, Japanese also were exposed to colonial violence in the process of constructing the modern nation. But in order to "Westernize," they simultaneously posited other people in Japan and Asia who had to be colonized and civilized, who then became objects of violence. The binary opposition "West" and "non-West" does not represent the essential identities of ruler and ruled. Instead, it conceals the instability inherent on the putative identity of the "West," as well as modernity's entangled history of conflicts.¹⁵

Many narrators of *Nihonjinron* repeatedly tell the miniaturized history of such a "West" within their personal experiences. They are keenly made to feel the threatening force of these commands. This premise is, however, erased from their culturalist narration, from which the diversity and overdetermined aspect of "the West" is similarly expunged. Like the binary opposition between "West" and "non-West," *Nihonjinron* conceals the history that such a discourse has necessarily produced.

Thus, we may say that *Nihonjinron*, this culturalist discourse of Japan, is not produced simply to explain the cultural differences that exist between the "West" and "Japan." Cultural difference must be explained so that those Japanese who have attempted to imitate the West and failed may have a common narrative of "excuse," and on this basis may return to a shared culture. Such a cultural discourse must be produced because it is the shared belief in the existence of the absent "West" that allows the contrasting figure of "Japan" to come into being. Such a schema of co-figuration makes possible the representation (and "re-presentation") of "Japan" and the "West" as organic unities. One can say that forms of cultural particularism like *Nihonjinron* could not exist without Eurocentric universalism, insofar as they are a means of concealing the fact that Eurocentrism entails compliance with these threats and commands. This is one example of the complicity between particularism and universalism.

Indeed, disputes about the origins of national cultures can clarify the otherwise obscured premise of narratives of cultural particularism and can help us to once again problematize that "West" they posit in a very vague form. This would make it possible to no longer ascribe those commands that must be accepted to an amorphous "West," but to assess the appropriateness of each in turn. Those judged correct would be accepted whether "Western" or not, whereas those judged incorrect would be rejected. For this reason, it is absolutely necessary that we make the schematism of co-figuration an object of analysis.

Once *Nihonjinron* is apprehended in this light, however, it can be seen that it is by no means a phenomenon particular to Japan. When *Nihonjinron* speaks as if Japanese culture and society were exceptional, it is simply embodying the kind of exceptionalism that is commonplace in discourses of national culture. Moreover, although it is not identical to culturalism, American exceptionalism springs to mind as another example of how commonplace cultural exceptionalism is. In its most familiar form, American exceptionalism is expressed in that "sentiment of nationality" that is an obsession with how unusual and special "my country" is. And no matter how "contagious" nationalism has proven to be in other parts of the world, it is always through this kind of exceptionalism—or belief in the particularity of one's nation—that it has been transmitted. Analysis of *Nihonjinron* is, therefore, useful for us, because it provides an opportunity to consider the process through which national culture comes to be figured.

Actually, the narrative in which the narrator continuously expresses awareness of his or her own cultural particularism may be produced in various contexts. For example, Japan scholars from the United States and Europe must live under the professional demand that they learn the Japanese language. There are many cases in which these scholars are made conscious of their own cultural origins, finding themselves unable, despite their best efforts, to comply with the demand to speak fluent Japanese. Such frustration may lead to a paranoid sense of being a "Westerner" and of how one's Western origins are inscribed upon one's own body. On this basis, a certain argument can be constructed that acts as a complement to *Nihonjinron*. Of course, such scholars do not generally go on from here to develop an argument about Western particularity, but this is because they operate within the framework of the broader demand described above that makes the dominant West the center of the world. That system of commands that takes "Japan" as its locus ("You must learn Japanese!" and "You must act like a Japanese!") is applicable only within an extremely limited professional context. Moreover, the system of commands that makes the West its center, and extends over a much broader area, is a tacitly recognized presence in Japan, as well. Depending on fluctuations in economic and social conditions, however, the center from which demands are assumed to be issued actually shifts constantly.

Moreover, it cannot, perhaps, be forgotten that the identity "West" confers a certain pride upon "Westerners" who identify with the "West." Because identification with the West asserts one's superiority vis-à-vis "non-Westerners," the non-Westerners inevitably feel coerced or threatened by the Westerners who stress their own "Western" identity. In other words, because "Western" pride is perceived through a contrast with non-Westerners, the "non-West" becomes for "Westerners" a type of mirror on which the desire to be one's own self-image is elicited. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the self-representations of the "West" always involve relations of gender. This is why relations between "West" and "non-West," and especially between colonial ruler and ruled, are often metaphorically represented by the gender relations symbolized by the trope of "Madame Butterfly." As a discourse that thematizes the "non-West," *Nihonjinron* takes Japanese people to be its thetic subject, yet it remains in fact a narrative of "Western" desire. The obfuscation of the division between "West" and "non-West"—which is otherwise maintained through such binary oppositions as modern versus premodern, white versus non-white, and progress versus tradition—brings about a kind of crisis for those who have identified with the "West." This crisis is similar to that which occurs when women, who sustain male subjective coherency through the assumption of male desire, cease to play that role. Through woman's internalization of male desire, a relationship of mutual interdependence is established in which women receive recognition by men.¹⁶ When a woman abandons this role, we find a collapse of male self-esteem as well as the loss of a

position of masculine privilege. Women who have internalized male desire and act "woman-like" in relation to men provide, as it were, a type of fulcrum of identity by which men are able to know themselves as men. Recognition that countries in East Asia might attain the universality of the modern has more recently threatened to disrupt the binary opposition between "West" and "non-West"—producing a situation that could perhaps be described as the West's loss of self-esteem.

Changes in the relations between areas that have functioned as center and periphery of the world economy have destabilized the apparatus of "Western superiority" that sustained the system of commands we have analyzed. In areas like the United States and Western Europe that, heretofore, through either colonial or imperialist power structures, had been the source of commands to "others," we have suddenly witnessed the eruption of greatly expanded possibilities for the production of discourses like that of "the return to the West," or cultural essentialist theories about the "West" that are simply an inversion of *Nihonjinron*. As writings by Paul Gilroy and Etienne Balibar have shown, in anti-immigrant movements of the late twentieth century, we find cultural essentialist discourses on "the English" and "the French" that are subdivisions of this broader discourse on the "West."¹⁶

We cannot, however, overlook the way in which the belief in cultural homogeneity upon which culturalism depends is also related to national homogeneity in the sense of the "society of sympathy" Fukuzawa derived from Mill. In order for an event that occurs in one part of the national community to be felt as if it belonged to the whole community, a mechanism for diffusing sentimentality must exist here. Without such a device, it is extremely difficult to create the sense, for example, of "we Japanese."

