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DE TOCQUEVILLE IN JAPAN

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De Tocqueville believed that the attempt to understand the deeper structure of differing civilizations was both necessary and very difficult. "Nations, under all circumstances, have their peculiar physiognomy and their characteristic features, as well as individuals. (Memoir, 1, 193). At first sight the task was quite simple. "Every foreign nation has a peculiar physiognomy, seen at the first glance and easily described." Yet soon the task became more difficult. "When afterwards you try to penetrate deeper, you are met by real and unexpected difficulties; you advance with a slowness that drives you to despair, and the farther you go the more you doubt". (Memoir, 1, 304)

Some nations were more difficult to understand than others: "it is infinitely easier to form clear ideas and precise conceptions about America than about Great Britain". (Journeys, xviii) He explained why this was so. "In America all laws originate more or less from the same idea. The whole of society, so to say, is based on just one fact: everything follows from one underlying principle. One could compare America to a great forest cut through by a large number of roads which all end in the same place. Once you have found the central point, you can see the whole plan in one glance. But in England the roads cross, and you have to follow along each one of them to get a clear idea of the whole". (Journeys, xviii)

What made it possible to see the plan, however, was the method of contrast and comparison. It was because De Tocqueville understood France so well that he could write so brilliantly on England and America, and vice versa. He explains the method. "In my work on America... Though I seldom mentioned France, I did not write a page without thinking of her, and placing her as it were before me. And what I especially tried to draw out, and to explain in the United States, was not the whole condition of that foreign society, but the points in which it differs from our own, or resembles us. It is always by noticing likenesses or contrasts that I succeeded in giving an interesting and accurate description...." (Memoir, i, 359)

Tocqueville had visited America and England in 1833 and England again in 1835. Imagine that in 1857, the year after his great work on France had been published, he had been invited to spend some months in Japan. Having explained the principles behind the two major forms of western civilization, the Ancien Regime societies of the Continent, and the 'new worlds' of America and England, it would have been tempting to for him to see to what extent Japan represented analogies or real differences, and whether his method could be applied there. What would he have made of that far off island?

A sense of confusion.

It is quite clear that he would have immediately recognized that he was in an almost totally different universe in the late years of Tokugawa Japan. He would probably have used words and expressed emotions similar to those used between 1800 and 1880 by a number of acute observers. At the end of the eighteenth century the Swedish visitor Thunberg wrote that 'The Empire of Japan is in many respects a singular country, and with regard to customs and institutions totally different from Europe, or, I had almost said, from any other part of the world.'¹ Sir Rutherford Alcock, a British diplomat, wrote in the 1860s 'Long isolation has given to this branch of the earth's great family a development which they may claim with some reason as peculiarly their own. Their outer life, their laws, customs, and institutions have all something peculiar - a **cachet** of their own which may always be distinguished.'² Isabella Bird, a British visitor in the 1880s, wrote that 'Japan offers as much novelty perhaps as an excursion to another planet.'³ When he arrived from India, Edwin Arnold felt that he was in "a new world, life in which is almost as strange and different as would be existence in the moon'.⁴

Most powerful of all was the comment of the American visitor Griffis in the 1870s. 'A double pleasure rewards the pioneer who is the first to penetrate into the midst of a new people. Besides the rare exhilaration felt in treading soil virgin to alien feet, it acts like mental oxygen to look upon and breathe in a unique civilization like that of Japan. To feel that for ages millions died, living the fullness of life, yet without the religion, laws, customs, food, dress and culture which seem to us to be the vitals of our social existence, is like walking through a living Pompeii.'⁵

Like most of the visitors, Tocqueville would have noticed that when comparing the west and Japan, everything seemed to be a mirror image, reversed, upside down and back to front like some Alice in Wonderland world. The idea was put forward by Alcock. 'Japan is essentially a country of paradoxes and anomalies, where all - even familiar things - put on new faces, and are curiously reversed. Except that they do not walk on their heads instead of their feet, there are few things in which they do not seem, by some occult law, to have been impelled in a perfectly opposite direction and a reversed order.'⁶ Edward Morse, a visiting American zoologist in the 1870s, described a few

¹ □ Thunberg, Travels, iii, v.

