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The Confucianism Ideas during the Edo Era to the Trend of Thought of the Meiji Era

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1. Introduction

When I attended the international conference held at Kazimierz Dolny in May 2010, one Polish professor asked the following question: "Pedagogy starts with the philosophical question: 'What is it to be human?' How is this question answered in Japan?" This question reminded me of how pedagogy and philosophy are linked in Japan, and of issues due to the reformation of university education, where, in accordance with the recent reorganization of university education programs, philosophy has been removed from a compulsory subject.

At that time, I received an offer to write a paper on the transition of views of the Japanese since the Edo Era. Therefore, even though I have not majored in the study of Japanese philosophy, I decided to write this paper. As I have done specialized studies on educational thought by Janusz Korczak and early childhood education, I could

not cover the history of philosophy in Japan in this paper. I hope you will forgive me that I will partially introduce some ideas characterized in the early Edo and Meiji Eras.

One characteristic that represents the Japanese nature and ideas are "Bushido (the spirit of the samurai)". The "Bushido: The Soul of Japan", written by Inazo Nitobe and published in 1900, was translated into languages all over the world, introducing "the Bushido" to the rest of the world. The Bushido is one of the basic concepts of Japanese culture, and the origin of many Japanese virtues; however, it is impossible to understand Japanese way of thinking using only Bushido. Ideas formed during the Edo Era, which was ruled by the Tokugawa clan for over 260 years, with its national isolation policy, and severance from Western Europe, ideas made in the previous Eras, the transition to the Meiji Era, involving the opening of Japan and the return of political power to the emperor and thought that emerged from the dramatic changes towards modernization; these formed the foundation of the current Japanese culture in both positive and negative ways.

An event which has directly or indirectly affected the formation of the Japanese way of thinking is the national isolation policy which lasted about 260 years. Under the National Isolation Policy, the Japanese culture emerged. The isolation which lasted 260 years, impacted the subsequent meeting of Western cultures after it ended making the process of Japanese modernization different

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from that of other countries. It is said that Japan is “the end of East of Asia”. Even though Japan is located at the far eastern end of Europe, Japan closed its doors on Western culture, making Japan an almost enclosed state for over 260 years. When Japan re-opened its doors, rapid changes occurred because of the introduction of Western European cultures.

2. Characteristics of Japanese Philosophy Brought by the National Isolation

A philosopher of the Meiji Era, Chōmin Nakae (1847 to 1901) said, “There is no philosophy in Japan”; however, the word “philosophy” has recently emerged in modern Japanese. The word “philosophy” in Japanese started with Amane Nishi (1829 to 1897) who went to Holland by order of the federal government. He translated “philosophy” to “Tetsugaku (philosophy)” in 1874. In Japanese history, ideas such as the “Confucianism ideas”, which support Japanese trend of thought, are regarded as “philosophy”; however, Nishi saw that the “philosophy” of Western Europe, especially which exceeded neo-Confucianism¹, was different from Confucianism. Hence, philosophy could not exist without the inflow of philosophy from Europe. Nagata (1967)² gave two reasons for this statement.

The first reason is that Japan was an underdeveloped country compared to China and the major capitalist Western powers. Therefore, ideology had to be transplanted from developed countries

1 熊野純彦(Sumihiko Kumano)(2009)『日本哲学小史』中央新書, p. 17

2 永田広志(Hiroshi Nagata)(1967)『日本哲学思想史 永田広志日本思想史研究 第一巻』法政大学出版社, pp. 1-4

before Japan created the ideology which reached the standard of developed countries, causing an absence of Japanese identity. The second reason is that the Japanese philosophical idea which started as religious concepts became inseparable from religion and did not have a scientific column for the development of philosophy. Nagata said that Japanese philosophy emerged as religious idealism and for a long time has existed as Buddhism and Shintoism. On the other hand, Confucianism, which was a widespread philosophy during the Edo Era and was independent of any religion, was promoted as the ideology most suitable for maintaining orders in the strict feudal system of the shogunate. The Confucianism promoted by the Edo government was neo-Confucianism. Studying neo-Confucianism, reading Nine Chinese classics which is the scriptures of Confucianism and calligraphy, were the major subjects of study in Han schools (schools of the feudal domain), which were established by feudal lords in each clan with the promotion by the government, and where Samurai warriors enrolled their children. Hence, Confucianism was promoted and promulgated. Therefore, “education” for the erudite in the Edo Era was Confucianism.

Confucianism and Buddhism came to Japan before the Taika Reforms (in 645). Until the Azuchi-Momoyama Era (Shokuho period around 1570 to 1603) when, through the process of centralization, the feudal system was established, Buddhism and Shintoism were promoted. Then, Confucianism gained power during the Edo Era and, as previously stated, it became the sole educational system. In the Muromachi Era (1336 to 1573), the Christianity came to Japan (in 1549) and gained many converts; however, because of the

Anti-Christian Edicts (from 1587) persecution of these communities, including severe punishments for the promulgation of Christianity as well as punishment for any converts, Christianity did not become widespread³. Also, the national isolation policy of the Edo government prevented import or contact with Europe cultures and Western Europe philosophy.

3. View of the Japanese by Moral Philosophy in the Early Edo Era

(1) Neo-Confucianism and Moral Philosophy

The Edo Era started when Ieyasu Tokugawa (1543 to 1616) established the centralization system, and formed the Tokugawa government in 1603 after a war-tone era, consisting of many warlords, from the end of the 15th century, the establishment of centralization system by Nobunaga Oda (1534 to 1582) and the domination of Japan by Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1537 to 1598). The Edo Era was a strict federal society where Samurai warriors were in control, under the caste system that ranked warriors at the top, followed by farmers, craftsmen and merchants.

In the Edo Era, Confucianism was the sole education system and systemic philosophy which became the basis of modern Japanese way of thinking. It was said that Confucianism was the only way of thought for all of the erudite.

