

Fused Horizons? *Downcast Eyes* in Japan

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Let me begin my remarks where any proper discussion of the Japanese translation of *Downcast Eyes* should begin: with an expression of heartfelt gratitude for the efforts of those who made it possible, the intrepid translators: Kamei Daisuke, Kanda Daisuke, Aoyagi Masafumi, Sato Yuichi, Kobayashi Takuji and Tanabe Masatoshi. I have always felt enormous respect and admiration for the often unsung heroes who make thoughts originally expressed in one language accessible in another. When they do so through oral transmission, we usually call them in English “interpreters,” but I think the term is applicable for those who translate written texts as well. For every decision they make involves a subtle application of the hermeneutic arts, which is far more than the automatic replacement of one word by another. The final result is thus best understood as a collaboration between the author and those who create a new text in a new language, producing something that is in excess of the original work.

Some translations, of course, are more challenging than others, and I suspect that *Downcast Eyes* was particularly difficult. In the twenty-five years since its initial appearance, only one other translation has actually been completed, which was into Spanish by Francesco López Martín in 2007.¹⁾ Although others have purportedly been in the works in French and Korean for a while, they have not yet appeared. The length of the book is probably one

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deterrent, but another is the wordplay in English that begins with the book's title and confronts the reader in the very first paragraph of the Introduction. It employs twenty-one metaphors, explicit as well as embedded, to illustrate the central role the sense of sight plays in our linguistic interaction, both with each other and with the world. Because of the often Latin derivations of words in both English and Spanish, it was possible for López Martín to find the appropriate cognates in most case with little trouble. But in my ignorance of Japanese, I can only wonder how much of a problem it was for his Japanese counterparts.

I mention this challenge not only to allow me to apologize for the extra work I have given the translators, but also to foreground the issue of how language and sensual experience are almost always intimately intertwined. If we bracket for a moment the question of which senses in particular have greater presence in the languages, indeed in the cultures, of different peoples at different times in their history, we can, I think, discern three prominent ways in which this interaction can operate. The first is illustrated by the visual metaphors I foreground at the beginning of *Downcast Eyes*. Here the question involves making explicit the residues that certain sensual experiences leave behind in specific languages as they evolve, and pondering what, if any, implications can be drawn from their presence for understanding the development of specific cultures. If, as is often argued, English speakers routinely use verbs of sight to describe cognitive activities—"I see what you mean," "you have a particular perspective on the truth," "enlightenment is an antidote to superstition and prejudice," and so on—does this tell us something about the way in our epistemological assumptions are indebted to a certain visually inflected interaction with the world? And if so, what specific aspects of visual experience are most influential?

The second interaction concerns the reflective meta-discourse in a culture that can develop about the role of the senses, which may involve asking questions about the impact of the first interaction and perhaps even advocating alternatives to what it discovers. The main focus of *Downcast Eyes* is, of course, on such a discourse, which emerged into prominence in one Western country, France, in the late 19th century and permeated many different areas of the culture, from social, political and religious thought to feminism, film theory and psychoanalysis. Focusing on visibility, understood in disparate and sometimes even contradictory ways, this discourse challenged the traditional idea that sight was “the noblest of the senses.”²⁾ What made writing the book so exciting for me was the unexpected discovery of how pervasive this discourse, which I came to characterize as anti-ocularcentrism, actually was in so many regions of recent French thought.

The third mode of interaction reverses the priority of language over practice and experience, which informs the first two. That is, where they are concerned with unpacking explicit or covert visual metaphors in everyday language or mapping a reflective meta-discourse about visibility, the third asks if cultures can be defined by what the French film theorist Christian Metz called distinct “scopic regimes.”³⁾ Whereas the first two modes involve ways of talking that are obliquely or explicitly *about* seeing, the third, to borrow the title of the British critic and novelist John Berger’s pioneering book in visual culture studies, involves instead “ways *of* seeing.”⁴⁾ It seeks to uncover an often dynamic constellation of behavioral, performative, institutional and discursive protocols that constitute a tacit normative order determining or at least strongly influencing the way those in its thrall see the world. As the term “regime” suggests, there is an element of constraint, implicit as much as explicit, that shapes and limits the visual experiences that people have of the world and how

they interact both with it and other people.

In an essay entitled “Scopic Regimes of Modernity,”⁵⁾ which appeared a few years before the publication of *Downcast Eyes*, I borrowed Metz’s term to argue against the conventional wisdom that modernity in the West was dominated by a single visual order, which Martin Heidegger had famously called “The Age of the World Picture.”⁶⁾ According to his account, existence in modern Western culture had come to be understood in terms of objects standing apart from disembedded, disincarnated and punctual subjects in geometrically rationalized space, objects available for representation in a frame. Or to put it in the terms of the 15th-century perspectival revolution in painting associated with Leon Battista Alberti, it placed those objects on the other side of a window in a spatially unified field. Through the use of orthogonal lines converging in a receding vanishing point, the painter could simulate three-dimensionality on a two-dimensional canvas. Adopting the dualistic metaphysics of Descartes, pitting viewing subject against viewed object, and encouraged by technological advances in visual range and acuity, this way of seeing abetted the transformation of the material world into what Heidegger called a “standing reserve” for human exploitation. As Richard Rorty had argued in his influential *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, which combined insights from the pragmatist John Dewey with those of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, the scientific world view of the modern era was dependent on a reifying, coldly dispassionate, disincarnated gaze.⁷⁾