² □ Alcock, Tycoon, 1, p.222

³ □ Yapp, Travellers, p.601

⁴ □ Arnold, Seas, 357.

⁵ □ Griffis, Mikado, ii, p.417

⁶ □ Alcock, Tycoon, 1, p.414

of the differences of detail. 'The Japanese plane and saw toward them instead of away from them as we do; they begin a book on what we should call the last page, and at the upper right-hand corner and read down; the last page of our books would be the first of theirs; their boats have the mast near the stern and the sailor sculls from the side; in the sequence of courses at dinner candy and cake are offered first; they drink hot water instead of cold and back their horses into the stall.'⁷

De Tocqueville would, however, have been most interested in trying to go deeper into the social, mental and political worlds, and in comparing what he had discovered in the west with this new wealth of data. In the brief time available I will concentrate on just two of the many areas that would have interested him, namely individualism and rationality. In looking at these, I shall draw on the work of both Japanese and outside observers, both before and after his visit.

Individualism.

In writing of the contrast between France and America, De Tocqueville had written that "Our ancestors had not got the world 'individualism' - a word which we have coined for our own use, because in fact in their time there was no individual who did not belong to a group, no one who could look on himself as absolutely alone...". In 'modern societies', "Men being no longer attached to one another by any tie of caste, of class, of corporation, of family, are only too much inclined to be preoccupied only with their private interests....to retire into a narrow individualism". His views were to be reflected four years later by Sir Henry Maine. "The unit of ancient society was the Family, of a modern society it is the individual". Ancient law - "knows next to nothing of individuals, it is concerned not with individuals, but with families, not with single human beings, but with groups." "In the constitution of primitive societies the individual creates for himself few or no rights, and few or no duties".

Thus individualism came to be seen as the essential feature of modernity. Daniel Bell wrote that "the fundamental assumption of modernity...is that the social unit of society is not the group, the guild, the tribe or the city, but the person". Such a belief was not only powerful, but peculiar. Dumont proclaims that "among the great civilizations the world has known, the holistic type of society has been overwhelmingly predominant. Indeed it looks as if it had been the rule, the only exception being our modern civilization and its individualistic type of society..." The heart of the matter is summarized by Gellner: "a society emerged in which single individuals could apparently carry the entire culture within themselves, unaided".

Taking the individualistic and the holistic as the extremes, we may wonder where the Japanese fit. On the one hand they are patently not individuals in the sense given to the word by De Tocqueville or Maine. This is most graphically shown in their language, where the personal pronoun, though it exists, is never used. One never speaks of 'I'. Charles Macfarlane noted in 1852 "There is a very singular fact in relation to the pronouns, which we believe to be unknown to any other language: it is that the same word may be I, or thou, or he, according to circumstances: in fact,

⁷ □ Morse, Day i, p.25

that the so-called personal pronoun is not personal at all, or that it belongs to any person."

The anthropologist Robert Smith agrees that there is an "absence in Japanese of anything remotely resembling the personal pronoun". This is concealed by the attempt to circumvent this gap. Miller writes that "Japanese has historically used an enormous variety of words to refer to speaker, persons spoken to, and persons spoken of... Japanese has this enormous lexicon of 'personal pronouns' because it never really had any 'personal pronouns' at all". The effect on children is curious: "The Japanese male child, for his part, by the age of six must master the use of at least six terms of self-reference; girls of that age will employ five....With overwhelming frequency they use no self-referent of any kind." The total absence in speech of the use of words for 'I' and 'You' must mean a good deal. As Smith puts it, in "English usage...the speaker stands at the centre of the set of referents he or she will employ", but this is in total contrast to Japanese, where one stands outside oneself and refers to oneself as if one were another person.