Originally, the Confucianism started by Koshi was a policy which showed moral examples for governors and officers. As the system of Confucianism was organized, external moralism became

3 "Seiyo Kibun" (completed in around 1715) written by Hakuseki Arai reported that 200,000 to 300,000 Christians were executed at that time (written by Hakuseki Arai, proofed by Michio Miyazaki) collation editing (1968) "Seiyo Kibun" Heibonsha Limited, Publisher p. 194

established. Confucianism was unified, systematized and organized as neo-Confucianism by Zhū Xī, [Song Dynasty (China)] (1130 to 1200); however, his successor embraced utilitarian learning. Hence, Wang Yangming, [Ming Dynasty (China)] (1472 to 1528) criticized ideological deterioration and created a moral philosophy that attempted to rehabilitate Confucianism as the true philosophy. Ohashi (1999) described the difference between neo-Confucianism and moral philosophy as follows:

"Neo-Confucianism and moral philosophy are both part of Confucianism, and their basic policy is 'cultivating the self and ruling others' (by cultivating the individual, and creating a populace with the virtues obtained by the cultivation and correcting the society). They have the same goal but their methodologies are different. Neo-Confucianism complies with the 'teaching of the eternal saints' such as Koshi and Moshi and pushes towards realization of the ideal, 'cultivating the self and ruling others', by devoting themselves to its authority. On the other hand, the moral philosophy devotes absolute trust into 'innate knowledge of the good' which is the inborn recognition of the capacities of the mind. The saints of the past are not always accepted as holy writ."⁴

Neo-Confucianism requires that "all people have the same set of values" while moral philosophy places the major proposition on realizing the innate knowledge of the good, which is the congenital function of the mind to understand right from wrong. This is the opposite position of neo-Confucianism⁵. Also, "the unity of knowledge

4 大橋健二(Kenji Ōhashi)(1999)『良心と至誠の精神史』勉誠出版 pp.9-10

5 渡辺弘(Hiroshi Watanabe)(1995)『江戸時代の

and action” is at the core of moral philosophy. “The unity of knowledge and action” means that recognition in accordance with the innate knowledge of good would translate into action. If recognition would not translate into action, it was because selfishness and self-interest would separate knowledge from actions. Araki (1978) reported that “the unity of knowledge and action” by Wang Yangming should be “thorough self-development and self-sufficiency of the original mind” and that “knowledge and action always corresponds to each other, as knowledge and action are of the original mind.”⁶

(2) The View of the People of Tōju Nakae

A period when moral philosophy was introduced was unknown. It is said that the founder of moral philosophy in Japan is Tōju Nakae (1608 to 1648) and that he outgrew neo-Confucianism and changed to moral philosophy while he pursued his own issues. As the Tokugawa government promoted neo-Confucianism as a governmental learning, moral philosophy was oppressed because it was regarded as heretical school and temporarily remained static; however, moral philosophy spread nationwide and became the foundation of ideas and practices of people who were active from the end of the Edo Era to the Meiji Restoration. How did moral philosophy see views of the people? The view of the people by moral philosophy will be introduced based on the study by Watanabe (1995, 2000)⁷.

学習思想(その1) 陽明学派の人々を中心に—『哲学』第99集, 三田哲学会, pp. 161-181

6 荒木見悟(Kengo Araki)(1978)『朱子 王陽明』中央公論社, p.43

7 渡辺弘(Hiroshi Watanabe)(1995)「江戸時代の学習思想(その1) 陽明学派の人々を中心に—」『哲学』第99集, 三田哲学会, pp.161-181

Tōju Nakae, who was the founder of moral philosophy in Japan, see that humans are connected with “Tendo” (the path of the gods) as “Tendo” was the parent of humans, and they were the children and leaves and branches of “Tendo”, that all creation is born from “Tendo” (the path of the gods), which is the basic principle of the universe. As “Tendo” is “the highest good”, he thinks that the humans who are connected to “Tendo” are virtuous, and can do no evil. He said that all people naturally had “innate knowledge of the good”, but those who were obsessed with evil passions and greed lost this knowledge. Nakae said that taking advantage of this innate knowledge, and good behavior were the essence of true learning. He also said that education was necessary so that humans could behave as humans. Watanabe mentioned the characteristics of the ideas of Nakae, that “we learn not to expose ourselves to others, but to know and understand our own true self to complete our own humanity” and he mentioned that this philosophy expresses the positive aspects of self-knowledge.

A pupil of Nakae, Banzan Kumazawa (1619 to 1691) had the view of the people that humans and all creation were one thing while he regarded that the human mind and all creation were one thing and human mind and “Taikyō” were one thing, just as all creation was one, born from “Taikyō (great voidness)”. According to the statement of Watanabe, another view of Banzan, was that the true nature of humans was goodness, that goodness comes from inside of humans, and all people have luminous virtue and innate knowledge of the good.

渡辺 弘(Hiroshi Watanabe)(2000)「江戸時代の学習思想(その2) —陽明学派の人々を中心に—」『哲学』第105集, 三田哲学会, pp. 109-135

Watanabe organized the thought of these three people including Chusai Ōshio (1793 to 1837), who belonged to moral philosophy group and summarized their common views as follows: the essential uniformity between Heaven and earth is assumed and humans attempt to understand and work the functions of the innate knowledge of good, which is inherent to all humans. From these views, we can clearly understand the philosophy of life and how humans should live, as well as the characteristics of moral philosophy, that the “independence of the individual mind is focused on more than external normatively”. Bitō (1993)⁸ reported that the characteristics of moral philosophy became the physical basis to accept “der deutsche Idealismus (German idealism)” as characteristics of moral philosophy is similar to the Western modern ideas of ethics. It is said that many people who accepted Christianity in the Meiji Era were affected by moral philosophy.

4. The View of the People of Confucian Bushido Theory during the Edo Era by Sokō Yamaga

(1) Bushido and Confucian Bushido (Shido)

Moral philosophy left its imprint from the end of Edo Era to around the Meiji Restoration. Neo-Confucianism connected with the Samurai warrior class in the Edo Era to a greater extent than moral philosophy did. Sokō Yamaga (1622 to 1685), who learned neo-Confucianism, is a representative of the “Confucian Bushido theory” in which samurai warriors living in times of peace would seek for the meaning of their own exi-

stence. Yamaga criticized neo-Confucianism and re-established the original Confucianism system; however, some points of his Confucian Bushido theory lean towards neo-Confucianism.

