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## Childhood: Naturalization of Development into a Japanese Space

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In this sense, to experience necessarily means to re-accede to infancy as history's transcendental place of origin. The enigma which infancy ushered in for man can be dissolved only in history, just as experience, being infancy and human place of origin, is something he is always in the act of falling from, into language and into speech.

—Giorgio Agamben

A common symbol and metaphor in modern society is childhood (Ariès 1962; Kessen 1979). It has penetrated to the level of everyday life, a part of our common sense and residing in our memories. Yet it is an ambiguous category, "a concept [that] binds a variety of historical experience and a collection of theoretical and practical references into a relation that is, as such, only given and actually ascertainable through the concept" (Koselleck 1985:84). Despite (or because of) this tautology, it possesses clarity, the certainty of an early or originary stage—a separable site—within a developmental process. It is a site where the ambiguities and contradictions of modernity are ameliorated into a coherent whole personified through the child. That is, the human body serves as an object that makes the abstractions of modernity seem natural.

Childhood as we think of it today is inextricably linked to the modern, liberal-capitalist society, the "West" (Edelstein 1983). Even though the transformation of childhood occurred over centuries since the sixteenth century, it was not until the nineteenth century that children became "children," a separated category of purity, innocence, protection, nurturance, and formal education. This does not mean that the child is Western, but that the way we understand the process of development is tied to the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment (see, for example, Polanyi 1944). Franco Moretti writes:

But when status society starts to collapse, the countryside is abandoned for the city, and the world of work changes at an incredible and incessant pace, the colourless and uneventful socialization of "old" youth becomes increasingly implausible: it becomes a *problem*, one that makes youth itself problematic. . . . [Youth] is a necessary exploration: in dismantling the continuity between generations, as is well known, the new and destabilizing forces of capitalism impose a hitherto unknown *mobility*. But it is also a yearned-for exploration, since the selfsame process gives rise to unexpected hopes, thereby generating an *interiority* not only fuller than before, but also—as Hegel clearly saw, even though he deplored it—perennially dissatisfied and restless. (1987:4, original emphasis)

Childhood has become a symbol for several aspects of modernity: of a new progressive society, one looking forward to a seemingly better future; of temporariness, that idealized past or originary state that must be guided and transformed; and of immanence, the constant regeneration of that pure originary state. In these modern meanings, the child becomes what Viviana Zelizer has called sacralized into a priceless asset (1985), but it is an asset of a culture of modernity circumscribed by the nation-state.

The transformation of childhood also parallels the emergence of the nation-state. This connection between childhood and the nation was recently brought to the surface in Japan's public dismay when Oe Kenzaburo declined to receive the Imperial Order of Culture, that nation-state's highest cultural honor; he was hastily added to the list of recipients after the announcement that he would receive the 1994 Nobel Prize in literature.<sup>1</sup> Kazuo Aichi, one of the more reform-minded members of the Diet, stated: "My own feeling was that he hadn't changed at all over the years. I would have expected that he would have matured, so to speak, and accepted the award" (Sterngold 1994). The word *nature* is juxtaposed to the child; it suggests that those who do not conform to social norms of the nation-state are still childish. The child, in this case, is the origin of a progressive developmental scheme that embodies the interiority and hopes of the nation. But when the child does not develop that full interiority, childhood becomes an exteriority that threatens (while simultaneously reinforcing) that same interiority.

Such criticism of Oe illustrates the extent to which childhood has become a common metaphor that orients behaviors and expectations without calling attention to itself. Drawing on Vico's discussion of the conceit of scholars, John Shotter points to the entrapments that are possible within "closed, harmonious systems of thought" (1993:62, original emphasis). A limitation in our

understanding of nation-states and nationalism is the focus on modern institutions and ideologies, the very categories of modern society and nation-states. Historiography on Japan has been dominated by Enlightenment, Whiggish, Marxist, or Modernization theory approaches that explicate institutions of the state, both structural—constitutional systems, governments and policies, corporations, and social institutions—and concepts and ideologies that facilitate them—individualism, rationality, and science. One problem of this focus on the objects of modern society is the categorical dichotomy that it encourages—good/bad, mature/immature, modern/traditional, Western/indigenous, and adult/child. Discussion of the Japanese nation-state remains within those "closed, harmonious systems of thought," the categories that were created to maintain the socio-political unit (for a recent example of an attempt to critique modern Japanese historiography, without problematizing the discourse of modernity, see Garon 1994).

A part of the difficulty in extricating oneself from such closed systems of thought is the convergence of nature and thought in the construction of the nation-state.<sup>2</sup> The notion of the child is a good example of this convergence. Even though it is now treated as a self-evident, natural form, childhood is a historical idea that has played a central role in the reorientation of locales into the nation and was central in intellectuals' efforts to make sense of and bring order to their societies in the nineteenth century. In Japan as well as in other societies it emerged as part of a process that involves a transition "from concrete to abstract relationships, from modalities of life dominated by particulars of experience to modalities of life dominated by abstract and universal regulations, by computational experiences, or . . . by bureaucratic rationality" (Edelstein 1983:56). Modern societies are organized around categorical hierarchies of learning, growth, development, and civility (self-control), a corollary of which is the notion of maturation (See Karatani 1993:123–25). Like progress, childhood incorporates notions of change, measured and described through stages, and presupposes some origin or purity. As an originary point of a developmental sense of time, childhood is a conceptual category that reinforces this linear time—progress and maturation. It becomes a temporal abstraction in this transformation from a cyclical to progressive time, which all modern societies have experienced (Elias 1990; Koselleck 1985). Childhood provides experience by establishing the primacy of a national culture as the experience of all individuals. In other words, childhood is one of those sites where the interiority of the nation-state is naturalized. Here, childhood becomes a political tool; it is part of the effort of a nation-state to monopolize those mnemonic devices that reinforce its vision of what society should be—in

the case of Japan, the marginalization of dissatisfaction and restlessness in favor of obedience and loyalty. The child comes to personify sensate boundaries of national similarity and difference, thereby blurring the difference between knowledge and the sensate in the logic of the nation.

A result of this transition is the separation of experience from knowledge, or perhaps more accurately the compartmentalization of experience. Experience is determined not by what is around the individual, but how that environment connects with abstract criteria—knowledge, be it objectified by science or a national common sense. This raises the question of whether (or in what way) experience is possible outside the norms established to maintain a national unity. One might argue that the criticism leveled against Oe is peculiar to a society like Japan, one that places a premium on an ideology of conformity. But Giorgio Agamben, in the epigraph above, suggests otherwise, that the *problem* of childhood is embedded in modern society itself. Infancy<sup>3</sup> is a mediating site that informs different roles according to social needs. But in today's societies those needs, "language and speech," are circumscribed within national sites—geographic and ideational.

This blurring of the distinction between ontogeny and phylogeny turns a certain kind of social time into a natural progress in which individuals and nations are used interchangeably. As a metaphor for development it is something temporal and temporary, being transformed "into language and into speech." When applied to national society it reorients social organization toward translocal (such as national and class) categories that re-produce an ideal national society. These criteria are institutionalized and projected in educational places that make criteria that fragment seem natural. Success is measured by the extent to which one distances oneself from childhood and moves toward socially objectified ideals—notions of civility, ethics, and morals. Distinctions occur by measuring the extent to which one improves from that pure state. Moreover, while childhood is useful in constituting the nation-state, it is also a metaphor used among nation-states. Here, it is especially problematic for nonmodern places that must confront their position as a child. Descriptions of nonmodern places and people as *childlike*—always connoting a lack or inferiority—are common within scholarly discourse. In this sense, the child naturalizes an asymmetry—in human development, in society, in the nation-state, and globally. The word *maturation* suggests norms that are separate from the child; what is natural is in those norms, not in its actions.

By focusing on the historicity of the child—the processes, the reorientation of a sociocultural matrix that is at the core of this transformation and a part of the constant negotiations of modernity—I hope to limit (or avoid) my en-

trapment within those "closed, harmonious systems of thought" that often inadvertently return us to the very concepts we try to write against. Although they seem "natural" today, we need to bring out those moments when thought and nature, nation and universalistic categories, merged. Only after we do so can we make an attempt (no matter how preliminary and inadequate) to understand some of the conditions under which we "experience" and believe within the nation-state.

