

Concept of Freedom in Japan (1854 – 1890)

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The idea of freedom generated many facets of social and political expressions in the first half of the Meiji period. Although scholars of Dutch learning flocked to Nagasaki to gain knowledge in science and medicine from the Dutch stationed at Deshima during the Yedo period, the traffic and the scope widened rapidly after the scare of Commodore Perry and the Black Ships. Information that the scholars and the Bakufu officials sought and received through the Dutch now included current international affairs and political developments. Less than six years after Japan was opened by the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854, the first Japanese embassy was to leave for the United States.

As a member of the entourage, the twenty-five year old Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), an already acknowledged master of Dutch studies, was one of the first Japanese to experience a Western nation in full diplomatic regalia. He was to visit Europe in another mission two years later. His reports in *Conditions of the West* published in 1866 became a best seller. Fukuzawa wrote on the variety of subjects which he had observed, studied and experienced during these trips— on political and social systems, public education and institutions, medical and cultural facilities, and on science and technologies. In the first chapter on politics, Fukuzawa tackled the idea of freedom which was essential in understanding the political systems in the West.

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, “Freedom” became the most popularly employed word by political aspirants, social innovators, and ‘modernization’ intellectuals. The *Meirokusha* scholars wrote on the subject, and political movements used it in their slogans. However all too often, “freedom” is seen in the context of political or social manifestations

rather than an idea. How does the concept of freedom in Japan differ from that of the West? And Why?

Fukuzawa Yukichi's Reaction to the Idea of Freedom

In the first chapter, *On Politics, of Conditions of the West* (1866), Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), undertakes the concept of freedom as “*Jishu Nin'i*” [自主任意] (Initiative and Self-determination).

“The purport of freedom is to have liberal national laws which do not bind individuals: To allow men to choose their own vocation—those who prefer to become warriors to pursue such careers and those who prefer to become farmers to farm; to make no distinction in the classes of warrior, peasant, craftsman, and merchant; not to be influenced by hereditary backgrounds and not to discriminate individuals with the authority of official ranks. That the high and low, the noble and base, are to extend their potentialities in their stations without infringing upon other's freedom. However, imperial decree must be respected in the administration of official duties, men of reason and letters be acknowledged while labors without learning must be scorned.”

Fukuzawa footnotes emphatically.

“*Jishu-nin'i* [自主任意] (self-determination) and *Jiyū* [自由] (freedom) of the foregoing do not imply that each individual is free to do what his selfish interest dictates him to do without heeding the laws of country, but that those who live there associate with each other without fear or reserve and perform to the best of their ability. This idea is called “*frīidomu*” or “*riberuchi*” in English. I am yet to find an appropriate word in translation.”*

It is quite apparent that Fukuzawa's concept of freedom lacked an ideological emphasis, and that his interest and understanding were on the manifestation of the idea in the resulting political and social situations. However, he was one of the first to notice the importance

* *Nihon no Meicho*, Fukuzawa Yukichi pp. 357–358

of the idea of freedom during the last days of the Tokugawa regime.

Influential scholars of the Dutch Studies of the preceding generation, such as Yokoi Shōnan (1809–1869), and Sakuma Shōzan (1811–1864), had an awakening to the idea of democracy—that the people’s participation in the government was essential to the unity of a nation. In his discourse *Kokuze Sanron* [国是三論] (Three Propositions for the State), Yokoi listed democratic system of government as the first of the three musts for building a strong nation. The other two were the financial and military stabilities. Sakuma Shōzan was of the similar opinion, including the proposals for attaining these goals. The famous slogans of the forthcoming Meiji period, “Fukoku-Kyōhei” (prosperous nation, strong military) and its methodology, “The Japanese Spirit and Western Technology” all but eradicated their concern for the people’s place in the government. Having come into actual contact with the Dutch at Nagasaki, they had been exposed to the advanced state of the Western countries, not only in the fields of medicine and natural science but in more abstract states of politics and social conditions. Outside of the Tokugawa hierarchy however, they made a great impression on enlightened *daimyos* and students of their domain schools. In the rapidly changing tides of the period leading to and the aftermath of the Restoration, these students were to find important roles to play.