Generally, the Bushido is divided into the following two groups: one of which is that its core is preparation for death as seen in the expression, “the Way of the Samurai is found in death”⁹, and the other is Confucian Bushido (Shido) that “the way of life for Samurai warriors newly emerges by understanding and reflecting Confucianism”¹⁰ and “realizing morality in the society is the duty of Samurai warriors”¹¹. The founder of the former Bushido is Jōchō Yamamoto (1650 to 1719) whose ideas are¹² summarized in “Hagakure – The book of Samurai”. Yamamoto affirmed martyrdom as he supported the idea that death, because of desperation, was the way of self-devotion, in the sense that the “regard for the self, ‘I’, should be completely discarded.”¹³ On the other hand, Yamaga who supported the Confucian Bushido theory strongly denied the concept of martyrdom due to our own desires as he thought that Samurai warriors should fulfill their duty towards humanity. For Yamaga, the concept of “death” written in the “Hagakure – The book of Samurai”, was “the worst disaster that we meet while conducting

9 山本常朝(Jōchō(Tsunetomo) Yamamoto) (2005)『葉隠 HAGAKURE THE BOOK OF THE SAMURAI』English Translation by William Scott Wilson,講談社, p. 24

10 相良亨(Tōru Sagara) (1993)『相良亨著作集3』ぺりかん社, p. 12

11 相良亨(Tōru Sagara) (1984)『武士の思想』ぺりかん社, p. 74

12 It is said that Tsuramoto Tasiro (1678 to 1748) wrote down what Jōchō Yamamoto said in the “Hagakure –The book of Samurai”.

13 相良,前掲『相良亨著作集3』, p. 389

8 尾藤正英(Masahide Bitō)(1993)『国史大辞典 14巻』国史大辞典編集委員会編,吉川弘文館, p. 351

principles"¹⁴, but it actually meant that we could quietly accept sudden death by "living with the principle in the moment while we constantly prepare ourselves for death."¹⁵

After the start of the Edo Era, Samurai warriors, who behaved as the warriors, became the policymakers ranking at the top of the traditional class structure (warriors, farmers, artisans and tradesmen in descending order of rank). This got the Bushido to realize that morality was the grand master of the three principles of the peace world and the Confucian Bushido theory was integrated into the philosophy that "realizing morality in the society was the duty of Samurai warriors."¹⁶

(2) The View of the People of Sokō Yamaga

Ideal Samurai warriors according to Sokō Yamaga were the ones who followed "public affairs", not for self honor, even if they had to accept scorn, that is, the ones who considered the interests of the nation by suppressing their subjective feelings¹⁷. Yamaga made self-control compulsory as a duty of the "three principles" of Samurai warriors and asked them to be aware that self-control was the duty of Samurai warriors¹⁸. What was requested of the Samurai warriors was to have a moral character themselves. Sagara stated that the moral character that Yamaga requested was the one that passed beyond self desires, worldliness and the matters of the world¹⁹. As concrete methods

to forming the character, Yamaga suggested that dignity should be corrected in all daily activities"²⁰ and "all daily life should be conducted with morality"²¹ because he thought that the inner character was also cultivated when dignity was correct."²² From these statements, Hirokami (1991)²³ said that the characteristic of the Confucian Bushido theory of Yamaga was seen in the point that the "Confucianism morality [...] was understood mainly through focusing on external dignity."²⁴

Sagara exhibited that the concrete examples of daily behaviors that Yamaga suggested were first to have correct dignity by the "abstention of observation", then "abstention of words", "appearances", color of the face and the way of putting your hands, and of walking. The meaning of "the abstention of observation" is that as "the way of children of looking at their father, the way of children of listening to their father, the way of fathers of looking at your children, and the way of fathers of listening to your children"²⁵ had distinct purposes, the purposes should be fulfilled. As described in the sentence, "focusing on the external dignity", Yamaga described, for example, the clothing of Samurai warriors in detail, while putting an importance on clothing which should be always adjusted as the "external appearance of a man."²⁶

14 同上, p. 303

15 同上, p. 304

16 相良,前掲『武士の思想』, p. 74

17 前田勉(Tsutomu Maeda)(2010)「山鹿素行における士道論の展開」『日本文化論叢』第18巻, 愛知教育大学日本文化研究室, p. 14

18 同上, p. 11

19 相良,前掲『武士の思想』, p. 77

20 同上, p. 77

21 同上, p. 78

22 同上, p. 77

23 広神清(Kiyoshi Hirokami)(1991)「山鹿素行の士道論」『倫理学』第9巻,筑波大学, pp. 1-10

24 同上, p. 6

25 相良,前掲『武士の思想』, p. 78

26 広神,前掲論文, p. 5

How did Sokō Yamaga treat human nature to develop the Confucian Bushido theory?

Tachibana (2007)²⁷ organized the logic of human nature of Yamaga, by comparing it with the philosophy of Zhū Xī, that was sharply criticized by Yamaga. Zhū Xī divided human nature into that of the metaphysical world, and the real world. He saw the nature of the metaphysical world as fundamental nature where the principles of all creation reside²⁸, and that of the real world as nature constituted by vital energy in body and matter. According to Zhū Xī, as all humans have a fundamental nature which is the principle and the highest good, anyone could be a saint, who exercises the highest morality. He also said that that fundamental nature which is impure and biased have the power of evil that can limit the fundamental nature of the highest good.

On the other hand, Yamaga only saw the human nature of the real world. The human nature that Yamaga insisted was the characteristic of restless active movement. The forming of conditions of this characteristic are that “principle” which commonly follows all creation inherent in the generative force, a body, as the “principle” in accordance with concreteness and individuality and the “principle” and the generative force are connected with each other. He said that the feelings, knowledge and physical movement of humans were expressions of the “restless active movement” of nature. That is, all of the mental

27 立花均(Hitoshi Tachibana)(2007)『山鹿素行の思想』ベリカン社, pp. 113-127

28 Araki (1978) said that the “principle” in neo-Confucianism included a variety of topics, including “ideal, reasons, ethic, logic” but Zhū Xī did not use them carefully.

and physical functions of humans are due to this nature and it is the same as in “human desires”.

