

The Subject Position

Modern Knowledge Formation in Japan as Translational Practices

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AUTHOR'S NOTE ON TRANSLATION

One question that is at the centre of this inquiry is that of semantic transparency. Is the meaning of a word, concept, passage, or text of, say, the late 18th century transparently available to us? Can we have recourse to the original meaning? Is the notion of 'original meaning' even adequate when a given word, concept, passage, or text has been variously translated and interpreted across time and space? The obvious dilemma of writing a history of modern knowledge from a perspective of conceptual history is this: Should I translate passages I quote from source texts written other than in English, or should I let the reader engage with the language of source texts and enjoy the 'feeling' of the language without providing translation? My hope, however, was that this inquiry would be of interest not only to those in Japanese Studies but also to those concerned with the general issues pertaining to modern knowledge, the subject, and historical differences. For this reason and for the sake of brevity, whenever quoting directly from primary source texts, I have provided both the passages in the original language, be it Japanese, Chinese, or other languages, and their English translation. Most of these translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Where established translations are available, I have borrowed them. Where more than two versions of the translation are available, I have explained why one is preferable to the other. For those concepts that were central to modern knowledge formation in Japan and that I discuss extensively in this inquiry, such as *gakumon* (学問), *kyūri* (窮理), *ri* (理), *shukan* (主観), and *kagaku* (科学), I use Romanised Japanese terms instead of providing generally accepted English translations. Not only is it because the meaning of these concepts was never fixed, but also because there is always a possibility of semantic and discursive difference between, for instance, the Japanese concept of '*shukan*' and the English concept of 'the subject'.

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INTRODUCTION

WRITING A HISTORY OF MODERN KNOWLEDGE

White mythology – metaphysics has erased within itself the fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered over in the palimpsest.

Jacques Derrida¹

A different understanding of time [...] where history does not progress according to a prescribed linear trajectory, history as a dialectic process that unfolds in a temporal tension between continuities and discontinuities, ruptures and closures, advances and retreats is required to map out often-contradictory contours of critical interventions and outcries against the status quo.

Namhee Lee²

§

A Paradox

The emergence of what I will be calling in this inquiry ‘modern’ knowledge in Japan is roughly coterminous with the early years of the Meiji period (1868-1912), during which Westernisation was considered a legitimate placeholder for modernisation. The 1860s and 1870s saw a bitter dispute among the ranks of political and intellectual centres over whether the newly formed government should direct its attention solely to promoting Western knowledge as the basis for modernisation, and whether the appropriation of Western knowledge alone could pave the way for Japan to enter the exclusive circle of civilised nations. What emerged from the dispute was a sense of consensus that simply adapting Western sciences and technologies, political concepts, economic thoughts, and institutions of knowledge production and dissemination would not make Japan modern because these were mere products, appearances, or external forms of something much more fundamental. Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891), a scholar both well-versed in Confucianism

¹ Jacques Derrida, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 213 [207-272].

² Namhee Lee, *Memory Construction and the Politics of Time in Neoliberal South Korea*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022: 135.

and Rangaku (蘭学: Dutch Studies), lamented that progress towards the modern could not be achieved by “scraping the surface of Western knowledge” because what differentiated the modern from the barbaric in the field of knowledge was this “consciousness” to distinguish “truth” and “constant and immanent principle” of the world from “fallacy.”³ Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), an advocate of social and educational reform, detected in his cautious approval of Western civilisation that what undergirded Western knowledge, its practical application, and its institutionalisation and formalisation was the “inner spirit” that distinguished contemporary Euro-America from their own past and from the rest of the world.⁴ And yet, Fukuzawa was equally sceptical that this ‘spirit’ could transcend all particularities. Thus, he cautioned his contemporaries that although “the external forms of Western civilisation,” including theories, concepts, technologies, and institutions derived from European Enlightenment, might be replicated in Japan, its spirit could be “neither bought nor sold.”⁵ Any attempt at replicating this spirit would be futile, only resulting in Japan becoming a mimicry, a counterfeit, a knockoff of the West.

However, the late 1890s and early 1900s also witnessed abundant examples of academic works that can be regarded as modern, or at least distinctly different from intellectual traditions of the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) in their epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises. Inoue Tetsujirō (1855-1944), one of the key figures to introduce Western philosophy in Japan, explained that “scientific culture,” that is, a set of established premises of scientific inquiries into both the natural and human worlds, had replaced the hitherto prevalent cosmological principles.⁶ From this new epistemic foundation, Inoue produced his famous trilogy that rendered Tokugawa intellectual traditions as things of the past “worth looking back on only for comparison and contrast.”⁷ Katō Hiroyuki (1836-1916), the first president of the University of Tokyo, argued that objectivity and scientific rigour were fundamental for transforming man into the possessor of “the factual truth,” and applied or at least sought to apply such principles of intellectual inquiry to his analyses of political rights and national polity.⁸ Ōtori Keisuke (1833-1911), a diplomat and educator, proposed the development of a “real historical scholarship” removed from mythologies and folk tales but based on factual verification and intellectual resolution “to attain an understanding of what the world actually is.”⁹ There are many more similar examples, but the

³ Nakamura Masanao, “Kangaku o haisubekarazu no ron” 漢学不可廃論 (“My Argument against the Abolishment of Chinese Studies”), *Tōkyō gakushikai zasshi*, 9:4, 1887: 54, 35-36 [33-68].

⁴ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst III (trans.), New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008 [1875]: 21.

⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁶ Inoue Tetsujirō, “Tōkyō Keizai zasshi ni kotau” 答東京経済雑誌 (“My Response to the Tokyo Journal of Economics”), *Tōyō gakuzei zasshi*, 6, 1882: 111 [110-115].

⁷ Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nippon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku* 日本朱子学派の哲学 (*Philosophy of the Zhu Xi School Confucianism in Japan*), Tokyo: Huzanbō, 1905: 603. See also Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nippon Yōmeigakuha no tetsugaku* 日本陽明学派の哲学 (*Philosophy of the Yangming School in Japan*), Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1900; Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nippon Kogakuha no tetsugaku* 日本古学派の哲学 (*Philosophy of the Ancient Studies in Japan*), Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1902.

⁸ Katō Hiroyuki, “Jinbutsu shūyōjō no shizen kagaku no hitsuyō” 人物修養上自然科学の必要 (“The Necessity of Natural Sciences for the Cultivation of Individuals”) in *Shin-jōshikiron* 新常識論 (A New Thesis of Common Sense), Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1914: 5 [1-12].

⁹ Ōtori Keisuke, “Gakumon ben” 学問弁 (“On Scholarship”), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikei 10-kan: Gakumon to chishikijin* 日本近代思想体系第 10 卷 学問と知識人 (*Japanese Modern Thought, Vol. 10: Scholarships and Intellectuals*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1886]: 88, 91 [86-93].

upshot is that it was only when the world they were investigating became an object of knowledge rather than the manifestation of divine intentions, only when man began to view the world as an object distinct from man himself, that facts and truths became available as such to be retrieved and excavated. Here, the way of relating to knowledge and the way of being in the world expressed by those scholars seem to mirror what we ourselves recognise as modern and indeed ‘our’ knowledge.

The paradox is obvious. On the one hand, the spirit or the consciousness that was said to sustain the modern nature of Western knowledge was, as Nakamura and Fukuzawa argued, not readily available to the Japanese. The foundational condition of modern Western knowledge does not transcend normativity and historicity encoded in that very condition. And yet, on the other hand, in the cognitive practices of Japanese intellectuals during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the world seemed to have been disenchanted, and man seemed to have become the possessor of facts and truths about the disenchanted world. The works of Inoue, Katō, Ōtori, and many of their contemporaries seem to embody some categories and presumptions about what counts as an adequately modern practice of knowing.

Taking a cue from this paradox, I begin this inquiry with a deceptively simple question. How did a knowledge tradition that we have come to recognise as ‘modern’ emerge in Japan and become a knowledge tout court? The question I am referring to is not of the content – what Nakamura and Fukuzawa respectively defined as ‘the surface’ or ‘the external forms’ – but of the form – ‘consciousness’ or ‘spirit’ – that undergirds cognitive practices. And here, I do not seek to reiterate a familiar diffusionist narrative of the history of knowledge that began in Enlightenment Europe and subsequently spread across the globe.¹⁰ The language of imitation and appropriation generally, and the idea that modern knowledge formation in Japan was achieved through adaptation of Western knowledge more specifically, cannot adequately address the paradox encapsulated in the Meiji intellectual debates and exercises of knowledge production. I seek instead to uncover how a distinctly ‘modern’ way of knowing emerged in a specific temporal and spatial location that I heuristically call ‘Japan’ not only in its synchronic encounters with modern European cognitive apparatuses but also in diachronic developments of various knowledge traditions within Japan including (Neo-)Confucianism, Kogaku (古学: Ancient Studies), Kokugaku (国学: Nationalist Learning), Jōrigaku (条理学: Rationalist Studies), and so on and so forth.

This means that I remain sceptical also of the historian’s inertia in searching for the origin of modern knowledge in a strictly ‘national’ context, hence, in ‘Japanese’ intellectual history.¹¹ The argument that the ‘deep current’ for a modern way of thinking and reasoning was formed through a long history of ‘indigenous’ thought and that Tokugawa intellectual traditions were the catalyst for this formation effectively erases any implications of Japan’s encounter with European cognitive apparatuses through the medium of Rangaku and Yōgaku (洋学: Western Learning) or of the fact that much of what one might consider indigenous is, in fact, the product of interactions and exchanges that cut across purported national and cultural boundaries. This simple observation points us to a much more fundamental issue of writing a history, especially of ‘Japanese’ intellectual history. One problem is that the object of knowledge is not preparatorily given because

¹⁰ Notable examples of the diffusionist narrative include Shigeru, Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions in China, Japan, and the West*, Jerry Busenbury (trans.), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1984; Tominaga Kenichi, *Kindaika no riron 近代化の理論 (Theory of Modernisation)*, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996.

¹¹ What I have in mind, among others, is Maruyama Masao’s seminal work on Tokugawa intellectual traditions. See Maruyama Masao, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, Mikiso Hane (trans.), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974.

‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ are not obvious and absolute categories¹²; they are made possible by the existence of historical scholarship.¹³ Further still, whatever the impulse historians have of establishing, defining, and gatekeeping the remit of ‘Japanese’ intellectual history, this qualifier ‘Japanese’ itself is a vindication that this history is not possible without the unspoken sovereign of all histories, that is, the West.¹⁴ The historian’s inertia towards the national reiterates, in a perverse way, a sense of subalternity that any ‘national’ history seeks to erase.

For this reason, the question I seek to address in this inquiry is not of the origin but of the process that is all at once synchronic and diachronic. And, for it is of process, the question also encompasses negotiations, transformations, and possible *différance*.¹⁵ How were different ways of relating to knowledge negotiated? What kinds of epistemic shifts occurred through such negotiations? How did ‘modern’ reveal itself in knowledge in Japan? If the foundational condition – ‘the spirit’ or ‘consciousness’ – of Western knowledge had certain particularities built into it, how was it forged in Japan to accommodate different experiences and histories? To what extent was this foundational condition forged in Japan distinct in its discourse and discursive strategy from, for instance, the condition that arose from the European Enlightenment?

While I remain sensitive to the claim of contemporaries that modern knowledge bears the burden of European intellectual tradition and its history, I do not wish to take this imprimatur as a pretext for “postcolonial revenge.”¹⁶ To be sure, Japan was subjected to the dictate of European cognitive practices that expressed European aspiration to exploration, exploitation, and domination. Yet, Japan also instrumentalised its own ‘modern’ way of thinking and reasoning to subsequently subjugate, under the dubious claim of ‘humane’ colonialism, other Asian nations.¹⁷ To this end, the inquiry into how modern knowledge was forged through negotiations, transformation, and *différance*, cannot be separated from Japan’s own ‘civilising mission’ and the horror that it inflicted upon others. It is not that I first trace the itinerary of modern knowledge from Europe to Japan and then argue that Japan became belatedly modern and remained belated in the structural and epistemic inequality between the West and the rest. Nor do I wish to argue that the specifically national origin of modern knowledge in Japan somehow exonerates Japan from the epistemic violence it has caused, as Europe did, to others. Instead, it is precisely through the study of how the foundational condition was forged in Japan that I demonstrate the genealogy of the Japanese subject, which yielded a position to view the world, the self, and the other and to become the possessor of facts and certitudes true not to all but to itself. It is through this demonstration of the genealogy of the Japanese subject that I show the formation of the epistemic condition for Japan’s imperial expansion and colonial subjugation of its others.¹⁸

Although the rest of the chapter will elaborate further on the overall design of this inquiry, let me point us towards some particular issues of writing a history generally and writing a history of

¹² Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1998.

¹³ Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On ‘Japan’ and Cultural Nationalism*, Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997: 40-41.

¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000: 27.

¹⁵ This is in the sense that Jacques Derrida would define it. See Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 3-28.

¹⁶ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: An Introduction*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1998: x.

¹⁷ Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1993.

¹⁸ As Michel Foucault writes, “the history of knowledge constitutes a privileged point of view for the genealogy of the subject.” See Michel Foucault, “About the Beginnings of a Hermeneutics of the Self,” *Political Theory*, 21:2, 1993: 223 [198-227], n.4.

modern knowledge more specifically. In a sense, this work is an attempt at offering a double diagnosis. At one level, as I will discuss in the following chapters, I am concerned with the past process through which the foundational condition of knowledge was forged and given the status of axiom. However, I am by no means seeking to offer a final judgment. History writing is essentially a process of reconstruction through raising questions, marshalling evidence, discerning patterns, and writing a narrative. Of course, reconstruction involves certain judgments. But these are of usable sources, tenable plots, explanatory schemas, techniques of interpretation, and modes of narration – judgments dictated by the historian’s arbitrary choice of a philosophy of history, which is considered in itself sufficient to explain the ultimate direction of historical change, but which cannot be validated by criteria that itself establishes as the standards for judgment.¹⁹ This is why, as Hayden White once provocatively argued, history cannot be found in archives or in facts.²⁰ Think, for instance, the following: Christian missionaries brought Western science to Japan; the Tokugawa shogunate institutionalised Western astronomy and Western medicine while doctrinising Neo-Confucianism; various *han*-domains (de facto administrative units) acquired modern Western military and defence technologies; and, the Meiji government established Western-style universities as the apex of a reformed educational system. These are verifiable facts. But what they mean as a history is our construction. This is because the meaning of a fact exists only through our own association and comparison of it with other facts. And the meaning depends on how it is stated, and a statement depends on purposes and intentions. In short, the product of history writing cannot escape our own preconceived notions of what history is and ought to be. Then, history writing, to invoke Derridean grammatology, is never more than an act of stabilisation of the past rather than a revelation of fundamental stability. The product of history writing is always heuristic, carrying within it alternative plausibility of what might otherwise be.

This sense of circularity, or worse, self-referentiality, becomes especially a salient issue for an inquiry such as this one. As disenchanting as it may be, I have been trained and writing from within a tradition of knowledge that I seek to investigate.²¹ If writing is indeed an act of stabilisation rather than a revelation of stability, then, writing a history of modern knowledge from within that knowledge could be a mere vindication of its epistemic premises and its status as knowledge tout court. A historical inquiry into modern knowledge formation could, therefore, be doubly self-

¹⁹ For Augustine, Herder, and Hegel, it is the monistic linear notion of temporal movement that they see carries history. For Toynbee and Spengler, it is the morphological notion of temporal changes and shifts that is at the core of history.

²⁰ Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” *History and Theory*, 23:1, 1984: 1-33.

²¹ Being critical of modern knowledge is one thing, but going beyond that which we are critical of is quite another. Against this disenchanting realisation, two opposing reactions have emerged in the field of philosophy. First, this impossibility of ‘going beyond’ permits a tendency to dismiss altogether the implications of theories and discussions organised with the prefix ‘post’ (i.e., poststructuralism, postcolonialism) and ‘de’ (i.e., decolonial tradition, deconstruction). Whether in the name of empiricism, rationalism, science, Kant, or Hegel, this tendency is predicated on the assumption that critical attitudes are not grounded on a firm epistemological terrain. Of course, I shall argue that such a charge of positivism entirely misses the point. The point of critique is to reflect on the rather uncertain nature of positivist epistemology itself. Second, the effect of dislodging modern knowledge from its privileged place is felt by some as a celebratory moment to recuperate Nietzschean or Heideggerian critique of dichotomies such as universality and particularity, history and contingency, transcendence and immanence, space and time. This in turn enables them to lodge claims for a new kind of relativism and diversity of human existence over reductionist assumptions of polity, society, and culture. Critique of modern knowledge thus represents liberation from foundationalist epistemologies. Yet, the problem as I see it is that the relativist celebration often fails to address the ontological condition of the very categories, such as polity, society, and culture, that on the one hand are the main protagonists of reductionist vision and on the other hand are that which makes relativism possible in the first place.

referential. For this reason, the task of writing about the historical formation of modern knowledge in Japan is and must be more than a simple reconstruction of the past. The task is also to reveal aporias and oddities encoded in available historical accounts of this knowledge, including my own, and to consider whether the ensuing circularity embedded within historical analyses of modern knowledge is an enabling hermeneutical circle or a disabling self-referential one. It is to remain attentive to the swampy nature, hence the limits, of our own historical knowledge.²²

§

A Discourse of the Subject of Modern Knowledge

What is ‘modern’ knowledge? Any knowledge tradition bears a specific relation between the knower and the known. In a knowledge tradition that I call here modern knowledge, the knower exists as the subject – that is otherwise variously called “I”-ness of cogito, “reason,” “spirit,” or “self-assertion”²³ – that is a priori set up against the known, against the world of objects. As the foundational apparatus for knowledge, the subject occupies a position to ‘view’ rather than ‘inhabit’ the world. As an explanatory principle of knowledge, the subject marks a radical break in historical time to justify its own ‘modern’ interpretation as being incommensurable with any pre-existing worldviews.²⁴ The subject claims the departure of God (secular) and the arrival of *scientia* (empirical and verifiable). Yet, it posits that, just like God, man can attain certitude about the world, having recourse to “eternal matter in accordance with eternal and necessary laws,” and thus produce “systematic secular knowledge that is somehow validated empirically.”²⁵ With this quasi-theological position of the subject, knowledge comes to be conceived as “a subject-object relation.”²⁶

For we are sedated by this figure of the knower, it seems almost impossible to think about knowledge today without invoking the subject and without presuming knowledge as a subject-

²² This is an allusion to Karl Popper’s observation of the ‘swampy nature’ of epistemology. He maintains, “Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. The bold structure of its theories rises, as it were, above a swamp. It is like a building erected on piles. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not down to any natural or ‘given’ base; and if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being.” See Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London: Routledge, 1992: 94.

²³ See respectively, René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. I*, John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Terry Pinkard (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017; Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, Robert M. Wallace (trans.), Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985.

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” in *Off the Beaten Track*, Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002: 57-85; Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

²⁵ See respectively, Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957: 276; Immanuel Wallerstein, *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Social Sciences*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996: 2.

²⁶ Sanjay Seth, *Beyond Reason: Postcolonial Theory and the Social Science*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021: 24.

object relation. However, as I will expand further shortly, the subject is a historically specific discourse, or more precisely put, a complex web of discourses. Thus, Lorraine Daston calls it “the precondition,” Mary Poovey “foundational assumption,” or Conal Condren “the contingent silence” that is “tacitly accepted as a given point in order that something might be said.”²⁷ This has, then, an immediate repercussion for historians of knowledge. As Anthony Cascardi puts it, “what is most significant about the emergence of the subject can be uncovered not from the history of events but from the modes of discourse and consciousness that were evolved in response to the process of social change.”²⁸

A brief consideration of the historical emergence of the subject in the European Enlightenment tradition – let me call it, for the sake of brevity, the Western subject – will suffice to allude to this point. First of all, the Western subject is built upon a set of discourses that establishes what I call here ‘temporal symmetry’, for it to view rather than inhabit the world of objects. More specifically, the subject is forged at the intersection of two assumptions. One is the Newtonian assumption about objective reality that everything exists in an eternal present since universal laws that regulate objects remain constant and true over time and space.²⁹ The other is the Cartesian assumption about the observing mind that man’s capacity lies in his vigorous mind through which independent realities of objects are rendered accessible and accurately represented for their utility and with which man makes himself a master and possessor of what is external to him.³⁰ Woven together, these assumptions understand knowledge in terms of repeatability (because everything in the eternal present can be repeated) and representability (because a vigorous observing mind can accurately represent an object’s discrete reality). Positioned at the intersection of these assumptions, the Western subject becomes the primary location, the thespian, the metonymy of repeatability and representability.

This temporal symmetry inscribed in the Western subject signals the departure of God as the foundation of knowledge. And yet, the departed God has left a certain imprint on the operation of knowledge. This is because temporal symmetry is indeed a quasi-theological presumption, which cannot be validated by the very mechanism of internal verification – we may call it objectivity, scientificity, or scientific rigour – of this knowledge. Unsurprisingly, then, this quasi-theological presumption of temporal symmetry is bound to be problematic in several ways. Most obviously, this ‘view from nowhere’ is merely that which is tacitly accepted as a contingent silence for the

²⁷ See Lorraine Daston, “Historical Epistemology,” in James Chandler, Arnold Davidson, and Harry Harootunian (eds.), *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion Across the Disciplines*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994: 283 [282-289]; Mary Poovey, “The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy,” *Public Culture*, 14:1, 2002: 130 [125-145]; Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Offices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 3-4.

²⁸ Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity*, 54.

²⁹ As Newton writes, “Every thing doth naturally persevere in y^t state in w^{ch} it is unlesse it bee interrupted by some external cause, hence [...] a body once moved will always keepe y^e same celerity, quantity & determination of its motion.” Isaac Newton, quoted in Richard S. Westfall, *The Life of Isaac Newton*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993: 47.

³⁰ In Descartes’ own words, “As soon as I had achieved some general notions about physics [...] I noticed how far they might lead and how they differed from the principles accepted up to this time [...] And they have satisfied me that it is possible to reach knowledge that will be of much utility in this life: and that instead of the speculative philosophy [...] we can find a practical one, by which knowing the nature and behaviour of fire, water, air, stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies which surround us [...] we can employ these entities for all the purposes for which they are suited, and so make ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.” René Descartes, “Discourse on the Method,” in Roger Ariew (ed.), *René Descartes: Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000 [1637]: 74 [46-82].

operation of knowledge, for the subject to exist as such. Even if we presume for the sake of discussion that we indeed have the capacity to attain this view from nowhere, our knowledge of the external world of objects will remain fragmentary at best precisely because we are finite beings and realities extend much beyond what we can view. Thus, scepticism is inevitable. No philosophical attempt at naturalising this disenchanted position of the knower in an eternal present can effectively rule out all possibilities of things otherwise. This subject, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls it, is essentially “a God’s-eye view.”³¹ Or, as Thomas Nagel describes it, it is merely a conviction in man’s capacity to “get outside of himself and view the world from nowhere within it.”³² And knowledge conceived as a subject-object relation is, as Richard Rorty puts it, essentially a “mirror of nature.”³³ And yet, none of these problems, as Nagel predicts, have “deter[ed] us from the effort to make objective progress so far as our minds, our culture, and our epoch may permit.”³⁴ So long as temporal symmetry is tacitly accepted as a contingent silence for the operation of knowledge, the subject continues to occupy this privileged position to view the repeatable and representable world.

This modern Western metaphysics exudes an unwavering conviction in attaining absolute certitude about the world of objects. Yet, as a discourse built upon a series of discourses, the

³¹ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2018: 4.

³² Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986: 67. One of the central themes of Nagel’s work here is indeed to examine how theories of knowledge have dealt with the paradox between the purportedly independent position of the knower and the insurmountable reality of one’s being in the world. As he writes, “however often we may try to step outside of ourselves, something will have to stay behind the lens, something in us will determine the resulting picture, and this will give grounds for doubt that we are really getting any closer to reality. The idea of objectivity thus seems to undermine itself” (ibid., 68).

³³ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979: 45. Rorty writes, “I hope that what I have been saying has made clear why I chose ‘Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature’ as a title. It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions. The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations – some accurate, some not – and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods. Without the notion of the mind as mirror, the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself. Without this latter notion, the strategy common to Descartes and Kant – getting more accurate representations by inspecting, repairing, and polishing the mirror, so to speak – would not have made sense. Without this strategy in mind, recent claims that philosophy could consist of ‘conceptual analysis’ or ‘phenomenological analysis’ or ‘explication of meanings’ or examination of ‘the logic of our language’ or of ‘the structure of the constituting activity of consciousness’ would not have made sense” (ibid., 12). This notion of knowledge as the mirror of nature signals a fundamental change in the conception of knowledge itself. Earlier, in the Aristotelian conception, knowledge was not necessarily dependent on the absolute distinction between the subject and the object. As Charles Taylor summarizes, “when we come to know something, the mind (*nous*) becomes one with the object of thought. Of course, this is not to say that they become materially the same thing; rather, mind and object are informed by the same *eidos*. Here was a conception quite different from the representational model, even though some of the things Aristotle said could be construed as supporting the latter. The basic bent of Aristotle’s model could much better be described as participational: being informed by the same *eidos*, the mind participates in the being of the known object, rather than simply depicting it.” Charles Taylor, “Overcoming Epistemology,” in *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1995: 3 [1-19].

³⁴ Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 86. Rorty offers an explanation of why this is the case. “The seventeenth century gave skepticism a new lease on life because of its epistemology, not its philosophy of mind. Any theory which views knowledge as accuracy of representation, and which holds that certainty can only be rationally had about representations, will make skepticism inevitable. [...] Skepticism and the principal genre of modern philosophy have symbiotic relationship. They live one another’s death, and die one another’s life. One should see philosophy neither as achieving success by ‘answering the skeptic,’ nor as rendered nugatory by realizing that there is no skeptical case to be answered. The story is more complicated than that.” Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 113-114.

primary bearer of such certitude, the subject, cannot escape certain normativity and ahistoricity. At the onset of intellectual transformation in Europe that reconceived knowledge as a subject-object relation, the question arose of how to assert this knowledge as *the* knowledge vis-à-vis other existing modes of thinking and reasoning. The question, in other words, was of how to relegate other kinds of knowledge, be they religious or indigenous, to the realm of the irrelevant so that the normativity and historicity of the Western subject could be transubstantiated, with the language of intellectual progress, into inevitability.

A series of discourses that establishes what I call ‘temporal asymmetry’ functions as a means to dialectically resolve this aporia. More concretely, in European Enlightenment thinking, the notion of ‘self-consciousness’ becomes the operative word for establishing temporal differences between modern and premodern and thus for marking the territory of modern Western knowledge vis-à-vis other worldviews. Now that man exists in the eternal present to view the world of objects, and that knowledge is liberated from the cosmological fetters of religious doctrine, man’s consciousness functions here both as a foundational force for articulating this new condition of knowledge and as a medium for fully comprehending the very condition of knowledge. Recall, for instance, Immanuel Kant’s famous proclamation that the Enlightenment marked “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity.”³⁵ The enlightened man had moved from his own “lack of resolution” and his inability to use his “own understanding without the guidance of another.”³⁶ Max Weber’s later pronouncement of ‘man’s capacity’ is equally illustrative. “The transcendental presupposition of every cultural science,” wrote Weber, was that “we are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude toward the world and to lend it significance.”³⁷ Or think also T.S. Eliot’s retrospection on the progress of Europe undergirded by “the historical sense,” which enabled man to understand the temporal positionality of the thinking self in the matrix of past and present. He wrote that it was this “perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence” in the present that enabled Europe to unceasingly and irreversibly move away from its own past and towards a progressive future.³⁸ Importantly, for those thinkers, this intelligibility of temporal difference between past and present is not something endowed by a divine intention. The difference becomes intelligible because, as they postulate, Europe has actively cultivated self-consciousness through the formation of autonomous individuals and the emergence of free capital, a process of ultimately liberating itself from its feudal dispositions. This self-consciousness as a metonymy of a new temporal regime marks contemporary Europe’s own origin in the modern age, disassociating the present self from the past self. With empty time filled with expectations of progress, with the eternal present temporalised, the relation between past and present, between the past self and the present self, becomes asymmetrical. The past self is reconstituted as the object of self-knowledge, the production of which feeds back into the very presumption of the past as inherently different from the present that enables such objectification in the first place. In essence, the Western subject is sustained by a series of discourses that locates this subject in the matrix of temporal symmetry and temporal asymmetry. And, knowledge that this subject produces – knowledge of the external world of objects and knowledge of the past self – tautologically reifies the very discursive matrix that sustains this subject.

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in James Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996 [1784]: 58 [58-64].

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Max Weber, “Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy,” in Edward Shils and Henry Finch (eds.), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences: Max Weber*, New York, NY: Free Press, 1949 [1904]: 81 [49-112].

³⁸ T.S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” *Perspecta*, 19, 1982 [1919]: 37 [36-42].

The story does not end here. This Western subject with the capacity to objectify and historicise was further ensconced when power inserted itself into knowledge in order to facilitate dominance and exploitation demanded by European imperialist aspirations. Needless to say, this complex entanglement of modern Western knowledge and imperialism has spawned a wide array of reflections.³⁹ What is, however, especially pertinent for my concern here is the following. The European outward explorations and their encounters with non-Europeans provided the Western subject with instances of further validation. This subject, initially forged through the trope of difference that distinguished itself from its own past, reasserted itself in its encounter with that which represented, in the eyes of this subject, the very trope of difference. Non-Europeans became the anthropological other that continued – or was thought to continue – to inhabit the foregone past that Europe had left behind. Cultural, political, and social differences ascribed to them became synonymous with the traditional, the backward, and the premodern. Self-consciousness of modern Europe that objectified and historicised, though itself was an arbitrary presumption, was now projected onto realities of the other, effectively relegating them to the outside of the temporal sphere of European modernity. It was, then, outside Europe that the Western subject was further reified as a contingent silence for the operation of knowledge.

The subject, a specific figure of the knower undergirding modern Western knowledge, is a discourse established by a series of discourses that carries within itself certain normativity and historicity. This has immediate repercussions for our understanding of knowledge. Most obviously, what we call modern knowledge is emic. It is simply one mode of knowing the world among many other possibilities. For this reason, modern Western knowledge that we associate with the European Enlightenment is also emic. Its sustenance, the Western subject, is far from being free from specific presumptions rooted in European lifeworlds and histories. Think, for instance, a host of concepts developed in the latter half of the last century, such as ‘*épistémè*,’ ‘social imaginary,’ ‘intellectual tradition,’ and ‘knowledge culture.’⁴⁰ All suggest that modern Western knowledge is constituted by “the specific range of thinking, reasoning, and institutional practices possible in a given historical time and space.”⁴¹ All suggest that modern Western knowledge does not transcend its parochial and temporal origin and that the foundational premise for its operation, the Western

³⁹ See, for example, Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, NY: Random House, 1978; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1993; Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996; Suman Seth, “Putting knowledge in its place: science, colonialism, and the postcolonial,” *Postcolonial Studies*, 12:4, 2009: 373-388.

⁴⁰ For these terms, see respectively, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1994; Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987; Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980; Margaret R. Sommers, “What Is Sociology after the Historic Turn? Knowledge Cultures, Narrativity, and Historical epistemologies,” in Terence J. McDonald (ed.), *The Historic Turn in the Human Science*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996: 64 [53-90].

⁴¹ Sommers, “What Is Sociology after the Historic Turn?” 54-55. Beyond the horizon of modern Western knowledge lay – at least at the onset of its emergence – a vast terrain of exteriority. There existed other modes of knowing the world and other ways of becoming and being the knower. Michel Foucault wrote in the preface of *The Order of Things* (1966) that the book was inspired by “the wonderment of this taxonomy” of animals he found in a “certain Chinese encyclopedia,” which for him represented “the stark impossibility of thinking” and in turn compels him to consider “the limitation of our own” thought. He thus reminded the reader that his work was concerned specifically with the developments of episteme “in the mainstream of a culture such as ours.” In a similar vein, Jacques Derrida also gestured towards unspoken other knowledge traditions when he specified that his deconstruction of metaphysics was a deconstruction of “white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West” and which “the white man takes [...] for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason.” See, Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xvi, xxiii; Derrida, “White Mythology,” 213.

subject, cannot be validated as an objective fact. Then, this Western subject certainly imprints a rather restricted view of the knower. After all, this is why Takeuchi Yoshimi (1910-1977), a prominent Japanese critic and Sinologist, once contended that this subject was possible only in the history of Europe and that this history is possible only in this Europe.⁴² Those outside this history, outside Europe, do not have unmediated access to this subject.

If the Western subject is a historically specific discourse built upon a series of discourses, then, it cannot be transparently transposed to other locations as the foundational condition for the operation of knowledge. The question remains of how the subject emerged as a discourse in those locations outside Europe, such as in Japan, in global historical contexts marked not only by connectivity and exchanges but also by coercion and violence, and how knowledge conceived as a subject-object relation became knowledge tout court in its relation to other pre-existing ways of knowing the world.

§

Historical Narratives of Modern Knowledge Formation in Japan

What I draw attention to at this juncture is twofold: a general proposition about modern knowledge and an overall analytical scope required for understanding modern knowledge formation. First, modern knowledge presumes a certain type of knower, the subject, discursively forged as the foundational apparatus for and the explanatory principle of knowledge. Thus, modern knowledge formation implies that it is not just the absorption of theories, ideas, and concepts – what Nakamura Masanao called “the surface” or Fukuzawa Yukichi “the external forms” – but also a series of discursive adjustments in terms of how the knower relates to the world as the subject – what

⁴² Takeuchi Yoshimi, “What is Modernity? (The Case of Japan and China),” in *What is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, Richard F. Calichman (ed. and trans.), New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005 [1948]: 53-81. In this influential essay, Takeuchi argues that Japan has never been modern and, thus, “Japan is nothing” (64). For Takeuchi, modernity manifests itself differently in Europe and in the Orient. European modernity, as he specifies, is essentially self-preservation through incessant self-renewals propelled by “the doubting self [that] cannot be doubted” – the modern subject that reflects on itself historically and objectively in order to continuously demarcate itself from its own past (54). Takeuchi understands Oriental modernity also as self-preservation. Crucially, though, as he argues, Orient’s self-preservation takes the form not of self-renewals but of resistance against European imperialism and colonialism. It is to resist the idea that conditions for liberation are given to all and reject this fantasy of liberation altogether, for it is through such resistance and rejection that the consciousness of the Oriental Self is formed (72). Thus, Takeuchi argues, contra Hegel, that this co-constitutive oppositionality of Europe and the Orient, of European modernity and Oriental modernity, is that which makes world history all the more complete. However, in this history, Takeuchi sees Japan occupying a curious place, or better yet, a non-place. This is because, in his view, Japan has never truly resisted Europe to preserve itself and thus never properly formed its own Oriental consciousness. There are no Sun Yatsen and Lu Xun, no Gandhi and Tagore, no Kemal Atatürk and Ibn Saud. “For there is here no resistance, [...] there is no wish to preserve the self (the self itself does not exist). The absence of resistance means that Japan is not Oriental, but at the same time, the absence of the wish for self-preservation (the absence of the self) means that Japan is not European” (64). Japan is neither Oriental nor European. It does not even have consciousness of the self. Hence, Japan is nothing. For all its appeals, however, I do not wish to replicate this radical oppositionality. The seeming impossibility of locating Japan either in the Oriental or in the European is not a reflection of its actuality but an attestation of the inadequacy of analytical categories. As I seek to demonstrate in this inquiry, the formation of the modern subject in Japan took a form that was far muddier than one would otherwise like to presume.

Nakamura described as “consciousness” and Fukuzawa “the inner spirit” – so that the very way of relating comes to register as the qualifier for valid and serious knowledge. Second, modern knowledge formation in Japan implies such adjustments too to establish a new mode of relating to the world, a discourse built upon a series of discourses that embodies normativity and historicity. But any attempt at understanding this process of discursive adjustment within a strictly national context, that is, within the predetermined analytical parameter called ‘Japan,’ is inadequate. This is because the history of knowledge in Japan is a history of encounters and metamorphoses. From the Confucian canon to the Buddhist teachings, from Christian doctrines to the Western theories and concepts of natural and human sciences, a bewilderingly wide array of worldviews was brought to and integrated into the intellectual life of the Japanese archipelago. To account for the discursive formation of the subject, a new mode of relating to the world, one must attend to discursive shifts that occurred through interactions among various worldviews, some already established as tradition within the intellectual life of the archipelago and others brought from elsewhere. It is in this liminal space among differing worldviews that the subject as a discourse emerges. Therefore, it is this liminal space that one must attend to.

Available historical analyses on modern knowledge formation in Japan, despite all their intellectual purchases, fall rather short of addressing these instances. Of course, to say so does not amount to claiming that these analyses offer little insight. This inquiry itself bears, as I hope, rich testimony to the creativity and achievements of the generations of historians. Their lack of attention to those instances specified above is part of a much more profound issue about writing history. The product of history writing cannot but escape our own preconceived notions of what history is and ought to be – a philosophy of history, a principle of interpretation based on an arbitrary imagining across time and space, which derives from a consideration of the human past and which is considered in itself sufficient to explain the ultimate direction of historical change. Whatever choices historians make, any act of history writing cannot escape the intentionality of the present. This inquiry is also a product of a specific intentionality of my own present to re-read modern knowledge formation in a certain way. It participates in a distinct historical field and has its own possibilities and limitations. To specify this further, let me take a detour as a form of preparation and recount two prevalent historical narratives of modern knowledge formation in Japan long promoted by historians.

A Case History of Universal Human Intellectual Progress

One sustained historical account falls into a common rubric of history writing, in which historical time and its movement represent measures of differences in progress among spatially defined territorial blocks, that is, nation-states. The general tendency is to view modern knowledge formation in Japan, first, as part and parcel of universal intellectual progress that began in Europe and subsequently spread across the globe. The tendency is thus also to view modern knowledge formation as a qualifying instance in which Japan joined this forward march towards universal intellectual progress at a speed that is different from other territorial blocks.⁴³ At the core of this

⁴³ Outside the narrow confines of Japanese Studies, this familiar, oversimplified, and undoubtedly problematic diffusionist narrative has long been challenged. One of the most recent challenges has been lodged by the proponents of global history. They argue that modern knowledge has become global, not because it was globally diffused from Europe to the rest, but because it was forged from the very beginning in the global context of socio-historical processes. To a certain extent, I am in sympathy with such a claim. The Garden of Eden in the Mexican highlands provided a

account is, therefore, a philosophy of history to view time as a universal linear movement and space as a unit of temporal differences. In other words, this philosophy of history recognises nation-states (space) according to the degree of progress (time) they have achieved in appropriating all that is associated with modern Western knowledge, and it reorganises them into a hierarchy based not on cultural but historical differences.⁴⁴ When applied to Japan, this philosophy of history, for all its inherent problems, offers an extremely stable scaffolding for narrating modern knowledge formation as a celebratory moment of Japan's entry into the universal history of human intellectual progress.

Notwithstanding variations and differences in detail, historical analyses undergirded by this philosophy of history have in common a narrative structure, which begins as follows. During the 15th and 16th centuries in Europe, a new knowledge tradition began to emerge as something distinct from moral and ethical concerns. With the logical rigour now residing primarily in methods and doctrines unfettered by cosmological and religious principles, the pursuit of knowledge became a systematic practice to produce bodies of scientific knowledge rather than a manifestation of a personal quality or habit of mind. Over the course of history, this knowledge became integral to a new political community organised around the nation-state, to a new economic life based on free capital, and to the social dispositive of autonomous individuals. It thus established itself as a qualifying marker for the increasingly secularising world of modern Europe. As the narrative goes, this knowledge came to Japan first in the 16th century with goods, guns, and Christian doctrines.⁴⁵ However, in Japan, outside its birthplace, this knowledge was by no means considered knowledge tout court. It was simply one knowledge tradition among many others. For an extended period, the intellectual and political ranks of the Japanese archipelago were keenly aware of the particularity of this knowledge and labelled it with the geo-cultural marker 'Western.'⁴⁶ From those scholars of Rangaku and Yōgaku to the governing ranks of *han*-domains and the officials of the Tokugawa shogunate, they saw modern Western knowledge as an assemblage of theories, concepts, and technologies, which could be selectively transferred, shared, appropriated, and instrumentalised.

basis for a taxonomy of plants and animals developed by Francisco Hernández and José de Acosta. Islamic astronomy was crucial for foregrounding the works of Copernicus. However, the claim that modern knowledge is a joint global product of all people merely serves to highlight global circulations of ideas and concepts. It does not tell us much about how the subject of knowledge, a discourse built upon a series of discourses, emerged simultaneously, as those advocates of global history seem to presume, in various locations, themselves were distinct lifeworlds and had distinct histories, as a way of relating to knowledge that was in and of itself universal. See, for instance, Gurminder Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

⁴⁴ The temptation here is to blame Hegel and his notion of *Weltgeist* and *Volkgeist* as myopically justifying and normalising the superiority of Europe. However, this is only a part of much more complex Hegelian thought. As Keya Ganguly suggests, "a more nuanced reading of his propositions about history would permit us to realize that for Hegel, the end of history [...] actually signals the beginning of historical understanding. [...] This is to view the end of history not as a triumphant moment, [...] but as melancholy or, at least, uncertain." Kaya Ganguly, "Temporality and postcolonial critique," in Neil Lazarus (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 164 [162-179].

⁴⁵ See, for example, Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1951; Masao Watanabe, *The Japanese and Western Science*, Otto Theodor Benfey (trans.), Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976; Tominaga, *Kindaika no riron*; Grant K. Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch 1600-1853*, London: Routledge, 2000.

⁴⁶ As Marwa Elshakry aptly argues, it was after all outside 'the West' that the concept of 'Western' knowledge was "itself first developed." See Marwa Elshakry, "When Science Became Western: Historiographical Reflections," *Isis*, 101:1, 2010: 100 [98-109].

It was consciously separated, as Grant Goodman observes, from its philosophical underpinnings “in order to maintain the indivisible philosophical base on Confucianism and its concordant political and economic theories.”⁴⁷ Thus, in a similar vein, Timon Screech concludes that the pattern of perception then established was that modern Western knowledge in Japan was “primarily intended for practical application”⁴⁸ – to improve existing calendrical knowledge, astronomical expertise, medical practices, and agricultural production. For those Tokugawa elites, modern Western knowledge was emic, an accessory to other existing knowledge traditions that had long offered sustenance for specific political economy, social strata, and moral and ethical values.

Yet, as these historians also observe, the end of the 19th century saw a significant perceptual and discursive shift. In the age of the nation-state and colonial encounters, the notion of civilisation, not in plural but in singular, became the primary point of reference, first of all, for Europeans to “see themselves in relation to others,” to elevate “particular European traditions to the status of universal standards marking the advance of human progress,” and therefore to justify their global expansion.⁴⁹ For Meiji modernisers, ‘Western civilisation’ was now much more than a description of contemporary Euro-America. It was now a conceptual device to reorganise cultural differences among territorial blocks into historical differences between the civilised and the barbaric, between the developed and the underdeveloped, between the modern and the premodern. Civilisation was thus a representation of a universal stage of world history, a destination that Japan itself should aspire to arrive at.

This notion of civilisation as a “double entendre”⁵⁰ – designating both universal and Western – is a product partly of the Meiji politico-ideological discourses. But it is also of the observers of history whose philosophy of history already presumes a specific imagining across time and space that corresponds to the imbrication of universal history (time) and a geographical location (the West) represented by this notion of civilisation. To be sure, a close reading of Meiji intellectual and political debates suggests that this perceptual and discursive shift cannot be taken as a vindication that those elites saw anything and everything ‘Western’ as inherently superior or universal. Take but one example of Fukuzawa’s sobering assessment. He observed: “The nations

⁴⁷ Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch 1600-1853*, 190. This view of modern Western knowledge as an assemblage of theories, concepts, and technologies is manifest, for instance, in the following works. Suzuki Hiroo, “Bakumatsu-ki no gakusei-kaikaku ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu: Saga-han o chūshin to shite” 幕末期の学制改革に関する一考察: 佐賀藩を中心として (“Educational Reform during the Late Edo Period: A Case Study of Saga-Clan”), *The Educational Sciences*, 4, 1965: 14-40; Okuyama Hideo, “Bakumatsu no gunji-kaikaku ni tsuite” 幕末の軍事改革について (“On Military Reform in the Late Edo Period”), *Journal of Hōsei Historical Society*, 19, 1967: 106-121; Suzuki Kazuyoshi, “Bakumatsu-ki no seiyō-gijutsu dōnyū ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu: Saga-han no hansharoyō taihi-renga no seizō-gijutsu ni tsuite” 幕末期の西洋技術導入に関する一考察: 佐賀藩の反射炉用対火煉瓦の製造技術について (“A Case Study on the Introduction of Western Technologies during the Late Edo Period: The Production of Refractory Bricks for Reverberatory Furnace in Saga-Clan”), *Bulletin of the National Science Museum*, 15, 1992: 53-65; Sonoda Hidehiro, *Seiyō-ka no kōzō: Kurofune, bushi, kokka* 西洋化の構造: 黒船、武士、国家 (*The Structure of Westernisation: Black Ships, Samurai Warriors, the Nation-State*), Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1995.

⁴⁸ Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2017 [1996]: 10.

⁴⁹ See respectively, Roy Preiwerk and Dominique Perrot, *Ethnocentrism and History: Africa, Asia and Indian American in Western Textbooks*, New York, NY and Lagos: Nok Publishers, 1978: 61; Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan*, 159. As Immanuel Wallerstein writes, “the finitude of the earthly sphere served primarily to facilitate the explorations and exploitation demanded by progress, and to make practical and realizable Western aspiration of domination.” See Wallerstein, *Open the Social Sciences*, 4.

⁵⁰ Douglas R. Howland, *Translating the West: Language and Political Reason in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002: 33

of the West are always at war,” which he saw as the greatest calamity of the human world; “In the West, there are robbers and murderers,” whom he admonished as committing the worst of human crimes; and international diplomacy conducted by the nations of the West “is really based on the art of deception.” Then, he concluded, “the present condition of the nations of the West will surely seem a pitifully primitive stage” and “civilisation is an open-ended process.”⁵¹ Emulating the West was, for Fukuzawa and for many of his contemporaries, not the ultimate goal. It was simply a means to eventually surpass the West. And yet, this muddiness of the past seems to have escaped the imagination of those who are sedated by the philosophy of history, which depends on an affirmation of the European Enlightenment, and which is ready to view the side effects of Hegelianism, progress, and the chauvinistic arrogance of European empires as prescribed reactions that nonetheless confirms the inevitability of universal temporal movements and historical differences. Such a confirmation becomes, in a self-referential manner, an affirmation of the very principle of historical interpretation.

Within this philosophy of history, Japan, as an object of historical scholarship, already has its appropriate place. It exists in the outer orbit of the universal centre as an eternal consumer of universal (Western) civilisation, following a prescribed historical path carved out from the Euro-American experiences. So, historians go on to argue that modern Western knowledge was no longer considered a knowledge tradition of a faraway place but was now viewed as the sustenance of universal (Western) civilisation indispensable for political, economic, and social reorganisation. The acquisition and dissemination of this knowledge under the politico-ideological project of *bunmei kaika* (civilisation and enlightenment) and *fukoku kyōhei* (enriching the country, strengthening the army) became a means and an end for Japan to become modern. It was no longer optional but a necessity and even inevitability, in the words of David Wittner, of “a ‘semi-civilised’ nation such as Japan.”⁵² Accordingly, various agencies served to learn and disseminate this knowledge, among them the government institutions, newly established universities, reformed primary and secondary schools, imperial armies, and newspapers and magazines. Contents of modern Western knowledge were taken as true, as James Bartholomew observes, “because they came from the West.”⁵³ Cramming these contents and instrumentalising them for new social relations and administration were registered, as Ardath Burks writes, as the basis for living “modern life” organised around “scientific and rational behaviour.”⁵⁴ For this reason, as Shigeru Nakayama declares, the Meiji period represents “the most dramatic instances of [...] the entry of modern science (the most excellent product of modern West) into a non-Western country [...] for the time.”⁵⁵ It is a symbolic moment, as Mark Lincicome writes in a celebratory tone, for a “clean break with the past.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, 19-20. Stefan Tanaka, in his analysis of the development of historical scholarship in Japan, also points to the fact that Meiji Japan’s approval of Western civilisation was a cautious one. See Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*.

⁵² David G. Wittner, *Technology and the Culture of Progress in Meiji Japan*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2008: 125.

⁵³ James R. Bartholomew, *The Formation of Science in Japan: Building a Research Tradition*, New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989: 4.

⁵⁴ Ardath W. Burks, “The Role of Education in Modernization,” in Ardath W. Burks (ed.), *The Modernizers: Overseas Students, Foreign Employees, and Meiji Japan*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1985: 256 [254-263].

⁵⁵ Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions in China, Japan, and the West*, 193.

⁵⁶ Mark Elwood Lincicome, *Principle, Practice, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995: 2. See also, John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989: 523-524.

Any schema of temporal disjuncture – such as this idea of a ‘clean break with the past’ – is a means to create a specific discursive space. It is a narrative strategy to accord significance to certain events and to project a particular logic of demarcation.⁵⁷ What is principally at work is not the revelation of historical truths but the justification of historical shifts and changes. Such justification, in turn, vindicates a certain explanation of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of those shifts and changes. More specifically, the historian’s insistence on a ‘clean break,’ while bringing our attention to the Meiji period as the epitome of modern life, also prefigures a possible location of the Tokugawa period in historical narration. The insistence leaves the earlier engagement with modern Western knowledge, such as in Rangaku and Yōgaku, suspended in the distinct past while simultaneously pressing them towards the future as a bridge between premodern and modern. For instance, Grant Goodman and Timon Screech respectively suggest that the Tokugawa engagement with modern Western knowledge in Rangaku was fundamentally different from its extensive appropriation during the Meiji period.⁵⁸ According to them, Rangaku, on the one hand, was intended primarily for the practical application of some selected contents of modern Western knowledge without muddling the existing political, economic, and social structures. In contrast, the Meiji period saw a sweeping change in one’s relation to knowledge, in that, for all its diversity, modern Western knowledge became that which foregrounded both collective and individual life of the Japanese people. Furthermore, Marius Jansen and Jon Van Sant assert that even those engagements with modern Western knowledge under the rubric of Tokugawa anti-foreignism had its function, serving “as a bridge between the world of Tokugawa and Meiji thought and action”⁵⁹ and paving the way for Japan’s “long and diligent assimilation” into the world of the modern.⁶⁰ In this way, the significance of Meiji accorded by historians becomes all at once a temporal marker for differentiation between premodern and modern and a discursive strategy to coalesce a diachronic history of Japan into a larger historical narrative of universal intellectual progress.