The diffusion of sentimentality I refer to here is not, of course, a certain feeling that spreads among people. Rather, we might compare the sentiment of nationality to the emotion one has when attending the funeral of someone one does not know. Through conforming to such rules of etiquette as maintaining a "solemn bearing" and wearing a "sad expression," one comes imperceptibly to actually maintain a "solemn bearing" and "feel sad." Rather than feeling, it is sentimentality that is diffused here. *Sentimentality* is that state of affairs in which the appearance demanded by "etiquette" is unquestioningly accepted as "reality." "Sentimentality" is analogous to the types of emotion one experiences when, on the basis of formalities rooted in preconceived ideas, one forms a stereotype of another and then respects, scorns, or fears him or her. Diffusion of these emotions is rooted in a community's possession of a common etiquette or patterns of behavior. It is for this reason that sentimentality will not be diffused among children and others who are ignorant of such etiquette and bold enough to say, "The Emperor is naked." What device diffuses sentimentality in the case of national community?

The discourse of national culture is one such device. The device takes those who narrate or listen to it and forms them into national subjects. We might best speak of this device as a "subjective technology," through which a subject constructs itself or performs its *poiesis* as a subject. National history may be cited as another example of such "subjective technologies." In this sense, the roles of national history and of discourses of national culture overlap. They are devices for making us feel as if events that are distant in both social space and historical time are in fact "our events." Without such devices, it would be extremely difficult to constitute the "nation" as community of sympathy.

THE DEVICE OF SYMPATHY: THE POSITIVITY OF NATIONAL LANGUAGE

The most effective device for producing a palpable "sentiment of nationality," however, is to create the *positivity* of a "mother" tongue. Closely related to this is the idea of the "native speaker." If we are to criticize the constructs of national and ethnic culture, we must begin by analyzing unitary notions of the mother tongue, native language, or national language. This is because the figure of culture as an organic unity in most cases depends upon the figure of a linguistic unity as its original form. Moreover, the regime, by which cultural difference is figured out in terms of specific difference between two cultures posited as entities, relies on the same schema that is mobilized to represent failure in communication as taking place between two different languages. The critique of culture as a unity cannot be accomplished without asking how language can be represented as a unity. Unless the concept of language is submitted to critical examination, all critiques of national culture will invariably remain incomplete.

Let us first note that the thought of the mother tongue as determined by an immediate relation to language is simply a fantasy of communion. As Lacan well understood, the acquisition of language takes place through the thorough alienation from the kind of immediacy symbolized in the notion of a "mother tongue." The fact that humans are capable of acquiring language is premised upon their definitive alienation from anything like a symbiotic relationship with the mother, and in this sense represents the loss of a mother tongue. Humans are always foreigners vis-à-vis language, and in this sense languages can only be "foreign" languages. One's linguistic ability is constituted in that relationship of severance, or alienation, from the mother tongue. This, it would not be too far-fetched to say that it is possible for me to learn the Japanese language precisely because I am a foreigner, or, that it is only insofar as I am not Japanese that I am able to identify with the national community called "Japan." In Hegelian terms, my capacity to be Japanese must be premised on a negation of that capacity. The notion of the mother tongue as that medium that allows me to express absolutely immediately my own desires and emotions is itself a reactive function. It can only be understood as an imaginary response to moments of failure or diffi-

culty in expression. In Nietzsche's words, the notion of the native tongue bears the character of a fundamental *ressentiment*, in that it posits a certain transcendent essence as preceding its own emergence. The thought of the mother tongue, that is, preserves the desire to return to a moment prior to injury, i.e., a hypothetical state in which injury as a reaction to certain historical scars is absent. This is similar to the status of the "excuse" within *Nihonjinron*: although the mother tongue was produced through scars, its imagined existence is determined by the wish to erase them.

Let me now explain why the mother tongue can only be in the register of the imaginary.

First, the notion of the mother tongue (as that which guarantees unmediated and direct relation between myself and my desires) conflicts with the basic condition in which the speaking subject cannot be identical to itself within the utterance, inasmuch as all utterances create a schism between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciated. The subject's schism within the utterance is similar to that schism that exists between the empirical ego and transcendental subject that, since the time of Kant, has come to be known as the *aporia* of the modern epistemological subject. While I can, of course, believe that my relation to my desires and emotions is unmediated, this relation can only be conceived of as an aspect of spontaneity of my own imagination. My relation to my mother tongue, as that which immediately expresses my own interiority, can therefore only be understood as imaginary. In other words, just as "representations/representations" of notions of national and ethnic culture are offered as "excuses" for the frustrations experienced within modernization and then taken by people to be "their own," so, too, through experiences of frustration and oppression do people discover their "mother tongue."

Intensely bound up with the notion of the mother tongue may be memories such as a mother's tone of voice, the feel of contact with her body, the repose brought about through symbiosis with her, nostalgia for her cooking, and the figure of the "family" constructed around her. In other words, the mother tongue is a notion, and, as a notion, it does not preserve actual memories, but gathers random memories, which include putative non-linguistic events, around it. It resembles the notion of a home: various memories swarm within this collection, including fabricated memories of things that never existed. It is a fundamentally nostalgic notion. I am directly related to this notion insofar as I think "this is *my* mother tongue." In other words, the immediacy of the mother tongue is something that is *imaginarily* related to the *notion* of the "mother tongue." Let us note, moreover, that these memories have no immediate relation to language. The taste of a mother's cooking and the feeling of contact with her body are not generally referred to as linguistic experiences. Furthermore, while "mother tongue" is a word, it does not refer to a tone of voice. This is because insofar as a language is a medium of expression, it does not bear the distinctive features of either individual morphemes or personal diction. Rather, it is

necessarily constituted as a *unity* of linguistic rules within a certain regime.¹⁸ Although the mother tongue as indicated through the figure of the mother is for the speaker the most primordial collective language, this community cannot be identified or represented outside of discourse. The unity of the mother tongue, like that of the "national mother tongue" or a national language, can be given only within discourse. It is a unity not to be discovered by those who live experientially in the "mother tongue" but rather by those who objectify it within a discourse on language, as in the discourse of philologists and linguists. Unless it has been first postulated as a unity through a discourse, we will never be able to discover the primordial and unmediated "mother tongue" upon which another language has supposedly been imposed.

We have established that the unmediated relation between myself and the mother tongue can only be understood as reactively imagined in relation to moments of failure or difficulty in expression. In other words, something like the mother tongue cannot be understood without the mediation of negativity. That which provides the identity of the mother tongue is the chance encounter with something negative to itself.

Nevertheless, the existence of historical scars or antagonisms within a collective does not necessarily enable us to return to the mother tongue or national mother tongue. In order for us to do this, there must be established in advance a discourse that represents historical scars in terms of the division between the mother tongue and that which is not the mother tongue. We may also come to understand the overwhelming importance of the perspective first referred to in the 1960s by Jacques Derrida as "phonocentrism"—in which speech and writing *are something that can be originally divided* into the opposition between the immediate and the mediated—with regard to the construction of the imaginary relation to the mother tongue. In order to ascertain the mother tongue, the immediate and mediate must both be posited as knowable. In other words, if we locate difficulties and failures of communication on the side of mediation, we can assume an authentic relation that is, for me, an intimacy devoid of such interruptions. The mother tongue becomes the figure of an intimate relation to language where difficulties and failures do not exist. Hence, for example, an immediate relation to language via the spoken words of someone who neither reads nor writes may be opposed to the elites' mediated relation to language of a ruler who has knowledge of the written word. This may then be figured as the opposition between a natural mother tongue acquired at birth and the artificial language of civilization that is only learned through training. Whatever we consciously recognize as the mother tongue will change according to the contrastive term with which it is paired. Thus, at times it will be the dialect contrasted to the standard language; at other times it will be the national language contrasted with an international language. Or, it may be the informal "spoken word" contrasted to the public "written word." The relation

between myself and the figure of a unitary mother tongue is entirely controlled by ideology.