According to Tachibana, Yamaga criticized the theories of Zhū Xī, that good would be realized by removing human desires. Yamaga said that human desires should be positively expressed, as they were also an expression of human nature, and the appropriate control of human desires was necessary. Yamaga assumed that humans were naturally evil; therefore humans need to control their nature for “restless active movement”, to turn their nature into goodness.

Yamaga said that it was wrong to discuss human nature from the view point of good or evil, and he regarded the nature of humans, as restless active movement. What did Yamaga seek for the realization of virtue? Zhū Xī pursued the realization of virtue as the “highest good nature of the metaphysical world” and defined virtue as the one which the god of the metaphysical world established. Yamaga who denied the statement of Zhū Xī pursued the realization of virtue in the ingenuity of investigation of things and extension of knowledge, not human nature.

Investigation of things and the extension of knowledge enable the careful pursuit of the way of the principle in each matter, to find out that the principle is in the matter and to properly judge and behave in accordance with each situation²⁹. Yamaga stated that virtues appeared first when humans began to appropriately understand reality (when logic which clarifies the meaning of the existence of matter, the active movement of matter could then be correctly controlled). It can be easily understood that each human action could

29 荒木,前掲『朱子 王陽明』, p. 32

demonstrate a virtue and this lead to the Confucian Bushido theory which defines the conduct that should be observed in daily life.

5. The View of the People in the Educational Philosophy of Ekiken Kaibara

The views of the rules of decorum and manners seen in the Confucian Bushido theory emphasized by Soko Yamaga can be considered one of the characteristics of Japanese way of thinking. Ekiken Kaibara (1630 to 1714) who is the author of "Wazokudoujikon", that is said to be the first specialized book on pedagogy, stated that the regulation of all physical action, in accordance to the models of constant physical action, "courtesy", is a method of character formation.

Kaibara was a believer of neo-Confucianism and he formed his original philosophy by questioning neo-Confucianism³⁰. "Courtesy", which Kaibara regarded as the basis of personality reformation, is "based on the 'laws of nature'", and confirming that courtesy was the basis for humans to be classified as human. He said that courtesy could control the state of mind, as he assumed that the mind would be stabilized with courtesy, and could not be stabilized without courtesy. Hence, the theory of Kaibara derived "the idea that daily practices of constant physical action would lead to cultivation of mind"³¹, and "'discipline', was the method of character reformation by accumulating daily actions." Tsujimoto mentioned the reason why Kaibara aimed at character reformation with

30 荒木見悟,井上忠,(Kengo Araki,Inoue Tadashi)(1970)『貝原益軒 室鳩巢』岩波書店, p. 467

31 辻本雅史(Masashi Tsujimoto)(2009)『教育を「江戸」から考える』NHK出版, p. 139

his own physical actions as follows: "Kaibara did not believe in the source of 'principle' of neo-Confucianism" and "did not accept the mind autonomy."³² When "confidence in the mind is lost, possibilities are left for the body"; therefore, "methods for a structure for virtuous behavior was necessary by regarding the physical, not the mind, as the circuit." The view of the people of Kaibara was that humans were not originally virtuous, but that virtue was obtained from outside of ourselves. This view denied the idea of inherent virtue, of neo-Confucianism.

I have discussed the view of the people of the representative thinkers of the early Tokugawa Era. In the Tokugawa Era, ideas that focused on Confucianism penetrated into official circles as well as the average person, and were developed further by a variety of Confucianists and other thinkers. The world of thoughts in Japan hardly contacted the philosophies of Western Europe for about 260 years, as Japan was under the national isolation policy established by the feudal system which was a characteristic of the shogunate.

6. End of National Isolation and the Introduction of Western Civilization

It was the end of the Edo Era that Japan was introduced to Western thought and philosophy, and it was after the Meiji Restoration that Japan officially accepted and began to learn Western philosophy³³. As I described at the beginning of

32 同上, p. 141

33 Since the arrival of Christianity in 1549, Western thought including Scholasticism and Greek philosophy were brought into Japan by missionaries who belonged to the Society of Jesus. In 1583, Western philosophy was lectured first in Japan in a college founded in Oita. Education and study on Western philosophy completely disappeared by the Anti-Christian Edicts and the national isolation policy. Import and study of Western scholarly including natural science were continued through commerce with Holland. (Takashi

this paper, Amane Nishi (1829 to 1897) went to Holland at the end of the Edo Era and brought the word “philosophy” to Japan. Chōmin Nakae who went to Europe at the beginning of the Meiji Era and leaned on the French philosophies, said that there was no philosophy in Japan. Hence, the introduction to Western thought produced great changes to the world of thoughts and philosophy in Japan, resulting in further changes to Japanese trend of thought.

The end of the Edo Era and the beginning of the Meiji Era saw a major transition for the world of thoughts in Japan.

The major events which led to the end of national isolation to the establishment of the system of the Meiji Era are as follows: Commodore Perry's arrival and opening Japan in 1853 (the end of national isolation policy) (1854), beginning of the overthrow of the shogunate by people who disagreed with the opening of Japan, Ansei Purge (the shogunate cracked down on the group who disagreed with opening Japan) (1858/1859), aggravation of actions of Sonnō jōi (Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians) after the opening of Japan, return of power to the emperor (the 15th lord of the Edo government, Yoshinobu Tokugawa, returned power to the emperor) (1867), Restoration (political change of abolishment of the Edo government and establishment of the Meiji government) (1868), the Boshin war between new government army and old government force (1868 to 1869), removal of the caste system that ranked warriors at the top, followed by farmers, craftsmen and merchants (1869), abolition of feudal domains

Miyayama (2005) "The Introduction of Western Philosophy into Japan" *Shakai-shirin* Vol.52 (1) *Hosei journal of sociology and social sciences* (Total vol. 183) pp. 48-126)

and establishment of prefectures (administrative changes where the Meiji government abolished the systems of areas, or Han, that lords governed under the control of the government and local governments were integrated into prefectures which were controlled by the central government) (1871) and establishment of the centralization system with the emperor centered.