### Premodern Children

It would be ludicrous to assert that the "invention" of childhood suggests that the human child did not exist prior to that conceptualization (as some critics of notions of invention, such as deMause [1974], have claimed).<sup>4</sup> Physiologically, children have obviously existed as long as humans have; but the roles and treatment of children differ throughout the past, as well as in different cultures. Those familiar with recent work on the concept of childhood would find numerous similarities with the transformation of childhood in Japan (Ariès 1962; Kessen 1979; Steedman 1992, 1995; Zelizer 1985). In fact, childhood in early Meiji Japan bore more similarity to Wolfgang Edelstein's description of the child in premodern rural Europe than to childhood in modern Japan: "the bond of meaning and mutual responsibility [is] in a world of work that does not know childhood as an age of play but, rather, an age of transient functional imperfection" (1983:59). Isabella Bird's description in 1878 of Japanese children as "little men and women rather than children" (1984 [1880]:80) indicates a similar world of transient functional imperfection. For Bird, as well as other foreign travelers,<sup>5</sup> difference was described as an unfamiliar culture, but it also shows quite different conceptions of time. Bird writes: "At three [years old] they put on the *kimono* and girdle, which are as inconvenient to them as to their parents, and childish play in this garb is grotesque. I have, however, never seen what we call child's play—that general abandonment to miscellaneous impulses, which consists in struggling, slapping, rolling, jumping, kicking, shouting, laughing, and quarrelling!" (199). Bird's comment is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss' complaint that Nambikwara children, who constantly imitate adult behavior, are not familiar with games (1971:272–85, esp. 275). This does not mean that children did not play, but that the visual codes that give hints to these cultures' notions of the child and child's play were not attached to a clearly marked temporal stage, as those ethnographers expected.

Children in premodern or early modern Japanese society did not exist as future citizens but as members of their locale. Childhood was not a unifying

category that represented children as some empty vessel, a metaphor for some romantic period, or an early stage of linear growth. Moreover, abstractions, such as nation, emperor, and race, were not yet defining concepts. Instead, a "space of experience" (Koselleck 1985), rather than time, established the parameters for social organization of the world of children (Kuroda 1994:10–11; Yanagita 1942:28–29); children differed by environment—locale, class, family occupation, and so on—where learning, play, and child-rearing occurred simultaneously. Bird observed of a remote farm village in Tochigi: "Old women were spinning, and young and old usually pursued their avocations with wise-looking babies tucked into the backs of their dresses, and peering cunningly over their shoulders. Even little girls of seven and eight were playing at children's games with babies on their backs, and those who were too small to carry real ones had big dolls strapped on in similar fashion" (1984 [1880]:51). Socialization occurred within the social codes of the adults of their specific environs. Children of samurai learned the techniques of that bureaucratic/warrior class, while in villages children participated in the work and rituals of farm life.<sup>6</sup>

Symbols of age and life-course changes were not absent, but marked different notions of the human being. *Kodomo-gumi* (children's groups) of rural, commoner, and samurai classes were the clearest form of age-based segmentation in the pre-Meiji period. Yet, where they existed, *kodomo-gumi* were usually temporary and informal groupings that facilitated the participation of children (from six or seven to fourteen or fifteen years of age) in special events or rituals. For example, the bonfires and bird-chasing on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month combined play with instruction in the relation between production and one's cosmic world (Yanagita 1942; Kami 1989:174–82). Formal schooling was more indicative of the notion of functional imperfection than of developmental growth stratified by age. For example, at a private academy (usually attended by commoners such as priests, poets, doctors, merchants, and wealthy farmers) in Kyushu, the age at admittance between 1801 and 1871 ranged from seven to fifty-nine, with most entering between sixteen and twenty-one years of age (Rubinger 1982:89–90).

A ritual that today is symbolic of childhood, the 7–5–3 ceremony, in which parents dress their children in elaborate kimonos (sons at ages three and five, daughters at three and seven) and take them to a temple or shrine, is a good example of the transformation of developmental stages from practices tied to immediate exigencies to rather commercialized observations of abstract (age-based) categories. Prior to the Meiji period children were considered godlike and not yet subject to the rules of human society. Seven, as reflected in a

proverb that children are "among the gods until seven," was a watershed year, marked by recognition paid to the gods. This observance was conducted in the home (Kuroda 1994:10).<sup>7</sup> But these observances were not uniform throughout the archipelago; for example, in Kansai, the region around Osaka and Kyoto, the end of childhood was marked by a ceremony at the age of thirteen. The early observances suggest a different connection between society, nature, idea of children, child-rearing, and so on.

I must emphasize that childhood prior to the nineteenth century was not static; indeed, a narrative of transformation can plausibly begin this discussion in the urban culture (especially Edo) of the Tokugawa period. The transformation of the 7–5–3 ceremony into a quite prevalent ritual today suggests a gradual change in the concept of the child that is tied to the rise of the commercial economy. During the Tokugawa period, some of the rituals marking the survival of the infant spread to wealthier merchants and peasants, and the visits to the shrines and temples began in the prosperous quarters of Edo. But what is evident is the lack of homogeneity; it is evidence of different, coexisting temporalities depending on immediate environment.

### The Child as Originaly Stage

The transformation of the child accelerated after the Meiji Restoration (1868) as Japanese intellectual and political leaders sought to redefine society into a national culture. Whereas the communities of Tokugawa Japan were based on a cyclical notion of change in which the ideal was to be found in some eschatological realm, post-Restoration Japan was characterized by a directional shift in the concept of time. The rational, abstract norms, conceived of through a linear temporal framework—progress—transformed and unified the "space of experience" into a "horizon of expectations." Koselleck describes this transition:

It will become apparent that it is with History experienced as a new temporality that specific dispositions and ways of assimilating experience emerge. Our modern concept of history is the outcome of Enlightenment reflection on the growing complexity of "history in general," in which the determinations of experience are increasingly removed from experience itself. (1985 [1979]:xxiv)

In the reorientation of the social into a nation-state, the social is altered according to abstract categories that symbolize this new temporality, such as child-

hood, mechanical time, and ethnicity, which define specific experiences. History becomes the idea that gives meaning to these categories in a way that coincides with the nation-state and brings the idea of the nation to the level of all individuals.

The early Meiji period (indeed, any period of transition toward a modern society) was a period of the reconceptualization of time and space. For example, the Gregorian calendar replaced the lunar calendar, the clock became the keeper of a time that facilitated the operation of factories and the railways, the administrative reorganization in 1871 reduced the approximately three hundred semiautonomous regional units into seventy-two prefectures (*ken*) and three cities (*fu*), and new technologies such as the railway and telegraph altered the conceptual landscape. A common point of these changes is centralization; each example, ordered around an abstraction, provided greater precision for the unification of disparate parts. Past knowledge was no longer a guide to the present, and language did not correspond to the new epistemology; this led to disorientation and dissatisfaction. For example, a critique in the *Tokyo nichichi shimban* just after the announcement expresses the disorientation created by the shift from the lunar to the Gregorian calendar:

Now, we will carry out your august will announced in the imperial edict to abolish the old calendar and disseminate the solar calendar. However, there is one matter that will most likely shock the unenlightened and ignorant; . . . it is certainly difficult to anticipate the new moon on the first day of the month and the full moon on the 15th night. When the moon rises at the end of the month no longer corresponding to the word *tsugomori* (end of the month) and when the fifteenth night seems like *yamiyo* (moonless night), how can one not lose the certainty that we have come to expect? This brings up an amusing anecdote that compares the reality of the geisha to the corner of an egg; this is a parable for the new moon at the end of the month. Should we transform these proverbs? . . . In this way, yesterday's masquerade becomes today's truth, how can this be? (Okada, 1994:236)

In a sense, this disorientation of everyday life, natural rhythms, and beliefs was planned. Intellectuals during the early part of the Meiji period debated the extent of the change necessary within the archipelago. Most agreed that the masses had to replace old habits with new ideas. In the *Meitoku zasshi*, the premier journal expounding enlightenment, Nakamura Masanao wrote in 1875: "Rather than changing the political structure, therefore, we should aspire

instead to change the character of the people, more and more rooting out the old habits and achieving 'renewal' with each new day. . . . Should you ask how to change the character of the people, there are but two approaches—through religious and moral education and through education in the arts and sciences" (Braisted 1976:373). That renewal was the imposition of a totally new system in which rationality and knowledge would further the objects of modern society while ethical codes would produce the social responsibility and "civil" deportment of a liberal-capitalist society. Historical (or social and political) time was now separated from and prior to individual time, the time of the body and seasonal rhythms.