Another indication of the lack of fixity of the individual lies in the way personal names are used in Japan. As Dalby writes, "Americans are used to having one 'real' name....In Japan, by contrast, one may have several or even many different real names, depending on what capacity is being exercised under that name....People have names appropriate to their stages of life, and they even have Buddhist posthumous names that they bear in death." This is amply documented. Japanese address each other by statuses; "Sugawara observed that the Japanese do not address each other by their names, but by their position, such as sensei or "president" or "section chief". Thus when the status changes, so does the name. Names in Japan are contextual and floating "Even the reading (pronunciation) of the characters with which one's name is written may vary contextually, so that an individual is called by one reading of his name by one set of associates and by another among members of another group".

More widely, the meaning of an individual is relational. An individual is, to use a favourite image, an empty mirror - only when in relation to another, does the mirror become filled. An individual is the sound of one hand clapping - no sound at all. For life to exist there must be two hands. The very word for human being in Japanese is composed of two Chinese characters, one meaning 'Human' (Nin), the other meaning 'Between' (Gen). In other words, a human being is, by definition, a relationship, not an essence or atom. Thus the very concept of 'individualism' is foreign to Japan.

There is a vast array of material attesting to the non-individualistic, relational, concept of the person in Japan. The Catholic novelist Endo tries to explain, through the words of Father Valente, a Jesuit missionary, why an individualistic religion like Christianity cannot succeed in Japan. "The Japanese never live their lives as individuals. We European missionaries were not aware of that fact...." The psychiatrist Doi writes: "In Japan, little value is attributed to the individual's private realm as distinct from the group". "... the Western-style idea of freedom also serves as a basis for asserting the precedence of the individual over the group, in which respect again it affords a marked contrast with the Japanese idea of 'jiju'". "Why should this be? Why should individual freedom be such an essential and indestructible part of the Westerner's fibre?". "The idea of Personality, which,

in the form of Freedom, determines everything in the morality of conscience, and, in the form of Object, everything in the ethic of values - this idea is, after all, a Western belief, unknown in our sense to the Far East, and preeminently and peculiarly the destiny of us Europeans".

A metaphor for the interdependence of Japanese society is developed by Matsumoto. "Japan is a 'natto' society. 'Natto', my pet analogy to explain the sticky nature of Japanese society, is fermented soybeans, which many Westerners find smelly, sticky, gooey, and peculiar tasting. 'Natto' though consisting of individual soy beans is only called 'natto' in its collective form". "What moves the 'natto' as a whole are not the individual soy beans but the strings. This can easily be observed if the 'natto' is stirred with chopsticks. The quickest way to move the 'natto' corporate family is to direct the chopsticks at middle management".

Or we may find the same account in the work of Japanese anthropologists. Nakane states that "In my view, the most characteristic feature of Japanese social organization arises from the single bond in social relationships; an individual or a group has always one single distinctive relation to the other. The working of this kind of relationship meets the unique structure of Japanese society as a whole, which contrasts to that of caste or class societies". Lebra tells us that "Not only in economic enterprises, but in politics and even personal matters like marriage, the group tends to claim priority over the individual." The same author writes that the individual is incomplete in Japan, a part of a whole. "The concept of bun has three implications, which all derive from the image of society as an organic whole, individuals being parts of that organism. First, the individual is conceived as a fraction." (Lebra, Japanese, 35, 67)

David Riesman recorded his puzzlement at the absence of the concept of the individual self in Japan. He talked to Mr. Itabashi, a director of Sony, who "explained...the Japanese lack of individual selfhood in the Western sense, so that Japanese were permeable to the value systems around them..." Riesman asked about privacy. "The Japanese have no sense of privacy, Dr. Toyoda said. Each person feels his life is an open book...and perhaps for this reason also, the Japanese lack a feeling of inner life and of individuality." Riesman talked to a group consisting of three career women, a writer, an anthropologist and a journalist. "Life in Japan, they said, is still familistic and paternalistic. This is true not only of family life itself, where the individual is completely suppressed, but on all levels. Japanese life is a society of groups: familial, social, political, scholastic, trade union, business. One has to belong to a group or one is out, one is nothing; and all groups, large or small, are paternalistic and 'feudal'". He talked to a group of young Japanese intellectuals. One of them, Yamazaki, "added that in America mirrors are part of our mixture of narcissism and individualism: one looks to see who he is; whereas in Japan society is the mirror of the individual, and he exists only in the reflection of his actions on others."