Although conceding that such a scopic regime, which I called “Cartesian perspectivalism,” certainly had existed and may well have been most influential in Western modernity, I argued that it was challenged for hegemony at certain times and in different places by two others, whose characteristics I derived largely from discussions of the Dutch “art of describing” by the

American art historian Svetlana Alpers and the baroque “madness of vision” explored by the French cultural critic Christine Buci-Glucksmann. This is not the place to rehearse the argument of that essay, or to characterize the lively response it generated, both of which I tried to do in a later paper called “Scopic Regimes of Modernity Revisited” published in 2011.⁸⁾ All I think needs to be said now is that the essay, whose main points were incorporated in *Downcast Eyes*, helped generate interest in the plurality of visual cultures or ways of seeing in both historical and national terms. It also allowed later students of those cultures to conceptualize them on different scales, with microscopic as well as macroscopic regimes providing the tacit constraints for the practices and discourses that occurred within them.

In the quarter century since *Downcast Eyes* appeared, the questions it addressed and the answers it offered have been subjected to considerable critical scrutiny, with the inevitable nuancing of some of my conclusions and challenges to others. For example, some commentators on certain of the thinkers treated in the book, such as Michel Foucault and Luce Irigaray, have interpreted their attitudes towards visuality in a more ambiguous way.⁹⁾ Others have resisted my identifying the founding philosophical justification for the hegemonic scopic regime of modernity with Descartes, a conclusion I drew from the work of Heidegger, Rorty and other commentators such as Norman Bryson.¹⁰⁾ Still others have claimed that the crisis of the *ancien* scopic regime, which I dated in the late-19th century, could actually be found in the critique of the “vanities of the eye” much earlier.¹¹⁾ Reservations have also been voiced about the clear-cut applicability of the three scopic regimes I identified to urban spatial forms.¹²⁾

I could masochistically list still other reservations critics have had about one or another aspect of my argument, but by and large I think it fair to say

Downcast Eyes was generously received and seems to have secured a modest niche in the still expanding field of visual culture. Historians of the senses have also found it a stimulus to the investigation of earlier attitudes towards visuality in, for example, medieval Europe.¹³⁾ It was also very gratifying to see the book singled out as the seminal discursive intervention for the year 1993 in the magisterial history of modern art produced by the editors of *October*, the leading American journal of art theory and criticism. For if this were true, it meant that the book had somehow given voice to and perhaps even contributed to the general crisis of ocularcentrism, not only among theorists, but also cutting-edge artists of the late 20th century.

I am, however, less interested now in revisiting the past reception of the book or defending its interpretations against their critics than in speculating about a future reception of the Japanese translation. Or more precisely, what I want to do is plant the seeds for a consideration of the issues raised by the figures whose ideas I treat in the book, ideas that may or may not have the same meaning in this new context. By and large, I think it is fair to say that the burgeoning field of visual culture studies in the West has more or less neglected the Japanese case, with apparent exceptions such as Roland Barthes' 1966 *Empire of Signs*, which many have argued actually turned Japan into a blank screen for the author's own projections.¹⁴⁾ Nonetheless, a very impressionistic on-line survey of prior references to the book in English-language texts on Japanese culture—which only obliquely suggests what might also exist in your language—does suggest that some of the issues it raises have already found their way into scholarly discourse about Japan. To clarify what I have found, let me return to the three interactions between language and visuality I mentioned above: the role of visual metaphors in everyday language, the existence of a reflective meta-discourse about visuality, and the existence

of historically or culturally distinct scopic regimes or visual cultures.

Although we might well assume that all languages draw on metaphors derived from corporeal experience, it is hard to dispel the suspicion that their meaning may well vary from culture to culture. The title of *Downcast Eyes*, for example, will be recognized by a native English speaker as a pun on a common metaphor, which implies a melancholic withdrawal from intersubjective interaction into a thoughtful interiority. Failing to look at someone directly in the face is also often taken in Western culture as an indication of indifference or avoidance rather than respect. When it accompanies an apology, it can actually undermine its force in the eyes of the recipient. Thus in the book's title, the negative connotations of casting the eyes down can easily be transferred to the denigration of vision in general. I gather, however, that an averted gaze and downward direction of the face suggest something very different in Japan, where it normally expresses polite deference and respect. Students of Japanese body language claim it can reinforce a bow that accompanies a sincere apology or expression of regret.¹⁵⁾ Insofar as Japanese are alleged to maintain eye contact for shorter periods than Westerners, and even sometimes close their eyes to listen more intently, the negative connotation of the metaphor may well be less self-evident.

There have, however, been studies that suggest much more of an overlap in the metaphors of the eye in English and Japanese. A recent essay written in 2016 by a Swedish sociolinguist, Emil Mårup, draws on the seminal work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson on conceptual metaphors derived from bodily experiences to compare idioms in the two languages that work with the most common body parts—chest (*mune*), heart (*kokoro*), face (*kao*), head (*atama*) and eye (*me*).¹⁶⁾ He notes that idioms using the eye are far more likely in Japanese than any other body part, something like 18% of the number

surveyed. In both English and Japanese, they are understood to be containers for emotions—something an observer can “look into” and see as “full,” “overflowing” or “vacant.” Similarly, both languages have expressions in which the eye is understood to be like a limb that can touch something as well as see it, as in the phrase “keep an eye on my suitcase.” In both languages the equation of knowing and seeing has many different variations, such as “see what I mean.” And in both visual metaphors are used to indicate desire, as in “making eyes at someone,” as well as serving as symbols of surveillance. Equally common is the use of the “eye” as the center of an object or process, as in “the eye of a storm” or the “bull’s-eye” of a target. Although nuanced differences, of course, exist, the author concludes that there is a great deal of overlap in the ocular idioms in both tongues. This modest comparative exercise does not, however, really explore deeply embedded latent metaphors in the etymologies of actual Japanese words, which may not immediately reveal their debts to visual experience, so further work would need to be done before any serious conclusions were reached. But it does seem likely that cross-cultural similarities do exist between English and Japanese reliance on the metaphors of visibility in significant ways.