Collapse of the shogunate system (the government of the Samurai warriors) by Tokugawa Shogun and the removal of the caste system in accordance with the Meiji Restoration (a series of restructuring, returning power to the emperor in 1867 to the establishment of the system of the Meiji government) saw extreme changes to the life of most of the Samurai warriors. The idea which supported the social structure in which the Samurai warriors played an important role changed dramatically. The Samurai warriors lost their position as policymakers and also lost the ideological ideas which supported them. The abolishment of the caste system meant a release for most of the common people.

7. The View of the People of the Illuminative Erudite in the First Half of the Meiji Era

(1) Establishment of “Meirokeisha”

Japan, after its opening, faced “a period of a great transformation, where new systems, including politics, economic, and moral systems, which adapted to the new era, had to be established through constant contact with Western civilization.”³⁴ The Meiji government sought a new political blueprint

34 小泉仰(Takashi Koizumi)(2007)「福沢諭吉の徳育思想の展開」『近代日本研究』第24巻,慶應義塾福沢研究センター, pp. 1-36

to catch up with the economical cultural levels of the capitalistic countries in Europe and the United States. Toshimichi Ōkubo (1830 to 1878)³⁵ said that it was urgent to cultivate human resources to become more independent, and for the making of a rich and powerful country. It was also necessary to overcome cultural weaknesses of the general people as well. Matsumoto (1996) stated that the transformation of the restoration had an aspect called “collective renovation”, which included “mental” restoration, as well as the replacement of people in power, and restoration of the political systems³⁶. The illuminative erudite of Japan played the role of conducting the renovation and the representative figures among the erudite established the group called “Rokumeisha”.

The “Meirokusha” was an academic society founded by Arinori Mori (1847 to 1889)³⁷ who was the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires. In the U.S., he learned about sophists and was impressed by their social activities, leading to the founding of this society as soon as his return to Japan from the U.S. The founders consisted of more than a dozen sophists, including Yukichi Fukuzawa, Masanao Nakamura, Amane Nishi and Hiroyuki Katou (1836 to 1916), who were the Japanese representatives at that time. The “Meirokusha” was named after its foundation year, the 6th year of the Meiji Era. The purpose of the foundation of the “Meirokusha” was to improve the national culture and the free exchange of knowledge. Its major activities consisted of holding regular meetings twice a month,

35 He was a warrior and politician who contributed to the realization of the Meiji Restoration and the establishment of the Meiji government

36 松本三之介(Sannosuke Matsumoto)(1996)『明治思想史』新曜社, p. 46

37 He became the first Minister of Education.

and the issuing of the journal of “Meiroku-Zasshi”, which introduced new Western learning and thought³⁸. Matsumoto cited the realistic and utilitarian views of the people as a concrete style of ideas produced by the erudite, including those founders of the Meirokusha in the Meiji Era. The representatives who supported this view were Fukuzawa and Nishi. Both of them were affected by the ideas of utilitarianism³⁹ by John Stuart Mill (1806 to 1873) and their thoughts were based on utilitarianism⁴⁰.

The erudite who had a realistic and utilitarian view of the people removed the prescriptivism views of the people which are frequently seen in Confucianism. They considered human nature as truth and essential for all humans⁴¹. Matsumoto regarded desires as the basis which establishes the agencies to expand knowledge and increase happiness; and specifically cited the paper “Lust” by Mamichi Tsuda (1829 to 1903) who criticized the teachings of Buddhism and the prescriptivism of Confucianism. At that time, Yukichi Fukuzawa, who was influential with the enlightening people, had a realistic and utilitarian view of the people.

(2) The View of the People of Yukichi Fukuzawa

For about 10 years, from the 5th or 6th year of the Meiji Era, called the “cultural enlightenment”, is when people mimicked Western cultures for

38 The number of each issue of Meiroku Zasshi exceeded three thousands, which meant that people welcomed Meiroku Zasshi with extreme interests (Ryoen Minamoto (1999) The first volume of Kyoto philosophy, Masaaki Kosaka, History of ideas of the Meiji Era TOEISHA p. 83)

39 It is said that the most read philosophy book was “ON LIBERTY” written by J.S. Mill from the end of Edo Era to the beginning of the Meiji Era. (Brief history of Japanese Philosophy p. 19)

40 小泉仰 (Takashi Koizumi)(2007)「明治における西洋哲学の受容」『日本の哲学』第8号,日本 哲学史フォーラム編, pp. 40-54

41 松本,前掲書, p. 54

modernization. The word “cultural enlightenment” was created by Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835 to 1901). Fukuzawa had traveled to Europe and the United State twice in 1867, and he took a close look at the actual status of the upper class of societies in Europe and the United States. He translated the word “civilization” into “cultural enlightenment (Bunmeikaika)” and wrote a book (in 1868, the first year in the Meiji Era) to introduce it to the people of Japan. Fukuzawa thought that Japan should reach “cultural enlightenment” as quickly as possible; however, “cultural enlightenment” for the general public was to mimic the Western life style; things such as eating beef, drinking milk, short hair and hanging a pocket watch from a short sword worn at the side. Fukuzawa played a considerable role in the trend of “cultural enlightenment”, and Takeda (1958)⁴² saw Fukuzawa as the ideological leader in the cultural enlightenment period, saying that it was not an exaggeration to say that Fukuzawa determinately defined the character of modern thought (or the way of thinking for the erudite).⁴³ The ideas of Fukuzawa are not always consistent. Let me introduce Fukuzawa’s ideological characteristics.

