

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Understanding the Role of Consciousness in Maruyama's Political Philosophy

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**Abstract:** In this paper, I will argue that Masao Maruyama's concept, *basso ostinato*, is best understood in conjunction with the evolution of the term consciousness in Japanese intellectual thought. Doing so allows us (1) to provide a more charitable interpretation of Maruyama's *basso ostinato* and (2) to supply a more methodological account of Maruyama's political philosophy. Such an interpretation of Maruyama's views also enables us (3) to demonstrate the continuous significance and applicability of his framework and methodology as I use his *basso ostinato* to show why Japan's "education-based nation" policy cannot sustain its post-war form of ultranationalism due to the embeddedness of the association of consciousness and autonomy in the current Japanese worldview.

**Keywords:** autonomy, *basso ostinato*, consciousness, education-based nation, Masao Maruyama, ultranationalism

In what follows, I argue that Masao Maruyama's *basso ostinato* [obstinate bass] provides a foundationalist framework and methodology for the analysis of political affairs. I maintain that even if Maruyama (1984/2011) explicitly noted that he refuses to use a framework in his explanation of political and societal changes, the role of consciousness in his *basso ostinato* shows otherwise. I also maintain that viewing Maruyama's *basso ostinato* in this way allows us to have a better understanding of the role of consciousness in shaping individual autonomy and ensuring the government's recognition of this autonomy in a nation-state as can be seen in the difficulties faced by the current Japanese government's attempt to create a new

form of ultranationalism based on its "education-based nation" policy.

To be more specific, my reasons for maintaining that Maruyama's *basso ostinato* is foundationalist in character can be traced to the following: (P1) Foundationalist theories in political philosophy maintain that there are self-evident and rationally incontestable universal truths regarding human nature, rights, and rationality that should be the bases of political affairs (Gutman, 1996, p. 340). (P2) If the *basso ostinato* (i.e., the recurring yet fragmentary consciousness underlying the development of a nation-state) can be seen in the historical, ethical, and political consciousness of a given period, then the *basso*

*ostinato* can be seen as providing a framework and a methodology for analyzing the political conditions at a particular time based on the aforementioned forms of consciousness. (P3) If (P2), even if Maruyama (1984/2011) claimed that his *basso ostinato* supplies an anti-foundationalist account of political events due to his emphasis on the subjective component of political analysis (i.e., the qualitative privilege of an individual's spatio-temporal existence in relation to a political event), his emphasis on the role of consciousness in understanding his *basso ostinato* shows that the existence of consciousness serves as the primary foundation of his political theory. (Conclusion) His implicit conception that consciousness is a part of human nature whose self-evident and rationally incontestable existence shapes how political rights and political affairs ought to be viewed demonstrates how his methodology allows us to establish the foundationalist character of his political philosophy.

Within this context, this paper is divided into three sections. In the initial part of this paper, I will develop (P1) to (P3) of my argument. This is followed by a possible rebuttal to (P3) of my argument. This rebuttal will take the following form: (P1\*) Even if the existence of consciousness serves as the foundation of Maruyama's *basso ostinato*, his conception of consciousness should not be divorced from how it has developed in Japanese intellectual thought. (P2\*) Since (P1\*), this shows the subjective component of his *basso ostinato*. (Conclusion\*) Maruyama's *basso ostinato* cannot be seen as a political theory that supplies a foundationalist framework and methodology for it is ultimately linked to how the concept consciousness has evolved in Japan's intellectual history. In the same section, I will debunk (P2\*) by emphasizing that the contemporary meaning of consciousness in Japan has led to its equation with the liberal concept of autonomy. I will also demonstrate that due to this, the current Japanese government's "education-based nation" policy cannot support its attempt to create a new form of ultranationalism in the country. Finally, I will conclude this paper by discussing the role of subjectivity and objectivity in our analysis of political affairs. In doing so, I will show that its ability to capture the subjective and objective aspects of our political lives provides us with another reason for the continuous relevance of Maruyama's *basso ostinato*.

Within this context, the importance of the following discussion can be traced to the following. First, at the

minimum, it allows us to supply a more charitable account of Maruyama's political philosophy (i.e., one that does not lead to inconsistencies). Second, it shows the continuous significance of Maruyama's political philosophy in the analysis of current political affairs. Most importantly, it demonstrates how the Japanese conception of consciousness can help us to have a deeper understanding of the liberal conception of autonomy.

### **Consciousness and the *Basso Ostinato*: Establishing the Foundationalist Character of Maruyama's Political Philosophy**

In this section, I will develop (P1) to (P3) of my argument. In doing so, I will demonstrate how (1) the development of Maruyama's *basso ostinato* is intricately connected with the Japanese conception of consciousness. In the process, I will also (2) show how this dependence allows us to provide cogent grounds to prove that Maruyama had a political philosophy that is foundationalist in character due to its reliance on the aforementioned concept in his analysis of the historical, political, and ethical consciousness prevalent during the end the Tokugawa Period.