More recently, Ronald Dore has argued in the same way. "About the (relatively) non-individualist nature of modern Japanese capitalism, I take it that there is no dispute". He writes that Japan is "a nation which managed to found its industrial efficiency on being, in every one of the term's many senses, less individualistic than its competitors". He asks whether Japan is individualist and answers, "Compared with the Anglo-Saxon countries, compared even with Germany, (and one has to make some comparison, since individualist is a relative term), Japan was certainly not".

On the other hand, if we approach Japan from the Chinese or Indian traditions, the size of the unit which is needed to give meaning to a person and the degree of flexibility and impermanence, seems very different from what in the traditional 'holistic' societies. We are far from the caste, the extended family, the lineage, the village community. This is why Japan is sometimes characterized as a 'small group' society, and indeed the 'groups' can be very small indeed, ultimately the meeting of two persons. That most characteristic of Japanese institutions, the tea ceremony, is a complete 'society', based on two persons. A tea ceremony with only one participant is unthinkable. Thus, in a curious way, Japan cannot be classified as either individualistic or holistic in the conventional senses of those words.

Rationality.

So what then of 'rationality'? The essence of the 'rationality' of the West can be said to be the separation out of spheres, and in particular the ability to apply to problems without thought being constrained by 'irrelevant' consideration. Here I am talking of Weber's 'formal' rationality, the relating of means to ends. If one is pursuing economic goals, then the best means to achieve them are devised and thought is not constrained by political, religious or social pressures. If pursuing social goals, then economic and political considerations can be put on one side. In other words, there is a mental division of labour such that means and ends are brought into ever closer association. As Gellner puts it, the West's peculiar rationality consists of its "single-strandedness, the neat and logical division of labour, the separation of functions..."

This is all part of that famous Cartesian distinction of mind and matter, of the elimination of magic and miracles, and the achievement of 'objective' thought. This is believed to have been one of the great achievements of the West, permitting the development of the 'scientific method'. It is part of that 'Disenchantment of the World' of which Weber has written. As Landes puts it, "Rationality may be defined as the adaptation of means to ends. It is the antithesis of superstition and magic..." Its central features again come out best in contrast to the world of 'traditional' thought, as, for example, nicely summarized by Robin Horton. In that other world, thought is embedded, just as the economy is embedded. Thought is at the service of many masters, political, social and religious, as well as economic. Thus it is constantly deflected and reflected and cannot 'know' the world directly.

From one point of view, Japanese thought is swayed by emotion, situational, unfixed, bending, highly context-dependent. There are no fixed points, no absolute distinctions between 'Truth' and 'Falsehood', no firm 'Laws'. Reality all depends on the social and power context. This can be seen, for example, in the language, which is unstable, all being a matter of interpretation and context. Riesman noted that "The idea of something slightly less than, or more than, cannot be literally translated...shadings or horizontal comparisons cannot be made". Roland Barthes asked "how can we imagine a verb which is simultaneously without subject, without attribute, and yet transitive, such as for instance an act of knowledge without knowing subject and without known object?" Koestler describes it as "a language which shuns relative pronouns and connectives designed to give a sentence coherence; it describes events that somehow float through the air without naming the

subject, gender, person and number to whom they happen."

The language is the despair of translators. Thus Ivan Morris writes in relation to the problems of understanding the language of the Genji, "Proper names are rigorously avoided. Direct speech is common, but the speaker hardly ever indicated. As often as not we have to guess at the subject of the sentence, and sometimes the subject will change half-way through without any warning. The mutually exclusive categories that we take for granted in European languages - past and present tense, affirmation and question, singular and plural, male and female (as identified by personal names and pronouns), doubt and certainty - have little relevance in Heian Japanese; sometimes it is not even clear whether the sentence is positive or negative". As Chamberlain summarized the situation "Japanese nouns have no gender or number, Japanese adjectives no degrees of comparison, Japanese verbs no person".