Such a rupture brings to the surface a fundamental issue in human apprehension of time. Sociologist Thomas Luckmann describes this as the interplay between an inner time of the individual and the intersubjective time of social interaction. Inner time is embedded in the body; it is a "natural" time of everyday habits and bodily rhythms. It is also tied to the social, for our awareness of time is through socially objectified norms. Luckmann states: "The rhythms of inner time are the basis of experience, and all other structures of time in human life are erected upon it. The latter, however, do not *originate* in the (pre-predicative) inner time of a solitary self. They originate in social interaction" (1989:155, original emphasis). During the Meiji period the transformation that the archipelago underwent was in this inversion of social interaction into an inner time of a Japan that spoke for experience.

Luckmann is warning against a common problem in modern scholarship, the use of the social as an ahistorical narrative device, thereby leading scholars into those traps of which Shutter warns. Childhood becomes one of those sites of social interaction that is apprehended as something natural and experiential, thus prior to the social. Because children have always existed, childhood also comes to stand for something timeless, that pure state before learning (of good and bad) occurs. Childhood becomes a socially objectified site, one of those mediating layers that gives procedure and meaning to social interaction. The socially constituted is then naturalized (or turned into inner time) by our everyday experience. It becomes a temporal category with specific meanings, a category that cuts across spatial divisions and experiential categories and facilitates the unity of previously disparate categories into a whole. It is seemingly universal because it is tied to the body and "experienced" by everybody (i.e., it is a period through which all adults pass).

The notion of the child in modern society was described, albeit rather obliquely when abstracted from his essay, by Agamben:

Within this perspective, ghosts and children, belonging neither to the signifiers of diachrony nor to those of synchrony, appear as the signifiers of the same signifying opposition between the two worlds which constitutes the potential for a social system. *They are, therefore, the signifiers of the signifying function*, without which there would be neither human time nor history. Playland and the land of ghosts set out a utopian topology of historyland, which has no site except in a signifying difference between diachrony and synchrony, between *aiōn* and *chrónos*, between living and dead, between nature and culture (1993:84–85, original italics).

The combination of child and ghosts as unstable signifiers is fascinating. Agamben reminds us of what was eliminated through history—the ghosts, spirits, and superstitions that pervaded communities on the archipelago (see for example Hearn 1971). They indicate the eschatological, cyclical world characteristic of premodern societies. Even the child, as discussed above, was treated more like a spirit, akin to the gods, than a “child.” This is the inversion that Luckmann exposes. The reconstitution of society as progressive, rather than cyclical, requires a readjustment of the relationship of signifiers from the spiritual—ghosts—to the natural—children.

Indeed, intellectuals and bureaucrats sought to eradicate this past filled with superstitions, the myriad and omnipresent beliefs that guided everyday life. The spread of scientific knowledge relegated other apprehensions of the unknown to the level of superstition. Inoue Tetsujirō, professor of philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, states: “When one doesn’t develop knowledge, evils—all superstitions and the bewitching of people’s hearts—spread. When one develops knowledge the principle of things [*jibutsu no dōri*] become clear and superstitions naturally [*onozukara*] disappear” (1974 [1891]:170). The change is profound; past knowledge, if not authorized by the nation-state through its institutions (in particular the Imperial University), becomes anachronistic or superstitious. The ghosts and spirits of the past are virtually reduced to some form of absence—of education, of knowledge, of common sense (newly defined).<sup>8</sup> Mnemonic sites of this past were also reduced. In 1906 thousands of shrines that protected hamlets, communities, and villages throughout the archipelago and symbolized many of those superstitions were destroyed, and their spirits ranked in the hierarchical order of what is known today as Shinto (Fridell 1973). Only ancestors remain, now elevated to a stable relationship that connects a past with the present.

In this sense, the child becomes that “potential for a social system” that sets out a “utopian topology of historyland [Japan] . . . between nature and cul-

ture.” As a universalized stage, childhood cuts across regions, making possible different forms of social organization that facilitate unification. Nature is now abstract, no longer locally based, while the child becomes juxtaposed to the putative complexity of the modern factory. For a place attempting to establish its unity from a mass of local communities to a developmental whole, childhood also provided a language for the naturalization of a national space where nature, industry, and society occupied discrete places in the whole.

This transformation was signaled in number of tracts by Japanese intellectuals and policymakers throughout the early Meiji period (See for example Lincione 1995). But the centrality of the child to the character of the new nation-state—the utopian topology of historyland—was most evident in the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), one of the most important decrees of the Meiji government. The Rescript, on the one hand, has been characterized as a conservative document that keyed the reaction against the westernization of Japan. If one’s goal is to exalt modernity, this is true. It is a document that uses the emperor to establish filiality and loyalty as the foundation of a communal patriotism that, in Inoue’s words, “return[s] the dignity of the Japanese people [in *lithon kokumin*] before decades pass” (1974 [1891]:156). But that dignity can also be seen as an attempt to bring back some of the synchrony that Agamben discusses. To label this as traditionalistic and anti-Western denies the possibility that these are conditions inherent to the process of modernity. First, the very idea of a Japanese people as a nation is new.<sup>9</sup> Second, no nation-state can exist as a purely a diachronic place. Enlightenment, at least as it is proposed in its ideal form, is close to pure diachrony. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries one can find numerous intellectuals in Europe trying to revive a synchrony of place, to reestablish the primacy of experience (see, e.g. Nietzsche 1983 [1874]; and Eagleton 1990).

To establish the unity of a Japanese nation, some kind of connection to a past was necessary—but to pasts that do not counter the formation of a rational society. From the nineteenth century on, historians have been preoccupied with origins.<sup>10</sup> In counterpoint to Patrick Wolfe’s discussion of the concept of *dreamtime* as the originary site for a narrative of settlement, I argue that children filled that signifying function for the idea of a Japanese people (*kokumin*). The child became that originary point (mythic) that unifies all Japanese as the same; it is simultaneously one’s own past, the present (through contemporary children), and a hope and prescription for a better future.

But, in contrast to the role of the aborigines, the internal and external are marked differently. The externality of the child is a temporary position, not a fixed category in a temporal hierarchy. It embodies the physiology of a group

the morning" (1974 [1891]:169). Inoue is describing the space of childhood, a temporal site in which deferred work, the acquisition of knowledge, is not considered wasted time, but an asset more important than material resources. He states quite emphatically: "time, in other words, is an asset" [kazarai] (1974 [1891]:169).<sup>11</sup> By placing a value on time, Inoue is sacralizing the child, who, divorced from its immediate relations, becomes, in Zelizer's words (1985), "useless" that is, childhood is a time when the individual is nonproductive. This similarity to the process described by Zelizer indicates that the issue, despite the rhetoric, is not one of western rationality versus indigenous (non-western) tradition. Inoue, who is considered a conservative ideologue, is working within a progressive linear concept. The child who goes to school does not represent uselessness but deferred gratification, improvement, functionalization, and rationality.

Inoue is codifying, as a national character, a notion of the child that gained popularity when early Japanese educational policymakers turned to western experts, such as Pestalozzi and Froebel, to rebuild the educational system. Early educators, such as Morokuzu Nobuzumi, the first principal of the Tokyo Normal School, and Isawa Shūji, one of the first students to study educational systems in the United States and an important functionary in the Ministry of Education, advocated an idea of the child as a pure, naive being who should be educated according to levels that correspond with its developing intellect. This contrasts with early modern education, the rote memorization of the Confucian classics (Lincicome 1995). The educational structure that emerged after the Fundamental Code of Education of 1872 included compulsory education through six grades and textbooks that emphasized gradual, developmental learning. Subsequent debates focused on content; while early curriculum focused on knowledge acquisition and cognitive development, later reforms emphasized morals to cultivate social character. A revision in 1890, corresponding with the Rescript, went one step further, emphasizing "education for citizenship" (Lincicome 1995:90-91). By 1912, the end of the Meiji period, the Ministry of Education boasted of an attendance rate of 98.2 percent of Japanese children in compulsory education (Kami 1989:497-507).