Needless to say, we should not view this process of figuration in an ahistorical manner. It is a process that first becomes possible through phonocentrism. In this sense, thought of the mother tongue prepares for the transition to the notion of a native language, or national mother tongue. It is only under such conditions that it is possible to consider the Japanese language as a lost mother tongue.¹⁹ It is for this reason that the mother tongue must be conceived as constitutive of the ideological core of "the national body."

Once the notion of the Japanese language has been invented, it becomes possible to regard the unthinkable as that which always emanates from *outside* a determinable area (such as Japan). Those things that resist thought (or create difficulties or failures in expression and understanding) are established in advance as coming "from outside," and incapable of arising within the "interior" of that immediacy figured through phonocentrism. In short, the establishment of the mother tongue and the notion of a native language or national mother tongue does not merely produce the idea of a speaker of the mother tongue ("native speaker"); through homogeneity, it also creates the matrix of the "ethnos" or "nation" as a region of flawless communication. Investigation would reveal that, within such so-called multi-ethnic nations as the United States, Australia, and Canada, the demand for linguistic homogeneity that has emerged as part of the logic of national integration derives, in fact, from phonocentrism. Moreover, the invention of the Japanese language makes possible both consciousness of an ethnocentric "we" and the nationalistic sense that this "we" exists as an archetype. The invention of the Japanese language, as well as of national language in general, produces an imaginary relation of unmediated bonding between the subject of the enunciation and the mother tongue. The Japanese language comes into being as an institution when many people begin to experience their everyday lives in accordance with this relation.

This does not, however, mean that the Japanese language thus produced appears as transparent and absolutely immediate to those who are, literally, "Japanese people." This is because, as mentioned earlier, the very possibility of language acquisition means that it cannot be true that those people within a national language or mother tongue are nothing but native speakers. As I stated earlier, the relation between myself and an assumed mother tongue is, in an essential sense, "broken." Nobody can be at home within a mother tongue, a national mother tongue, or national language. If it were in fact possible to be so at home, we would have to abandon the basic human rules of sociality in the sense of being open to the Other.

That is to say that the unities of the mother tongue, national mother tongue, and national language are all established within discourse. The thought of the mother tongue must itself be historicized. These unities can

be conceived only as discursive positivities. Because these unities are discursive *a priori*, they emerge and disappear as discourse itself changes.

The unity of a language is, firstly, regulated through the formation of an idea that provides that unity, and, secondly, defined in terms of a specific difference with another language. Thus, such unities as ethnos, nation, race, and national/ethnic culture may be thought of as produced by nearly identical regimes.

A particular language, especially national language, while playing a role in regulating our experience, is not itself experienced. Neither ethnos nor national language is given within verifiable experience. Rather, the unity of a language is posited as an idea. This is not to deny that individual morphemes and rules are understood as belonging to specific languages. Nevertheless, when we investigate the regimes that judge such parts as belonging to the whole, we come face to face with language's mode of being as a regulative idea.

Let us, for example, adopt the position that the regulative idea of the "Japanese language" came into being at a certain period of time, and that, prior to this, it did not exist. A situation could then be imagined in which the various elements of language could be known, not as the special features of the Japanese language, but rather as the elements or styles of different social formations that need not be synthesized within a unity called the Japanese language. Without including various styles (e.g., the ancient Chinese classical style, *noh* chants, *waka* poetry, the epistolary style, everyday village conversation, or that village speech sometimes known as "dialect," formal aristocratic speech, and so forth) within the unity of the Japanese language, it would still be possible to identify different languages used in different social settings, on the basis of a pragmatics approach. So-called "Japanese writing" (*wabun*) would be a loose grouping of certain styles within such a discursive space. This could be distinguished from "Chinese writing" (*kanbun*), just as the style of contemporary novel writing is contrasted with the style of laws published by the government. If we followed such a manner of pragmatic classification, the languages presently subsumed within the category "Chinese language" could also be grasped in continuity with "Japanese writing," and seen as a particular style in which the differences between "Chinese writing" and other styles would not be privileged and exclusive boundaries created.

It is, moreover, necessary to consider the following problem. The relevance of pragmatics is not limited to those conditions that relate to the utterance and its hearing, such as movements of the speaker's body, facial expressions, and the present circumstances of speech. There are also conditions typically found in written texts that have to do with sight and movements of the pen. From the viewpoint of pragmatics, the boundaries between texts that are seen, read, felt, and heard are mutually interpenetrating. There is no reason to think of texts, in general, purely from a linguistic standpoint. The text of a book, for example, can be considered merely as

language (as sentences constituted by a series of words) only if one disregards such things as the style of its letters, the social occasions where the book is presented, its design, and the feel of its paper. If written texts were classified on the basis of their letters, then the "stiff" style of calligraphy (*kaisho*) and the "grass" style (*sōsho*) would constitute two different genres. Likewise, if texts were classified on the basis of the frequency of usage of Chinese characters (*mana*) and Japanese syllabary (*kana*), two different genres would also appear. The opposition between these genres, however, would have nothing to do with the opposition between one language and another. When the text of a book is not recognized merely as a *language* text, then, it is possible to see it as belonging to many different, intersecting genres. Our consideration of texts would then not be limited by the principle of ascending rank, in which the highest rank, as represented by the order of family-species-genus, would be the category of the universal or general. Rather, a series of genres could be seen as linking up with another series rhizomatically. It would not, therefore, be unusual for two different grammars to coexist within the same text, just as "stiff" and cursive styles, or illustrations and written letters, are able to coexist within the same space of the utterance. Before the unity of a language is established—a unity established by expunging other languages from it—new rules of classification have to be established that make language an exclusionary category that takes precedence over other genres. The idea that a text is a purely linguistic entity requires that such reorganization of categories has already taken place.