Morris wrote that "You sometimes feel that you can insert a 'not' into most Japanese sentences and they will still mean much the same." This is linked to the fact that the same word is used to mean 'yes' and 'no' in Japanese. One word for 'yes' in Japan, 'hai' can be taken to mean yes, but can also mean anything from yes, through maybe, to no. Really it is reflecting the other's words and intentions and saying "you know" or "you decide". A person should not say no directly in Japan. Rather he must leave it to the other's discretion to pick up the negative signals that underlie a 'yes'. As Miyanaga puts it, "the Japanese rarely say 'no' verbally, but very often indicate 'no' in behavioural cues. When the verbal 'yes' and the nonverbal 'no' are given simultaneously, a good recipient will choose 'no' over 'yes'..."

Since to describe a civilization as having a different form of logic or rationality might be thought invidious, let us look at the views of some Japanese authors. Nakamura writes of "the tendency toward an absence of theoretical or systematic thinking, along with an emphasis upon an aesthetic and intuitive and concrete, rather than a strictly logical orientation." In discussing Japanese body language or haragei, Matsumoto writes "What makes the Japanese tick? Evidence shows that the Japanese do not seem to possess principles, if the word 'principle' is to be defined from the logic-oriented western perspective. Logic is considered to be 'cold' or 'unemotional' in Japan and certainly not identical to the truth". Or again he writes, "My observations tell me that in Japan, situation takes precedence over reason. What Japanese call 'reason beyond reason' (rigai no ri) is a 'haragei' practitioner's stock in trade. The very nature of this principle-free principle leads foreign observers to suspect that the Japanese have no principles". "Similarly no human laws, no elaborate clauses in human contracts, can cover the infinitely large variety of actual situations. For this reason all conceptual constructions such as theories, laws, etc. are destined to fail eventually in the face of reality. In this sense Japanese can be called 'realists' because they never fully trust 'logos', 'principles', or 'laws', either natural or human".

When David Riesman tried to penetrate into the mysteries of Japanese thought he received the same baffling accounts, whether he talked to natives or outsiders. "The Japanese, Mrs. Hayashiya said, are trained not to respond to reason but to emotion....The language, she said, is not logical, but is based entirely on feeling.' In translating Western literature into Japanese, we have great difficulty.

We can't say 'freedom of thought,' we can only say 'freedom of feeling.'" Richard Story told Riesman that "The Japanese mentality was far more alien than the Chinese, for the Chinese would think philosophically and logically and the Japanese would not - the Japanese mentality was unique...the more he studies it, the more he was baffled by it". Koestler noted a "type of reasoning indifferent to the 'laws' of contradiction and excluded middle, to the distinction between subject and object, between the act of perception and the thing perceived..."

If Gellner is right that "logical and social coherence are inversely related", then the Japanese appear to have opted for social coherence. As Robert Smith writes, the Japanese have chosen "to forego universalistic knowledge, skeptical observation, and individual reflection in order to sustain a close and coherent community inherited from the long past." Or as Lebra, a Japanese author, puts it "At some point or other a compromise is reached, and a fully socialized adult Japanese seems receptive to such a compromise, acknowledging that the world does not run by reason (rikutsu) alone. This is facilitated by the cultural tolerance for logical contradiction and ambiguity."

Thus, many people would regard the Japanese as having as different a form of 'rationality' or 'logic' to that in the West as is possible. On the other hand, from another point of view Japan is highly 'rational' in the Weberian sense. That is to say, in terms of the expulsion of 'magic', of the 'disenchantment of the world', the Japanese have long ago made the break which has only recently occurred in the West. Most Japanese thought is of the here and now, limited to the world of physical, material, 'natural' phenomena. Their thought may be embedded in social relations, but not in the supernatural. There is very little magic, little ritual, very little interest in a supernatural dimension, in the after life, no real concept of the soul. It is for this reason that many contend that the Japanese have no religion at all.