Can a comparable generalization be made about meta-discourses about visibility, which would allow us to conclude that something like the interdisciplinary French critique of ocularcentrism has at one time or another also emerged in Japan? As far as I can tell, no general map of Japanese attitudes over time towards visibility and its implications has been drawn, at least not one that has made its way into the Western literature on the subject. It seems only recently that historians of Japanese religion, or more precisely Buddhism, have focused on the struggles between iconophiles and iconoclasts, such as those that roiled the waters in Christianity, especially in the Byzantine

Church in the 8th and 9th centuries and during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. There is little evidence of a more general taboo against blasphemous representation, such as in the Jewish prohibition on graven images—which for complicated reasons has often been called by the German term *Bilderverbot*—or Islamic “aniconism,” which proscribes images of sentient beings, in particular God and his prophets.

I’ve only been able to locate two sustained recent English-language treatments of this subject in Japan. The first is by Pamela Winfield, who compares the attitudes of the 8th and 13th-century—Heian and Kamakura--Buddhist thinkers, Kūkai, who founded the Shingon School, and Dōgen, the founder of the Sōtō sect of Zen.¹⁷⁾ The former defended images, for example mandala paintings, as potent vehicles of enlightenment, while the latter worried that they might be mistaken for what they signified and defended instead the casting off of both body and mind. (*shinjin datsuraku*). The second study, Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders’ *Buddhism and Iconoclasm in East Asia*, treats the issue in a broader Asian context.¹⁸⁾ It enlarges the concept of iconoclasm to include all acts that seek to destroy material objects, even entire temples. The authors provide ample evidence of the ambivalence of Buddhist attitudes towards such destruction, while raising complex issues concerning the living, animistic identities of icons and the value of empty spaces and hidden Buddhas (*Hibutsu*). Although other examples of Japanese iconoclastic destruction have been located—some ironically aimed at the Christian images brought to Japan by the Jesuits¹⁹⁾—there does not seem to have been as explicit an anxiety over the idolatrous “lust of the eyes,” to cite Augustine’s famous phrase, in Japan as in the West during the Iconoclastic Controversy or the Reformation. Nor has it seem to have had a major impact in the political arena, as was the case, for example, during the French

Revolution.²⁰⁾

Turning to more recent discourses about visibility, there also seems to be little evidence of a widespread philosophical critique of ocularcentrism and its cultural or social implications, at least in the literature I have been able to consult. If there is, for example, a Japanese equivalent of French film theory's suspicion of the "apparatus" or the Sartrean demonization of the reifying power of "the look" or the postmodernist critique of Enlightenment ocularcentrism, I haven't found it. An exception may perhaps be found in discussions of the thought of Nishida Kitaro and his followers, such as Nishitani Keiji, in what has come to be called the Kyoto School. In fact, some commentators have noted important parallels with several prominent thinkers in the French discourse traced in *Downcast Eyes*, most notably Maurice Merleau-Ponty.²¹⁾ Both he and Nishida, it is noted, replaced a single perspectival understanding of visual experience with a multi-perspectival one, both stressed the entanglement of sight and touch, and both re-embedded the isolated eye in the living body. They were also at one in stressing the chiasmic relationality of visibility and invisibility in an unsublatable dialectic of being and nothingness. The general field of visibility, they agreed, is more fundamental than the perception of an object by a subject; it exists instead in the de-localized fabric of the world, what Nishida called "seeing without a seer."

Nishida's divergence from a strong Cartesian notion of the centered subject has also earned him a comparison with Jacques Lacan, despite the relative lack of Japanese interest in psychoanalysis, including Nishida, and Lacan's own controversial assertion that the Japanese were fundamentally resistant to psychoanalysis.²²⁾ Nonetheless, Lacan's rejection of the rational, sublimated self that was celebrated by ego psychology in favor of a unstable force field of

conflicting impulses has recalled Nishida's dispersed, non-substantive, non-essentialized self. Disdaining the Cartesian *cogito*, both situated the self in a dynamic whirl of topological transformations rather than conceiving it as a punctual, boundaried individual located in a spatially coherent field. Because Lacan understood the centered ego as an effect of an "Imaginary" totalization constructed during the "mirror stage" of psychological development, Nishida's comparable disdain could be also understood as a critique of ocularcentrism.

So too, it was argued by Norman Bryson at the conference in 1987 where I first presented "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," can Nishitani's concept of *śūnyatā*, variously translated as "emptiness," "radical impermanence," "blankness" and "nihility."²³) Not only subjects, but also objects are dissolved in a network of negations that recall Derrida's notion of *différance*, defying placement in a coherent visual field circumscribed by a frame or seen through a window. If there is a gaze associated with *śūnyatā*, it is non- or even anti-representational, exemplified by the Japanese painting technique known as "flung ink," which Bryson sees perfected during the middle Muromachi period in Zen painting and calligraphy. Here the image is open to random disfiguration that undermines the limiting identification of an object with any one of its perspectival profiles, situating it instead in what Bryson calls "an expanded field." His prime examples are the works of Sesshū Tōyō (1420-1506), although he also mentions Murata Shukō (1423-1502), best known for his role in introducing the wabi-cha tea ceremony to Japan. Bryson, however, acknowledges that Nishitani lacked the paranoid coloration of Lacan's analysis of the tense dialectic between gaze and look, which characterized the general French denigration of ocularcentrism examined in *Downcast Eyes*.