Prior to such reorganization, it would have been impossible to conceive of a discursive formation in which (to use the current terms) the "Chinese language" and "Japanese language" coexisted not as different languages but as different genres. Of course, any reference to these genres as indicated by the names of nations such as "Chinese language" or "Japanese language" is, rigorously speaking, inappropriate. Conversely, the coming into being of national languages must, at the very least, accompany a substantial change in classifying regimes. Speaking in the most abstract and general terms, it can be said that *the establishment of the idea of a national mother tongue or national language (as would be the case, for example, when wabun or "Japanese writing" is taken as signifier of the national language) entails removing a genre from that level of species where it coexists with other species and placing it on the level of a "genus" that subsumes other genres understood as its "species."* In other words, genre is formed arborescently.²⁰ It is easy to conflate the word "genre" with "genus," inasmuch as the former derives originally from the latter. Yet, in the era when *wabun* and *kanbun* coexisted as two different genres, it was no more strange for a writer to shift from "Chinese writing" (*kanbun*) to an epistolary writing style (*sōrōbun*) than it was for a writer to shift between the style of private correspondence and one in which ordinances were written in government notices. Of course, it is another question entirely whether a certain individ-

ual could, at the same time, properly use both a legal and epistolary style. Although some people even today are incapable of writing in a legal style, such people are usually not thought of as foreigners. And yet those who are able to expertly write letters in the style of "Chinese writing" are regarded now as foreigners. Only seventy or eighty years ago, however, such people within the Japanese archipelago were regarded not as being of a different nationality but rather as being intellectuals who came from different social class and educational backgrounds. Such movements between genres were actually anticipated in systems of classification that existed prior to the formation of the positivity of the national mother tongue or national language (the question of people's actual capacity to write in different genres is one I will set aside for the moment). The assumption did not exist that people using "Chinese writing" could only be of a certain origin, or that "Japanese writing" determined one's personal authenticity. Such restrictions bearing on such practices were not related to ethnic, national, or racial authenticity, but rather to social ranking. Under the rules of this system of classification, "Chinese writing" was not defined as the "Chinese language" or as an ethnic language. It goes without saying that, when these writing practices were understood in terms of differences between genres, people considered it reasonable to shift from one genre to another in accordance with the necessities of pragmatic context. Let me state once again that, *in order for a certain "language" to be accepted as determining an individual's total and personal identity, almost as if it were a fate, it is necessary for a category once loosely classified as, for example, a "classical style" of writing to relinquish its status as one genre among many. And if what was once thought to be genre is now taken as logically extending over an entirety of social relations, it must be shifted to the logical category of the "genus" that, in turn, subsumes within itself many genres.*

Once this occurs, the shift from one "language" to another in accordance with pragmatic necessity can be perceived as if it were a betrayal of authenticity, an escape from fate, so to speak. Or perhaps this shift begins to be understood not as a transition from genre to genre but as a relation to people who speak a foreign language, by means of the regime of translation. At such a time, it becomes impossible to conceive of "Chinese writing" and classical "literary Japanese" (*gikobun*) as coexisting within the same enunciative situation. Rather one "language" and another "language" will be assumed to exist within an exclusionary relation to each other. The mother tongue (or national mother tongue) acquires its identity as a negation of the "other" language, in such a way that people are seen to possess their authentic "mother tongue" by virtue of their own ethnic or national origins. This is precisely the manner by which the native speaker is born—as one who bears the mother tongue or national mother tongue as the ground of personal authenticity.

This same argument is possible on the level of morphology as well. Let us take as an example the two Japanese nouns, "Western confectionery"

(*yōgashi*) and "cake" (*kēki*). At first, perhaps, the word "*yōgashi*" might be understood as an approximate substitute for the English word "cake." But there are also times when "*kēki*" indicates an object distinct from "*yōgashi*," and a distinction is made between the two words. In this sense, the word "cake" may be seen as contained within the Japanese language. Nevertheless, "cake" (*kēki*) may also be understood to refer to the English word "cake." On the basis of pragmatic conditions, however, it is a matter of indifference whether "cake" is a Japanese or English word. Such ambiguity appears most clearly in the case of Chinese characters, which appear to straddle both Japanese and Chinese languages. The question of whether Chinese characters "belong" to either the Japanese or Chinese language, when raised without attention to the historicity of such unities as "Japanese language" and "Chinese language," is clearly foolish. When such inquiries are made, they reveal the historicity of the question itself. I hardly need to add that the distinction between Chinese characters and the Japanese syllabary needs to be historicized as well.

It can be said that the idea of national language is produced by erasing those multiplicities inherent in the act of enunciation, which should itself be understood as a form of sociality. On the Japanese archipelago in the pre-modern period, there existed *multilingual social formations, formed through multiplicity, which did not correspond to the coexistence of plural languages and cultures as individualized unities.* These multilingual social formations were gradually reorganized and replaced by that which took as its standard a single language. It may be possible to locate the birth of the Japanese language and people at the point of rupture between this unilingual social formation and the multilingual social formations that preceded it.

Yet it is perhaps important to distinguish between at least two levels of argument here. First, the thought of language cannot be determined unambiguously. The concept of language itself varies depending upon time, region, and social class. It is for this reason that our inquiry must not take as its guiding thread a concept of language popularized by modern linguistics.²¹ To do so would be to ignore the political role played by linguistics and historical linguistics. It would entail not only disregarding the politicality of those requirements (homogeneity, grammaticality, normativity) in accordance with which linguistics posits its object, but also to ignore the connection between language and pragmatics. At the same time, I am not making a judgment about the empirical knowledge taken up by linguistics. My argument deals rather with the conditions of possibility of the historical emergence of this empirical knowledge.

There is also the difference between, on the one hand, the positivity of national or ethnic language as a regulative idea within those social formations that take as their standard a monolingual and monoethnic society, and, on the other, the various aspects of social formations that contradict this idea. As stated earlier, a single language is an idea, something that is not

empirically observed within social reality. Unless this difference is taken into account, the contemporary Japan that is supposedly monolingual and monocultural is literally taken as such. And it is for this reason that those who try to attack the myth of a monolingual and monoethnic Japan by calling attention to the existence of foreigners and other ethnic groups end up, themselves, perpetuating and affirming the assumption of unitary languages and ethnic cultures. We must, for example, be extremely wary of propositions that assert that premodern Japan was a multilingual and multicultural society due to the great cultural divide that existed between the Kansai and Kantō regions during the medieval period. Multilingualism does not mean the coexistence of a plurality of ethnic languages: rather, the identity of language itself can only be represented through the suppression of multiplicity. The Japanese language is ceaselessly deconstructing itself. In other words, an institution that suppresses multilingualism must be in constant operation in order to sustain the conviction that the social formations of contemporary Japan are monolingual and monocultural. The unities of the Japanese language and people cannot be conceived as apart from the institution that suppresses the recognition of multilingualism.

"THE SAME" AND HOMOGENEITY

We have thus far seen that, in the absence of a culturalism that regards culture as an organic unity pervasive throughout the nation, it is impossible to stipulate the homogeneity of a national body that shares common customs and a common culture. We have also seen that the identity of community cannot be directly equated to the identity of language. How can one determine what constitutes the "same" language? Language is capable of countless divisions; it is a positivity whose content changes constantly throughout history. If this is the case, then the assumption that a given community is homogeneous and constituted by "the same" people must once again be submitted to rigorous revision. Dealing with this question requires us to confront the idea of assimilation, as that process that ultimately produces homogeneity.

The violence implicit in the notion of assimilation is largely unleashed in situations where discrimination and social conflict prevail. The most conventional response is that discrimination is what those people incapable of assimilation are fated to endure. Added to this is the notion that inability to assimilate is determined by ethnic origin, against which individual will can do nothing. This argument is similar to the argument that holds that the "mother tongue" is grounded in an ethnic or racial identity constitutive of the core of personality. Assimilation has, in fact, frequently been explained by recourse to the example of immigrants entering a certain society, or of native peoples subsumed within national territory through expansion of empire. Supposedly, it is a process in which such people gradually acquire

the customs and ways of life of that society, becoming in time indistinguishable from the majority.