Alas, in a perverse way, the act of writing a history of modern knowledge formation in Japan becomes an act of stabilising modern Western knowledge as knowledge tout court, or more precisely, an act of stabilising a certain temporal structure that has long enabled Europe’s self-assertion of its superiority: a linear and totalising universal history of human intellectual progress, a forward march of reason, which began in one place but nonetheless continued outside it, or in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty, “‘first in Europe, then elsewhere’ structure of global historical time.”⁶¹ In this ensuing circularity between historical analysis and the object of historical analysis,

⁵⁷ See Karatani Kōjin, “The Discursive Space of Modern Japan,” *boundary 2*, 18:3, 1991: 191-219.

⁵⁸ Goodman 190; Screech 10. On the development of Rangaku, see also, Numata Jirō, *Yōgaku* 洋学 (*Western Learning*), Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1989; Sugimoto Tsutomu, *Edo no yōgaku jijō* 江戸の洋学事情 (*Western Learning in Edo*), Tokyo: Yasaka shobō, 1990; Tozawa Yukio, *Edo ga nozoita ‘Seiyō’* 江戸が覗いた「西洋」 (*The West that Edo Peeked In*), Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan, 1999; Terrence Jackson, *Network of Knowledge: Western Science and the Tokugawa Information Revolution*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016.

⁵⁹ Marius B. Jansen, “Rangaku and Westernization,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 18:4, 1984: 553 [541-553]. Main proponents of anti-foreignism include Hayashi Shihei (1738-1793), Aizawa Seishisai (1782-1863), Watanabe Kazan (1793-1841), and Sakuma Shōzan (1811-1864). For anti-foreignism and Western learning, see W.G. Beasley, “The Edo Experience and Japanese Nationalism,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 18:4, 1984: 555-566; Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan: The New Thesis of 1825*, Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1986: 76-97.

⁶⁰ John E. van Sant, “Rangaku Medicine and ‘Foreign’ Knowledge in Late Tokugawa Japan,” *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, 34, 2012: 213 [207-214].

⁶¹ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 7.

between the principle of historical interpretation and the foundational principle of the object of investigation, between the historian's imagining across time and space and the 19th-century discursive structure that legitimised the global imposition of modern Western knowledge, Japan already has its appropriate location. It occupies a position that Carol Gluck describes as eternal "elsewhere" or that Naoki Sakai defines as "the rest," which provides a case history for the grand historical narrative of modern Western knowledge as a metonymy of temporal movements from tradition to modernity, from primitive to enlightened, from darkness into light that privilege European experiences as the prototype.⁶²

A sense of coloniality embedded in these historical accounts is nonetheless muted. To sediment the muddiness of the past into a manageable narrative of universal intellectual progress, these accounts reduce modern knowledge formation in Japan to a mere process of transferring concepts, theories, and institutions of knowledge from the West to Japan. Those historians see that recounting a process of appropriating Western concepts, theories, and institutions is tantamount to explaining how modern knowledge is formed. But this is almost antithetical to their initial premise. If, as these historians indicate, modern knowledge is modern because it is a way of thinking and reasoning incommensurable to previously available modes of knowing, and if modern knowledge formation in Japan signifies a fundamental change in the way of thinking and reasoning, then, concepts, theories, and institutions are mere manifestations of the epistemic foundation that validates these concepts, theories, and institutions in the first place. In other words, modern knowledge formation is tantamount not to the adaptation of these contents but to the form of knowledge. Yet, nowhere in these historical accounts can one find a sustained engagement with the ways in which an epistemic change occurred in Japan's encounter with modern Western knowledge.

The National Origin of the Subject of Knowledge

How did, then, an epistemic change occur? How did the subject of knowledge, a discourse built upon a series of discourses, emerge as something reflexive of distinct lifeworlds and histories of the Japanese archipelago?⁶³ One common explanation provided by historians emphasises the

⁶² Carol Gluck, "The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now," *The American Historical Review*, 116: 3, 2011: 676-687; Naoki Sakai, "The West – A Dialogic Prescription or Proscription?" *Social Identities*, 11:3, 2005: 179 [177-195]. The initial impulse of global history is to challenge this structural inequality between the West and the rest. Yet, I have a lingering suspicion that attention to global connectivity and transfer cannot alone adequately explain historical changes, let alone epistemic changes that reconceived knowledge as a subject-object relation. If connectivity and transfer are the primary forces of epistemic changes, then, a change could have occurred, in theory, in the 16th century when Portuguese missionaries first arrived in Japan with scientific theories and instruments. Or it could have occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries when Western texts became widely available through translation for the intellectual and political classes. The upshot is that global history is not well-equipped to account for why a certain epistemic change occurred at a specific moment and how such a change was legitimised and normalised in that specific context. Changes are located, in fact, less in connectivity and transfer than in intellectual and cognitive conditions and in the structure of power that made such connectivity and transfer possible in the first place. For the limits and possibilities of global history, see Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016; Sebastian Conrad "Nothing Is the Way It Should Be": Global Transformations of the Time Regime in the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Intellectual History*, 15:3, 2018: 821-848.

⁶³ In his important work, Peter Harrison recounts the emergence of the subject in Europe, telling us that the epistemic shift from cosmological worldviews to a subject-object relation, from 'inhabiting' to 'viewing,' was a long process that stretched over centuries. One inference I shall draw from his observation is that the change cannot be attributed to notable intellectual achievements, such as the discovery of the law of gravity or the development of the heliocentric view. Rather, the change occurred through a series of intellectual works that tended to the question of God, individual

strictly national origin of the subject. While this explanation shares a general affinity to a philosophy of history that views historical time as linear and empty, filled with the promise of progress, it follows that modern knowledge formation in Japan, a form of intellectual progress, occurred not through a diffusionist process but rather through a decidedly diachronic and localised process. This emphasis on the national, in turn, necessitates a reassessment of premodern, especially Tokugawa intellectual traditions, as a potential ‘Japanese’ genesis of the subject.

For many historians, the dissolution of Neo-Confucianism, an authoritative and dogmatic mode of thinking and reasoning that they see as epitomising the premodern, was a crucial moment for forging a predilection towards the formation of the subject. Or, put otherwise, a sense of intellectual resistance against Neo-Confucianism shared among its dissents, such as those associated with Kogaku and Kokugaku, was the catalyst for the emergence of a distinctly modern way of thinking and reasoning. Take, for instance, Maruyama Masao’s seminal work on Tokugawa intellectual traditions. He argues that the efficacy of Kogaku lies in its problematisation of the most fundamental and foundational premise of Neo-Confucianism, that is, its concept of *ri* 理 (*li* in Chinese), the all-encompassing principle that dictates everything in both human and natural worlds under the heaven. With this problematisation, Kogaku, as Maruyama observes, effectively rejected the Neo-Confucian continuum of *dōri* 道理 (the way of humans) and *butsurei* 物理 (the way of things). In turn, Kogaku constituted an enabling condition for clearly demarcating the realm of “what ought to be” (moral laws valid only for man) and the realm of “what (naturally) exists” (universal laws and regularities of the world external to man).⁶⁴ Further still, this demarcation foregrounded a general inertia away from “Gemeinschaft consciousness” and towards “Gesellschaft consciousness,” that is to say, from the feudal to the modern.⁶⁵ With the demarcation, the world out there, once considered integral to moral and ethical concerns within Neo-Confucianism, became a distinct object to be observed and anatomised.⁶⁶

What is simultaneously at work is a specific understanding of the premodern. To claim that a modern way of thinking and reasoning was forged in a specifically national history and that its genesis is in what is often regarded as premodern, the very notion of premodern has to be reworked. To argue that Kogaku, for instance, represents an inertia towards the modern, an antithesis must be established. For this reason, historians also spend many pages reconstituting Neo-Confucianism as a negative foil, as the embodiment of the premodern. One of the earliest examples of such historical reconstitution is the work of Inoue Tetsujirō. On Neo-Confucianism in Japan, he writes

virtues, and the finitude of human cognition. See Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

⁶⁴ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 70, 148-149. Though three-quarters of a century old, this work remains one of the most comprehensive and influential readings of Tokugawa intellectual traditions. Albert Craig once noted that “all who write on Tokugawa thought must at some point ask themselves how their work relates to Maruyama Masao’s brilliant elucidation of the development of the school of Ancient Learning.” This, I believe, remains also true for historians today. See Albert Craig, “Science and Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan,” in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965: 155 [133-165].

⁶⁵ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 221. Here, Maruyama’s analytical schema follows Franz Borkenau’s *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild* (1934), which traces the transformation of worldviews from the mediaeval period to the period of the Renaissance. Applying Borkenau’s approach to the internal and structural interrelations between basic categories of thinking and reasoning (such as reason, nature, and law), Maruyama treats Neo-Confucianism as something equivalent to the Scholastic philosophy of European intellectual tradition. In doing so, and for all its problems, such treatment enables Maruyama to make ‘Japanese’ intellectual history analogous, parallel, and comparable to European intellectual history.

⁶⁶ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 221.

that it is “very simple and homogenous,” merely functioning as a vehicle for propagating Zhu Xi’s (1130-1200) claims without any critical reflections.⁶⁷ For him, those Neo-Confucian scholars of the Tokugawa period were nothing but “spiritual slaves” of Zhu Xi, who did not have the means to equip themselves with a modern way of thinking and reasoning that he defines elsewhere as “scientific culture.”⁶⁸ Then, as Inoue concludes, the value of Neo-Confucianism, if anything, is that “it is a historical fact worth looking back on only for comparison and contrast.”⁶⁹

This image of Neo-Confucianism as rigid, homogenous, and dogmatic, devoid of any critical reflections, has continued to operate as a general point of departure for the postwar reassessment of Tokugawa intellectual traditions. Maruyama argues that “since these scholars treated Ch’eng I and Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi] with the devotion due to sages, their works are not more than faithful introductions to Chu His.”⁷⁰ It was only when Kogaku and Kokugaku began to resist Neo-Confucian orthodoxy that “conciliatory elements and compromises” arose in the works of Neo-Confucians.⁷¹ Bitō Masahide, in a similar vein, reads that Fujiwara Seika’s (1561-1691) Neo-Confucianism was dogmatic, whose symbolic power was sustained by its core premise that connected the realm of governing to the ideal of moral and ethical being. Bitō, then, wields this understanding of Neo-Confucianism as an antithesis to evaluate the significance of the works of Yamazaki Ansai (1619-1682), Satō Naokata (1650-1719), Nakae Tōju (1608-1648), and Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691).⁷² For all differences in focus and scope, these historical analyses are premised upon the consensus that Neo-Confucianism encapsulated, in the words of Maruyama, “medieval Einheit” and thus was incapable of self-renewal.⁷³

More generally, such a diachronic history of modern knowledge has a broader narrative function. It is to argue that the development of a modern way of thinking and reasoning in Japan is not an achievement exclusive to Meiji, nor was it a consequence of the global diffusion of modern Western knowledge, but its genesis is in a “deep current” found in Tokugawa intellectual traditions that was “developing unceasingly towards modernity.”⁷⁴ The obvious appeal of such a diachronic account is its analytical scope that does not explicitly rely on modern Western knowledge as the ultimate reference. The attention to a ‘deep current’ enables historians to argue that history does not begin only in Europe and that the genesis of a modern way of thinking and reasoning is, in fact, multiple, each of which is undoubtedly diachronic and exceedingly particular. At the same time, the allure of this account is also in its diachronic way of connecting the past, present, and future as an unceasing continuity. Once Neo-Confucianism is relocated to the confines of the premodern, it becomes possible to read those dissents as markers of continuity between the Tokugawa and Meiji periods – two periods that are otherwise viewed with a sense of politico-ideological

⁶⁷ Inoue, *Nippon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku*, 598.

⁶⁸ See respectively, Inoue, *ibid.*, 598; Inoue, “Tōkyō Keizai zasshi ni kotau,” 111.

⁶⁹ Inoue, *Nihon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku*, 603.

⁷⁰ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 32-33.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Bitō Masahide, *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū: Bakuhan taisei no genri to shushigakuteki shisui* 日本封建思想史研究: 幕藩体制の原理と朱子学的思想推 (Studies of the History of Japanese Feudal Thoughts: The Principle of Tokugawa Political System and Neo-Confucian Thought), Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1961.

⁷³ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 198-199. A similar tendency to treat Neo-Confucianism as an epitome of the premodern can also be found in subsequent works. See, for example, Peter Nescio, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990; Alan T. Wood, *Limits to Autocracy: From Sung Neo-Confucianism to a Doctrine of Political Rights*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995.

⁷⁴ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, xxxiii.

disjuncture. This, in turn, ascribes a sense of primordial integrity of Japan as the container of such continuity.

Yet, the search for the origin of modern knowledge in a strictly national context is inseparable from some fundamental issues of writing a specifically Japanese history of knowledge. There is a sense of a shared consensus through which historians see, or else wish to see, the development of Kogaku and Kokugaku as forms of resistance against Neo-Confucianism. And yet, as Wendy Brown aptly suggests, “resistance is by no means inherently subversive of power,” and it is only by recourse to an “evaluation of power as bad or as that which is to be overcome that it is possible to equate resistance with that which is good, progressive, or seeking an end to domination.”⁷⁵ Treating Kogaku and Kokugaku as a resistance ‘good’ for the formation of modern knowledge is possible only by reworking the image of Neo-Confucianism as rigid, homogenous, dogmatic, and uncritical. But ascertainable facts do not correspond to this purported oppositionality between Neo-Confucianism and its dissents. A close reading suggests that critical reflections, as we see, for example, in the works of Neo-Confucian scholars such as Hayashi Razan (1583-1657) and Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714), were very much a part of the Neo-Confucian tradition.⁷⁶

Then, it is reasonable to assume that the impulse of writing a decidedly national history of modern knowledge formation is not necessarily about historical accuracy. What is at work is the historian’s intentionality to read the past in a certain way so that history confirms the expectation of the present. Maruyama, for instance, never shies away from disclosing his own intentionality. He explains that his interest in Tokugawa intellectual traditions derives from his desire to stand on the “intellectual battleground on the side of ‘modernity’” – a desire to combat what he perceives as the perilous idea of ‘overcoming modernity,’ the pathogen of pathological decay of Japanese intellectual life witnessed during the war period.⁷⁷ Mikiso Hane, the translator of Maruyama’s

⁷⁵ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995: 22.

⁷⁶ Maruyama himself later acknowledged that his rendering of Neo-Confucianism had a problematic tendency of generalisation. He writes, “The first concerns the assumption [...] that what I called the ‘Neo-Confucian’ mode of thought had achieved a general social ascendancy in the early Tokugawa period, and that the universality of its acceptance began to crumble subsequently in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as it was subjected to the calculated challenge of the rising School of Ancient Learning. Not only is this assumption too mechanical a reflection of historical evolutionism, but it also does not correspond with the ascertainable facts. [...] it is certainly true that the Tokugawa government and that of the fiefs did realize the usefulness of Confucianism (concretely, for the most part Chu Hsi’s Neo-Confucianism) [...]. But, it was not really until the late seventeenth century that [...] the doctrines of Confucianism as an ideology came to penetrate the society in general.” Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, xxxiv. I will expand on the unfolding of the Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan later in this inquiry, but for now, the following works should allude to my point. Abe Yoshio, *Nihon shushigaku to chosen* 日本朱子学と朝鮮 (Japanese Neo-Confucianism and Korea), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1965; Tetsuo Najita, *Japan: The Intellectual Foundations of Modern Japanese Politics*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974; Tetsuo Najita, *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan: The Kaitokudō Merchant Academy of Osaka*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Harry Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism*, Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988; Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The Life and Thought of Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714)*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989; Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The Statues of Language in Eighteenth-century Japanese Discourse*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992; John H. Berthrong, *Transformation of the Confucian Way*, New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1998; Federico Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015; Kiri Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism: A Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

⁷⁷ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*., xxxi. Harry Harootunian offers an erudite rendering of ‘overcomers’ especially in the field of philosophy who, in the 1920s and 1930s, clustered their efforts

work, also suggests that the task facing postwar Japanese intellectuals, including Maruyama, was “the creation of an autonomous mind that can function as an intermediary between reality and ideas,” that is, the creation of the “independent subject in Japan.”⁷⁸ The intentionality, in other words, of writing a specifically Japanese history of modern knowledge is to excavate the origin of

around oppositions to modernisation, which they perceived as the embrace of materialistic and empty Western capitalism and culture. See Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. Maruyama’s work must, therefore, be contextualised within the postwar scholarly climate marked by modernisation theory. As evident in Edward Shils’ initial proposal, modernisation theory is not a mere theoretical rendering of an ideal society that development and progress should strive for. It is also a desire to promote particular characteristics of 20th-century American liberalism that is “democratic and equalitarian, scientific, economically advanced and sovereign,” which, in turn, legitimises the interventionism of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. Edward A. Shils, Draft to “Political Development in the New States,” Folder 10734, Box 739, Series 1, Amendum 8/96, SSRC Archives (Committee on Comparative Politics). Rockefeller Archive Center, North Tarrytown, NY, 1958: 1-3. Nils Gilman charts the development, proliferation, and subsequent demise of modernisation theory in Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America*, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. Modernisation theory spawned a wide array of works within the field of Japanese Studies in the 1960s. Names and works of those especially prominent can be found in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965. It is worth noting here that those works that resort to modernisation theory are not at all homogenous. On the one hand, the primary intention of American scholars of Japan reflects their concerns over the purported antagonism between disciplinary theories and area-oriented data. As John Whitney Hall writes, “if the recent history of Japan is to be discussed in terms other than a set of discrete monologues, the acceptance of a formula of change derived from one society as normal for all others is certainly not justified.” And thus Sheldon Garon maintains that modernisation theory, as applied to Japanese history, cannot be taken as “a rigorous theory or methodology than a general outlook.” John Whitney Hall, “Changing Conceptions of the Modernization of Japan,” in Jansen (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, 33 [7-42]; Sheldon Garon, “Rethinking Modernization and Modernity in Japanese History: A Focus on State-Society Relations,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53:2, 1994: 348 [346-366]. On the other hand, for Japanese scholars, modernisation theory represents an opportunity to combat Marxist historiography that depicts previous decades with the vocabulary of deficiencies, incomplete transition, and time lags and, therefore, to reread what has been defined feudal and traditional as the catalyst for Japan’s modernisation. This – almost – Nietzschean transvaluation in history writing permits those Japanese scholars to emphasise the ‘transformative ability’ or ‘internal capacity’ of traditional Japanese society and culture as the primary force of historical progress. Umesao Tadao, “Bunmei no seitaishikan josetsu” 文明の生態史観序説 (“Thought on Ecological View of History”), *Chūō kōron*, February 1957: 32-49; Tōyama Shigeki, “Genjitsu to dentō wa chigau mo gakusha no kyōryoku wa kanō” 現実と伝統は違うも学者の協力は可能 (“Possibility of Scholarly Cooperation Despite the Differences in Realities and Traditions”), *Mainichi Shinbun*, 9th September, 1960; Kawashima Takeyoshi, “Kindai nihonshi no shakaigakuteki kenkyū” 近代日本史の社会学的研究 (“Social Scientific Studies of Modern Japan”), *Shisō*, 442, 1961: 483-488. Of course, modernisation theory and its application to Japanese history have been criticised by a number of scholars. Tetsuo Najita argues that the linear temporality of progress problematically treats Japan’s imperial expansion and militarism as a mere aberration of the otherwise steady progress of Japan as a modern nation-state and suggests that historical research must address the multitude of historical agents and complex actuality of historical moments. In a similar vein, Sebastian Conrad maintains that, in the discursive schema of modernisation theory, Japan’s imperial past and its colonial desires are methodologically rendered invisible, such that “colonial ties are” rather conveniently “liquidated.” Harry Harootunian characterises the Hakone Conference as an epitome of “a new stage of imperialism and colonialism without territorialisation,” to the extent that modernisation theory “prompted Japanese to incorporate American expectations to fulfil a narrative about themselves, produced by others, elsewhere,” concluding that “America’s Japan became Japan’s Japan.” Tetsuo Najita, “Introduction: A Synchronous Approach to the Study of Conflict in Modern Japanese History,” in Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann (eds.), *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982: 3-21; Sebastian Conrad, “‘The Colonial Ties are Liquidated’: Modernization Theory, Post-War Japan and the Global Cold War,” *Past and Present*, 216: 1, 2012: 181-214; Harry Harootunian, “America’s Japan / Japan’s Japan,” in Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian (eds.), *Japan in the World*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1993: 200, 215 [196-221].

⁷⁸ Mikiso Hane, “Translator’s Preface,” in Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, x [vii-xiii].

not only modern but also uniquely ‘Japanese’ consciousness that foregrounds a modern way of thinking and reasoning.

The question, at this juncture, is of what makes consciousness uniquely Japanese.⁷⁹ Naoki Sakai notes, in his analysis of cultural nationalism, that what we call ‘Japanese’ thought, the object of Japanese intellectual history, is not preparatorily given for historians to excavate. On the contrary, the object is “engendered” and “made possible” by the existence of historical discipline.⁸⁰ Or, as Tessa Morris-Suzuki demonstrates, terms such as ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ are floating signifiers that do not have fixed meanings but are utilised for various and, at times, competing interests.⁸¹ These signifiers are, at best, ongoing projects without any closure. An immediate repercussion is that the object of diachronic historical analyses, that is, the specifically ‘Japanese’ genesis of the subject of modern knowledge, is not preparatorily given. It is not something that historians can excavate from archives, forgotten texts, and historical records. The object is out there because historians forge it as such. It is made possible by the very practices of history writing, whereby those encounters with Chinese classics, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and modern Western science – those encounters that had shaped the contours of the Tokugawa intellectual life – are erased in searching for the origin of modern knowledge in a strictly national context.⁸²

A number of works have since challenged such inertia towards national history by arguing against the image of Neo-Confucianism as rigid, homogenous, and dogmatic and by offering more nuanced and complex pictures of the Tokugawa intellectual landscape. To borrow from Harry Harootunian, “we have no reason to suppose that such relationship” between Neo-Confucianism and other Tokugawa intellectual traditions “are neither natural or permanent and no reason to assume that we are prevented from producing different positions,” by way of “redefining the set

⁷⁹ Kiri Paramore problematises the assertion of the specifically ‘Japanese’ quality of Tokugawa intellectual traditions, arguing that such representation of various strands of Confucianism in Japan had paved the way for the disastrous political ideology of fascism. See Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*, 141-166.

⁸⁰ Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 40-41.

⁸¹ Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan*.

⁸² The idea of enduring national specificity brings to my mind Johann Gottfried von Herder’s 18th-century observation that each nation “bears in itself the standard of its perfection, totally independent of comparison with that of all others,” or the 19th-century German idealist’s hermeneutics, whereby the nation becomes all at once a name of identity and a process of cultivating national subjects. Think, for instance, the dialectic of an established historical tradition and rational knowledge proposed by Friedrich W.J. Schelling, in his articulation of the idea of man who exalts himself through reason to the level of the universal; Friedrich von Schiller’s proposal about nurturing such man through the mediation of aesthetic ideology that fuses objective science (cultural knowledge) with subject education (cultivation of national subject); Friedrich Schleiermacher’s synthesis that positions the university as the intermediary of hermeneutic relationship between nature and reason; Johann G. Fichte’s privileging of pedagogy, as one that directly addresses the nation-state and that constitutes a backdrop for national emancipation; and last but not least, Wilhelm von Humboldt’s proposal to unify research and teaching (*die Einheit von Forschung und Lehre*), which was materialized through the establishment of universities in Berlin, and which had become – or at least was said to have become – the foundational model of the modern university. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968: 98; Friedrich W.J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, E.S. Morgan (trans.), Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981 [1802]; Friedrich von Schiller, “Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man,” in Daniel O. Dahlstrom and Walter Hinderer (eds.), Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.W. Willoughby (trans.), *Essays*, New York, NY: Continuum, 1993 [1794]: 86-178; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German State: With an Appendix Regarding a University Soon to Be Established*, T.N. Tice with E. Lawler (trans.), San Francisco, CA: EM Text, 1991 [1808]; Johann G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, R.F. Jones and G.H. Turnbull (trans.), Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1979 [1808]; Johann G. Fichte, *The Purpose of Higher Education*, John K. Bramann (trans.), Mt. Savage, Maryland: Nightsun Books, 1988 [1794]; Johan Östling, *Humboldt and the Modern German University: An Intellectual History*, Lena Olsson (trans.), Lund: Lund University Press, 2018.

of relationships governing the cultural field of the eighteenth century.”⁸³ The point, as I see it, is not merely about acknowledging the complexity, heterogeneity, and muddiness of history that often escapes historical narration. It is also about the arbitrariness of history writing. Any engagement with the past is dictated by the historian’s intentionality. Thus, Harootunian goes on to caution us that “there is no innocent reading” of historical records and materials “in which an invariant reality is transparently reflected in words” of the past. This is because “words are [...] opaque, layered, filled with differing and contrary valences” and because “lucidity is illusory, as is its claim that an utterance must necessarily be true because it is ‘obvious,’ ‘familiar,’ and ‘clear.’”⁸⁴ Reading historical records and materials is, therefore, always mediated by a set of presumptions, a schema, a contingent silence agreed by historians about language and meaning, about words and things, about signs and significations, which forms a specific intentionality of understanding the past in a certain way.

Whether one sees the history of modern knowledge in Japan as a global unfolding of the European Enlightenment ethos or as a product of decidedly national developments, a common thread ties these historical accounts together. These accounts mould the past into a prescribed path that moves unceasingly and purposefully towards a certain closure – becoming modern. Here, the general movement of time accorded as the developmental process (the Hegelian-Marxian insistence) prefigures the totality of particular instances and the uniqueness of historical events (the Rankean insistence). Resistances, discontinuities, and ruptures are all but part of “a storm [that] is blowing from Paradise” – a storm that “we call progress.”⁸⁵

Yet, in a world that has transformed beyond the imagination of Hegel, Marx, and Ranke, such a temporal-spatial constellation becomes increasingly swampy. For one, ‘elsewhere’ is no longer a credible proposition to intervene into non-European pasts. As Carol Gluck succinctly argues, “the Eurocentric arrogance that once kept the ‘backward’ peoples of ‘elsewhere’ forever in the ‘imaginary waiting room’ of history” cannot be taken as the foundational principle of history writing, for “the long modern conjuncture, with its welter of contingencies and consequences, means that elsewhere is everywhere now.”⁸⁶ At the same time, ‘Japan’ cannot be taken as given, neither as a primordial repository of history nor as a stable analytical category. Not only because it is, to use the oversaturated concept of Benedict Anderson, ‘imagined community,’ but also because, and more fundamentally, the pattern of imagination is so heterogeneous that it does not have any principle of closure.⁸⁷ The question, then, becomes how to write about modern

⁸³ Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 16.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁵ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” Andy Blunden (trans.), Creative Commons, 2005 [1974]: Section IX. On the general problem of historicism and its application to Japan, see Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*, 36-47.

⁸⁶ Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere,” 677.

⁸⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York, NY: Verso, 1991 [1983]. This emphasis on the heterogeneity of the pattern of imagination is my response to Anderson’s otherwise powerful analytical apparatus. What I take issue with is his conviction in the original pattern of imagination derived from Euro-American experiences. In his text, the development of modern nation-states in Asia, Africa, and indeed ‘elsewhere’ is grasped in its “profoundly modular character” that is based on “models of nation, nation-ness, and nationalism distilled from the turbulent, chaotic experiences of more than a century of American and European history” (*ibid.*, 135, 140). However, his claim that the pattern of imagining is already prescribed as modular is almost antithetical to this original notion of the ‘imagined’ nature of the nation-state. To reiterate Partha Chatterjee’s critical position here, “if nationalists in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have to imagine? History,

knowledge formation from a perspective of ‘everywhere’ but not from a pre-established position of ‘Japan,’ how to write about epistemic changes by proceeding from the fact that the subject is a localised discursive configuration to the order of discourse that constitutes a condition of possibility that makes such localised configuration possible in the first place. The question, in short, becomes how to write a history of modern knowledge without erasing the question of heterotemporality from the formation of the modern subject.

§

Modern Knowledge Formation as Translational Practices

To answer this question, I want to point out two specific legacies of philosophical inquiries of the last century, which, I believe, have some important implications for the conduct of historians of knowledge.

The first is the idea that philosophical critique must take the form of the ontology of ourselves. In his meditation on Immanuel Kant’s notion of *Aufklärung*, Michel Foucault argues that no philosophical inquiry can go without examining ‘us’ that “relates to a characteristic cultural ensemble of [one’s] own actuality.”⁸⁸ It is to understand certain predispositions of ‘us’ that undergird “a unique cultural process” through which we become aware of ourselves by naming ourselves, by situating ourselves in terms of our past and future, and by indicating how we have to operate within our own present.⁸⁹ It is, in essence, to analyse and reflect on the limits of ourselves through “a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying,” rather than to seek to distil

it would seem, has decreed that we, in the post-colonial world, shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial misery.” Partha Chatterjee, “Whose Imagined Community?” *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 20: 3, 1991: 521 [521-525]. As I read it, Anderson’s muddling of ‘histories of nationalism’ with ‘nationalism’s self-representations’ stems from his intellectual affinity, on the one hand, with the European tradition of humanistic critique, which apex he finds in Eric Auerbach, and on the other hand, with historicism of Karl Popper. The humanist trope is often registered as the principle of *ad fontes* – ‘back to the source.’ The credibility and integrity of knowledge about something, as it is premised, depends on the fundamental source, be it the bible for the Protestant Reformation or the Greek and Latin classics for Renaissance humanists. Inevitably, historical differences become often and most likely irrelevant. In following Auerbach’s claim that the purpose is always to write history, Anderson’s primary objective is to write a history based on this principle of *ad fontes*, thus to write a history of the original. In contrast, Popperian historicism presumes that there are “the ‘rhythms’ or the ‘pattern,’ the ‘law’ or ‘trends’ that underlie the evolution of history.” Anderson’s writing is also mediated by this historicism, which is evident in his interest in understanding the unfolding of the original in other locations. Weaving together Auerbach’s desire to reach the origin with Popperian historicism to reveal a universal pattern of historical evolution, Anderson’s intellectual affinity seems to predetermine, or else delimit, the horizon of his own imagination. See Eric Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public: In Late Latin Antiquity and In the Middle Ages*, Ralph Manheim (trans. and ed.), Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965: 20; Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957: 55.

⁸⁸ Michel Foucault, “What is Revolution?” in Sylvère Lotringer (ed.), Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (trans.), *The Politics of Truth*, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007: 85 [83-95].

⁸⁹ Ibid., 86.

formal structures with universal values.⁹⁰ When pressed into the service of the history of knowledge, this attention to ourselves stresses the necessary examination of the ways in which the epistemic foundation of our knowledge – the subject a priori set up against the object – has historically constituted through a unique cultural process and, therefore, embodies not only possibilities but also certain limits.

At the same time, this problematisation of one's own discursive actuality as the subject of knowledge points to another philosophical development of the 20th century, the so-called linguistic turn. In his observation on philosophy, Ludwig Wittgenstein suggests that knowledge is, in fact, dependent on "all those primitive propositions which are assumed as true without proof" and that one must attend to the ways in which primitive propositions are socially constructed through language, meaning, and signification in order for us to conceptualise reality and to claim truths.⁹¹ For the conduct of historians of knowledge, this means that the subject, a primitive proposition that is often assumed as given, is a discursive construction and that this discursivity is reflected in our language. The formation of the subject must be understood by examining language, meaning, and signification that are mobilised for the subject to become a primitive proposition.

There are two influential approaches to history that have embraced these philosophical insights. One is *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history) of Reinhart Koselleck and Melvin Richter, which, with an ambitious historical range, seeks not only to establish the meaning of a concept in a contemporary semantic field but also to trace semantic changes of a concept across time.⁹² This approach has, no doubt, a certain advantage for an inquiry such as this one that seeks to understand the formation of the subject as a product of epistemic shifts forged through changes in language, meanings, and signification. And yet, for its reliance on 'basic concept' as the fundamental carrier and locus of semantic changes, *Begriffsgeschichte* risks detaching concepts from their linguistic context and ordering them according to a temporal sequence as if their meanings are transparently accessible. The other approach, namely the contextualist approach of Quentin Skinner and John Dunn, sees this "reified reconstruction" as the primary pitfall of conceptual history, whereby a concept is abstracted from its context and endowed with certain "timeless elements" with "universal applicability."⁹³ Here, the idea is that language is not transparent and that even what we often ubiquitously treat as modern Western knowledge is, in fact, replete with problems of semantic transparency. Take, for instance, terms such as 'Wissenschaft' (German), 'science' (French), and 'science' (English). While these terms are often equated linguistically to one another, there exist some notable semantic differences among them. The term 'Wissenschaft' signifies a well-founded research activity based on an established and formalised methodological procedure, such as observation, experiment, hypothesis, and deduction, that produces a unified body of knowledge in a given field (*ein einheitlicher Wissensbestand in einem bestimmten Bereich*). The French term 'science' equally denotes the unified nature of knowledge based on established and

⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in Sylvère Lotringer (ed.), Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (trans.), *The Politics of Truth*, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007: 113 [97-119].

⁹¹ James Carl Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions*, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc., 2003: 332. Thus, Wittgenstein writes elsewhere, "We feel that even if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all." See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, London: Routledge, 1994: 6.52.

⁹² Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985; Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.

⁹³ See respectively, John Dunn, "The Identity of the History of Ideas," *Philosophy*, 43:164, 1968: 87 [85-104]; Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8, 1969: 4 [3-53].

formalised methodologies, but the emphasis is also placed on the universal nature of its value (*de travaux d'une Valeur universelle*). In contrast, 'science' in English names not a unified body of knowledge nor its purportedly universal nature but an ensemble of knowledge, especially in hard science.⁹⁴ Recognising these semantic differences, the contextual approach maintains that a concept can only be fully grasped in its linguistic context defined by a specific period, geographical setting, and particular actors.

This problem of semantic transparency is especially salient for the history of knowledge that is marked by processes of transpositions of hitherto unfamiliar worldviews. From Buddhist teachings to Christianity, from Confucianism to modern Western science, a wide array of worldviews was brought to Japan and subsequently became integral parts of the intellectual life of the archipelago. But these processes of transposition cannot be adequately addressed with the language of transparent assimilation of the foreign into the familiar. This is because an encounter with a foreign worldview was, if anything, an instance of *problématique*, whereby an unfamiliar way of relating to the world had to be anchored into the then-familiar conceptual and semantic constellation that sustained what counted as valid and serious knowledge. Anchoring took place through the conversion of meaning and signification of an existing concept, through the hybridisation of a new concept with existing cognitive apparatuses, or through the transfiguration of the unfamiliar into a new conceptual and cognitive device. Thus, an encounter with an unfamiliar worldview was not in and of itself a guarantor of transparent transposition. An epistemic change may have occurred not because a new way of thinking and reasoning was assimilated into the existing intellectual landscape without any mediation as if it was transparently accessible to all. Rather, it is because such an encounter, as a moment of *problématique*, forged a liminal space, a transformative threshold, to reflect on and re-signify core concepts of a given existing knowledge tradition, to reconfigure its cognitive structures, and to reorganise the constellation of conceptual cognitive apparatuses that sustained knowledge as valid and serious within that tradition.

So understood, my argument is that this history of encounters and metamorphoses was mediated by translation in its broadest sense, not as an exercise to establish linguistic equivalence between the Japanese language and the language of source texts, be it classical Chinese or a European language, but as a conscious labour to interpret and expound on a way of thinking and reasoning within the semantic field that one partakes in.⁹⁵ Translation is an epistemic, rather than linguistic, exercise that encompasses elaboration, refraction, and incommensurability.

To be sure, the attention to translation is not necessarily new. After all, translation was a crucial means to facilitate encounters and metamorphoses. However, historians are not in agreement on the function and nature of translation and thus divided roughly into three camps. One is the kind of intellectual history represented by the work of Takeshi Ishida, which treats translation as a mechanism to coordinate 'Japanese' and 'Western' on somewhat equal terms. Here, language is understood as an autonomous determinant that holds a culture as a whole and simultaneously as

⁹⁴ Recognizing these semantic differences, Samuel Weber argues that institutions of knowledge are never free from the necessity of establishing and consolidating their authority through a process of reinstating themselves, for which interpretation and translation are the crucial means. Samuel Weber, *Institution and Interpretation*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

⁹⁵ For a comprehensive overview of the history of translation in Japan, see Rebekah Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. This view on translation not as a mere linguistic practice but as a broader cultural practice was popularised by Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia. See Peter Burke, *Language and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

universal in the sense that it is the original human ability. As Ishida reads it, translation from one language to another is an act of reconciling cultural differences and establishing equilibrium between two cultures. The presumption here is that ideas and concepts can be transferred from one location to another through translation as something semantically transparent. Changes occur not in the signification of what is translated but in the constellation of two cultures. As the recipient culture transparently incorporates whatever is translated into its own intellectual vocabulary, the hitherto incommensurable cultures come to embody certain similarities and, therefore, become comparable.⁹⁶

Tsutomu Sugimoto, Shūichi Katō, Masao Maruyama, and more recently Noriaki Kuwata and Liwei Chen also view linguistic unity as equal to cultural unity. However, for them, this linguistic unity-cum-cultural unity is not a category of equilibrium but a historical reality of linguistic and cultural untranslatability, which has emerged during the Tokugawa period and manifests itself as distinctive Japanese-ness. For the world is fragmented into linguistically and culturally homogenous units, and for linguistic and cultural boundaries are congruent with political ones, translation is not a means of reconciling linguistic and cultural differences. Rather, the function of translation, as they suggest, is to make sense of the foreign as it is within one's own linguistic, semantic, and cognitive practices. For this reason, the act of translating modern Western concepts is nothing but the manifestation of specifically 'Japanese' ability to transfigure the foreign into the Japanese and to commodify them for 'Japanese' intellectual exercises, especially through the creative application of *kango* (Japanese vocabulary originated in Chinese or created with elements borrowed from Chinese). Changes that occur through translation are, therefore, not homogenisation nor Westernisation but particularisation of Japan.⁹⁷

Akira Yanabu and Douglas Howland take issues with this emphasis on *kango* as a vehicle for signification autonomous from semantic and semiotic contexts. They argue instead that it is the context that regulates what a concept actually signifies. For them, translation is an instance of contextual change, in which a concept is extracted, so to say, from the original location and relocated to another, and in which the said concept is re-linked to a cluster of other concepts that either already exist or are newly invented in the semantic field of the target language. Thus, they maintain that this practice of re-linking is precisely when epistemic changes occur.⁹⁸ Howland writes, when observing the introduction of European Enlightenment concepts to Japan through

⁹⁶ Ishida Takeshi, *Kindai nihon no seiji bunka to gengo shōchō* 近代日本の政治文化と言語表象 (*Political Culture and Language Symbols of Modern Japan*), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1983. Ishida's understanding of language is indebted to Ernst Cassirer's conceptualisation. See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Vol. 1-3*, Steve G. Lofts (trans.), London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2021[1923].

⁹⁷ See Sugimoto Tsutomu, "Edo no honyakuron to honyakuhō" 江戸の翻訳論と翻訳法 ("Theories and Methods of Translation during the Edo Period"), *Kokubungaku kenkyū*, 95, 1988: 57 [57-68]; Katō Shūichi, "Meijishoki no honyaku: Naze, nani o ika ni yakushitaka" 明治初期の翻訳: なぜ、なにを、いかに訳するか ("Translation in the Early Meiji Period: Why, What, and How They Translated"), in Katō Shūichi and Maruyama Masao (eds.), *Honyaku no shisō* 翻訳の思想 (Theories of Translation), 1991: 342-343 [342-380]; Kuwata Noriaki, *Giron to honyaku: Meiji-ishin-ki ni okeru chiteki kankyō no kōchiku* 議論と翻訳: 明治維新时期における知的環境の構築 (*Debate and Translation: The Construction of Intellectual Condition During the Early Meiji Period*), Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 2019; Liwei Chen, *Kindaichi no honyaku to denpan: kango o baikai ni* 近代知の翻訳と伝搬: 漢語を媒介に (*Translation and Transfer of Modern Knowledge: Through Kango*), Tokyo: Sanseidō, 2019.

⁹⁸ Yanabu Akira, *Honyakugo no ronri: Gengo ni miru nihon bunka no kōzō* 翻訳語の論理: 言語に見る日本文化の構造 (*Theory of Translated Words: The Structure of Japanese Culture Encoded in Language*), Tokyo: Hōsei daigaku shuppanyoku, 1972: 205; Howland, *Translating the West*.

translation, that “if these [concepts] were initially embedded in a Japanese project of enlightened civilization largely informed by Western liberal theory and practice, the Western hypocrisy that some Japanese observed in the disjunction between Western theory and practice [...] compromised concepts like liberty, rights, and sovereignty from the outset.”⁹⁹ The stabilisation of these concepts vis-à-vis the establishment of a national assembly then “began to change the conditions of that enlightenment project.” The upshot of Yanabu and Howland’s observation is that once extracted from their birthplace and repositioned in the semantic and semiotic field of Meiji Japan, European Enlightenment concepts no longer carried the same meanings, for translation effectively reconfigured the very condition of Enlightenment. The idea is that structures of meaning that hold reality together are never fixed insofar as meaning is context-dependent. Once the context of enunciation changes, the structures of meaning change too. Once the structures change, the reality that language holds changes too.

Following Yanabu and Howland, I explain translation as epistemic practice as follows. It involves, first of all, elaborating on a set of conceptual devices, the form rather than contents of a foreign knowledge tradition, on what a concept originated elsewhere means and can mean within the existing Japanese semantic field. This, in general, takes two forms. One is to encode new meanings in existing signifiers and, thus, to expand the semantic scope of these signifiers. The other is to render the meaning of a foreign concept into a Japanese sign, that is to say, to invent a new signifier by resorting, most often, to Chinese characters as the standard vehicle. In short, elaboration on new conceptual apparatuses of knowledge not only forges changes to lexicons of the Japanese language but also reconfigures the parameter of the overall semantic field. The point is that elaboration is not a value-neutral practice. For one, existing signifiers had been, more often than not, the foundational sustenance for already prevalent knowledge traditions. For another, elaboration was often marred by one’s own intellectual itinerary and affinity, which began, in the case of those protagonists that this inquiry addresses, with basic training in (Neo-)Confucianism, Kangaku, and other existing intellectual traditions. To this end, translation as elaboration encompasses the semantics and the worldview of multiple knowledge traditions, and it leaves traces of difference between what is elaborated and the outcome of elaboration. Hence, refraction from the original meaning. Or, more accurately put, translation does not guarantee one to have a direct recourse to the original meaning. This is what Jacques Derrida once called ‘différance’ – difference of meaning and deferral of meaning. Insofar as *différance* is inevitable in any translation practice, and insofar as the meaning of a concept is not inherent but arises only in relation to other concepts existing in the semantic field of the target language, translation embeds within itself possible incommensurability at the level of signification and discourse.¹⁰⁰

Throughout the history of encounters and metamorphoses, throughout the process of modern knowledge formation in Japan, many ideas, concepts, and notions were translated, and many existing signifiers were transubstantiated into that which now signified something new and different. While it is beyond my present means to discuss each and every concept translated and signifier reconfigured as part and parcel of modern knowledge formation, some were relatively more pivotal than others for the epistemic changes to reconceive knowledge as a subject-object relation. These include: ‘*gakumon*’ (学問), which has long signified the realm of serious learning since at least the introduction of the term from China in the 7th century with the *Ritsuryō* (律令) system and its educational institution called *Daigakuryō* (大学寮); ‘*ri*’ (理), which has been the

⁹⁹ Howland, *Translating the West*, 184.

¹⁰⁰ Derrida, “Différance.”

primary qualifier for serious knowledge that many knowledge traditions as well as religious orders, including Buddhism, (Neo-)Confucianism, and Christianity, seek to attain within the remit of their own practices; ‘*kyūri*’ (窮理), which initially derived from the Neo-Confucian tradition to specify appropriate modes of learning, hence of pursuing ‘*ri*’, and subsequently has become the general epithet for the pursuit of valid and serious knowledge; ‘*kagaku*’ (科学), a neologism of the late 19th century, which has replaced the then-prevalent notion of ‘*kyūri*’ and thus transformed the standard qualification of serious knowledge from one that defines knowledge as revolving around the concept of ‘*ri*’ to one that is grounded on scientificity; and, ‘*shukan*’ (主観), another neologism of the late 19th century, which designates the specific capacity or consciousness of the knower to view the world as the object of knowledge external to oneself and simultaneously to know that one as the knower indeed views rather than inhabits the world. What I also seek to show is that modern knowledge formation in Japan, that is to say, the emergence of the subject, was a process through which the very idea of serious and valid knowledge, once grounded on what I call the *ri* (理)-knowledge structuration, was reconceived as a subject-object relation.

§

Chapter Plan

The term *gakumon*, one of the earliest usages of which can be found in classical Chinese texts, such as *I Ching* (易经: *Book of Changes*), was introduced to the Japanese semantic space around the late 7th century. Since then, its meaning has changed variously to define and redefine what could be qualified as learning, what scholarship ought to do, and how one might attain proper knowledge. Ultimately, however, a kind of knowledge pursued through *gakumon* was not limited to the facts about the world; knowledge was essentially about being and becoming as an inhabitant of the world. *Gakumon* was, thus, a means to cultivate certain habits of mind. It was considered an individual virtue. For Meiji political and intellectual elites, *gakumon* was also a crucial conceptual device for cultivation, indoctrination, and socialisation. However, its meaning differed from hitherto prevalent meanings. Chapter 1 revisits those political and intellectual discourses of the early Meiji period, which, for all their differences, effectively reconstituted the concept of *gakumon* vis-à-vis the demands of new collective life organised around the 19th-century idea of the nation-state. Most obviously, *gakumon* was now considered integral to modernisation, whereby one should acquire and advance at one’s own discretion specialised and utilitarian knowledge for enriching and strengthening the Japanese nation-state. *Gakumon* was clearly demarcated from a kind of learning process called *kyōiku* (教育) based on the pedagogy of instruction and guidance, as the nucleus of the intellectual pursuit of knowledge at the university, the institutional apex of the reformed educational system. It came to represent systematic learning to reveal, in the words of some Meiji government officials, the “truth” (真理) about the natural and human worlds,¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Kawashima Atsushi, “Hyakuse no chi wa gakusei o kaisei shite ikkoku no shisō o hitotsu ni suruni shikasarū gi” 百世ノ治ハ学制ヲ改正シテ一國ノ思想ヲ一ニスルニ如カサル議 (“Restructuring the Educational System and Unifying National Ideology for Stable Governing”), 1882. The original document with comments by Katō, Kuki and

which was formalised and institutionalised into, as defined in *Gakusei* (学制: Fundamental Code of Education, 1972), various “lofty subjects (高尚の諸学)” at the university, including law, natural sciences, medicine, history, philology, philosophy, and literature.¹⁰² Notably, such (re)conceptualisation of *gakumon* marked a departure from its earlier signification. *Gakumon* was no longer about individual virtues or habits of mind. It was detached from the concerns for moral and ethical values but reconstituted as a systematic pursuit of factual truths about the world.

It is tempting to emphasise such a discontinuity in signification as a qualifier of epistemic change. Yet, my argument here is that this seeming discontinuity, in fact, conceals a fundamental continuity. The discursive strategy to imbricate serious knowledge with the notion of truth, with the pursuit of truth, was by no means a commodity exclusive to the Meiji elites. For many intellectual traditions prevalent during the previous decades and even centuries, the validity of knowledge was intimately tied to the discursive imbrication of truth, otherwise defined as *ri*, and a mode of attaining that truth. For example, Neo-Confucianism saw that to know was to grasp *ri*, the absolute and transcendental principle dictating the ordering of the universe. Kokugaku understood that to know was to embrace the so-called ‘*taenaru kotowari*’ (妙理), the ineffable intention of heavenly deities that created the imperial land of Japan. Jōrigaku viewed that to know was to reveal *ri* defined as various principles of the universe in which humans had a small part. Though *ri* was defined variously, the upshot is that this imbrication of *ri* and a mode of attaining it, or else what I call *ri*-knowledge structuration, had been the foundational discursive strategy to qualify knowledge as serious and valid. In a most fundamental way, there was a certain sense of continuity between the Meiji discourses of knowledge and learning and those discourses of Tokugawa intellectual traditions.

This continuity is the primary trope of Chapter 2. The chapter examines the ways in which the *ri*-knowledge structuration functioned as a cognitive backdrop for Meiji intellectuals, especially in their efforts to understand modern Western knowledge in its unity and to map it onto the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape as part of what they considered serious knowledge. In the context in which many saw Westernisation as a legitimate placeholder for modernisation, Confucian scholars, such as Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891) and Sakatani Rōryō (1822-1881), sought to accommodate modern Western knowledge within the Confucian regime of truth by reconfiguring the *ri*-knowledge structuration. Here, their central argument was that modern Western knowledge was essentially knowledge about what Confucians would call the realm of *ki* (気: material force), observable manifestations of the absolute and transcendental principle, that is *ri*. To this end, as they went on to argue, modern Western knowledge would contribute to expanding one’s understanding of *ri*. In contrast, the likes of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nishi Amane (1829-1897) sought to grasp modern Western knowledge by encoding a new meaning to *ri*. In their discussions, *ri* was understood not as the Confucian notion of the absolute and transcendental principle but as universal scientific law or as Reason. Though the *ri*-knowledge structuration remained fundamental for their justification of the seriousness and validity of modern Western knowledge, their discursive strategy was dependent on the presumption that Confucianism and modern Western knowledge were fundamentally incommensurable. The point I shall emphasise in this chapter is, however, neither the accuracy nor the viability of these intellectual exercises. What these Meiji intellectual discussions collectively indicate is the fact that their reasonings were

Fukuoka in the margin is archived at Tōsho-bunko, “学制改正ニツキ河島醇ノ建議及本建議ニツキ福岡文部卿九鬼隆一・加藤弘之等ノ朱批,” ID-No. 110-3-2, 1882.