Yet, as Zelizer's account suggests, the transformation of the child was not easy, nor was it as thorough as the Ministry of Education's figure suggests. As late as 1938 a teacher in a remote farm village in Yamagata (northern Japan) recalls an encounter with a small farmer while riding home on his bicycle. He describes the child's appearance, commenting that he looks just like an adult: "He wore straw sandals quite skillfully. Even his way of walking was that of an adult. . . . It was the image of a laborer, a small peasant" (Kokubun 1972:220).

of people, and it cuts across other divisive categories that had once existed, such as class (hereditary), wealth, or region, as well as new categories, such as class (economic), knowledge, or putative ability. Difference is now altered into temporal hierarchies of the Same—that is, through the diachrony of human growth and progress—and childhood signifies the synchrony of ethnicity or race. While orienting society around a diachronic epistemology, the child is also a visible form (body and images), the "like us" that facilitates the construction and maintenance of a national "we." Inoue describes such a role of the child in the "*chokugo engi*," the official commentary to the Rescript: "If all children receive this national education [*kokuminteki kyōiku*], there is no doubt that our land will coalesce into one country" (1974 [1891]:156). The combination of learning and children turns the latter into an experiential site for the nation-state. Children become that past (synchrony) and future (diachrony) that bring the interiority of the nation into being. In this sense, the Rescript is also a quite modern document, one that envisions the unity of a nation-state. But such a function is only possible with the presence of Western nation-states, an alter that validates the national idea in conjunction with geographic boundaries.

This developmental notion of the human body appeared earlier in the *Meiroku zasshi*; Mitsukuri Shūhei foresaw the changing role of the child. "From infancy until they are six or seven, children's minds are clean and without the slightest blemish while their characters are as pure and unadulterated as a perfect pearl. Since what then touches their eyes and ears, whether good or bad, makes a deep impression that will not be wiped out until death, this age provides the best opportunity for disciplining their natures and training them in deportment" (Braisted 106). A key age (seven) that signifies a life-course change remains the same, but the child has been transformed from the godlike, or "among the gods until seven," to an infant as an empty vessel to be trained as a proper citizen. In other words, the child changes from an uncertain being—poised between death and life—to the preparatory stage in which its externality is molded into sameness, the interiority of the nation-state.

Now the child, still temporary, becomes a temporal category for a future good. Whereas in the past initiation rites, the ritual at seven years of age, recognized the child as a member of the world, whereupon he/she would go off and work/learn, the modern child should go to school. Inoue writes, "In the first place, human life is like climbing a mountain: the climb is remembered as long, but we know the second half, the descent, to be very fast. In this way, people need to study hard during their youth. Actually, one's life is determined by one's diligence in the first half, just as the organization of a day is determined in

油断して遊惰こと勿れ  
 利を得る支少あふ必ず  
 遠き子往候も商工も暫時  
 瞬く間も遠まも通信之流車  
 万支も益少見も電線ハ  
 空しく過き支加く勉強せれ  
 ○一時千金と云ふ僅の時間も  
 唯一有益の事を学へし  
 益の支母少し心をうばさ  
 終る迄失ること無し故も無  
 る支有と雖も学びし支の身



古語一文字の千金に當る  
 といふ文字の徳の廣大成の數  
 千里の海陸を隔つ地やも坐  
 して音信を通し數百年の古  
 への支を如え自今幾千年を  
 歴て支を知り人悉皆文  
 字の有ば之然が人として学  
 び知むんが殆ど貧人のごと

○一事千金と云ふの総て有  
 益の事の一支たり其是を学  
 び得る時の千圓の金を得た

古語三句  
 一字千金  
 一事千金  
 一時千金

Fig. 1. A primary school text exhorting students on the value of study. (From Kido 1886.)



But beyond the lack of distinction between child and farmer/laborer, the conversation raised questions of utility and the category of the child.

I asked suspiciously, aren't you Shunichi who, even though now in the fourth grade, was scolded for not knowing your multiplication tables? Well, wonderful. I had to reconsider that I scolded, again today, such a useful fellow for not being able to read. He laughed, "Sensei [honorific for teacher], today I've tilled three fields. Heh, I've even developed blisters." . . . Then whenever I saw him I wondered, what am I doing when he is working in the fields? I'm recording detailed lesson plans and buried among countless, worthless reports. (Kokubun 1972:220)

Such doubts notwithstanding, society did change, but differentially depending on region, population density, and wealth. American and European travelers noticed the progress (i.e., growing signs of civilization as they understood it) and rejoiced. Mabel Alice Bacon proudly exclaims: "But in spite of its hard work, the new school life is cheerful and healthful, and the children enjoy it. It helps them to be really children . . ." (1891:51). But to be "really children" means to be restricted to an orderly system in which children had a clearly demarcated realm. She observed: "Now, every morning, the streets of the cities and villages are alive with boys and girls clattering along, with their books and lunch boxes in their hands, to the kindergarten, primary, grammar, high, or normal school. Every rank in life, every grade in learning, may find its proper place in the new school system, and the girls eagerly grasp their opportunities" (1891:50).

These observations encapsulate many of the problems of a facile overlay of modern cultural norms over a non-western one. The description ends with the celebration of the transformation. Any failure to complete the transition is a problem in adaptation, that is, of the indigenous people and culture, not the system itself. It ignores Agamben's sage observations on the interaction and dependence of both stable and unstable signifiers and the presence of diachrony and synchrony, while one is pretending to obliterate the other. Like so many of the mediating categories of the modern world, the reconstitution of childhood as an abstract temporal category both separates experience and knowledge and simultaneously mediates the schism. Edelstein states this differently: "The progression of rationality towards the transformation of the objective structure of social relations . . . increasingly incorporates the whole person under its iron sway. The rational planning of the conduct of life, which liberated the individual from the bondage of opaque traditions, in the end

totally and irrevocably determines his subjective lifespaces and dispossesses him of the very freedom that rationality had earned him" (1983:70). This is well depicted in figure 1. The students on the right are freed from the world of adults to be children, that is, to occupy a defined realm that is orderly, uniform, and attentive. They are taught a modern curriculum; the writing on the board, *ichiji senkin*, uses different characters to denote the rationality of the new world. It reads, "literacy is wealth, material is wealth, time is wealth" (see for example, Kinmonth 1981). Childhood, as an association based on common interests—age-based categories of various early levels of intellectual development—becomes a temporal category that reinforces the social rationalization and fragmentation that is part of modern society.

### Childhood and Nation

These quotations suggest that the transformation of the child was not serendipitous but inextricably tied to the idea of a modern society, in particular, the Japanese nation-state. But this metaphor or signifier has become an abstraction, a temporary and impermanent stage in the progress and development of individuals and nation-states. It suggests constant change, an image of mobility and inner restlessness: "Modernity as a bewitching and risky process full of 'great expectations' and 'lost illusions.' Modernity as—in Marx's words—a 'permanent revolution' that perceives the experience piled up in tradition as a useless dead-weight, and therefore can no longer feel represented by maturity, and still less by old age" (Moretti 1987:5). Moretti brings out one of the paradoxes within the idea of the nation-state: it is built upon an idea of perpetual change (progress), but its rationale is dependent upon the very past that is being jettisoned.

The individualism that the modern child enables—the space to act autonomously no matter how circumscribed—calls into question the way that a nation will become and remain unified, whether it is a solidarity built up through alliances based on common interests (imposed or willful) or whether "individuals are enjoined to act within a collectivity because, it is believed, bonds of solidarity that tie them together already exist" (Chatterjee 1993:163). The child embodies certain concepts and characteristics that mediate this paradox by allowing "children to be children." Such freedom occurs within a narrowly bounded, homogenized category that facilitates notions of what society should be. The transition in the curriculum from knowledge to morals and ethics throughout the 1880s suggests that Japanese intellectuals and leaders opted for the latter, the "principle of community" adapted to the nation-state.

Here the idea of the child is part of the resolution of a moral and political problem of the new nation-state—how the national “we” *should* relate to one another (Shotter 1993:87). For children this *should* had not been natural to their everyday lives; they had to be taught to conform to this “natural” state.