What is at stake here, however, is not simply a question of permitting differences in habits and customs. No matter how homogeneous the society, it is impossible for all adult members to share the same habits and customs. Within, for example, the United States, different clothing, manners, and performance of duties are required for men and women. Differences in habits and customs are made to represent the difference between men and women; the desire to maintain such basic institutions as education and the family, moreover, is controlled in accordance with these markings. These differences are skillfully organized to coincide with social status, so that homogeneity does not necessarily mean that everyone acts in the same way or has the same tastes and sense of duty. Homogenization is not, therefore, simply the process by which people become the same.

Would it be natural, then, to assume that ethnic groups are discriminated against because of differences in their habits and ways of life? Is it cultural difference that produces differences between immigrants, or ethnic minorities, and the national majority? Here we must once again emphasize the distinction between the notions of cultural difference and culturally specific difference.

The difference between red and blue is understood to be a particular difference within the generality or universality of color. Red and blue are "species" within the genus of color, and thus this difference can be seen as constituting a "specific difference." Red and blue are "continuous" with each other within the generality of color, and thus can be seen as "continuous particular differences." We could, in a similar manner, define cultural difference as a matter of cultural particularities within the continuity of culture, in which case they could be "species" ("specific differences") within the same genus. In those cases where another person cannot be understood or gotten along with, however, there is an encounter with incommensurability that cannot be grasped as particular difference within a "continuous" generality. Insofar as something is incommensurable, it indicates a situation of discontinuity. It goes without saying that such discontinuity in social relations is what I call "cultural difference," which is something we above all encounter practically. Culturally specific difference is a problem for epistemology. But our relationship to cultural difference is a practical one.²²

As previously stated, members of a national community are involved in a countless number of cultures. Incommensurabilities of experience and behavior arise constantly between those who drive cars and those who do not. While these could be considered practical experiences of cultural difference, which have social effects such as disparities in job opportunities or mobility, they are nevertheless rarely recognized as the kind of differences that give rise to discrimination. Yet the different customs of an ethnic group, even when in a practical sense their social effects are negligible, are

represented as differences belonging to one group rather than another, and to this extent, as differences between one particularity (or species) and another. This has the result of producing the other ethnic group as an externality. In a similar manner, for example, the observer of another ethnos (such as the cultural anthropologist) often represents as closed that gathering of people that constitutes his or her object of observation. Despite living among these people, the anthropologist "externalizes" himself or herself, representing the experience of various incommensurabilities as discordance between "insiders" and "outsiders," as if spatially outside the closed-off entity. Incommensurability is, in other words, understood spatially as a culturally specific difference.

Assimilation is not a monolithic becoming of the same. People produce their own desires in accordance with a regime of prearranged expectations: women act "woman-like" and students "student-like" in accordance with the relevant circumstances. Assimilation is nevertheless represented as an entering from the outside, as if something becomes steeped in the atmosphere of a self-enclosed area and dissolves within it. "Cultural difference" is that which is perceived when people are unable to meet such expectations. A person encounters cultural difference when, in a dialogic situation, that person finds it impossible to understand the actions of others, or when a person encounters obstacles in the execution of a collective task. When these obstacles and impossibilities to mutual understanding are represented as the difference between one particularity and another, cultural difference has been displaced onto culturally specific difference. As I stated earlier, since it is precisely the *inability to understand* that constitutes cultural difference, it is impossible to determine it (to predicate, of course, is already one mode of determination). Determination is the displacement of cultural difference onto culturally specific difference. Through actions in the face of cultural difference, one displaces cultural difference with culturally specific difference. Because specific difference is inscribed within a certain discursive formation, however, cultural difference itself can only be apprehended with these existing formations as incomprehensible. Cultural difference, in other words, indicates the exteriority of a discursive formation. The terms "ethnos" and "race" have already been assumed to fall within the category of "particularity," among many other kinds of positivities incorporated within these discursive formations. As a purely practical issue, cultural difference alone could never produce the notion of ethnic difference.

The positivity of ethnos is maintained only within discourse—which means that ethnos as a category that sustains specific difference has nothing to do with cultural difference. Conversely, we can say that discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities has no immediate relation to cultural differences between the majority and themselves. Assimilation does not, therefore, put an end to discrimination. Jews who were in their lifestyles completely Germanized were arrested by the Nazis solely on the basis of their race. Likewise, Korean residents in Japan who have become

indistinguishable from Japanese in both language and customs still continue to suffer from discrimination. When their ethnic and racial identities are not known, they are safe. But they are turned into objects of discrimination as soon as their ethnic or racial origins are discovered. The knowledge that they belong to another "species" distinguishes "them." The most subtle differences are perceived after the fact as ethnic or racially specific difference in such a way that, when these are taken as indices of difference, these people become objects of discrimination. It is only when, through discourse, specific differences come to be seen that it becomes possible to mobilize the specific differences of ethnos and race for social discrimination. That is to say, people are not discriminated against on the basis of experienced difference. Rather, discrimination takes place when the positivities of ethnos and nation, which themselves can never be experienced, function as givens or preconceptions. In the absence of such preconceptions, all these varied differences would never be problematized. Indeed, immigrants and migrant workers are not, in the first place, discriminated against because of different customs or incomprehensible behavior. Discrimination against them arises from the stereotyped understanding of the difference between "them" and "us."

Robert Miles says the following about discrimination against migrant workers: "From the moment of their arrival, therefore, they have participated in commodity production and exchange and, through the taxation of their wages and the expenditure of their income, they have sustained the welfare (not to mention the 'law and order' and 'warfare') state. Moreover, migrant workers have reproduced their labor power and themselves: they required accommodation and food, they engaged in leisure practices, and they organized social relations within which to reproduce themselves. While many of these practices were accomplished in a culturally distinct manner, they were nevertheless an immediately present part of the social fabric of the social formation. The notion of integration therefore *exteriorises* in thought, and in politics, those populations that are already, indeed have always been, a constituent element of the social formation."²³