¹⁰² Article 38 of the Fundamental Code of Education.

contingent upon semantic transvaluation of *ri*. In other words, the concept *ri* functioned not merely as that which structured knowledge but also as a liminal space upon which one could project one's own vested interests by (re)defining it as one saw fit.

The question that arises at this point is how such semantic transvaluation of *ri* became possible in the first place. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 address this question with a historical detour to the Tokugawa period.

Chapter 3 revisits the works of Rangaku scholars and considers how they reconstituted the concept of *ri* and *kyūri* in their encounter with modern Western science. This encounter was so much more than an instance of transposition in which theories, concepts, and methods of modern Western science were translated and appropriated in Japan. It was an instance in which two worldviews were juxtaposed to one another. On the one hand, there was an existing and familiar worldview that understood the world as a repository of individual virtues and personal qualities. On the other hand, there was a new worldview that treated the world as a repository of knowledge devoid of moral and ethical concerns. To make sense of the latter, Rangaku scholars resorted to the familiar signifiers, *ri* and *kyūri*, and argued that modern Western science was indeed a knowledge about *ri*, but this *ri* had no resemblance to the concept of *ri* that undergirded the (Neo-)Confucian tradition. For this reason, Rangaku scholars also maintained that, for modern Western science, *kyūri* entailed not the cultivation of inner dispositions but the discovery and accumulation of facts about the natural world.

The semantic transvaluation of *ri* and the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri* were possible, not because modern Western knowledge was and was seen as being inherently better. It was possible for Rangaku scholars to project the *ri*-knowledge structuration on modern Western science because broader political and intellectual predilections had created an enabling condition for such projection. The chapter thus identifies two important developments in politics and intellectual discussions. The first is the shift in the political attitude towards Christianity generally and Jesuit missionaries more specifically. The shift, which was marked by the increasing suppression of Christianity and the prosecution of missionaries and followers, was important because it occasioned a possibility to discursively disassociate modern Western knowledge from European religious and political machinations. In other words, with the anti-Christian political sentiment, it became possible to view modern Western knowledge as areligious and apolitical, to view it in its utility and instrumentality. Similarly important was the intellectual development within the Neo-Confucian tradition, which can be described as an increasing predilection towards scepticism as a method. This is especially evident in the works of Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken, who came to recognise certain discursive disparities and inconsistencies in the Neo-Confucian texts otherwise treated as canonical and authoritative in their tradition. Scepticism as a method was crucial as it permitted dissents from previously accepted positions, or more concretely, as it permitted an idea that the meanings of *ri* and *kyūri* promoted by Neo-Confucianism were, in fact, neither fixed nor absolute and that these signifiers could be extracted from the Neo-Confucian fold to verify the validity of other knowledge traditions, such as modern Western knowledge.

If *ri* and *kyūri* can be defined arbitrarily, and if the *ri*-knowledge structuration can be operationalised to legitimise the seriousness of any knowledge tradition, anyone can claim the seriousness of their knowledge. Any knowledge tradition can be a valid knowledge tradition insofar as it addresses whatever is defined as *ri* within its own remit. One logical consequence would be that the *ri*-knowledge structuration could no longer have epistemic purchase as the primary qualification of serious and valid knowledge. This, as Chapter 4 demonstrates, is exactly what happened towards the end of the Tokugawa period. With the development of Yōmeigaku

(Wang Yangming school of Confucianism), Kogaku, Kokugaku, Jōrigaku, and Koihō (Ancient Chinese Medicine), the meaning of *ri* became exceedingly heterogeneous and the mode of attaining proper knowledge, *kyūri*, miscellaneous. Some scholars of Koihō even went so far as to relegate *ri* to the outside of their concern, arguing that speculating and contemplating on *ri* would not bring one to verifiable facts about the observable world.

For all the particularities and intricacies of those knowledge traditions, the chapter draws two general inferences. One is about the way of relating to the world. While the concept of *ri* remained central for legitimising knowledge as valid and serious, in these Tokugawa knowledge traditions, the knower began to acquire a certain capacity to intervene in the world rather than simply inhabiting it. Itō Jinsai (1627-1705) and Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) view that the knower has the capacity to move across time and space, having recourse to the original meaning of ancient Chinese texts. Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) maintains that the knower embodies authentically ‘Japanese’ subjective voice when reciting ancient ‘Japanese’ texts. Yamawaki Tōyō (1705-1762) and Yoshimasu Tōdō (1702-1773) understand the knower as the observing, who, without cosmological speculations, distinguishes facts from nominally agreed categories. Second, this capacity of the knower was undergirded by the idea that to possess an adequate language, be it ancient Chinese or ancient Japanese, written or vocal forms, was to occupy a position to signify, to render things with meanings, and to delimit what meanings are available for signifying practices. In these Tokugawa knowledge traditions, language became as a means of knowing, better yet, the very position of the knower to have recourse to the world.

This unquestionably parochial nature of the knower mediated by language has foregrounded the formation of the specifically ‘Japanese’ subject of knowledge. Chapter 5 traces the subsequent discursive development of moulding the knower into the subject by attending to the development of two conceptual devices, *kagaku* and *shukan*. The term *kagaku*, initially used by some Rangaku scholars to denote ‘one field of knowledge’, acquired a new meaning during the early Meiji period and now signified systematised practices of knowledge production grounded on scientificity, or what Inoue Tetsujirō called ‘scientific culture’. This semantic shift of *kagaku* effectively enacted new signifiatory boundaries between science and non-science, between truth and fallacy. This means that the concept of *ri* and the *ri*-knowledge structure no longer represented the primary qualification of serious and valid knowledge. Now, ‘scientific culture’ was the primary qualifier. This, in turn, brought to the fore the question of the knower as the bearer of scientific culture. What emerged through the works of, for example, Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) and Nishi Amane was the new concept of *shukan*, the observing subject. Importantly, however, a series of discourses that came to sustain *shukan* as a discursively articulated position of the knower was different from a series of discourses that undergirded the Western subject. As the chapter also argues, the concept of *shukan* was established at the nexus between a temporal imagination based on evolutionary temporality and a spatial imagination grounded on the idea of linguistic unity-cum-cultural unity. It was established as the specifically ‘Japanese’ subject position.

Modern knowledge formation in Japan is synchronic to the extent that, through epistemic reconfiguration, knowledge comes to draw its sustenance from a specific position of the knowing subject that views, rather than inhabits, the world objectively and that consciously knows itself as the knower. However, modern knowledge formation in Japan is simultaneously diachronic, because the order of discourse that comes to sustain this position of the knowing subject – articulated through specific significations of the idea of *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, and *shukan* – is enacted in a liminal space among various knowledge traditions, embodying within itself competing semantics, contingent historical experiences, and specific wills and desires of power.

Therefore, modern knowledge formation in Japan is an instance in which certain incommensurability, more specifically, discursive differences, emerge within the knowledge tradition that we have come to regard as 'modern' knowledge.

CHAPTER 1

THE LOCATION OF ‘*GAKUMON*’

I have entitled this book *An Encouragement of Learning*, but I am hardly advocating an exclusive study of books.

Fukuzawa Yukichi¹

§

1.1. Questions

For historians of knowledge, the promulgation of *Gakusei* (学制: Fundamental Code of Education) on the 2nd of August 1872 is an interesting instance, for this legislative measure marked the beginning of a systematic reorganisation of the educational system. As its preamble stipulated, the primary purpose of this legislation was to “wash off the pathetic learning habits of the past” and to “reorient the people” through education to kinds of knowledge necessary for “the wealth and strength, and ultimately the stability of the Japanese nation-state.”² This is not simply a political pronouncement for a centralised and hierarchised educational system co-opted to serve both as a means and an end for nation-building. This is also a legalised pronouncement of a specific understanding of what kinds of knowledge can be considered ‘valid’ and ‘serious’ and who can have the authority to produce and disseminate such knowledge. Upon specifying the ascending hierarchy of educational institutions, with grade schools at the most elementary levels and universities at the apex of learning (see Figure 3-1), the Fundamental Code of Education stated the following: universities were the institutional loci specifically dedicated to investigating “lofty subjects (*kōshō no shogaku*: 高尚ノ諸学),” and these subjects were exclusive of *gakumon* (学問) one could pursue only after completing one’s education in general and introductory learning for

¹ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Encouragement of Learning*, David A. Dilworth (trans.), New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012 [1872-1876]: 82. This book is considered one of the first best-seller books. Over 3.4 million copies of this book were sold in a country of thirty million people. See Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi chosakushū, 12-kan* 福沢諭吉著作集 第12卷 (Works of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Vol.12), Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2002: 460.

² Fundamental Code of Education, the Grand Council of State, No.214 / 00004928.

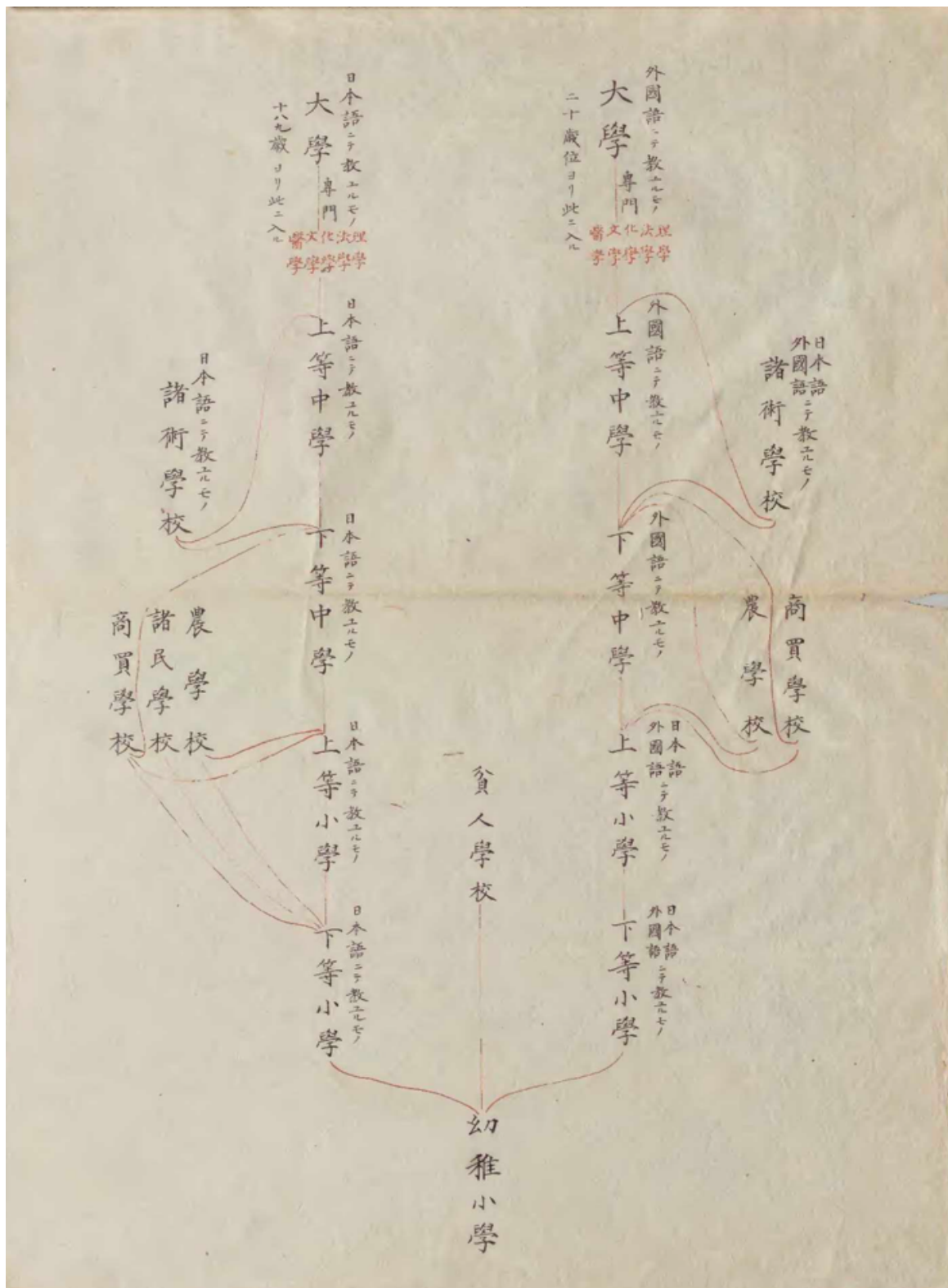


Figure 1-1. Ascending Hierarchy of Educational Institutions (Fundamental Code of Education, 1872)

universities studies.³ As the Code further defined, those ‘lofty subjects’ would constitute, once institutionalised, “specialised faculties,” including physics and/or philosophy (*rigaku*: 理学), science (*kagaku*: 科学), law (*hōgaku*: 法学), medicine (*igaku*: 医学), and mathematics (*sūrigaku*: 数理学).⁴ Put simply, the reorganisation of the educational system envisioned by the Fundamental Code of Education was so much more than repurposing education to serve the interest of the nation-state. It was to redraw boundaries of legitimate knowledge vis-à-vis non-knowledge exemplified here as ‘lofty subjects,’ to bind this knowledge to the concept of *gakumon*, and to authorise the university as the primary institutional locus to engage with this knowledge. While the Fundamental Code of Education was relatively short-lived and replaced by the Education Order in 1879, this conceptual matrix of legitimate knowledge, the concept of *gakumon*, and the university remained the crucial frame of reference for political and intellectual ranks in the following decades.

A number of writings and speeches of this period echoed this legislative language that assigned a certain territory to *gakumon* and inscribed specific qualifications to knowledge. At the beginning of the fifth section of *Gakumon no susume* (学問のすすめ: An Encouragement of Learning, 1872-1876), Fukuzawa Yukichi offers an apology, somewhat in passing, for “a more demanding style” of his writing and “elevated [...] meaning” of the section.⁵ While this work was, in his own words, “originally presented as a book for the public and as a text for lower schools,” he intended this section specifically “for a scholarly audience,” who had equipped themselves with “the spirit of independence” and “the creativity” of mind.⁶ What is implied here is a distinction not merely in terms of educational institutions but also in terms of intellectual capacity that separates a scholarly audience from the general public and pupils of lower schools. To grapple with demanding texts and to properly understand the meanings of those texts, as Fukuzawa assumed, one must cultivate a particular ethos as a scholar. This distinction was further specified by Mori Arinori (1847-1889) in his speech delivered as the Minister of Education. On 15th November 1887, Mori travelled to Wakayama prefecture to give a speech at a normal school, which was packed with local dignitaries and school principals. Mori’s primary concern on this occasion was to explain to the audience that *kyōiku* (教育: education) was absolutely essential for the wealth and strength of the nation-state and that the statist intervention into the realm of *kyōiku* was not optional but a necessity. To make his point, Mori stipulated the central purpose of *kyōiku* by distinguishing it from that of *gakumon*.

³ On preparatory education for the university, see Nakauchi Toshio, *Kyōzai to kyōgu no riron: kyōiku gennron II* 教材と教具の理論: 教育原論 2 (*Theory of Educational Material and Teaching Tools: Basic Theory of Education II*), Tokyo: Ayumi shuppan, 1990; Takeda Kōji, “Meiji shoki ni okeru ‘hutsū-gaku’ ‘hutsū-kyōiku’ gainen no kanren kōzō” 明治初期における「普通学」・「普通教育」概念の関連構造 (“A Related Structure of the Conception of ‘Common Science’ and ‘Common Education’ in the Early Meiji Era”), *Studies in the History of Education*, 34, 1991: 35-49.

⁴ Article 38 of the Fundamental Code of Education stipulated that “the university is an institution with specialised faculties that engage with lofty subjects (大学ハ高尚ノ諸学ヲ教ル専門科ノ学校ナリ).” The term *rigaku* (理学) has various meanings, which I will discuss further in the following chapters. At least, during the early years of the Meiji period, the term was often used to designate scholarly fields that sought to understand both the unifying nature of knowledge (philosophy) and the specific manifestations of laws of nature (physics).

⁵ Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, 82.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

教育ト學問トノ差別ニ付一言サセル可ラス乃チ教育トハ丁年未滿ノ者ニシテ未タ獨義ノ資格ナク專ハラ他人ノ指導ニ由テ智育徳育體育ヲ発達セラルルモノヲ云ヒ學問トハ丁年以上ニシテ其好ム所ニ從ヒ獨義ノ資格ヲ以テ学科ヲ選択研究シ得ルモノヲ云フ

(The difference between *kyōiku* and *gakumon* is as follows. *Kyōiku* is catered for those minors who are not yet intellectually independent and thus require guidance for their intellectual, moral, and physical development. In contrast, *gakumon* is for those who have already attained the intellectual capacity to think independently in order to pursue whatever specialised subject one may wish to pursue.)⁷

This juxtaposition is salient. Mori understood *kyōiku* as a realm of education catering to those under the age of majority, that is, to the students of primary and secondary schools, and organised around the pedagogy of purposive instruction and deliberate guidance. In contrast, *gakumon* was viewed as a mode of learning to be pursued independently, at the tertiary level, by those adequately accredited through the ascending hierarchy of the educational system to engage with a specialised subject that would require a certain level of intellectual capacity and particular ethos and methods of thinking and reasoning.⁸

To be sure, the term *gakumon* was not a neologism of the late 19th century. And yet, its meaning promoted by Fukuzawa, Mori, and their contemporaries during the early Meiji period was, as we shall see shortly, profoundly at odds with previously accepted notions of what *gakumon* ought to do. How did the meaning of *gakumon* change over time? Why did a marked shift in signification occur at the end of the 19th century? How did such a shift, in turn, forge a new discursive space to (re)configure the scope and nature of knowledge?

§

1.2. Shifting Meanings of *Gakumon* and Knowledge

⁷ Mori Arinori, “Wakayamaken jinjyō shōgakkō ni oite gunkuchō jyōsetsuiin oyobi gakkōchō ni taisuru enzetsu” 和歌山県尋常小学校に於いて郡県長常設委員及び学校長に対する演説 (“Speech at A Wakayama Normal School to Local Leaders, Political Advisors and School Principals”), in *Monbu-daijin Mori-shisyaku no kyōiku iken* 文部大臣森子爵の教育意見 (Mori Arinori’s Opinions on Education), Tokyo: Kusakabe Sannosuke, 1888: 146 [145-152].

⁸ This sense of ascending hierarchy of the educational system was not a new reality in the late 19th century. The Tokugawa educational systems were also marked by a sense of hierarchy. At the most elementary level were so-called *terakoya* (寺子屋: private educational institutions) catered to providing children with basic skills of writing, reading, and arithmetic. Then, there were those official schools of *han*-domains that educated and trained those students who pursued to join the governing ranks, as well as private academies offering specialised education in, for instance, Confucianism, Kangaku (漢学: Chinese Studies), and Ranpō (蘭方: Dutch medicine). The difference, if anything, between the Tokugawa and Meiji educational systems was rather in the determination of who had access to education, especially higher education, who authorised educational institutions, and what purposes these institutions ought to serve. The abolishment of the hereditary system following the Meiji Restoration made it possible, at least in principle, for any male from any social stratum to have access to higher education. The educational system was now centralised with the government authorising educational institutions and curricula. And the system was reoriented, with the promulgation of the Fundamental Code of Education, towards a social transformation envisaged with the twin shibboleths – *bunmei kaika* (文明開化: civilisation and enlightenment) and *fukoku kyōhei* (富国強兵: enriching the country, strengthening the army).

As a form of preparation, let me take here a detour to offer an albeit brief and limited conceptual history of *gakumon*, which provides us, as I hope, with a historical backdrop for tackling these questions.

The term *gakumon* is a loanword. It was taken from classical Chinese texts, for instance, *I Ching* (易經: *Book of Changes*, n.d.), which stipulated as follows.

君子學以聚之、問以辯之、寬以居之、仁以行之。易曰、見龍在田、利見大人、君德也。

(The superior man learns [学] and accumulates the result of his learning; puts questions [問], and discriminates among those results; dwells magnanimously and unambitiously in what he has attained; and carries it into practice with benevolence. What Yi says, ‘The dragon appears in the field: it will be advantageous to meet with the great man,’ has reference to the virtuous qualities of a ruler as thus described.)⁹

Learning, in classical Chinese texts, was understood as a noble pursuit for the superior man to govern as the benevolent sovereign. To learn, hence to do *gakumon*, was not merely to accumulate knowledge. The emphasis was on the process of becoming – to cultivate a habit of mind or an individual virtue, which would manifest itself in practices of governing. This understanding of *gakumon* was integrated into the Japanese semantic field as early as the 8th century when *I Ching* and other classical Chinese texts were introduced to those court nobles in the archipelago. For instance, one of the earliest recorded usages of the term as a Japanese lexicon in *Shoku-nihongi* (続日本紀: *Chronicle of Japan Continued*, 794-797) generally follows the meaning of *gakumon* put forward in *I Ching*. In describing the establishment of the imperial academy called Daigakuryō (大学寮) as an educational branch of the Ministry of Civil Service, Shikibushō (式部省), the *Chronicle* refers to the term *gakumon*, specifying that learning was to become well-versed in the legal codes of centralised administration of *ritsuryō*-system (律令制) specifically and to acquire, more generally, an attitude and aptitude of the desired individual described in classical Chinese literary works and Confucian texts.¹⁰ Thus, in this politico-legal context of the 8th century, the assertion was that *gakumon* was essentially for one to enter the governing ranks with knowledge and faculty considered necessary for governing.

Meanings are, of course, never fixed. A different context provides an incentive for different signification. While basic elements of the concept of *gakumon* proposed in *Shoku-nihongi* can also

⁹ The text is available on <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/gen>. The English translation is borrowed from *The Sacred Books of China: The I Ching*, James Legge (trans.), New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963: 416. Kawano Kimiko offers a comprehensive list of Chinese classical texts, including *I Ching*, which were introduced to Japan by the end of the 9th century in her analysis of the transposition of *I Ching* divination from China. See Kawano Kimiko, “Kodai nihon ni okeru shūeki no juyō” 古代日本における周易の受容 (“The Appropriation of *I Ching* Divination in Ancient Japan”), *Kokubungaku kenkyū*, 161, 2010: 22-32.

¹⁰ The original text reads as follows. “太政官奏、大学生徒、既経歳月、習業庸浅、猶難博達、実是一家道困窮、無物資給、雖有好学、不堪遂志、望請、選性識聡慧、芸業優長者、十人以下五人以上、専精学問 [...]” *Shoku-nihongi*, quoted in Murakami Tadao, “Daigakuryō kyōiku no suitai genin ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu” 大学寮教育の衰退原因に関する一考察 (“Analysis on the Decline of the Daigakuryō”), *Kyōikugaku kenkyū*, 24: 1, 1957: 25 [21-29].

be found in signifying practices in the following decades and centuries, there emerged myriad ways of defining the territory of *gakumon* and, by extension, diverse qualifications to inscribe ‘proper’ knowledge to be pursued through *gakumon*. Take, for instance, the Bloom Tree chapter of *Genji Monogatari* (源氏物語: *Tale of Genji*, 1008). In a sentence that describes the close relationship between the main protagonist, Hikaru Genji, and his confidant, Tō no Chūjō, we find the term *gakumon* used in contrastive to the term *asobi* (遊び: play).¹¹ Here, *gakumon* is understood as the process of becoming, as it was in the 8th century. However, the purpose is not limited to acquiring the knowledge and faculty for governing. It is to become a cultured person by reading a wide range of Chinese classics, from Confucian texts and legal codes to Chinese poetry such as of Bai Juyi (772-846).¹² Cultured individuals, in this specific context, are undoubtedly those who occupy the imperial court and, thus, the governing ranks. But what they are supposed to learn through *gakumon* is not limited to practical matters of governing. The purported function of *gakumon*, of learning, is to mould individuals into intellectually, morally, and culturally refined ones.

If this example from *Tale of Genji* offers a purview of the purpose and contents of appropriate learning, some other medieval texts specify how one can pursue *gakumon*, hence appropriate methods of learning. For example, in *Tsurezuregusa* (徒然草: *Essay in Idleness*, 1330-1332), Yoshida Kenkō (1283-1358) uses the term *gakumon* with a twofold meaning to elucidate what he thinks appropriate contents for learning and what he considers an apposite mode of attaining knowledge through learning. For him, *gakumon* denotes an earnest exploration not of Confucian teachings nor of Chinese classics but of Buddhist doctrines. Learning is composed, therefore, of textual engagement to grasp the eternal truths of Buddha’s teaching, such as the concept of *hetu-phala* (karma).¹³ This premise alone should be sufficient to give us an indication of a mode of learning Kenkō advocates as appropriate. According to him, learning must be organised around specific pedagogy based on instruction and guidance from one’s teacher to engage with a philological reading of texts. To acquire knowledge from one’s teacher and through textual engagement is, as he goes on to argue, less for one’s profession or profits but more for learning *michi* (道: way), an allegory to a doctrine, principle, or holistic belief, to ameliorate self and to achieve a desirable state of being defined by Buddhist doctrines.¹⁴

¹¹ Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji Monogatari* 源氏物語 (*Tale of Genji*), Tukamoto Tetsuzō (ed.), Tokyo: Yūhōdō, 1932: 34-35. The original sentence reads as follows. “里にても、わが方のしつらひまばゆくして、君の出で入りしたまふにうち連れきこえたまひつつ、夜昼、学問をも遊びをももろともにし[...]” Here, the term *asobi* denotes playing traditional musical instruments.

¹² For the popularity of Bai Juyi’s poetry among the Heian court nobles, see, for instance, Xiaoye Duan, “Ganji Monogatari ni okeru Hakusibunshū inyō no tokuchō: Tōjōjinbutsu no kuchizusanda shiku o megutte” 源氏物語における白子文集引用の特徴: 登場人物の口ずさんだ詩句をめぐって (“An Analysis of the Quotations from ‘Po Chu-i’s Collected Works’ Used in ‘The Tale of Genji’: A look at the Poems Recited by the Various Characters”), *Hokuriku daigaku kiyō*, 32, 2008: 181-192.

¹³ He writes, ある者、子を法師になして、「学問して因果の理をも知り、説経などして世渡るたづきともせよ」と言ひければ[...]” Yoshida Kenkō, *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (*Essay in Idleness*), Agatsuma Junichirō (trans.), Tokyo: Koten kyōyō bunko, 2015: 257.

¹⁴ The original text reads, “人にまさらん事を思はば、ただ学問して、その智を人に増さんと思ふべし。[...] 大きな職をも辞し、利をも捨つるは、ただ学問の力なり。” Ibid., 442. The term ‘*gakumon*’ with a similar meaning also appears in the 13th-century Setsuwa collection, *Jikkinshō* (十訓抄: Stories Selected to Illustrate the Ten Maxims), and in the 14th-century tale of *Gikeiki* (義経記: The Chronicle of Yoshitsune).

One inference I shall draw from these examples is as follows. Allied to these significations of the term *gakumon* is the persistent belief that knowledge attained through *gakumon* is an individual virtue or a habit of mind defined variously by cosmological, religious, or cultural fetters of a given context, and that *gakumon* is essentially the rehearsal rather than the production of knowledge through textual engagement and through guidance offered by the teacher. Somewhat curiously from our present perspective, none of these significations of *gakumon* regards knowledge as systematic and formal. None of them understands the acquisition of knowledge with purely utilitarian and instrumental purposes. None of them defines the process of learning with the language of progress to ‘discover’ and ‘unveil’ new truths about the world. Knowledge is a metonymy of the benevolent sovereign, or a cultured person, or a desirable state of being. Hence, it is a quality of individuals. To acquire knowledge through *gakumon* is to become adept at drawing conclusions, be they Confucian, Buddhist, or medieval court standards, as virtuous individuals.

Whatever the regime of truth one may choose, the assertion is that anything and everything worth knowing is already in texts and is already acquired by one’s teacher. This assertion, in turn, determines appropriate methods of learning. Doing *gakumon* is essentially absorbing that which is written in the texts and taught by the teacher.¹⁵ This pedagogical predilection is, in fact, reflected in the etymology of the Japanese word *manabu* (学ぶ: learn). This verb that signifies the act of learning is a kind of morphological derivation of another Japanese word *manebu* (真似ぶ: imitate), and these two verbs are used interchangeably.¹⁶ For instance, Yoshida Kenkō writes, “Those who try to imitate Emperor Shun, the virtuous man of the ancient time, [...] are wise men, even if they fail to do so,”¹⁷ using the verb *manabu* (learn) to designate the act of imitating. In *Tale of Genji*, *manebu* (imitate) and *manabu* (learn) are often used interchangeably without much semantic distinction. In the chapter on a picture contest, there is a sentence that reads as follows: “Young court nobles thought that learning [*manebu*: imitate] how to paint might attract attention from the emperor [...]”¹⁸ The upshot is that the purpose of learning, that is, of *gakumon*, is to inculcate certain habits of mind based on available teachings, canonical texts, and doctrines, such that the scope of what one should know, that is, of knowledge, is a priori fixed. Whatever is considered essential to become the benevolent sovereign, a cultured person, or a desirable being is already out there in the texts or embodied by the teacher. To this end, and as the semantic ambiguity of *manabu* (learn) and *manebu* (imitate) suggests, the time of learning is rather cyclical, punctuated by one’s engagement with whatever sources of knowledge perceived as important. *Gakumon* is essentially the rehearsal rather than the production of knowledge, based on the methodological imbrication of learning and imitating.

¹⁵ For this reason, during the medieval period, the term *gakumon* and the term *gakubun* (学文), literary translates ‘learning’ (学) and ‘texts’ (文), were used interchangeably. For instance, in a 13-century short Buddhist text entitled *Tannishō* (歎異抄: The Lamentations of Divergences), we find the following sentence: “学文して、人の誇りを止め [...] 学問せばいよいよ如来の御本意をしり [...] (learning texts stops us from belittling others [...] learning enables us to understand at last the real intention of Tathāgata [...]).” Yuien, *Tannishō* 歎異抄 (*The Lamentations of Divergences*), Seijin kinen-sasshi hensan-iinkai (ed.), Kyoto: Honganji shuppansha, 1977 [n.d].

¹⁶ Nakata Yoshiaki, “Gakumon no konseputo: tōzai ni okeru sono rekishi to mondaiten” 学問のコンセプト: 東西におけるその歴史と問題点 (“The Concept of Gakumon: Its History and Problem in the East and the West”), *Bulletin of Seishin-jogakuin Junior College*, 10, 1992: 77-91.

¹⁷ This sentence can be found in Paragraph 85.

¹⁸ This sentence can be found in Chapter 17.

This notion of knowledge and learning is at odds, for instance, with the notion of knowledge and learning cultivated in Enlightenment Europe. The primary purpose of the knowledge tradition that bears the name of *scientia* is to expand a body of systematic knowledge about the world and, hence, to make ‘progress’ in knowledge.¹⁹ The scope of this knowledge tradition is, therefore, constantly expanding through ‘discoveries’ of objective truths, which are accurately ‘represented’ by the knowing subject. This is diametrically oppositional to the kind of knowledge envisaged in those medieval texts discussed above. For all the available knowledge can be found in teachings, canonical texts, and doctrines, there is nothing more to discover or unveil. The process of attaining knowledge is, therefore, marked by the dictum of transmitting and interpreting. Knowledge is not something that the meaning-endowing subject produces by accurately representing the world of objects but that the knower attains as a habit of mind through textual immersion, rote memorisation, and imitating the superior.²⁰

Further still, this difference points us towards the question of the territory and validity of knowledge, which, in our present perspective, often manifests itself as the distinction between secular and non-secular knowledge. Again, the European Enlightenment intellectual tradition constitutes a salient point of comparison to allude to my point. To be sure, the departure of God from this tradition was not at all immediate. At least up until the late 18th century, God had a genuine part in this tradition.²¹ But around the turn of the century, European scholars, while continuing to “believe in God or gods in their private capacity,” began to reconceive knowledge in such a way that “gods, spirits, and the like” no longer had a role “in explanation in the natural and human science.”²² Think, for example, a frequently cited – yet probably apocryphal – interaction between Simon-Pierre Laplace and Napoleon, in which Napoleon asked Laplace why he never mentioned the name of God in his works on the system of the universe. Laplace replied, “*Je n'avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse-là* (I don’t need that hypothesis).”²³ And subsequently, the Académie des Sciences in Paris banned entirely any mention of the name of God in their scientific journal articles.²⁴ Think, also, the often-cited Kantian declaration that the Enlightenment marked “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity.”²⁵ What is implied here is that hitherto prevalent enchanted knowledges were replaced by disenchanting, mature, and genuinely scientific knowledge. The point is that, in the European Enlightenment tradition, the territory and validity of

¹⁹ Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 12.

²⁰ Such a dictum obviously follows the tradition of learning long established in China. As James Legge observes, the idea of learning revolving primarily around transmitting and interpreting is already manifest in the writings of Confucius and Mencius. Confucius thought that his purpose was not necessarily “to announce any new truths, or to initiate any new economy. It was to prevent what had previously been known from being lost.” In a similar vein, Mencius argued that “the superior man seeks simply to bring back the unchanging standard, and, that being correct, the masses are roused to virtue.” See respectively, James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.1*, London: Clarendon Press, 1893: 95; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.2*, London: Clarendon Press, 1895: 289. See also Ch’ien Mu, “Historical Perspective in Chu Hsi’s Learning,” in Waing-tsit Chan (ed.), *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1986: 32-42.

²¹ This is what Newton suggested in the second edition of his *Principia*. Peter Harrison calls this attitude “the Newtonian stance” which was not so uncommon among Newton’s contemporaries. See Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 149.

²² Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 87.

²³ A version of this interaction is provided by W.W. Rouse Ball, *A Short Account of the History of Mathematics*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1908: 417-418.

²⁴ Oki Sayaka offers us a comprehensive account of the process of secularisation of knowledge in France. See Oki Sayaka, *Bunkei to rikei wa naze wakaretanoka* 文系と理系はなぜ分かれたのか (*On the Separation of Humanities and Sciences*), Tokyo: Seikaisya, 2018: 26-32.

²⁵ Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” 58.

knowledge were established by the idea that knowledge must be detached from the divine intention. In contrast, in the medieval Japanese and Chinese conceptualisation of knowledge, mythological cosmology, perennial wisdom, and divinity all had a crucial role both as the determinant and as the manifestation of universal truths about the nature of human existence, ethics, consciousness, and reality. Secularity was not the fundamental qualification to establish the territory and validity of knowledge. Instead, the territory and validity of knowledge were established by determining what would be the foundational principle of all things, that is, *ri* (理), which preparatorily authorised certain sources of knowledge and methods of attaining knowledge.²⁶

These questions about the source of knowledge and method of engaging with it were at the centre of subsequent developments of various intellectual traditions in Japan, including Neo-Confucianism, Kogaku, and Kokugaku. And for all their differences, the concept of knowledge as a habit of mind and the concept of *gakumon* as a way of cultivating that habit remained a latent backdrop, or a contingent silence, for the development and operation of these traditions.

Neo-Confucian scholars, such as Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken, identify Zhu Xi's interpretations of the words of the sages as the primary sources of knowledge for attaining moral and ethical conclusions about being and becoming.²⁷ Hayashi, for instance, proclaimed that "no one has ever offered an understanding of these classics [Book of Songs, Book of Documents, Book of Rites, Classic of Music, Book of Changes, and Spring and Autumn Annals] better than Zhu Xi has. Not following him, then, we will get lost in all the things observable to man."²⁸ Learning is, thus, essentially to engage with Zhu Xi's elucidation of Confucian virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity. In a similar vein, Kaibara sought to reclaim Zhu Xi's interpretations for his own ethical and empirical thought, arguing that the primary goal of learning was practical moral rectification and that moral principles and virtues were all written in the classics. As he wrote, "Teaching must begin with things easily comprehensible and accessible, and the Chinese classics of the sage emperors are the best learning material to begin one's pursuit

²⁶ One broader implication for history writing is that no idea of knowledge is applicable across time and space. Any idea of knowledge cannot escape spatio-temporal specificities that make that idea possible in the first place. This, in turn, points to the possible inadequacy of our own categorial imperatives such as 'secular' and 'non-secular'. Rajyashree Pandey's illuminating work addresses this problem of anachronism, more precisely, of imposing modern analytical concepts onto those texts far removed from our spatial and temporal position. Rajyashree Pandey, *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair: Body, Woman, and Desire in Medieval Japanese Narratives*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016.

²⁷ As I will discuss further in a subsequent chapter, Hayashi and Kaibara were not "the spiritual slaves" of Zhu Xi as Inoue Tetsujirō would characterise them. See Inoue, *Nippon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku*, 598. Both of them expressed a sense of disavowal towards Zhu Xi. Hayashi, for instance, was sceptical towards Zhu Xi's rendering of the concept of *ri* and *ki*. Likewise, Kaibara, especially towards the end of his life, came to reject Neo-Confucian metaphysics and sought instead a more empirical approach to the study of nature detached from the constrictions of Confucian ethics. See Tetsuo Najita, "Intellectual Change in Early Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Confucianism," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 34:4, 1975: 931-944.

²⁸ The original text reads, "其夫子の道は六經にあり、經を解すること紫陽氏より粹なるはなし、紫陽を捨てて之に従はず、而して唯区々たる象山を是れ信ず、惑へるに似たるに幾からずや。" See Hayashi Razan, "Tagen kore ni yosu" 寄田玄之 ("Questions about Classics of Confucianism"), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū, 1-kan* 羅山先生文集 1 卷 (*Essays of Master Razan, Vol. 1*), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918 [1604]: 14 [12-28].

of knowledge.”²⁹ For Hayashi and Kaibara, knowledge was an individual quality defined as Confucian moral and ethical conclusions, something to be rehearsed insofar as it was perennial and unaffected by time. And, the purpose of *gakumon*, organised along the cyclical time of learning, was to have a proper grasp of such timeless wisdom.

Scholars of Kogaku also emphasised the importance of textual emersion as the primary method of learning. However, for them, Zhu Xi’s interpretations did not constitute appropriate sources of knowledge, since they considered these interpretations as mere distortions of the original. This negation of Neo-Confucianism led those scholars of Kogaku to argue for the inadequacy of interpretation and the necessity of returning instead to the original Confucian writings. Itō Jinsai, for example, sought to redefine the purpose of *gakumon* by resorting to Meincius’s concept of *kuochong* (扩充: enlarging, accumulating). Itō’s understanding was that to learn was not only to cultivate personal qualities as a virtuous man but also to accumulate knowledge about all that existed under the Heaven (*tianxia*: 天下), which was already there in the original teaching of Confucianism and was, thus, attainable through extensive textual engagement.³⁰ Ogyū Sorai, while calling also for the return to the original, equated *gakumon* to what he called *jitsugaku* (実学: practical learning). The purpose of *jitsugaku* was by no means to pursue *michi* (the way) for self-cultivation. Instead, it was, first of all, to correctly grasp various Confucian categories, such as *tendō* (天道: the way of Heaven), *jindō* (人道: the way of Man), *ri*, and *sei* (性: the nature of a thing), all of which were already specified in Chinese classics. On the basis of a proper understanding of these categories, *gakumon* defined as *jitsugaku* was to cultivate *jinzai* (人材: talent) who were adept at practising benevolent governing. Ogyū, then, proposed to read Chinese classics in the original language, that is, in classical Chinese, because language and signification were neither universal nor timeless and because the meaning of Confucian categories could be recuperated neither through contemporary Chinese nor through *kanbun*-rendering, a method of reading, annotating, and translating Chinese texts used since the Nara period (710-794).³¹ As these

²⁹ The original text is as follows. “學ぶ者に教ふるには、日用彝倫の平實切近なる者を以て先と為す、聖人の教本と自から此の如し、是れ學者曉り易く入り易きの道にして [...]。” See Kaibara Ekken, *Shinshiroku* 慎思錄 (*Record of Careful Thought*), Tokyo: Tōadō, 1911[1714]: 15.

³⁰ Itō wrote as follows. “宋明の儒先、みな性を尽すを以て極則として、学問の功ますます大なることを知らず。殊に、己が性は限り有りて、天下の道は窮まり無きを知らず。限り有るの性を以てして窮まり無き道を尽さんと欲するときは、則ち学問の功に非ずんば、得べからざるなり。(Confucian scholars of the Sung and Ming dynasties all perceived that the ultimate rule of learning was to exhaust one’s own nature. They never understood that the merits of learning were much broader than the cultivation of Self. In particular, they did not realise that one’s nature is limited. Nor did they grasp the fact that the Way under Heaven is not limited. When you desire to use your limited nature to attain the limitless Way, learning is futile and impossible to achieve its objective.)” Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon 1* 童子問 1 (*Questions from A Child, Vol. 1*), in Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen, 5-kan* 日本倫理彙編 5 卷 (*Japanese Ethics, Vol. 5*), Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901 [1707]: 91 [76-103].

³¹ To allude to this point, he wrote that “是ヲ教ルニ術有ベシ、士君子ノ輩ハ文字ヲ知ルヲ要トス、近年理学ハヤリテ悪キコトヲ云散シ、其習シ儒者ノ常語ト成テ、文字ヲ知ラズトモ道理ヲ知レバヨキト云ハ大ナル僻事也、文字ヲ知ネバ道理モ暗キモノ也 (There is a method to engage with the ancient texts: learn its language [the ancient Chinese language]. Confucian learning has come to revolve largely around *ri* [following the Neo-Confucian interpretations], and its [neo-Confucian] teachings have become the vernacular of Confucian learning. Many presume that all one has to know is *dōri* [that by which something is so] and that there is no need to know the language. However, if one does not know the language, how can one know *dōri*?)” Ogyū Sorai, “Taiheisaku” 太平策

examples illustrate, Kogaku's understanding of the sources of knowledge and the method of learning posed a fundamental challenge to Neo-Confucianism. And yet, the basic idea of *gakumon* promoted by the likes of Itō and Ogyū generally followed a pattern of thinking similar to Neo-Confucianism, whereby the time of learning was structured in a cyclical manner, and canonical texts constituted the core apparatus of such cyclicity, as the sources of all human knowledge.

This emphasis on canonical texts as the sources of knowledge was also foundational for Kokugaku. But for the likes of Motoori Norinaga, Confucian texts and Chinese classics were essentially foreign, such that knowledge retrieved from them was irrelevant to the realities of the Japanese archipelago. Thus, Motoori lamented, "All the people, both wise and foolish, are misled by foreign thought" and "those scholars of the land of the emperor, who are supposed to know what they are supposed to know through their reading of our own ancient texts, do not know what they are supposed to know."³² For him, the then-prevalent tendency to project, for instance, the Buddhist concept of karma or the Confucian notion of the Will of Heaven onto the land of the emperor was nothing but a futile disposition.³³ One could not arrive at proper knowledge through intervention with foreign thought. Motoori's proposition was the following: in seeking knowledge, one must embody the ineffable spirit or mythical intention of heavenly deities that, according to him, had created the land of the emperor and had long been dictating its particular characters. This spirit did not manifest itself in those foreign texts and doctrines but revealed itself in ancient 'Japanese' texts, such as *Kojiki* (古事記: *Records of Ancient Matters*, 711-712) and *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀: *Chronicle of Japan*, 720). Then, he went on to explain painstakingly which texts to read, in which order, and how to read them.³⁴ While the general understanding of knowledge remained as that which was characterised as an individual quality, the territory and validity of knowledge were mapped onto the imaginary geography of Japan as a distinct historical and cultural entity. In a similar vein, though the basic propositions of *gakumon*, such as the cyclical time of learning and the dictum of transmitting and interpreting, were similar to other intellectual traditions, its scope was also mapped onto the imaginary geography of Japan. It was to engage with these ancient 'Japanese' texts so that one could adequately grasp and embody the ineffable spirit dictating the very world that one inhabited.

These examples should suffice to give pause to those who assume, all too readily, the inadequacy of 'traditional' knowledges and the inefficacy of modes of *gakumon* from which these knowledges derive. A critique, such as Ronald Dore's that characterises these knowledge traditions as being emblematic of "the neglect of curiosity and the pleasure of independent discovery" as opposed to "progressive branch[es] of study, constantly pushing at the frontiers of new knowledge,"

("A Proposal for A Great Peace"), in Takimoto Seiichi (ed.), *Nihon keizai sōsho*, 3-kan 日本経済思想 3 卷 (*Japanese Economic Thought*, Vol.3), Tokyo: Nihon keizai sōsho kankōkai, 1914 [1721]: 563.

³² The original text reads, "然るを世の人かしこきもおろかなるもおしなべて、外国の道々の説にのみ惑ひはてて、此の意をえ知らず。皇国の学問する人などは、古書を見て必ず知るべきわざなるを、さる人どもだに、えわきまえ知らざるはいかにぞや。" Motoori Norinaga, *Naobi no mitama* 直毘霊 (*The Rectifying Spirit*), in Kobayashi Ichirō (ed.), *Kōkoku seishin kōza*, 12-kan 皇国精神講座 12 卷 (*On Psychology of Imperial Kingdom*), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1941-1943 [1771]: 45 [15-107].

³³ The original text reads, "抑吉凶き萬の事をあだし国にて、佛の道には因果とし、漢の道々には天命といひて、天のなすわざと思へり。是等みなひがごとなり。" Ibid.

³⁴ Motoori Norinaga, *Uiyamabumi* うひ山ぶみ (*First Step into the Mountain*), in *Motoori Norinaga zenshū*, 9-kann 本居宣長全集 9 卷 (*Complete Works of Motoori Norinaga*, Vol.9), Tokyo: Yoshikawa-kōbunkan, 1937[1798]: 479-506.

is itself anachronistic.³⁵ Such a critique relies on a judgement only possible from a perspective far removed from those ‘traditional’ knowledges – a perspective that understands knowledge in the language of progress, discovery, and representation. What these earlier significations of *gakumon* collectively suggest – and this is the whole point of this detour – is that the purpose, function, and nature of learning had been defined differently and variously because the very idea of serious and valid knowledge, that which *gakumon* sought to pursue, were indeed heterogeneous.

There is a sense of incommensurability. These earlier significations of what knowledge entails and what *gakumon* ought to do are, as it seems, at odds with a kind of knowledge promoted by the Fundamental Code of Education, or the concept of *gakumon* undergirding those ‘lofty subjects’ to be pursued at universities and Mori Arinori spoke for. This sense of incommensurability brings to the fore some questions that are indispensable for an investigation into modern knowledge formation in Japan. How did the concept of *gakumon*, the semantics of which had been manifold and utilised variously by many to validate practices and products of knowledge within the remit of their own intellectual traditions, become in early Meiji a conceptual device to legitimise the production and dissemination of knowledge that was markedly different from Neo-Confucianism, Kogaku, or Kokugaku? How was the idea of ‘lofty subjects’ pursued in the realm of *gakumon* equated to formalised bodies of knowledge, such as physics, philosophy, science, law, medicine, and mathematics? What enabled the likes of Mori Arinori to speak of *gakumon* as the realm of pursuing specialised knowledge distinct from the realm of *kyōiku*?

§

1.3. Politics of Knowledge and Education in the Late 19th Century

If the rise of a modern state depends, among other things, on various projects of socialisation to inculcate in the minds of the people a collective understanding and sentiment about the nation, socialisation under the condition of modernity is a distinctly political problem.³⁶ Thus, for political centres, education constitutes an effective vehicle for socialisation. Meiji Japan was no exception. This entanglement of education and the modern state became, in the late 19th century, a fundamental backdrop for educational reform, whereby hitherto dispersed educational structures were remoulded into a centralised and systematised ascending hierarchy. Undoubtedly, this entanglement exhibited the synchronicity of the 19th-century nation-form, seemingly bent on the statist intervention into knowledge and education. Yet, in Japan, policies and political discourses that forged this entanglement also embedded within themselves certain diachronicities: policies were aimed at marking territories of learning and knowledge that were reflexive of the specificities of Japan’s modernisation; political discourses on education were intended to cultivate not only modern but also distinctly Japanese subjects of the nation. This reorganisation of education as a simultaneously synchronic and diachronic process of the late 19th century was, in essence, a

³⁵ Ronald P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011[1965]: 52.

³⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994: 36-37. See also Francis X. Sutton, “Education and the Making of Modern Nations,” in James Smoot Coleman (ed.), *Education and Political Development (SPD-4)*, Vol. 4, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015: 51-74.

process of ‘statising,’ or else, ‘etatisation.’³⁷ It was a process through which time and space of learning were reconfigured to reflect a new form of political power, social structures, and economy and to function, in the words of Michel Foucault, not with overt disciplinarian means but “as a machine for supervising, hierarchising, rewarding.”³⁸

My argument is that it was through this process of etatisation, not nationalisation, of education that the concept of *gakumon* was reconfigured as a signifier for a realm markedly different from what Mori Arinori described as the realm of *kyōiku*. It was through this process of etatisation of education that new meanings were encoded in the concept of *gakumon*, the space of learning was compartmentalised into a series of ascending institutions, and the time of learning was reorganised into linear progression. By extension, it was through this process that a new understanding of serious and valid knowledge – a new territory of legitimate knowledge – was heteronomously authorised.

