

FOREWORD

Part 1

My first observation regards Russian-born French philosopher Alexandre Kojève's post-historical tourist fantasy. It is also a part of my own tourist fantasy of Japan, that I find encapsulated in the fable and myth of Kojève (1902-1968). Part of the fantasy goes like this: Kojève influenced a whole generation of French intellectuals in the 1930s, when he delivered his anthropological reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In this reading of Hegel, the end of history thesis rises to prominence. It is a thesis which gains greater traction after the collapse of the Soviet empire and from which Francis Fukuyama writes his paean to capitalism and democracy, the universal love story at the end of history. I was seduced by Kojève's interest in Japan and decided to come to these isles. According to the story, Kojève comes to Japan in 1959, and is influenced by the culture. Something profound happens and he modifies his end of history thesis to include the period of seclusion in Japan during the Edo period, during which Japan practices a form of snobbery, a peculiar and empty form of snobbery, a practice somehow contrary to the animalization thesis. This is to somehow offer a rival narrative to Hegel's vision and Fukuyama's universalist American dream. It is also a theory picked up by Azuma Hiroki in his database animal thesis.

Part Two of this tourist fantasy is where we find Kojève stumbling around the planet in the 1960s and 1970s taking photographs and collecting postcards in many countries. Boris Groys tells us that Kojève was systematic in his photographic records, detailing his visits to many countries, including China, India and Japan. I am troubled by this because why is it that at the end of history, when consciousness becomes one with its object, where there is no self-consciousness as such, when there can be no aesthetics as such, when we become animals like the bees and ants *without art*, why does Kojève take

hundreds of photographs in places and sites across the Japanese archipelago?

Thinking about what would Kojève make of the present moment, I wonder how would Kojève would understand animation and manga, and whether he would be one of the database animals of the kind Azuma Hiroki speaks about? Would he become an administrator of the animated world? Would he understand the archive and the minor narratives which pervade otaku culture? Would he become Derridian in this respect and seek a deconstruction of manga and animation images? Would he collate anime and manga images into a narrative which would somehow undermine the end of grand narratives of what Lyotard speaks of?

I am not sure I can answer these questions but I am intrigued by Kojève's interest in photography and postcards and the images of Japan, and his interest in the mythology of Japan and his systematic archiving of those images because in those images there is no criticism of the country, no attempt to address the social problems which abound in contemporary Japan. There is just a free floating 'I', without perspective. Why am I telling you this narrative?

It seems to me that Kojève suffers a second tourist fantasy about Japan. He's an outsider who looks in on Japan and tries to make sense of it – tries to orient the Orient. Others have attempted this as well. Michel Foucault famously complains about Japanese culture when he visits in 1970s as he struggles to understand Nô drama, for example, and becomes frustrated with being enveloped in a language which he doesn't understand. He then has a change of heart several years later and finds in Japan and Iran too a manifestation of an altogether other Orient which might rival Western social and cultural hegemony. Félix Guattari too visits Japan, finding in Japan a curious mix of the ancient and the modern. He too suffers from this tourist fantasy but at least he offers a critique of the mental pollution that Japanese young people suffer from: what he calls the intoxication with manga reading. Regarding these moments of tourist fantasy, I seek a corrective. I try and find another way to look at Japan which somehow can penetrate arguably one of the most difficult languages in the world, to understand the manga and animation explosion, the power of the Japanese entertainment industry, the

power of Japan's soft power. I want to understand these cultural facts. To whom should I turn?

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Part 2

I asked my students about the Second World War, the post-war US-Japan alliance and the Cold War which ensued. They know the name of these narratives but admit to not knowing them in detail. I asked them why. They tell me that they learned much about their own country in school but they didn't learn much about the realities of the Second World War and what came afterwards. Just a matter of class management in high school they explain. I change the subject quickly feeling the uncomfortable, resentful silence (who does this white guy think he is talking about these hard power subjects? What authorial presence does he have?). We talk about something soft, light and cuddly – animation and manga – and of course they know much more about this than the harsh realities of fascism in Europe and their own country. They explain to me how animation is connected with the ancient traditions of Japan and teach me about the Shintô religion and forms of folk animism. Our conversation is animated and stimulating.

Another day passes and I review this anecdote. I appear to sound like a grumpy old man who says the youth of today have forgotten the past and the Japanese media, marketing and entertainment industries are much to blame for this. Such industries have captured the attention of youth and have pulled them away from a mature relationship with history and their time. They have captured the youth of today and manufactured a phantasmagoria of fleeting images which leaves only a thin memorial trace upon the present. To some extent I feel vindicated by my grumpiness and think I am right to hold on to my views, but I also understand one has to offer a remedy for this lack of historical situatedness. I ask myself where this would come from.

I think it can come from the images of Japanese animation and manga. There is much to learn from them. But accompanying this must be a critical perspective. For example, I follow the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler who finds in the animation of Miyazaki Hayao a pharmacological

understanding of technology and the technê of memory and imagination. I want to understand more about what he means by this because he says it from a perspective of not understanding Japanese culture, history, politics to any substantial, professional degree. Again, what and where is the remedy? I think I found one.

Maria Grajdian's *Post-Cold-War Japanese Animation: Five Directors and Their Visions*, a book which looks especially at the respective oeuvres of Kon Satoshi, Hosoda Mamoru, Miyazaki Gorô, Yonebayashi Hiromasa, and Shinkai Makoto, is one such antidote. It is something altogether different from the tourist fantasy of the exoticized Other.

Such a book as this one does much to teach a new form of scholarship and to connect young people with traditions ancient and modern. She does this in a multilateral way, connecting contemporary forms of expression with the deep and rich and profound culture of Japan.

This is not only a precious resource for Japanese media and entertainment studies but also a comprehensive analytical prospectus applying concepts generated inside and outside the Japanese archipelago to contemporary social and cultural phenomenon.

It should be of interest to teachers and students not only in Japanese studies and media studies but also philosophy, anthropology, gender studies, youth and visual studies, Asia-Pacific studies to name but a few disciplines.

What distinguishes this book from its rivals, from the great deal of secondary literature on anime and manga both inside and outside Japan? For one much of the secondary literature on Japanese animation is second-hand, drawing less on primary sources and relying often on translations of other translations. This book does not do that. While there is recognition on the canon of Japanese studies (Keene, Harootunian, Lamarre, Ôtsuka Eiji, Azuma Hiroki, Graham Parkes, Edward Said and others), Maria Grajdian builds upon and beyond this to find an interstitial place of perspective. She thinks across multiple languages, cultures, genders and ages to manifest a profound and singular perspective.

Her position is the envy of many as there are few writers who can move across several languages at once (Japanese, German, French and English) and write philosophically and analytically about everyday cultural