Let us begin by looking at the usual meanings associated with the Japanese concept for consciousness (*ishiki*) in their ordinary language. In itself, the concept can be understood in at least three ways, all of which places the individual at its locus. First, it refers to an individual's general awareness of his physical surroundings. Second, it pertains to an individual's awareness of himself as an agent capable of practicing intentionality over himself and his environment (i.e., *ishikiteki*). Finally, it refers to an individual's awareness of himself as an agent within the social sphere (i.e., *shaka ishiki, mondai ishiki*). All of these senses of *ishiki* were aptly captured in how Maruyama (1984/2011) saw the applicability of the *basso ostinato* in the analysis of socio-political events, as he stated:

(The) *basso ostinato*... is described as a phrase that includes a certain melody and recurs obstinately in the lower tones, resonating with the high and middle tones. It is a specific sound but *not necessarily* the main melody... (The *basso ostinato* can be used to help us to) gain a better understanding of the "individual character" of Japanese intellectual history

by trying to reflect on it from a standpoint that explains change not *in opposition to* unaltered factors but rather *in the light of* a specific unaltered pattern of change... Thus, for reasons of convenience, I have come to think of the *basso ostinato* in three distinct areas: (1) Historical or cosmological consciousness, (2) ethical consciousness, (and) (3) political consciousness. (pp. 927–929)

At face value, each of these forms of consciousness corresponds with the aforementioned senses associated with *ishiki* earlier. For instance, the first sense of *ishiki* mentioned above may be seen to correspond with all the forms of consciousness related to the *basso ostinato*. Historical and ethical consciousness, on the other hand, may be perceived to correspond with *shaka ishiki*. Finally, *mondai ishiki* may be seen as displaying a form of political consciousness. However, this characterization of the relationship between the *basso ostinato* and *ishiki* is oversimplified for this relationship is already a byproduct of the current *basso ostinato* in Japan. That is, they are byproducts of the association of *ishiki* with liberalism. To gain a deeper understanding of *ishiki*, it is thereby necessary to trace its conceptual development prior to its association with liberalism.

At this juncture, it is crucial to introduce Maruyama's works that dealt with how Japanese Confucianism played an important role in the development of Japan as a nation-state due to the following reasons. First, in these works, Maruyama implicitly demonstrated how the differences between the prominent versions of Japanese Confucianism during the end of the Tokugawa Era enabled the availability of political ideals that coincided with liberalism. Second, these discussions also provide us with textual evidence that he implicitly traced the isolation of the political component of consciousness from its ethical component during the end of the Shogunate. Finally, these works also enable us to show that the foundationalist character of his political philosophy can be traced to its reliance on the continuous redefinition of consciousness in Japan's intellectual history.

In the process of introducing these texts, it is also important to note that they reiterated what Maruyama had continually emphasized in almost all of his essays and lectures. That is, the development of Japanese thought is dissimilar to its European counterparts

(Maruyama, 1946/2011, 1947/1969c, 1951/1969b, 1974, 1980/2014, 1984/1969d). He observed that Japan lacked the political conditions that would enable the correspondence of the changes in the fundamental mode of thought and the political thought in its development as a nation-state (Maruyama, 1974). Hence, he believed that the best way to assess the development of the Japanese nation-state is by determining the conditions on how political consciousness began to emerge and continually develop in the country (Maruyama, 194/1969a,; 195/1969b,; 1974, 1980/2014). For him, such a process involved the assessment of the historical, political, and ethical thought during the end of the Tokugawa Period until the Showa Period with a specific emphasis on the role of Japanese Confucianism in the development of Japan's premodern and modern nationalist thought (Maruyama, 1974,; 1980/2014).

Maruyama (1974) highlighted that the internal disintegration of Japanese Confucianism during the end of the Tokugawa Era is one of the definitive sources of the emergence of Japan's premodern nationalism. In a similar vein, he maintained that the development of ultranationalism since the beginning of the Meiji period until the Showa period was influenced by the Yamazaki Ansai School (Maruyama, 1980/2014). What is of import to my discussion, however, is the reliance of Maruyama's analysis on the association of modernity with rationalism. He recognized this association as can be seen in his statement below:

One of the most important characteristics of the modern spirit is rationalism. The line that extends from Chu Hsi philosophy through the Sorai school to National Learning, however, developed in an irrationalistic rather than a rationalistic direction... (This is because) modern reason did not, as is often naively believed, develop in a straight line by the gradual elimination of the irrational... Before cognitive intent can turn to the empirical and sensuous, it must abandon its leanings towards the metaphysical. In this process, the area open to rational cognition is considerably reduced, and instead, the irrational gains the ascendancy. (Maruyama, 1974, p.179)