When Perry landed in Yokohama in 1854, Sakuma Shōzan was there in the command of what they had of an artillery force and the young Fukuzawa in Nagasaki was learning to read Dutch and to learn about gunnery. Two years later, Fukuzawa was a student at Teki-juku, the school run by another prominent Dutch scholar, Ogata Kōan (1810–1863).

Fukuzawa could take quite a few steps further than his predecessors proving into more abstract elements of the Western nations as he was to see these nations with his own eyes. Only six years after the Kanagawa Treaty of 1854, we see Fukuzawa boarding a 625-ton Kanrin-maru bound for the United States. He pulled strings to get a position as a servant to the admiral of the *bakufu* Navy, Kimura Settsu no kami, and in this capacity, he was among the entourage of the first Japanese mission to the United States. He was already a master of Confucian

and Dutch learnings, and was considered the most brilliant of Kōan's school in Osaka. In 1862, Fukuzawa was again a member of the Japanese mission to Europe, this time as an interpreter. Added to his language ability, his young impressionable eyes made him the most observant witness and recorder of these trips.

The outcome of these trips is *Conditions of the West* published in 1866 which sold some 200,000 copies. He began his discourse with politics as if foreseeing the great change to come—that of the fall of the *bakufu* only two years later. Fukuzawa's study into the government systems of modern nations brought to light the idea of freedom at their core. However pragmatic Fukuzawa's approach was to see how the idea worked in actuality, his struggle to translate the meaning of "freedom" or "Liberty" proves the depth of his understanding of the Western ideology. After Fukuzawa, politicians and educators used "jiyū" freely, and in the process, it seems that the conceptual differences between the Western mind and the Japanese on "freedom" seemed to become wider apart.

Meiropusha, the group of "Enlightenment" scholars

It was in 1873, the sixth year of the Meiji, that Mori Arinori (1847–1889) called a group of scholars to found an intellectual society, *Meiropusha*. The purpose was to 'promote civilization and enlightenment'. He had studied in the United States and England backed by his domain lord of Satsuma prior to the Restoration of 1868. He served as a minister to the United States in the Meiji government from 1871 to 1873, and upon his return to Japan, he began his activities based on his belief in the importance of education. As young as he was, at twenty-four, he was already looked upon as a formidable statesman, and collected about him the most eminent scholars of the time. Among those that Mori gathered were Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakamura Masanao (1832–1891), Kato Hiroyuki (1836–1916), Tsuda Mamichi (1829–1903), Nishi Amane (1829–1897), and Mitsukuri Rinshō (1846–1897) at the start. They had in common that all were imbued thoroughly in the traditional Confucian and the Dutch studies, and that they had their

roots in the old regime of Tokugawa. As befitting the aspiration of Mori who was to become the minister of Education, the purpose of their regular meetings was to broaden their knowledge and education in Japan. The members multiplied, their bulletins published through March 1874 to November 1875, forty-three issues in all, left a profound impression on the conscious minds of the period.

Nakamura Masanao was a Confucian scholar in the service of the *bakufu*. At the time of the Restoration, he found himself in London as the leader of the group of students sent abroad by the *bakufu*. Being a scholar of both Oriental and Occidental thoughts, he looked at the idea of freedom more philosophically. On his return to Japan, he translated John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* as *Jiyū no Ri* [自由の理] (Theory of Liberty) which was published in 1871. He admitted that his translation was an approximation. However, with his unhesitant use of *Jiyu* for liberty, his clear analysis of the theory, and, especially, his statement that the strength of the Western nations was largely due to people's representation in government, *Jiyu no Ri* was a timely appearance in 1872. Together with his translation in the previous year of *Self Help*, now a forgotten work of an English writer, Samuel Smiles, as *Saikoku Risshihen*, Nakamura's writings won a tremendous public acclaim. Nakamura became a mentor to many educators in the Christian oriented education of the new era. Significantly, he dealt with the most provocative elements of the day—those of the awakening of “self” and “liberty”.