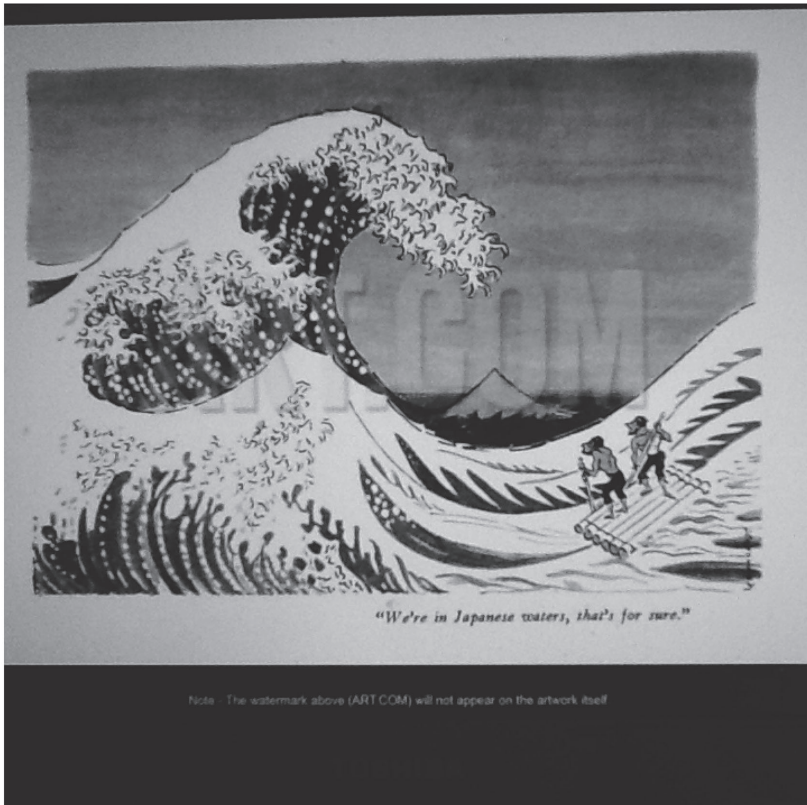
But aside from isolated comparisons of this sort, the English-language literature does not reveal a sustained Japanese meta-discourse on the primacy

of the visual and its dangers, although there may well be one revealed by a more serious examination of sources to which I have no access. The absence may, however, be significant for what it tells us about the third interaction between language and visibility I mentioned above: the existence of historically or culturally distinct scopic regimes or visual cultures. For it may well be the case that a meta-discourse criticizing ocularcentrism is less likely to have occurred in Japan than in France, because its dominant visual culture seems not to have been as open to criticism of the type leveled against Cartesian perspectivalism as the hegemonic scopic regime of Western modernity, which has been blamed for complicity with the domination of nature, the epistemological alienation from the world, and an impoverished notion of the rational subject.

Can we, in fact, identify a specifically Japanese scopic regime—or different ones over time—and if so, can it or they be understood as a variant or variants of any of the ones posited in “Scopic Regimes of Modernity?” Regarded from the outside, it does often seem as if a coherent Japanese visual culture can be identified. A belief in it underlay, for example, the fad of Japanese style—usually called “Japonaiserie” or “Japonism”—beginning in the 1870’s, which inspired such European artists as Van Gogh and was a major influence on the Aesthetic movement identified in England with Oscar Wilde, Algernon Swinburne, James Whistler. Based on the availability after Japan’s isolation ended of relatively inexpensive color wood-block prints (*ukiyo-e*), with uniform lighting, patterned surfaces, flat colors and the absence of chiaroscuro, they have been credited with accelerating the decline of realism and historicism in mainstream Western art and the rise of formalism. The circulation of exquisitely decorated screens, fans, porcelain, lacquered boxes, silks and other examples of Japanese material culture also contributed to the

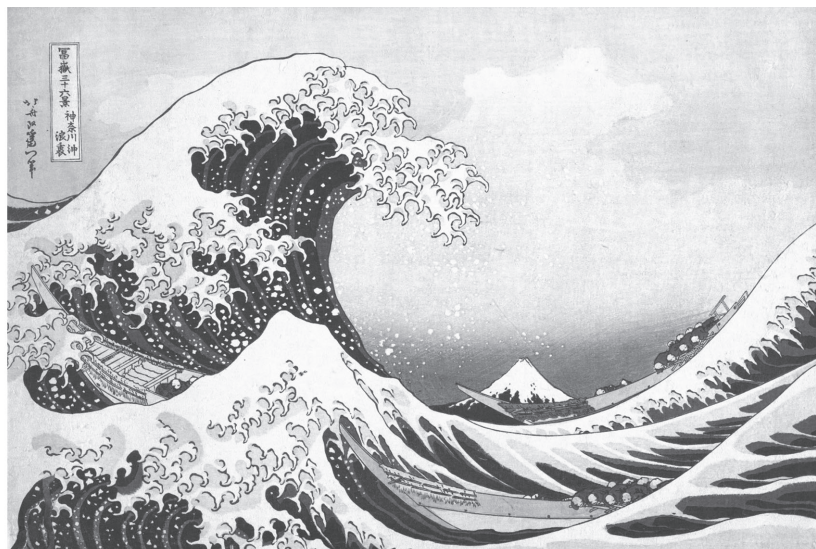
flourishing of decorative arts and crafts in daily life, albeit more for the luxury market than mass consumption. The impact of what seemed a distinctly Japanese visual style is now part of the canonical history of aesthetic modernism, which contributed to the crisis of Cartesian perspectivalism.