To expand further, it is instructive to turn to *Gokajō no Goseimon* (五箇条の御誓文: the Charter Oath, 1868) because it contains foundational political discourses about the nation and education. The Charter Oath expresses two kinds of teleology for political and social changes as the nucleus of new state building, which, in turn, constitute the rationale for statist intervention into education. The first teleological premise is that the strength and wealth of the nation can be achieved through acquiring and disseminating knowledge, which dialectically links two guiding ideologies of early Meiji, that is, *bunmei kaika* (文明開化: civilisation and enlightenment) and *fukoku kyōhei* (富国強兵: enrich the country, strengthen the army). In its fifth article, the Charter Oath thus stipulates that “knowledge shall be sought all over the world, in order to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule and succeed in the transformation that the country has never seen before [...]”³⁹ The second teleological premise of the Charter Oath is about the relationship between individuals and a collective community. The third article of the Charter Oath maintains that “all individuals shall achieve their aspirations irrespective of their class origins or occupation.”⁴⁰ Yet, as the second article specifies, the pursuit of individual aspirations must be harnessed by the sense of duty towards a collective community rather than by the promise of self-fulfilment.⁴¹ Although the Charter Oath did not explicitly define the function of education for political and social changes, these two teleological premises nevertheless set out a basic theme for educational reform. Education was now a locus to be seized by the state as a medium for statist activities for actualising, almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy, these premises of changes. The assertion, in other words, was that not only would the state be responsible for providing appropriate levels of education to all so that individuals could arrive at the state of the enlightened and pursue

³⁷ Understandably, some might prefer to render this process ‘nationalisation.’ However, I use this rather cumbersome term ‘etatisation’ here because, in late 19th-century Japan, the state and the nation had not yet been isomorphic. The establishment of an educational system was part and parcel of the statist’s attempt to articulate the notion of the Japanese nation. If anything, activities of the state had, at times, even been at odds with the interests of the people. See Makihara Norio, *Kyakubun to kokumin no aida: kindai minshū no seiji-ishiki* 客分と国民の間: 近代民衆の政治意識 (*Being the Guest of the Nation, Being the People of the Nation: Political Consciousness of the Mass*), Tokyo: Yoshikawa-kōbunkan, 2019 [1998].

³⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1977: 155.

³⁹ The text reads, “智識ヲ世界ニ求メ大ニ皇基ヲ振起スヘシ我國未曾有ノ変革ヲ爲ントシ [...]” The full text of the Charter Oath can be found in Sashihara Yasuzō (ed.), *Meiji Seijishi, 1-kan* 明治政治史 1 卷 (*Political History of Meiji, Vol. I*), Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1892: 94-95.

⁴⁰ Ibid. The original text reads “官武一途庶民ニ至ル迄各其志ヲ遂ケ人心ヲシテ倦マサラシメン事ヲ要ス。”

⁴¹ Ibid. The original article reads “上下心ヲ一ニシテ盛ニ経綸ヲ行フヘシ。”

their own aspirations, but also, and precisely to this end, education would be bent on the statist pursuit to inculcate in individuals a sentiment towards a national community and to achieve the wealth and strength of the nation necessary to join the ranks of the civilised.

The following years saw a saturation of opinions on education. Each of these opinions set out a distinct understanding of the scope and purpose of education, the mode of institutionalisation, and the degree of statist intervention. And yet, for all their differences, these two teleological premises remained recurring tropes. Take, for example, a petition entitled ‘Kokuze-kōmoku’ (国是綱目: Political Orientations) submitted to the Meiji government in 1869.⁴² For the signatories of the petition, including Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), Nakajima Nobuyuki (1846-1899), Tanaka Mitsuaki (1843-1939), Ga Noriyuki (1840-1923), and Mutsu Munemitsu (1844-1898), enlightening the people and remoulding them into the civilised was a means to an end for socio-political transformation, the goal of which was to achieve the wealth and strength on par with the West.⁴³ To actualise this premise along the prescribed path of progress, the signatories proposed a range of policies they thought necessary. These policies included the reorganisation of the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects through *hanseki hōkan* (版籍奉還: the return of the land and people from the feudal lords to the Emperor), the expansion of trade industry, and the compliance to international treaties and international laws. However, these proposed policies came with caution. The signatories maintained that these policies could not be imposed in a vacuum and that a certain condition was imperative for successful implementation, which the signatories insisted could be prepared by recuperating the spirit of the Charter Oath. Thus, the petition asserted,

全國ノ人民ヲシテ世界萬國ノ學術ニ達セシメ、天然ノ知識ヲ拡充セシム可シ。
[...] 目今宇内ノ形勢一発、四海交通ノ時ニ當リ、人々競フテ其耳目ヲ廣メ一人ヨ
リ二人ニ及ビ、延テ萬姓ニ達ス、於是乎欧州各国ノ如ク文明開化ノ治ヲ開ケリ。
今ヤ我皇國數百年継受ノ弊害ヲ一新シテ天下ノ耳目ヲ開ク可キ千載ノ一機會ニ當
レ。

(We must encourage the people of our nation to be well-versed in various scholarships flourishing around the world and to expand their knowledge. [...] the balance of power in the world is shifting, exchanges and interactions among nations are intensifying, and everyone is competing to expand their horizon, which initially begins as an effort of an individual but necessarily culminates in a collective effort of the entire nation. This is how we shall become a civilised nation on par with Europeans. Now we have an unwonted

⁴² Itō Hirobumi, “Kokuze-kōmoku” 国是綱目 (“Political Orientations”), in Baba Tsunego, *Itō Hirobumi*, Tokyo: Chōbunkaku, 1942 [1869]: 104-108. This petition is also known as ‘Hyōgoron’ (兵庫論: A Proposal from Hyōgo) since one of its main signatories, Itō Hirobumi, was serving at that time as the Governor of the newly established Hyōgo prefecture.

⁴³ No one explained this equation of the civilised with the West more plainly than Fukuzawa Yukichi. He wrote in 1875 that “when we are talking about civilization in the world today, the nations of Europe and the United States of America are the most highly civilized.” Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmei-ron no gairyaku* 文明論之概略 (An Outline of a Theory of Civilisation), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1931 [1875]: 20. The English translation is borrowed from Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, 17. Therefore, at the end of the 19th century, as Carol Gluck observes, “the available modernities [...] were known to Japanese as ‘civilization,’ understood both as a universal stage in world history and as a description of contemporary ‘Euro-America.’” See Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere,” 681.

opportunity to get rid of the adverse effects of the past few hundred years and to reorient our attention to the world.)⁴⁴

Learning would create an appropriate condition to successfully implement the necessary policies for socio-political transformation. Crucially, though, the kind of knowledge the petition encouraged people to pursue was a qualified one. For those signatories, hitherto prevalent knowledge, such as Confucianism, was nothing but the source of disruptive political, social, and intellectual practices that had long plagued the country. What they saw as appropriate knowledge was essentially modern, Western, and scientific.⁴⁵ Then, for the effective accumulation of such knowledge, they proposed to reorganise the educational system into a centralised and hierarchised one, with the university at its apex and as the qualified institution to determine general orientations of learning and pedagogy at lower schools.⁴⁶ In other words, they saw the ascending process of learning as the most effective way of enlightening people and remoulding them into those who would have an innate consciousness as the subjects of the Japanese nation. Thus, the most urgent political matter for those signatories of the petition was to establish and structure educational institutions – from primary schools to universities – into an ascending hierarchy, a mimicry of the progressive path towards enlightenment.

The two teleological premises undergirding the Charter Oath, as well as the general tendency to view education as a field of statist activities, were central propositions also for Kido Takayoshi (1833-1877). In a text written while he was an imperial advisor, Kido declared that “education is now a matter of the utmost urgency.”⁴⁷ This was so because, as he believed, being educated was the basis for interacting with other countries on equal terms. Thus, Kido maintained that it was a political matter “to educate the uneducated, to expand their knowledge, and to teach them their duties as a member of the Japanese nation” and that “educational opportunities must be provided for all.”⁴⁸ However, for Kido, the paramount question was not that of how to institutionalise learning but that of what kinds of knowledge should be authorised as adequate curricula for reformed educational institutions. His assertion was based on his understanding that the then-prevalent mantra of *wakon yōsai* (和魂洋才: Japanese spirit, Western techniques), which was widely wielded both as a means and as an end for modernisation while resisting Westernisation, was, in fact, an unattainable delusion.⁴⁹ In his 1871 letter addressed to a bureaucrat of the newly

⁴⁴ Itō Hirobumi et al., “Kokuze-kōmoku,” 106.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106-107.

⁴⁷ Kido Takayoshi, “Shuppei hantai kengi” 出兵反対建議 (“Opposing the Expedition to Taiwan”), in Kido-kō denki hensanjo (ed.), *Shoukiku Kido den, 2-kan* 松菊木戸公伝 2 卷 (*Biography of Kido Takayoshi, Vol.2*), Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1927 [1874]: 1697-1698.

⁴⁸ Ibid. The original text reads, “文部教育ノ事目今ノ急務之ニ過ルナシ、政府嘗テ旨ヲ伝ヘ、国内不学ノ戸ナク不学ノ民ナク、其智識ヲ磨励シ其義務ヲ講明シ、各国ト対峙スルノ基ヲ起サントス。[...]今ヤ人民貴賤ノ別ナク、悉ク之ヲ教育スルヲ主トシテ [...]。” Then, he argued for allocating more of the budget to the matters of education. As the title of this text indicates, its central aim was to curtail the fanaticism for the expedition to Taiwan. At the same time, however, the general tone of the text is undeniably that of disillusionment, derived perhaps from his experiences in Europe and North America as a member of the Iwakura Mission. His conviction was that there was much more progress to be made domestically before acting upon any colonial desire to compete against Western expansionism.

⁴⁹ As Hirakawa Sukehiro points out, the genealogy of this mantra can be traced back to the earlier notion of *wakon kansai* (和魂漢才: Japanese spirit, Chinese learning) in the 15th century, which, according to Hirakawa, reflected a ‘Japanese’ consciousness of acquiring some aspects of advanced civilisation, China, while maintaining a sense of the

established Ministry of Education, Kido argued that material manifestations of the modern and civilised said to be achieved through Westernisation could not be treated as signs of genuine progress. Appropriating things Western was not an apposite path to become truly modern. His assessment was thus quite jarring: “Our civilisation today is not a true civilisation. Our enlightenment today is not true enlightenment.”⁵⁰ This was because ‘our civilisation’ and ‘our enlightenment’ were mere caricatures of Western civilisation and enlightenment, the spirit of which was fundamentally incongruous to the Japanese nation. Such a view, if we recall, is strikingly similar to Fukuzawa Yukichi’s. What made contemporary Euro-America distinctly civilised and enlightened was, according to Fukuzawa, the “inner spirit,” which did not transcend all particularities and thus could not be bought or sold.⁵¹ For Kido, too, the spirit of Western civilisation could not be replicated in Japan. Especially problematic, however, was that the mantra of ‘Japanese spirit, Western techniques’ failed to account for the fact that Western technique could not be divorced from the Western spirit. All those attempts at acquiring Western techniques would ultimately fail because the Japanese did not have unmediated access to the spirit that sustained such techniques. Those attempts were, as Kido went on to suggest, not just naïve but detrimental, undermining that which was deemed to be at the very heart of the Japanese nation.

To cultivate a specifically Japanese spirit and to inculcate it in the minds of the people, Kido saw education as indispensable.

十年之後其病を防ぐ只学校之真学校を起こすに在り[...] 国家永安之長作は僅々之賢材世に出するとも一般に忠義仁礼之風起り確乎不拔之国基不相立候而は千年を期し候とも国光を掲る事不可知風を起す基之確立する只人に在り其人を千載無盡に期す真に教育に在る而已

(The only way to prevent the disease [of fallacious civilisation and enlightenment] in the years to come is to establish ‘real’ schools. It is true that, once in a while, a wise man emerges to lead the nation. But the stability and prosperity of our nation are and must be grounded on the characteristics of our people, that is to say, loyalty, righteousness, benevolence, and courtesy. The very foundation to pave the way towards national glory, even if it takes a thousand years, the very foundation to mould such a way to national glory as our inevitability – it is in individuals and, indeed, in education that cultivates those individuals.)⁵²

Education was to cultivate the spirit of the Japanese nation, which would be embodied by the people and would manifest itself as the basic moral and ethical virtues derived largely from the Confucian tradition. Educational institutions, which Kido described as ‘real’ schools, were responsible not necessarily for appropriating things Western but for teaching, based on the

Self distinct from China. See Hirakawa Sukehiro, *Wakon yōsai no keifu* 和魂洋才の系譜 (*The Genealogy of Japanese Spirit, Western Technique*), Tokyo: Kwade shobō shinsho, 1987. For the notion of *wakon* (Japanese spirit), see Kenichiro Koizumi, “In Search of ‘Wakon’: The Cultural Dynamics of the Rise of Manufacturing Technology of Postwar Japan,” *Technology and Culture*, 43:1, 2002: 29-49.

⁵⁰ The original sentence reads as follows. “我今日之文明は真之文明にあらず我今日の開化は真之開化にあらず。” Kido Takayoshi, “Sugiyama Takatoshi ate shokan” 杉山孝敏宛書簡 (“Letter to Sugiyama Takatoshi”), in *Nihon shiseki kyōkai* (ed.), *Kido Takayoshi Bunsho* 木戸孝允文書 (*Documents of Kido Takayoshi*), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppan’kai, 1930 [1872]: 320.

⁵¹ Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, 21-22.

⁵² Kido, “Sugiyama Takatoshi ate shokan,” 320-321.

Confucian pedagogy of moral education, the kind of knowledge indispensable for cultivating personal qualities.

If Itō Hirobumi and Kido Takayoshi represented two ends of the spectrum between modern Western knowledge and Confucian knowledge, Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883) occupied the middle ground. He occupied that position to the extent that he attempted to structure these two kinds of knowledge into a sequential order of educational institutions by arguing that Confucian moral education was a necessary backdrop for the people to appropriate modern Western knowledge specifically for its utility and instrumentality. In his 1867 proposal to the Imperial Court, Iwakura criticised the *zeitgeist* that justified the uncontrolled and unmediated acquisition of modern Western knowledge, which he believed had more adverse effects on the wealth and strength of the nation than otherwise surmised.

朝廷ニ於テ富国ノ道ヲ主張セラル、トキハ利ノ在ル所弊必ス之ニ從フノ理ニシテ
西洋名利ノ学問盛ンニ行ハル、ト共ニ衆人前後ノ得失ヲ顧ミス末流ニ走リテ本源
ヲ忘レー一時逆上症ニ罹ルカ如ク脚根空虚トナリ如何ナル弊害ノ生スルコト有ルヤ
測ラレス是レ亦遠ク慮ラサル可カラス

(As the Imperial Court insists on taking the path of enriching the country, it is inevitable that Western scholarships flourish and that the people feverishly pursue them without considering gains and losses, without remembering the actual reason for doing so, becoming rootless in this general air of malaise. I wonder how much harm it would do.)⁵³

Iwakura's assertion was that, before letting them pursue modern Western knowledge, those individuals must be moulded into those who would embody specifically Japanese moral and ethical virtues derived from Japan's brand of Confucianism. This collective embodiment of such virtues would constitute the foundation for attaining and utilising, when and if appropriate, modern Western knowledge as building blocks for new political, social, and economic life. Then, he called for the establishment of "hundreds of elementary schools" across Japan as institutional loci for teaching "the five basic human relationships" of the Confucian tradition and the fact of human relatedness that established certain individual responsibilities. Once individuals internalised these moral and ethical principles, then, they would clearly see the utility and instrumentality of modern Western knowledge. The upshot here is that, in Iwakura's proposal, the educational progress of individuals was institutionally and temporally sequenced as a movement from elementary education to post-elementary education, from the cultivation of moral and ethical principles to the acquisition of utilitarian and instrumental knowledge of the modern West.

Later, in 1879, Iwakura expanded this general design for the educational system further, suggesting the establishment of universities as the institutional loci for post-elementary education and as the supervisory bodies to guide and determine the general orientation of elementary moral education.⁵⁴ He wrote, "it is necessary to expand our knowledge and educate the uneducated in

⁵³ Iwakura Tomomi, "Chōtei ni taisuru kengensho" 朝廷に対する建言書 ("A Proposal to the Imperial Court"), in Tada Kōmon and Kagawa Keizō (eds.), *Iwakura-kō zikki, 2-kan* 岩倉公実記 2 卷 (*A True Account of Iwakura Tomomi, Vol.2*), Tokyo: Kōgōgūshiki, 1906 [1867]: 31-32.

⁵⁴ Iwakura Tomomi, "Kenkokusaku" 建国策 ("Policies for Founding a Nation-State"), in Tada Kōmon and Kagawa Keizō (eds.), *Iwakura-kō zikki, 2-kan* 岩倉公実記 2 卷 (*A True Account of Iwakura Tomomi, Vol.2*), Tokyo: Kōgōgūshiki, 1906 [1870]: 835.

order to become a civilised nation-state with wealth and strength.”⁵⁵ While he was acutely aware that “such a goal cannot be achieved overnight,” he nonetheless urged that “we would repent if we were to miss this opportunity” to establish a centralised and hierarchised educational system for both Confucian moral education and the acquisition of modern Western knowledge so that “there would be no uneducated people in our nation.”⁵⁶

This conceptual and institutional separation of moral education based on Confucian moral and ethical principles from knowledge education to disseminate modern Western knowledge offered a certain degree of consolation to those unconvinced by Westernisation. And yet, there remained some fundamental questions of how to discursively connect moral education and knowledge education as a coherent whole, how to ascribe a sense of totality to the educational system that encompassed two kinds of knowledge, and how to link rather than juxtapose the national (an awareness of being Japanese) and the modern (a category variously defined but generally equated to contemporary Euro-America).

One prevalent solution was to reconfigure the notion of *kokutai* (国体) as an overarching ideology to tether moral education to knowledge education, as an expression of the immutable and eternal character of Japan, in contrast to the historically contingent political structure and exercise of political authority qualified as *seitai* (政体).⁵⁷ Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830-1878), then the associate counsellor of the Imperial Court, wrote in 1869 that imitating Western models of the nation was detrimental to Japan because those nations of Euro-America and their national essence were reflexive essentially of their own historical and social contexts. So, too, was Japan’s national essence. It was something “reflexive of the land, customs, people’s characters, and historical contexts” of our nation, such that “it cannot be invented in a vacuum.”⁵⁸

要務先ツ我ガ国体ヲ議スルヨリ大且ツ急ナルハナシ苟シモ之レヲ議スルニ序アリ
妄リニ欧州各国君民共治ノ制ニ擬ス可カラズ我ガ国自カラ皇統一系ノ法典アリ亦
タ人民開明ノ程度アリ宜シク其得失利弊ヲ審按酌慮シテ以テ法憲典章ヲ立定スベ
シ

(Nothing is more urgent than to form a consensus on the Japanese national essence. But we shall not imitate the European model of constitutional monarchy. Our nation has a code of law based on the unbroken lineage of the sovereign. Our people have achieved a certain level of civilisation. Laws to govern our nation shall be established upon considering carefully both the benefits and drawbacks of the European model.)⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ibid. The original text is as follows. “天下ニ不教ノ人民ナカラシムルニハ [...] 国家ヲシテ文明ニ導キ富強ニ赴カシムルコト人智ノ開進ニ在ルハ勿論ニシテ[...]。”

⁵⁶ Ibid. The original sentence reads, “天下ノ人民ヲシテ不学ノモノ無カラシムルハ一朝ニシテ成ルベキモノニ非ズ。今ニシテ之ヲ施設セザレバ悔ユトモ及バザルモノアラン。”

⁵⁷ It was only in the late 1880s, with the promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (1889), that the notion of *kokutai* (the emperor as the expression of national essence and the incarnation of national morals) and that of *seitai* (organs of government based on constitutional monarchy) were enshrined as the basic principles of the Japanese nation.

⁵⁸ Ōkubo Toshimichi, “Meiji roku-nen Ōkubo sanngi kisō seitai ni kansuru ikensho” 明治六年大久保参議起草政体ニ関スル意見書 (“Opinion on the Political Structure and Political Authority”), 1873 [1869]: 5. The original sentence reads, “土地風俗人情時勢ニ随テ自然ニ之レヲ成立スル者ニシテ敢テ今ヨリ之レヲ構成スベキモノニ非ラズ”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 15-16.

And, in order to form a consensus on the national essence, Ōkubo saw education as a crucial means. On the one hand, he argued for the necessity of institutionalising moral education as a way of indoctrinating the uneducated into national sentiment.⁶⁰ On the other hand, he also urged to establish an educational institution to learn and disseminate modern Western knowledge, an institution akin to Kaisaijo (開成所: Kaisei school) of the Yōgaku tradition established during the Tokugawa shogunate specialised in Western learning, in order to cultivate those who could treat modern Western knowledge in its utility and instrumentality and serve the emperor to govern the Japanese nation.⁶¹ In other words, two kinds of education were linked to one another as a means of inculcating *kokutai* in the minds of the people and as a means of exercising political authority that expressed *kokutai*.

These examples altogether offer sufficient ground to argue that, in the late 19th century, there emerged certain consensuses over the complex matrix of politics, knowledge, and education. Becoming modern was not equivalent to becoming Western; the primary concern among the political ranks was that of how to become modern while maintaining particularities, hence while being different from contemporary Euro-America. What made Japan different from Euro-America was its national essence, the immutable and eternal character of Japan embodied and incarnated by the emperor. Thus, modernisation entailed not only acquiring the wealth and strength equal to contemporary Euro-America but also cultivating and inculcating the national essence in the minds of the people as the foundation for modernising processes. Education was a crucial means for ‘becoming modern and yet being different.’ And, insofar as ‘becoming modern and yet being different’ was primarily a political problem, education was a field of statist activities.

However, these examples also demonstrate considerable differences in intentions, propositions, and discursive strategies. Just as with any other political problem, a general consensus on what constitutes a problem does not mean that there is also a consensus on a possible solution. In the complex matrix of politics, knowledge, and education, a fundamental political question remained. What could be qualified as an adequate extent of statist intervention into the realm of education when new principles of politico-social life guaranteed, among other things, individual autonomy in matters of learning integral for individuals to fulfil their purposes?

§

1.4. Forging A Political Solution

⁶⁰ Nihon shiseki kyōkai (ed.), *Ōkubo Toshimichi bunsho dai-san* 大久保利通文書 第三 (*Documents of Ōkubo Toshimichi, Vol.3*), Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1928 [1869]: 11. The original texts reads, “先ツ無識文盲ノ民ヲ導クヲ以テ急務トスレハ従前ノ俗ヲ失ハス教化ノ道ヲ闡キ学校ノ制ヲ設クヘシ”

⁶¹ The original texts read as follows. “当時学校 等御取建て相成候より速ニ旧幕之開成所同様之者御興シ有之候義、御急務ト奉存候間其 節ニ臨ミ大ニ御為可相成候” and “主上未タ壮年ニ至ラセ玉ハ即今 御徳器御成修肝要ナル時節ニ候得ハ御精選ノ上補 導ノ任ヲ置セラル最要條ナルヘシ” See respectively Nihon shiseki kyōkai (ed.), *Ōkubo Toshimichi nikki jōkan* 大久保利通日記上巻 (*Diary of Ōkubo Toshimichi, Vol.1*), Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1983: 260-261; Nihon shiseki kyōkai (ed.), *Ōkubo Toshimichi bunsho dai-san*, 12.

The late 1870s saw a certain discursive and institutional resolution to the political question. Among many texts, speeches, and debates, the so-called *Kyōgaku-seishi ronsō* (教学聖旨論争: Controversy over the Imperial Thought on Education, 1879) is perhaps the most instructive example to grasp a kind of resolution emerged from within political circles.

In August 1879, only a few weeks before the promulgation of *Kyōikurei* (教育令: Education Order, 1879), which aimed at reversing certain effects of the highly centralised educational system set out by the Fundamental Code of Education (1872), a short text entitled ‘*Kyōgaku-seishi*’ (教学聖旨: Imperial Thought on Education) was handed to the government officials. The purpose of the text, written in the name of the emperor and addressed to Itō Hirobumi, then the Prime Minister, and Terashima Munenori (1832-1893), soon to be the Minister of Education, was twofold. First, the text sought to persuade the government to curb its ‘modernist’ enthusiasm that seemingly equated education to the acquisition and dissemination of modern Western knowledge. And second, it also sought to facilitate some last-minute changes to the ‘liberal’ Education Order that envisioned a decentralised educational system. Of course, as we all know today, ‘Imperial Thought on Education’ was written not by the emperor himself but by Motoda Nagazane (1818-1891), a prominent Neo-Confucian scholar and an advisor to the emperor who subsequently became a prominent figure in promoting the ideology of imperial divinity in the realm of education. Given this context, the temptation is to read ‘Imperial Thought on Education’ as a Confucian ‘traditionalist’ attack on the purportedly ‘modernist’ tendency of the government and as a genesis of *Kyōiku chokugo* (教育勅語: Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890) which is said to have paved the way for “indoctrination, repression, and militarism, culminating in the Pacific War.”⁶²

My reading differs from such a polemical view. The significance of ‘Imperial Thought on Education’ and the ensuing controversy over it lies not in its discursive strategy to frame the politics of education into a simple, partisan opposition between traditionalist and modernist, between Confucian education and Western education. Nor does it lie in the consequence of the controversy, that is, a liberalist concession to accommodate the demands of the traditionalist. As I read it, the significance lies in the fact that the Controversy over the Imperial Thought on Education forged two distinct yet intertwined realms within the overall educational system: the realm of *kyōiku* (教育) and that of *gakumon* (学問). The upshot is that this discursive and institutional distinction between *kyōiku* and *gakumon*, in turn, became an enabling condition for resolving the political question about the extent of statist intervention in education.

Let us take a closer look here. Motoda’s overall concern expressed in ‘Imperial Thought on Education’ was that which underpinned education policies. As he observed, the predilection towards what he described as *chiiku* (知育: knowledge education) based on the acquisition and dissemination of modern Western knowledge, albeit having some immediate benefits for the country, had created those individuals preoccupied with attaining technical knowledge who ended up “breaking the rules of conduct and damaging customs in the name of civilisation and

⁶² Sharon H. Nolte, “National Morality and Universal Ethics: Ōnishi Hajime and the Imperial Rescript on Education,” *Momumenta Nipponica*, 38:3, 1983: 284 [283-294]. On the Imperial Rescript on Education, see for example, Yoshimitsu Khan, *Japanese Moral Education: Past and Present*, London: Associated University Press, 1997; Benjamin Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education: Constructing the National School System, 1872-1890*, New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2009: 257-370; Morikawa Terumichi, *Kyōiku chokugo e no michi* 教育勅語への道 (*The Road to The Imperial Rescript on Education*), Tokyo: Sangensha, 2011.

enlightenment.”⁶³ This fad for knowledge education, as Motoda feared, would eventually “result in neglect of the moral and ethical fundamentals that have long defined the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects in this country.”⁶⁴ For Motoda, modern Western theories and concepts were “empty abstractions” (高尚ノ空論) not because they were in and of themselves empty but because those students of knowledge education had failed to situate these theories and concepts firmly within a vision of Japanese polity organised as a manifestation of *kokutai*.⁶⁵ Only when people came to view modern Western knowledge as “situated knowledge” (実地ニ基ツキ) that knowledge education could be considered “practical learning” (実学) for the nation.⁶⁶ What Motoda envisioned here was *tokuiku* (徳育: moral education) as a means to inculcate in the minds of the people a particular vision of the polity and, therefore, as a means to forge a cognitive condition under which empty abstractions would be transformed into practical knowledge.

仁義忠孝ノ心ハ人皆之有リ、然トモ其幼少ノ始ニ、其脳髓ニ感覚セシメテ培養スルニ非レハ、他ノ物事已ニ耳ニ入リ、先入主トナル時ハ、後奈何トモ為ス可カラス [...] 其行事ノ概略ヲ説諭シ、忠孝ノ大義ヲ第一ニ脳髓ニ感覚セシメンヲ要ス [...]

(Principles of benevolence, justice, loyalty, and filial piety are the natural characteristics of human beings. People must be taught, from a very early age, how to consciously cultivate and intuitively embody these principles before other things occupy their minds. [...] My aim here is to emphasise the fact that the primary purpose of education is to transform individuals into the embodiment of those principles [...].)⁶⁷

What is especially interesting here is Motoda’s emphasis on the body as a site in which power and its regime of discourse would inscribe themselves. His repeated usage of phrases such as ‘intuitive embodiment’ and ‘intuitively embody’ epitomises his vision that the body is not merely the object of, for instance, anatomical knowledge or the target of overt disciplinarian means but is a site of docility and submission to the indoctrination of a certain mentality and rationality of the Japanese nation. Moral education was, for Motoda, the very means of such indoctrination through authorised pedagogy and cultural impositions. It was an attempt to ‘etatisise,’ so to speak, a physical body and transform it into that which was directly involved in a political field as the manifestation of certain moral and ethical principles. Motoda saw the body as a statist medium to connect the individual to the nation and moral education as a statist instrument to establish and formalise such connection.⁶⁸ To this end, the etatisation of the body was simultaneously the etatisation of education.

⁶³ Motoda Nagazane, “Kyōgaku-seishi” 教学聖旨 (“Imperial Thoughts on Education”), in Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyūjo (ed.), *Kyōikuchokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryōshū, 1-kan* 教育勅語渙発関係資料集 1 卷 (*Documents on the Promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, Vol. 1*), Tokyo: Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyūjo, 1938 [1879]: 3 [1-4]. The original text reads, “然ルニ輓近専ラ智識才芸ノミヲ尚トヒ、文明開化ノ末ニ馳セ、品行ヲ破リ、風俗ヲ傷フ者少ナカラス”

⁶⁴ Ibid., 4. The original text reads, “将来ノ恐れ、所、終ニ君臣父子ノ大義ヲ知ラサルニ至ランモ測ル可カラス”

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Motoda was not alone in emphasising the body as a site of inscribing a sense of the Japanese nation. Also in 1879, Mori Arinori submitted a draft text of his education theory, in which he argued for the importance of the body, along

My argument is that ‘Imperial Thought on Education’ is interesting less for its insistence on Confucian moral and ethical education than for its affirmation that education was a political problem and that the state had the responsibility to carve out desirable modes and contents of education. The guiding teleological premises of the Meiji period – that knowledge acquisition would foreground the strength and wealth of the nation and that individual aspirations were to be harnessed for a collective community rather than for self-fulfilment – could not be actualised without any mediation. For these premises to be more than mere hypothetical optimum, for modern Western knowledge to be harnessed for the purpose of the Japanese nation, and thus for individuals to view this knowledge in its practicality, the statist intervention was necessary. The role of the state, in other words, was to establish parameters of what it meant to be Japanese and to implement an educational schema, or what Motoda termed *kyōgaku* (教学), for moral indoctrination.⁶⁹ To this end, ‘Imperial Thought on Education’ was much more than a polemical manifestation of the familiar opposition between Confucian education and Western education, between the traditional and the progressive, between premodern and modern. Motoda, as I read it, sought to move beyond such opposition by pointing to a specific role of the state in re-linking moral education and knowledge education.

‘Imperial Thought on Education’ prompted a swift response in the form of ‘Kyōikugi’ (教育議: On Education), drafted by Inoue Kowashi (1844-1895), then the great secretary of the Grand Council of the State and submitted to the emperor by Itō Hirobumi, then Lords of Home Affairs. However, Motoda’s overall proposition – that an educational system was to be divided into the realm of moral education and the realm of knowledge education and that these two realms were to be linked to one another through the statist moral indoctrination of certain behavioural principles – was largely unchallenged. In lieu, ‘On Education’ expanded on Motoda’s proposition by attending to three distinct matters: the causes of socio-political instability, the role of modern Western knowledge and that of tertiary education as the locus for engaging with this knowledge, and the role of government in promoting tertiary education.

with intelligence and moral consciousness, as a site for experiencing the good and as a medium of doing the good. Of course, Mori was adamant that Confucian moral indoctrination was not at all appropriate. And yet, just like Motoda, Mori saw the body as the site for inscribing a collective sense of the Japanese nation and, therefore, as the embodiment of national sentiment. See Mori Arinori, “Kyōikuron: Shintai no nōryoku” 教育論 身体の能力 (“Theory of Education: The Ability of the Body”), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Mori Arinori zenshū, 1-kan* 森有礼全集 1 卷 (*Complete Works of Mori Arinori Vol.1*), Tokyo: Senbūdō shoten, 1972 [1879]: 325-329. My reading here of the works of Motoda and Mori is indebted to Michel Foucault’s analysis of the political economy of the body. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, Michel Senellart (ed.), Graham Burchell (trans.), London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

⁶⁹ On Motoda’s conceptualisation of *kyōgaku*, see Morikawa Terumichi, “Motoda Nagazane to kyōgaku-ron” 元田永孚と教学論 (“Motoda Nagazane and the Theory of Kyōgaku”), *Saitama daigaku kiyō*, 59:1, 2010: 133-154. One of the earlier critiques of *kyōgaku* was offered by Tosaka Jun, who asserted that this concept was merely to (re)establish and maintain the feudal nexus between morality (*shūsin* 修身), government (*keikoku* 経国), and stability (*chikoku heitenka* 治国平天下). See Tosaka Jun, “Ninshikiron towa nani ka” 認識論とは何か (“What is Epistemology?”), in *Tosaka Jun zenshū, 3-kan* 戸坂潤全集 3 卷 (*Complete Works of Tosaka Jun, Vol.3*), Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1937: 465. As much as Tosaka’s reflection came from his own pre-war ideo-political interest, the post-war engagement with the concept of *kyōgaku* and Motoda’s ideology was foregrounded by a sense of urgency to overcome what were viewed as ‘premodern’ qualities of the ‘modern’ Japanese educational system. This is especially evident, for example, in Tsuchiya Tadao’s historical analysis of educational policies. See Tsuchiya Tadao, *Meiji zenki kyōiku seisakushi no kenkyū* 明治前期教育政策史の研究 (*A Historical Analysis of Educational Policies during the First Half of the Meiji Period*), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1962.

For Itō and Inoue, the socio-political instability of the late Tokugawa and early Meiji periods had little to do with the state of education. It was, instead, an inevitable consequence of the socio-political transformation brought by the end of the seclusion policy and the introduction of new governing principles that had replaced the feudal political hierarchy. The instability was part and parcel of socio-political transformation.⁷⁰ All the more so when those changes occurred rather suddenly as they did in Japan.

世道一変シ、廟堂深ク宇内ノ大勢ヲ察シ、斷シテ之ヲ行ヒ、尽ク鎖國封建ノ旧ヲ改ム、是ニ於テ我人民始メテ意ノ向フ所ニ從ヒ、尋常例格ノ外ニ馳驟シ、云為自由ナルヲ得、 [...]

(As the outlook of external relations and internal structures has transformed completely, we must observe the trends of the world carefully and, with conviction, break away from the old orders. This conviction shall be the basis for our people to follow their own will, to move away from what was hitherto considered normal, and ultimately to be free.)⁷¹

In the midst of such transformation, as Itō and Inoue observed, many people were enchanted by concepts of European Enlightenment, such as liberty, self-help, and rights, and utilised these concepts as polemical devices for political debates.⁷² The problem was neither the proliferation of these concepts nor those individuals indulging themselves in debates. The problem was that because those individuals were educated in the Kangaku tradition, they lacked any proper understanding of these concepts and used them merely for the purpose of virtue signalling. It was not that modern Western knowledge was in and of itself a destabilising force. The increasing sense of socio-political instability was caused not by the inadequacy of modern Western knowledge but by the inadequacy of those who misused or even abused this knowledge without any appropriate comprehension of its utility.⁷³ For this reason, Kangaku could no longer be considered an adequate tradition of learning.

To mitigate the adverse effects of instability, Itō and Inoue understood, just as Motoda did, that it was essential to articulate a collective sentiment towards national polity by cultivating proper understandings of the historico-cultural characters of Japan. However, they argued, now against Motoda, that the role of government in such an endeavour was not moral indoctrination and cultural imposition. The role was not to establish Confucianism as a state religion. Nor was it to promote specific interpretations of ‘Japanese’ history, literature, customs, and language, even

⁷⁰ Itō Hirobumi, “Kyōikugui” 教育議 (“On Education”), in Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyū-jo (ed.), *Kyōikuchokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryōshū, 1-kan* 教育勅語煥發関係資料集 1 卷 (*Documents on the Promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, Vol. 1*), Tokyo: Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyūjo, 1938 [1879]: 5 [5-9].

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² In 1870, Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help* (1859) and John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859) were translated by Nakamura Nasanao and published respectively as *Seigoku risshihen* (西国立志編) and *Jiyū no ri* (自由之理). The former proved especially popular. With one million copies sold by the end of 1911 in a country of thirty million people, it became one of the best-sellers of the Meiji period, along with Fukuzawa’s *Encouragement of Learning*. For Nakamura’s translation and subsequent popularisation of European Enlightenment concepts, see, for example, Douglas Howland, *Personal Liberty and Public Good: The Introduction of John Stuart Mill to Japan and China*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005; Mikawa Tomohisa, “Seigoku risshihen wa donoyō ni shite meiji-shoki no syakai ni hirogatta noka” 西国立志編はどのようにして明治初期の社会に広がったのか (“How Did Seigoku Risshihen Become Popular in Early Meiji Society?”), *Human and Socio-Environmental Studies*, 17, 2009: 69-81.

⁷³ Itō Hirobumi, “Kyōikugui,” 5, 9.

though these were the constitutive elements of national polity and must be protected.⁷⁴ Rather, the role was to consider the greater good and welfare of the people or, in the words of Itō and Inoue, “the happiness of the nation.”⁷⁵ In so defining, Itō and Inoue followed once again Motoda’s proposition that education was a field of statist activities instrumental for calibrating the adverse effects of instability. They then diverged from Motoda in that education was to provide a condition under which individuals could pursue their own happiness that was at the heart of ‘the happiness of the nation.’

However, at this juncture, the scope of Itō and Inoue’s deliberation gets rather narrow. If Motoda’s concern was with moral education “from a very early age,” thus with primary education, Itō and Inoue’s concern was placed specifically on post-primary education that they described as “*kōtō no gaku*” (高等の学).⁷⁶ Limiting the scope of their deliberation was, as I read it, a calculated strategy. It was political pragmatism, especially of Itō, to create an area of potential political concession in order to advance his immediate political agenda, that is, the promulgation of the Education Order, without necessarily antagonising ideological oppositions. This limited scope also enabled Itō and Inoue to argue that post-elementary education shall be the realm of knowledge education for individuals to attain “a hundred means of crafts and technologies” of the West and for them to engage with practical learning (*jitsugaku*: 実学), which in turn would bring Japan close to the end-goal of modernisation. Acquiring modern Western knowledge was, therefore, viewed as an antidote, if not an immediate solution, for polemical debates and, ultimately, for the socio-political instability.

The role of government in post-primary education, as Itō and Inoue went on to maintain, was to ‘guide’ rather than indoctrinate individuals to understand the historico-cultural specificities of Japan and to ‘encourage’ them to acquire scientific and indeed practical knowledge of the West.

若シ夫レ古今ヲ折衷シ、經典ヲ斟酌シ、一ノ国教ヲ建立シテ、以テ行フカ如キハ、[...] 而シテ政府ノ宜シク管制スヘキ所ニ非サルナリ、唯政府深ク意ヲ留ムヘキ所ノ者、歴史文学慣習言語ハ、国体ヲ組織スルノ元素ナリ、宜シク之ヲ愛護スヘクシテ、之ヲ混乱シ及ヒ之ヲ残破スルコトアルヘカラス、高等生徒ヲ訓導スルハ、宜シク之ヲ科学ニ進ムヘクシテ、之ヲ政談ニ誘フヘカラス、[...] 蓋シ科学ハ、実ニ政談ト消長ヲ相為ス者ナリ

(Politics of the past was based on the idea that the past must be integrated into the present – reading canonical scriptures, establishing them as the foundation for the nation, and conducting political matters on that basis. [...] Such is no longer the role of this government. Of course, this government shall remain conscious of the fact that history, literature, customs, and language are the basic elements to organise and sustain national polity and that these elements must be protected and nurtured but never be slighted. For post-primary education, however, the role of this government is to encourage students to pursue science and to make them understand the futility of indulging in political debates. Science is the antidote to polemics.)⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., 8-9.

⁷⁵ The original phrase is “国民ノ幸福.” Ibid., 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 8-9.

The efficacy of such a claim lies in its discursive function. By defining the role of government as guiding and encouraging individuals to pursue their own happiness, and by linking individual happiness to the socio-political stability achieved through modernisation undergirded by utilitarian and instrumental knowledge imported from the West, Itō and Inoue discursively established a hermeneutic relationship between education and governing, between individual happiness and collective prosperity, and between modern Western knowledge and socio-political stability. What we see here is a resolution, or at least an orientation towards a resolution, for the political questions about how to actualise two teleological premises – one about knowledge acquisition and national strength and the other about individuals and collective community.

The so-called ‘Controversy over the Imperial Thought on Education’ was not so much of a controversy as the denomination otherwise leads us to believe. Despite the obvious ideological differences between Motoda on the one hand and Itō and Inoue on the other hand, their exchanges were within the predetermined parameters of political debate over the matrix of politics, knowledge, and education and thus offered a sharper focus on emerging political consensus: a consensus that education was indeed a field of statist activities; a consensus that the process of (re)establishing educational system as a process of etatising the realm of education; and, a consensus that it was indeed politics that would determine what ‘appropriate’ education would entail and how education could be compartmentalised into various levels of learning to reflect diverse necessities of individual and, crucially, necessities of the state.

Furthermore, these consensus reflected a general shift in the discursive space of the 1870s. Previously, at the onset of the Meiji period, two guiding principles of modernisation – *bunmei kaika* (civilisation and enlightenment) and *fukoku kyōhei* (enriching the country, strengthening the army) – were dialectically linked to one another with a conviction in pre-established teleological integrity between individuals and a nation-state. The integrity was pre-established in the sense that individual enlightenment would *inevitably and directly* result in enhancing the strength and wealth of the nation-state. However, with the reality of instability becoming increasingly undeniable and with polemical debates beginning to interfere with the business of politics, this presumed teleological integrity began to lose its discursive purchase among political elites. Instability and polemical debates became an attestation that, in fact, individual enlightenment did not automatically guarantee the strength and wealth of the nation-state. Instead, the realisation was that for this teleological integrity to become a reality, statist intervention was indispensable and that the state must prefigure an ‘appropriate’ orientation of individual enlightenment. I shall even go so far as to argue that it was these consensus that enabled, in the first place, discursive differences between ‘Imperial Thought on education’ and ‘On Education.’ Because the authors of these texts were in agreement that education was a political problem, that education must be etatised, and that education should be divided into different levels to cater to various necessities, Motoda could argue for moral education at the level of primary education. Because of these consensus, Itō and Inoue could endorse practical learning of modern Western knowledge at the level of post-primary education. Then, the purported ideological differences among the authors and discursive differences between these texts become, for this particular reading of the controversy, almost incidental.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ In fact, Motoda responded to ‘On Education’ by publishing ‘Kyōikugi fugi’ (教育議附議: A Supplementary Note on ‘On Education’) in September 1879, only a few days before the promulgation of Education Order. His response, however, had little significance on the general direction of the debate, simply reiterating, on the basis of his conviction in *kyōgaku*, the importance of moral education and proposing to expand knowledge education at the post-primary level. See Motoda Nagazane, “Kyōikugi fugi” 教育議附議 (“Supplementary Note on ‘On Education’”), in Kokumin

1.5. Territories of *Kyōiku* and *Gakumon*

In the 1880s, the political consensus on education as a field to forge the teleological integrity of individuals and the nation-state became increasingly manifest both legislatively and discursively.

In legislative terms, for example, the revision of the Education Order in 1880 effectively nullified the earlier ‘liberal’ tendency of educational policies and instead strengthened the authority of the Minister of Education.⁷⁹ The revised Education Order also extended its scope to control the content of education by specifying pedagogical standards and appropriate learning procedures at educational institutions, especially at the primary level. Of those standards and procedures, the legislative status of a compulsory subject called *shūshin* (修身: morality, ethics) taught at primary schools exemplifies increasing statist encroachment into and control over education. In the earlier version of the Education Order promulgated in 1879, *shūshin* appeared, along with reading, writing, mathematics, geography, and history, at the end of the list of basic subjects to be taught at primary schools. In contrast, in the revised Education Order of 1880, *shūshin* appeared at the top of the list. This change, though ostensibly insignificant, was indicative not only of the increasing prevalence of the concept of *kyōgaku* and Motoda’s continuing influence on educational policies but also of the government’s concession, or perhaps, willingness, to incorporate a kind education serving as moral indoctrination and cultural imposition, which did not necessarily bode well for the general inclination towards knowledge education. What enabled such concession was the structured divisions – primary, secondary, and tertiary – within the overall educational system.⁸⁰

This inclination towards increasing statist intervention into and control over education was also manifest in political discourses of the 1880s. Among them, two speeches of Itō Hirobumi delivered a few days after the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889 are sufficient to allude to my point. One of them was addressed to the chairs of prefectural assemblies, in which Itō expanded on some key features of the Constitution, including the notion of *kokutai*, the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects, and the responsibility of the government and individual citizens. The most notable point for my concern here is that, during the speech, Itō argued for education as a means of effectively transforming *jinmin* (人民: the people) into *kokumin* (国民: the nation).⁸¹ While this may be the extension of his earlier conviction that education was essential for cultivating a collective sentiment towards the nation, the other speech went further. The second

seishin bunka kenkyū-jo (ed.), *Kyōikuchokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryōshū, I-kan* 教育勅語煥發関係資料集 1 卷 (*Documents on the Promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, Vol.1*), Tokyo: Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyūjo, 1938 [1879]: 11-14.

⁷⁹ The original text of the revised Education Order is available at the National Archives of Japan (Document ID: 公02665100).

⁸⁰ For the process of political concession to promote *shūsin* as the first basic subjects for primary education, see Morikara, *Kyōiku chokugo e no michi*, 249-257.

⁸¹ Itō Hirobumi, “Fukē-gikaichō ni taisuru kenpō enzetsu” 府県議会議長に対する憲法演説 (“Speech on the Constitution Addressed to the Chairs of Prefectural Assemblies”), in Takii Kazuhiro (ed.), *Itō Hirobumi enzetsushū* 伊藤博文演説集 (*Collection of Itō Hirobumi’s Speeches*), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2011 [1889].

speech in question was delivered to the peers descended from court nobles and aristocrats in an attempt to offer them reassurance of their status within a polity envisioned by the Constitution. Though the primary purpose was to acknowledge the continuation of hereditary class division and thus to appease those nobles and aristocrats, Itō asserted that under the constitutional monarchy envisioned in the Constitution, education must function as a means of transforming *kokumin* (the nation) into *shinmin* (臣民: the Emperor's subjects).⁸² Itō's long-sustained conviction in education as a means of teleologically linking individuals to the nation-state remained apparent. What is, however, especially striking is that now he described the role of the government not with terms such as 'guide' and 'encourage' but with a far more dogmatic term, that is *shihai* (支配: dominate, dictate). The idea was that in order to transform the people into the nation and ultimately into imperial subjects, thus forcibly establish the teleology of individuals and the Japanese nation-state, political centres must dictate the realm of education by carefully deliberating on necessities and interests of national polity envisioned by the Constitution. It was through this complex matrix of politics, knowledge, and education that, as Itō maintained, modernisation could be delinked from Westernisation and, therefore, Japan could become modern while maintaining national differences.

Allied to these legislative and discursive changes was the fact that the government expropriated individuals of much of what and how they could learn. I shall, however, emphasise that such statist control over education was, by design, what I call here 'nesting control' – varying degrees of statist control at different levels of education. From the conceptual distinction between moral education and knowledge education and the institutional division between elementary and post-elementary educational institutions emerged a new territory of *kyōiku* (教育) and that of *gakumon* (学問), each of which required, or so it claimed by political centres, varying degrees of statist intervention and control.

The territory of *kyōiku* was that in which the time and space of learning would be governed by guidance, instruction, and supervision. Irrespective of the contents of learning, be they basic subjects for elementary learning, behavioural principles for children, or specialised subjects for post-elementary learning, *kyōiku* was to impart certain knowledge and skills for the intellectual and psychological development of learners. To this end, the qualification of teachers and the standardisation of pedagogy that would serve the necessity and interest of the nation-state were essential. And, these matters became the primary insistence of statist intervention, which subsequently materialised into various legislative measures in 1881.⁸³ At the same time, *kyōiku* also became, for its fundamental design, a realm of political concession to integrate some elements of moral education that, for instance, Motoda Nagazane promoted into knowledge education, insofar as the contents of moral education would comply with the existing legislative framework.⁸⁴

⁸² Itō Hirobumi, "Kaku shinnō-denka oyobi kizoku ni taishi" 各親王殿下及び貴族に対し ("To Imperial Princes and Aristocrats"), in Takii Kazuhiro (ed.), *Itō Hirobumi enzetsushū* 伊藤博文演説集 (*Collection of Itō Hirobumi's Speeches*), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2011 [1889].

⁸³ These measures included *Shōgakkō kyōsoku kōryō* (小学校教則綱領: Principles for Primary School Pedagogy), *Chūgakkō kyōsoku kōryō* (中学校教則綱領: Principles for Middle School Pedagogy), *Shōgakkō kyōin kokoroe* (小学校教員心得: Guideline for Primary School Teachers), and *Shōgakkō kyōin hinkōkentei kisoku* (小学校教員品行検定規則: Regulation for Examining the Conduct of Primary School Teachers).

⁸⁴ The debate on what kinds of moral education would be appropriate had never arrived at a concrete consensus. It thus resulted in the so-called *Tokuiku ronsō* (德育論争: Controversy over Moral Education). For example, Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) attempted to integrate some Western thoughts on morality and ethics into Confucian moral teachings in his *Shōgaku shūshin kun* (小学修身訓: The Principles of Elementary Moral Education, 1880), while

The collaboration between Motoda and Inoue Kowashi on drafting *Yōgaku kōyō* (幼学綱要: Outline of Elementary Education, 1882) is an apposite example of such concession, through which *kyōiku* began to exhibit a tendency towards *kyōgaku*, a mode of teaching and learning organised around moral indoctrination and cultural imposition.⁸⁵

In comparison, the territory of *gakumon* was designated as a locus for individuals to pursue specialised knowledge in their chosen field autonomously and independently, at least in principle. Here, the state, as it seems, remained only functional. And this was certainly true to a certain extent

Motoda reiterated the Confucian moral and ethical principles in his *Yōgaku kōyō* (幼学綱要: Outline of Elementary Education, 1882) and *Kokkyō ron* (国教論: Theory of State Religion, 1882). Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote *Tokuiku ika* (徳育如何: What is Moral Education?, 1882), calling for replacing old moral teachings based on Confucianism with a new set of morality and ethics appropriate for the new era. Katō Hiroyuki's (1836-1916) proposal in *Tokuiku hōhōron* (徳育方法論: Methods of Moral Education, 1887) was controversial for it argued for moral education grounded on religiosity, that is to say, on not one specific religion but various religions including Shintō, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Nose Sakae (1852-1895), who studied moral philosophy at Pacific University in Oregon, U.S., introduced moral education based on Western moral philosophy by publishing *Tokuiku chintei ron* (徳育鎮定論: Suppressing Controversy over Moral Education, 1890).