While childhood has the potential to reorient society from local communities—sites of experience—to universalistic categories of development—horizons of expectations—it did not become the antithesis of community. Childhood simultaneously facilitates a “principle of community,” now of the nation rather than the locale. One of the powerful aspects of the temporality of childhood is that it is a temporary condition that depends on a prior knowledge. The child has become what Carolyn Steedman calls a “first metaphor for all people . . . a mapping of analogy and meaning for the self, always in shape and form *like us*, the visual connection plain to see” (1992:141). The child represents both past and future, romance and hope. Even though it has become the origin of human development, it also relies upon and reinforces a synchrony that occults such diachronic time. Maeda Ai describes childhood in modern Japan: “Struggling back to the time of the child, combined with the inclination toward a natural cycle, is the illusory axis that stimulates our escape from modern industrial society, and at the same time it is that irreplaceable horizon through which we can see beyond the barrenness of life that is hidden in the everyday” (1982:279; see also Karatani 1993). Childhood provides that illusion of idealized pasts that facilitate a unified conceptual space yet remain separate from the present. This nature is both a pristine site of longing and rescuer of a corrupt world (Steedman 1992:130).

This transformation of the individual and national body into categories of experience is made possible by an inversion where the socially constituted child becomes everyday experience; but it is an experience that is only meaningful in connection with nationally constituted norms. A principal goal of any new nation-state is to convince all people to accept and participate in, actively or through a lack of resistance, the parameters and goals established by the state—to paraphrase Chatterjee, to act as a collectivity because of previously and always existing bonds of solidarity. As suggested above, this reorientation necessitates the dissolution of regional or local ties, or, more accurately, the superimposition of national over individual relations. In early Meiji Japan, few commoners were concerned with Tokyo; most identified with their immediate community, not some distant idea like the nation or nation-state. For example, less than half the population knew about the emperor (Irokawa 1973:487; Fujitani 1993). Social and political policy during the early Meiji period was characterized by much experimentation and seemed to follow social disorder.

Rebellions and protests continued throughout the early period; new movements, such as the Freedom and Popular Rights Movements (1874–89), involved greater numbers of people in the political arena; and counterrevolution, especially the *Seinan sensō* (literally the Southwestern War, but commonly translated as the Satsuma Rebellion), threatened the new government. These events offered competing visions of citizenship and constitutional government that questioned the vision and knowledge of the oligarchy of leaders. This perceived disorder formed the background to Inoue’s commentary on the Rescript.

To foster ties between the individual and the nation, leaders turned to the family, or more broadly, to affect.<sup>12</sup> The idea of the family, as Philippe Ariès has pointed out, rose in tandem with the concept of the child; indeed, it is difficult if not impossible for the idealized family to exist without the child (1962:353). Again, we must be careful not to conflate the reproductive system with the conceptual family.<sup>13</sup> The family of course existed in pre-Meiji Japan, and many travelers commented on the affection parents had for their children. My attention will focus only on the family as it facilitated the reconceptualization of space, from an immediate, experiential environment to a delineation of ideal roles guided by the emperor.

The newly defined modern family replaced intermediary organizations—village, city, prefecture—now emplotted into secondary categories. Inoue describes the linkage between family and nation:

The relation between the ruler [*kokkū*] and subjects is like that between parents and offspring [*shison*]. In other words, a country is an expanded family, and there is no difference between the leader of a country who commands his subjects and parents of a family who benevolently direct their offspring. Thus, today, when our emperor calls upon all throughout the land, these subjects must listen attentively and reverently as do all offspring to their honored father and affectionate mother. (1974 [1891]:159)

Inoue employs the metaphor of the organism to obscure the tenuous connection of family and nation (see also Inoue 1911). Ideas of growth, development, and nurturing suggest an inner time of the nation, but one that while connected to, indeed formed by, the historical, is also timeless. The appeal to the nation as an organism blurs the distinction between the past and the future, or experience and expectation. As in childhood, there is an inversion of the historical process—the historicity of the modern nation is elided. Even though the nation is created through history, those diachronic narratives that provide and order

details of the national experience are now conflated with the nation-state; they exist prior to history. Past, present, and future are merged: "Subjects should possess a spirit of cooperation, assist and defend the imperial lineage, preserve the age-old *kokutai*, and prepare for the safety and prosperity of future generations" (1974 [1891]:179). This is the inversion of which Luckmann warns: that, despite narratives that naturalize, structures like the nation do not originate in some inner time that is natural, but through a social interaction. To ignore this inversion returns the historian to an ahistorical position where past, present, and future are connected (as they are today) as the common sense of the nation-state.

The notion of nation as an organism turns an idea, the *ethnos*, into a natural, pre-predictive category. It allows claims to a new experience despite conceptual gaps. Inoue does not claim a logical relation: "Those who exist in one country are all interconnected. Why? Because the interests [*rigai*] of one person become the interests of the nation-state, and its influence extends to all nationals" (1974 [1891]:177). Inoue recasts the notion of interests, crucial to bourgeois society, within a national, not individual, unit, orienting it toward the collective singular of the nation. In his argument for unity, Inoue mentions the variation, diversity, and disagreement within the archipelago. Yet difference is blurred in this appeal to the *ethnos*, a leap of faith (the "because") in the nation as the origin. While this is evident in the 1891 text, Inoue is much more explicit on the relation between individual and nation in an 1899 revision:<sup>14</sup> "Each individual [*kakaji*] is one element of the nation [*kokumin*] and the nation is produced from each individual. There is no individual outside the nation; there is no nation outside of each individual. For this reason, the fortunes of the nation influence each individual and the fortune of each influences the nation. Individuals and the nation are indivisibly bound together. In other words, the individual is the small ego and the nation is the big ego" (1899:509). Here the word *kakaji* for 'individual' refers to the person of the nation but also connotes an abstract thing. Importantly, it depicts the growing abstraction of individuals as nationals. While individuals become abstract units, their conceptual bodies naturalize the nation. "The Japanese *ethnos* continues the lineage from the same ancient texts, has resided on the same territory for thousands of years, and possesses the same language, habits, customs, history, etc. . . . Thus those who are part of the Japanese *ethnos*, just like a member of a family, are related by blood" (1899:509).

The child validates this social notion of organic community, one of growth, continuity, and posterity. It serves as a mnemonic object for the codes that define nationness. Inoue writes: "In the first place, the special kind of affection

the child feels for its parents originally emerges from a relation of flesh and bones and is a thoroughly natural [*shizen*] feeling. . . . Thus, even though parents and child are completely different, they are not at all different. One has to say that the filiality of the child toward its parents is this inevitable force [*hituzen no ikioi*]" (1974 [1891]:159). Inoue conflates the biological and the social—birth and filiality are the same. The blood family becomes the primary social unit (itself problematic, since many families used adoption to perpetuate their line), and the child, now interchangeable with the citizen, is a reminder of continuity and the future. But the experience of the past that is to be continued is not that of the child but of an ideal society, in history.

Inoue hints at this new notion of experience in his analogy of child and parent to citizen and emperor. The social idea that makes this experience seem natural is the conflation of filiality and loyalty, combining the family with the national past: "Our Japanese nation-state long ago formed the family system: the country is an expanded family, and the family is a contracted country. . . . Thus in the family children obey the head, and in the country, through the spirit of obedience toward this family head, they obey the monarch. In other words, it is the extension of filiality directly to loyalty" (1899:513). Such passages make clear that he understands that part of the transformation of society is changing the way people think and the way their lives are oriented, from the local to the nation. To do so it is necessary to create different reasons, an ideology, apprehended through everyday experience to tie them to the whole. The family becomes a caricature of the various units that were part of a local economy; it is now the primary site that specifies, on an everyday level, the roles of good citizens.

The analogy between filiality and loyalty further binds citizens to the nation by locating childhood as the moment when citizens become indebted to the nation-state. Inoue writes: "People receive protection from the country [*honkoku*], develop in safety, and receive education in the schools of the country, thereby refining their abilities, developing their knowledge, and acquiring skills. Because of these the great obligation [*daion*] to the country, being profound and superior to all other obligations [*onkei*], must obviously be required, and more important, the peace and prosperity of the whole country must not be damaged for one or a few persons" (1974 [1891]:168). Here the child mediates the interaction of the individual with the nation-state. By receiving something from superiors—protection, knowledge, guidance, and so on—it incurs an obligation that should be returned in the future. The horizon of expectations shifts attention from the individual and family to the nation.