Japanism faded when modernism moved on from Impressionism and became bored with superficial decoration. Many of the fad's more simplistic Orientalist assumptions were soon subjected to criticism, as was its one-sided reduction of Japanese visuality to a purely formal aesthetic, unmoored from its



functional purpose in a larger cultural and religious context.²⁴⁾ But the assumption that there is a coherent and identifiable Japanese way of seeing has persisted in the West. American art historians like Ernest Fenelossa were major exponents of *Nihonga* (Japanese-style paintings) or works done according to traditional Japanese artistic conventions, techniques and materials, which they vigorously opposed to works designated as *Yōga* (Western-style painting). The survival of this distinction is evident in what may seem a trivial, but nonetheless symptomatic example: the publication in 1959 in the *New Yorker* magazine of a cartoon by Anatole Kovarsky with the caption “we are in Japanese waters, that’s for sure.”

Anyone familiar with the history of Japanese art will immediately recognize the model for the cartoon in the iconic wood-block print by Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849) called “Mount Fuji Seen Below a Wave at Kanagawa” the first in his series “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji.” It was published



sometime in the late Edo period, between 1829 and 1833. The three long fishing boats threatened by the monster wave with its claw-like foam in the original image are turned into a raft in the cartoon with two foreign sailors. Mount Fuji, a potent a symbol of Japanese culture and sacred to many Japanese, is rendered without snow covering it as a kind of visual after-thought with no real impact in the cartoon. The tension Hokusai created between the dynamic wave—perhaps expressing anxiety over the growing threat of invasion only a few decades before Commodore Perry’s “opening of Japan”—and the dwarfed, if still stable and comforting, mountain is lost.

What is striking for our purposes is that the image could be so easily transformed into a distinct Japanese way of seeing the world in an American cartoon of the 1950’s, which allowed the men on the raft to know where they were “for sure.” As a wood block, it could be reproduced, at least in modest numbers, and gain international attention in the late 19th century, during a period of heightened interest in Japanese art, when it was exhibited in international fairs and inspired Claude Debussy’s popular composition *La Mer*. What is perhaps forgotten is that in addition to the Japanese models studied by Hokusai, “The Great Wave,” as it became popularly known, was also inspired by the linear perspective typical of Western art, which is evident in his low horizon line with the mountain situated in the distance. Perspectival images had, in fact, been introduced in Japan as early as the 16th century by Portuguese Jesuits and Spanish Franciscans who brought with them European books and prints. Even the movement of the wave from left to right in the “The Great Wave” has been interpreted as influenced by the direction of the eye in Western ways of reading text. We are also a long way from the monochrome images of earlier Japanese art with the dominant Prussian blue of the print popular in European painting of the time. And of course, there is nothing of

the flung ink tradition of Ch'an painting or calligraphy that we have seen Bryson link within Nishitani's *śūnyatā* gaze.

Much more, of course, can be said about this canonical image and its afterlife in popular culture, both in Japan and the West, not only in cartoons but in everything from ads for beer to emojis on smart phones. But I mention it only to raise the issue of how one might characterize a specifically Japanese scopic regime or regimes. One conclusion to be drawn is caution about assuming a unique and internally coherent visual order, whose boundaries are clear and impermeable. For if, as we have noted, "The Great Wave" is indebted, at least in part, to non-Japanese sources, the same might also be said of Sesshū's monochrome landscapes, whose debts to the revival of interest in Southern Song Chinese painting in the Ming era China he visited are often acknowledged.²⁵⁾ No scopic regime can be understood as having watertight boundaries protecting it against external influences, and so it is useful to remind ourselves that we need to be cautious before uttering the "for sure" that allows us to essentialize any visual culture and set it apart from its alleged others. It may seem so from the perspective of an outsider, but from within, it is far less likely to be all-pervasive and homogeneous.

Perhaps heeding this warning, most English-language evocations of the concept of a "scopic regime" in connection with Japanese visual culture have been, as far as I can tell, on the micro rather than macroscopic level. For example, one commentator has compared the visual cultures embodied in the late-18th, early- 19th century woodblock *Kibyōshi*, illustrated books from the Edo period, and the postmodern Manga of contemporary Japan.²⁶⁾ Both are visual-verbal narratives with similar popular appeal, but the former are said to resemble illustrations of Kabuki theater while the latter evoke modern cinematic montage and the modern comic book. The erotic prints of the 18th

century known as Shunga have also been understood as inhabiting distinct “scopic regimes,” which played with the interactions of viewers within the images and those looking at them from without.²⁷⁾ The concept has also been introduced to characterize the remarkable animated cinema tradition in Japan that is known throughout the world as “anime.”²⁸⁾ Pitted against the dominant Cartesian perspectivalism of Western visuality since the Renaissance, it develops an alternative that has come to be called “superflat,” and is reminiscent of the Dutch “art of describing.” The pre-photographic visual practices of the Shōhyaku-sha group of physicians, pharmacologists, farmers and bureaucrats, who collected and exhibited botanical specimens in 19th-century Nagoya, has also been recently interpreted as exemplifying realistic fidelity to objects, similar to the Dutch model.²⁹⁾ Yet another example is a “pornographic scopic regime” that has been identified with the photographic images by female artists Yamamoto Kaori and Mori Mariko of Japanese love hotels.³⁰⁾