His representative work was “Encouragement of Learning” (published from 1872 and later. This series was put into one book and published in 1880)⁴⁴. He stated in the beginning of the book, “It is said that Heaven doesn’t make a man better than others, nor does it make a man worse than

others.”⁴⁵, and “As Heaven provides this basic human right for humans at birth, no one can infringe upon this right under any circumstances,”⁴⁶ presenting the theory of the natural rights of man. According to Takeda⁴⁷, in these sentences, “Heaven” does not mean the Absolute Creator, but means the intuitive concepts of Heaven, one of the pragmatism meaning “principle”, which means that “knowing Heaven” means “knowing the truth of existence”. Based on the concept of Heaven, Fukuzawa clearly stated that human rights that all humans naturally have are equal, and no one can infringe upon those rights. On the other hand, Fukuzawa also stated that: “there is no distinction of rank, if one is rich or poor when they are born; however, those who learn and know truth are of a high social standing, which results in their becoming rich, but those who do not learn become poor and are of low social standing.”⁴⁸ Fukuzawa also stated: “Uneducated people should be pitied and hated.”⁴⁹ Iwasaki (2002)⁵⁰ pointed out the drastic devaluing of the uninformed people (unread people) by Fukuzawa. Nakazawa (1983)⁵¹ explained the conflicting theory of Fukuzawa as follows: “The theory of Fukuzawa brought about

45 福澤諭吉(Yukichi Fukuzawa)(2009)『現代語訳 学問のすすめ』ちくま新書, p. 9

46 同上, p. 26

47 武田,前掲論文, p. 62

48 福澤,前掲書, pp. 10-11

49 同上, p. 18

50 岩崎允胤(Chikatsugu Iwasaki)(2002)『日本近代思想史序説[明治期前編]上』新日本出版社, pp. 258-260

51 中澤鐵(Kanao Nakazawa)(1983)『福澤諭吉の道徳思想と人間観』『教育科学研究』第2巻, 首都大学東京, pp. 32-49

42 武田清子(Kiyoko Takeda)(1958)『福澤諭吉の人間観』『国際基督教大学学報 I-A, 教育研究』第5巻, pp. 52-90

43 武田,前掲論文, p. 53

44 This book sold about 700,000 copies over 9 years from the first edition publication and was the bestseller at that time.

a new type of discrimination⁵² because although he denied the feudalistic fixed rank systems, his theories presented the rationalization (grounding) for the inequality between the rich and the poor, the capable and incapable and the wise and foolish.”

What was Fukuzawa’s view of the people like? Takeda stated that Fukuzawa saw the “autonomy, freedom, independence and equality”, including human rights, which people obtain naturally, as being “human nature”. Fukuzawa divided “independence” into material independence, which is physical independence, and non-material independence, or mental independence, and stated that material independence preceded the non-material independence. In material independence, “the way of self-support” is the basic idea and our mind, naturally became independent after we achieved independence of food, clothing and housing. Non-material independence was “the initiative derived from self-respect independent mind” which is inherent in humans. Takeda suggested that “another tone which accompanies like a shadow”⁵³ existed in the self-respect and independence view of the people. The tone is the view of the people which see humans as “insignificant animals, similar to ignorant, incapable and miserable gusano” from the universal view point. Takeda assumed that this might be similar to the teachings of Buddhist “nothingness” and stated that he placed humans at the utmost limits of self-denial, then paradoxically, he acquired his original “freedom” and made the freedom more definite⁵⁴. Although Takeda saw the views of Fukuzawa having the conflicting concepts

52 同上, p. 43

53 武田,前掲論文p. 74

54 同上, pp. 75-76

from the optimistic views of the people, he defined his view of the people as optimism because the pessimism easily shifted to optimism as the pessimism was external pessimism, which was not based on human nature.

Fukuzawa assumed that human nature was virtuous and stated, as did Socrates, that ignorance caused evil, and knowledge made humans virtuous. That is, removal of the conditions preventing the attainment of virtues enables the growth of the virtues that humans naturally have. As for “evil”, Fukuzawa assumed that evil which sees authorities as methods to obtain the self-centered desires exists in humans; however, he only pointed out the unbalanced power. Takeda suggested that Fukuzawa did not essentially determine what the “evil” of humans was.

Takeda suggested, with further analysis of Fukuzawa’s view of the people, that his ideas could not build the momentum to pursue the concept of human nature, and stated, “What prevented Fukuzawa from deeply understanding the essence of humanity? This could be because he did not reach self-recognition, which those who confirm the transcendent truth should reach.”⁵⁵ Nakazawa noted this as important and agreed with Takeda. Nakazawa stated that the ideas of Fukuzawa did not essentially need to value the recognition of the nature of humanity⁵⁶.

Takeda said that the ideas of Fukuzawa were very Japanese rather than import of the Western spirit. The ideas of Fukuzawa were a type of materialism, secular and materialistic humanism, which were dominating modern Japanese thought

55 武田,前掲論文, p. 86

56 中澤,前掲論文, p. 38

and were very similar to the way of thinking and the mindset of the general public as well as the erudite in Japan.

(3) The View of the People of Masanao (Keiu) Nakamura

Masanao (Keiu) Nakamura (1892 to 1891) had the opposite view from Fukuzawa, although they were founders of the Rokumeisha. Kosaka⁵⁷ (1999) stated that Fukuzawa was an external reformer, while Nakamura was an internal reformer. Nakamura went to England one year before Fukuzawa went abroad. After Nakamura came back to Japan, he translated "Self-Help" (1859) written by Samuel Smiles (1812 to 1904) and published it with the name of "Saigokurisshihen" (1870 to 71, the 3rd to 4th year in the Meiji Era). "Self-Help" stated that the growth and decay of a nation were dependent upon the characteristics of its citizens, and taught independence⁵⁸ and had a significant impact on Japanese in the Meiji Era, as did the book written by Fukuzawa. According to Takahashi⁵⁹ (1966), "Saigokurisshihen" was one of the ways to fulfill the demands of a period in which the ethics of Confucianism, and the ideals of Buddhism, had lost the objective grounding necessary to be moral ideals, and the civil middle-class was looking for a direction to proceed with its ethical ideals in the transition stage of systems from the end of Edo Era to the Meiji Era. As soon as "Saigokurisshihen" was published, people rushed to read it. In addition, the book was used as a textbook in many schools and it sold well; however, it is said

that the impact of the "Saigokurisshihen" on the average person was only as a role to simulate careerism⁶⁰.