Like the nation, the concepts of child and family become synchronic forms,

separate from history (see Murakami 1984 for a recent example). The seduction is that the individual child and human family become the sites of experience, obfuscating the historicity of the particular meanings that are objectified. Everyday life—indeed, the body—is turned into a mnemonic device for the nation-state. Inner time, while believed to be “natural” time embedded in everyday habits or bodily rhythms, is only meaningful as socially objectified norms. This is a powerful source for ideological construction. Social constructs of interpersonal interaction are described in naturalized forms of development. The child becomes that origin, not of an experience prior to knowledge, but of a mythical origin, the empty vessel or dependent being, always in need of some guidance. The power of this ideology is that such a placement in the body of the child eradicates the artificiality of a social time, the origination in social interaction against which Luckmann warns.<sup>15</sup>

This public discourse was codified in two ways, through law and ethical education. In law, the Old Civil Code (1889) and the Civil Code (1898) legalized a patriarchal system that connected the hierarchy of the family to the nation (Kawashima 1957; Hastings and Nolte 1989). From the 1880s on, educators became increasingly concerned with social harmony and national unity. Motoda Eifu, the tutor to the Meiji Emperor, writes in his *Yōgaku kōyō*, a guidebook for elementary education published in 1882 by the Imperial Household Agency:

Between heaven and earth no person is without a mother and father. One begins in the womb, is born, and grows. Their love and nurturance are profound; the mother and father have no equal. We must remember this benevolence and constantly strive to be reverent. Such love and respect is the Way of children. Filial piety is the highest principle of humanity. (quoted in Kawashima 1957:37)

Motoda is combining an idealized past—the extraction of filiality from Confucianism—with the modern—the concept of the child—in a way that elides the historicity of his idea. It is presented as a natural idea, the “Way of children,” a combination of timeless forms: ethical norms suggesting the Confucian ideal and scientific knowledge shown through the human body. These ideas were taught in ways that did not eliminate the local but relocated it to a temporal category as a romanticized past. As early as 1881 Isawa, believing that affect was an important tool in conveying information to children, published a book of songs through the Ministry of Education for primary school students. These songs (many of which are remembered today) celebrate the

village, a romanticized place of nature, “tradition,” and family (Matsunaga 1975:83–90; Isawa 1881). For example, the song, “Kokyō no sora” (“The Skies of Home”)<sup>16</sup> celebrates the ancestral village as a peaceful natural site while suggesting the importance of forbearance: “A clear night sky and autumn breeze / The moonlight dims, the *suzumushi* sings / Oh, how distant, the skies of home / Aah, how our mother and father have endured” (Matsunaga 1975:84). As Matsunaga points out, this song, which appeared just before the promulgation of the Constitution (1889), is connected to bourgeois society; one can easily imagine the migrant daughter in the textile mills or the son who ventured to the city looking for work (and fortune) remembering their home and parents at points of particular hardship. Using an aesthetic language of natural beauty, the song celebrates the nation-state, that is, the ancestors of the land. Individuality of and within each village is absent, and instead the village—described in terms of nature—becomes an abstract notion of a place of origin. The rural village takes on some of the transitory character of the child.

This naturalization of the nation could not have been possible apart from the imperialist nineteenth-century world. Both the similarity to Western discourse and the otherness of the West reinforced the redefinition of space, as Japan. The metaphor of the child, while useful in constructing the sameness of the nation, was also useful in constructing comparative frameworks that explained the asynchrony of nation-states. Here, we return to the diachrony of the child metaphor. Miyake Setsurei states: “Thus emulation is actually an effective form when, like a child [*shōni*], intellectual abilities are not yet developed; there are aspects [of the West] one should fervently recommend because it fosters development of knowledge, virtue, talent, and skills.” The child becomes a metaphor for national development; the nation is assumed. But the child also gives hope. Miyake criticizes government policy of the 1890s for Japan’s lack of cultural autonomy: “But one is already older and has reached the twenties. . . . Truly it turns into the absurd, as with the bewitching goblin and autonomous samurai” (1931 [1891]:257). In other words, intercultural comparisons now alter the horizon of expectations; the nation-state, too, must leave the temporary condition of childhood, in this case, mimetic ways, for an unknown but better future.

The Japanese nation-state was able to complete this development around the turn of the century. The Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) and Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) provided evidence of its new position in the linear hierarchy as an adult. China and Korea were emplaced on the lower end, becoming children to Japan’s maturity.<sup>17</sup> Naitō Konan, the professor of Sinology at Kyoto Impe-

rial University, used the metaphor of the child in a discourse commonly found among imperialists. He states: "The kindest thing the Japanese can do for the Koreans is to implement an austere government and remake their human natures which have fallen into decay over the past few centuries. . . . [A child] must first submit to disciplined training. Even if you provoke the child's resentment for a time, such treatment will bring true happiness in its future growth" (quoted in Fogel 1984:238). This conviction, common within Japan during the twentieth century, allowed Japanese to act in good faith as friends of their colonies while justifying their imperialistic rule (see also Nitobe 1920). The identification of others as children confirms that Japan has left that temporary site, and authorizes it to lead/dominate/punish others.

#### Ambiguity and Functionalization

The child as an abstract category brought a certainty to society that united a "plentitude of meanings." As in the idea of Dreamtime in Wolfe's essay in this volume, the definition of childhood as a temporal category is useful in facilitating the synchronization of different temporalities, what Ernst Bloch calls non-synchronism, that "not all people exist in the same Now" (1977), into an orderly, usually hierarchical form. But an ambiguity also resides in this non-synchrony, which allows childhood to be used in numerous ways. The variable and temporary nature of the concept of the child facilitates a variable reflexivity in which childhood serves as a site to fix and order things: problems are addressed as immature, romantic, hope, or in need of correction through education.

In his discussion of the pre-World War II Japan, Kuno Osamu, for example, has described society as containing exoteric and esoteric ideologies. The exoteric (*kenkyō*) was the public ideology proffered to most citizens in which the authority of the emperor, and thus of the state that governed for him, was absolute. In other words, it was a system based on belief. In contrast, the esoteric (*mikyō*) served as the canon of the ruling elite, which recognized the limitations of the emperor within a constitutional system predicated on rationality—the mechanism and rationale for (and against) rule (Kuno [1956] 1978). This system could easily be described through the metaphor of childhood, in which citizens are infantilized and the state apparatus becomes the adult, the possessor of the knowledge required to rule. The child is the antithesis—an other located in a prior time—that confirms the process of socialization as knowledge acquisition. As an empty vessel in need of edification and discipline, children are those in need of direction (in little bits and

pieces) before becoming participating members. Successful internalization of the proper codes—learning—allows the child to leave that temporary site for the "mature" condition of citizen. In Inoue's discussion of ethics, he uses the ambiguous word *shōnin* ('small person') for child; it suggests both the child and the uneducated.<sup>18</sup> Through edification (the context of his discussion is the efficacy of humiliation), "even the child changes, becomes a man of character [*kunshū*], and this man of character has an ethical conscience [*ryōshin*]" (1899:493). In other words, all people are first childlike; citizens must learn to behave and act in an appropriate way.

The metamorphosis of the child out of childhood overlays the alterity of childhood with another temporality, that of an idealized past. The child also serves as the embodied site for the future of the nation; it reminds adults of what is wrong with the present and provides the possibility for reform. In this case it is a hope for improvement—progress—but improvement based on an imagined experience. Steedman states: "In this way, childhood as it has been culturally described is always about that which is temporary and impermanent, always describes a loss in adult life, a state that is recognised too late" (1992:140). Here, the child plays an interesting role; it is to be something that does not exist and is based on an idealization of past experience. Education becomes the hope to correct what is "recognized too late." Inokuma Yōko's criticism of Ogawa Mimei, an author of children's books such as *Akai fume*, which is often considered to be the beginning of modern children's literature, illustrates this use of past and future to verify the present. She writes: "Mimei needed the imaginary world of children's stories in order to describe his own inner world, and once he gave up 'my unique form of poetry' in order to try writing 'for the sake of' children, he instructed them, from the viewpoint of adults, on how to live harmoniously in the real world" (quoted in Karatani 1993:115). The imaginary world of Mimei's children—naïveté, sensitivity, gentleness, and honesty—is conceptually similar to the pristine world of Japan's mythical origin in Inoue's commentary on the Rescript. He writes: "The virtues that were established when our imperial founder and ancestors founded the country are very deep. Thus, the unification of past beliefs [*jūrai kokoro*] of the commoners and adherence to the path of loyalty and filiality is for the prestige of our country and its preeminence over all others. To achieve this, education of our country must serve as the foundation" (1974 [1891]:158). The world of the child is a mirror leading to the future, a desire in the guise of guidance, which imposes restrictions on actions based on the present. For Inoue, the purpose of education was to provide all citizens with an understanding of "public affairs" (*seimu*). But his notion of *seimu* was quite specific:

attentiveness, obedience to law, and punctuality (the latter, he laments, is particularly lacking among common Japanese) (1899:500). The historical, *seimu*, and the real world of Mimei are ideals that people must internalize, even as far as bodily habits, which have become inherent national characteristics.