Increasing members of the Meirokusha were diversely different individuals—scholars, physicians, bureaucrats of old and new regimes, and even merchants. And as often is the case of gathering of individuals, internal disagreements were inevitable. However, as is usual with the intellectuals, all were liberal minded. Most knew Dutch and English, and some, French, German, and Russian. In this atmosphere, be it for a practical catch-up-with-the-West purpose or for a political pursuit, the idea of freedom was discussed freely and publicly greatly influencing the younger intellectual generation.

The word *jiyū* blossomed during the first and the second decades

of the Meiji period. It meant, first of all, freedom from the old regime and the old values. The word was associated with the dreams of the new era—modernization, participation in the government, success, riches, and unlimited growth in industry. Freedom was no longer an idea, but a concrete means to attain one's goal.

The Movement for Freedom and People's Rights

In 1872, the Iwakura Mission was visiting the USA and Europe studying the structures of representative government; the universal education system and conscription system were enacted. Another of Fukuzawa's best seller, *Gakumon no Susume* [学問のすすめ] (An Encouragement of Learning) started to make appearance, serialized from 1872-74. His highly illuminating quotation from Jefferson, "All men are created equal", indeed seemed to be coming true.

During the first two decades of the Meiji, the best read translations, summaries, or introductions were of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Montesquieu's *de L'esprit des Lois*, Jean Jacques Rousseau's *de Contrat Social*, and Spencer's *Social Statistics*. The idea of freedom became a very political idea, and it became a synonym of democracy and of people's rights. The word *jiyū* appeared everywhere—in the names of newspapers, as the favorite subject of discourse by the intellectuals of the new era, and as the name of Itagaki Taisuke's (1837-1919) political party, *Jiyū-to*, organized in 1881.

The Movement for Freedom and People's Rights was motivated by Itagaki's demand in the government for a creation of Diet and election system in 1874. Aspiration for democracy manifested itself in the movement and it spread sporadically between the years 1874 to 1890. The first phase of the movement was quick and widely spread all over Japan but short lived. The ill organized groups had different aims and understanding of democracy. For those who felt that they had contributed for the success of the Restoration, the freedom meant the right to demand a situation to participate in the government of Satsuma-Choshū factions. For the disgruntled warriors of the lesser anti-bakufu domains and the educated retainers of the bakufu who

needed immediate occupations, the movement was a forum to make their demand. Facing the onslaught of rampant publications, the government answered with strict censorship of press and speech including *Meiroke zasshi*.

In the second phase of the movement, the victimized peasants who rebelled against the harsh Matsukata financial policy of early 1880s joined the camps of the movement. Revolutionary incidents often burst out. While many who had joined the movement did not have much interest in the idea of freedom and collaborated for purely social and economical reasons, there was also many young idealists who aroused enthusiasm among the common people.

Works such as Nakae Chōmin's translation of *du Contrat Social* was copied and spread among the conclaves of the freedom activists from 1876, before its publication. Ueki Emori's *Minken Jiyu-ron* (Theory of People's rights and Freedom), and *Genron Jiyū-ron* (Theory of the Freedom of Speech) of 1879 and 1880 respectively, sold tens of thousands copies.

During the 1880s, aspirants wrote drafts of constitution with the intent of presentation to the government and to the people. Three drafts Ueki made were especially interesting in that one could see the influence of Montesquieu's *de L'esprit des Lois*, and that they resembled the Constitution of the United States even to terminology.

It is to be noted that a large number of activists of the Movement for Freedom and People's Rights had come from Tosa. The domain was instrumental in bringing about the coalition of Satsuma and Choshū domains, and joined forces with them in toppling the Tokugawa bakufu. Both Itagaki Taisuke (1837–1919) and Goto Shōjirō (1838–1897) of Tosa were among the members of the central government of the new regime immediately following the Restoration. However, they were gradually pushed aside, and their struggles for establishing a representative government were met with increasingly bold rejections. After submitting the demand for election and the establishment of Diet, Itagaki and Goto returned to their domain of Tosa in Shikoku, the then Kochi prefecture. They formed a political party Risshisha strongly promoting