Discrimination comes to be recognized as a problem insofar as cultural difference is represented. Discrimination is, in fact, rarely grounded on the incommensurabilities between people; rather, it is produced when the political process of articulating culturally specific difference attaches a fantasy to a certain subject position. And yet, identities based on culturally specific differences that are attributed to migrant workers and immigrants always contain within them the mechanism that produces the identity of one's own group. Discrimination against a different ethnos or race occurs when "we" and "they" are grasped as specific difference through a schema of configuration. Moreover, no matter how thoroughly appropriated within existing regimes of specific difference a person may be, not every social relation can be contained within existing classification systems. An excess will always remain. It is impossible to fully eliminate discontinuity, and it is be-

cause of this discontinuity that people do not fully lose their singularity. People are, in other words, "irreplaceable," because they always contain something that deviates from that possibility of equivalence upon which the continuity of specific difference is premised. This excess renders problematic the very justification of culturally specific difference. Social relations from which discontinuities are absent cannot be said to be realistic, but are rather fantasized. It is precisely this excess that disrupts the conviction (or dream of communion) that holds that social formations have a transhistorical basis, and that harmonious and self-realizing communities will someday become possible. This excess exposes the ungroundedness of social formations, always indicating the possibility of social change. Because of this excess, the possibility can never be entirely erased that someone, no matter how assimilated, may become feared and become the object of a violent exclusion. As Franz Fanon says of mimicry, the gesture of mimicry that is performed by the minority for the purpose of assimilation may always potentially be regarded as a threat by those who see themselves as the social mainstream. Assimilation of the minority reveals the ungroundedness of the position of those who seek confirmation of their own superiority through dependence upon the hierarchical structure of discrimination. The cause of discrimination, in many cases, does not lie with immigrants and ethnic minorities; rather discrimination becomes necessary in order to represent the discriminator's own ethnic or national identity. The nation constructs itself as culturally homogeneous by "externalizing" alien cultures. Hence the notion of assimilation always contains the danger of a constant "externalizing" of immigrants and migrant workers. Homogeneity within the nation can, moreover, only be posited as a negative reflection through accounts of other nations, races and ethnic groups. This "other" that constitutes the term of contrast is ceaselessly transformed and shifted. To speak of the unity of the nation as imaginary is to recognize that it is a reflection that takes place via the "other."

As we have seen, the sense of "being Japanese" cannot escape this basic principle of reflection, either. When this awareness is naturalized and taken to be derivative of a long and continuous history, it also naturalizes the contrast with another "species" and hence becomes dependent upon the category of the designated, contrasting ethnos or race. Whether supporting a belief in the "unbroken imperial line" or in cultural homogeneity, those arguments that attempt to ground themselves upon the national community are sustained by the conviction that the boundaries of this community are determinable on the basis of an index that is natural and impervious to human change. It is precisely because of this that nationalism seeks to ground itself in that category of "ethnos" considered more natural than nation itself, and an ethnos, in turn, attempts to seek its foundations in that category of "race" that is understood to be fully natural in origin. As such, neither nationalism nor ethnicism can escape that logic of "race" that is the most typical category of collective specific identity within modernity.²⁴

We have already invalidated the notion that "ethnos" and "race" are more natural and historically constant than the nation. Since "ethnos" and the positivities of "mother tongue" and "national mother tongue" that sustain it have been historically generated, they cannot be conceived as naturally given in comparison with the nation.

And yet, it must not be thought that racism occurs only within those societies in which the myth of monoethnic society (in which race = ethnos = nation) is openly displayed. Racism should not be understood only within the narrow framework of that argument that posits an overlap between race and the sphere of national community. The equality between nation and ethnos was widely accepted in such places as postwar Japan, in which the myth of the single ethnic society was dominant. Naturalization of the nation through naturalization of the ethnos, i.e., national racialization, progressed largely without criticism. As has already been shown through analysis of *Nihonjinron*, the discourse on national culture and its various premises can be utilized exactly as is by the logic of national racialization. This, however, does not mean that we can act as if racism and ethnicism were less important within so-called multi-ethnic societies, in which the words "ethnos" and "race" have become taboo, or where there is an overemphasis on the contradiction between concepts of "ethnos" and "nation." Taken in by the *Nihonjinron* myth of the single ethnic society, for example, some American critics attempt to denounce Japan for being a single ethnic nation. But such criticism becomes merely nationalistic self-praise on the part of multi-ethnic America. Similarly, criticism of monoethnic discourse or of the discourse of ethnic minorities on their ethnic cultures functions at times to conceal the intimate link between multi-ethnic nationalism and racism in the United States. As is well known, racism is most visible within so-called multi-ethnic societies. This is not because people become more racist because of multi-ethnic societies, nor because monoracial societies are more harmonious. Generally speaking, people within those nation-states that flaunt their status as monoethnic societies are not aware of their own racism. Such people believe themselves to be in a position to denounce somebody else's racism because they rarely self-consciously confront their own racism.

In such so-called multi-ethnic societies as Australia after 1970 and the prewar Japanese Empire, anti-racist arguments were often vigorously set forth because people generally had to deal with racial problems constantly. It cannot, however, be concluded that societies in which the antiracist claim is strong are necessarily ones in which racism is not often practiced. In such societies, where anti-racist arguments were vigorously set forth, it was also true that a colonial social ranking was frequently based on a hierarchy of races, relations between the colonial ruler and ruled were maintained as racial relations, and racism was considered indestructible insofar as the structure of such social stratification was taken as unchanging.

As we can see, in "white Americanism" and "white Australianism," the ranking, on the basis of degrees of assimilation, between more and less legitimate citizens within multi-ethnic nation-states often takes the form of a hierarchy of races. Because a greater degree of assimilation to the image of the western European bourgeoisie is often taken to be the equivalent of becoming a more "legitimate" citizen, advancement in rank through assimilation must be preserved in order to maintain the command to assimilate. (There is, at the same time, a strong tendency among American citizens to distinguish themselves from Europe. The worship of and the hatred of Europe inherent within American nationalism are in a relationship of ambivalence.) Here, as well, assimilation "externalizes" minorities, and it is through this "externalizing" that the conviction of the unity of national community is maintained.²⁵

Many of the anti-multiculturalist arguments that have recently flourished in the U.S. hold that American national culture is of European (i.e., white) descent. They therefore insist that minorities should assimilate themselves to this legitimate culture, arguing that multiculturalism diminishes the desire to assimilate, and hence dissolves national culture and fragments the national community. As we have just seen, these anti-multiculturalist arguments are in fact of the same type as essentialist multiculturalism, in that they also regard culture as an organic unity. They are no different from the discourse of national culture (nor from that of ethnic culture). Anti-multiculturalist discourse is complicitous with an essentialist discourse of culture. Anti-multiculturalists, obsessed with the supremacy of the West, constantly remind those who are unable to assimilate of their own "non-Western" origins, and stir up their nostalgia for their own ethnic culture. Anti-multiculturalism constantly produces an essentialistic culturalism, while an essentialistic culturalism will continue to evoke a reaction of anti-multiculturalism. If, moreover, the collective culture of minorities ever became dominant, people of European descent would then have to assimilate to minority culture. In other words, inasmuch as cultural difference is reduced in advance to specific difference from the point of view of assimilation, exchange between different groups can only be conceived in terms of pure power relations according to which one side becomes subordinate to another and accepts its culture. In sum, assimilation and essentialist culturalism may be understood as invariably producing both insecurities between majority and minority populations and a mutual intensification of adherence to their respective ethnic identities. The majority quickly becomes the minority when its political and economic superiority collapses, in which case adherence to its own cultural origins becomes natural. A "return to the West" carries with it many fantasized insecurities evoked by such a logic of culturally specific difference. And yet, this does not mean that ethnic struggles and discrimination would immediately disappear in the absence of culturalism. Social relations are invariably antagonistic, just as it is also true that culturalism is a reactive response against such antagonisms.