That this occurs in a nation's adherence to modernity can be seen in Maruyama's (1980/2014) description of

the Japanese government's reaction to its initial official adherence to liberalism:

The greatest incident "since the founding of the nation" for the oracular legitimacy of the Japanese state was...the conclusion of the Second World War by Japan's unconditional acceptance of the Postdam Declaration.... (T)he greatest point of controversy that delayed its acceptance was the matter of "the maintenance of the national polity." The proposition that the future form of government of the Japanese nation would be entrusted to the *free choice* of the people was after all incompatible... with the principle (*tatema*) that the imperial line's presiding role over the power of rule was determined a priori and eternally by a "sacred edict." *The tangle over the acceptance of the declaration was finally solved through the "sagely decision" of the emperor* [emphasis added]. (pp. 405–406)

In his description of the conditions behind the acceptance of the Postdam Declaration above, Maruyama showed us a case where the irrational gained ascendancy over the rationale for even if the Declaration was meant to enforce Japan's adherence to liberalism, the underlying reason behind the acceptance of the Declaration went against the underlying principles behind the Declaration itself.

One of the crucial demands in the Postdam Declaration was that "(t)he Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people (hence) (f)reedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1945/966, para. 1-13). Yet, Maruyama (1980/2014) noted that the acceptance of the Declaration might not have been based on the Japanese government's adherence to the aforementioned tenets of liberalism. He claimed that the people should question "whether their acquiescence was based on their assent to a fatal change in the oracular basis of legitimacy, or in a position of unquestioning compliance that suspends value judgements regarding the *content* of the imperial decision and takes it as absolute simply because it is the imperial decision" (Maruyama, 1980/2014, p. 406).

To fully understand how the acceptance of the Postdam Declaration was still reliant on the Imperial

Way, it is crucial to demonstrate how the conception of rationality and its relation to the Japanese conception of consciousness has evolved in line with the development and influence of the most prominent schools for or against Japanese Confucianism during the Bakumatsu period until the Showa period. In this section, let us focus on how Japanese Confucianism developed at the end of the Tokugawa Era by presenting the political thought of Chu Hsi's philosophy, the Sorai school's, and the School of National Learning.

All the schools mentioned above adopted a rationalistic attitude in so far as they relied on the assumption that there is order in the world, which can be proven through the use of an empirical methodology. For instance, Chu Hsi's philosophy used the conjunction of its metaphysical views (e.g., the relationship of *li* and *ch'i*) and its empirical methodology to establish a social hierarchy (i.e., the five relationships) and an ethical framework (i.e., the five constant virtues) that will support its conception of natural order in society. On a different note, although the Sorai school adopted a constructivist view of social reality as it dispensed with Chu Hsi's theory of natural order (e.g., the Way is merely a historical and cultural product), Sorai presupposed the existence of an "autonomous personality" who had or shall continue to bring about Sorai's conception of the Way (Maruyama, 1974, p. 207). For the Sorai school then, the source of order is the individual who is capable of being an agent because he can bring about institutional changes in the disintegrating feudal society of Sorai's time.

As for National Learning, it is crucial to recognize that it was a Taoist and anti-Confucian school; hence, it is paradoxical to see how its opposition to Japanese Confucianism was dependent on Confucianism itself. This dependence is by no means the dependence of an anti-thesis to the thesis that it aims to overthrow. Furthermore, National Learning's views cannot be seen as a synthesis of the positions of the prior schools because it vehemently excluded Chu Hsi's and Sorai's views in their search for what is essentially Japanese in their study of ancient texts. Now, the aforementioned problem for National Learning arises because it cannot separate itself from the theory of natural order that can be seen in Chu Hsi's philosophy as it was forced to maintain that the formal structure of the state was based on the invention of gods. Even if the gods themselves were social constructs in National Learning, its emphasis on man's natural state as an emotional being

forced it to posit the existence of an absolute entity that enabled the existence of man's inner nature. This is similar to the Sorai school who found it impossible to attribute agency to mere individuals (i.e., only sages were capable of agency). Maruyama (1974) recounted National Learning's explanation for the existence of gods as he stated that "to maintain the primacy of inner naturalness over human invention, while avoiding any ideal absolutization of nature itself, there was no alternative (for Natural Learning) but to posit a superhuman, an absolute personality behind the inner nature as its foundation" (i.e., "nature as the invention of the Gods") (p. 271). Regardless of this view, National Learning still believed that "in the present world, we must respect the commands of the present" because "the Way of Antiquity expects all those below to obey and to follow exactly the existing laws issued by those above, *regardless of whether these laws are good or bad*" (Maruyama, 1974, p. 273). As I see it, these views forced National Learning to adopt a contradictory position for if laws are partially byproducts of man's inner emotional nature which is ordained to him by the gods, then it should be the case that these laws have an intrinsic value to them for they can also be seen as byproducts of the gods with humans serving merely as their intermediaries in the creation of laws.