⁸⁵ By the 1930s, *kyōgaku* was revived as the central principle of education at primary and secondary educational institutions and also notably at tertiary institutions. For example, in 1935, the advisory body for the education minister, *Kyōgaku sasshin hyōgi-kai* (教学刷新評議会: the Bureau for Reforming Kyōgaku), was established with the aim not only to transform primary and secondary education into the locus of moral and physical training for the war effort, but also to reposition tertiary education, especially universities, as the institution that embodied *kokutai*, and its specific moral doctrine and cultural presumptions, in its research and pedagogy. A white paper published by the Bureau in 1936 argued as follows: “我が国ノ大学ハ国家ノ重要ナル学府トシテ、国体ノ本義ヲ体シ、以テ学問ノ蘊奥ヲ攻究シ、教養アル指導の人材ヲ養成スルヲ本分トス。凡テ大学ニ於ケル学問ノ研究、学生ノ教育並ニソノ制度ノ運用等ハコノ精神ニ合致スルモノヲラシムベシ。[...] 前項ノ趣旨ヲ達成センガため、文科系統ノ学部ニ於ハ、国家的見地ニ立脚シテ一層諸学ノ発達ヲ図リ、ソノ日本の特色ヲ高調スベシ[...] 而シテコレガため必要ニ応ジ、各大学ニ於ケル学部・学科・講座・学科目等ニ互ツテ新設改廃ヲ行フベキモノトス。 (The university of our country, as an important national institution, must expand the horizon of knowledge and produce those cultivated individuals who would guide the nation by embodying *kokutai*. The practice and product of knowledge, education of students, and administration of the university must, therefore, conform to the spirit of *kokutai*. [...] In order to fulfil this purpose, those faculties in the humanities should further develop various scholarships reflexive of national interests and enhance their specifically ‘Japanese’ characteristics. [...] Accordingly, faculties, departments, chairs, and courses at each university shall be established, revised, or abolished.)” Kindai nihon kyōikuseidoshi hensan iinkai (ed.), *Kindai nihon kyōikuseido shiryō, 14-kan* 近代日本教育制度資料 14 卷 (*Materials of Modern Japanese Education System, Vol. 14*), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1964: 439-440. On the basis of this recommendation by the Bureau, the first Konoe Cabinet and the succeeding Hiranuma Cabinet subsequently proposed the establishment of so-called *nihongaku* (日本学: Studies of Japan) as a locus of producing scientific self-knowledge of Japan that would contribute to the political ideology of *Tōa shin-chitsujo* (東亜新秩序: the new order in East Asia). This political encroachment on universities resulted in the establishment of new chairs at imperial universities, including the Chair of the History of Japanese Thought and the Chair of the History of East Asian Political Thought at Tokyo Imperial University, and the Chair of the History of Japanese Spirit and the Chair of East Asian Economy at Kyoto Imperial University. There are some retrospective accounts of those involved in these chairs. See, for example, Maruyama Masao and Fukuda Kanichi (eds.), *Kikigaki: Nanbara Shigeru kaikoroku* 聞き書き: 南原繁回顧録 (*Interviews with Nanbara Shigeru*), Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1989: 236-258; Maruyama Masao, *Maruyama Masao shū, 11-kan* 丸山眞男集 11 卷 (*Works of Maruyama Masao, Vol. 11*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996: 158-169; Hiraishi Naoaki, “Seiji shisō” 政治思想 (“Political Thought”), in Karube Tadashi, Kuruzumi Makoto, Satō Hiroo, Sueki Fumihiko, and Tajiri Yūichi (eds.), *Nihon shisōshi kōza 5-kan: Hōhō* 日本思想史講座 5 卷: 方法 (*History of Japanese Intellectual Thought, Vol. 5: Methodology*), Tokyo: Perikansha, 2015: 465-468.

during the 1870s and early 1880s. The primary role of the state was to establish and authorise tertiary institutions as institutional loci of *gakumon*. Thus, the Education Order of 1879 and its revised version of 1880 identified two kinds of tertiary institutions, the university and so-called *senmon gakkō* (専門学校: special school) and authorised them as institutions for pursuing knowledge in the field of law, natural sciences, medicine, and literature.⁸⁶ However, towards the mid-1880s, it became increasingly apparent that this idea of *gakumon* as an independent and autonomous pursuit of knowledge at tertiary institutions was, in fact, a qualified one. *Teikoku daigaku rei* (帝国大学令: Imperial University Decree) of 1886, for instance, clearly curtailed the extent of independence and autonomy of scholarly pursuit by stipulating that “the purpose of the university is to expand the horizon of knowledge both in arts and sciences in a way that meets the needs of the nation-state.”⁸⁷ A bricolage of subjects brought together under the unifying term ‘specialised subjects’ was already limited in their scope to those subjects deemed essential for fulfilling socio-political demands of modernisation, including French law, German medicine and sciences, American agricultural studies, and various economic theories of the West. What were qualified as ‘specialised subjects’ to be pursued at the university were already determined by the needs of the nation-state. Autonomy of *gakumon* was, therefore, heteronomously authorised autonomy.

The demarcation of *kyōiku* and *gakumon* and the nesting control over education were that which undergirded Itō’s claim for statist control while simultaneously safeguarding the right of individuals to freely follow their aspirations, or Mori’s insistence on education as a means of creating national subjects while simultaneously emphasising individual’s free will to pursue knowledge of a given specialised subject. More broadly, the demarcation of *kyōiku* and *gakumon* and the nesting control over education enabled political ranks to articulate an orientation towards resolving the conundrum of becoming modern and yet maintaining national differences, at least in the realm of *kyōiku*, that is, the orientation towards discursively, conceptually, and pedagogically integrating some elements of moral education into knowledge education. However, there remains a fundamental question. How could one resolve this conundrum in the realm of *gakumon*, wherein the pursuit of ‘specialised subjects’ to meet the needs of the nation-state was designed in such a way that it simply amounted to learning and disseminating modern Western knowledge?

In political debates, this question manifested itself as a concern for the function of the university, the primary institutional locus of *gakumon*.⁸⁸ Already in 1868, before the Fundamental Code of

⁸⁶ Throughout the prewar period, the university retained its prestige over other tertiary educational institutions. However, those special schools, some public but mostly private, were crucial in responding to the increasing demand for post-compulsory education. By 1945, there existed more than 2,100 post-compulsory educational institutions: 56 normal schools, four higher normal schools, 33 high schools and preparatory schools for university education, 1,743 special schools, and 309 public vocational schools. In the same year, the number of students at these schools amassed 845,000, with one-fourth of them being female. The number is staggering, especially in comparison to the number of students admitted to universities in 1945, which reached a little over 98,000. See Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), *Gakusei hyakunenshi: Shiryōhen* 学制百年史: 資料編 (*The Hundred Years of the Japanese Education System: Documents*), Tokyo: Teikoku chihōgyōsei gakkai, 1981.

⁸⁷ The original sentence reads as follows. “ 帝國大學ハ國家ノ須要ニ應スル學術技藝ヲ教授シ及其蘊奥ヲ改究スルヲ以テ目的トス ”

⁸⁸ This is not so surprising, given that the question of valid and serious knowledge, that is, the question of the autonomy of knowledge, is intimately intertwined with the question of controlling political effects of knowledge, thus, the question of the authority of knowledge. In the case of China, Wang Hui observes a shift from Neo-Confucianism (what he calls “Heavenly Principle”) to modern knowledge (“Universal Principle”), maintaining the following: “The transformation from Heavenly Principle to Universal Principle is a process of extreme conflict. Just as the dominance

Education (1872) defined the university as the locus for pursuing ‘lofty subjects’ and before the University of Tokyo was established as the first officially authorised tertiary institution (1877), the Meiji government expressed its intention to establish the university as the apex of the reformed educational system. However, its intended function had little to do with the modern university that we all are familiar with, even though the Japanese term, *daigakkō* (大学校), approximately means ‘university’. The initial plan was to revive, against the backdrop of *ōsei-fukko* (王政復古: the restoration of imperial rule), the ancient institution of *Daigakuryō* (大学寮), which in the 7th century functioned as an institution to teach the art of governing under the *ritsuryō*-system.⁸⁹ In short, the function of the university was understood as to produce those who could be proficient in the matters of governing envisioned through the restoration of the imperial rule. Thus, the question was of how to overhaul pedagogy, which in the past revolved around the ancient Chinese and Confucian modes of learning, and to make it adequate for the new socio-political condition of the early Meiji period.⁹⁰

While such an understanding of the function of the university seemed to warrant the continuing dominance of Kangaku and Kokugaku and, therefore, induced a fierce dispute between these scholarly traditions to assert academic and pedagogical authority, the political centre had a different plan. By 1869, those in the political ranks had significantly reshaped the idea of the university, with its function centred not on teaching the art of government but on offering a wide array of knowledge deemed necessary for modernising the country without obvious intellectual disjuncture from the Tokugawa period. The proposed plan was first to reform three existing institutions of the Tokugawa shogunate, namely Shōheizaka-gakumonjo (昌平坂学問所), Kaisei-gakkō (開成学校), Seiyō-igakusho (西洋医学所),⁹¹ into respectively Daigaku-honkō (大学本校),

of the Heavenly Principle worldview was produced through institutional relationships, the dominance of the Universal Principle worldview was produced through the establishment of the model of sovereignty of the modern state and its institutions of knowledge.” Wang Hui, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, Michael Gibbs Hill (trans.), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2014: 70. In the case of Europe, Jacques Derrida suggests that while knowledge has its own criteria of verification, “When, however, this issue is one of creating public titles of competence, or of legitimating knowledge, or of producing the public effects of this ideal autonomy, then, at that point, the university is no longer authorised by itself. It is authorised (*berrehtigt*) by a non-university instance or agency – here, by the State – and according to criteria no longer necessarily and in the final analysis those of scientific competence, but those of a certain performativity. The autonomy of scientific evaluation may be absolute and unconditioned, the political effects of its legitimation, even supposing that one could in all rigor distinguish them, are nonetheless controlled, measured, and overseen by a power outside university. Regarding this power, university authority is in a situation of heteronomy, and autonomy conferred and limited, a representation of autonomy – in a double sense of a representation by delegation and theatrical representation. In fact, the university as a whole is responsible to a non-university agency.” Jacques Derrida, “Mochlos, or The Conflict of the Faculties,” in *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, Jan Plug (trans.), Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004: 85-86 [83-112].

⁸⁹ On this ancient institution and its legacy, see, for example, Hisaki Yukio, *Daigakuryō to kodai jukyō: Nihon kodai kyōiku kenkyū* 大学寮と古代儒教: 日本古代教育研究 (*Daigaku-ryō and Ancient Confucianism: Research on Ancient Japanese Education*), Tokyo: Saimaru shuppankai, 1968; Akira Arimoto, “Schooling in Japan,” in Gerard A. Postiglione and Jason Tan (eds.), *Going to School in East Asia*, Westport, CT. and London: Greenwood Press, 2007: 143-145. See also Chapter 4 of Roy Lowe and Yoshihito Yasuhara, *The Origins of Higher Learning: Knowledge Networks and the Early Development of Universities*, London: Routledge, 2016.

⁹⁰ Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Nihon no daigaku* 日本の大学 (*The University in Japan*), Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1943.

⁹¹ Shōheizaka-gakumonjo was established by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1790 as its primary institution for Confucian learning and *kyōgaku* education. Kaisei-gakkō was initially established as Banshowage-goyō (蕃書和解御用) in 1811, also by the Tokugawa shogunate, as its official institution for translation and philological studies of

Daigaku-minamikō (大学南校), and Daigaku-higashikō (大学東校), and second to integrate them into an all-encompassing tertiary institution. To be sure, this newly envisioned tertiary institution still exhibited the legacy of the previous decades, especially in its admission policy developed around the notion of *kōshin* (貢進: paying tribute). The idea was that students of Daigaku-honkō, Daigaku-minamikō, and Daigaku-higashikō would be selected and recommended by each *han*-domain and that the number of students admitted to the tertiary institution would be determined on the basis of a quota system reflexive of the varying sizes of *han*-domains. In other words, students were tributes to the state who were expected to cultivate certain skills, both tangible and intangible, that would be used to contribute to the wealth and strength of the state. To this end, the 1869 proposal for the tertiary institution exhibited a sense of continuity of the Tokugawa tributary system. And yet, more broadly, the idea of an all-encompassing institution of knowledge was an effective inscription that the university should reflect the zeitgeist – becoming modern and yet being different; excavating ancient traditions of political machination that the Meiji restoration demanded, the responsibility of which fell onto those specialised in Kangaku and Kokugaku; and, acquiring and appropriating modern Western knowledge considered necessary for modernising the country, which authorised those scholarships on Western medicine, natural sciences, law, economics, and political sciences.

1870 marked another step towards further specification of the institutionalised form of *gakumon*, when the government forced the closure of Daigaku-honkō, the renewed institution for Kangaku and Kokugaku. This closure, however, is not vindication that those in governing ranks perceived what was taught at Daigaku-honkō as regressive and inadequate. The government's decision to close the institution derived primarily from its frustration at the never-ending dispute between Kangaku and Kokugaku to assert academic and pedagogical authority over one another.⁹² And yet, the decision, as we rightly surmise, had far-reaching consequences. Most obviously, the territory of an institutionalised form of *gakumon* was redrawn to encompass Daigaku-minamikō and Daigaku-higashikō, that is to say, institutionalised and formalised inquiries introduced from the West. The institutionalisation of *gakumon* now amounted to the institutionalisation of modern Western knowledge. This, in turn, necessitated a new way of organising various fields of knowledge into institutional categories. Previously, fields of knowledge were organised with area-oriented structuration – Kangaku for Chinese studies, Kokugaku for national (hence, Japanese) learning, and Rangaku and Yōgaku for Western learning. Now that the institutionalisation of *gakumon* amounted to the institutionalisation of modern Western knowledge, various fields of knowledge were to be reorganised into institutional categories akin to what we now call disciplines: *hōka* (法科: law), including studies of constitutions, civil codes, criminal laws, commercial laws, international laws and treaties; *rika* (理科: science), including physics, astronomy, geology, mineralogy, zoology, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and engineering; *ika* (医科: medicine); *bunka* (文科: humanities), including history, rhetoric and philology, and Chinese metaphysics; and *kyōka* (教科: ethics) comprised of theology and studies of morality.⁹³ These

Western texts. Seiyō Igakusho, established in 1859, was also a Shogunate institution specialising in Western medical studies.

⁹² Amano Ikuo, *Daigaku no tanjō, 1-kan 大学の誕生 1 巻 (The Birth of the University, Vol.1)*, Tokyo: Chūkō shinsho, 2005: 20-21.

⁹³ Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi hensyū-iinkai (ed.), *Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi: Tsūshi, 1 東京大学百年史: 通史 1 (One Hundred Years of Tokyo University: General History, Vol.1)*, Tokyo: Tokyo University, 1987: 139-140.

institutional categories of knowledge were then authorised as ‘lofty subjects’ in the Fundamental Codes of Education (1872) and as ‘specialised subjects’ in the Education Order (1879).

The contour of the institutionalised locus of *gakumon* that emerged through these organising categories of knowledge, however, brought to the fore, once again, the question of national difference. Clearly, these categories of knowledge became, for some, a vindication that Japan’s modernisation was belated and that the practices, products, and institutions of *gakumon* were mere mimicries of Euro-America. For this reason, during the 1880s, the term ‘*shin-no daigakkō*’ (真ノ大学校: the ‘real’ university) began to gain political purchase as a conceptual device to transform the institutional locus of *gakumon* into that which was all at once modern and Japanese. For instance, Tanaka Fujimaro (1845-1909), then a high-ranking official at the Ministry of Education, spoke for the idea of the ‘real’ university when he proposed that the future orientation of the university should reflect quintessentially ‘Japanese’ characters.⁹⁴ Katō Hiroyuki (1836-1916), the first president of the University of Tokyo, argued that his institution was not a mere mimicry of Western models, for it embodied in its research and teaching specifically ‘Japanese’ characters.⁹⁵ For those advocates of the ‘real’ university, the question was not so much about what constituted Japanese-ness. The question was, instead, about how to assert national differences in knowledge while becoming adequately modern. In what ways could national differences be asserted at the university when the organising institutional categories of knowledge mirrored those of the modern West? How could these categories of knowledge be reconstituted as expressions of specifically ‘Japanese’ characters? And, more broadly, what should be the function of *gakumon* and its institutionalised form for Japan’s attempt at becoming modern and yet being different?

§

1.6. Reconstituting the Concept of *Gakumon*

The political settlement was twofold: linking the institutionalised locus of *gakumon*, the university, to the interest of the Japanese nation-state so that the university would be unequivocally Japanese in its purpose and function; and forging some semantic changes to the concept of *gakumon* itself so that divine intentions and cosmological tethers would no longer have a place in learning and knowing. Especially significant for this settlement was a proposal submitted in January 1882 by Kawashima Atsushi (1847-1911), a diplomat and avid learner of Lorenz von Stein’s vision of politics and education, to Fukuoka Takachika (1835-1919), then the chief of the Ministry of Education.⁹⁶ This proposal was one of the earliest political expressions of turning the university

⁹⁴ Ibid., 387-398.

⁹⁵ Katō Hiroyuki, “Gakuijuyo-shiki shukuji” 学位授与式祝辞 (“Commencement Speech”), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taiki 10-kan: Gakumon to chishikijin* 日本近代思想体系第10巻 学問と知識人 (*Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1882]: 196-198.

⁹⁶ Kawashima, “Hyakuse no chi wa gakusei o kaisei shite ikkoku no shisō o hitotsu ni suruni shikasarū gi”.

into an institutional arm of the nation-state.⁹⁷ Furthermore, through the subsequent discussion ensued among Kawashima, Fukuoka, Katō Hiroyuki, and Kuki Ryūichi (1852-1931), the undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, emerged a new signification of the concept of *gakumon*, that is to say, *gakumon* as a pursuit of knowledge defined as a subject-object relation.

To be sure, Kawashima's intention for writing this proposal is rather unclear. It is, at least, plausible that the proposal was reflexive of two significant political events of the late 1870s and early 1880s, the period which Amano Ikuno characterises as “the season of politics.”⁹⁸ The first such event was *Jiyū minken undō* (自由民権運動: Liberty and Civil Rights Movement). Though the movement had a multitude of socio-political implications, what is especially noteworthy for my concern here is the following. The height of this movement witnessed the popularisation of private tertiary educational institutions vis-à-vis the widespread interest in French enlightenment thought as the foundation for liberal reforms. This demand for French thought was, however, a digression from the then Anglo-American-oriented curriculum at the University of Tokyo, the primary institution of *gakumon* authorised by the state. This schism, as I read it, urged those at the political centres, including Kawashima, to reconsider the role and function of the university. Another event of significance was the political crisis of 1881, also known as *Meiji jūyonen no seihei* (明治十四年の政変). Two consequences, among others, of this political crisis are especially noteworthy. As a result of the crisis, Itō Hirobumi consolidated his position as the leading figure of political modernisation and was planning a tour around Europe as part of the preparation for drafting the Meiji Constitution. Since Kawashima was to accompany Itō to Europe, he probably saw an opportunity to remind Itō of the role of the university vis-à-vis the state that he borrowed from Stein.⁹⁹ At the same time, the political crisis of 1881 also engendered a new challenge to the purported primacy of the University of Tokyo and its intimate entanglement with political centres. Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838-1922), who was expelled from the Diet as a result of the crisis, established in 1882 what later became known as Waseda University. Although Ōkuma's venture was officially recognised, at this point, as a private technical college, his ambition was far broader. He sought to “eventually turn [this technical college] into an all-encompassing university and to establish a truly independent realm of *gakumon* specific to Japan.”¹⁰⁰ Subsequently, Ōkuma

⁹⁷ The significance of this proposal is suggested, for example, in Terasaki Masao, “Teikoku daigaku keiseiki no daigakukan” 帝国大学形成期の大学観 (“Perceptions on the University during the Formative Period of Imperial Universities”), in Terasaki Masao, Satō Hideo, Matsuno Kenji, Miyazawa Yasuto, Yamauchi Tarō, *Gakkōkan no shiteki kenkyū* 学校観の史的研究 (*Historical Study of Perceptions on Educational Institutions*), Tokyo: Noma kyōiku kenkyūjo, 1972: 190 [184-265].

⁹⁸ Amano, *Daigaku no tanjō*, 1-kan, 78.

⁹⁹ Though Itō did not meet Stein in person until 1884 and the oldest recorded correspondence between Stein and Japanese intellectual and political elites was of 1882 with Fukuzawa Yukichi, Itō's political belief in the nexus between the state and education expressed, for instance, in ‘Kyōikugi’ of 1879, was consistent with Stein's vision. Takii Kazuhiro's detailed archival work indicates that a certain connection between the Japanese and Stein was already established prior to Fukuzawa's correspondence. Shimizu Shin makes a similar observation that Itō was an avid follower of Stein's political thought even before his trip to Europe. See Takii Kazuhiro, “Nihon ni okeru shutain mondai eno apurōchi” 日本におけるシュタイン問題へのアプローチ (“An Approach to ‘Stein's Problem’ in Japan”), *Jinbungakuhō*, 77, 1996: 27-62; Shimizu Shin, *Dokuō ni okeru Itō Hirobumi no kenpō torishirabe to nihon kenpō* 独逸における伊藤博文の憲法取調べと日本憲法 (*Itō Hirobumi's Constitutional Research in Germany and Austria and the Constitution of the Empire of Japan*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939: 332.

¹⁰⁰ This intention was reiterated at the inauguration ceremony by Ono Azusa, with whom Ōkuma planned and established the technical college. See Waseda daigaku daigaku-shi hensyūjo (ed.), *Waseda daigaku hyakunen-shi* 1 早

successfully convinced seven graduates of the University of Tokyo, including Takata Sanae (1860-1938) and Amano Tameyuki (1861-1938), to join and teach at the college, which political centres considered explicitly an anti-government move. Woven together, these two political events provided Kawashima with a legitimate ground to redefine the role and function of the university and to explicitly bind it with the interest of the nation-state.

Convinced that the progress of the nation-state was dependent on the hermeneutic relation between nation and education, Kawashima spoke for transforming the university into that which would reflect, in its research and education, history and polity unique to Japan. As he observed, all advanced and stable countries of the West had instituted the university with a double function: as the apex of scientific investigation into the human and natural world and as a locus of a development process through which individuals were transformed into national subjects. “Any country concerned with its long-term stability,” thus wrote Kawashima, “must establish the university and reform its educational system, so as to consolidate a sense of nation and to inculcate within the people a national sentiment.”¹⁰¹ In other words, he understood the university as the site to produce not only servants of the state but also subjects of the nation. The primary role and function of the university, hence the role and function of *gakumon* in its institutionalised form, was to identify and affirm the historical and cultural unity of the nation and ultimately to give that unity an organic life and to encourage individuals to internalise and embody such unity.

The problem, for Kawashima, was that the university in Japan had failed to fulfil this hermeneutic function. Nothing taught at the university aptly reflected Japan’s historical and cultural processes.

従来ノ慣習ヲ掃シ制度文物ヨリ學術ニ至リ悉ク泰西ヲ以テ師望スルニ至[...] 中学以上ハ専ラ英仏ノ語學ト其學課ヲ教授スルモノニシテ大學ノ専門學科ハ一モ自國ノ學科無ク文學政治經濟法律等ノ如キ都テ英仏ノ兩學ヲ以テ課目ヲ定メ教員ハ英仏人多キニ居レリ

(Now that old customs have been wiped out, and in their stead emerged a new predilection for treating Western systems, things, and scholarships as the desirable models. [...] At the moment, however, post-elementary education is mere language education in English and French. There are no specialised subjects about our own country offered at the university. Literature, politics, economics, and laws – all that are offered at the university today are studies of England and France taught by instructors from England and France.)¹⁰²

In his view, those specialised subjects were designed only to reproduce specialists of English and French histories and cultures. Kawashima then quoted Stein’s verdict that Japan had discarded, with blind enthusiasm, its historically specific customs in favour of socio-political reorganisation of the country based on things Western but had not yet succeeded in such an endeavour.¹⁰³ Japan was, therefore, at a critical juncture to reconsider its future orientation.

稲田大学百年史 1 (*Waseda University 100 Year Chronicle, Vol.1*), Tokyo: Waseda daigaku daigaku-shi henshūjo, 1982: 462.

¹⁰¹ Kawashima, “Hyakuse no chi wa gakusei o kaisei shite ikkoku no shisō o hitotsu ni suruni shikasarū gi.”

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid. In his correspondence with Kawashima, Stein even went so far as to argue that the appropriation of foreign concepts, especially those of French civil rights, which were themselves specific historico-cultural products but had been promoted in the fold of universality, would be ruinous. Adopting them would be as if to provide a child who did not know how to use weapons with a gun. To be sure, Stein’s cynicism towards French political concepts was also a historical product reflexive of his own interest, following Fichte’s culturalist tradition, in legitimating the German

Kawashima was sceptical about the efficacy of imitating things Western. At the same time, he was acutely aware that neither the imposition of moral education nor the revival of Tokugawa intellectual traditions would offer an apposite political alternative. The question, as he saw it, was not so much of either-or – either moral education or knowledge education, either Tokugawa traditions or modern Western knowledge, either the national or the foreign. It was rather about a synthesis. How could national differences be integrated into knowledge when its organising categories reflected institutional structures of modern Western knowledge? How could a hermeneutic relationship between knowledge production on par with contemporary Western scholarships and the Japanese nation be established at the university? The primary purpose of Kawashima's proposal was, thus, to reorient political questions about *gakumon* towards a possible synthesis of epistemic premises of modern Western knowledge and Japan's purported national particularities.

At least, given the commentaries written in the margin of the original document, we can reasonably surmise that Fukuoka took the proposal rather seriously enough to ask Katō and Kuki for their opinions. However, their response was rather limited. They merely pointed to the inadequacy of Kawashima's observation that the university had so far failed to fulfil its hermeneutic function. As they argued, the Department of Japanese and Chinese Literature (*Wakan bungaku-ka* 和漢文学科), established in 1877 at the time of the inauguration of the University of Tokyo, sufficiently addressed historical and cultural processes specific to Japan. They then reiterated a plan to expand the Department with courses specialised in 'national' classical literature (*kokubun*: 国文) and Chinese classical literature.¹⁰⁴

Of course, such a brief comment requires further probing. A few months after its inauguration, Katō wrote to the Ministry of Education to explain the purpose and scope of this new institutionalised field of knowledge called 'Japanese and Chinese literature.'

今文学部中特ニ和漢文ノ一科ヲ加フル所以ハ目今ノ勢斯文幾ント寥々晨星ノ如ク
今之ヲ大学ノ科目中ニ置カサレハ到底永久維持スヘカラサルノミナラス自ラ日本
学士ト称スル者ノ唯リ英文ニノミ通シテ国文ニ茫乎タルアラバ真ニ文運ノ精英ヲ
収ム可カラサレハナリ但シ和漢文ノミニテハ固陋ニ失スルヲ免カレサルノ憂アレ
ハ並ニ英文哲学西洋歴史ヲ兼修セシメ以テ有用ノ人材ヲ育セントス

(The Department of Japanese and Chinese Literature at the Faculty of Letters is analogous to a star at dawn simmering ever so slightly and disappearing in a ray of sunlight. This is

nation-state as a political manifestation of ethnic unity vis-à-vis post-revolutionary French republican state organised around the notion of universal humanity that cut across national – that is, ethnically defined national – boundaries. See, for instance, John Weiss, "Dialectical Idealism and the Work of Lorenz von Stein," *International Review of Social History*, 8:1, 1963: 75-93; Mark R. Rutgers, "Can the Study of Public Administration Do Without a Concept of the State? Reflections on the Work of Lorenz Von Stein," *Administration & Society*, 26:3, 1994: 395-412. For German intellectual discourses on the French Revolution, see T.C.W. Blanning, "The French Revolution and the Modernization of Germany," *Central European History*, 22:2, 1989:109-129; Anthony J. La Vopa, "The Revolutionary Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution," *Central European History*, 22:2, 1989: 130-159; Peter Burg, "The French Revolution and the German Classical Period," in C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen (eds.), *Tropes of Revolution: Writers' Reactions to Real and Imagined Revolutions 1789-1989*, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1991: 219-230; David James, *Fichte's Republic: Idealism, History and Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ This plan was later materialised in 1882 with the establishment of *Koten kōshū-ka* (古典講習科) and further in 1883 with the establishment of *Koten kōshū-ka otsu-bu* (古典講習科乙部). Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi hensyū-iinkai (ed.), *Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi: Tsūshi*, 1, 452.

because the department attends to that in which people are losing their interests. But it is precisely for this reason that the department must be a permanent feature of the university. If those self-proclaimed ‘Japanese’ scholars are well-versed only in the English language and have little knowledge about national literature, how can they call themselves specialists in literature? Of course, this does not mean that knowledge about the English language and Western literature, philosophy, and history is irrelevant. Individuals valuable to the nation-state are those who have achieved a mastery of knowledge both of our nation and of the West.)¹⁰⁵

The immediate purpose, as Katō explained above, of the Department of Japanese and Chinese Literature was to cultivate truly ‘Japanese’ scholars who could recuperate Japan’s historical and cultural uniqueness through their scholarly exercises. The department was thus envisioned as an institutional locus not only to educate successive generations of ‘Japanese’ scholars but also to preserve a body of knowledge that would otherwise be lost in obscurity vis-à-vis the popular tendency towards things Western.¹⁰⁶ Konakamura Kiyonori (1822-1895), a professor of Japanese classical literature, later recalled Katō’s preoccupation to preserve the body of knowledge on Japanese classics. At the inauguration of a new specialised course on Japanese classical literature in 1882, Konakamura acknowledged that this course was a brainchild of Katō, who was “deeply concerned by the declining number of students pursuing education and training in national literature” and who saw the necessity “to cultivate a new generation of scholars of national literature” in order to preserve this specific body of knowledge.¹⁰⁷ The immediate purpose of the department thus embodied a certain hermeneutic circle of knowledge production on the nation and cultivation of national sentiment.

Returning to Katō and Kuki’s response to Kawashima’s proposal, their emphasis on the existing Department of Japanese and Chinese Literature can be read as an expression of what they considered an appropriate scope of knowledge production and dissemination at the university – an appropriate scope to resolve the conundrum of becoming modern and yet being different in the realm of *gakumon*. To this end, their response was not necessarily a repudiation of Kawashima’s overall claim for integrating national particularities into the university along those institutional categories such as law, science, medicine, humanities, and ethics. Their response was, if anything, a specification of what it actually meant for the university to be an institution reflexive of synchronicity and diachronicity of modernising changes. Fukuoka’s comment on Kawashima’s proposal reiterated this point in a far more explicit manner.

主客ヲ分チ本末ヲ明ニシ空理ニ墜チズ激進ニ流レシメザル以上ハ諸般ノ学科ヲシテ務テ之ヲ具備シ之ヲ高尚ニ進メ真理ノ精妙ヲ究メシムルニ非ズンバ何ゾ大学ノ教育トスルニ足ランヤ又何ゾ他ヲ超過圧倒スルニ足ランヤ是普通教育ト異ナルヘシ然ルヲ論者今ニシテ徳川氏ノ如ク明祖ト同轍ノ政略ニ出テ朱学ヲ宗トスルノ林家ヲシテ大学ヲ統轄セシムル等ノ点ニ復帰セシメ以テ我大学ヲ組織セントスルハ果シテ充分ノ好勢力ヲ得ベキ者トスルヤ、又所謂主客ヲ分チ本末ヲ明ニシ固有ノ

¹⁰⁵ Tōkyō teikoku daigaku (ed.), *Tōkyō teikoku daigaku gojyūnen-shi 1-kan* 東京帝国大学五十年史 1 卷 (*Fifty Years of Tokyo Imperial University, Vol. I*), Tokyo: Tōkyō teikoku daigaku, 1932: 686-687.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 731.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 732.

教育ニ拠ルノ精神ハ果シテ此ニノミ在ル者トスルヤ、[...] 是レ予カ印氏ノ言ニ感
衝シテ肯テ論者ニ服セザル所ナリ

(Separating the subject of knowledge from the object knowledge, clarifying causes and effects, and avoiding the pitfall of empty theories and radical ideas – these are the foundational rules of all faculties and departments to conduct rarefied scholarly pursuits of the truth based on exhaustive research. If one fails to pursue truth, how can this be a university education? How can this be considered the apex of learning? University education is different from universal education. Some critics may propose, just as the Tokugawa clan did, to follow the political strategy derived from the Ming dynasty and to revive Neo-Confucianism as the ground for structuring and overseeing the university. However, I wonder about the efficacy of such a proposal. I wonder if the Neo-Confucian tradition, in fact, fulfils the necessary qualifications of research and education at the university. [...] I believe Prof Stein has succinctly made the point, which I wholeheartedly admire.)¹⁰⁸

It is clear what Fukuoka expected of the university. The university shall not be an institutional locus to reintroduce the Neo-Confucian political ideology and its mode of learning organised around the attainment of moral and ethical conclusions. The guiding principles of research and education at the university must be those that had little resemblance to the Neo-Confucian tradition of learning. The university was, instead, an institutional locus to pursue truth about the world based on subject-object distinction, causal reasoning, and empirical investigation.

The significance of this discussion on Kawashima's proposal was that it forged a political consensus, if not a solution, about the institutionalised locus of *gakumon*. The university was now repositioned as an institution that embodied, in its institutional categories and its principles of knowledge production, both the modern and sovereign character of the state and the historical and cultural unity of the nation. This consensus foregrounded subsequent political discussions about the university and became the very foundation for authorising certain kinds of knowledge it produced – knowledge instrumental for the temporal process of becoming and being, for the progressive process of the specifically modern 'Japanese' nation-state. Then, it is not at all surprising that, for instance, the Imperial University Decree of 1886 rather blatantly rendered the university as an arm of the nation-state. It is equally unsurprising that Mori Arinori, then the minister of education, proclaimed that the university is for the public good and *gakumon* is for the nation-state.¹⁰⁹

That said, a far more pertinent and indeed remaining theme is the formal character of knowledge that Fukuoka argued the institutionalised locus of *gakumon*, the university, should pursue – knowledge that is attained through the pursuit of 'truth' (真理) based on the principles of subject-object distinction, causal reasoning, and empirical investigation. For Fukuoka, such pursuit of truth based on those principles was that which distinguished late 19th-century *gakumon* from the hitherto prevalent modes of learning epitomised by Confucianism. And yet, this imbrication of truth and

¹⁰⁸ Kawashima, "Hyakuse no chi wa gakusei o kaisei shite ikkoku no shisō o hitotsu ni suruni shikasarū gi."

¹⁰⁹ Yūbinhōchi Newspaper, 8th February 1889, evening edition; Kimura Tadashi, *Mori sensei den* 森先生伝 (*Biography of Mori Arinori*), Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1932: 142-143. Mori's proclamation here seems to contradict his own claim about *gakumon* as the locus for individuals to pursue their own interests, which I have introduced earlier in this chapter. Perhaps the temptation is to read this disparity as a vindication of Mori's ideological shift from liberalism to nationalism. However, my reading follows Sonada Hidehiro's assessment that this disparity was more than anything a reflection of the unsettled nature of the politico-ideological discussions of the late 19th century. See Sonoda, *Seiyō-ka no kōzō: Kurofune, bushi, kokka*, 213-326.

knowledge was not at all a novel discursive device for verifying the seriousness and legitimacy of knowledge. This imbrication was, in fact, also central to what Fukuoka despised as the traditional. For instance, in the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, the ontological truth about all things was understood as a priori determined by what was called *ri* (理: principle), and the primary purpose of learning was defined as the pursuit of *ri*, or else *kyūri* (窮理: the pursuit of principle). Here, again, the seriousness and legitimacy of knowledge was grounded on the imbrication of truth, or else *ri*, and knowledge. What is principally at issue is this *ri*-knowledge structuration. If a kind of knowledge Fukuoka spoke for was indeed different from what he considered traditional, how could he continue to refer to the *ri*-knowledge structuration as the qualifying marker for serious and valid knowledge? The question, in other words, is of the ways in which the *ri*-knowledge structuration, once a commodity of 'old' intellectual traditions, became, during the early Meiji period, the qualifying marker for knowledge that was said to be fundamentally different from kinds of knowledge those 'old' traditions had produced.

CHAPTER 2

A LIMINAL SEMANTIC SPACE OF ‘*RI*’

What we call a truly enlightened world is achieved only when practical studies become popular and individuals arrive at an understanding of truth.

Tsuda Mamichi¹

That which is in a constant war with our thinking faculties, that which is the enemy of our thinking faculties – is what I call here the principle of all things. This war may be called learning, investigation, or cultivation. Whatever the nomenclature, once this principle becomes a captive, and once we become its vessel, it will fall under the jurisdiction of our thinking faculties and, thereby, ultimately function as the utility of our thinking faculties.

Nishi Amane²

§

2.1. Epistemic Reconfiguration

Late 19th-century political discussions of the complex matrix of politics, knowledge, and education presupposed that the presumed superiority of modern Western knowledge was underpinned by what Fukuzawa Yukichi called ‘spirit’ or what Nakamura Masanao described as ‘consciousness.’ It was generally assumed that this ‘spirit’ or ‘consciousness’ was reflexive of specific historical and cultural processes unique to the West, such that, while the contents of modern Western

¹ The original text reads as follows. “此実学国内一般ニ流行シテ各人道理ニ明達スルヲ真ノ文明界ト称スベシ。” See Tsuda Mamichi, “Kaika o susumeru hōhō o ronzu” 開化ヲ進ル方法ヲ論ズ (“On the Method of Promoting Enlightenment”), *Mei roku zasshi*, 3, 1874: 13 [13-16].

² The original text reads, “知の従来のおのれが敵として、もって畢生戦争してやまざるものは、これを名づけて理という。その戦争を学といい、また講究・練磨という。ゆえに知の理と戦うや、一理を俘にしておのれが麾下に属する時は、その理また知の管轄を受けて、ついに知の用をなす。” Nishi Amane, *Chisetsu* 知説 (*On Knowledge*), in Uete Michiari (ed.), *Nihon no meicho*, 34: Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki 日本の名著 34: 西周・加藤弘之 (*Japanese Classics, Vol. 34: Nishi Amane and Katō Hiroyuki*), Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1984 [1874]: 201.

knowledge (theories, concepts, institutions) may be replicated in Japan, its spirit or consciousness could not be imitated. That which underpinned modern Western knowledge was foreign and inaccessible. And yet, the political discussions also presupposed that the utility and instrumentality of modern Western knowledge must be harnessed for the purpose of collective progress, while nurturing a national sentiment in knowledge by reflecting on a historical and cultural process unique to Japan. The general consensus was to redraw the territory to *gakumon* and to institutionalise it as a university, whereby ‘lofty subjects’ taught at the institution reflected the necessity of the modern state and the historico-cultural unity of the Japanese nation.

The question for the moment is the following. If modern Western knowledge was essentially foreign and inaccessible, how could it become a constitutive part of university education specifically and of *gakumon* more generally? Claiming that modern Western knowledge was at the apex of human intellectual progress is not tantamount to actually integrating it into the intellectual landscape far removed from it. For modern Western knowledge to be a constitutive part of *gakumon* at the end of the 19th century, a certain condition of possibility had to be articulated. Thus, the question is not so much about the politics of knowledge as discussed in the previous chapter but about epistemic reconfiguration to qualify modern Western knowledge as valid and serious in the first place.

Central to epistemic reconfiguration was the valorisation of *ri*(理)-knowledge structuration. The imbrication of truth and knowledge, the *ri*-knowledge structuration, had long been the qualifying marker for valid and serious knowledge. The idea was that knowledge was essentially about the foundational truth, the fundamental principle (*ri*), of the world and that the pursuit of knowledge amounted to the pursuit of *ri*. In the late 19th century, many Japanese intellectuals viewed *ri* as a conceptual device, or else a floating signifier, in their effort to make sense of the epistemic foundation of modern Western knowledge and to integrate this knowledge into the existing intellectual landscape. As I show below, some sought to integrate modern Western knowledge into the (Neo-)Confucian regime of truth by reconstituting the (Neo-)Confucian concept of *ri*. Others attempted to assert the primacy of modern Western knowledge by articulating new meanings of *ri* and forging, through such new significations, a field of scientificity and rationality within the existing intellectual landscape. The upshot is that the valorisation of *ri*-knowledge structuration was underpinned by translational practices to encode new meanings to *ri* and, by extension, to reconfigure the entanglement of *ri* and knowledge.

By recounting various translational practices, I seek to pursue the following lines of argument. First, to articulate a condition of possibility to qualify modern Western knowledge as valid and serious, the concept of *ri* became a liminal semantic space, and translation became a means of reconstituting a specific regime of truth. For the concept of *ri* had long been registered as a metonymy of valid knowledge, but for its meaning had never been fixed, the concept was in and of itself a transformative threshold. The concept could encapsulate, in its semantics, different modes of thinking and reasoning. The act of signifying the concept became, at once, the act of negotiating epistemic differences. This liminality of the concept of *ri* was precisely that which enabled Japanese scholars to articulate a condition of possibility for treating modern Western knowledge as a valid knowledge tradition pursuing truth, *ri*, within its own remit. Second, through this process of translating modern Western knowledge within the familiar *ri*-knowledge structuration, this knowledge was remoulded into something comprehensible with the existing intellectual lexicons and mapped onto the existing epistemic landscape in relation to other knowledge traditions. However, insofar as modern Western knowledge was reconstituted through the concept of *ri* and through valorising the *ri*-knowledge structuration, the purported differences

between this knowledge and other knowledge traditions became increasingly ambiguous. The certain semantic continuum engendered a sense of incommensurability between the object of translation (modern Western knowledge) and the outcome of translation (a specific understanding of this knowledge in the Japanese language). That this kind of translation inevitably invites *différance* is the third argument I seek to pursue. While the concept *ri* facilitated the integration of modern Western knowledge into the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape, the mediation through that concept *deferred* and *suspended*, to use the Derridean terminology, the very notion of truth that underpinned modern Western knowledge

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2.2. The (Neo-)Confucian Synthesis of *Ri* and *Ki*

But to arrive at the point where these arguments present themselves to us, we need to first address the genealogy of the concept *ri* and its imbrication with knowledge that many Meiji intellectuals were drawing on as a means of comprehending modern Western knowledge. While the usage of the term *ri* stretches far back, the Neo-Confucian scholarship of the Song dynasty (960-1276) in China was pivotal in promoting *ri* as the primary qualification of valid knowledge. This is because its claim of the concept of *lishi* (理勢: the propensity of principle) as the fundamental principle of *tian* (天: Heaven) and as the guiding moral and ethical concept for the exercise of power effectively dislodged the then-prevalent concept of *shishi* (時勢: the propensity of times) from its dominant position as the nucleus of Confucian teachings.

In the earlier Chinese Confucian tradition, the ‘propensity of times’ was the edifice of its teaching. The (in)adequacy of events, behaviours, and decisions was judged by its timeliness because every event, behaviour, or decision, as it was presumed, had its proper time to occur, to be taken, or to be made. Thus, in his comment on *I Ching* (易經: The Book of Changes), Mencius (372-389 BCE) described Confucius as the “sage of timeliness.”

時止則止，時行則行，動靜不失其時，其道光明。艮其止，止其所也。上下敵應，不相與也。是以不獲其身，行其庭不見其人，无咎也。

(Rest when it is time to rest and move forward when it is time to move forward. When action and rest are not out of accord with the times, the Way is bright and clear.)³

This proclivity towards the ‘propensity of times’ had two general implications. First, as the principle of learning, the ‘propensity of times’ centred Confucian concerns primarily around the question of historical changes and the forces of such changes. Second, as the principle of individual quality, the ‘propensity of times’ was understood as inherently linked to moral action, in that

³ The original text is accessible at: <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/gen> (10.09.2022). The English translation was borrowed from Bryan W. Van Norden (ed. and trans.), *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2008: 132. See also, *I Ching*, Richard Wilhelm and Cary Byrnes (trans.), Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950: 200.

“moral action (*dexing*) is quickened by the propensity of times.”⁴ In other words, it was viewed as the primary principle for the exercise of power. This point was especially pronounced, for instance, in *Zhan guo ce* (戰國策: Records of the Warring States), which maintained the following.

[...] when the alliances are formed he who delights to be the chief object of resentment is left solitary, but he who is late to make a move has support and he who keeps resentment at a distance acts at the proper time. That is why when the sage does anything he is sure to rely on what the situation requires and makes it his aim to being at the proper time. Reliance on what the situation requires is the guiding principle in all things and action at the proper times is the leading principle in all affairs. Therefore there are few who without relying on what the situation requires and in opposition to the circumstances of the time are able to carry his business to completion.⁵

However, in the works of Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty emerged a new competing view that the world was, in fact, structured and regulated by the ‘propensity of principle.’ For instance, Zhu Xi, while referring to both the propensity of times and that of principle, argued for the primacy of the latter. He wrote in *Si shu huo wen* (四書或問: Questions and Answers on the Four Books) that

曰天下之理其本有正而無邪其始有順而無逆故天下之勢正而順者常重而無待於外邪而逆者常輕而不得不資諸人此理勢之必然也

(All principle (*li*) under heaven is based on what is correct and without deviance. It begins in what flows and is without blockage. Therefore, in regard to all propensity under heaven, that which is correct and fluid is always heavy and need not rely on anything external; that which is deviant and runs in opposition is always light and must rely on assistance from others. This is the inevitable result of the propensity of principle (*lishi*).)⁶

If the ‘propensity of times’ explains historical changes, the ‘propensity of principle’ underpins a sense of continuity in the midst of historical changes, ruptures, and discontinuities. It implies the existence of the constant, absolute, and transcendental principle that ultimately regulates changes. In an instance of historical change wherein continuity cannot be clearly delineated, the ‘propensity of principle’ becomes “a kind of internal, essential process and state for and of the lifeworld.”⁷

This proposition of *ri/li* (理: principle) subsequently spawned a wide array of intellectual engagements and interpretations. It is certainly beyond my present means to offer a sustained reading of the vast amount of available literature. At least, for my concern here for the *ri*-knowledge structuration, I shall emphasise two implications. First, this new predilection towards the ‘propensity of principle’ foregrounded the well-known dualism of Neo-Confucian thought: the dualism between *ri* and *ki* (氣: material force, *qi* in Chinese), which a famous sentence in *Xi ci I* (繫辭上: The Great Treatise I) summarised as “what is above (*ri*) is called the Way, and what is

⁴ Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 74.

⁵ For this translation, see *Records of the Warring State*, Bramwell Seaton Bonsall (trans.), Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Libraries, 2005: 87.

⁶ The original text is accessible at <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=659337>. The English translation is borrowed from Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 75.

⁷ Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 76.

below (*ki*) is called a device.”⁸ Here, *ri* is defined as the principle immanent in all things. It determines and regulates the ontological unfolding of a thing and manifests itself in each and everything as *ki* (as what a thing *is*). Simultaneously, because it is the ultimate cause of creation and change, *ri* is also the essence (體) of a thing, representing the Way (道) of the thing (as what a thing *must be*). In contrast, *ki*, that is, the phenomenological manifestation of *ri*, is understood as a tangible effect (用) of the essence and, therefore, a device (器) for *ri* to manifest itself. To this end, *ri* and *ki* are co-constitutive. But the general tendency of Neo-Confucianism is to ascribe certain primacy to the former, arguing that *ri* is not merely the dictate of tangible things but also intimately intertwined with moral virtues and an ideal way of being and becoming (what man *must do and be*), underpinning the archetypal mode of social existence and governing. That the pursuit of *ri*, *kyūri* (窮理), becomes, for this reason, the primary objective of Neo-Confucian learning is the second implication I want to emphasise. The idea is that to learn was essentially to grasp the principle, *ri*, through inquiries into various functions of things manifested as *ki*, hence various manifestations of *ri*. Think, for instance, phrases such as ‘*ju jing qiong li*’ (居敬窮理: to remain conscious and calm in order to arrive at the principle), ‘*gewu qiong li*’ (格物窮理: to investigate things in order to pursue the principle), and ‘*gewu zhizhi*’ (格物致知: to investigate things and to extend knowledge). All illustrate the centrality of *ri* in learning, expressing a vested interest in grasping the fundamental principle of all things. The upshot is that, with the new predilection towards the ‘propensity of principle,’ knowledge is equated to the comprehension of *ri*, and to attain knowledge becomes tantamount to expanding one’s grasp of *ri* through inquiries into its various manifestations observable as *ki*.

The introduction and subsequent unfolding of (Neo-)Confucianism in Japan is a complex story, far more complex than the likes of Inoue Tetsujirō and Maruyama Masao have led us to believe. This will be dealt with in the following chapters. But, at this juncture, let us follow a common trope shared among various strands of (Neo-)Confucianism that emerged in Japan during the Tokugawa periods: the tendency to imbricate knowledge with *ri* based on the presumed integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth.

Japanese (Neo-)Confucians’ emphasis on the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth was, in part, an attestation of the general Confucian doctrine of learning centred around textual immersion. It was also, in part, a critique of Buddhist’s insistence on words as inherently empty. Thus, in the preface to his rendition of Chen Beixi’s (1159-1223) *Xingli ziyi* (性理字義: The Meaning of Neo-Confucian Terms, 1659), Hayashi Razan posed a rhetorical question. “The mind of the sages and the worthies are manifest in their words; their words are found in their writings. Unless one understands the meanings of their words, how can one comprehend their minds?”⁹ He then went on to suggest that only through a thorough emersion in the writings of the sages could one arrive at the enlightened status of being.