An essentialist multiculturalism and the anti-multiculturalism that protests it are two poles of the debate surrounding "nationality." Both sides begin their arguments by regarding as an entity the "we" of ethnic minority groups as well as, for example, the "we Americans" sentimentally produced by a "sentiment of nationality." In other words, both arguments are, in this sense, homologous to *Nihonjinron*. When its roots in the discourse of "nationality" are overlooked and its own premises and historical conditions concealed, essentialist multiculturalism lends support to anti-multiculturalism, which attempts to assert the supremacy of the "West."

It is for this reason that the "deconstruction of nationality" is necessary. As a method of confronting racism, the "deconstruction of nationality" must by all means be undertaken, whether in Japan, the United States, or elsewhere. This deconstruction would force us, moreover, to problematize the very idea of a distinction between monoethnic and multiethnic societies.

I am not, of course, suggesting that we must deny the identities of ethnos and nation simply because they are dependent upon the regimes of imagination. As imaginary constructs, race, ethnos and nation are unquestionably social realities. That the deconstruction of "nationality" is not equivalent to its dissolution strictly confirms the nature of such regimes. Yet we might say that, regardless of the fact that nationality exists as a social reality, by rigorously coming to terms with its modes of existence we are already engaging in social relations that are not governed by a sentiment of nationality. In doing so, we are, moreover, living emotional lives that depart from the society of sympathy. This shows that "nationality" is always in fact being betrayed. Although a "sentiment of nationality" incites us to distinguish ourselves from "foreigners" and perceive them as "strangers," for example, there are countless cases in which relations with an individual identified as "foreigner" can be closer and more dependable than those with "compatriots." And there are countless cases of social relations that are not governed by the categories of "race," "ethnos," and "nation." "Nationality" is continually deconstructing itself. This is why what we must really be concerned about is that histories exist of people who could not find a way to live without the categories of "race," "ethnos," and "nation." Rather than denying or forgetting such "histories," our task is to discover them at the very heart of these social formations governed by the regime of "nationality," and hence to find a path by which we may answer to such histories without appeal to "nationality."

An attack on nationalism that simply discredits ideas of ethnicity and race can easily become complicitous with the logic of imperial nationalism, which produces a more inclusive sense of the solidarity of the nation. In order to maintain an awareness of the distinction between ethnic nationalism, with its essentialized ideas of race and nation, and the equally dangerous logic of imperial nationalism, it is absolutely necessary that we turn our attention to the "deconstruction of nationality."

Translated by Richard Calichman and Brett de Bary

Notes

1. In his critique of the discourse on Japanese homogeneity and closure, which may be understood as the corollary of the myth of the monoethnic society, Iyotani Toshio has stated the following: "Many writers have even positively appraised the 'homogeneity' and 'harmony' of Japanese society as the foundation of its international competitiveness. They regard the loosening of restrictions on the influx of foreigners with caution, asserting the social foundation does not exist by which to accept their heterogeneous existence."

Those arguments that seize upon the particularity of Japanese society as compared with the various countries of Europe and the United States are above all grounded in this kind of exclusionism and homogeneity. The extreme intensity by which Japanese society refuses to tolerate heterogeneous existences is a fact that does not, of course, need restating. There are various obstacles within the daily lives of foreigners understood in the sense of "others," not only (as is predictable) among Asians, but as well among European and American whites.

And yet, given differences in mode of expression, socio-cultural discrimination and exclusion against foreigners may be seen in all countries. The modern nation has been constituted as an entity within which only a specific group has been demarcated as citizens. The creation of "minority" groups within this territory has been accompanied by the exclusion of foreigners vis-à-vis its outside. But contempt for Asians and adulation of Europeans and Americans is not restricted to Japan alone. In Europe and the U.S., as well as in those countries engulfed by these latter within the world economy, the dichotomous conception of "civilized" and "barbarian" has been the common worldview of capitalism. Emphasis on the notion of "escape from Asia" (*datsua shisō*) that emerged in Japan in the Meiji period placed excessive emphasis on the particularity of Japanese society and caused us to lose sight of the structure of discrimination against the foreign *within* Japan. While there exists within Japan discrimination against foreigners and ostracism, as well as heterogeneity, these features are rather common in modern nation states." "*Sakerarenai kadai: sengo nihon ni okeru gaikokujin rōdōsha*," in Kajita Takemichi and Iyotani Toshio, *Gaikokujin rōdōsharon* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1992), 126.

2. The myth of the single ethnic society is not to be found only within postwar Japan. We should not overlook the fact that many "Japan experts" within the United States also hold a view of Japan that is governed by this myth. The existence of this myth, moreover, should not be seen as a problem of Japan alone. It need hardly be said that the image of the U.S. played a major role in reproducing Japanese national identity following World War II. The role that the image of Japan played in reproducing American national identity, however, has been underestimated. The myth of the single ethnos would appear to be an irreplaceable aspect of the regime of mutual reproduction of the two nations. The various obstacles created in the reproduction of American and Japanese

national identities have been frequently displaced onto the image of the other nation. This myth about Japanese society has become the framework through which various insecurities arising in the mutual relations between Japan and the U.S. are displaced. Examples of texts published within the U.S. that have attempted to displace these insecurities through the wholesale acceptance of the myth of monoethnic are David Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and *Japan 2000*, Andrew Dougherty, ed., (Rochester: Rochester Institute of Technology, 1991).

3. Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1931), 37. [English translation by David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst, *Fukuzawa Yukichi's 'An Outline of a Theory of Civilization'* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973), 23. Translation has been slightly modified.]

4. Concerning such central notions of nineteenth-century liberal representative government as "national sentiment," "national character," and "the society of sympathy," cf. John Stuart Mill, "Considerations of Representative Government," in *John Stuart Mill*, H. B. Acton, ed. (London: Everyman's Library, 1972), 187–428.

5. Oguma Eiji, *Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen* (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995).

6. Fukuzawa Yukichi, op. cit., 237. [English translation, p. 177.]

7. Michel Foucault, "«*Omnes et singularis*»: vers une critique de la raison politique," in *Dits et Écrits 1954–1988, vol. IV* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994), 134–161.

8. To avoid misunderstanding, let me offer here a brief explanation of the terms "particularity" and "generality" ("universality"). As set forth in classical logic, particularity is the generality (universality) of the rank of species that is opposed to the generality (universality) of the rank of genus. Inasmuch as neither particularity nor generality constitute singularity, both belong equally to the realm of generality/universality.

9. *Nihonjinron* refers to the pervasive discourse, in postwar Japanese scholarship as well as the mass media, that sought to define unique characteristics of Japanese culture.