Still other instances of micro-scopical regimes can be found in analyses of literary texts. Thus, for example, a study of Tanizaki Junichiro’s novel *The Portrait of Shunkin* uses feminist film theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis to analyze what one commentator calls “the sadism of the scopic regime.”³¹⁾ Another explores the *Diary in Roman Script* of the 19th-century poet Ishikawa Takuboku, which he claims exemplifies a new visual curiosity, a modern eagerness to discover new worlds that can justly be called “a scopic regime of discovery.”³²⁾ The diary also betrays a strongly gendered bias, which evokes the objectifying “male gaze” so often the target of reproach in the anti-ocularcentric discourse traced in *Downcast Eyes*.

Such applications of the concept of a scopic regime in Japan are modest in scale and somewhat casual in usage. Only a few efforts, as far as I have been

able to ascertain, have been made to posit a macro-scopic regime premised on a broader and more pervasive pattern of evidence. Several commentators have described an “imperial” or “feudal” visual regime based on the emperor’s all-powerful gaze, which conveyed legitimacy and administered discipline in a way reminiscent of Foucault’s generalization of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon into a powerful tool of non-coercive discipline.³³⁾ Another has pointed to the visual culture generated by Japanese imperialism during the decades prior to the Pacific War.³⁴⁾ But these isolated examples are thinly fleshed out and have few counterparts.³⁵⁾ The relative paucity of attempts to speculate on Japanese macro-scopic regimes, at least in the literature I have been able to consult, is striking, especially when compared with other non-Western cultures, such as medieval Islam, or modern India.³⁶⁾

Perhaps the translation of *Downcast Eyes* will stimulate efforts to speculate more boldly on the existence of scopic regimes in Japanese history. I emphasize the plural here, even though there may be a tendency, which we have seen expressed in the *New Yorker* magazine cartoon based on Hokusai’s “Great Wave,” to seek an essential one in which “Japaneseness” is captured. The most frequently acknowledged virtue of the essay on “Scopic Regimes of Modernity” was its pluralization of the modern Western ways of seeing. Despite the greater cohesion of Japanese culture and its relative isolation for so long from external influences, it would, I think, be prudent here as well to resist seeking a single hegemonic scopic regime that somehow permeated the whole for an extended period of time. Anyone who exits the tranquil setting of Zen garden into the visual cacophony of a modern Japanese city can testify to the conflicting alternatives that are apparent today even to the glance of an inexperienced tourist. I can’t, of course, predict what those more specific regimes might turn out to be, although it would be surprising if they were

easily mapped onto the three I discerned in the West. The Dutch “art of describing,” with its emphasis on the surface of the canvas and attention to the material textures of everyday life, may seem the most plausible candidate. In fact, the genre art of early modern Japan has already earned a comparison with its Dutch counterpart.³⁷⁾ But what is more likely is that sustained attempts to discern a coherent scopic regime or multiple regimes for different epochs in Japan’s history will produce results that resist simple congruence with Western models. This is not to say that an inherently “orientalist” attribution of exotic otherness has to be imposed on Japanese visual experience, which would be merely the reverse side of the assumption that Western scopic regimes should serve as the model for all that has developed elsewhere. What it means instead is the necessity of being sensitive to patterns that both duplicate and depart from those models, or combine their elements in fresh and surprising ways.

To bring them to the fore, the rich traditions of the visual arts, high and low, as well as other evidence ranging from gardening conventions, theatrical traditions and tea ceremonies to patterns of urban development and interior decoration, will have to be comparatively analyzed. Technological enhancements of visual experience and aides to cultural memory, such as the microscope, telescope, photography and film, will likewise need to be investigated. So too will discursive supplements to visual experience, involving not only the embedded metaphors in daily language discussed above, but also attitudes towards the sensorium and its internal hierarchy expressed by philosophical and literary figures who may justifiably be understood as the intellectual legislators of their epochs. Likewise, the abiding power of religious traditions, in particular Buddhism, whose founder’s benevolent gaze is often celebrated, would need to be included in any discussion.³⁸⁾ The changing

political and social functions of intersubjective visual interactions would have to be explored, posing such questions as: Who has the right to look? Who is the object of the gaze? Who is rendered invisible? Who commands attention? Who is under surveillance? Who can hide behind camouflage—screens, veils, customs, make-up, masks and the like—and who can be or is forced to be transparent? And in addition, the issue of how all of these questions intersect with delicate issues of gender and race would have to be addressed.

Much more can be said about the kinds of questions that might be stimulated by the translation of *Downcast Eyes*, but I want to conclude by focusing only on the one posed in the title of this paper. What are the prospects for a fusion of horizons between Western attitudes towards visuality and those that may have existed or are still hegemonic in today's Japan? The concept of "fused horizons" is, of course, itself a visual metaphor and was introduced by the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer to characterize mutually beneficial intersubjective interactions.³⁹⁾ Horizons are mobile rather than rigid boundaries, expanding or contracting with the movement of the viewer, and if Gadamer is right, they can be enlarged by the incorporation of views from elsewhere. How harmonious or consensus-building such encounters can actually be is not certain, but whatever the outcome, they depend on a mutual recognition that truth, such as it is, can be discovered only through a reciprocal exchange of historical experiences, cultural values, political opinions, and the like. To put it in linguistic rather than visual terms—once again underscoring the entanglement of the two—they necessitate dialogic humility rather than monologic arrogance. Or to repeat what I said at the beginning of this essay, even translations have to be understood as collaborative interpretations, rather than one-directional adaptations.