⁸ The original text reads “形而上者謂之道、形而下者謂之器”. The text of *Xi ci I* is accessible online at <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/zh> (21.01.2022). While the term ‘形而上学’ in today’s Japanese and Chinese philosophical vernacular encompasses Aristotle’s *Metaphysika*, the very term derives indeed from the Neo-Confucian tradition. Here, we also see the inversion of the relationship between signifier and signification. For Confucian understanding of ‘what is above’ (形而上) and ‘what is below’ (形而下), see Yasuo Yuasa, *Overcoming Modernity: Synchronicity and Image-Thinking*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008: 51-53.

⁹ The original text reads, “聖賢之心見於言其言見於書若不知字義何以明之故雖聖賢未掌麈之謂枚舉而示之.” See Hayashi Razan, *Seiri jigi genkai 1-kan* 性理字義諺解 1 卷 (*Vernacular Explanation of the Meaning of Neo-*

日横看堅看左右逢源分見合見始終貫通竟歸一理總是渾然書興我二者可謂善讀豈翹此書而已哉讀他經亦然問者

(One should read the classics horizontally! Read them vertically! Read them from the left and from the right! Comprehend their source! Analyse them and synthesise them until you thoroughly penetrate them from the beginning until the end. Ultimately, you will understand that everything in the sages' writings culminates in a unified grasp of 'principle.' When you realise a mystical unity with the sage's writings, one in which the self and those texts are nondual, you will have read them well!)¹⁰

Hayashi was hardly alone in his challenge to the nominalist insistence of the Buddhist tradition. Against Buddhist's assertion of the emptiness of words and the insignificance of meaning and truth, Itō Jinsai maintained that words were indeed meaningful and that correct meaning could be attainable through a systematic analysis of terms central to the Confucian teaching, such as *ri*, *michi* (道: way), *sei* (性: quality/nature), and *gaku* (学: learning).¹¹ In a similar vein, Ogyū Sorai pointed to the ability of language to refer to realities, arguing that the words of the sages were precisely for people to make sense of the immanent workings of the world and to instruct them to attain the ideal mode of being *a priori* determined by *ri*.¹²

Especially pronounced in such an emphasis on the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth was the idea that *ri* was all at once the object of learning and the unifying principle of the Confucian regime of truth and that *ri* was graspable only through an investigation into its tangible manifestation. Hayashi, thus, wrote the following.

道ト理トハ是一事ノ物ナリ然レトモ折テ二字トナス分別アルヘシ道ハ人ノ通行スル上ニテ此字ヲ立ツ理ト對シテ云フトキハ道ノ字ハ寛ク理ノ字ハ実ナリカタク定テカワラサル意アリ故ニ古今通行スルハ道ナリ古今カワラサルハ理ナリ理ハ形ナシ如何ノ見得センヤ只是事事物物ノ上一個当然ノ則是理ナリ則ハ準則法則ナリ此確定不易ノ意アリ

(The terms 'way' and 'principle' are one. But why are there two words that designate the same thing? 'Way' suggests a path of man towards what he must be. While 'way' is not fixed, 'principle' is stable and unchanging. 'Way' is that which moves us from the past to the present; 'Principle' is that which remains unaffected by time and intangible. But it is 'principle' that dictates why things are what they are. To this end, 'principle' is the constant order of all things.)¹³

Following Zhu Xi's rendering of *ri* as simultaneously representing the way, Hayashi understood *ri* as that which referred to the immanent and permanent order of things. It determined and regulated

Confucius Terms, Vol. 1), Kyoto: Arakawa Shirōzaemon, 1659: 1-2. The translation is borrowed from James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011: 305.

¹⁰ Hayashi, *Seiri jigi genkai Vol. 1*, 14. The English translation is borrowed from Heisig et al., *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 305-306.

¹¹ Itō Jinsai, *Gomō jigi 語孟字義 (The Meanings of Terms in the Analects and Mencius)*, 1705 [1683].

¹² Ogyū Sorai, *Benmei 弁名 (Clarification of Confucian Concepts)*, 1789 [n.d.].

¹³ Hayashi Razan, *Seiri jigi genkai 5-kan 性理字義諺解 5 卷 (Vernacular Explanation of the Meaning of Neo-Confucius Terms, Vol. 5)*, Kyoto: Arakawa Shirōzaemon, 1659: 43.

all particularities of what things were in actuality (*is*) and, therefore, by extension, what things should be in their ideal (*must be*). Hayashi also rehearsed Zhu Xi's synthesis of *ri* and *ki*, arguing that they were not merely co-constitutive but one and the same thing. *Ri* does not exist outside *ki*.

命ノ字ニ二義アリ理ヲ以テ云コトアリ氣ヲ以テ云コトアリ其ノ真実ハ理ハ氣ノ外ニアラス [...] 理ヲ以テ云フトイヘトモ本ヨリ氣ヲ離ルルヘカラス氣ノ上ニツイテコノ氣を雜ヘサルモノヲサシ [...]

(The term 'decree' has two meanings: one is designated as 'principle' and the other as 'material force.' This means that principle does not exist outside material force [...] While the principle is the fundamental basis, we cannot separate it from material force insofar as the former dictates how the latter manifests itself [...])¹⁴

Ri and *ki* are one and the same, because *ki* is what moves *ri* that is immanent and permanent, and because *ri* is what determines the orientation and order within *ki*. Thus, Hayashi concluded that if there was no *ri*, then there was no *ki*, and vice versa.

There were many issues about which (Neo-)Confucian scholars of the Tokugawa period genuinely disagreed. Are *ri* and *ki* truly co-constitutive as Hayashi and Kaibara presume? Does *ri* is something that merely dwells within *ki* as Itō suggests? Is it even possible to claim that *ri* is a concept exclusive of the (Neo-)Confucian tradition when, as Ogyū points out, the influence of Daoist and Buddhist discourses is obvious? Even those Neo-Confucian scholars, including Hayashi and Kaibara, were not necessarily faithful slaves of Zhu Xi, as Inoue Tetsujirō would otherwise claim. Hayashi expressed his scepticism towards the viability of Zhu Xi's synthesis of *ri* and *ki*. Kaibara also became increasingly discontent, especially towards the end of his life, with Zhu Xi's propositions. These issues are certainly worth exploring, and the following chapters will return to them. But the inference I shall emphasise at this juncture is the following: whenever we find those (Neo-)Confucian scholars disagree with each other about a series of issues, we also know that, in fact, they agree about some fundamentals. Without enough common ground, they cannot even dispute specifics. Here, the common ground is the (Neo-)Confucian concern for the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth. This integrity determines the remit of *ri*, the dictate of all things and the object of learning processes. It also determines the relationship between *ri* and *ki*, the way in which *ri* manifests itself and the locus in which man can gain access to knowledge, thus, to *ri*.

§

2.3. (Neo-)Confucian Restructuration of Knowledge

For their concern about knowledge, (Neo-)Confucian scholars of the Tokugawa period agree on two general assumptions. Knowledge is conceived as a *ri*-knowledge structuration. The point is not what *ri* actually is. There is no consensus on this. But the point is that *ri*, however one may define it, is knowledge, and attaining knowledge is essentially grasping *ri*, which manifests itself

¹⁴ Hayashi, *Seiri jigū genkkai I-kan*, 31.

as *ki*. This assumption about the entanglement between *ri* and *ki*, between the dictate and the manifestation, prefigures two possible modes of grasping *ri*: directly addressing the absolute and transcendental principle of all things or observing a multitude of manifestations of the principle to eventually grasp it. When modern Western knowledge became increasingly prevalent among political and intellectual ranks, these two general assumptions became a kind of scaffolding for (Neo-)Confucian scholars to make sense of modern Western knowledge, to integrate it into the Confucian regime of truth, and ultimately to reify the predominance of the (Neo-)Confucian tradition.

Especially emblematic in this regard are the works of Nakamura Masanao and Sakatani Rourou. The point of departure for both of them is the structural distinction between *ri* and *ki* proposed in *The Great Treatise I* – the distinction between *ri* as ‘what is above’ (形而上) and *ki* as ‘what is below’ (形而下).

乾坤其易之綱邪？乾坤成列、而易立乎其中矣。乾坤毀、則无以見易、易不可見、則乾坤或几乎息矣。是故、形而上者謂之道、形而下者謂之器。化而裁之謂之變、推而行之謂之通、舉而錯之天下之民、謂之事業。

(May we not say that the *yang* and *yin* [or the undivided and divided lines] are the secret and substance of the Yi? The *yang* and *yin* being established in their several places, the system of changes was thereby constituted. If *yang* and *yin* were taken away, there would be no means of seeing that system; and if that system were not seen, *yang* and *yin* would almost cease to act. Hence that which is antecedent to the material form exists as an ideal method, and that which is subsequent to the material form exists as a definite thing. Transformation and shaping are what we call change; carrying this out and operating with it is what we call generalising the method; taking the result and setting it forth for all the people under heaven is the business of life.)¹⁵

Nakamura and Sakatani understand that modern Western knowledge does not directly address the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. But this does not deter them from arguing for the certain relevance of modern Western knowledge. The context of their intellectual existence, marked by increasingly systematic and institutionalised engagement with this knowledge, enables them to perceive it as something of utility and instrumentality. They are concerned less about reiterating the familiar polemical opposition between modern Western knowledge and Confucianism than about seeking an alternative way of mapping the former within the established Confucian epistemic framework.¹⁶ Based on the distinction between ‘that which is antecedent to the material form’ and ‘that which is subsequent to the material form,’ between ‘an ideal method’ and ‘a definite thing,’ Nakamura and Sakatani view modern Western knowledge as that which addresses ‘a definite thing.’ They thus invite an idea that modern Western knowledge belongs to the realm of ‘what is below’ rather than to the realm of ‘what is above.’

¹⁵ The text is available at: <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/ens> (13.02.2022). The translation is modified from James Legge’s version.

¹⁶ Their sustained engagement with modern Western knowledge continued well into the 1870s and 1880s through their discussions with the members of Meirokusha (明六社: Meiji Six Society) established in 1872 to promote and popularise some elements of Western philosophy, ethics, and education.

2.3.1. Being True to the Confucian Teaching

Nakamura, for instance, describes modern Western knowledge as technical and practical. But this nature of modern Western knowledge gives no basis for one to regard it as irrelevant. Such knowledge of practical utility can, in fact, underpin one's effort to arrive at moral and ethical conclusions and to grasp the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. Practical knowledge can be instrumentalised for a much more significant purpose in one's life, that is, for pursuing the way towards an ideal being.

夫れ洋学なる者は技芸たるのみ、猶ほ之れ稼圃を治むるが如きの類なり。使し其れ少しく取る可きものあらば、亦た聖人の棄てざる所なり。蓋し道の事物に在るは、猶ほ水の地に在るがごとし。[...] 小技曲芸も孰ぞ吾が道の中の一物に非ざらん。

(Western learning is all about acquiring technical and practical knowledge. This is analogous to cultivating a field. Even if one could harvest only so much, the sages would never abandon the field. Just as the soil of the field contains water, things embody the Way. [...] All the technical and practical knowledge is part and parcel of the Way I pursue.)¹⁷

Acquiring technical and practical knowledge is a constitutive part of one's undertaking to pursue the way that is dictated by the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. Upon this premise, Nakamura goes on to define six fields of practical knowledge that emerged initially in the Western intellectual tradition, and that can be incorporated into one's pursuit of the principle: astronomy, geography, mathematics, engineering, navigation, and medicine.¹⁸

Here lies the idea that modern Western knowledge is essentially knowledge about *ki*. It concerns not what *ri*, the principle of all things, actually is but how this principle manifests itself as the nature of a thing. To engage with modern Western knowledge is, in a term familiar to us, to inductively arrive at the principle. Thus, Nakamura declares: "Modern Western knowledge is within the remit of the Way I pursue."¹⁹ And, here also lies the idea that the Way, the ideal mode of being and becoming, or else a set of moral and ethical virtues, is regulated by the principle that transcends spatial and temporal boundaries of that which otherwise mark particularities of culture, customs, and social existence.

天地ノ覆載スル所、人物ノ蕃生スル所、邦各俗有リ、民各風ヲ成ス、百爾ノ制度、同ジカラザル者有リ、而シテ父子君臣夫婦昆弟朋友ノ倫ニ至リテハ、則チ未ダ嘗テ同ジカラザルモノアラザルナリ

(In the realm under Heaven, where human lives unfold, there are many nations. Every nation has its own customs. Hundreds of institutions exist, but none are the same. Yet, moral and ethical virtues that define the relationship between the father and the son, between the

¹⁷ Nakamura Masanao, "Yōgakuron" 洋学論 ("On Western Knowledge"), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taikēi 10-kan: Gakumon to chishikijin* 日本近代思想体系第 10 卷 学問と知識人 (*Japanese Modern Thought, Vol. 10: Scholarships and Intellectuals*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1854]: 3 [3-6].

¹⁸ The original text reads as follows. "蓋し洋夷の長ずる所の者六あり。曰く天文、曰く地理、曰く算数、曰く器械、曰く航海、曰く医術、是の六者は精緻工妙にして、天に出で地を出で、漢土の及ばざる所なりと。" Ibid., 3.

¹⁹ Ibid. The original text reads, "洋学なる者、吾が道の外す能はざる所なり。"

sovereign and the subject, between the husband and the wife, between brothers, and between friends – these virtues are universal.)²⁰

The assumption here is tautological. Practical knowledge of the West is knowledge about variegated manifestations of the absolute and transcendental principle of all things, the existence of which is evident, for Nakamura, in the fact that moral and ethical virtues, themselves dictated by the principle, do not know temporal and spatial boundaries. For this reason, dedicating oneself to the acquisition of modern Western knowledge does not constitute the infringement of the Confucian way of being and becoming. The pursuit of modern Western knowledge, in fact, underpins the pursuit of virtues, hence the pursuit of the principle.

All this sounds as if Nakamura was endorsing the mantra of *wakon yōsai* (和魂洋才: Japanese spirit, Western techniques), of which many of the Meiji political and intellectual ranks remained rather cautious. As discussed in the previous chapter, the likes of Kido Takayoshi, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and Fukuoka Takachika suspected that modern Western knowledge was sustained by a certain spiritual component, which could neither be bought nor sold. They suspected that the acquisition of modern Western knowledge could engender the crisis of the ‘Japanese’ spirit – whatever it may be and assuming that such exists – and thus could result in Japan becoming a mere mimicry of the West. Then, this begs a question. On what ground did Nakamura justify the acquisition of modern Western knowledge without internalising its spirit? How could it be possible to integrate modern Western knowledge into the Confucian regime of truth?

Nakamura offers twofold reasoning. First, he asserts that the contents of a given knowledge tradition – concepts, theories, and institutions – are not commodities exclusive to the spatio-temporal location from which the said knowledge tradition has emerged. This is because *ri*, the absolute and transcendental principle of all things, is universal, and because variegated historical and cultural processes around the world, which are reflected in the formation of various knowledge traditions, are ultimately dictated by that principle. The contents of a knowledge tradition are thus transferable. And for Nakamura, human history is the very proof of this assertion. While observing the developments of some notable knowledge traditions, he argues that what is principally at work for the formation of these traditions is a historical process through which various discoveries and knowledge claims produced elsewhere are integrated into a new body of knowledge. According to Nakamura, the genealogy of modern Western knowledge, in fact, cuts across the spatial and temporal boundaries of the modern West. It is an accumulative process of appropriating contents of other knowledge traditions, such as ancient Egyptian astronomy and Judeo-Christian teleological reasoning.²¹ As Nakamura points out, a similar process is also observable in Asia. He

²⁰ Nakamura Masanao, “Morison inpu shinōjo” 穆理宋韻府鈔叙 (“On Robert Morrison’s Dictionary”), in *Ukei Bunshū*, 2-kan 宇敬文集 2 卷 (*Writings of Nakamura Ukei*, Vol. 2), Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1903 [1855]: 82 [82-84].

²¹ Nakamura, “Yōgakuron,” 4. This reference to Judeo-Christian teleological reasoning is an interesting one. While Nakamura maintains that modern Western knowledge does not directly address the absolute and transcendental principle, this reference nonetheless indicates his view that modern Western knowledge inherently offers a way of addressing, though indirectly, the question of the divine, the ineffable, the intangible. Perhaps Nakamura sees a certain affinity between (Neo-)Confucian tradition and modern Western knowledge, which explains his decision to convert to Christianity in 1874. This has an immediate repercussion for our reading of Nakamura’s corpus. Against Ōkubo Toshiaki and Matsumoto Sannosuke’s assessment, I am rather hesitant to classify his corpus as a representative of the discursive strategy of “*Tōyō dōtoku, seiyō geijutsu*” (東洋道德、西洋芸術: Eastern morality, Western arts). See Ōkubo Toshiaki, “Nakamura Keiu no shoki yōgaku-shisō to ‘Saigoku risshi-hen’ no yakujutsu oyobi kankō ni tsuite: jakkan no shin-shiryō no shōkai to sono kenshō” 中村敬宇の初期洋学思想と『西国立志編』の訳述および刊行

maintains that the sustained success of the Qin dynasty was largely due to its disposition and willingness to acquire practical and technological knowledge of Yan, Zhao, Han, and Wei. Further still, he asserts that the process of knowledge acquisition also transcends geographical and imaginary boundaries between the East and the West. Look at those Westerners, he proclaims, who are so keen to learn Chinese classics today – they are the very evidence that one can indeed learn that which hitherto so foreign to oneself without endangering the essence of one's being.²²

Second, Nakamura posits that engaging with modern Western knowledge is, in fact, being true to Confucian teaching. This is not to say that one should accept this foreign knowledge tradition wholeheartedly and blindly. Nor does it mean to have recourse to an evaluation of this knowledge tradition as better or as more progressive. To be truly Confucian, one must cultivate one's expertise of the foreign. Engaging with modern Western knowledge thus means anatomising it. And anatomising modern Western knowledge is part and parcel of Confucian learning. The reality, however, of Confucian scholarship is far removed from what Nakamura thinks it should be. He expresses his displeasure in his 1854 essay on education.

当今ノ儒生率ネ多クハ外蕃ヲ侮リ、漫リニ度外ニ置ク、是ヲ以テ彼ノ形勢ニ於ケル塹壕トシテ霧ヲ隔ツルガ如シ、一タビ洋文ヲ読ム者ニ遇ヘバ、臂ヲ攘ツテ怒リ、曰ク、彼ハ外夷ヲ慕フ者ナリト、殊ニ天地人三才ニ通ズル之ヲ儒ト謂フヲ知ラズ、外蕃ノ事ヲ諳ンジ、外蕃ノ情ヲ審カニス、皆学者分内ニ為スベキノ事ナリ

(Students of Confucianism underestimate the ability of barbarians, fallaciously assuming they are inconsequential. It is as if fog covers the trenches. When they meet those who read Western texts, they angrily condemn them as admirers of the barbarians. However, such an attitude is, in fact, an attestation that those students have failed to understand the essence of Confucian teaching – one must grapple with three basic components of the world: heaven, earth, and humans. Expanding one's knowledge about affairs and characters of foreign lands is part and parcel of Confucian scholarships.)²³

Clearly, Nakamura thinks that merely immersing oneself in Confucian texts and having recourse to the correct meanings of the words of the sages is not enough. As he implies, it is important to recognise that there is something more to grapple with and anatomise outside the Confucian canon. All the more so when the Western influence is no longer inconsequential. Here, Nakamura's argument verges on the earlier Confucian proclivity: the propensity of times, which encourages one to understand the (in)efficacy of actions and decisions in terms of their timeliness. He thus proposes that given the increasing influence of the West, the situation requires one to aptly

について: 若干の新資料の紹介とその検証 (“Nakamura Keiu's Western Learning and His Translation and Publication of ‘Self Help’”), *Shien*, 26:2-3, 1966: 67-92; Matsumoto Sannosuke, “Atarashii gakumon no keisei to chishikijin: Sakatani Shiroshi, Nakamura Ukei, Fukuzawa Yukichi o chūshin ni” 新しい学問の形成と知識人: 阪谷素、中村宇敬、福沢諭吉を中心に (“Development of a New Scholarship and Intellectuals: Sakatani Shiroshi, Nakamura Ukei, and Fukuzawa Yukichi”), in Matsumoto and Yamamuro (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikei*, 10, 424-464.

²² Nakamura, “Yōgakuron,” 4-5.

²³ Nakamura Masanao, “Shingaku seisaku” 振学政策 (“On Promoting Education” 1854), quoted in Matsumoto, “Atarashii gakumon no keisei to chishikijin,” 438.

anatomise the West, including its knowledge tradition. Engaging with modern Western knowledge is indeed timely, and knowing its timeliness is indeed Confucian.²⁴

Nakamura's effort to forge a space for modern Western knowledge within the (Neo-)Confucian regime of truth has some obvious implications. Modern Western knowledge is no longer in opposition to the (Neo-)Confucian worldview. It is, in fact, a knowledge tradition that addresses *ki*, manifold manifestations of *ri*, the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. Thus, modern Western knowledge and (Neo-)Confucianism are integral to one another. Both now share the same motivation – to arrive at a concrete understanding of the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. This integrity of two knowledge traditions, of (Neo-)Confucianism that concerns *ri* and modern Western knowledge that addresses *ki*, in turn tautologically vindicates the dualism of *ri* and *ki*, one of the foundational claims of (Neo-)Confucianism. More profoundly, this co-constitutive relationship between (Neo-)Confucianism and modern Western knowledge forged through the valorisation of *ri-ki* dualism enables Nakamura to run together claims of abstraction and claims of reality. One sustained critique of (Neo-)Confucianism is that, because of its attention to the transcendental, this tradition is unable to explain what the world actually is.²⁵ Now that modern Western knowledge is integrated into the (Neo-)Confucian regime of truth as that which provides explanations for the actual workings of the world, (Neo-)Confucianism has been reconstituted, in Nakamura's mind, as a knowledge tradition that has recourse all at once to the abstract (*ri*) and the reality (*ki*).

2.3.2. Instrumentalising Modern Western Knowledge

Sakatani Rouro offers a far more pronounced exposition of why modern Western knowledge participates in the realm of *ki* and, ultimately, the (Neo-)Confucian regime of truth. In doing so, he not only reiterates the dualism of *ri* and *ki* but also asserts, in a manner quintessentially Neo-Confucian, the primacy of *ri* over *ki*.

天地ノ間ハ、理ト氣ノニツデ持シモノ也。理ハ氣ノ本トナリテ、氣ヲ立テ、氣ハ理ノ臣トナリテ、理ヲ輔ク。理ハ教トナリテ、人ノ道ヲ司ドリ、氣ハ人ノ用トナリテ、道ノハタラキヲ為ス。理ハ一ツ而已、氣ハ千ニモ万ニモ分ル [...] 然シ氣ハ理ノ如ク定リシモノデナシ。[...] 理ノ教ヲ槌ニ立テネバナラス也。

(That which is between Heaven and Earth is sustained by the principle and material force. The principle is the source of material force; material source, being subjected to the principle, carries the principle. The principle becomes our guide, governing the Way of man.

²⁴ This claim is especially pertinent in his short text about the limitation of Confucianism, written sometime between 1854 and 1859. See Nakamura Masanao, “Rongaku heiso” 論学弊疏 (“On the Limitation of Our Tradition”), in *Keiu Bunshū I-kan* 字敬文集 1 卷 (*Works of Nakamura Keiu, Vol. 1*), Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1903 [1853]: 1-7.

²⁵ For over a century, this had been the primary line of argument that scholars of Rangaku and Yōgaku lodged against (Neo-)Confucianism. For example, in 1776, Sugita Genpaku (1733-1817) criticised (Neo-)Confucianism as lacking any consideration of laws and regularities of the world. In a similar vein, Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757-1827) argued in 1816 that even if one accepted the (Neo-)Confucian preoccupation with the absolute and transcendental principle, its exposition was sloppy at best. See Sugita Genpaku, “Kyōi no gen” 狂医之言 (“Notes of a Mad Doctor”), in Numata Jirō, Matumura Akira, and Satō Shōsuke (eds.), *Nihon shisō taikēi, 64-kan* 日本思想体系 64 卷 (*Japanese Intellectual Thoughts, Vol. 64*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1976 [1776]: 234; Ōtsuki Gentaku, *Ranyaku teikō* 蘭訳梯航 (*In Pursuit of Western Knowledge*), 1816: 3.

Material force becomes a function, regulating the Way of man. The principle is one; material force is manifold [...] not as stable as the principle. [...] We must understand, with certainty, what the principle really is.)²⁶

Ever since Zhu Xhi's interpretation of the Confucian canon, the duality of *ri* and *ki* and the primacy of the former have been the foundational premises of the Neo-Confucian worldview. Sakatani has no intention of diverging from these premises. *Ri* and *ki* are inseparable: *ri* grounds *ki* and enables *ki* to manifest itself, while *ki* assists *ri* in its manifold manifestations. *Ri* is pre-eminent because, as the stable principle, it threads the universe with a certain sense of totality. Thus, everything that one seeks to know leads one to *ri*, and everything that one seeks to do embodies *ri*.

These premises lay the ground for Sakatani to integrate modern Western knowledge into the (Neo-)Confucian structure of knowledge while reasserting (Neo-)Confucianism as the ultimate dictum to have recourse to the principle of all things. As he maintains,

今ノ洋学ハ、氣ヲ究ムル学、理ノ輔ニ用ル道具ユヘ、上ヨリ御許ニナリ、君父ニ事ル道具ニ用ユルコトナリ

(Western learning is essentially a scholarship to investigate material force that assists the principle to manifest itself in all things. This is why the sovereign has authorised Western learning as an instrument for him to pursue the virtuous way of being as one who governs.)²⁷

Sakatani thinks that modern Western knowledge occupies the realm of 'what is below,' offering an understanding of the ways in which the principle regulates each and everything in the world. It ultimately serves to confirm the immanent effect of the principle. In so claiming, Sakatani here offers a justification for the proliferation of Western learning among the governing and intellectual ranks of the Tokugawa shogunate. Modern Western knowledge is not merely knowledge of utility that can be instrumentalised, as the shogunate has instrumentalised it, for improving existing calendrical knowledge, astronomical expertise, medical practices, and agricultural production. Insofar as modern Western knowledge investigates different manifestations of *ri*, and insofar as grappling *ri* is the ultimate virtue, modern Western knowledge is, in Sakatani's enunciation, relinked to the Confucian cosmological order in which humans are a constitutive part and becomes individual virtue. Hence, something that those in power must actively pursue.

Sakatani goes even further. He asserts that the increasing purchase of modern Western knowledge is proof that (Neo-)Confucianism indeed is the pre-eminent knowledge tradition. How could a knowledge tradition about *ki* (modern Western knowledge) flourish without a knowledge tradition about *ri* (Confucianism) that provides a footing for the former?²⁸ The point is not about the plausibility of such an assertion but about its discursive function to justify that the ultimate dictum of learning resides in the (Neo-)Confucian tradition and that all the other knowledge traditions rely on that dictum.

²⁶ Sakatani Rouro, "Kajukusei ni shimesu kokoroesho" 家塾生ニ示ス心得書 ("Instruction for My Students"), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikai 10-kan: Gakumon to chishikijin* 日本近代思想体系第 10 巻 学問と知識人 (*Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1862]: 7 [7-13].

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 8. The original text reads, "理ガナクテ、氣学ガ立モノデナシ。今太平ノ沢ニ浴シ、ワルク云ナガラモ、洋学ノデキルハ、我国ノ理立ヲルユヘナリ。"

孔夫子ノ学徳ハ未開ノ世ニ当リ、而シテ又支那ニ局セリ。然ルニ欧米人ノ公平ナル、之ヲ賞シテ置カズ。其経書ハ大抵之ヲ翻訳刻布セリ。然レハ則欧米聖賢、開物成務ノ学業ハ孔夫子ノ公平ナル学徳ニ於テ今世ニ生ゼシメバ、必ズ賛嘆シテ、我開物成務ノ真理ヲ得フモノト為サン。孔夫子ト欧米聖賢ノ異ナル者、曰ク、文字、曰ク、言語、曰ク、風習、曰ク、古今時世ノ殊別ナル者ノミ。其ノ帰ヲ要スル、豈ニ毫髪ノ異ナルアランヤ。均シク斯人ナリ、斯道ナリ。[...] 豈又異ナルベキノ理アランヤ

(From the uncivilised world emerged the teachings and virtues of Confucius. It was exclusively Chinese in their origin. But look at how impartial the Westerners are towards Confucian thought! We shall praise them for their fair judgement. They have translated most of the Confucian canon into their languages. Those especially astute among them recognise that their inquiries into things that make up the world have, in fact, been brought to life by the well-sounded teachings and virtues of Confucius. Thus, they speak highly of Confucianism and treat it as that which sustains their inquiries. Of course, each era has its own particularities and the ancient and the contemporary are not the same. There are differences between Confucius and well-learned men of the West. There are differences in letters, in languages, and in customs. But, ultimately, are we so different? All of us are human. All of us are pursuing the way. [...] There is no reason to assume otherwise.)²⁹

Sakatani's assertion is much more than a discursive strategy to re-establish the primacy of (Neo-)Confucianism vis-à-vis the increasing political and intellectual purchase of modern Western knowledge. It is his conviction that *ri* is ultimately one and the same across time and space. Scholars of (Neo-)Confucianism seek to have direct recourse to it. Scholars in the West seek to understand it inductively. Whichever knowledge tradition one subscribes to, all of us are seeking to grapple with the principle of all things. Therefore, when asserting that modern Western knowledge is integral to the (Neo-)Confucian regime of truth, Sakatani is simply stating what is obvious to him: modern Western knowledge and its inquiries into manifold manifestations of *ri* complement Neo-Confucianism, which offers a profound consideration of *ri* but which is said to be limited in its exploration of *ki*.³⁰

If this assertion derives primarily from Sakatani's intellectual concern, what follows is blatantly political.³¹ He goes on to make a point that (Neo-)Confucian scholars, especially 'Japanese' (Neo-)Confucian scholars, have an aptitude for comprehending the actual nature of modern Western knowledge: it is a knowledge tradition that engages with *ki* and thus belongs to the realm of 'what is below.' Accordingly, Japanese (Neo-)Confucian scholars have an aptitude for articulating a far more profound and holistic understanding of *ri*. Sakatani then concludes that "both Kangaku and Yōgaku" – knowledge traditions developed respectively in China and in the West – "become, if done by Japanese, what can be called 'Nihongaku'" (日本学: Japanese

²⁹ Sakatani Rourō, "Egi Takatō-shi beikokuiki ni tsuki okugen enzetsu" 江木高遠子米国行ニ付送言演説 ("Speech on the Occasion of Celebrating Egi Takatō's Departure to the United States"), *Shūshin-gakusha sōsetsu*, 4, 1880: 56-57.

³⁰ Sakatani, "Kajukusei ni shimesu kokoroesho," 9. The original text reads, "西洋ノ風土、全体氣ニ精ニテ理ニ暗キ、漢土ノ理ニ勝テ氣ニ疎ナルト同ジコトト見ヘタリ。"

³¹ For a brief survey of the politico-ideological nature of Sakatani's corpus, see Lee Saebom, "Shushi-gakusha Sakatani Shiroshi ni okeru 'ri' to tennō" 朱子学者阪谷素における「理」と天皇 ("The Concept of Ri and the Emperor in Sakatani Shiroshi's Neo-Confucian Thought"), *Japanese Journal of Political Thought*, 10, 2010: 458-489.

Learning).³² Here, we begin to see a familiar pattern of discursive address that later became prevalent during the early years of the Meiji period. The pattern I am referring to is one that seeks to integrate seeming oppositions into the whole while asserting national differences. Recall, for instance, the Meiji political debates about education, whereby the overall educational system was restructured into something in the service of the interest of the Japanese nation-state by simultaneously embodying moral education and knowledge education, the historico-cultural process of Japan and the universal process towards progress, the ethos of *kyōiku* and that of *gakumon*. Sakatani's insistence on 'Japanese' aptitude indicates a kind of consciousness, or at least the formation thereof, that, while the foundational principle of the world may be one and the same across time and space, and while *ri* remains the foundational qualification of valid and serious knowledge, the product and practice of arriving at that principle, hence knowledge, is undeniably local. Some knowers have a certain aptitude to have direct recourse to the principle, while others do not. And the difference between them manifests itself, as Sakatani seems to suggest, as the national difference.

§

2.4. The Structure of Modern Western Knowledge

The (Neo-)Confucian valorisation of *ri-ki* dualism was, of course, not the only option for integrating modern Western knowledge into the epistemic landscape of late 19th-century Japan. Those whom many historians consider avid learners of modern Western knowledge, such as Nishi Amane, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakae Chōmin (1848-1901), and Kikuchi Dairoku (1855-1917), had an entirely different proposition. And the difference primarily comes down to the questions of what *ri* actually is and how to warrant the existence of *ri* that is intangible and almost ethereal. (Neo-)Confucian scholars, such as Nakamura and Sakatani, explain that *ri* is the Way: it dictates all things that exist under the Heaven, their state of being and their process of becoming; its existence is warranted in the words of the sages and in its manifestation as material force; thus modern Western knowledge as knowledge about material force is integral to (Neo-)Confucianism that seeks to directly address *ri*. The likes of Nishi do not think that these two knowledge traditions are integral to one another. Why and how they dissent from their (Neo-)Confucian contemporaries are the questions for the moment.

The apposite point of departure is Nishi Amane's discussion in *Chisetsu* (知説: On Knowledge, 1874).³³ According to Nishi, there are three kinds of knowledge that are distinguishable from one

³² Sakatani, "Kajukusei ni shimesu kokoroesho," 10. The original sentence reads as follows: "漢学モ洋学モ、日本ノ者ガスレバ皆日本学ナリ。"

³³ Nishi is considered as the founding father of Western philosophical scholarship in Japan. See, for example, Gino K. Piovesana, "The Beginnings of Western Philosophy in Japan: Nishi Amane, 1829-1897," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 2:2, 1962: 295-306; Thomas R. H. Havens, *Nishi Amane and Modern Japanese Thought*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970; Hasunuma Keisuke, *Nishi Amane ni okeru tetsugaku no seiritsu: Kindai nihon ni okeru hō-tetsugaku no tame no echūdo* 西周における哲学の成立: 近代日本における法哲学のためのエチュード (*The Development of Philosophy in Nishi Amane's Thought: Étude for Jurisprudence in Modern Japan*), Kobe: Kōbe daigaku kenkyū sōsho kankōkai, 1987.

another in terms of scope and structure: *shōchi* (小知: ‘small’ knowledge), which he defines as a “common” and “banal” knowledge with little utility; *daichi* (大知: ‘broad’ knowledge), which he describes as that which “penetrates” into or has recourse to the intrinsic nature of certain things and thus has some degrees of utility in a given society, but that which cannot transcend the remit of that society within which it is produced and disseminated; and, *kekko-soshiki-no-chi* (結構組織の知: ‘well-structured’ knowledge) consisted of various intellectual achievements of the past and present, all of which are grounded on “the common foundation” and “structured” with “a sense of totality.”³⁴ For Nishi, it is this ‘well-structured’ knowledge that has transcendental, explanatory power over anything and everything.

Nishi goes on to argue that only Europeans have thus far managed to attain ‘well-structured’ knowledge. It is an achievement of neither one particular scholar nor a specific period in history. “Just as European civilisation cannot be credited to one individual, such as Alexander the Great, Caesar, or Napoleon,” modern Western knowledge “cannot be attributed to one scholar, such as Aristotle, Plato, Galileo, or Newton.” The intellectual achievement of contemporary Europe results from “unifying all available knowledge of the past and present.”³⁵ It is a product of a temporally very thick, accumulative process, with its lineage beginning with Greek philosophers and culminating with the early modern European scientists. Of course, Nishi is aware that knowledge production has never been an exclusively European affair. He lists some notable past intellectual developments elsewhere: China has long-established traditions of studies of medicine, astronomy, geography, politics and criminal law; Chaldea developed a distinctive scholarship on astronomy; Brahmin in ancient India established a tradition of logic before Aristotle; in Goshen emerged a set of legislative principles; and, Babylonians elaborated on a positional number system.³⁶ Each of these fields of knowledge, as Nishi acknowledges, reveals the nature of whatever object they are investigating. Yet, it is in Europe that those dispersed fields of knowledge have been structured and integrated into a tradition of knowledge that can claim all at once totality and universality. For this reason, Nishi thinks that modern Western knowledge is far more sophisticated than any other knowledge tradition, incomparable, for example, to Confucianism, which relies exclusively on the teachings of a handful of the sages produced in a specific period of time.³⁷

いわゆる學術なるもの、四大の州、往昔よりすでにあるにあらざるなし。然れども、これを今日欧州のいわゆる學術に比するに、あにただ霄壤のみならんや。けだしそのいわゆる學術の盛んなりとするものは、一学一術のその精緻をつくし、蘊奥をきわむるをいうにあらず。衆学諸術、相結構組織して、集めてもって大成するものをいうなり。

(Since time immemorial, the pursuit of knowledge has been a common feature across four great provinces of the world. And yet, in comparison to the knowledge of contemporary Europe, the difference is as big as heaven and earth. Deepening and expanding one’s knowledge in one particular field does not guarantee the predominance of a knowledge tradition. The prevalence of knowledge is based on structuring, organising, and integrating various fields into a whole.)³⁸

³⁴ Nishi, *Chisetus*, 203-205.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 206. These are Nishi’s observations, and their descriptive and historical accuracy may be contested.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

Nishi's chief lesson here is that modern Western knowledge is remarkably different from hitherto prevalent knowledge traditions, first, because it unifies all dispersed fields of knowledge through an accumulative process. It marks a contrast, also because, for its accumulative nature, the pursuit of knowledge is temporal progress, an obvious *idolum saeculi* of the modern West. There is no closure. There is always something more to know about the world, something more to refine as one's knowledge.³⁹

What is it that structures and integrates dispersed fields of knowledge into a unified whole? Or, to use Nishi's own terms, what is "*tōitsu-no-kan*" (統一の観: the principle of unity) that sustains modern Western knowledge with a sense of totality and universality?⁴⁰ These are the basic questions for Nishi and his contemporaries. Their answers, in turn, take two basic orientations. One treats these questions as fundamentally philosophical ones and seeks to define the principle of unity by anchoring it to the existing semantic field of the Japanese language. The other views these questions as the guiding questions for institutionalising knowledge and seeks to understand the principle of unity as represented by institutional categories and disciplinary propositions.

Philosophical reflections on the principle of unity take the form of translation as an epistemic exercise. Here, the term *ri* (理) functions as an operative signifier. Nishi maintains that the structured totality of modern Western knowledge is sustained by *ri* (理) – the fundamental and transcendental ground for one's thinking and reasoning, independent of historical, cultural, and social particularities.⁴¹ This is seemingly a simple semantic equation of the principle of unity of modern Western knowledge with *ri*. Yet, it involves a twofold translational practice. First, and most obviously, *ri* here is a borrowed term. It has been the prevalent concept for many existing knowledge traditions. As discussed above, in (Neo-)Confucianism, for instance, *ri* designates the absolute and transcendental principle that dictates why things are what they are and how things ought to be in their ideal. By expanding the semantic scope of *ri*, Nishi offers a way of engaging with the hitherto foreign knowledge tradition with a sense of linguistic familiarity. Yet, here lies a conundrum. Simply equating the principle of unity of modern Western knowledge to *ri* does not tell us much about what the principle actually is and how it may differ from *ri* that, for example, (Neo-)Confucians would define it. Nishi himself admits that

³⁹ Of course, we must approach Nishi's characterisation of Western knowledge with caution, as it is deeply entrenched in the autobiographical history of modern Western knowledge. For some critical reflections on this history, see, for instance, Gilbert G. Germain, *A Discourse on Disenchantment: Reflections on Politics and Technology*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993; Stefan Collini, "Postscript: Disciplines, Canons and Publicness: The History of the 'History of Political Thought' in Comparative Perspective," in Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk (eds.), *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001: 280-302; Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *On Historicizing Epistemology: An Essay*, David Fernbach (trans.), Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010; Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015.

⁴⁰ Nishi Amane, "Shōhaku sakki" 尚白筭記 ("Reading Notes of an Unaccomplished Man"), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū 1-kan* 西周全集 1 卷 (*Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1*), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960 [1882]: 165 [165-172].

⁴¹ Ibid., 168-169. Fukuzawa Yukichi also makes a similar observation in his address at the Literary Society, See Fukuzawa Yukichi, "Bungaku kaiin ni tsugu" 文学会員ニ告グ ("To the Member of the Literary Society"), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taikō 10-kan: Gakumon to chishikijin* 日本近代思想体系第 10 卷 学問と知識人 (*Japanese Modern Thought, Vol. 10: Scholarships and Intellectuals*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1883]: 205 [205-210]. It is important to note that their expositions of *ri* are not completely uniform. The discrepancy will be discussed further later in this chapter.

吾人固より理の一端を知れとも其全體を知る事能はざる事有り [...] 一定必然の者たりと云ふ一端は知れとも其全體は知るに由無き也

(We can partially know what the principle of unity is, but grasping it in its entirety is out of our reach. [...] We know in part that the principle of unity is stable and inevitable, and yet we do not know it as a matter of fact or its existence.)⁴²

Nishi seeks to overcome this conundrum with the second translational strategy, which is to establish semantic equivalence between *ri* and other existing Japanese terms. He explains that *ri* that grounds all knowledge and unifies all fields of knowledge in the Western intellectual tradition is synonymous with three Japanese terms: *kotowari* (事分), a thinking faculty to separate the whole into parts, hence to grasp all at once the entirety of the world and specificities of things that make up the world; *kotowari* (言分), a linguistic calibre to appreciate what has been said, hence to correctly understand the meaning of every word that comprises a statement and the essence of that said statement; and, *hazu* (筈), a cognitive capacity to surmise what a thing ‘ought to be’ rather than simply ‘be,’ hence to deploy logical reasoning with a degree of abstraction.⁴³

Such a signification of *ri* runs counter to the then-prevalent (Neo-)Confucian signification. In the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, *ri* is defined as that which dictates everything under the heaven, of which humans have a small part. Thus, *ri* is also the principle of individual virtue dictating the way of being and becoming. To know, then, is to grasp *ri*. And, to grasp *ri* is to become virtuous. In Nishi’s philosophical rendering through translation, *ri* is defined as the ground for thinking and reasoning. It is something that ultimately resides within the knower as a thinking faculty, as linguistic calibre, and as a cognitive capacity. *Ri* is not the principle of unity of the world as Confucians would define it, but the principle of unity in thinking and reasoning – the unity of conjecture and refutation.

Nishi then goes on to note that, when applied to each of those dispersed fields of knowledge, *ri* prescribes that all phenomena are subjected to invariable laws of nature (*hazu*) and that knowledge consists of what is logically induced as regularities (*kotowari*). Thus, he summarises,

欧州近来の習にては、理を二つに分けたり、例すれば英語の「レーズン」「ラウ・オフ・ネチュール」の如し、[...] 汎用にて道理と訳し、局用にて理性と訳す、此理性とは人性に具はる是非辨別の本源 [...] 然て一方の「ネチュール・ラウ」と云ふは理法と訳す、直訳なれば天然法律の義なり [...] 人の発明に因るとは雖へとも人心の想像して定めたる理と異にして、客観に属する者なり

(In the recent European intellectual tradition, the principle is understood in twofold: reason and laws of nature, to use the English terms here. Reason designates in Japanese either *dōri* [道理] for a general purpose or *risei* [理性] for a specific purpose. Either way, reason is inherent in human nature and is that which enables man to distinguish truth from falsehood. [...] Natural laws are the laws of the principle, which I translate as *rihō* [理法], or more literally, laws that reveal what does happen. [...] To be sure, it is a category invented by

⁴² Nishi, “Shōhaku sakki,” 171-172.

⁴³ Ibid., 168.

man. But unlike the concept of principle that is forged by human imagination, laws of nature belong to the realm of objectivity.)⁴⁴

For Nishi, knowledge is all at once unified and dispersed. It is unified because it is dictated by the principle of unity in thinking and reasoning (reason). It is dispersed because a given field of knowledge seeks to understand certain regularities (laws of nature) of whatever matters of the world it investigates. And two are inseparable. As Nishi claims,

唯二ツノ相反セル者ヲ合シテ、以テ一ツトナスニ、在ルル必セリ、即チ、其一ハ、統一ノ観ニシテ、其一ハ、実理ノ諸学トス、蓋シーノ観、実理ニ據ラサレハ、精神ナク、而シテ実理ノ学、統一ノ観ニ、基イセサレハ、亦空腔タリトス

(Combining those that seem incommensurable and integrating them into a whole [is what is at the core of knowledge]. On the one hand, there is the principle of unity in thinking and reasoning. On the other hand, there are those dispersed fields of knowledge seeking to understand regularities. If the principle of unity is not applied to those fields of knowledge, the principle would be devoid of spirit. If those fields of knowledge are not grounded on the principle of unity, they become hollow.)⁴⁵

Some might argue that a claim such as this one invokes the familiar pattern of discursive address that has long been promoted by the (Neo-)Confucian premise of dualism between *ri* and *ki*, between ‘what is above’ and ‘what is below.’ Certainly, ‘all at once unified and dispersed’ could be a description of (Neo-)Confucian knowledge. But such an assumption falsely invites us to conclude that a similarity in discursive structure is tantamount to a similarity in discourse. As Nishi views it, in modern Western knowledge, *ri* does not represent the merely postulated. It is not a conceptual and linguistic instrument to grasp something unobservable, but nonetheless, that is the cause of each and every phenomenon, event, and human action. Instead, *ri* is a certain way of relating to knowledge (reason), which, when applied to actual knowledge production, describes rather than prescribes a phenomenon, event, or action (laws of nature).

This new signification of *ri* informs two basic categories of knowledge production: philosophy that asks fundamental questions about *ri* on the basis of *ri* alone; and sciences in the broadest sense that accumulate and deepen, on the basis of *ri*, knowledge about a given phenomenon, event, or action. Thereby writes Nishi in a manner that invokes Immanuel Kant’s *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798) that

⁴⁴ Ibid., 169. One caution must be entered here on Nishi’s interchangeable usage of the terms ‘laws of nature’ and ‘natural laws,’ which somewhat runs counter to our semantic consensus today. ‘Laws of nature,’ as we assume, is what science aims to describe, whereas the term ‘natural laws,’ as we understand the term, concerns primarily with issues of ethics and morality. Nishi’s interchangeable usage here is indebted to Auguste Comte, whose corpus was formative for Nishi to develop his affinity towards positivism. In *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830), Comte maintains as follows. “The first characteristic of the positive philosophy is that it regards all phenomena as subjected to invariable natural laws. Our business is [...] to pursue an accurate discovery of these laws, with a view to reducing them to the smallest possible number. By speculating upon causes, we could solve no difficulty about origin and purpose. Our real business is to analyse accurately the circumstances of phenomena, and to connect them by the natural relations of succession and resemblance.” Quoted in Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983: 47. See also Thomas R. H. Havens, “Comte, Mill, and the Thought of Nishi Amane in Meiji Japan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 27:2, 1968: 217-228.

⁴⁵ Nishi Amane, *Seisei hatsuun* 生性發蘊 (*The Relationship between the Physical and the Spiritual*), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū 1-kan* 西周全集 1 卷 (*Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1*), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960 [1871-1873]: 46 [29-129].

百科の學術に於いて統一の觀を立て、各自に其精微の極に臻る事より始まるなり、是學者分上の事業なり、[...] 然るに此學者分上の事業の中にも、統一の觀を立つると學術の精微を究むるとは、亦分業の方二區の觀にて、一人の能く兼ね得る所に非らず、故に統一の觀を立つるは哲學家の論究す可き所と為、學術の精微を究むるは各科の學術を專攻する者に存する也

(The first step is to establish the principle of unity for the hundred branches of knowledge, which leads to the refinement of those branches. This is what scholars must do. [...] However, seeking to establish the principle of unity and seeking to refine a given field of knowledge are two separate undertakings. No one can do both. Philosophers are responsible for the former, and specialists in various fields of knowledge are obliged to do the latter).⁴⁶

Ri structures modern Western knowledge all at once unified and dispersed: *ri* is the unity of conjecture and refutation, and *ri* is also that which can be logically induced as regularities; *ri* is reason and simultaneously laws of nature; *ri* is what philosophy seeks to establish and what science investigates. In Nishi's rendering, *ri* functions as the linguistic and conceptual representation of the nature, structure, and institutional manifestation of modern Western knowledge.

For both reason and laws of nature are translated into *ri*, the term itself becomes an encompassing signifier. This semantic conversion through translation foregrounds a pattern of signifying what *rigaku* (理学: studies of *ri*) entails as a formalised and institutionalised category of knowledge. There is no clear distinction, in Japanese semantics of the late 19th century, between philosophy and science because both are studies of *ri*. *Rigaku* is encompassing and, as a signifier, absorbs manifold significations. For example, Nakae Chōmin's (1848-1901) views *rigaku* as essentially a philosophical enterprise which underpins all kinds of scholarship. It is "to investigate the foundational principle that mediates all fields of knowledge so that one can penetrate deep into the essence of all things." To this end, according to Nakae, "*rigaku*" as a philosophical enterprise "is, among others, the most extensive and most abstract field of knowledge."⁴⁷

In contrast, Kikuchi Dairoku (1855-1917) regards *rigaku* as various fields of science. In his short essay, he asks: what is *rigaku*? In invoking Comte's historicism, Kikuchi answers as follows.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Nishi, "Shōhaku sakki," 165, 166. In *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, Kant makes a division between 'higher faculties' and 'lower faculty'. The former includes theology, law, and medicine, whose knowledge is sanctioned heteronomously by established traditions, be it the Bible, civil codes, or the decree of the medical profession. Those faculties represent interests formed externally, such as Christianity, civil life, and medical practices, and thus speak the performative language of those external domains. In contrast, lower faculty, namely philosophy, speaks a purely constative language, whose knowledge is autonomous in that it legitimates itself by asking fundamental questions on the basis of Reason. Philosophy, therefore, intervenes in the higher faculties by critiquing and problematising, through Reason, their grounds of knowledge. While there seems to be a perpetual contestation between established traditions and rational inquiry, higher faculties and lower faculty are unified with a sense of totality provided by Reason. See Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties (Der Streit der Fakultäten)*, Mary J. Gregor (trans.), New York, NY: Abaris Books, 1979 [1798]: 23.