the ideals of democracy. Tosa was a hotbed of the Movement for Freedom and People's Rights. Younger generation of dedicated political thinkers grew in this atmosphere. Among them Ueki Emori (1857-1892), Nakae Chōmin (1847-1901), Baba Tatsui (1850-1888), Ono Azausa (1852-1886) were all natives of Tosa. Nakae had an extensive exposure to the French language and civilization from his youth before the Restoration, and spent three years studying in France having left Japan with the Iwakura Mission as an interpreter. Ono and Baba had longer experience in studies abroad, mostly England and in the United States. Their grasp of democracy at work, and their understanding of People's rights and responsibility for freedom were far-reaching and profound. They became extremely persuasive and illuminating educator-journalists of the day. They also received strong pressure from the oligarchy government whose control was strengthening by the day. Ueki was elected to the first Diet in 1890 but he died two years later at the age of thirty-five. The suspicion of poisoning is not cleared to this day. Baba was known as one of the best orators in Japan, worked for Jiyūto and as a member of *Jiyū Shimbun* but was to die as a political exile in Philadelphia at the age thirty-eight. His severe criticism of the oligarchy continued in English while in exile. Ono's approach, after his return from England in 1874, was enlightenment through humanitarian education. He became associated with Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922), a distinguished statesman from Saga, yet another of a peripheral domain. Okuma founded Kaishinto (Progressive Party) against the oligarchy, and Tokyo Sen'mon Gakko which was to become Wasada University later. Ono made a significant contribution to Okuma in politics and education, but he was to live a short life also—only thirty-five years. Among this generation of the Tosa intellectuals, it was left to Nakae Chōmin to witness the oligarchy in full control, the rising tide of Nationalism and militarism which culminated in Sino-Japan War in 1894-5. Nakae was to receive countless harrassments from the government fighting for freedom by writing.

The year 1890 marks the demise of the Movement for Freedom and People's Rights. The Constitution was amalgamated. It had been planned and worked on within the oligarchy of the oligarchy in strict

secrecy. Modelled after the Prussian constitution, it gave an absolute power to the emperor, and it was presented to the people as a gift of the emperor. The following year, the election for the first Diet was held. However, it could hardly be called a popular election as only 450,000 high tax payers were given the voting rights among the total population of more than 39,000,000. With the constitution and the Diet realised, and with the outward success of modernization, it was easy to turn the pride of the people into nationalism. Movements for individual freedom was doomed.

However, the movements of the early Meiji period left a notable mark in history; that it was the first democratic movement in Japan, and that it had produced some highly qualified statesmen in the Western sense. On the other hand, through its failure, the weakness of the innate Japanese characteristics came to surface. While it was apparent that democracy was welcoming to the people, they were reluctant to fight for freedom. Fukuzawa, with his accurate insight, did not translate freedom as *jiyū*; he struggled with the idea and called it *jishu nin'i*—initiative, self determination, and self-imposed responsibilities. Had the people known the true concept of freedom, and aspired to win it by themselves, they could not have been so easily manipulated by a stronger hand. Indeed, it took less than 20 years for the Meiji oligarchy government to replace itself in the position vacated by the Tokugawa bakufu. The first of the three propositions that Yokoi Shōnan had advocated— “a democratic government” was put aside and forgotten about, and the slogan for the rest of the Meiji period was “prosperity of the nation, strong military.”

Concept of Freedom and Existence of God

As we have seen, the order of progressive events differed in Japan from that of the West. Whereas conceptual stimulation led to the tide of social reforms which culminated in political changes in Europe, the mid-nineteenth century Japan saw the political change first, followed by demands for social reforms and, lastly, study of conceptual problems. The core of the stimulus had been a religious question in the West, but it was not so in Japan.

Paul Hazard said that with the philosophers of the French "Enlightenment" the revolution had actually taken place. The issue of the active philosophical struggles of the preceding era, 1680 to 1715, which was called by Hazard the period of the crisis of European conscience, was largely of a religious problem. With the "Crisis" period philosophers such as Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), François de Salignac Fénelon (1651-1715), Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757), the question of religious tolerance comes to the fore. It had been triggered by Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 which caused the persecution of Protestantism accompanied by the suppression of freedom of thought and expression.