Regardless of this inconsistency in National Learning, its views are important because they revealed the relativistic tendency of Sorai's philosophy. This poses a problem for Sorai because it goes against his rationale for the creation of an autonomous personality (i.e., an entity that will always ensure the retention of a feudal state). The views of National Learning are also important because they showed how political order was conceived and rationalized from the top and bottom of Japan's feudal state during that time. Maruyama (1974) noted that whereas Sorai described how laws were ordained from above (i.e., from the legal framework of society), National Learning described how laws were understood from below (i.e., in the context of the emotional life of man). Combined, Sorai's and National Learning's views provided the feudal lords with a rationale to retain the existing social hierarchy by providing the rest of the Japanese with justification on why their actions should be governed based on their *daimyo's* interpretation of the Imperial laws.

At this point, let us look at how the conception of rationality evolved through the intermingling of Chu

Hsi's philosophy, the Sorai School's, and National Learning's. Even if these schools aimed to protect feudalism, the disagreements between them led to the availability of the following views at the end of the Tokugawa Era: (1) political order exists, (2) it is possible to be an autonomous agent, (3) there is a distinction between the private sphere (i.e., man as an intrinsically emotional being) and the public sphere (i.e., man as a being bound by the laws of the land), and (4) political discourse is possible because even if laws are dependent on gods, (5) laws are also social constructs which are to a certain extent akin to cultural artifacts. Hence, (6) there must also be a social sphere for the ability to perceive one's self as an agent in both the private and public spheres as well as the capacity to participate in the creation of culture requires one's recognition that one's membership in a community can extend to one's membership in a society. Finally, (7) the state can hold an objective position as it only provides the formal structure for a nation.

With these in mind, it would not be remiss to state that the beginnings of a liberal outlook on social and political affairs can be traced to the clash of the three schools mentioned above. It would also not be remiss to maintain that their disagreements show how consciousness began to take a center stage in Japan's political thought at that time. This can be seen in (1) to (7) above. The introduction of an autonomous agent who is capable of autonomous invention involves the presupposition of a conscious being. However, consciousness in this context does not merely involve knowing one's place in the natural order (e.g., Chu Hsi's philosophy), but it also involves knowing one's capacity to act and hence, shape the social and political realms (e.g., Sorai school and National Learning). It also involves the recognition of one's awareness of one's self as a separate agent from the state (e.g., National Learning). That is, because there is a difference between the rational (e.g., Sorai school) and emotional (e.g., National Learning) component in one's nature, there must be a private space that should not be infringed on by the state. Most importantly, because one shares these attributes with others, it is possible to conceive of one's self as a member of a community. In addition, because one recognizes how a community can construct social reality, one recognizes one's membership in a society. As I see it, these became the roots of premodern nationalism in Japan.

Admittedly these modes of understanding

consciousness were mostly adopted by the members of the upper-class during the Bakumatsu Period. Regardless, as I see it, I have provided an ample demonstration of how the fermentation of modernity and, along with it, the rationality associated with liberalism can be traced to this period. At this point, it is crucial to show how Maruyama's discussion of the latter part of the Tokugawa Period relied heavily on the prevailing mode of consciousness during that time. Even if the conception of consciousness continued to change in Japan's intellectual history, the assumption that understanding consciousness must also involve understanding the political and ethical thought of a given time allows us to consistently maintain that Maruyama adopted a foundationalist political philosophy. Recall that the minimum requirement to state that one has a foundationalist political philosophy is that one's analyses presuppose "self-evident and rationally incontestable universal truths regarding human nature, rights, and rationality that should be the bases of political affairs" (Gutman, 1996, p. 340). That Maruyama implicitly held this view is evident in his reliance on the role of consciousness in his description of political events. Even if he was referring to the predominant consciousness of a particular time, the presumption that there is such an overall consciousness involves a presumption that those who share that consciousness are conscious beings as well. In effect, it is a self-evident and rationally incontestable fact in Maruyama's political thought that it is a part of human nature to be a conscious being. In addition, because he framed his discussion of the end of the Tokugawa Era in terms of the relationship of modernity and rationality, it would not be remiss to maintain that he implicitly held that the ability to be aware of one's environment is part of human nature. Moreover, because awareness of political affairs is best understood in terms of societal or cultural awareness, then it must follow that the inherent awareness of human beings has an inherent rationality that guides it so much so that it can knowingly or unknowingly create and support a form of social order. In a similar vein, this inherent rationality allows us to attribute fundamental rights to ourselves and to others as well. The problem, however, lies in ensuring that these rights are consistent with the inherent rationality of our nature (e.g., the divine right of the Emperor should not be the basis for accepting Imperial edicts).