⁴⁷ Nakae Chōmin, *Rigaku kōgen* 理学鉤玄 (*The Nature of Philosophy*), Tokyo: Shūseisha, 1886: 1, 3-4. The original text reads as follows. "理学ノ趣旨ハ万事ニ係リテ其本源ヲ窮究スルニ在ル [...] 必ズ諸種學術ノ相通ジテ原本スル所ノ理ヲ講究シテ以テ事物ノ最高層ノ処ニ透徹スルニ在リ [...] 是故ニ理学ハ凡ソ學術ノ中ニ就イテ最広博ニシテ最高遠ナル者ナリ"

⁴⁸ For Comte's historicism, see, for example, Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, Vol. 1*, Harriet Martineau (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Comte's belief in human progress was

理学トハ人ノ知識ノ最高度ナリ凡テ人ノ知識ハ最初ハ漠然、不確、狹隘ナルモノニシテ、漸々進ミテ精密、確實、広遠ニ及ボスモノトナルナリ而シテ其確實、精密、広遠ナルニ至リテ始メテ理学ト称スルナリ [...] 石ハ一「セコンド」ニ何尺墜ルヤ其速率ハ如何等精密確實ノ知識ハ即理学ノ部分ナリ益此知識ヲ推シ廣メ遂ニ萬物引力ノ定則ヲ知り之ニ由リテ以テ彼ノ海王星ノ発見ニ於ケル如ク未タ曾テ見サル星ノ位置ヲ推測シ得ル如キハ是レ最高等ノ理学ナリ [...] 理学者ハ唯宇宙間何ニテモ真理ヲ発見スルヲ目的トシ [...]

(Science is the highest degree of human knowledge. At first, human knowledge is vague, uncertain, and narrow. Yet, as it progresses, it becomes precise, certain, and far-reaching. When knowledge becomes precise, certain, and far-reaching, we call it science. [...] How many feet a stone falls in a second, with what velocity etc. – knowledge determined with precision and concreteness is part of science. By expanding this knowledge about motion, we discover the law of gravity. By utilising this knowledge about gravitational interaction, we discover Neptune and even deduce the constellation of those stars that we have not yet seen. This is the highest level of science one can strive for. [...] The aim of scientists is to discover the truth about everything in the universe.)⁴⁹

Rigaku, as Kikuchi explains here, has little to do with establishing the principle of unity in thinking and reasoning. Instead, it is about discovering regularities (laws of nature) between phenomena and adding up discoveries to increase the depth and breadth of knowledge.

Fukuzawa Yukichi also views *rigaku* as being comprised of various fields of science, but his understanding reflects rather the Anglo-American notion of natural philosophy. He humorously writes that a man who “takes things as they are without thinking why things are what they are is akin to a horse that eats hay knowing the taste but having no clue about which kind of hay it is eating.”⁵⁰ Of course, some things taste sweet, and others bitter. The sky is high, and the valley deep. Summer is hot, and winter cold. But “we who are born as man must exercise our thinking faculties,

primarily influenced by Nicholas de Condorcet, *Outlines of An Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind*, Philadelphia, PA: M Carey, 1796.

⁴⁹ Kikuchi Dairoku, “Rigaku no setsu” 理学の説 (“On Rigaku”), *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 33, 1884: 76-77 [75-81]. Nishi made a similar observation in *Hyakugaku renakan* (百学連環: Encyclopaedia, 1870). He writes, “凡て学問には、学域といふありて、地理学は、地理学の域あり、政事学は政事学の域ありて、敢て其域を越へて彼是混雑することなく、各の学に於いて其経界を觀察して、正しく区別するを要せざるべからず。” (The pursuit of knowledge is marked by internal boundaries. Studies of geography has its own remit. So too does studies of politics. Transgressing those boundaries only causes confusion. One must attentively observe those boundaries and accurately separate various fields of knowledge from one another.) See Nishi Amane, *Hyakugaku renakan* 百学連環 (Encyclopaedia), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū, 4-kan* 西周全集 4 卷 (*Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 4*), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960 [1870]: 46.

⁵⁰ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Kunmō kyūri zukai* 訓蒙窮理図解 (*Introductory Theories with Illustrations*), in Tomita Msafumi and Tsuchihashi Shunichi (eds.), *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū, 2-kan* 福沢諭吉全集 2 卷 (*Complete Works of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Vol. 2*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1959 [1868]: 235 [233-280]. The original text reads, “ありの儘の物を、ありの儘に見過ごして、少しも心に留ざるは、猶馬の秣を食ひ、其味を知て其品柄を知らざるが如しと。”

know everything observable, and investigate the attributes of these things.”⁵¹ For Fukuzawa, *rigaku* is a field of empirical investigation. It is a commitment to understanding the inner workings of phenomena. It is a commitment of the inquisitive human mind.

Others even go so far as to argue that some of the ‘old’ knowledge traditions, such as Kangaku and Kokugaku, can be revived as constitutive fields of *rigaku*. Granted that *ri* is the principle of unity in thinking and reasoning, the principle of unity of conjecture and refutation. Granted also that old traditions can be subjected to this principle of unity. Then, these traditions can be legitimately accommodated in the knowledge tradition undergirded by that unity. Recall here Katō Hiroyuki’s defence of *Wakan bungaku-ka* at the University of Tokyo that I have discussed in the previous chapter.⁵² This is an emblematic example. For Katō, establishing *Wakan bungaku-ka* is not about instituting the university around Kangaku and Kokugaku. Nor is it about reflecting on traditionalist and nativist ideologies these knowledge traditions are said to promote. Instead, the sole purpose of *Wakan bungaku-ka* is to preserve the contents of these knowledge traditions as something integral to the notion of ‘lofty subjects’. This defence of *Wakan bungaku-ka* is based on his earlier assessment that Kokugaku indeed has successfully reoriented its focus around specifically ‘Japanese’ historical and cultural processes and redefined the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects under the notion of *kokutai*.⁵³ Yet, in the same breath, Katō also problematises Kokugaku’s reasoning, suggesting that Kokugaku’s knowledge about *kokutai* must be renewed by subjecting it to the mode of thinking and reasoning promoted in the European intellectual tradition.⁵⁴ In a similar vein, Kikuchi Dairoku maintains that Kangaku for Japanese is what the studies of Latin and Greek are for Europeans. While Kangaku does not have any privileged status, it has particular importance and hence, as Kikuchi insists, should not be abolished entirely but taught as one of those specialised subjects.⁵⁵ Ōtori Keisuke (1833-1911) also follows a similar pattern of discursive address. He proposes that both Kangaku and Kokugaku must be resuscitated by applying methods of Western scholarships, which he describes as investigations into what the world actually is based on verifiable facts and proof.⁵⁶ If Kangaku and Kokugaku are reoriented towards scholarships based on factual verification, these traditions, as Ōtori envisions, offer ‘real’ historical accounts and ‘precise’ topological details of Japan.⁵⁷

For these attempts to understand that which structures modern Western knowledge, translation is the primary strategy. *Ri* is abstracted from the then-prevalent existing knowledge traditions and turned into a floating signifier to render the foreign knowledge tradition with a certain familiarity. In other words, translation enables the likes of Nishi to expand the semantic scope of *ri* to create a new domain of discourse about knowledge, while, at the same time, the established primacy of *ri* as the qualifier of serious knowledge – the *ri*-knowledge structuration – enables them to argue for the seriousness of modern Western knowledge.

⁵¹ Ibid. The original sentence reads, “苟にも人としてこの世に生れなば、よく心を用ひて、何事にも大小軽重に拘はらず、先づ其物を知り其理を窮め、一事一物も捨置くべからず。”

⁵² See Chapter 1 for my analysis of Katō’s justification of the establishment of *Wakan bungaku-ka*.

⁵³ Katō Hiroyuki, *Kokutai shinron* 国体新論 (*A New Theory on National Polity* 1874), in Uete Michiari (ed.), *Nihon no meicho*, 34: Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki 日本名著 34: 西周・加藤弘之 (*Japanese Classics, Vol.34: Nishi Amane and Katō Hiroyuki*), Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1984 [1874]: 385 [383-407].

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Kikuchi, “Rigaku no setsu,” 97.

⁵⁶ Ōtori, “Gakumon ben,” 91.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 88.

And yet, this abstraction of *ri* as a transformative threshold begs some questions about semantic transparency. Translation contains, to borrow from Naoki Sakai, a double sense of meaning.⁵⁸ Most obviously, translation is a process: re-writing and re-stating what is said in the original. But at the same time, translation is also the product: a new text and statement emerge as a result of such a process. When the process and the product are mediated through an existing concept – here, the concept of *ri* as the apparatus for knowledge – we cannot simply assume semantic transparency between the original text and the new text. *Ri* cannot fully summon the meanings of ‘reason’ and ‘laws of nature’ without an appeal to other words, such as *kotowari* and *hazu*, from which they differ. Translating ‘reason’ and ‘laws of nature’ both as *ri*, the meanings of ‘reason’ and ‘laws of nature’ established within the semantic space of, for instance, English, German, or French are differed and suspended with an endless chain of signifiers.

The new signification of *ri* as the most basic proposition of modern Western knowledge suggests a certain inversion of the semantic relationship between signifier and signification. Hans Erich Bödeker understands this relationship as one between “lexical organisation” and “social communicative references.” Valentin N. Voloshinov defines it as the relationship between meaning and theme.⁵⁹ The signifier *ri*, which hitherto designated, for instance, the absolute and transcendental principle of (Neo-)Confucianism, now comes to semantically and conceptually represent, through translational practices, the principle of unity of modern Western knowledge. This inversion of the relationship between signifier and signification, however, does not mean the complete erasure of ‘old’ significations, especially when translation mediates the inversion. As shown above, translation does not take place in a vacuum. The texture of a signifier, a certain feeling and even materiality inscribed thereto, determines the parameter within which, as Douglas Howland posits, the language user creates “new concepts or expands existing concepts in a new direction.”⁶⁰ My argument here is that *ri*, as the principle of unity of modern Western knowledge, has imprints or traces of other significations such as *kotowari* and *hazu*. Semantic transparency is a fallacy. Translation leaves certain traces of discursive difference.

§

2.5. Signifier, Signification, and Discursive Inversion

Understanding modern Western knowledge and viewing it as serious and valid is not tantamount to legitimising it as knowledge tout court. Referring to Gilbert Ryle, Ian Hacking notes that

It is not the word ‘rational’ that works for us, but rather the word ‘irrational’. [...] Aristotle taught that humans are rational animals, which meant that they are able to

⁵⁸ Naoki Sakai, “Translation and the Schematism of Bordering,” a conference paper presented at “Translating Society: A Commentator’s Conference,” 29th-31st October 2009, University of Konstanz. The transcript is available at <https://www.translating-society.de/conference/papers/2/>

⁵⁹ See Hans Erich Bödeker, “Concept – Meaning – Discourse: *Begriffsgeschichte* Reconsidered,” in Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, and Fran van Vree (eds.), *History of Concept: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998: 53 [51-64]; Valentin N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (trans.), New York, NY: Academic Press, 1973: 99-106.

⁶⁰ Howland, *Translating the West*, 27.

reason. We can assent to that without thinking that ‘rational’ is an evaluative word. Only ‘irrational’, in our present language, is evaluative, and it means nutty, unsound, vacillating, unsure, lacking self-knowledge, and much else.⁶¹

For Nishi and his contemporaries, ‘irrational’ is also the evaluative word for dissenting from (Neo-)Confucianism and other existing traditions while tacitly legitimising modern Western knowledge as the opposite of irrational. To be sure, this is not a novel discursive strategy. There are abundant examples of (re)marking boundaries between the rational and the irrational, which often take the form of semantic reconfiguration of *ri* and, by extension, valorisation of *ri*-knowledge structuration. Earlier, for instance, Sakuma Shōzan (1811-1864) argued that *ri* was not merely the ethical concern for Confucians but also the analytical concern of Western science.⁶² Ogyū Sorai challenged the Neo-Confucian continuum of natural laws and moral laws sustained by the overarching concept of *ri*.⁶³ Miura Baien (1723-1789) suggested that it was *jōri* (条理) that remained constant while *ri* as regularities of the natural and human worlds constantly folded and unfolded.⁶⁴ These examples will be recurring tropes for my discussion in a later chapter, but what I shall emphasise at this juncture is the following. These attempts to encode new meanings in the signifier *ri* effectively invalidated the Neo-Confucian notion of *ri* and, therefore, reconstituted Neo-Confucianism as irrelevant. The attempt of Nishi and his contemporaries to grasp modern Western knowledge through a semantic change of *ri* follows a similar pattern of discursive address. Redefining *ri* as reason and laws of nature enables them to invalidate other meanings encoded in the signifier and ultimately to declare the irrationality of other knowledge traditions.

Thus, the late 19th century saw the oversaturation of combative and polemical enunciations. For example, against the Neo-Confucian disdain towards Europeans, Nishi has this to say.

然れど、欧人は理を知らざる所かは、理と指す中にも色々の区別有りて、一層緻密也と謂ふ可し、然れと宋儒の如く何も斯も天理と説きて天地風雨の事より人倫上の事為まで皆一定不拔の天理存して此に外れるは皆天理に背くと定むるは、余りに措大の見に過ぎたりと謂ふべし。

(Are Europeans really clueless about what the principle is? In fact, what is called the principle is manifold, and Europeans understand it with details and precision. In contrast, Neo-Confucians postulate that everything, from phenomena of the natural world to the

⁶¹ Hacking, *Representing and Intervening*, 15-16.

⁶² Albert Craig makes this rendering of Shōzan’s work. See Craig, “Science and Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan,” 153. However, Harry Harootunian claims that Sakuma “did not think of anything so elaborate as the notion of two distinct cultures informed by two different principles (*ri*). No more does his later slogan *Tōyō dōtoku, seiyō gei* (‘Oriental ethics as a base, Western techniques as means’) assume a radical cultural difference on the grounds that the *ri* of Japan was different from that of the West.” See Harry Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1970: 144.

⁶³ Thus, Harootunian writes, “the essential property of this intellectual shift was the notation of a break in the line; its path to resolution was marked by an attack on ‘*ri*’ (or rational speculation). [...] The new choice was to explain the world in a modality of contiguity, so as to accommodate the apparent differences among phenomena, not continuity, which had previously been made possible by a paradigmatic model of knowledge.” See Harry Harootunian, “Ideology as Conflict,” in Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann (eds.), *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982: 31 [25-61]. Maruyama Masao provides an extensive analysis of Ogyū’s thoughts and implications. See Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*.

⁶⁴ For Miura’s works, see, for example, Gino K. Piovesana, “Miura Baien, 1723-1789, and His Dialectic & Political Ideas,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 20:3/4, 1965: 389-421; Rosemary Mercer, “Picturing the Universe: Adventures with Miura Baien at the Borderland of Philosophy and Science,” *Philosophy East and West*, 38: 3, 1998: 478-502.

ethics of man, is dictated by the heavenly principle. If something does not conform to this principle, they claim that it infringes the principle. I must say, though, this is really a poor judgment.)⁶⁵

The problem Nishi finds of Neo-Confucianism is its postulate of the absolute, all-encompassing, transcendental principle. Nishi implies that Neo-Confucianism erroneously lumps together a priori principles of the natural world and posteriori principles of the human world. Of course, such critique is possible because of his own conviction that *ri* signifies something different and that modern Western knowledge is the tradition that has recourse to that *ri*. It is with this conviction that Nishi can infer that what Neo-Confucians decry as the infringement of the principle is nothing but the infringement of the very ethos of what it means to know.⁶⁶ Encoding a new meaning to the signifier *ri* is, thus, an act of re-territorialising what is considered valid and serious knowledge.

Let us remain in this line of inquiry and consider the following. How do Nishi and his contemporaries justify new meanings of *ri* to validate modern Western knowledge as knowledge tout court? How do they discursively forge a semantic inversion of the relationship between signifier and signification? How does the semantic change of *ri* legitimise the new territory of knowledge and, in turn, relegate Neo-Confucianism and other old traditions to the realm of the irrational? And, if semantic inversion does not mean the complete erasure of old significations, in what ways does the old manifest itself in the new signification of *ri* as the principle of unity of modern Western knowledge?

Two general strategies are of interest here. The first of which I shall call ‘conscious rupture’ is a strategy to wholly evacuate the signifier *ri* from the existing traditions and relocate it to modern Western knowledge as a lexical and conceptual commodity exclusive to that knowledge tradition. This strategy participates, to borrow from Quentin Skinner, the “acts of commending (and expressing and soliciting approval)” and the “acts of condemning (and expressing and soliciting disapproval).”⁶⁷ The other strategy provokes simultaneously consciousness of rupture and consciousness of continuity. It is a strategy that relies all at once on historicisation and transvaluation. It begins with a recognition of the historical emergence of the signifier *ri* in (Neo-)Confucianism, which is followed by a kind of Copernican turn, first, within the epistemic space of (Neo-)Confucianism to offer an alternative reading of the *ri-ki* dualism. But to justify this alternative reading, this strategy postulates a new ground for validation that is markedly Cartesian.

2.5.1. *Conscious Rupture*

The first strategy begins with a polemical and even crude comparison between modern Western knowledge and existing knowledge traditions. For its obvious simplicity and polemical efficacy, this strategy was, during the late 19th century, much more pervasive than the other strategy of historicisation and transvaluation. Tsuda Mamichi (1829-1903), for instance, states that existing knowledge traditions, such as Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism, and Yōmeigaku (陽明学: Wang Yangming school of Confucianism), have produced nothing but “hollow knowledge” and “vain speculation.” In contrast, modern Western knowledge, as he views it, grasps “the principle with

⁶⁵ Nishi, “Shōhaku sakki,” 170.

⁶⁶ See also Nishi, *Chisetsu*, 201.

⁶⁷ Quentin Skinner, “Rhetoric and Conceptual Change,” *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, 3:1, 1999: 61 [60-73].

certainty” and “offers utilitarian knowledge of astronomy, physics, chemistry, medicine, economics, and philosophy.”⁶⁸ Taguchi Ukichi (1855-1905) explains that modern Western knowledge seeks to validate “empirically” rather than speculatively “the principle that truly exists in the universe.” This is, in his view, far removed from what has long been considered serious scholarships in Japan, that is, *gakumon*, represented by traditions such as Kangaku and Kogaku. Taguchi goes on to entirely dismiss these traditions as “mere textual interpretations of the opinions of the past,” which are for “intellectual pastimes to relieve oneself from boredom.”⁶⁹ Ōtori Keisuke also makes a distinction between ‘hollow knowledge’ and ‘utilitarian knowledge’, maintaining that Kokugaku and Kangaku, the representative of the former, have failed to verify the purported truth that is said to dictate the workings of the universe and that “efforts made by these traditions are fruitless.” He then admonishes those scholars of Kokugaku and Kangaku that “they must learn some basics of Western scholarships.” In Ōtori’s opinion, engaging with modern Western knowledge enables them to comprehend “the actual principle of things,” without which they cannot distinguish “useful knowledge” from “useless knowledge.”⁷⁰ We can certainly continue to list more examples. Nevertheless, a common thread here is the kind of language used to characterise long-existing traditions of knowledge, which effectively re-territorialises the realm of serious and valid knowledge that, in essence, corresponds to a new semantic scope of *ri* defined as the principle of unity of modern Western knowledge. A common thread, in other words, is the re-territorialisation of knowledge sustained by a conscious semantic rupture of the meaning of *ri*.

This thread is especially evident in the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi. As we shall see shortly, his conviction in *ri* as an attribute exclusive to modern Western knowledge undergirds his dissent from existing knowledge traditions, which in turn reconfirms, in a self-referential manner, the status of modern Western knowledge as knowledge tout court. Despite the polemical undertone, his writings are illustrative of the strategy of conscious semantic rupture. What is, however, equally or perhaps more interesting is that, in his combative pattern of discursive address, we also begin to see certain traces of existing knowledge traditions that he vehemently seeks to negate. Fukuzawa’s corpus is, thus, an interesting case to suggest that a conscious semantic rupture does not entail a complete erasure of old significations.

In a series of articles entitled ‘Kyokugai ukami’ (局外窺見: An Observation on the Opposition, 1882) published in *Jiji shinpō* newspaper, Fukuzawa remarks that in terms of morals, customs, and arts and crafts, Japan and Europe are in fact more similar than one might otherwise surmise. However, concerning the state of knowledge, “there are neither considerable similarities nor minor differences between Japan and Europe. There are neither minor similarities nor considerable

⁶⁸ Tsuda, “Kaika o susumeru hōhō o ronzu,” 13. The original text reads “蓋學問ヲ大別スルニ二種アリ。夫高速ノ空理ヲ論ズル虚無寂滅、若クハ五行性理、或ハ良知良能ノ説ノ如キハ虚学ナリ。之ヲ実物ニ徴シ実象ニ資シテ、専確実ノ理ヲ説ク、近今西洋ノ天文、格物、化学、医学、経済、希哲学ノ如キハ実学ナリ。”

⁶⁹ Taguchi Ukichi, *Nippon kaika no seishitsu* 日本開化ノ性質 (*The Nature of Japanese Modernisation*), Tokyo: Aoki sūzandō, 1886: 50-53. The original text reads as follows. “西洋の諸学は素と下等社会の実験に基づくものにして其実際は必ず宇宙空間に存するものなり。[...] 日本に於て従来学問と称せしものは之に異なり漢学者の専ら講究せし所 [...] 古学を唱ふるもの [...] 全く消日の一戯具に供するに過ぎず。”

⁷⁰ Ōtori, “Gakumon ben,” 88, 89, 93. He describes Kokugaku and Kangaku as follows. “事実ヲ証セズシテ徒ニ上古ノ事ヲ構造シテ論ズルハ、勞シテ益ナキナリ。[...] 支那学ヲ専門ニ修ムル人アルニモセヨ、一通リ西洋学問ノ道筋ダケハ心得居ラネバナラヌナリ。否ラザレバ、此点ハ要用、彼件ハ無用ナリトノ取捨分別ヲ決スルコト難シ。[...] 空文浮辞ニ陥ラズ実理ヲ研究シ [...]。”

differences between them.”⁷¹ This is because, as Fukuzawa laments, “there is no trace of ‘proper’ knowledge in our civilisation” and “scholarships in our country do not pursue the ‘actual’ principle.”⁷² To this end, Fukuzawa suggests that a comparison between modern Western knowledge and existing knowledge traditions is untenable and even meaningless.

His reasoning is perspicuous if not entirely warranted. And yet, here lies a problem. In his writings, Fukuzawa offers a number of epithets for what he views as the foundational principle of the world and the explanatory principle of modern Western knowledge: ‘*jitsubutsu no ri*’ (実物の理: the actual principle), ‘*tennen no gensoku*’ (天然ノ原則: the a priori principle), ‘*shizen no gensoku*’ (自然ノ原則: the a priori principle), and ‘*banko fueki no gensoku*’ (万古不易ノ原則: the permanent principle). But none of these epithets clarify what the principle actually is. They merely suggest that there is something foundational, unchanging, and permanent about the world and that the pursuit of proper knowledge amounts to the exposition of the foundational, unchanging, and permanent. In other words, his assumption is that one cannot have direct recourse to the metaphysical postulate that is the a priori principle; one can arrive at the principle only inductively through inquiries into what he calls ‘*butsurei no gensoku*’ (物理の原則: laws of nature).

之ニ反シテ西洋諸国ノ有様ヲ通覧スルニ、智学ノ拠ル所ハ自然ノ原則ニシテ、実物ノ形ト実物ノ数ト其動静ノ時間トヲ根本ニ定メ [...] 問フ可キモノ [...] 即チ物理ノ原則ナリ。西洋智学ノ世界ハ此原則ヲ以テ支配スルコト知ル可シ。

(In comparison [to existing scholarships in Japan], modern Western knowledge is grounded on the a priori principle, which determines the shape, quantity, and temporal movement of things that actually exist in the world. [...] What must be investigated [...] is laws of nature. This, we must know, is the basic dictum of modern Western knowledge.)⁷³

Obviously, Fukuzawa is not in denial of a metaphysical entity – something that is legitimately postulated but cannot be observed. But he also recognises that attending to the noumenal does not lead one beyond the realm of speculation. The solution he sees in modern Western knowledge is to attend to the phenomenal world, that is to say, to how the principle appears to us rather than what the principle is.

開闢の初より今日にいたるまで、世界古今、正しく同一様にして変違あることなし。神代の水も華氏の寒暖計二百十二度の熱に逢うて沸騰し、明治年間の水もまた、これに同じ。西洋の蒸気も東洋の蒸気も、その膨張の力は異ならず。亜米利

⁷¹ Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Kyokugai ukami” 局外窺見 (“An Observation of the Opposition”), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikēi 10-kan: Gakumon to chishikijin* 日本近代思想体系第 10 卷 学問と知識人 (*Japanese Modern Thought, Vol. 10: Scholarships and Intellectuals*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1882]: 48 [36-59]. This series of articles was written as a critique of the 1882 Imperial Directive on the Educational System (学制規則ニ付勅諭) drafted by Motoda Nagazane and submitted to Fukuoka Takachika, which aimed at shifting education policies towards moral education based on the Confucian moral and ethical teaching. The transcript of the directive can be found in Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyūjo (ed.), *Kyōikuchokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryōshū*, I-kan, 22-24.

⁷² Fukuzawa, “Kyokugai ukami,” 48.

⁷³ Ibid., 49.

加の人がモルヒネを多量に服して死すれば、日本人もまた、これを服して死すべし。これを物理の原則といい、 [...]

(From the beginning of the Earth until now, some things remain unchanged. Water boils at 212 degrees, which was true during the age of the Gods and is still true today. Vapour expands at the same ratio in the West and in the East. If an American dies from injecting too much morphine, a Japanese would also die from injecting the same amount. These are what are called laws of nature.)⁷⁴

Investigation into the phenomenal world allows one to understand it in terms of regularities – the manifestation of the a priori principle – in the eternal present, free from gross cultural and historical particularities. Proper knowledge, for Fukuzawa, is a kind of knowledge that conforms to the way the phenomenal world is rather than a kind of knowledge that conforms to the way one thinks what the world must be.

This rendering of modern Western knowledge certainly reminds us of Immanuel Kant's distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds or of David Hume's fervent negation of metaphysics.⁷⁵ And yet, it also reminds us, to a certain extent, of the (Neo-)Confucian notions of 'gewu qiong li' (格物窮理: to investigate things in order to pursue the principle) and 'gewu zhizhi' (格物致知: to investigate things and to extend knowledge), both of which, while allowing silence on the ultimate question of *ri*, orient our attention to the realm of *ki* in which the metaphysical postulate manifests itself variously and thus can be observable. Then, how does Fukuzawa justify his claim that modern Western knowledge and existing knowledge traditions are fundamentally different and that the latter is, in comparison, inadequate and irrelevant?

Fukuzawa's justification relies, first, on an argument that existing knowledge traditions completely misconceptualise *ri*, which, in turn, results in the inadequacy of their interpretative and speculative methods. What these traditions define as *ri*, in Fukuzawa's opinion, is mere mythical speculation based on the *yin-yang* and the five elements of Chinese cosmology and thus has nothing to do with the a priori principle, the metaphysical entity, which manifests itself as laws of nature. For their foundational postulate for knowledge is inaccurate, "their reasoning and writing remain simple and extremely sloppy, their focus is diffused, and their comprehension is imprecise."⁷⁶ This is somewhat contradictory to his general suspicion towards metaphysical postulates. While he argues for the impossibility of having recourse to the noumenal and for the importance of restricting one's attention to the phenomenal, he criticises existing knowledge traditions for their inability to accurately postulate the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. While he advocates an anti-metaphysical attitude in his approval of modern Western

⁷⁴ Fukuzawa Yukichi, "Butsurigaku no yōyō" 物理学の要用 ("The Significance of Science"), in *Jiji shinpō*, 22nd March 1882.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*; David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1748].

⁷⁶ Fukuzawa Yukichi, "Bungaku kaiin ni tsugu," 208. The original text reads as follows. "漢学ニハ毫モ原則ナルモノナクシテ、其根拠トスル所ノモノハ陰陽ニアラザレバ五行ニ外ナラズ、立論モ文章モ極メテ簡単、極メテ漠然ニシテ、主意ヲ左右ニシ義解ヲ二三ニスルモ亦容易ナルガ故ニ、[...] 洋学ハ決シテ然ラズ。万古不易ノ原則ナルモノアリテ、凡ソ如何ナル学科ニテモ各皆此原則ニ拠ラザルハナク、一事ヲ論ズル毎ニ必ズ此原則ト結果ト符合セザレバ決シテ一条ノ説トナスヲ許サズ。"

knowledge, he implies the importance of metaphysics in his critique of existing knowledge traditions.⁷⁷

Second, Fukuzawa's justification also resorts to quasi-Comtean historicism, that is, a belief in human progress as an inevitable historical law. To argue for the primacy of what he calls '*butsurigaku*' (物理学: science) or '*jitsugaku*' (実学: science), knowledge about laws of nature, he equates scientific progress to civilisational progress.⁷⁸

蓋シ文明ノ進歩トハ原則（ナチュラルロー）ノ支配スル領分ノ日月ニ増加スルヲ云フナリ。技術（アート）ト実学（サイエンス）トハ自ラ異ナリト雖ドモ、昔時「アート」ト認メタル者ノ中ニモ、原則ノ所在ヲ発見シテ、其「サイエンス」ニ属ス可キハ勉メテ之ニ編入スルコソ、今日文明ノ進歩ト云フ可キモノナレ。

(When our understanding of natural laws gradually expands, we make civilisational progress. 'Arts' [a wide range of creative practices and expressions including applied sciences, manufacturing, and crafts] and 'science' are indeed distinct from one another. And yet, if what is considered as belonging to the realm of arts contributes to the discovery of natural laws, it must be integrated into the realm of science. This is what we call today civilisational progress.)⁷⁹

And on science, Fukuzawa specifies as follows.

物理学とは、天然の原則に基づき、物の性質を明にして、基働を察し、之を採て以て人事の用に供するの学にして [...] この原則を究めて利用する、これを物理学という。人間万事この理に洩るるものある可らず。若し或は然らざるに似たる者は、未だ究理の不行届なるものと知る可し。

(Science is, based on the a priori principle, to clarify the disposition of things, to observe their basic functions, and to instrumentalise scientific insights for practical purposes. [...] Investigating the principle and utilising it – this is what science is. Nothing exists independent of this principle. If something seems to defy the principle, it simply means the insufficiency of our investigation.)⁸⁰

⁷⁷ In hindsight, one could argue that these seemingly contradictory attitudes we find in Fukuzawa's corpus anticipate the later development of logical positivism that is often attributed to the likes of A.J. Ayer and Moritz Schlick. See Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, New York, NY: Dover Publishing Inc., 1952 [1936]; Moritz Schlick, *General Theory of Knowledge*, Albert E. Blumberg (trans.), Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1985 [1925].

⁷⁸ Fukuzawa, "Bungaku kaiin ni tsugu," 205. In the original text, Fukuzawa adds the phonetic character 'サイエンス' (science) next to the Japanese term '実学'. However, it is important to recognise also that Fukuzawa uses the term '*jitsugaku*' variously in his writings, sometimes narrowly as 'science' or 'applied science' and other times more broadly as 'utilitarian and instrumental knowledge for one's life and occupation'. While the term '*butsurigaku*' (物理学) as a contemporary vernacular means physics, Fukuzawa's usage here as 'science' can be approximated to Nishi Amane calls '*jitsuri no shogaku*' (実利ノ諸学: fields of utility) or Kikuchi Dairoku '*senmon no gakka*' (専門ノ学科: specialised fields). See Fukuzawa, *Gakumon no susume*, 6; Fukuzawa Yukichi, "Jitsugaku no hitsuyō" 実学の必要 ("The Necessity of Science"), in *Fukuō hyakuwa* 福翁百話 (*A Hundred Stories of Fukuzawa Yukichi*), Tokyo: Jiji shinpō, 1897: 114 [113-116].

⁷⁹ Fukuzawa, "Bungaku kaiin ni tsugu," 205.

⁸⁰ Fukuzawa, "Butsurigaku no yōyō."

The discovery of natural laws bears the progress in science, and the progress in science bears the progress of civilisation. Scientific discoveries are simultaneously the vehicle and the representation of human evolution over time. Progress in knowledge can now be measured as a linear temporal process. This, in turn, means for Fukuzawa that existing knowledge traditions represent not just different worldviews and different ways of relating to knowledge. Their anti-scientific, or more precisely put, non-scientific attitude represents temporal backwardness. Any attempt at reinstating the primacy of these existing traditions means the vanquishing faith in progress, the return to the past subjected to the fiction of divinities.

The crux of Fukuzawa's twofold justification is his strategy of translation. To forge differences between modern Western knowledge and existing knowledge tradition and to relegate the latter to the realm of the inadequate and the backward, Fukuzawa consciously expatriates *ri* from existing knowledge traditions and repositions it as a conceptual device exclusive to modern Western knowledge. As he blatantly declares,

全体此主義（プリンシプル）ト云フ文字ハ洋学者流ノ作為シタル文字ニシテ儒者ノ所有物ニアラザレバ [...]

(The term 'principle' was invented by scholars of Western learning. Therefore, it is not the property of Confucian scholars.)⁸¹

What is at work here is the almost insolent negation of the historicity of the term *ri*. It is not that scholars of existing knowledge traditions misconceptualise the term; they cannot even stake a claim for owning the term as their lexical and conceptual device. To be sure, such a claim is somewhat self-contradictory, as Fukuzawa argues in the same breath that those existing traditions have failed to accurately conceptualise what the principle actually is. But the point here for him is not historical accuracy. Fukuzawa's rendering of modern Western knowledge has undeniable overtones of (Neo-)Confucian dualism between *ri* and *ki*, its metaphysical postulate of the ultimate principle, its instruction for inductive learning, and much else. If differences cannot be clearly established, it is difficult to justify the purported inadequacy and backwardness of existing knowledge tradition. Differences must be forged. Hence, the negation of the historicity of *ri*, which, in turn, enables Fukuzawa to expatriate *ri* from existing traditions and treat it as the lexical and conceptual device exclusive to modern Western knowledge.

This is a strategy of disruption and erasure through translation. That existing traditions have failed to engage with *ri* and that they do not even possess *ri* are the arguments that consciously disrupt the temporality of *ri*. The past (*ri* as the signifier central to existing traditions) is disconnected from the present (*ri* as the signifier exclusive to modern Western knowledge). This temporal disruption, then, permits the conscious erasure of past significations, expunging any significations of *ri* that existing traditions have variously proposed. It is this disruption and erasure that creates a possibility for Fukuzawa to promote *ri* as a lexical and conceptual contrivance of

⁸¹ Fukuzawa, "Bungakukaiin ni tsugu," 206. As we notice, Fukuzawa equates here not the familiar term '理' but another term '主義' to the loanword 'プリンシプル' (principle). This equation, however, is within the semantic remit of the late 19th century. Then-widely circulated dictionary of philosophical terms defines the English term 'principle' as '*michi* (道), *gennri* (原理), and *shugi* (主義)'. See Inoue Tetsujirō (ed.), *Tetsugaku jii* 哲学字彙 (*Dictionary of Philosophy*), Tokyo: Tokyo University, 1881: 71. In a similar vein, Hepburn's Japanese-English Dictionary (1886) equates the English term 'principle' to '*ri* (理), *dōri* (道理), *kotowari* (理), *michi* (道), *moto* (素), *kizashi* (兆し), *riai* (理愛)'. James Curtis Hepburn, *A Japanese-English and English-Japanese Dictionary*, Tokyo: Z.P. Maruya & Co. Ltd., 1888: 900.

what he considers proper knowledge. In other words, the disruption and erasure transpose *ri* to a new domain of discourse and reconfigure the boundaries of valid and serious knowledge.

2.5.2. Rapture and Continuity

The second strategy for reconfiguring the semantic relationship between signifier and signification is to simultaneously establish continuity and rupture or else to appeal to the technique of historicisation and transvaluation. To understand this strategy, we shall return here to the corpus of Nishi Amane. As I have pointed out earlier, Nishi admits to having difficulty grasping the unifying principle of modern Western knowledge. As I have also explained, he resorts to translation as a means of expounding on what the principle is. By equating the principle to the familiar concept of *ri*, he designates *ri* as both *kotowari* (事分 / 言分) and *hazu* (筈), that is to say, what something is and what something must be. He also explains that *ri* is a certain way of relating to knowledge (reason), which, when applied to actual knowledge production, describes rather than prescribes a phenomenon, event, or action (laws of nature). As if unsatisfied with his own renderings, Nishi turns to the concept of *ri* itself and seeks to re-read its formation and semantic changes historically so that a new, contemporary meaning may be legitimately inscribed to the concept.

Nishi begins his reading with a rather banal observation of the historical emergence of the concept of *ri*.⁸² By attributing its origin to Chinese Neo-Confucianism, Nishi explains that those Confucian scholars of Song and Ming developed the concept of *ri* to challenge the Buddhist concept of emptiness (空: *śūnyatā*) and to argue for the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth.⁸³ Then, Nishi summarises that *ri* entails, in the Neo-Confucian semantic and discursive space, as that which dictates the inherent nature of human beings and the ontological being of all things – or else what he calls ‘*sei*’ (性: quality or nature) – and as that which manifests itself as *ki*.

⁸² Nishi Amane, “Ri no ji no setsu” 理の字の説 (“A Theory of the Term ‘Ri’”), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū 1-kan* 西周全集 1 卷 (*Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1*), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960 [1889]: 598-602. This text was based on Nishi’s 1889 lecture given at a gathering of Kōdōkai (弘道会), which was established in 1876 by Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) and had since become a leading private organisation to promote the idea of *shūshin* (moral education). Kōdōkai was especially prolific in promoting *Kyōiku chokugo* (Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890) and its ideology revolving around the imperial family as the absolute sovereign of the Japanese nation.

⁸³ Indeed, Chen Beixi wrote that “Buddhists see emptiness 空 (*kong*) as their main teaching [...] Buddhism has so deluded [people] that their flesh sags and their bones are brittle and cannot be reinvigorated. The harm Buddhism causes has two sources: one involves claims about blessings and punishments linked to life and death, which deceive the ignorant. The other involves lofty words on human nature, fate, and morality that delude even scholars.” Then, he went on to argue that “Buddhist doctrines seem similar to our Confucian accounts but in reality differ profoundly. We Confucians distinguish individual principles from physical realities and their generative force. Principle is extremely subtle and utmost difficult to apprehend. Buddhists point to generative force and consider it as human nature. Thinking that what is readily seen is human nature, they have no special means of cultivating human nature.” This English translation is from John Allen Tucker, “The Meanings of Words and Confucian Political Philosophy: A Study of Matsunaga Sekigo’s Ethics,” in Chun-Chieh Huang and John Allen Tucker (eds.), *Dao Companion to Japanese Confucian Philosophy*, New York, NY and London: Springer Dordrecht, 2014: 40. For the Japanese translation of Beixi’s work, see Chen Beixi, “Hokkei sensei jigi shōkō” 北溪先生字義詳講 (“Teacher Beixi’s Lectures on the Meanings of Terms”), in Okada Takehiko (ed.), *Kinsei kanseki sōkan: Shisō-hen 21-kan* 近世漢籍叢刊 思想編 21 卷 (*Early Modern Chinese Classics: Intellectual Thought, Vol.21*), Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1972: 46b-47a, 51a.

性は即ち理也、天陰陽五行を以て万物を化生す、氣にて以て形を成す、而て理も亦焉に賦せり、是に於て人物之生因て各其賦せらるる所の理を得て以て健順五常之徳を為す、所謂性なり

(Nature is the principle that gives birth to all things through *Yin-Yang* and the five elements that form the shape of things through *ki*. The principle is immanent. It is this principle that bores our being, determines our attributes, and names the five virtues – hence the nature of our being.)⁸⁴

There is nothing remarkable about this observation. Nishi is simply referring to the core ideas of Zhu Xi's *xing-li xue* (性理学), that is, 'nature is principle' (性即理) and 'nature is virtue' (性即善).⁸⁵ In so doing, he affirms, contra Fukuzawa, that the term *ri* is not a neologism of the late 19th century but has long functioned as an important conceptual and cognitive device for existing worldviews.

What follows, however, is interesting. Upon acknowledging the genesis of *ri* found in Neo-Confucianism, Nishi inserts a radical claim that is certainly a perversion for Neo-Confucians. He argues that it is not *ri* that transcends *ki*, as Neo-Confucians assert, but it is, in fact, *ki* that precedes *ri* because the formation of a thing – its substance, function, quality, and quantity – is dependent on *ki*.

密かに考ふるに其氣質之稟と称する者既に一定せは、是即ち後來万般の事に応する其中の主宰と成て、其方向を指定する者にして之を外にして別に所謂理なる者有る碧、また存す可き筈無きなり

(I secretly think that what we call material force, which provides certain qualities to things, is actually constant. This constant material force is what is at the core of each and everything, determining their attributes and functions. The principle does not and cannot exist outside of the material force.)⁸⁶

What Nishi's dissent forges is a sense of rupture in the discursive structure of the Neo-Confucian worldview. It forges an instance of disassociation with a new ordering of thought, here represented by the radical claim about *ki* as constant and determining, but without moving completely away from Confucian semantics. Based on this new order of thought, Nishi goes on to define *ri* as follows.

蓋し理といふ者は虚体にして、其氣稟性質の一定するに従て其事物に応する際に現はるる所の關係にして、唯人心の其關係を察するものに於てのみ観る可き者とす、凡そ万事万物苟も両性相對すれば其際に理生せざること莫し、仮令へは火の水に対し、木の金に対し、子の父に於ける、婦の夫に於けるか如し、其中間に必ず一定の理即ち關係の存せざること莫し

⁸⁴ Nishi, "Ri no ji no setsu," 599.

⁸⁵ For the development of *xing-li xue* in China, see, for example, Shimada Kenji, *Shushigaku to yōmeigaku* 朱子学と陽明学 (*Zhu Xi School and Yangming School*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967; Huang Yushun, "Return to life and reconstruct Confucianism: An outline of comparative study on Confucianism and phenomenology," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, 2:3, 2007: 454-473.

⁸⁶ Nishi, "Ri no ji no setsu," 600.

(The principle is incorporeal. It is a relation that emerges when a thing, which is dictated by the constant material force, interacts with another thing, which is also dictated by the constant material force. The principle is thus observable only when the human mind perceives such a relation. Whenever a thing with a certain quality interacts with another thing with a different quality, the interaction engenders the principle. For instance, when water interacts with fire, wood with metal, a child with a father, and a wife with a husband, there emerges a certain principle and hence a relation.)⁸⁷

This new definition of *ri* as a relation between two things, between two kinds of *ki*, represents a radical departure not only from Neo-Confucianism, which presumes the primacy of *ri*, but also from other strands of Confucianism, which view the world in terms of *ri-ki* dualism. For Nishi, *ri* and *ki* are not metaphysical entities autonomous from and interacting with one another. *Ki* is the basic character of an entity, be it a material constitutive of the natural world or the social status of individuals, which is constant and invariable. The basic character of water is unchanging across time and space. So is the basic character of a child. *Ri* is not the determinant of such a basic character. Rather, it is a stable effect that emerges when an entity interacts with another entity and when a relation is forged between two entities. Whenever water interacts with fire, the effect is the same across time and space. Whenever a child interacts with their father, the interaction encodes within itself the relational principles of how an individual behaves as a child and as a father. *Ri* is manifold. But in a certain relationship, it is constant. Hence, his equation of *ri* to *hazu* (筈: what a thing ‘ought to be’). *Ri* for Nishi is a set of regularities of the natural and human worlds. It is not something to which everything must conform but something that conforms to the way the phenomenal world is. At the same time, as he writes, *ri* is incorporeal and does not have a putative optimal form. Only when the human mind observes an interaction between entities does *ri* become perceptible. Hence, his equation of *ri* to *kotowari* (事分 / 言分: what is logically induced as regularities).

Nishi’s emphasis on the power of the observing mind is of particular interest. The assumption here is that it is, in fact, the observing mind that recognises or even establishes *ri* as such. It is through this assumption that Nishi moves away from the discursive and semantic space of (Neo-)Confucianism. Especially evident in Nishi’s assumption here is the trace of the Cartesian postulate about man’s capacity to know the incorporeal.⁸⁸ The edifice of the Cartesian shift from

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ A consensus among historians is that Nishi’s corpus was influenced, among others, by Auguste Comte. Comte was indeed adamant about the pre-positivistic elements in Descartes’s work, which led him to develop a profound critique of Descartes in *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-1842). However, he was equally open about his indebtedness to Descartes and, thus, made a direct attribution to the Cartesian method as the first attempt at articulating a complete system of positivist philosophy. Some Cartesian elements are, therefore, traceable, for instance, in Comte’s scepticism towards abstractions of higher mathematics and in his interest in method. For this reason, although Nishi rarely made a direct reference to Descartes, it is not so surprising to find Cartesian spectre in Nishi’s corpus. See Havens, “Comte, Mill, and the Thought of Nishi Amane in Meiji Japan”; Eric W. Smitbner, “Descartes and Auguste Comte,” *The French Review*, 41:5, 1968: 629-640. This parallel between Nishi’s exposition and the Cartesian postulate is pointed out also by Tomoe Nakamura, “Philosophical Scope of Ri without Ration,” *Tetsugaku: International Journal of the Philosophical Association of Japan*, 2, 2018: 228-247. One of the few mentions of Descartes in Nishi’s corpus can be found in his letter to Prof. Hoffmann, which he wrote while on a ship, Ternate, to the Netherlands. In the letter, Nishi explained his general interests in modern Western philosophy, including the Cartesian tradition. “哲学 philosophie と称せられる方面の学問の領域も修めたいと思う。我が国法が禁じている宗教思想は、デカルト Descartes、ロック Locke、ヘーゲル Hegel、カント Kant 等の唱道したこととは相違していると思うから、これらも学みたいと思う” (I would also like to study the field of knowledge called philosophy. I believe that religious philosophy

ontology to epistemology, that is, from Aristotelian speculative philosophy to what Descartes calls practical philosophy of utility, is the presumption that to know is essentially to have recourse to the workings of the world external to the human mind for the purpose of mastering it.⁸⁹ But how can one know and master the exteriority of one's mind? How can one go beyond epistemological idealism, which presumes that all one can know is the mind, for it is the only thing that truly exists? The Cartesian solution is to argue that the world external to the mind can be grasped as *res extensa*, as corporeal substances that remain constant. Attending to that which one can actually observe, then, the exteriority becomes accessible, and, simultaneously, the man exits the realm of contemplation and enters that of mastering. As Descartes argues, "to be possessed of a vigorous mind is not enough: the prime requisite is rightly to apply it."⁹⁰ In other words, to know is not simply to recognise the world as it is but to appropriately re-present its immanent workings, to apprehend discrete realities of all that which constitute the world. Not to mention Nishi's understanding of *ri* as corporeal gestures towards the Cartesian notion of *res extensa*; his emphasis on the power of the observing mind, of thinking faculties, infers the Cartesian reconfiguration of the way in which the knower relates to the known. In other words, Nishi's presumption of the observing mind implies that the knower is no longer simply inhabiting the world to be known but begins instead to disassociate itself from the known as to view it. This presumption is especially interesting because, as I read it, it functions as a medium through which Nishi leaves the discursive and semantic space of (Neo-)Confucianism and enters the discursive and semantic space of modern Western knowledge.

Nishi's is a translational strategy of historicisation and semantic transvaluation, of continuity and rupture. Unlike Fukuzawa, Nishi does not view *ri* as a conceptual commodity exclusive to modern Western knowledge. Nor does he seek to expatriate *ri* from its context of historical emergence. Nishi's take here is a bit more nuanced. While *ri* acquires different meanings when foundational premises of the world change, while the signification of *ri* is manifold, the signifier *ri* remains the primary qualifier of serious and valid knowledge. Put otherwise, at the level of signification, we see semantic transvaluation in Nishi's exposition of *ri*, which foregrounds a transgression from the discursive and semantic space of (Neo-)Confucianism to that of modern Western knowledge. Hence, a rupture. However, the historicisation of the signifier *ri* reconfirms its continuing significance as the conceptual device to determine the remit of proper knowledge.

banned in our country differs from the thought of Descartes, Locke, Hegel, and Kant. I want to learn their ideas.) Nishi Amane, quoted in Ōkubo Toshiaki, "Kaisetsu" 解説 ("Commentary"), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane zenshū*, 2-kan 西周全集 2 卷 (*Complete Works of Nishi Amane*, Vol. 2), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1966: 701-702 [683-770].

⁸⁹ Descartes writes, "it is possible to reach knowledge that will be of much utility in this life, and that instead of the speculative philosophy [...] we can find a practical one, by which, [...] we] make ourselves master and possessor of nature." Rene Descartes, "Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking Truth in the Field of Science," in Laurence J. Lafleur (trans.), *Descartes: Philosophical Essays*, New York, NY: Library of the Liberal Arts, 1985: 45.

⁹⁰ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method and the Meditations*, John Veitch (trans.), New York: Cosimo Inc., 2008: 11. On the method of knowing, Descartes writes, "The *first* was never to accept anything for true which I did not clearly know to be such; that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitancy and prejudice, and to comprise nothing more in my judgment than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all ground of doubt. The *second*, to divide each of the difficulties under examination into as many parts as possible, and as might be necessary for its adequate solution. The *third*, to conduct my thoughts in such order that, by commencing with objects the simplest and easiest to know, I might ascend by little and little, and, as it were, step by step, to the knowledge of the more complex; assigning in thought a certain order even to those objects which in their own nature do not stand in a relation of antecedence and sequence. And the *last*, in every case to make enumerations so complete, and reviews so general, that I might be assured that nothing was omitted." Ibid., 21.