Bayle had been born to a Protestant pastor; educated at Jesuit university in Toulouse. He was sent to Calvinistic Genève by his family after his conversion to Catholicism; he later settled in Rotterdam to fight for toleration between the two faiths. Fénelon was born to a noble Catholic family and became the archbishop of Cambrai, but he fought for toleration within the church which eventually brought him the royal disfavor. Fontenelle, a member of the French Academy and the secretary of the Academy of Science, had been educated at a Jesuit college in Rouen. Though he avoided open criticisms on religious issues, he spoke against emotional and sentimental prejudices against any religion by his writings in *History of Oracles* and *Origin of Fables*. His conspicuous omission of biblical stories was the obvious implication. It was the time of rational thinking against traditional, empiricism against mysticism, augmented by probing into Oriental philosophies—Judaic, Islamic, and Confucian.

Philosophers of the "Enlightenment" faced more personal entanglement with religions. Charles de Secondat, Baron de la Brède, et de Montesquieu (1689-1755) was educated at the college of Oratorians at Juilly from the age of eleven. The Oratorians at the time had been considered as even more progressive educators than the Jesuits, and he received an extremely liberal education on a wide range of subjects. He married a Protestant, became the chief justice of Bordeaux Parlement at the age of twenty-seven before he launched on a long career of

writing on the philosophy of law, politics, and natural science. Voltaire, or François Marie Arouet (1694–1778), received his education at the Jesuit College of Louis-le-Grand in Paris. With his voluminous writings of philosophical letters and on histories, he was the most popular philosopher of his time in England and America as well as in France. In his short masterpiece, *Candide*, Voltaire seemed to ridicule all established religions mercilessly. However, he had, at no time, lost faith in the existence of God. His complex views on religion were shared by his contemporaries, and his humane insight into history, disguised under incomparable sarcasm, had a great appeal to the European intellectuals. The Encyclopedist Denis Diderot (1713–1784) also studied at the College of Louis-le-Grand. Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–1780) started as a seminarian at Saint Sulpice, but later changed his mind about becoming a priest and turned to concentrate on philosophy. However, of all these “Enlightenment” philosophers, Jean–Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) seemed to have had more than his share of religious problems—inner struggles trying to define the existence of God, and reckoning with his own existence vis-à-vis God.

Rousseau was born in the austere Calvinistic Genève. Having lost his mother soon after his birth, he was brought up alternately by his watch-maker father and his aunt at the home of a pastor. He ran away from home at sixteen, and joined a sort of Protestant refuge where he met Madame de Warens and Catholicism. Madame de Warens was to become instrumental to his conversion to Catholicism as well as an instructress of love. Rousseau had been generally self-educated, but his intellect, talent in music, and connections through boudoirs brought him up in society, and in touch with Voltaire, Diderot, Condillac, and d’Holbach whose salon in Paris he was to become a standard member. It is largely owed to his humble origin, however, that he became the best read writer among his contemporaries in the late nineteenth-century-Japan. Uncomplicated by academism, his “primitive” approach to all his discourses were easily understandable and immediatly applicable to situations in Japan.

Rousseau met his initial success by his *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* winning the prize of the Academy of Dijon in 1750. He was

on intimate terms with “Les Philosophes” and “Les Encyclopedistes”, but his emotional and paranoid nature caused friction with them later. He also complicated himself by falling in love with one Thérèse le Vasseur, an illiterate but very companionable woman. The educator Rousseau sired five children with her but all were given away to a fondling home right after each birth, much to his regret later as none was to be recovered. Finally in 1768 he married Thérèse who remained his life-long companion. Rousseau’s opera, *Le Devin du Village*, had been performed in Versailles for the royal presentation, however he chose not to show up for the occasion forsaking the possible grant of a life-time pension. He wrote on music for Diderot’s Encyclopedia, and though his novels and essays on education and political theory were popularly accepted, he often had to resort to music copying to earn a living. Music was his only vocation and means on which he could count on in time of need. In his contrary behaviors against his idealism, one can feel his perpetual struggle with reality and spiritual matters. However, his conviction in the existence of God had always remained unshaken while he became less and less attached to the structures of any sect. “..Philosophy, whilst attaching me to what was essential in religion, had freed me from the host of petty forms with which men have obscured it,” (from Confessions) Rousseau decided to re-convert to Protestantism and return to Genève. For Rousseau, faith in God was a personal matter, and the rituals and forms of religions were better left to one’s sovereign or government. Thus to remain a citizen of Genève was to conform to Calvinism, the choice of the state.

