

Review

Kitayama, Osamu (2010). *Prohibition of Don't Look: Living Through Psychoanalysis and Culture in Japan*. Tokyo: Iwasaki Gakujutsu Shuppansha. ISBN-978-7533-1000-5.

According to Osamu Kitayama (*Preface*), psychoanalysis in Japan is represented by two organizations: the IPA affiliated, medical, Japan Psychoanalytical Society (JPS), with 35 members and 21 candidates, of which he is a Training and Supervising Analyst and current Secretary; and the Japan Psychoanalytical Association (JPA), a much larger, non-IPA affiliated body that has 2600 members, 900 physicians and 1600 psychologists, of which he is a Past President.

Kitayama has authored more than 100 articles, including publications in the *International Review* and *Journal of Psycho-Analysis* in English, and some 15 books on psychoanalysis and applied psychoanalysis. All 7 of the chapters of the present work have previously been published in the *IRP*, the *IJP* and the *Japan Journal of Psycho-Analysis*. The book includes a brief biography of Kitayama and explanatory notes written by Jhuma Basak, a member of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society.

The English title of the book, "Prohibition of Don't Look," is ambiguous: it could be construed to mean either that what is prohibited is *not* looking, or the opposite, a prohibition against looking. According to Kitayama, "Ambiguity is said to be a characteristic of not only our language but also of our whole culture" (p. 28). Be that as it may, this text suffers from a range of editorial and translation problems: on p.15 there is reference to a "preoccupied mother" when, in context, it seems the "pre-oedipal mother" is meant; and on p. 9, we read "Although the heroin these stories is visited by the heroine" To suggest such problems should have been picked up and corrected in the proofreading process may be to reveal a characteristically Western preference for logical order and clarity.

Leaving such formal issues aside, the substance of Kitayama's contributions is of great interest. Whereas in his work "taboo" refers to what he sees as the universal and absolute taboo against incest, "prohibition" pertains to pre-oedipal proscriptions meant to be broken over time. Kitayama brings a Kleinian perspective to bear upon the pre-oedipal, mother/child dynamic as reflected in a wide range of Japanese myths, legends and folk-tragedies.

Kitayama suggests that whereas many Western fairy-tales have happy endings reflecting the achieved integration of the depressive position and operating on a predominantly oedipal level, many of the Japanese tales reflect tragic failures of the integration process. Unable to come to terms with the imagined damage done by the demanding, greedy child to the devoted mother's body, the image of

the mother remains split into a benevolent woman and a damaged animal. In chapter three, "The Wounded Caretaker and Guilt," the themes of masochism, altruism and "forced guilt" (i.e., guilt induced in the child due to the mother's suffering or failure to "survive" its demands) are explored in a Winnicottian vein.

Splitting, idealization and "animalization" are reflected in the many tales of marriage between humans and non-humans. The hero saves the life of an attacked creature that takes him to a palace under the sea where he meets a beautiful princess who marries him. She hides her animal nature (in various tales a tortoise, a snake, a fish, a crocodile, a crane) and prohibits the hero from looking at her in certain circumstances, such as while she is giving birth or satisfying his needs through self-damaging activities such as creating cloth by pecking the feathers from her breast. He violates the prohibition and discovers what she has been hiding from him because she knows he cannot accept it: namely, her shameful animal nature and her sacrifices on his behalf.

Although Kitayama draws our attention to such animalization of the female in Japanese as distinct from Western folk-tragedies and legends, he does not go on to suggest what to me seems a plausible hypothesis: that the preoedipal themes so evident in these myths make manifest what is kept latent, deeply repressed, in our still-patriarchal Western culture and in Freud's father and Oedipus-centered psychoanalysis.

Anyone who today reads *The Future of An Illusion* and *Civilization and Its Discontents* cannot help feeling astonished when Freud repeatedly refers to the helpless infant's longing for the care and protection of the ... father; not to mention his opinion that all human relationships are characterized by ambivalence ... except for that of a mother and her son! As May (2000) has pointed out, it was Karl Abraham (1911) who made the breakthrough discovery of the bad, preoedipal mother and it was Melanie Klein who developed his insight.