These restrictions, however, are not the draconian policies of a totalitarian government but the bounding of experience as the proper behavior of good citizens. Mimei's imaginary child's world hints of an antithetical time, a romance or escape to a lost time. But this picture of innocence and naïveté is the imagination of an adult world (Maeda 1982:284–85). The child rescues one from the present, the problems, corruption, and alienation of modern society (Steedman 1992:139). It is an escape to a past, both a past of exploration and restlessness, where one can vicariously escape the limits of "mature" behavior, and a past where corrections could have been made. On an individual level, it places responsibility for not being higher in the social hierarchy on oneself and one's childhood. And for the nation-state it is a constant reminder of the failings of past forms in teaching its members how the national "we" should relate to one another (Shutter 1993:87). The rise of children's literature around 1890 reflects this longing that is tied to the future of the nation-state. The magazine *Shōkōkamin* ("Young [lit: small] Citizen") and the series *Shōnen bungaku* ("Children's Literature") were filled with historical stories of exemplary figures and rarely included folk stories (such as *Kogane maru*, often considered the first children's story). The main themes were effort and proper moral and ethical behavior. The child linked an idealized past and future, now history; it became the idealized site for hard work, study, obedience, and filiality.

As was evident above, the transformation of childhood elevated the family into a public institution that mediates between individual desires and national prescriptions. Inoue writes: "However, a family, as in the organism of a cell, actually, is the pillar of a country; when families are reconciled there is tranquility within the country. But because one cannot unify the hearts [*kokoro*] of millions when there is strife among families, the power of the country will consequently collapse" (1974 [1891]:162). But the formalization of the family weakened rather than strengthened its influence. Importantly, the chief role of parents is to provide a nurturing environment, not the transmission of social knowledge. Education, formerly a process of socialization by members of the community, regardless of age, now became the obligation of the state. Public schools took on the role of education, shifting learning from integration into the local economy to becoming a good citizen. Indeed, here, too, parents were considered as children. Elites were convinced that the state, through the educa-

tional system, knew what was best for children. Aoki Sukekiyo's 1876 manual for primary school teachers displays a distrust of parents that has characterized modern educational systems. He states: "What determines whether habits of good behavior and diligence, or bad behavior and indolence will form are the standards and models provided by the conduct of parents and teachers. Especially in Japan, whose culture is shallow, parents lack the know-how to educate their children, so it is the teacher who bears the greatest responsibility" (quoted in Lincicome 1995:37). Others, such as Mitsukuri, were more direct in lamenting the lack of parental attention, regardless of wealth (Braisted 1976:107). Zelizzer finds a similar distrust in the United States (1985:84); it is a distrust reflecting the authority invested in the possessor of knowledge—the rationality of modernity—rather than a cultural trait. The establishment of compulsory primary education in Japan institutionalized this shift of power; education—the teaching of morals, ethics, history, writing, and so on—was removed from the home to the school, allowing parents to concentrate on work or housekeeping.

The decline of family influence was furthered in this functionalization of daily habits. Each part of the unit was to act within proper, or assigned, roles and rules. Tasks that had been shared were increasingly assigned to specific people (Edelstein 1983; Liljestrom 1983). Inoue was quite aware of this change: "When they form a family unit, it leads, without fail, to the separation of work between husband and wife. In other words, the husband exists outside and works, while the wife remains and tends to the house; by planning together and helping each other, in hopes for future prosperity, they must work for their mutual development and progress" (1974 [1891]:163). Prior to the Meiji period roles of individual family members, especially among the nonsamurai, were not as restrictive (see for example Uno 1991). Implicit in the deferred gratification, "hopes for future prosperity," is the child, the one who will perpetuate the family line. The description of an ideal working family not only separates work as a male endeavor from the household and engenders the now devalued housework, but also ties labor to abstract gratification, some nonexperiential "reward" in the future. The child as rescuer encourages resignation to one's present conditions.

The reorientation of the archipelago into a nation-state during the early Meiji period can be described as an effort by intellectuals and the political elite to create a rational order that, through synchronization, could account for the great diversity that existed. This synchronization occurred in history, the constitution of a social time of the nation-state. The child was central to this transfor-

does not mean that the latter actually did so. If experience is socially constituted—which I believe it is—then on one level Agamben's warning harks back to an Enlightenment ideal, that there can be a pure experience. When we recognize the historicity of the social, then we can also recognize the various socials that constitute experiences. The monological claims of science and the nation-state are one, albeit predominant, of those socials. In the case of Japan, the common sense of the nation is that "orderly or coherent mental representation—the urge in reflection to *command a clear view*—[that] in fact prevents us from achieving a proper grasp of the pluralistic, nonorderly nature of our circumstances" (Shotter 1993:19).

This leads to a problem that has no singular answer but must be confronted if we are to better understand questions of nation and identity: what is the relation between knowledge and belief? While a nation-state like Japan suggests a rather thorough internalization of codes that evoke a common belief, our archives today are rich with evidence of a great variety of experiences beyond what has been described through history. Indeed, there are many socials that guide individual experiences, and the ambiguity of categories such as childhood also creates spaces, albeit rather narrow, in which individuals can act autonomously (Herzfeld, 1992). One can find many different types of experience throughout pre-World War II Japan. For example, a year after the law establishing compulsory education (1872), riots erupted in Tsuruga, Okayama, Tottori, Kagawa, and Fukuoka, and in some cases schools were burned. To be sure, these riots were not directed solely against education, but the educational system was seen as a part and symbol of the new government (Karatani 204). Even by the 1930s, while the child as symbol of the hope of the nation-state was pervasive, the process of incorporation varied considerably and did not necessarily lead to betterment for children/citizens (see also Steedman 1992:134–36). For example, villagers in Takagami village in Chiba rose up in 1930 against those who symbolized the nation-state, the police, teachers, and the wealthy.<sup>21</sup> Children who participated in the riots indicate the presence of multiple temporalities, the presence of a different social knowledge, that of a local, participatory form which, in this case, resisted the homogenization to a national, abstract form. These children were not innocents, nor were they uninformed about changes brought about by the new government: "By yelling at the bushy-faced thugs [police] who tried to drive us off and by showing resistance as much as we, the smallest, could, we wanted to show again and again that we knew. It was they who oppressed our fathers; they squeezed everyone for as many as twenty years" (Seki 1972:473–74). The children obviously did not directly experience the twenty years of embezzlement, but

mation; in Meiji Japan, childhood provided a centripetal force, always being drawn on to structure a national society. By turning the child into the focus of a developmental notion of human life, intellectuals merged ontology and phylogeny as if they were an "underlying essence," the mysterious and hidden, now placed in the realm of science rather than that of the supernatural (ghosts).

But the child only existed through the body of "the Japanese." Far from being universalistic, the constant birth of children provided that synchrony of nation, the same passage of all Japanese since the beginning of time. The preoccupation of the elite in early Meiji Japan was the formation of an idea of nation that created a sense of unity and thus, occasionally by design, eradicated existing differences in favor of variations that could be rendered within that orderly system. The chosen characteristics were part of a coherent image that reoriented society around those abstract forms of knowledge, something seemingly common that could give a point of sameness to all people of the archipelago, despite the considerable differences of region, class, occupation, and so on. This synchrony fostered a different form of interaction in which certain past codes could be retained as something inherent. The child became a site of that new temporality, which established "specific dispositions" and demonstrated "ways of assimilating experience."<sup>19</sup>

In this constitution of history, knowledge was separated from experience; first, the previous understanding of the world was no longer valid, eliminated willingly by some or forcefully by others (or retained in some capacity by many willing to remain on the margins); and second, it was replaced by new forms, now abstract and still separated from the immediate. Childhood filled the void created by this separation; it is a natural being, clear for everyone (with the proper knowledge) to see, that becomes the metonym for a historical construction that seeks monopoly over experience itself. As the specific idea of childhood became increasingly common, the artificiality of this new ethical system faded and it became "natural."<sup>20</sup> It is the replacement of the historical with the natural that imbues ideas of the nation-state with the tenacity of belief, despite empirical information to the contrary, and it is here that scholars have often been blind to the entrapments of our discourses. This returns us to the troubling statement that begins Agamben's chapter on infancy and history: "The question of experience can be approached nowadays only with an acknowledgement that it is no longer accessible to us" (1993:13).