With these in mind, regardless if Maruyama

(1980/2011) emphasized the role of subjectivity in his analyses, he implicitly recognized the foundationalist character of his political philosophy when he characterized Japan's intellectual history in the following way: (It should be understood) "from a standpoint that explains change not *in opposition to* unaltered factors but rather *in the light of a specific unaltered pattern of change ... (When I say unaltered), I mean simply that it is something not easily changed [emphasis added]*" (p. 929–930). To see a pattern requires the existence of an agent who is aware and whose awareness is capable of recognizing and framing patterns of change. It would not be remiss on our part then to conclude that the existence of consciousness and all the capacities associated with it serves as the primary foundation of Maruyama's political philosophy.

At this juncture, it is important to show that the dependence of his political philosophy on its foundational assumption of the existence of consciousness provides us with a methodology for analyzing political thought. Recall that he maintained that his *basso ostinato* could be understood in three distinct areas: historical, political, and ethical consciousness (Maruyama, 1984/2011). Using these three distinct areas in the analyses of how individual consciousness brings about the prevalent thought during a particular time gives us a methodology for the analysis of political affairs.

It is important to note that Karl Mannheim influenced Maruyama's political philosophy. Maruyama used Mannheim's philosophy to establish that "the historical development of the state (facts), and the historical development of theories and concepts of the state (meaning) (wherein) (t)he latter had to take into account the value-consciousness of the subject" (Kersten, 1996, p. 87) should be separated. From this perspective, it is reasonable to maintain that Maruyama recognized that even the elements of his *basso ostinato* were subject to the changes in the context of thought in a given timeframe. It is important to establish this because it allows us to reject a possible charge of inconsistency in Maruyama's conception of history, which has negative repercussions to our attempt to establish his foundationalist philosophy. This charge of inconsistency may be presented in the following way: If Maruyama maintained the fluidity of thought in his *basso ostinato*, why does he provide a definitive conception of history, especially because

history is one of the primary components of his *basso ostinato*?

The aforementioned charge of inconsistency is best understood as Yumiko Iida (2001) recounted how Maruyama described history below:

(The three components in which we can understand the Japanese's view of history are) (*n*)*aru* (history as a natural process of becoming), *tsugi* (history as a succession of discrete, causally unlinked events in the greater whole of flux), and *ikioi* (the natural creative dynamic as the driving force of history). Together these three notions constituted 'history' conceived as the unfolding sequence of naturally motivated events without subjective intervention, or as he expressed it: '*Tsugi tsugi nariyuku ikioi.*' Seen from this 'historical' perspective each moment is ahistorically totalized in the present, reason and truth are made relative and inconsequential to each moment, and the world appears as a kind of nihilistic series of events governed by *nariyuki*, the uncontrolled natural process. (pp. 96–97)

In her analysis of Maruyama's position, Iida (2001) claimed that his emphasis on the deep rootedness of this view of history on the Japanese people explained why Maruyama saw the Japanese as "a contemplative subject devoid of any active notion of agency, ability, or obligation, to participate in the making of history... (They were inclined) towards a resolute subordination to naturalistic orders and a tenacious resistance to the acceptance of universal reason, truth, and morality" (p. 97).

At face value, such a characterization of history does not seem to coincide with our claim that the existence of consciousness is the underlying foundation of Maruyama's political philosophy. After all, he removed the subjective component in the historical process and emphasized how it is an "uncontrolled natural process" (Iida, 2001, p. 97). Yet, understood from Mannheim's distinction between the historical development of the state and the historical development of the ideas associated with the state, it is reasonable to maintain that when he spoke of *tsugi tsugi nariyuku ikioi*, he was only describing the Japanese context of thought regarding history during the post-Restoration period.

In addition, it is crucial to point out that Maruyama also derived his conception of autonomy from Mannheim's philosophy. Mannheim believed that autonomy is best expressed "through acting and doing...(and) also through the thinking which must go with them" (1936, as cited in Kersten, 1996, p. 86). In effect, the removal of the subjective component in how historical events are understood does not necessarily negate the role of consciousness in Maruyama's political philosophy. Autonomy presupposes consciousness. Also, consciousness, in its most basic form as the general awareness of one's self and one's situatedness in an environment, involves the recognition that, although humans are influenced by the subjectivity of their position (e.g., actual involvement in a historical event), they can go beyond this subjectivity and reach a more objective position in the assessment of their relation to an event. As I see it, what Maruyama wanted to be recognized, by emphasizing *nariyuki* [the process of becoming], is that in becoming aware of the uncontrolled natural process of history, one can look at the events within it from a more objective standpoint. Such a process involves the aspects of autonomy that Mannheim described above. With these in mind, the possible charge of inconsistency against Maruyama's political philosophy mentioned earlier can be dissolved.