Downcast Eyes, it is worth remembering, was originally itself a fusion of the

horizon of an American scholar of European thought and a discursive tradition that developed in France. That tradition, moreover, was itself indebted to encounters with others from different contexts, European and elsewhere. In the latter category, let it be noted, were experiences that French intellectuals had with Japan, which had a palpable impact on their attitudes towards visuality. In addition to the one already mentioned that inspired Roland Barthes to write his *Empire of Signs*, Lacan made two important trips in 1963 and 1971.⁴⁰⁾ Despite his provocative contention that the Japanese were not analyzable in Freudian terms, he seems to have taken Buddhism very seriously. In particular, he was influenced by experiences he had with images of the Buddha, most notably the famous 7th-century wooden statue of the “pensive prince” or *Miroku Bosatsu*, which he came upon in the woman’s monastery at Chūgūjin at Nara.⁴¹⁾ The statue’s half-closed eyes and indirect, inward gaze suggested the illusory quality of desire in Buddhism, but what was perhaps more important was the lesson Lacan took from the gaze of a worshiper he noticed looking intently at the statue for a long time. Lacan’s elusive concepts of the scopic drive, the crossing of the eye and the gaze, and the taming of the gaze, all seem to have been inspired in part by this encounter with an iconic representation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, who not only looked inwardly, but was himself the *objet petit a* or partial object of desire of a devoted worshiper.

It would be an unwarranted exaggeration to attribute too much to this anecdote, which is scarcely ever mentioned in the literature on Lacan and was not known to me when I wrote *Downcast Eyes*. But it is nonetheless worth mentioning in conclusion as an anticipation of the stimulus not only to Japanese discussions of visuality that I hope will ensue from this translation, but also to ones in the West that may well follow. We can doubtless learn much from your reflections on scopic regimes and discursive traditions that differ

from our own. If not entirely fused, each of our horizons are likely to be expanded in the process. So let me finish where I began: with an expression of my heartfelt gratitude to the team of translators whose hard work may have accomplished even more than they anticipated.⁴²⁾

Notes

- 1) Martin Jay, *Ojos Abatidos: La Denigración de la Visión en el Pensamiento Francés del Siglo XX*, trans. Francesco López Martín (Madrid, 2007).
- 2) For an important earlier investigation of this assumption, see Hans Jonas, "The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses," in *The Phenomenon of Light: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago, 1982).
- 3) Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington, Ind., 1982), p. 61. He was interested in particular in the scopic regime of the cinema.
- 4) John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, 1972).
- 5) Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York, 1993). It first appeared in a collection edited by Hal Foster, *Vision and Visuality* (New York, Seattle, 1988), which was one of the founding volumes in the development of visual culture as a new scholarly field.
- 6) Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York, 1977).
- 7) Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J., 1979).
- 8) Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity Revisited," in *Essays from the Edge: Parerga and Paralipomena* (Charlottesville, Va., 2011).
- 9) For a critique of my reading of Foucault, see Gary Shapiro, *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying* (Chicago, 2003); for my response, see "Visual Parrhesia? Foucault and the Truth of the Gaze," in *Essays from the Edge*. For a critique of my reading of Irigaray, see, Catherine Vasseleu, *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas, and Merleau-Ponty* (New York, 1998).
- 10) The defense of Descartes began as early as Catherine Wilson, "Discourse of Vision in Seventeenth-Century Metaphysics" and Margaret Atherton, "How to Write the History of Vision: Understanding the Relationship between Berkeley and Descartes," in *Sites of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy*, ed. David Michael Levin (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).
- 11) Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford,

- 2007).
- 12) Amari Peliowski, "Martin Jay on Urban Scopic Regimes," in *Theorizing Visual Studies: Writing Through the Disciplines*, eds. James Elkins and Kristi McGuire with Maureen Burns, Alicia Chester and Joel Kuennen (New York, 2003).
 - 13) See, for example, Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York, 2002).
 - 14) Roland Barthes, *The Empire of Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1983).
 - 15) See Haro Yumada, Orlando R. Kelm and David A. Victor, *The Seven Keys to Communicating in Japan: An Intercultural Approach* (Washington, D.C., 2017); and Shota Uono and Jan K. Heitanen, "Eye Perception Contact in the West and East: A Cross-Cultural Study," *Plos One*, 10, 2 (2015).
 - 16) Emil Mårup, "Eye to Eye: A Contrastive View on the Metaphorical Use of the Eye in English and Japanese," <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/8889725>. In addition to interviews with native speakers, he cites scholarly articles by Japanese scholars, Junji Kawaguchi, Hiroko Oki, and Yoshio Terasawa.
 - 17) Pamela D. Winfield, *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism: Kūkai and Dōgen on the Art of Enlightenment* (New York, 2013).
 - 18) Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders, *Buddhism and Iconoclasm in East Asia: A History* (New York, 2014). See also the essay by the Japanese scholar Michitaka Susuki, which has also appeared in English: "Invisible *Hibutsu* (Hidden Buddha) and Visible Icon," https://www.academia.edu/7934756/Invisible_Hibutsu_Hidden_Buddha_and_Visible_Icon?auto=download.
 - 19) Mia M. Mochizuki, "Idolatry and Western Inspired Painting in Japan," in *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, eds., Michael W. Cole and Rebecca Zorach (New York, 2017). For references to other episodes involving non-Christian images, see www.meijigakuin.ac.jp/~pmjs/archive/2001/iconoclasm.html.
 - 20) There is, of course, a complicated entanglement of religious and political origins for hostility to images. See James Noyes, *The Politics of Iconoclasm: Religion, Violence, and the Culture of Image-Breaking in Christianity and Islam* (London, 2013).
 - 21) Adam Loughnane, "Nishida and Merleau-Ponty: Art, 'Depth' and 'Seeing Without a Seer,'" *European Journal of Japanese Philosophy*, 1 (2016). For other discussions of Merleau-Ponty's relation to eastern thought, see Jin Y. Park and Gareon Kopf, eds., *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism* (Totowa, N.J., 2009).
 - 22) Xavier Blondelot and Marie-Jean Sauret, "Japanese and Lacanian Ways of Thinking: An Invitation to a Dialogue," *Japan Review*, 28 (2015). Lacan's odd claim seems to have rested on the fact that kanji ideograms in Japanese can be read either in the Chinese