### Epilogue

Even though the Japanese philosophers, educators, and political leaders mentioned in this essay mapped out what citizens/children should experience, it

they were part of a community that transmitted what it considered to be knowledge necessary to function within the village. Indeed, this socialization for village life conflicted with the socialization for the nation-state: "At school the teacher taught us: it was bad to create such trouble, etc. etc. But that? No one is that tight: those who made our fathers suffer so; those thugs who oppressed those who have endured in silence. How can we remain silent at the bidding of the government teacher? To eyes that still only see this as proper? That's why we yelled and threw rocks; we wanted to attack again and again" (Seki 1972:474). To the teachers, the children were innocents who should not know about such troubling things: "No matter how much those thugs told us that we could not watch and tried to chase us away, we always returned, yelling" (Seki 1972:473). This incident suggests the presence of many experiences; while the event is described as local versus national, these are not dialectical categories but varied, coexisting, and conflicting forms of knowledge. The children possessed several voices. On the one hand, they were only heard by authorities through the monological codes of the nation-state—they were unruly and uneducated. But, on the other hand, they also had a different knowledge (more sophisticated than the authorities believed) about the relation between power and individuals. While learning (but differentially internalizing) the codes of the nation-state, they were also defending their world, a space of experience, which included, but was not incorporated by, the hierarchical horizons of the nation-state.

## NOTES

1. The award given to Oe is often construed within (and outside) Japan as Japan's Nobel Prize. Indeed, after Oe's award, the *New York Times Book Review* listed Mishima as a Nobel laureate, conflating the two authors into a single category, Japanese.
2. This convergence of nature and thought in the scientific discourses of the late nineteenth century was described by Heinrich Hertz, the physicist who discovered radio waves: "In endeavouring . . . to draw inferences as to the future from the past, we always adopt the following process. We form for ourselves images or symbols of external objects; and the form that we give them is such that the necessary consequents of the images in thought are always the images of the necessary consequents in nature of the things pictured. In order that this requirement may be satisfied, there must be a certain conformity between nature and our thought" (quoted in Shotton 1993:74).
3. While today we use several categories to mark stages of human development—infant, toddler, adolescent, and so on—I use the child as a concept for this early period that historically was not precisely defined.

4. For an account of the controversy provoked by Philippe Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood*, see Schultz 1995.
5. Such comments on Japanese children were common among foreign travelers in the nineteenth century. See, for example, Mitford 1966 [1871]; Griffiths 1901; and Bacon 1891.
6. Child-rearing practices differed by class: infants of commoners and peasants were carried about on the backs of older children, in the middle classes babies rode the backs of nurses, while the offspring of the elite were carried about in the arms of attendants (Bacon 1891:7).
7. Children were generally naked, keeping warm within the clothes of the caregiver, until the age of three (Kuroda 1989:89–94). Although not rigidly codified, samurai marked changes at the third year by no longer shaving children's hair; at five, boys received a *hakama*, the traditional skirtlike pants, and at seven the girls began wearing the *obi* (the girdlelike sash).
8. For an example of this transformation in which ghosts and spirits become the imagined world of children—that is, the unlearned—see Tamizaki 1988:68–69.
9. Like the concept of the child, the physiological Japanese is conflated with the idea of "the Japanese." For a recent study that examines this construction of the nation, see Fujitani 1993, and 1996.
10. Foucault writes: "It is no longer origin that gives rise to historicity; it is historicity that, in its very fabric, makes possible the necessity of an origin which must be both internal and foreign to it: like the virtual tip of a cone in which all differences, all dispersions, all discontinuities would be knitted together so as to form no more than a single point of identity, the impalpable figure of the Same, yet possessing the power, nevertheless, to burst open upon itself and become Other" (1973:329–30).
11. Interestingly, Inoue's and Mitsukuri's division of childhood has not changed significantly today: infants are dependent upon parents and society for basic needs, then at the age of six or seven the child goes to school, and by age twenty he or she is generally capable of becoming autonomous (Inoue 1974 [1891]:160; Braisted 106). Again, this is less something that was introduced from the West than a process that was catalysed. For example, Kaibara Ekiken described a somewhat developmental educational structure, beginning at six, that bears some resemblance to the ideas Japanese in the Meiji period were to pick up from Pestalozzi and other educational reformers. For the latter, see Lincicome 1995 (esp. chaps. 1 and 2).
12. Much has been written about the family and its connection to the emperor system. See, for example, Irokawa 1985; Kawashima 1957; Bernstein 1991; and Gluck 1986.
13. For a study that argues that the family system has been the defining unit of Japanese society throughout history, see Murakami 1984.
14. Inoue more clearly articulates the position of the individual in the nation-state in this revised and enlarged version than in the original. I have used passages from the revised version (which is often not differentiated from the original) where different. The



difference, I believe, indicates a greater concern for articulating the contemporary indigenous sites for unity, rather than arguing for unity to avoid the atomization of modern/Western society.

15. For a criticism of this conflation of loyalty and filiality as a strategy that occurs the historicity of Japan, see Tsuda 1938.

16. It was written by Owada Takeki in 1888 using the melody of the Scottish tune "Comin' through the Rye." The *suzumushi* is a type of cricket.

17. The position of China was ambiguous, at times being the child and on other occasions the old, decrepit man. Shiratori Kurakichi, professor of Oriental History at Tokyo Imperial University, compared Chinese and Japanese families to assert Japan's distinctiveness and superiority (1920).

18. From the latter context, it is clear that he is discussing the uneducated, a category extending well beyond that of children.

19. Steedman describes this role: [D]evelopments in scientific thought in the 19th century showed that childhood was both a stage of growth and development common to all of us, abandoned and left behind, but at the same time, a core of the individual's psychic life, always immanent, waiting there be drawn on in various ways" (1992:129).

20. This naturalization is made painfully evident in Norma Field's essay (1995), which points to the further reduction of this temporal category in Japan to that of laborer and consumer of the educational system that must give them the knowledge to become good citizens.

21. Takagami was a combined farming and fishing village not far from Tokyo. It was not impoverished. The riot was precipitated by the discovery of embezzlement of public funds by the mayor and an increase in local taxes.

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## Should the Subaltern Dream? "Australian Aborigines" and the Problem of Ethnographic Ventriloquism

*Patrick Wolfe*

### Introduction

For all the homage paid to heterogeneity and difference, the bulk of "post"-colonial theorizing is disabled by an oddly monolithic, and generally unexamined, notion of colonialism. This would seem to spring from two distinct sources. The first is a pervasive Eurocentrism—or, as we might better term it, Occidocentrism—on the part of academic theorists, for whom colonialism figures, narcissistically, as a projection (the western will to power, etc.). The second consists in the historical accident (or is it?) that the native founders of the "post"colonial canon came from franchise or dependent—as opposed to settler or creole—colonies. This gave these guerrilla theoreticians the advantage of speaking to an oppressed majority on the supply of whose labor a colonizing minority was utterly dependent. For Amil Cabral (1967:47), therefore, genocide of the natives could only be counterproductive, creating "a void which empties foreign domination of its content and its object: the dominated people." Analogously (in this regard at least), when Frantz Fanon asserted (1967:47) that "colonization and decolonization are simply a question of relative strength," he was referring to relative capacities for violence, on which basis the colonizer was ultimately superfluous. Given certain African contexts, especially in the 1960s, the material grounds for such optimism can reasonably be credited. But what if the colonizers are not dependent on native labor?—indeed, what if the natives themselves have been reduced to a small minority whose survival can hardly be seen to furnish the colonizing society with more than a remission from ideological embarrassment?

In contrast to the kind of colonial formation that Cabral or Fanon confronted, settler colonies were not primarily established to extract surplus value