The activities of the “Enlightenment” philosophers which encouraged free study into the established hierarchy of religion, kingdom, political and social structures were met with suppression and persecution. Diderot experienced prison terms and Voltaire died in exile. The American revolution, nourished by the “Enlightenment” philosophy, freed the yoke of England in the war of Independence. The Bourbon regime which helped the Americans for political reasons, was toppled by its own revolution twenty years later under the cries of “Egalité, Liberté, Fraternité.” The American Constitution guaranteed the freedom of worship and speech,

and of pursuit of happiness, the new nation was founded on the belief in the existence of Supreme Being—"In God we trust." While there were some atheists among the revolutionaries, France remained firmly a god-fearing country, in faith and practice. How did the Japanese students on the philosophy of this period look upon the problem of faith?

Japanese Intellectuals and the Existence of God

Traditionally, in Europe, from the Pre-Socratic eras up to the modern times, philosophers concerned themselves with the search for truth, the existence of a supreme being, or more simply, for God. More wars have been fought for religious reasons than for political, social, or economic reasons as there always hovered over them an object of worship. Whether to reach an unshakable conviction or a total renunciation, a thinking man had to face his own reckoning. The process created tension, and in the course it was possible to have a dialogue with the Existence.

What was the stand of the Japanese counterparts? Most scholars and students of foreign studies had been exposed to Christianity in the late Tokugawa period. Missionaries arrived in the treaty ports immediately after the opening of the country. Despite the fact that the ban on Christianity remained in effect until 1873, students were most eager to learn about the superior Western religion. It was not difficult for serious thinkers to accept another religion, if only to satisfy one's curiosity. Traditionally, in Japan, there had never been an absolute deity. Buddhism was polytheistic, and for centuries co-existed with the indigenous Shinto deities—sometimes in a complete fusion. There was little resistance against missionary works except among those who were against foreigners and all things foreign.

Yokoi Shōnan was assassinated in 1869 because of his inclination toward Christianity. He was not a Christian; however, his nephews, son, and his widow later, were not only converted but chose ministerial vocation. The founder of Meirokusha, Mori Arinori, also met his end by the hand of an assassin, a Nationalist fanatic, in 1889, for his Christian and progressive ideas. The exposure to Christianity was strong among the members of the Meirokusha, but their reactions were varied. Of the

original members, Fukuzawa Yukichi was an atheist and this permitted him to pursue his utilitarian course unhindered by soul-searching. Katō Hiroyuki turned against all things liberal—freedom, peoples' rights, and Christianity, and later served in educational department of the oligarchy. Just recently, in 1983, it was discovered that Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi had been initiated into Freemasonry while they were studying in Holland. It required an avowal of belief in the existence of Supreme Being. Nakamura Masanao, the Confucian erudite, became a sincere and devout Christian, and his theoretical deduction left a clear insight into the mind of Japanese in the matters of religion.

Nakamura was of the opinion that “Only after intensive pursuit for truth in one's own traditional religion, the words of Christ become meaningful.” He founded *Dōninsha* and its publication *Jogaku Zasshi* which provided a forum for Christian oriented men of letters. *Jogaku Zasshi* merged with a Buddhist magazine, *Daiishin*, in 1891, and thereafter carried unbiased Buddhist-oriented articles as well. Nakamura had advocated the universality of the doctrines of Christianity and Confucianism*, and of Buddhism, apparently. Nakamura's deduction was an ethical pursuit; it was a complete fusion of all acceptable religious thoughts which was traditionally Japanese.