In this section, I developed (P1) to (P3) of my argument. In the process, I showed the following: (1) how the existence of consciousness serves as the main foundation of Maruyama's *basso ostinato*; and (2) how an analysis of the ethical and political thought of the prominent Japanese Confucian schools during the end of the Tokugawa Era showed us how the concept of consciousness has evolved in the period in such a way that it coincides with how it is viewed in a liberal framework. I also (3) demonstrated that even if Maruyama (1984/2011) claimed that his *basso ostinato* supplies an anti-foundationalist account of political events due to his emphasis on the subjective component of political analysis, his emphasis on the role of consciousness in understanding the *basso ostinato* shows that consciousness can consistently serve as the primary foundation of his political theory regardless of how he characterized history. Due to these, (4) I was able to establish that Maruyama's implicit conception that consciousness is a part of human nature, the self-evident and rationally incontestable existence of which, shapes how people should view

political rights and political affairs demonstrates how he had a foundationalist political philosophy that can also supply us with a methodology for the analysis of political affairs.

### **Education as a Tool for Ensuring Political Legitimacy: An Application of Maruyama's *Basso Ostinato***

In this section, I will develop a counter-argument to my position regarding the foundationalist character of Maruyama's political philosophy. This counter-argument emphasizes that (P1\*) even if the existence of consciousness serves as the foundational component in Maruyama's *basso ostinato*, his conception of consciousness should not be divorced from its evolution in Japanese intellectual history. (P2\*) If (P1\*), the concept of consciousness shows the subjective component of his *basso ostinato*. (Conclusion\*) Maruyama's *basso ostinato* cannot be seen as a political theory that supplies a foundationalist framework for it is ultimately linked to a specific conception of consciousness (e.g., the Japanese concept *ishiki*). I will show that this counter-argument can be debunked by targeting (P2\*). To do this, I will show that the contemporary meaning of consciousness in Japan has led to its equation with the liberal concept of autonomy. In the process of debunking (P2\*), I will also show how Japan's "education-based nation" policy cannot support its goal of establishing a new form of ultranationalism in the country.

To establish (P1\*), it is crucial to emphasize the importance that Maruyama attributed to the Yamazaki Ansai school's theory of correct lineage (henceforth, CL) and theory of the perpetual crisis of the national polity (henceforth, CP) (Maruyama, 1980/2014). CL is the problem of "the legitimacy of rule," i.e., the problem of giving qualifications to a specific ruler or ruling system such that it can procure obedience of the ruled without relying solely on violence" (Maruyama, 1980/2014, p. 358). In contrast, CP is the problem of ensuring the proper balance between being in a state of vigilance against political change and ensuring the continuous legitimacy of political order (Maruyama, 1980/2014). In this context, CP is dependent on CL because the mechanisms needed to ensure the retention of political order relies on how a political system gains its legitimacy. Yet, Maruyama (1980/2014) explicitly noted that it is crucial to recognize that CL is, in itself,

a by-product of the dominant worldview during a particular time. It is for this reason that he distinguished "L-orthodoxy" (i.e., CL) from "O-orthodoxy" wherein the latter refers to legitimacy as it is conceived in "a doctrine or worldview" (Maruyama, 1980/2014, p. 358).

Now, Japanese ultranationalism can be understood in terms of both O-orthodoxy and L-orthodoxy. It is a by-product of CP as it involves the adherence to the Imperial Way's view of legitimacy (L-orthodoxy) that sprung from the conflict between the Ansai school (O-orthodoxy) and Western liberalism (O-orthodoxy). This is evident if the forms of historical, ethical, and political consciousness that enabled the growth and retention of ultranationalism were considered as by-products of the need to ensure the retention of the L-orthodoxy (i.e., Imperial Way) during that time (Maruyama, 1946/1969d, 1947/1969a).

Let us now move on to demonstrate Maruyama's usage of his *basso ostinato* in showing the forms of consciousness that enabled pre-war ultranationalism in Japan. It is important to reiterate that this *basso ostinato* coincided with the L-orthodoxy of the Imperial Way, as can be seen in the following. First, the historical consciousness during the period provided an extreme interpretation of the Emperor's Imperial Rescript on education, which claimed that the goal of the Emperor and, hence, the function of the Empire was to unite and bring universal peace to the world (*hakko ichiu*). Second, the ethical consciousness evident during the time interpreted the aforementioned Rescript's emphasis on the Imperial Way as requiring that each Japanese citizen must give primacy to his duties towards the Emperor/Empire over his individual rights in order to demonstrate his allegiance to the Emperor/Empire's ultimate goal of fulfilling *hakko ichiu*. Finally, the political thought during this period supported an interpretation of the aforementioned Rescript's unclear distinction between the public and private domains in a nation-state.