A string of observers have attested to the peculiar lack of spirituality, or religion in the western sense, in Japan. In the eighteenth century, Montesquieu approved of the "reigning religion of Japan having few doctrines, and proposing neither future rewards nor punishments..." In the nineteenth, Isabella Bird commented that "The Japanese are the most irreligious people that I have ever seen - their pilgrimages are picnics, and their religious festivals fairs." Even when one went to their greatest shrine, at Ise, "The impression produced by the whole resembles that made upon the minds of those who have made the deepest researches into Shinto - there is nothing, and all things, even the stately avenues of the Geku, lead to NOTHING." As Ratzell put it, "The Japanese proverb: 'You can pray to a sardine's head if you like; it is all a matter of faith,' is...not the expression of the most heartfelt religion." This lack of seriousness, Ratzell felt, arose from the exhaustion of too many religions: "The Japanese, conceiving of shintoism only as ancestor-worship, and of Confucianism only as a system of philosophic ethics, can combine with both an almost convinced worship of Buddha....the influence of three equivalent religions has destroyed his religious seriousness."

Charles Macfarlane also noted the paradox of flourishing sects and great tolerance. When Europeans arrived "There was no one established, dominant religion in the country; the most ancient faith was split into sects; and there were at least three other religions imported from foreign countries, and tolerated in the most perfect manner." He notes that "an industrious and accurate writer sets down the number of religions or sects, quite distinct from Buddhism, at thirty-four...As

far as regards the State, all these sects indulge their several opinions without restraint. The fact is, the Japanese government exhibited a rare and wonderful indifference to mere matters of doctrine, so long as they did not interfere with the public tranquillity." As Chamberlain noted, "The average, even educated, European strikes the average educated Japanese as strangely superstitious, unaccountably pre-occupied with supra-mundane matters. The Japanese simply cannot be brought to comprehend how a 'mere parson' such as the Pope, or even the Archbishop of Canterbury, occupies the place he does in politics and society".

That this is not merely a western view of the situation can easily be demonstrated. The novelist Endo puts the following words into the mouth of the Jesuit Father Valente. "The Japanese basically lack a sensitivity to anything that is absolute, to anything that transcends the human level, the existence of anything beyond the realm of Nature: what we would call the supernatural. I finally realized that after thirty years there as a missionary. It was a simple matter to teach them that this life is transitory. They have always been sensitive to that aspect of life. The frightening thing is that the Japanese also have a capacity to accept and even relish the evanescence of life. This capacity is so profound that they actually revel in that knowledge, and have written many verses inspired by that emotion. Yet the Japanese make no attempt to leap beyond that knowledge. They have no desire at all to progress beyond it. They abhor the idea of making clear distinctions between man and God. To them, even if there should be something grater than man, it is something which man himself can one day become. Their Buddha, for instance, is a being which man can become once he abandons his illusions..."

The non-supernatural, this-worldly, basis of Japanese religion is echoed by many leading experts, Japanese and Western. Thus Robert Smith cites Nakamura who concludes "with the flat statement that the Japanese take the phenomenal world as absolute...it is a profoundly important characteristic of the contemporary Japanese world view. In the past, it proved to be powerful enough to effect the transformation of Buddhism itself into a religion almost wholly centred on this world." Smith comments on "the peculiar construction the Japanese have placed on Buddhism, that human beings have this world and this life and none other."