Two great interpreters of Rousseau's political theory, Nakae Chōmin and Ueki Emori had a diversely different outlook on religion. Nakae was fiercely anti-religion. Ueki's aspiration toward Christianity was close to infatuation probably because of the fact that he had never experienced the West. It was through books and attendance at the Meirokusha meetings and Christian circles that Ueki expanded his knowledge and developed his political thinking.

Along with *jiyū*, *Tempu* [天賦] (Gift from Heaven) often appeared in coinage with freedom or people's rights, and Ueki was one to use it effectively in his writings and speeches. In *du Contra Social*, Rousseau had written that life—people's rights and the very existence of—was “un bienfait de la nature” (gift of nature), “un bienfait de Dieu” (gift from God), and “un don conditionnel de l'état” (conditional endowment from

* Editorial “Keiu-sensei” *Jogaku Zasshi* No. 269 pp. 501–502

the country). For Rousseau, it consisted of three-fold elements—scientific, spiritual, and social. Clearly, the recipient of the-gift-from-God would have the privilege as well as responsibility in Rousseau’s opinion. However, if it was a gift from Heaven, in the sense most Japanese would understand, one was merely to receive it, in gratitude perhaps, without answering back the giver. Herein lies a delicate difference in the concept between that of the West and of Japan. Even in Ueki’s persuasive arguments dealing with Heaven-given freedom or people’s rights, one fails to see his personal involvement with a Christian oriented God.

The most qualified of the interpreters and translators of Rousseau, Nakae Chōmin, was unaffected by Rousseau’s conviction and developed his own philosophy.

“..Space, time, and universe is one, and not plural. It doesn’t take much of imagination to think that there couldn’t be any beginning for space, time, or universe; or is there limit to directions upward or downward, or to east or to west...”*

“..I am given a limited time—a year and a half—and I am approaching the end very quickly. For a person in my state, it would be a comforting thought if one could believe that the soul is immortal. But how can I reconcile to such a notion in respect to science?”**

Compare this with Rousseau:

“All justice comes from God, He alone is the source, but if we knew how to receive justice from such a high place, then we would need neither government nor law.”***

Nakae was fighting cancer and the end was near. But he refused to

* Nakae Chōmin, *One and A Half Years* p. 431

** *ibid.* p. 432

*** *Toute justice vient de Dieu, Lui seul en est la source; mais si nous savions la recevoir de si haut, nous n’aurions besoin ni de gouvernement ni de lois.* -*du Contrat Social*- Livre II, Chapt. VI

depend upon religion. And his style took on a Voltairian vehemence: “..When the body disintegrates, how can anyone expect the spirit to live on. It is against the logic of a man who is not contaminated by the poison of religion to think of such a possibility.”**

In order to cultivate a new field, Voltaire and Diderot came into conflict with their mentor-educators—the Jesuits among them, and Rousseau wavered back and forth between Calvinism and Catholicism, and reached a sphere which would be called “Enlightenment”. Nakae practiced what Rousseau termed “teaching people to be free” by writing for the people fighting government persecution throughout his life, but the spiritual matter was his own. He confronted the God of Rousseau in total negation. Another man without conviction, Fukuzawa, took a different stand. Exposure to Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity had been just as wide and deep for Fukuzawa as for Nakamura and Nakae. Nakamura created his own sphere of faith by a complete infusion of the three doctrines. Nakae observed bloody political maneuvers caused by supposedly god-fearing peoples, both in Europe and the East, and reached the state of disbelief. Fukuzawa’s deduction was ethical and theoretical without reaching the conviction of Nakamura. He saw merits and faults in every religion, and when he used “Heaven” in his writings it gave a little more spiritual connotation than a simple “nature”. His was not a total negation of the Existence as that of Nakae, but he simply did not worry about his own faith or the matters of codified religions. He joined neither government nor popular movements; he thought that an excessive emphasis on “National Polity” was damaging to democracy as was the excessive demands of the popular movements. He concentrated on educating younger generation for what he believed in—the modernization of the country in every aspect.

Thus they won their spheres of *jishu nin’i*, the spheres of their own choice and undertaking—spheres of “freedom” which were not Eastern and old, or Western and modern.

** Nakae Chōmin p. 433

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