Takahashi said that the translation of "Saigokurisshihen" was necessary for Nakamura to stand up and take actions, as well as to encourage the vassals of the government and general populace. As opposed to Fukuzawa, Nakamura was attracted to Christianity. In 1871, even during the prohibition against Christianity⁶¹, he anonymously posted a letter of protest because the government imported the Western civilization but still forbid the Christian religion. He was baptized in 1875. In 1868 (the first year in the Meiji Era), Nakamura wrote a paper with the title of Keiten aijin setu⁶² that tried to understand "God" in the Christian religion, through the "Heaven" of Confucianism. In this paper, Nakamura described, "Heaven made me, that is, heaven is my father. As all people are made by Heaven as I was, all people are my brothers and sisters. I cannot help respecting Heaven and I cannot help loving all people". Iwasaki said that Nakamura did not understand the Christian "God" at the time, but the statement of Nakamura expressed his religious beliefs⁶³. Takahashi wrote that Nakamura adopted the human "goodness" in his later days, had two elements, "conscience" and "sympathy", and he regarded the "individual" as the root of morality. The "individual" that Nakamura used was the power to control desires. Nakamura stated that humans needed to control their desires, which come out of our physical nature. By controlling these desires we rise above

57 高坂正顕(Masaaki Kousaka)(1999)『明治思想史』燈影舎, p. 138

58 高橋昌郎(Masao Takahashi)(1966)『中村敬宇』日本歴史学会編,吉川弘文館, p. 72

59 同上, pp. 77-78

60 同上, p. 81

61 It was 1873 that the prohibition against Christianity was removed.

62 This means "Honoring the Heaven and loving people".

63 岩崎,前掲書, p. 271

the animal, while keeping a moral self-initiative, which enables individual power⁶⁴.

Nakamura insisted on the importance of the education of women, to “create the best mothers” for Japanese modernization. He also insisted on the importance of mothers to educate their young children. He worked hard to establish the first public elementary school in Japan⁶⁵.

8. Shift of the Trend of Thought during the Last Half of the Meiji Era

(1) Trends in the 20's in the Meiji Era

After the Meiji Restoration, new movements emerged in Japan during the first few decades of the Meiji Era (from 1887). Kosaka stated that the spirit of the Meiji Era showed reaction in the 2nd decade of the Meiji Era, and “human revolution, or spirit revolution”, which was the new “personal and folk awareness”, occurred during that time⁶⁶. Kosaka presented the difference between modernized social formation in Europe, and that of Japan as follows: modern Europe resolved problems one at a time, created and formed modern countries, starting from the beginning of the Renaissance, while Japanese modernization just began during the Meiji Era by adapting the already-formed framework of the advanced countries in Europe and the United States. This “framework was produced outside of Japan, and cannot be said to be an internal framework”. In the 2nd decade of the Meiji Era, discussions started on how the framework balances the individual, society and folks, could be built on the basic framework which was

started in the 1st decade of the Meiji Era. Kosaka pointed out that this would be the reverse order that was seen in Europe, where the modernization of countries appeared after the Renaissance with its religious transformation⁶⁷.

The outbreak of the Japanese-Sino War (1894, 27th year of the Meiji Era) promoted the national ideology. Matsumoto mentioned that the “individual” view point, or “happiness of the people”, which is private and small, but is also widespread and constant, was gradually emerging in heterogeneous directions, while more or less keeping a distance from the collective ideology and “official” principles⁶⁸. The thinkers including Ryōsen Tsunasima (1873 to 1907) of this period discussed the necessity of questioning the existent political blueprint and morality, through the expression of contradiction and conflict between “past ideal” and “new trend of thought”. The thinkers insisted the individual viewpoints against the centralized domination of the value system of the wealthy and the strength of the military. This consciousness started to appear in a variety of ideological expressions after the 3rd decade of the Meiji Era. According to Matsumoto, the consciousness moved towards the directions of an attempt to prescribe new subjective meanings, which accept the existent national concept and social imperative, or of sinking into the “private individual world”, separated from the nation and society⁶⁹.

(2) Stage of “Egoism” and “Skepticism and Agony”

Egoism, a spirit of the times, fascinated many young people as one direction of “sinking into

64 高橋,前掲書, pp. 260-261

65 同上, pp. 155-160

66 高坂,前掲書, p. 215

67 同上, pp. 217-218

68 松本,前掲書, p. 193

69 同上, pp. 194-195

the private and individual world". Kawaguchi (2009)⁷⁰ reported that egoism, which does not accept any authority other than that of the self, was the spirit of the times, and fascinated many young people. The thought of living as an individual, not devoting themselves to their family or sacrificing themselves for their country, was an important theme for them. Yasutomi (2007)⁷¹ stated that the spirit of people in the Meiji Era which spoke of the "me" philosophy was the transformation of the feudalistic ethical view, in which self-annihilation is regarded as a virtue and self-assertiveness was considered as "selfish" and not considered acceptable. During this time solipsism conditions also became apparent in egoism.

With this "egoism" and sinking into the "private and individual inner world", the trend emerged that many people talked about emotional agony, and doubted the existing learning and morality. This trend sought for definition and the meaning of "individual ego", not "group ego".

The episode which demonstrated that the youth were at the "skepticism and agony" stage was the incident where Misao Fujimura (1886 to 1903), a high school student, threw himself to the Kegon Falls in Nikko (in 1903, the 36th year in the Meiji Era) after he worried about the meaning of life, leaving a note saying "all truth is expressed by incomprehensibility". This incident caused a controversy among the young people at that time, leading to a trend where many young people threw themselves into the Kegon Falls. This

70 川口さつき(Satsuki Kawaguchi)(2009)「明治後期における青少年の自我主義」『ソシオサイエンス』第15巻,早稲田大学大学院社会科学部研究科, pp. 62-76

71 安富信哉 (Shinya Yasutomi)(2007)「宗教的『個』の課題」『日本の哲学』第8号,日本哲学史フォーラム編, pp. 73-88

incident caused discussion in the thinking world because of sympathy for young Fujimura who "had sacrificed himself for learning, philosophy and social conflict which did not fulfill the demands for truth, which attempts to clarify the universal reality of all nature", and who, "awakened his ego and was pushed into mental conflict due to formalized education systems, which do not emphasize individual personality", and because of the criticism that "there is no difference among those who committed suicide because of their life problems and who kill themselves for any reason including debts, because they could not satisfy their individual needs."⁷²

In the stage of "skeptical and agony", "spiritualism" emerged, which attempted to pursue how our own mental state was stabilized. This was advocated by a Buddhist, Manshi Kiyozawa (1863 to 1903) from the 34th year in the Meiji Era. This "spiritualism sought for subjectivity, and discovered the absolute infinite inside of the subjective, the subjective satisfies us and we cannot be affected by objective external matters."⁷³ Yamamoto (2009)⁷⁴ mentioned that the world view of Kiyozawa was that all things in the universe, as well as ourselves, were originally united as one entity. Kiyozawa thought that all things, even inorganic objects, in the world had a "spirit", as we humans do. Kiyozawa differentiated the existence of creation according to the degree of awareness of the "spirit", and ranked humans as the closest to God.