- way (*onyomi*) or the Japanese (*kunyomi*). He speculated that this ambivalence frustrates the process of true repression of the subject in relation to language. Like the men in black on the Bunraku stage, it is possible to be at once visible and invisible.
- 23) Norman Bryson, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, 1988). The concept is developed in Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley, 1982), p. 30-45.
 - 24) See Bernard Faure, "The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze," *Critical Inquiry*, 24 (Spring, 1998).
 - 25) See, for example, Hui Fung, "Sesshū Tōyō's Selective Assimilation of Ming Chinese Painting Elements," MA Thesis, U. of Oregon, 2013; https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/12984/Fang_oregon_0171N_10609.pdf;sequence=1
 - 26) Adam Kern, "Manga vs. *Kibyōshi*," *A Comic Studies Reader*, eds. Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson, Miss., 2009).
 - 27) Timon Screech, "The Scopic Regimes of Shunga," in *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700-1820* (London, 1999).
 - 28) See for example, Dani Cavallero, *CLAMP in Context: A Critical Study of the Manga and Anime* (Jefferson, NC, 2012). P. 149f; Thomas LaMarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minnesota, 2009), pp. 26, 44, 114, 116 and 282.
 - 29) Maki Fukuoka, *The Premise of Fidelity: Science, Visuality, and Representing the Real in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, 2012).
 - 30) Sarah Chaplin, *Japanese Love Hotels: A Cultural History* (New York, 2007).
 - 31) Margherita Long, *This Perversion Called Love: Reading Tanizaki, Feminist Film Theory and Freud* (Stanford, 2009), chapter 4.
 - 32) Charles Shiro Inouye, "In the Scopic Regime of Discovery: Ishikawa Takuboku's *Diary in Roman Script* and the Gendered Premise of Self-Discovery," in *Formations of Colonial Identity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, N.C., 1997).
 - 33) See Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*. (Berkeley, 1996) and Mika Ko, *Japanese Cinema and Otherness" Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Japaneseness* (New York, 2010). Fujitani argues that Japan's modernization was aided by the emperor's symbolic function in the surveillance of the popular, thus combining Foucault's monarchical and modern visual regimes. He also acknowledges the influence of *Downcast Eyes* as a source for his argument (p. 270).
 - 34) "Visual Cultures of Japanese Imperialism," special issue of *Positions*, 8,3 (December, 2000).
 - 35) It is perhaps symptomatic that only one of the sixty entries in the influential *Visual*

- Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, 2nd ed. (London, 2002) deals with Japan, and it is a critique of the resistance to gendered visual culture studies in Japan (Lisa Bloom, "Gender, Race and Nation in Japanese Contemporary Art and Criticism"). There is, to be sure, a lively interest in specific moments or traditions in Japanese visual culture, as exemplified by the series of books published by Brill Press called *Japanese Visual Culture*, whose main editor is John T. Carpenter. It describes its books as dealing with "the history of painting, prints, calligraphy, sculpture, architecture and applied arts, but also extends to the performing arts, cinema, manga and anime."
- 36) See, for example, "Mapping the Gaze—Vision and Visuality in Classical Arab Civilization," Special Issue of *The Medieval History Journal*, 9,1 (January-June, 2006) ; Sumathi Ramaswamy, ed., *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India* (New Delhi, 2003).
 - 37) Mary Elizabeth Berry, " (Even Radical) Illustration Requires (Normalizing) Convention: The Case of 'Genre Art; in Early Modern Japan," *Journal of Visual Culture*, 9, 3 (December, 2010).
 - 38) The gaze of the Buddha is often remarked in the West as well. In a meeting I had in the 1990's with the American poet Alan Ginsberg, in which we discussed *Downcast Eyes*, he demonstrated his version of the Buddha's non-dominating gaze.
 - 39) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1975), p. 273.
 - 40) Foucault also made several trips to Japan. See Marnia Lazreg, *Foucault's Orient: The Conundrum of Cultural Difference, from Tunisia to Japan* (New York, 2017), chapter 7. He does not, however, seem to have focused on issues relevant to visual culture.
 - 41) See Alistair Black, "Lacan's Encounter with a Buddhist Statue and the Gaze as *Objet a*," *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven*, 32, 4 (2014). For another discussion, see Shingu Kazushige, "Freud, Lacan and Japan," *The Letter: Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*, 34 (Summer, 2005).
 - 42) Let me also express my thanks to three of my Berkeley colleagues who have kindly shared their expertise in Japanese history and culture with me: Andrew Barshay, Mary Elizabeth Berry and Gregory Levine.