But it was the non-analyst, though psychoanalytically informed feminist psychologist, Dorothy Dinnerstein, in her ground-breaking, still unassimilated and currently neglected masterpiece, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1976), who thought through the far-reaching implications of our association of nature, women and our bodies (and, hence, of death) with the overwhelming, both uncannily desired and dreaded, preoedipal mother. Dinnerstein's synthesis and elaboration of the thought of Freud, Klein and Norman O. Brown remains unsurpassed, and largely unread, because it addresses issues that remain even today highly anxiety-arousing for Western men and women alike.

Reading Kitayama's Kleinian interpretations of Japanese folk-tragedies assists us to begin to come to terms with such, still deeply repressed, pre-oedipal dimensions of our own experience. Many of the folk-tragedies he reviews will evoke in the Western mind ancient stories of mermaids, creatures of world

mythology, who are half-woman, half-fish, and who lure sailors to their deaths in the depths. Like the Japanese, we in the West suffer from unresolved pre-oedipal issues that are perhaps only more deeply repressed, covered over by oedipal themes, than they are among the Japanese. The very term “pre-oedipal” itself reflects a defensive flight forward and the privileging of the father over the mother, the oedipal over the “pre-oedipal,” in Western psychoanalysis.

The degree to which Japanese culture may be said to be characterized more by pre-oedipal than by oedipal themes echoes the controversy over the issue of whether or not Japan is (or was), as Ruth Benedict (1946) claimed some six decades ago, more of a “shame” than a “guilt” culture. As Creighton (1990) has pointed out in Benedict’s defense, she never denied the role of guilt in Japanese culture or of shame in Western culture, but pointed only to a difference of emphasis upon these two emotions in cultures that also differ in their respective emphases upon individual autonomy and social belonging.

While Creighton leans toward cultural relativism, distancing herself from any tendency to evaluate guilt as a more mature or advanced phenomenon than shame, E.R. Dodds (1951; Sagan, 2010) in his classic study of *The Greeks and the Irrational* rejects such relativism, considering the developmental shift he observes in ancient Greek civilization from shame to guilt as a moral advance, as in Erikson’s (1950) elaboration of the Freudian model. Certainly those of us who identify with the Kleinian tradition tend to consider shame an essentially narcissistic emotion characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position, however socially useful it may be in promoting socialization. Moving beyond persecutory to depressive anxiety and developing the “capacity for concern” (Winnicott, 1965) and the mature guilt that motivates reparation is a developmental advance. It is regrettable in this connection that Kitayama did not make use of Bettelheim’s (1976) classic study, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, which clearly draws attention to the advance toward integration represented in European fairytales (e.g., the brothers Grimm) as compared to the relative failure of such development reflected in the Scandinavian folk legends of roughly the same period (e.g., Hans Christian Anderson).

Kitayama appears to be among those who do not reject the characterization of Japanese culture as a “shame” culture: the final chapter of his book, entitled “Psychotherapy in ‘Shame Culture’,” addresses technical problems in dealing psychotherapeutically with resistances arising from shame-readiness and from difficulties encountered by a “talking cure” in a culture in which personal subjectivity is differently constructed and putting such subjectivity into verbal forms is problematic.

In addition to the contributions already addressed, Kitayama offers a thoughtful discussion of metaphorization and of therapeutic work with schizophrenic patients who literalize metaphor--and I would add, metaphorize the literal (Carveth 1984). He discusses innovative therapeutic strategies to subtly re-

introduce the distinction between the metaphor and its object that has been lost when what Segal (1957) called symbolic representation succumbs to symbolic equation. In chapter four, "Amae and Its Hierarchy of Love," Kitayama offers his own thoughts on the now relatively well-known work of Takeo Doi (1973) on what has generally in English been called "dependence," a term Kitayama feels implies something negative whereas in Japanese "Amae" has a generally positive sense. In his chapter on "Transience: Its Beauty and Danger," he supplements Winnicott's (1953; 1971) work on spatial relations of transition with a focus upon temporal relations, that which is transient in time, again suggesting a particular connection between Japanese culture and the idea of transience.

All in all, Kitayama's book offers the English-speaking reader a sampling of a lifetime of creative and reflective psychoanalytic work at the intersection of two cultures that is both psychoanalytically and sociologically rewarding.

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