The effects of this *basso ostinato*, which shows the manifestations as well as the repercussions of Japanese ultranationalism, can be seen in the following. First, it enabled a historical consciousness where the Japanese perceived their government as the rightful possessor of political power in the world, which led them to perceive themselves as superior over other races (i.e., a magnified form of ethnocentrism). Second, the ethical thought that developed from ultranationalism led the



Japanese to unconsciously deny their capacity for autonomy by refusing to take accountability for their own actions (e.g., transfer of oppression, Japanese system of psychological compensation). Also, the political thought that emerged from their extreme nationalism retained the blurred distinction between the public and private domains within Japan even after that period.

Based on the forms of consciousness that enabled Japanese ultranationalism above, it can be seen how the O-orthodoxy of the Imperial Way was used as a means to solve L-orthodoxy (i.e., CP) through the educational system. The combination of the 1890's Revision of the Primary School Law (i.e., Elementary School Order, 1886) and the Rescript enabled this by dispelling the acceptance of any form of heterodoxy amongst the Japanese. This allowed the Japanese to adopt an extreme form of nationalism because they saw this challenge as an affront to their own moral nature. This placed them in a continuous state of vigilance against any possibility of political change.

As I see it, even the Basic Act on Education (2006) and the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (Policy Planning and Coordination Division, Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, 2008) in Japan are best understood in the same lines as the function of the Elementary School Order (1886) and the Rescript in solving CL and CP above. From my perspective, the only thing that has changed now is CL. The L-orthodoxy now is provided by democratic liberalism. The O-orthodoxy, on the other hand, continues to adopt ultranationalism. Within this context, the combination of the Basic Act on Education (2006) and the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (Policy Planning and Coordination Division, Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, 2008) can be seen as an attempt to revive ultranationalism in Japan. What is noteworthy about this attempt is that it demonstrates how it seems to be possible for the O-orthodoxy of ultranationalism to be supported by the L-orthodoxy of liberalism.

To be clear, the O-orthodoxy of liberalism can be seen in the rationale of the Basic Act on Education (2006) as it maintained that the law aims to support "the democratic and cultural state of Japan and will contribute to peace and human welfare" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2006, para. 10). Yet, the libertarian view that is supposed to be encapsulated in the initial lines of

the law becomes suspect when placed in conjunction with the following statements:

Rationale of the law: (I)t is important to cultivate people who long for truth and justice... (This law) promotes education that transmits tradition and helps create a new culture. It has been enacted in order to...promote education that opens the way to Japan's future... (One of its) (m)ain regulations: (I)n the case of political education, it should follow the principle that) (p)olitical education is regarded as necessary for good citizenship. (MEXT, 2006, para. 10)

At face value, the principles of truth and justice mentioned above can be understood within the context of a liberal framework, yet, the rationale's emphasis on the transmission of tradition and the creation of a new culture reminds us of the aims of the Rescript. That the aims of this law may be reasonably interpreted as having the same goals as the Rescript's is evident in how "a good citizen" will be formed under the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (Policy Planning and Coordination Division, Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, 2008).

It is crucial to note that the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (Policy Planning and Coordination Division, Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, 2008) emphasized from the very beginning that Japan is "an education-based nation" (Office for the Promotion of Educational Reform, Policy Planning and Coordination Division, Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau [OPER], 2008, para. 1). This emphasis may be seen as the Ministry of Education's way of dispelling one of the criticisms against the development of nationalism in post-Restoration Japan. That is, its educational system did not bring about *citoyen* [citizens] (Maruyama, 1951/1969b). Such an individual was not developed during the pre-war period because the educational system at that time was geared towards the creation of ultranationalists. In this context, the dangers of the government's complete involvement in the creation of its educational curriculum can be seen. The current Japanese curriculum seems to show that the current government recognizes that the failure in the pre-war educational system's creation of ultranationalists laid partially in the bases of its L-orthodoxy on the Imperial Way. For this reason, the current Ministry of Education enabled a condition where, in the process of "establishing the

framework of (the) educational systems and (the) standards of the Courses of Study," the government can set which kinds of values and facts should be included in the curriculum (OPER, 2008, Chapter 3). This was made possible because even if the L-orthodoxy of liberalism sees the government as merely providing the structural framework for the state, the O-orthodoxy in Japan is tinged with ultranationalism. This is problematic for it enabled a scenario where the improvement of high school textbooks involves a reinstatement of the values that were connected with ultranationalism (e.g., extreme ethnocentrism, purity of the nation). Due to this, the educational framework set by the current government shows how it uses liberalism's L-orthodoxy to go beyond creating the formal structure of Japan as it also used it to foster ultranationalist values in its educational system. This is possible because the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (Policy Planning and Coordination Division, Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, 2008) commands the Education Ministry to take control of the "improvement of content, descriptions, and styles" of "basic knowledge" (OPER, 2008, Chapter 2).