72 松本,前掲書, pp. 214-215

73 末木文美士(Fumihiko Sueki)(2004)『明治思想家論』トランスビュー, p. 124

74 山本伸裕(Nobuhiro Yamamoto)(2009)「清沢満之における生命観と倫理観」『死生学研究』第11号, pp. 273-299

In the “spiritualism” of Kiyozawa, in which “only subjectivity is sought for”, external matters are not included as interests. “Spiritualism” states that matter in the objective external world does exist; however, it has no value, and we should seek subjectivity⁷⁵. Matsumoto stated that this “spiritualism” is “individual” thought, for individual mental “satisfaction and freedom”⁷⁶. Matsumoto explained that this spiritualism started from the individual position that one’s own inner world should be the focus, rather than the current viewpoint in which the good of the nation and society receive preference over those of individual⁷⁷. He also stated that separation of the self from external environment, which was gaining awareness at the time, was solved by questioning the way of the inner self mindset, not by reaching out to the external environment⁷⁸ and suggested that spiritualism did not have enough active power to form creative agents which battle with the self outside status, and attempted to overcome gaps between the self and the outside status, and features that individual “satisfaction” and “freedom” were characterized by extreme introspective and passive principles.

(3) Changes in the Thinking and Philosophical World in the Last Stage of the Meiji Era

The “skepticism and agony”, represented by the suicide of Fujimura and the “spiritualism” of Kiyozawa were the trend in the last stage of the Meiji Era. In this trend, emotional ideological questions were attempted to be resolved using only

75 末木,前掲書, p. 124

76 松本,前掲書, pp. 196-197

77 同上, p. 197

78 同上, p. 198

the internal self and the relationship with outer realities were not sought after. Hence, there were no answers to the emotional ideological questions of the young people of the last stage of the Meiji Era. The book titled “A Study of Good” (published in 1911, the 44th year in the Meiji Era) written by Kitarō Nishida (1870 to 1945) and published in the last stage of the Meiji Era, answered these questions. The book “A Study of Good” discussed the essential relationship between “individual” and other “existence” in a situation where the “individual” was formed.

Nishida regarded the basis structure all of the existence formation as “one is all, all is one”, which means that existing multiple matters (especially personal existence) means existing uniformity. That is, existence of a human with other humans as “all” means that there is an inconsistent “one” and the “one” which is not absolute “all” exceeds the personal Einzelding as well as establishing the Einzelding⁷⁹. Suzuki (1977) explained the relationship between “reality”, “world” and “humans” in “one is all, all is one” as follows;

“[...] the reality becomes one which is expressed by itself through the expression of humans. [...] The reality or the world produces humans. From the world view point, the world expresses itself by producing humans from itself and simultaneously is expressed by humans. It can be said that the reality is expressed through the self expression of humans. Hence, it may be said that actually the self, or reality, sees the self through the existence of humans, that is awareness. [...] In the theory of Nishida, the world or reality does not mean the world to be targeted, but does mean the entirety

79 鈴木亨(Tōru Suzuki) (1977)『西田幾多郎の世界』勁草書房, p. 143

which contains the world to be targeted and humans who approach the world.”⁸⁰

The basic reason for “raison d’être” is to “be aware of one’s own ‘nothingness’ and ‘eternal death’”⁸¹ and when we “prepare for our own eternal death and our finitude”⁸², we will meet “the absolute infinity” which exceeds ourselves and will exceed our own nothingness through it⁸³.

According to Yagi (1984), “A study of good” written by Nishida “provided the most thorough answers” to the issues of the young people of the last stage of the Meiji Era⁸⁴. The study by Nishida was the “first systematic philosophy book” of the modern age in Japan⁸⁵ and he was said to be “the pioneering figure of the original philosophical systems, marking a phase in the history of Western philosophy acceptance”⁸⁶. The study gave a determinate impact to the philosophy of Japan.

9. Conclusion

This paper discussed the view of the people as seen in the thinking world during the early Edo Era, and ideas on the view of the people seen from the end of the Edo Era, to the Meiji Restoration, and after. The views held by the figures whom I introduced in this paper do not include all of the views taken by the general people during those

times. The philosophers discussed in this paper are representative of the thinking and academic worlds then, and have been regarded as important, as they affected the formation of Japanese thought, not only during those times but also in later years.

Dramatic changes were made to the Japanese way of thinking from the Edo Era to the Meiji Era. As stated at the beginning of this paper, national isolation, which lasted over 260 years, had a great impact on the formation of Japanese thought and philosophy. The enclosed state which lasted over a long period of time and the impact from the meeting with Western civilization during the opening of the country had a major impact on Japan.

In the Taisho Era (1912 to 1926) followed by the Meiji Era, democracy called “Taisho democracy”, promoted a liberalistic philosophy, cultures of liberalism and personalism, were in the boom of a stable social background⁸⁷. Then, the period changed to the Showa Era (1926 to 1989). Social systems in Japan showed a great surge of change, with the way of thinking and philosophical world of Japan showing a variety of new directions. I will finish this paper in the hope that the thoughts introduced in this paper have been accurately presented to follow the trends of Japanese thought and characteristics. ■

80 同上, pp. 144-145

81 藤田正勝(Masakatsu Fujita)(2007)『西田幾多郎 一生きることと哲学』岩波書店, p. 150

82 鈴木,前掲書, p. 96

83 藤田,前掲書, p. 153

84 八木公生(Kousei Yatsuki) (1984)『善の研究—近代独我論の克服』『日本思想史入門』相良亨 編ベリかん社, p. 350

85 熊野,前掲書, p. 35

86 八木,前掲論文, p. 348

87 末木,前掲書, p. 296