Another way of putting this is cited by Matsumoto, who writes that "...Yamamoto calls this unique religious phenomenon in Japan 'human religion', in contrast to the 'God religion' of the West". (Matsumoto, Haragei, 92). Without going into the details, the curious absence of a supernatural, other, mystical, world seems a very old feature of Japan. Koestler writes that "Religious feeling is deader in Japan, and has been dead for a longer time, than in any of the great existing civilizations." (Lotus, 268). Reischauer notes that "...the trend toward secularism that has only recently become marked in the West dates back at least three centuries in Japan". (Japanese, 203) Yet it is probably much older than that. As Sansom noted in relation to the first missionaries in sixteenth century Japan, "The translation of the word 'God' has caused great difficulties in Japan, where it has been most inadequately represented by the word **Kami**, which means little more than a superior being." Bellah goes back earlier, arguing that "...the 12th and 13th centuries marked a great turning point in Japanese Buddhism during which a strong trend to free the religion from magic took hold". (Bellah, Tokugawa ,p.67). Yet one could back even earlier.

The marvellous **Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon**, a Japanese classic written in the tenth century almost entirely lacks a sense of the supernatural and 'religion' in the western sense. Of course, the problem is largely determined by what we mean by 'religion'. As Chamberlain observed, "Because the Japanese seem irreligious, we would be no means be understood to accuse them of being specially immoral. Even the word 'irreligious' will be considered by some of those who know them best scarcely to suit the case. The family shrine in every household, the numerous temples, the multitudes who still make pilgrimages".

It appears that Japan has for long been a very pragmatic, anti-mystical and purist society, which has overcome the opposition of natural and supernatural by bringing the supernatural world down into the material. Thus again one is left with a contradiction; Japan is and was the most, or the least rational of societies. In terms of thought being embedded in the social, it is the least rational of societies, in terms of thought being embedded in the mystical or supernatural, it is the most rational. However we resolve this question, Japan is certainly very different in its logical structure from much of the West.

Conclusions.

De Tocqueville would have been able to have made sense of all the strange contradictions in Japan for two reasons. Firstly, he was aware that all civilizations were built on contradictions. He demonstrates this again and again, for instance in his analysis of England. He understands the contradictions of individualism and the spirit of association. "Two spirits which, if not altogether contrary, are at least very diverse, seem to hold equal sway in England". (74) Or again the contradiction of equality and hierarchy. "Apparent equality, real privileges of wealth, greater perhaps than in any country of the world". The tension and balance of centre and locality. The "Greatness and strength of England" is explained by the power of centralization in certain matters. Prosperity, wealth, liberty of England, which is explained by its weakness in a thousand others". And the contrasts between civilization and brutality. "Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilisation works its miracles, and civilised man is turned back almost into a savage".

Secondly, his wide experience and thought had already freed him from ethnocentrism. He was a relativist who would have questioned his own civilization, as he was able to question his own nation. He would therefore have entered into the spirit of the most observant of foreign visitors to Japan who began to question whether their own civilization or Japan was "right".

He might well have thought, like Griffis, 'Why is it that we do things contrariwise to the Japanese? Are we upside down, or they? The Japanese say that **we** are reversed. They call our penmanship 'crab-writing', because, they say, 'it goes back-ward.' The lines in our books cross the page like a crawl-fish, instead of going downward 'properly'. In a Japanese stable we find the horse's flank where we look for his head. Japanese screws screw the other way. Their locks thrust to the left, ours to the right. The baby-toys of the Aryan race squeak when squeezed; the Turanian gimcracks

emit noise when pulled apart. A Caucasian, to injure his enemy, kills him; a Japanese kills himself to spite his foe. Which race is left-handed? Which has the negative, which the positive of truth? What is truth? What is down, what is up?'⁸ And he might have concluded, with the great Edward Morse, that it was probably the west which was topsy-turvy. 'The first observation a foreigner makes on coming to Japan is that the Japanese in certain things do just the reverse from us. We think our way is undeniably right, whereas the Japanese are equally impressed with the fact that we do everything differently from them. As the Japanese are a much older civilized race, it may be possible that their way of doing some things is really the best way.'⁹
(5700 words.)

⁸ □ Griffis, *Mikado*, ii, p.366

⁹ □ Morse, *Day i*, p.221; for similar comments see Hearn, *East*, 82 and Percival Lowell, quoted in Rosenstone, *Mirror in the Shrine*, 1.