Another interesting point in the current Japanese educational system's use of liberalism's L-orthodoxy in the promotion of ultranationalism can be seen in how it enables a convoluted conception of truth and justice. Recall that Maruyama emphasized that the problem of legitimacy can also be understood in terms of CP. The conditions that would enable a solution to CP is provided by the contents of the curriculum. For example, by practicing historical revisionism in Japanese high school textbooks (e.g., see Lee, 2014, pp. 509–547), the members of the populace are indirectly sanctioned by their government to adopt a state of vigilance in order to ensure that the Japanese's official account of historical events provides the singular truth about those events. Note also that as Japan's historical revisionism has led it to downplay or even deny its role in some wars, the rationale behind the Basic Act on Education (2006), which maintains that Japan will contribute to peace, is given a different meaning. This goal can now be seen as separate from the rationale behind the Postdam Declaration and the Japanese's acceptance of its contents. In effect, the act of contributing to peace can also be understood as the act of ensuring the continued legitimacy of the state against heterodoxies. The heterodoxies

now are the more accurate accounts of historical events. Another crucial heterodoxy is the view that Japan should continue to uphold its stance on non-militarization.

If, as I have demonstrated so far, the beginnings of a new form of ultranationalism is being developed in Japan then it seems that there is a problem regarding my argument supporting the foundationalist character of Maruyama's political philosophy. Such is the case because it seems that even the concept of consciousness needs to be reevaluated in line with what I argued to be the current O-orthodoxy in Japan (i.e., post-war ultranationalism). However, as I see it, it would be remiss to state that the existence of consciousness cannot serve as the foundation of Maruyama's political philosophy due to this development of post-war ultranationalism in the country. As I have demonstrated in the previous section, *ishiki* has already been associated with liberalism. This is an inevitable process when a country adopts liberalism as its L-orthodoxy because liberalism is founded on the assumption that humans are conscious beings who are capable of agency. Hence, even if the O-orthodoxy in Japan supports ultranationalism and its denial of an individual's agency, its L-orthodoxy compels the Japanese government to protect their citizen's autonomy. Within this context, I can still maintain that the existence of consciousness serves as the foundation of Maruyama's political philosophy. In fact, the association of the Japanese concept of consciousness with liberalism provides it with a wider sense of objectivity for liberalism associates both consciousness and autonomy with universality.

In this section, I (1) provided a possible counterargument to my position by highlighting the subjectivity of the Japanese conception of consciousness due to its dependence on Japan's intellectual history. In response to this, (2) I demonstrated that regardless of whether the term consciousness is best understood in line with Japan's intellectual history, the current conception of consciousness in Japan is still associated with liberalism because Japan adopts the L-orthodoxy of liberalism. In effect, I was able to quash (P2\*) of a possible counterargument to my position. I also showed that, (3) even if there are attempts to separate consciousness with autonomy, as can be seen in the usage of the educational system to establish pre-war and post-war ultranationalism, the fact that the

existence of autonomy is the bases of Japan's current L-orthodoxy will continually support my claim that the existence of consciousness can still serve as the foundation of Maruyama's political philosophy.

## Conclusion

As I see it, one of the appeals of Maruyama's *basso ostinato* lies in its capacity to provide a framework and a methodology that allows us to combine our subjective and objective analyses of political events. It is able to do this for it showed that a subjective position can be used as the starting point in arriving at an objective account of political reality. This should not be understood as my endorsement of the association of Maruyama's political philosophy with relativism. Rather, it should be understood as my way of showing that Maruyama's political philosophy unites the subjective first-person and the objective third-person access of an individual to the political reality that he belongs to. To be clear, Maruyama's *basso ostinato* enables this because it is founded on the assumption that human beings are conscious entities who are capable of creating and accessing political reality. The methodology that can be derived from his usage of the *basso ostinato*, on the other hand, shows that regardless of one's subjective access to one's political reality, one should continually recognize the importance of situating one's understanding of the political realm in line with the historical, ethical, and political consciousness of a particular period. Such a methodology requires one to understand an event based on how it is situated in a particular worldview (e.g. O-orthodoxy, L-orthodoxy, and heterodoxies). Yet, it also requires one to continually recognize how one's subjectivity helps in the evolution of a worldview.

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## Declaration of ownership

This report is my original work.

## Conflict of interest

None.

## Ethical clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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