10. See Iyotani Toshio's essay in this volume.

11. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

12. Kawamura Minato, *Umi o watatta nihongo* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1994).

13. Tomiyama Ichirō writes the following concerning the self-consciousness of "Okinawans": "From the moment they tried, through diligence, to become outstanding workers, workers from Okinawa became objects of surveillance under the mark of being "Okinawan." This is because the actions of their everyday lives, which made up their being as "Okinawans," became objects of a surveillance that sought to ascertain if they could continue to perform as excellent workers. "Okinawan" no longer referred simply to their efficiency, but referred to their very physical existence. This kind of surveillance of the body, and the threat it implied, constituted a function of power that

disciplined those from Okinawa. As a result, these Okinawans came to aspire to a change in markings, i.e., to be seen as 'Japanese.' . . . To the extent that human beings are fated to be marked in one way or another, however, aspiring to change one's mark causes an increase in fantasy. Those who attempt to change their fated mark become lost in the process of pursuing the invisible fantasy of their goals. Becoming 'Japanese,' then, meant nothing more than having one's body and everyday actions drawn into a mystified world produced by one's fantasy of being Japanese on the one hand, and one's fated identity as Okinawan, on the other." *Kindai Nihon shakai to "okinawajin"- "nihonjin" ni naru to iu koto* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1990), 242–243.

14. See Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.)

15. We may recall on this point the classic words of Antonio Gramsci: "To understand exactly what might be meant by the problem of the reality of the external world it might be worth taking up the example of the notions of 'East' and 'West,' which do not cease to be 'objectively real' even though analysis shows them to be no more than a conventional, that is, 'historico-cultural,' construction. (The terms 'artificial' and 'conventional' often indicate 'historical' facts that are products of the development of civilisation and not just rationally arbitrary or individually contrived constructions.) . . . What would North-South or East-West mean without man? They are real relationships and yet they would not exist without man and without the development of civilisation. Obviously East and West are arbitrary and conventional, that is historical, constructions, since outside of real history every point on the earth is East and West at the same time. This can be seen more clearly from the fact that these terms have crystallised not from the point of view of a hypothetical melancholic man in general but from the point of view of the European cultured classes who, as a result of their world-wide hegemony, have caused them to be accepted everywhere. Japan is the Far East not only for Europe but also perhaps for the American from California and even for the Japanese himself, who, through English political culture, may then call Egypt the Near East." *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, trans. (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 447.

16. The problem of the coherency of male subjectivity and the support of such by women in film is addressed vis-à-vis film in Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

17. Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Robert Miles, *Racism after 'Race Relations'* (London: Routledge, 1993); Etienne Balibar, with Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class* (London: Verso, 1991).

18. While the unity of a national language can be grasped as a regime, this in no way implies that the unity of language constitutes a closed system that conforms to a finite number of individual rules. The unity of language is given as an "idea" in the Kantian sense.

19. While Derrida tends to directly link phonocentrism with Western metaphysics, in this argument, phonocentrism is strictly conceived as a historically identifiable formation. This is in no way to conceive of an empirically existing outside to Western metaphysics, but any historically specific phonocentrism will contain its own exteriority.

20. Concerning the notions of "arborescent formation" and "rhizome," cf. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980).

21. It is well known that 30 years ago Michel Foucault incorporated in his terminology the widely used everyday word *discours*, or discourse, hence introducing a new concept to historical analysis. Foucault's *discours* prepared a new viewpoint from which it was possible to review and historicize various positivities within our institutionalized knowledge.

As such, one of the categories that requires historicization is that of language. *Discours* does not objectify language within the purview of linguistics or literary study. Rather, it enables us to grasp it as a positivity that emerged at the same time as a complex of institutional conditions concerning the production of repetition, circulation, change, succession, and knowledge. It is related to the attempt to historicize not only individual languages but language in general. In the final analysis, language can be historicized because it is *within discours*; not within language. The description of discursive formations, therefore, opens the possibility for history to be written without placing language within descriptive categories. This possibility is, however, immediately lost when *discours* is conflated with such things as conversation, argument, historical documents, as well as, for example, the complete works of individual authors, schools of learning, contemporary intellectual climate, national culture, and intellectual traditions. It is, of course, possible to employ *discours* without adhering to Foucault. And yet, what I find to be especially valuable in his use of *discours* is that discursive analysis does not consider historical data as documents (in the sense that they accurately convey acts of meaning, intention, and historical reality alone, i.e., historical materials regarded merely as linguistic texts) but rather allows them to be seen as archaeological monuments. When historical data are viewed as documents, such aspects as the sight, feel, and corporeal linkage of those texts that came into being prior to national language can no longer be examined. When one thinks, for example, of the genre of song (*uta*), not in the narrow sense of *waka* poetry, but of songs in general, it will immediately be understood why the texts that belong to this genre must be read as monuments as opposed to documents. This is because a reading of the text of a song that concerns itself solely with its acts of meaning would not constitute a reading of its texts. A song is usually neither an expression of the singer's intentions nor a portrayal of reality as seen by the song's author. The text of a song can be an event in terms of such nonlinguistic aspects as musicality, its power to evoke collective emotion, the correlation between bodily movement and rhythm, as well as its ritual-ity. A text can be described within *discours* when read so as to include the relation to its various pragmatic aspects. Conversely, language as positivity that

emerges within *discours* can then be analyzed. When, moreover, there is no dimension by which to relativize language, people are forced to read past documents through projecting national or ethnic languages into the past. Concerning these notions of "documents," "monuments," "enunciative," and "discursive formation," see Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, A. M. Sheridan, trans. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

Still, the use of *discours* as that dimension by which to relativize language is not necessarily consistent in Foucault. Foucault insisted that historical accounts be without any hypothesis of totality whatsoever, and yet it is from this point that the concept of *discours* must be critically examined. It must also be rigorously investigated whether discursive analysis is able to sufficiently target sensible things. Cf. Beverly Brown and Mark Cousins, "The Linguistic Fault: the Case of Foucault's Archaeology," in *Towards a Critique of Foucault*, Mike Gane, ed. (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 33–60.

22. See Tanabe Hajime, "Shakai sonzai no ronri," *Tanabe Hajime zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963), 51–168; and Nishida Kitarō, "Sekai no jikodōitsu to renzoku," *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965), 7–107. Tanabe's book was originally published in 1934 and Nishida's in 1935.

23. Robert Miles, op. cit., 175.

24. Let me offer some broad observations about the difference between the basic principles of the modern national community and those of the premodern community. In the modern national community, specific identity is taken to be equal to direct and unmediated relationship with the totality. Premodern social formations, by contrast, are based upon relational identity. Within relational identity, group belonging occurs via such status relations as father/son and master/retainer. Status relations are not necessarily fixed. In other words, individual identity is determined by a social network and kinship. Within specific identity, however, relations of belonging that do not occur via status relations are dominant, such as individual/race, individual/ethnos, and individual/nation. Here, for the first time a notion of social relations of institutionalized equality becomes possible. "Equality" refers to those relations that are sustained by an immediate link to the totality. Here, the immanence of the totality within the individual becomes possible. As such, the individual becomes autonomous. The independence of the nation becomes the independence of the individual.

Still, determinations such as "modern" and "premodern" are period divisions that are proposed strictly to understand the historical materials of the past. It is impossible to predict the future. Although we could predict that the twenty-first century will follow the twentieth century, we cannot as easily posit the "aftermath" of modernity.

25. Robert Miles, 79 and 148.

I. Nationalism and Colonialism