The historicisation, in other words, transforms the signifier into a vehicle to move across the purported temporal and epistemic boundaries, that is to say, across one spatio-temporally specific worldview to another. Hence, continuity.

§

2.6. Différance

If modern Western knowledge was essentially a historical product of Enlightenment Europe and its foundational premises were not readily available to those outside, how did Meiji intellectuals grasp it and justify it as serious and valid vis-à-vis other existing knowledge traditions? As we have seen, the primary strategy was translation, not, obviously, as a linguistic exercise but as an epistemic exercise. To put it schematically, translation took three orientations. One was to anchor modern Western knowledge into an existing worldview and reposition it within an existing regime of truth by reconfiguring the conceptual and semantic scope of existing cognitive devices. An illustrative example is the (Neo-)Confucian attempt of Nakamura Masanao and Sakatani Rourō to classify modern Western knowledge as that which belongs to the realm of *ki* and that which is subjected to the dictate of (Neo-)Confucian concept of *ri*. The second orientation was to expand the semantic scope of *ri* and to qualify modern Western knowledge as a knowledge tradition that took *ri* simultaneously as something to be known and as something to dictate the pursuit of knowledge. Here, the signifier *ri* was evacuated and redefined, through translation, from existing knowledge traditions and imposed as the qualifying marker for serious knowledge and as the qualifying cognitive device for intellectual inquiry. This evacuation, redefinition, and imposition of *ri* that we see in the works of, for instance, Nishi Amane, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakae Chōmin, and Kikuchi Dairoku, articulated in turn an enabling condition for comparison. A newly established signification of *ri* as the qualifying marker for modern Western knowledge was projected back onto existing knowledge traditions. Thus, the third orientation was to argue for the difference between modern Western knowledge and existing knowledge traditions, which, then, sanctioned a discursive manoeuvre to relegate the latter to the rank of irrelevant and inadequate. New meanings encoded to *ri*, as we have seen in the translation strategies of Nishi and Fukuzawa, effectively redrew the boundaries of serious knowledge.

Despite these differences in orientation, intention, and outcome, these translational practices also share some underlying tropes. Most obviously, there was a persistent conviction that any serious knowledge must revolve around *ri*, however one may define it, and that knowledge was undergirded essentially by the *ri*-knowledge structuration. This conviction functioned as a contingent silence for comprehending and relocating hitherto foreign modern Western knowledge within the semantic and epistemic space of Japanese intellectual life. To this end, whichever translational strategy one may resort to, *ri* became a liminal space, a transformative threshold, to reconfigure the very semantic and epistemic space. In other words, *ri* became a representation of continuity. Every translational attempt that resorted to *ri* became a moment of reifying a sense of semiotic continuity at the point of semantic disruption. And yet, the conviction in *ri* and in the *ri*-knowledge structuration also constituted an instance of *différance* – deferral and suspension of meanings. It is impossible to argue for the semantic and conceptual equilibrium between

reason/natural laws and *ri*. What we understand as reason/natural laws is not equivalent to what we understand as *ri*, because each of these concepts requires an endless chain of specific signifiers that sustains what it actually means.

Thus, I have a suspicion about any claims of complete epistemic disjuncture. Think, for instance, Fukuzawa Yukichi's declaration that "we can only enter into the world of science (*kyūri*: 窮理) by completely doing away with blind credulity towards the outdated theory of *yin-yang* and the five elements."⁹¹ Think also Maruyama Masao's historical observation that "a modern approach to the investigation of principle could not be developed without first eliminating the nonmodern approach."⁹² The allure of these claims is understandable, especially when one seeks to treat Meiji as an instance of disjuncture between modern and premodern. Yet, my argument here is that what Fukuzawa perceived as inadequate or what Maruyama viewed as nonmodern, in fact, continued to exist. The liminal space of *ri* and the very method of grasping modern Western knowledge, that is to say, translation, represented a certain cognitive continuity in the fundamental qualification of serious knowledge – the *ri*-knowledge structuration.

And, here emerges a new conundrum. Surely, the *ri*-knowledge structuration enabled those Meiji intellectuals to grasp a foreign knowledge tradition with a familiar cognitive schema. Yet, at the same time, the *ri*-knowledge structuration prevented them from moving completely away from a familiar postulation of what serious knowledge should be, which suggests that the product of translation (modern Western knowledge understood with the *ri*-knowledge structuration) was not necessarily equal to the object of translation (modern Western knowledge). A plausible conjecture, then, is that a knowledge tradition presented as 'modern' in the works of Nishi, Fukuzawa, and others was, in fact, not a mere imitation and appropriation of modern Western knowledge.

⁹¹ Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, 37.

⁹² Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 182.

CHAPTER 3

EPISTEMIC ENCOUNTERS

Students must first of all know how to doubt.

Cheng Yi¹

§

3.1. Semantic Transvaluation

Ludwig Wittgenstein once noted that an encounter with a worldview, an intellectual tradition, a knowledge far removed from one's own was an instance of extreme doubt. For there was no common ground shared between their worldview and one's own for evaluating a truth claim, establishing truth, and communicating truth, one would inevitably begin to doubt that which grounded one's notion of truth and regimes of discourse.

608. Is it wrong for me to be guided in my actions by the propositions of physics? Am I to say I have no ground for doing so? Isn't precisely this what we call a 'good ground'?

609. Supposing we met people who did not regard that as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? – If we call this 'wrong' aren't we using our language-game as a base from which to combat theirs?

610. And are we right or wrong to combat it? Of course there are all sorts of slogans which will be used to support our proceedings.

611. Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and heretic.

612. I said I would 'combat' the other man – but wouldn't I offer him reason? Certainly, but how far would they go?²

What I seek to do in this chapter is to reconsider the instance in which two principles really did meet. That is to say, the first relatively systematic engagement, if not the earliest engagement, with modern Western knowledge through the medium of that which we now call Rangaku. My purpose

¹ Quoted in John A. Tucker, "Skepticism and the Neo-Confucian Canon: Itō Jinsai's Philosophical Critique of the *Great Learning*," *Dao*, 12, 2013: 12 [11-39].

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, New York, NY and London: Harper Collins, 1972: §608-12.

of this historical detour is rather straightforward. It is to understand how earlier engagements with modern Western knowledge prepared a condition of possibility for semantic transvaluation we have seen in the works of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nishi Amane, and their contemporaries. It is, therefore, also to challenge the myth of temporal and intellectual disjuncture between the Tokugawa and Meiji periods that we are often too quick to assume.

Of course, inserting this sense of disjuncture was very much the discursive strategy for the likes of Fukuzawa to assert the legitimacy of a knowledge tradition that no longer resonated with moral and ethical concerns nor with human purposes and aspirations. In his dialectic of national strength and learning, Fukuzawa urged his contemporaries to reject the continuing allure of Chinese cosmology and to pursue the way of learning that was oriented towards what he defined as *ri* – natural laws dictating the phenomenal world.

智力発生ノ道ニ於テ第一着ノ急須ハ古習ノ惑溺ヲ一掃シテ西洋ニ行ハルル文明ノ
精神ヲ取ルニ在リ陰陽五行ノ惑溺ヲ払ハザレバ窮理ノ道ニ入ル可ラズ
(The road to the ‘exhaustive investigation of Principle’ cannot be entered without sweeping
away the misguided notion of *yin* and *yang* and the five elements.)³

The term *kyūri* (窮理: investigation of principle) is the operative word for Fukuzawa’s disjuncture between the past pursuit of knowledge and what he recognises as the proper pursuit of knowledge. And yet, what we see in his argument above is the familiar translational strategy of disruption and erasure. Recall here Fukuzawa’s translation of *ri* discussed in the previous chapter. In his translation, the term *ri* was extracted from the existing knowledge traditions and repositioned as a conceptual commodity exclusive to modern Western knowledge. Fukuzawa was consciously resorting to the same strategy and operationalising the term *kyūri* as a signifier for the pursuit of knowledge removed from cosmological tethers of divine intention. But as we know, the term *kyūri* had long been a signifier of (Neo-)Confucian methods of scholarly learning. It had long constituted one of the two nuclei, along with the concept of *kyokei* (居敬: the method of moral learning), of (Neo-)Confucian faith in the betterment of the human condition.⁴

It is easy to dismiss this translational strategy of disjuncture and erasure as a mere reflection of

³ Fukuzawa, *Bunmei-ron no gairyaku*, Vol. 1, 49. This English translation is by Mikiso Hane. See Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 182. It is important to recognise here that contemporary interpretation of what Fukuzawa specifically means by *kyūri* in this passage has not been settled. Hane, whose translation I endorse here, puts forward a reading of Fukuzawa’s usage of *kyūri* as that which designates a general attitude towards knowledge, ‘the spirit of civilisation,’ that, in the eyes of Fukuzawa, sustains Western civilisation. In contrast, Dilworth and Hurst, for instance, seem to suggest in their widely cited translation of Fukuzawa’s work that the idea of *kyūri* that Fukuzawa speaks of here is a formalised field of (Western) natural science with an established set of methodological and technical postulates. Their translation reads, “the first order of business in development of our intellectual powers lies in sweeping away credulity to past customs and adopting the spirit of Western civilization. We can only enter into the world of natural science (*kyūri*) by completely doing away with blind credulity towards the outdated theory of yin-yang and the five elements.” See Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, 9-10. I understand the temptation of reading Fukuzawa’s usage of *kyūri* as Dilworth and Hurst do, especially given his intellectual affinity to *butsurigaku* (物理学: physics). But this affinity does not necessarily mean that *kyūri* for Fukuzawa is a narrowly defined, disciplinised, and professionalised field of physics. As suggested earlier, Fukuzawa’s idea of *butsurigaku* encompasses various fields of knowledge sustained by scientificity rather than a specific field of science.

⁴ As *I Ching* famously stated, “窮理盡性以至於命” (They [the sages] (thus) made exhaustive discrimination of what was right, and effected the complete development of (every) nature, till they arrived (in the Yi) at what was appointed for it (by Heaven). The English translation is borrowed from *The Sacred Books of China: The I Ching*, James Legge (trans.), New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963.

Fukuzawa's idiosyncratic conviction in a knowledge removed from cosmological presumptions or the overall ideology of Meiji modernisation that depended on the sense of disjuncture from the past. And yet, there remain some semiotic concerns. Under which condition can one legitimately distinguish two worldviews – in this case, (Neo-)Confucianism and modern Western knowledge – while operationalising fundamental conceptual and cognitive devices of one worldview to justify the legitimacy and even superiority of the other? My proposition here is twofold. The first and perhaps trite proposition is that Rangaku's engagement with modern Western knowledge prepared a condition of possibility for Meiji intellectuals to operationalise and commodify hitherto (Neo-)Confucian conceptual and cognitive devices for the purpose of promoting modern Western knowledge as knowledge tout court. The second proposition, which I view as more significant, is that the politics of knowledge since the arrival of Jesuit missionaries and what I call 'scepticism as a method' inherent in the Neo-Confucian tradition forged a space to accommodate modern Western knowledge within the existing intellectual landscape as a knowledge tradition that could adequately address things outside the remit of existing knowledge traditions.

For Rangaku's engagement with modern Western knowledge, translation was a crucial instrument. And Rangaku scholars' translational practices encompassed both linguistic and epistemic exercises. Most obviously, the development of Rangaku relied primarily on translation as a linguistic exercise, as a strategy for communicating the contents of texts produced in Western languages, be it in Dutch, German, French, or English. Indeed, some bibliographical catalogues from the Tokugawa period suggest that a significant number of Western texts were translated into the Japanese language and circulated among those interested. For example, a catalogue compiled in 1841 lists 103 Western titles.⁵ Another catalogue from 1852 records 503 Western texts, along with 117 names of translators.⁶ At the same time, Rangaku also relied on translation as an epistemic exercise, elaborating on a specific order of discourse that sustained the validity of what was said in a source text rather than merely establishing a linguistic equivalence between two languages.

To allude to my point, let me offer some examples. One is Maeno Ryōtaku's (1723-1803) *Shichiyō chokujitsu kō* (七曜直日考: Investigation of Star-gazing, 1792), a translation of Egbert Buys' *Nieuw en Volkomen Woordenboek van Konsten en Weetenschappen, Vol. X* (1778).⁷ This text, as one of the first comprehensive translations of Western calendrical science, sought to

⁵ Yoshida Jibei, *Waran honyaku-sho mokuroku* 和蘭翻譯書目録 (*A Catalogue of Dutch-Japanese Translated Works*), 1841. A digitised version is accessible at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/3508483>.

⁶ Hotei Omobito, *Seiyōgakka yakujutsu mokuroku* 西洋学家訳述目録 (*Catalogue of Translations with Elaboration by Scholars of Western Studies*), 1852. For a digitised version, see <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/3510717/5>. There are some useful postwar compilations of Rangaku texts. See, for example, Kaikoku hyakunen kinen bunka jigyōkai (ed.), *Sakokujidai nihonjin no kaigaichishik: Sekaichiri seiyōshi ni kansuru bunken kaidai* 鎖国時代日本人の海外知識: 世界地理西洋史に関する文献解題 (*Japan's Knowledge of Foreign Countries during the Period of National Seclusion: A Bibliographical Introduction to World Geography and History*), Tokyo: Kengensha, 1953; Miyashita Saburō, "A Bibliography of the Dutch Medical Books Translated into Japanese," *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences*, 25, 1975: 8-72; Annick Horiuchi, "Kinsei nihon shisōshi ni okeru honyaku no yakuwari" 近世日本西洋史における翻訳の役割 ("The Role of Translation in Early Modern Japanese Intellectual History"), in Tsujimoto Masashi and Xu Xingqing (eds.), *Shisōshi kara higashi-ajia o kangaeru* 思想史から東アジアを考える (*Thinking East Asia from the Perspective of Intellectual History*), Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2016: 271-294.

⁷ Maeno Ryōtaku was an avid learner of various Western languages, a medical practitioner, and one of the chief translators, along with Sugita Genpaku, of a Dutch version of Johann Adam Kulmus' (1689-1745) *Anatomische Tabellen* (1722), circulated in Japan under the title of *Kaitai shinsho* (解体新書: New Text on Anatomy, 1774).

introduce a new temporal concept to Japanese readers. In his effort to make sense of a new temporal concept, Maeno compares Western calendrical science to the Japanese and Chinese calendrical traditions, elucidating differences and similarities. For him, being true to the original is more than simply establishing the linguistic equilibrium between two languages. Thus, he writes in the introductory section that his text is a result of “extracting the gist of the sourcebook, translating it, and elaborating upon it with my own limited knowledge.”⁸ Sugita Genpaku (1733-1817) also makes a similar point in his *Oranda iji mondō* (和蘭醫事問答: Questions Concerning the Matters of Dutch Medicine, 1795) and *Rangaku kotohajime* (蘭学事始: The Beginning of Dutch Studies, 1815). Reflecting on his translation of a Dutch version of Johann Adam Kulmus’ *Anatomische Tabellen* (1741), Sugita acknowledges that he has made a number of approximations, rather than word-to-word translation, in order to convey the gist of the original text.⁹

This notion of translation as elaboration and approximation also suggests that there exists an enabling space of manoeuvre to combine various source materials and to represent them in the Japanese language as one text. This is especially true to the earlier engagement with modern Western knowledge specifically and with the West more generally. Arai Hakuseki’s (1657-1725) *Sairan igen* (采覧異言: Various Sights and Strange Words, 1713) is an illustrative example here.¹⁰ This comprehensive geographical study of the world is based on combining and elaborating on a wide array of available sources, including Matteo Ricci’s (1552-1610) world map known as *Konyo bankoku zenzu* (坤輿万国全図: A Map of the Myriad Countries of the World, 1602), Joan Blaeu’s (1596-1673) *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, sive, Atlas Novus* (1649), various Chinese geographical texts, Hakuseki’s own conversation with Giovanni Battista Sidotti (1668-1714). Again, the point of translation is not about establishing a linguistic equilibrium. Rather, it is about making sense of and communicating the essence of hitherto unfamiliar geographical knowledge.

Among those scholars of the Tokugawa period, Yoshida Chōshuku (1779-1824) offers a succinct explanation of why translation as elaboration and approximation better suits their

⁸ Maeno Ryōtaku, *Shichiyō chokujitsu kō* 七曜直日考 (*Investigation of Star-gazing*), 1792. The digitised version is accessible at: https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ni05/ni05_02382/. The original sentence reads, “其要領ヲ抄シテコレヲ訳シ且浅知識ヲ述テ。”

⁹ Sugita Genpaku, *Rangaku kotohajime* 蘭学事始 (*The Beginning of Dutch Studies*), Tokyo: Hayashi Shigeka, 1890 [1815]: 48. See also, Sugita Genpaku, *Oranda iji mondō* 和蘭醫事問答 (*Questions Concerning the Matters of Dutch Medicine*), Tokyo: Takebe Seian, 1795. While today’s historical scholarship tends to focus on the achievements of those Rangaku scholars close to the power, such as Sugita Genpaku, Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757-1827), Motoki Yoshinaga (1735-1794), and Shizuki Tadao (1760-1806), Aoki Toshiyuki argues for the importance of earlier Dutch-Japanese translation works of those scholars of ‘provincial’ Dutch learning. According to Aoki, those earlier works produced in locations far removed from the centre of political gravity pioneered the establishment of translation techniques within the Rangaku tradition. This has led Rebekah Clements to conclude that “the significance of *A New Treatise on Anatomy* [...] lies in the fact that it was the first major work of translation from Dutch by established Edo-based scholars who published their efforts in print, and went to great length to obtain the approval of the shogunate in order to do so.” See Aoki Toshiyuki, *Zaison rangaku no kenkyū* 在村蘭学の研究 (*A Study of Dutch Studies in Villages*), Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 1998; Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation*, 148. For the Shogunate-sponsored Dutch studies, see Satō Shōsuke, *Yōgaku-shi no kenkyū* 洋学史の研究 (*Study of the History of Western Learning*), Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1980.

¹⁰ To be sure, Arai Hakuseki is not a scholar of Rangaku in a strict sense. He was initially employed as a Confucian scholar by Tokugawa Ienobu (1662-1712) when the latter was still the head of Kōfu Domain. When Ienobu became the 6th Shogun of the Edo Bakufu, Arai was promoted to the rank of counsel of the Shogunate. And, as a counsel, Arai offered his observation on the West under the title of *Seiyō kibun* (西洋紀聞: A Study of the Occident, 1709), which influenced the subsequent development of Rangaku and Yōgaku.

purposes. In *Taisei netsubyō ron* (泰西熱病論: On Fever Diseases, 1814), Yoshida defends his method of translation as elaboration and approximation that he borrows from the Chinese tradition of translating Sanskrit.

訳有対訳有意訳何謂対訳影彼土之文而直訳之是也故顛錯之累何謂意訳唯主其意弗必其文剩者削之不足者補之以訳之是也故意訳者以対訳為負此文対訳者以意訳為負彼文彼我長短不知其熟賢佛祖統記云乾毒天息災入于宋魏訳諸經也其法回綴文字以為句義刊削冗長定取句義[...]是亦貴意訳之證也寧有少負其文毋寧負其文之意是余之所以主意訳也

(For translation, there are two methods: ‘*taiyaku*’ and ‘*iyaku*’. The former is to translate the original text word-by-word to establish semantic equivalence. It means direct translation. And yet, it cannot completely avoid the pitfall of semantic inversion and semantic illusion. The latter method is to paraphrase and elaborate on the gist of the original text and, for this reason, not a literal translation. If something is unnecessary, you delete it. If something is missing, you supplement it. Therefore, a text produced with this method of paraphrasing and elaboration differs from a text presented with the method of direct translation, even if both are translations of the same source text. In fact, the product of direct translation is often far removed from the source text. Previously, I did not know how effective paraphrasing and elaboration could be. But if we look at the translation of ‘*Juāndú Devaśāntika*’ in the Buddhist scripture during the Song dynasty, which was based on the inquiry into words and extraction of meanings [...], this proves the primacy of the method of paraphrasing and elaboration. A text reproduced through this method may not be linguistically the same as the original. And yet, the meaning of the original can be aptly extracted and presented in the target language. This is why I prefer this method of paraphrasing and elaboration.)¹¹

The primary goal of translation is not to establish linguistic equivalence between two languages. Nor is it to maintain the authenticity of a source text. The goal is to anchor the foreign into the familiar by elaborating on the core premises and claims of a source text in a way that makes sense in the semantic field of the target language. In other words, translation is a process through which the translator dismantles specific signifiatory relationality and context-dependency in the semantic field of the original language and re-assembles them in the semantic field of the target language.

The point of my engagement with Rangaku in the following is, therefore, not so much about accounting for which texts were translated and which concepts and ideas were introduced to the Japanese. Rather, it is about accounting for the ways in which Rangaku forged, through translation, a legitimate space to accommodate modern Western knowledge within the existing semantic and intellectual landscape and the ways in which a broader political and intellectual context of the Tokugawa period heteronomously authorised the development of Rangaku and thus a location of modern Western knowledge within the existing semantic and intellectual landscape.

¹¹ Yoshida Chōshuku, *Taisei netsubyō ron* 泰西熱病論 (*On Fever Diseases*), Tokyo: Tōtō shorin, 1814.

3.2. Translating Modern Western Knowledge

In *Kizanroku* (帰山録: Returning to My Fane, 1776), Miura Baien stipulates that the concept of *kyūri* is no longer a conceptual device exclusive to (Neo-)Confucianism but is now also applicable to modern Western knowledge undergirded by a very different settlement on how knowledge must be pursued.¹² By recalling his conversation with a Dutch translator, Miura writes as follows.

松村と西洋の事を語るに因て松村曰く西洋の学畢竟窮理の学也務めて物の性を知るに在り性を知るにて能物を成すといへり此窮理の字も性の字も宋儒の所謂と同じきにも非ざれども西洋の学は能くものの理を推し極め物の性を盡す能く道を小にせず物を天地の如く容れ天地に達観せんとならば能く天地の条理をしり是非を大同上に分ち各好尚を海の如く容るべし是乃天地を師とする也

(When Matsumura and I talked about the West, he said that Western scholarship was, after all, a scholarship investigating the principle [窮理]. It is about understanding the nature [性] of things, for it is the nature that makes things what they are. Here, what they mean by the principle [理] and the nature [性] differs from how Confucian scholars of Song understand them. And yet, Western scholarship, like Confucianism, is about investigating the principle of things and understanding their nature. If one wishes to view the world as it is and to attain certainties about the world without narrowing one's mind, then, one must comprehend the ultimate workings of the universe and the earth, distinguish right from wrong, accept general orientations of things as ocean accepts everything, and thus make the universe and the earth one's teacher.)¹³

We see here Miura's conscious operationalisation of the familiar existing concepts such as *kyūri*, *ri*, and *sei* to make sense of a foreign knowledge tradition. However, it is important to recognise here that Miura is not dissenting from the existing usage of these concepts, nor from specific Neo-Confucian meanings encoded in them. He is simply expanding the semantic scope of these concepts to make modern Western knowledge comparable to existing knowledge traditions.

Indeed, concepts such as *kyūri*, *ri*, and *sei* are deeply ingrained in Neo-Confucianism. As Zhu Xi's thesis of *xing ji ri* (性即理: nature is the principle) encapsulates, the nature of things, including human nature, is transcendently anchored by *tian* (天: Heaven), that is, by *ri*. Nothing escapes

¹² Miura Baien, *Kizanroku* 帰山録 (*Returning to My Fane*), in *Baien zensyū* 梅園全集 1 卷 (*Complete Works of Baien, Vol. I*), Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1912 [1776]: 1057-1104. I will come back to Baien's own designation of *kyūri* within the scope of his Jōrigaku (条理学: Rationalist studies) in Chapter 4.

¹³ Ibid., 1103-1104. The translator named 'Matsumura' is probably Matsumura Mototsuna, born in Nagasaki and later in the 1770s worked for Shimazu Shigehide (1745-1833) of Satsuma domain. Matsumura eventually became a prolific writer of Western astronomy, geography, and botanical categorisation. For his brief biography, see Kanbashi Norimasa, "Shimazu Shigehide ni tsukaeta orandatūshi Matsumura Mototsuna" 島津重豪に仕えたオランダ通詞松村元綱 ("A Dutch Translator Matsumura Mototsuna Who Served Shimazu Shigehide"), *Kadai Shigaku*, 24, 1976: 1-13.

the dictate of the a priori-postulated absolute principle of all things.¹⁴ This means that humans are integral to the world that is ostensibly external to itself, and moral and ethical concerns are intimately intertwined with knowledge about the world. Neo-Confucians thus propose that *gewu zhizhi* (格物致知: investigating things and perfecting knowledge) enables one to arrive at moral and ethical conclusions. To this end, Neo-Confucian knowledge is internal to humans. The pursuit of principle (*kyūri*) by investigating things and perfecting knowledge about things external to humans ultimately arrives back at moral and ethical conclusions. These concepts, when used to make sense of modern Western knowledge, are registered with different meanings. *Ri* represents here not the cosmological postulate of the absolute principle of Heaven but the principle of things, something analogous to laws of nature. *Sei* designates the specific quality of things that has little to do with human nature. And *kyūri* entails the pursuit of knowledge about things that exist independently of human desires and aspirations. It is to understand the principle of things external to man manifesting as their fundamental attributes. Hence, the universe and the earth are one's teachers, one's sources of knowledge.

These new significations certainly mark an ontological and epistemological departure from the (Neo-)Confucian worldview, wherein knowledge about things is internal to humans and, therefore, is the habit of mind. By expanding the semantic scope of *ri*, *sei*, and *kyūri*, Miura implies that not all knowledge is reduced to moral and ethical conclusions for being and becoming. There exists a world 'out there', so to speak, external to humans, neither being reflexive of nor having recourse to human virtues. To know this external world, attending to the words of sages is inadequate; one must instead engage with all that which makes up this external world.

How did the scholars of Rangaku expand, through their writings, the semantic scope of existing concepts integral to (Neo-)Confucian knowledge and, by extension, the epistemic purview of 'serious' and 'valid' knowledge? To what extent and in which way did such a semantic and epistemic expansion reshape the notion of what knowledge ought to be and how one might pursue it? Rangaku, as I see it, had more to do with developing enunciative strategies of semantic transvaluation and articulating a new possibility of knowledge than with introducing new calendrical science, a new medical tradition, a new geographical perception, and so on and so forth.

3.2.1. Internationality and Externality

To consider these questions, let us return to the works of Maeno Ryōtaku. At the beginning of *Kanrei higen* (管蠡秘言: Secret Words about Narrow Views, 1777), he succinctly summarises the essence of Western scholarship.

以管窺天以蠡測海用心窺測不知其道知者不言言者不知可言非秘秘在言外

(Look at the sky with an optical instrument. Measure the sea with shells. And use your mind to look at how things could be. He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know. What is to be said is not a secret, but what is unknown is outside of what is

¹⁴ As Zhu Xi writes, “莫之為而為者、天也。莫之致而至者、命也。[...] 盖以理言之謂之天、自人言之謂之命、其實則一而已。” (That which is done without man doing is from Heaven. That which happens without man causing is from the ordinance of Heaven. [...] From the point of view of the principle, this is called Heaven; from the point of view of humans, it is called a decree. But both are one and the same in essence.) See Zhu Xi, *Mengzi jizhu: Wanzhang zhangju* 6.1. 孟子集注: 万章章句 (*Commentary on Wan Zhang I*).

said.)¹⁵

Immediately noticeable is the fact that Maeno's text is dotted with references to ancient Chinese phrases. 'Look at the sky with an optical instrument; measure the sea with shells' is from Dong Zhongshu, which in *Han shu* (漢書: Book of Han, 111) means to suggest the inadequacy of observation, measurement and deduction. Obviously, Maeno refers to this phrase from Dong Zhongshu with an opposite effect, that is to say, to warrant a mode of knowledge production based on observation, measurement, and deduction. As Maeno understands it, Western scholarship examines the universe devoid of divine intentions with an instrument of observation; it measures the vastness of the ocean by scoops made of shells; it deduces something seemingly beyond comprehension through the capacity of the mind to synthesise. Then, he refers to a phrase from Lao Tzu, 'he who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know,' which, in the Taoist tradition, constitutes the dictum that wisdom transcends words. Here, again, Maeno is inverting the meaning of the phrase to ridicule the (Neo-)Confucian obsession with the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth. He sees that the secret of the world, that is, the world external to man, lies not in the words of sages but outside those words and that Western scholarship seeks to arrive at the secret of the world not through polemical debates but through observation, measurement, and deduction.

Maeno's treatise is indeed amusing and clever. Yet, its rhetorical ingenuity cannot offer a solid ground for actually differentiating modern Western knowledge from (Neo-)Confucianism. One cannot help but wonder how his claim of 'making the universe and earth one's teacher' differs from Zhu Xi's dictum of 'investigating things and perfecting knowledge' or from Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken's emphasis on the importance of attaining knowledge with practical implication, such as botany, agriculture, taxonomy, and mathematics, for the betterment less of individual virtues but more of social condition. Maeno's strategy of differentiation is, in fact, not in text but in textuality, which moulds a certain figure of the knower and a relationship between the knower and the known.

To allude to my point, it is instructive to take a very brief detour to Hayashi and Kaibara, because what they have to say about the knower vis-à-vis the known conspicuously reminds us of what Maeno remains silent on. In *Daigiroku* (大疑録: Grave Doubt, 1714), Kaibara observes that those who seek to know are never free from biases in their discernment.

人非聖人雖賢者多有偏曲故其學識性行亦必有通有塞有所長有所短其所通必開明其所塞必固滯

(People are not sages and, even if they are wise, they often have biases. In both scholarship and disposition, certainly, they may have discernment or they may be impeded in their understanding. Therefore, they will have strong points and weak points. What is understood will definitely become clear, but what is blocked definitely stagnates.)¹⁶

Precisely because the knower is a biased being for their embedded existence, the purpose of pursuing knowledge, *kyūri*, is to confront and overcome one's biases through the rehearsal of 'investigating things and perfecting knowledge.' It is, in other words, to cultivate a mental habit

¹⁵ Maeno Ryōtaku, *Kanrei higen* 管蠡秘言 (*Secret Words about Narrow Views*), 1777.

¹⁶ Kaibara Ekken, *Daigiroku* 大疑録 (*Grave Doubt*), Osaka: Aburaya Jinshichi, 1767 [1714]: 8. The English translation is borrowed from Heisig et al. (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 361.

in order to arrive at *ri*. And this act of cultivating a mental habit is in itself an individual virtue because humans are embedded beings. What Kaibara implies here is that the knower and the known are integral to one another. The absolute and transcendental principle to be known is also immanent in humans who seek to know it. This parallels Hayashi's claim in *Santokushō* (三徳抄: Extract of Three Primary Virtues, n.d.) that *ri* is ultimately internal to man and can be found in the human mind.

今日も一つの理をきはめ、明日も一つの理をきはむれば、つもりつもりて疑なかるべし。只だ一つの理をきはめつくして、萬理皆通ずべし。大方にんきはむるにあらず、其の理の中に又一より十までの次第あるをよく究めて、内外終始まんまるに、くはしく合點するときは萬事にわたるなり。是れ外より内に入り、表より裏に通じ、始めよりも終りにいたり、浅きより深きにいたり、あらきよりこまかなるにいたる。皆我が心の理をきはめて智をつくす工夫より、末はあまたあれども、根本は只一なるが故に、一理を以て萬事をつらぬき、一心を以て諸事に通ずるなり、其の理といふものは、即ち我が心なり。心の外に別に理あるにあらず。

(If today one principle is investigated, and tomorrow, one more principle is inquired into, soon we will be free of doubts. If we thoroughly penetrate one principle, myriad principles will be penetrated, even though we have not investigated matters on a grand scale. Within a single principle, we can gradually progress from one to ten others. When these are investigated so that we completely comprehend them internally and externally, as well as their beginning and ending, then our understanding spans myriad principles. In this, we move from the outside inwards, from the exterior to the interior, from the beginning to the ending, from the shallow ground to the deeper, and from rough outlines to more detailed particulars. When all our mind's principles are investigated, we will have thoroughly exhausted the limits of wisdom. Considered relative to practice, while there are many extremities, there is only one source. For this reason, we can penetrate myriad matters by understanding only one principle, and we can comprehend various affairs with just one 'mind'. What we refer to as 'principle' is indeed our minds. Apart from our minds, there are no principles.)¹⁷

Insofar as the principle to be known is internal to the mind that seeks to know, the investigation and perfection of knowledge about things, which, at the onset, do not seem to have direct recourse to moral and ethical conclusions, is, in fact, instrumental for cultivating individual virtues.

In contrast, for Maeno, things to be known do not resonate with human virtues. Moral and ethical concerns have nothing to do with those myriad things that make up the world.

木金火水土

仁義礼知信

トナスコレヲ聖人ノ言ニ徴スルニ曰ク[...]智以テ水ニ配スヘシ[...]予曰ク木ハ木ニシテ金ハ金ナリ[...]如何ナレハ水火等ヲ以テ特吉凶生尅ヲノミ慮ンヤ

(The sages equate wood, metal, fire, water, and earth to benevolence, righteousness,

¹⁷ Hayashi Razan, *Santokushō* 三徳抄 (Extract of Three Primary Virtues), in Katō Totsudō (ed.), *Kokumin shisō sōsho: Jukyō-hen* 国民思想叢書: 儒教編 (Japanese National Thoughts: Confucianism), Tokyo: Kokumin shisō sōsho kankō-kai, 1929 [n.d.]: 34-35 [33-47]. The translation is borrowed from Heisig et al. (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 306-307.

propriety, wisdom, and faith. They say wisdom corresponds to water [...] I say a tree is a tree, and metal is metal. [...] How can you equate water, fire, etc., to good and bad when you know what is good and bad for you?)¹⁸

Things to be known do not possess human purposes and aspirations. Nor do they represent moral and ethical virtues of a distinctly human process of being and becoming. The point, for Ryōtaku, is that there is a clear distinction between matters internal to the mind and matters external to the mind, between virtues and facts, between internality and externality.¹⁹ The question, then, is not necessarily about how to overcome biases, embeddedness, and impediments of the knower. Nowhere in his rendering of modern Western knowledge can we find such a question. The question is rather about how to ‘view’ the world that is external to the knower, the world that the knower does not ‘inhabit’. It is this separation of the knower from the known, this externality of that which is to be known, that undergirds Maeno’s strategy of differentiation.

While his assessment of (Neo-)Confucianism at times verges on the polemical and his contemptuous language becomes rather self-serving, Maeno’s engagement with modern Western knowledge points to three instances to make a distinction between two knowledge traditions: the worldview, or the way in which the world is structured (ontology); the position of the knower in relation to the known (epistemology); and, the way in which the knower interacts or intervenes into the known (methodology). Compellingly, Maeno offers comparative illustrations to underscore what he sees as ontological, epistemological, and methodological differences between (Neo-)Confucianism and modern Western knowledge. In the (Neo-)Confucian tradition (see Figure 5-1), the one and only principle, *ri*, informs everything that exists in the realm under Heaven. The knower is no exception. The knower, whose ultimate purpose is to grapple with *ri*, inhabits the realm that is dictated by *ri*. The knower is simultaneously the known. Thus, the pursuit of knowledge, *kyūri*, ultimately comes down to the introspection of one’s mind, which, incidentally, is curtailed by certain parameters of learning. As Maeno’s illustration exemplifies, the presumption is that all that one must know, *ri*, is in the words of sages because everything that sages say and write culminates in the proper grasp of *ri*. For this reason, one can indeed have recourse to that which is to be known through textual immersion. Thus, as Hayashi Razan proclaims, “When you realise a mystical unity with the sage’s writings, one in which the self and those texts are nondual, you will have read them well!”²⁰ To pursue knowledge in the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, as the illustration demonstrates, is to engage with texts not as the author but as one that inhabits the world-as-text and to establish, through textual immersion, the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth. To know, in essence, is to rehearse knowledge already existing in texts.

In contrast, Maeno’s visualisation of modern Western knowledge (see Figure 5-2) captures a worldview with the distinct position of the knower vis-à-vis the known that is different from (Neo-)Confucianism, a worldview that is, in hindsight, quasi-Cartesian. To be sure, only in the 1830s did Descartes’ name begin to appear in the works of Rangaku. But at least the late 18th century saw the introduction of the Cartesian worldview, if not his name, to the reader in the

¹⁸ Maeno, *Kanrei higen*.

¹⁹ Thus, Maeno characterises the (Neo-)Confucian presumption of internality as ‘wrong thesis’ (‘謬説’), ‘nonsense’ (‘戲言’), and ‘irresponsible remark’ (‘放言’) and concludes that (Neo-)Confucianism is nothing but a delusional desire to use inadequate beliefs about the world for the exercise of power and domination. See *ibid.* The original text reads, “本然何物タルカヲ知ラサルヲ意トセス妄ニ火トイヒ金トイヒテコレヲ治論ノ口実トス夫虚説ナルモノ。”

²⁰ Hayashi, *Seiri jigi genkkai 1-kan*, 14.



Figure 3-1. (Neo-)Confucianism (*Secret Words about Narrow Views*, 1777)



Figure 3-2. Modern Western Knowledge (*Secret Words about Narrow Views*, 1777)

Japanese archipelago through myriad processes of translation. One example is Shizuki Tadao's (1760-1806) text on calendrical science entitled *Rekishō shinsho* (曆象新書: New Writings on Calendrical Phenomena, 1798-1802). It is a Japanese translation of Johan Lulofs' (1711-1768) work in Dutch, *Introduction to the True Natural Astronomy* (1741), which was originally published under the title of *Introduction to the True Physics and True Astronomy* (1725) by John Keill (1671-1721), who was well-known for his scientific engagement with Descartes and who later lodged claims against Cartesian thought.²¹ The upshot here is that, whether Maeno is conscious or otherwise, the composition and framing of his illustration infer the ethos of Cartesian dualism between humans and nature through which the former becomes the master and possessor of the latter. What undergirds this illustration is the presumption that the knower is completely detached from the known. Humans do not inhabit the world to be known but view it. The pursuit of knowledge, *kyūri*, is not the rehearsal of knowledge already exists in texts but the production of knowledge about the world out there by exercising the capacity of the observing mind. In modern Western knowledge, as Maeno implies with the illustration, the knower is the author of texts rather than who inhabits the world-as-text. It is in this instance that we begin to see the emergence of a new ontology of the knower, which is sanctioned not by divine intention but by some kind of secular guarantee.

This distinction between (Neo-)Confucianism and modern Western knowledge is interesting, for it is not a mere semantic distinction in terms of what *ri* and *kyūri* mean. Maeno's comparative illustrations suggest something much more fundamental that enables a semantic distinction in the first place. *Ri* and *kyūri* mean different for modern Western knowledge, in comparison to (Neo-)Confucianism, because its worldview, its figure of the knower vis-à-vis the known, and its mode of arriving at knowledge are also different. (Neo-)Confucianism presumes the internality of that which is to be known, such that the knower is part and parcel of the known. In contrast, Maeno sees that modern Western knowledge presumes the externality of the known, such that the knower views rather than inhabits the known. To clarify this difference in worldview, the familiar concepts of *ri* and *kyūri* are operationalised with expanded semantic scopes. *Ri* and *kyūri* become signifiers for an alternative mode of thinking, reasoning, and institutional practices.

²¹ One of the first mentions of the name of Descartes can be found in Yoshio Shunzō's (1787-1847) *Seisetsu kanshō-kyō* (西説観象経: Western Doctrines for Observation) published sometime before 1822. As the term 経 in the title indicates, this text follows the structure of *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra* or *Amida-kyō* (阿弥陀経): it begins with “如是我聞” and ends with “作礼而去”, offering an introductory reading of Western thoughts with the familiar lexicons and textual structure of the Buddhist tradition. Yoshio mentions Descartes (得私加而的私 / テスカルテス) in his brief description of the genealogy of modern Western science. Takano Chōei's (1804-1850) *Bunken manroku* (聞見漫録: Stray Notes on Things Heard and Seen, 1836) also refers to Descartes as one of the architects of modern Western science. See Takano Chōei, *Bunken manroku* 聞見漫録 (*Stray Notes on Things Heard and Seen*), in Satō Shōsuke, Uete Michiari, and Yamaguchi Muneyuki (eds.), *Nihon shisō taikēi 55-kan: Watanabe Kazan, Takano Chōei, Sakuma Shōzan, Yokoi Shōnan, Hashimoto Sanai* 日本思想体系 55 卷: 渡辺華山、高野長英、佐久間象山、横井小楠、橋本左内 (*Japanese Intellectual Thought, Vol.55*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971 [1836]: 204-210. And more profound engagement with Cartesian thought can be found in Udagawa Yōan's *Seimi kaisō* (舎密開宗: Principles of Chemistry, 1837-1847), which draws largely upon a Dutch version of William Henry's (1774-1836) *Epitome of Chemistry* (1803), along with Adolphus Ypey's (1749-1822) *Sijstematische Handboek der Beschouwende en Werkdaadige Scheikunde* (1804-1812) and F. van Catz Smalenburg's *Leerboek der Scheikunde* (1827). The Dutch version of Henry's work was a simplified version of *Elementary Treaties of Chemistry* (1789) by Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794), who was considered a practitioner of the Cartesian method.

3.2.2. *Scientia and Science*

For Maeno, one specific field of modern Western knowledge succinctly exemplifies this worldview structured with the externality of the known and disenchanted position of the knower – what the Dutch calls ‘*natuurkunde*’ (science broadly and physics more specifically). Accordingly, he observes that, in the Netherlands, there are those schools established to expand knowledge specifically of “fundamental principles inherent in thirty million things,” which he describes as ‘*kyūri gakkō*’ (窮理学校: school of the pursuit of the principle).²² What these schools do, as Maeno goes on to explain, is not merely to acquire practical and technical skills based on scientific knowledge but to wholly grasp the truth about nature within the formalised inquiries of astronomy, geography, calendrical science, and mathematics.²³ More specifically, this signification of ‘*natuurkunde*’ as *kyūri* encompasses both a particular knowledge settlement (*scientia*) and specific fields of knowledge (*science*). On the one hand, *kyūri* designates a mode of pursuing knowledge in which no human purposes or aspirations yield knowledge of the external world. On the other hand, *kyūri* also designates formalised fields of inquiry with established conventions of scientific observations and syntheses.

What we see here is a rather familiar double entendre and a conundrum of translation, which we have already seen in the previous chapter. How can one grasp all at once the unified and dispersed nature of modern Western knowledge? The likes of Nihis Amane and Nakae Chōmin seek to establish a field of philosophical inquiry into basic propositions of unified knowledge. The likes of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Kikuchi Dairoku, in contrast, see modern Western knowledge in its dispersed nature and set out to define rules of scientific inquiry within the remit of natural science. But, as Maeno’s translation suggests, the conundrum is not unique to the Meiji intellectuals’ engagement with modern Western knowledge. From the onset of Japan’s encounter with this foreign knowledge through the medium of Rangaku, the term *kyūri* functions as a floating signifier to capture the essence of this knowledge. Some use the term to designate a set of foundational premises that unify and ground modern Western knowledge. Others have in mind a much more specific meaning of *kyūri*, attributing it to a specific field of natural science.

Take, for instance, the works of Motoki Yoshinaga (1735-1794), who, as a prominent Dutch translator in Nagasaki, translated a number of Western texts on natural sciences. When translating a Dutch version of George Adams’ (1709-1773) *A Treaties Describing and Explaining the Construction and Use of New Celestial and Terrestrial Globes* (1766), Motoki defines *natuurkunde* as ‘*seiri gaku*’ (性理学: *xing-li xue* in Chinese).²⁴ Needless to say, the term ‘*seiri*

²² Maeno, *Kanrei higen*. The original text reads as follows. “和蘭都有諸学校其中別有名窮理学校者其立教也即三寸萬物而窮其本原固有之理名曰本然学也”

²³ Ibid. The original text reads, “和蘭ノ学ヲヤ [...] 只堅術ヲイフノミナラス天文地理曆学数術 [...] 窮理本然ノ学ヲイヒ [...]”

²⁴ Motoki’s seven-volume translation of Adam’s work was published under the title of *Seijutsu hongen taiyō kyūri ryōkai shinsei tenchi nikyū yōhō-ki* 星術本原太陽窮理了解新制天地二球用法記 (*A Treaties Describing and Explaining the Construction and Use of New Celestial and Terrestrial Globes*), 1791, Waseda University Library, id-no. 05_02335. See also George Adams, *A Treatise Describing and Explaining the Construction and Use of New Celestial and terrestrial Globes: Designed to Illustrate in the Most Easy and Natural Manner the Phenomena of the Earth and Heaves*, London, 1766.

gaku’ that we see in Motoki’s text is an instructive example of the transvaluation of that which thus constituted the nucleus of Neo-Confucian learning. By relocating the term from the Neo-Confucian fold to the semantic field of Rangaku and re-signifying it as an epithet for modern Western knowledge, Motoki transubstantiates the meaning of *sei* and *ri*. For Motoki, *sei* is not the quality of human beings tied to moral and ethical conclusions, and *ri* is not the absolute transcendental principle that dictates everything under Heaven and that ultimately resides in the human mind. *Sei* that Motoki speaks of is the quality of manifold things that together make up the natural world. *Ri*, for him, is that which determines such quality of a thing. What Motoki translates as *seiri gaku* is, therefore, a pursuit of knowledge about the fundamental workings of the world external to the human mind. It is a kind of ethos for the pursuit of knowledge.

One emblematic example, as Motoki suggests, is the Copernican heliocentrism, which embodies in its meticulous observations of celestial and terrestrial principles the ethos of what *kyūri* ought to do (see Figure 3-3). As Motoki sees it, the significance of Copernicus’ work is not limited to its contribution to a specific field of science. The significance lies also and more importantly in the fact that his theory of the universe that places the sun, not the earth, at its centre has triggered a paradigm shift in the fundamental worldview. What enables such a shift, a certain attitude towards knowledge, is, for Motoki, the kernel of Copernicus’ work. Motoki describes it as follows.

理ヲ窮メ[...], 一言ヲ以テ云ハバ裸眼ニ視ル諸象ハ如何アリト学業ノ基ノ端ヲ開
キ明ラメシム

(To pursue the principle [...] is, in essence, to investigate various phenomena you see with your naked eyes. This is the foundation for expanding the horizon of learning.)²⁵

The point of this passage is its emphasis on the investigation of phenomena visible to one’s naked eye. For Motoki, proper knowledge is a kind of knowledge attained by observing rather than contemplating phenomena out there, external to the observing mind. Here, *kyūri* means much more than a pursuit of knowledge based on established methodological conventions of natural sciences, such as observation, experiment, and synthesis. It means a general attitude towards knowledge, that is, to view the external world of objects and to accurately represent principles of the universe manifesting themselves as specific visible phenomena.

A number of Rangaku scholars rehearsed this understanding of *kyūri* as a general attitude towards knowledge, as *scientia*. Another instructive example can be found in Takano Chōei’s (1804-1850) comment on Descartes’ achievement in the history of Western science. In an essay entitled ‘*Seiyō gakushi no setsu*’ (西洋学師ノ説: Doctrines of Western Philosophers, 1835), Takano offers the following assessment on Cartesian treaties on astronomy.

「レネテルカルテス」トイフモノ起コリテ、「コーペルニキユス」ノ説ヲ崇ビ、
其説ヲ俾益シタリ。但シ、旧染ノ存スル所、免ルルコトヲ得ズシテ、其論、真偽
相半バスト雖モ、世人千古ノ学風ヲ棄テテ、実学ノ真理ニ入ルハ、此人ノ力ナリ
。著書頗ル多シ。諸学科ニ涉ルト雖モ、就中、数学・研理学ハ殊ニ勤メタリ。其
天学ヲ論ズルノ条ニ、天ニ真ノ空ナシ。恒星ハ太陽ニシテ、各其游星ヲ存ス。然

²⁵ Motoki, *Seijutsu hongen taiyō kyūri ryōkai shinsei tenchi nikyū yōhō-ki*.

レドモ、其間ノ一箇流体アリテ、此運動ニ從テ、運天ヲナスト云ヘリ。是レ未ダ旧圈ヲ脱セザル所ナリ。

(The theory of Copernicus was venerated by Rene Descartes, who greatly expanded on the Copernican theory. Of course, Descartes is not entirely exempted from the old habits of thought, and his theories are not always correct. But he is the one who has abandoned the old paradigm of speculation and begun a ‘real’ scholarship. His writings are incredibly numerous. He has written on a wide range of subjects, but he has worked particularly hard on mathematics and physics. In his treatise on astronomy, he writes that “the universe is not empty at all. The sun is the fixed star, around which planets orbit.” But he also claims that “there exists some kind of fluid in between the star and planets, with determines the motion of the star and planets.” The latter claim remains in the fold of the old paradigm.)²⁶

Takano is not credulous in accepting all of what Descartes has to say about the natural world. He even acknowledges that some of the Cartesian theories remain within the old paradigm of contemplation and, thus, have not been fully validated. Nevertheless, Takano insists on the significance of the Cartesian scholarship: it has effectively determined a new orientation of modern Western science. For Takano, Descartes has played a pivotal role in discrediting the hitherto tacitly accepted conventions of scholarly enterprises and in establishing an attitude of what Takano describes as ‘real’ scholarship – *jitsugaku* (実学) – that brings humankind to the truth. It is this Cartesian attitude to question the entrenched habits of thinking and reasoning vis-à-vis observable and verifiable facts that Takano thinks emblematic of the ethos of *kyūri*.

Equally noteworthy is Takano’s notion of ‘real’ scholarship or *jitsugaku*. The term *jitsugaku* is, in essence, also a floating signifier. As seen in the previous chapter, the term was enthusiastically endorsed by the likes of Fukuzawa Yukichi during the early Meiji period to promote ‘practical learning’ as the foundation for modernisation. For Fukuzawa, if we may recall here, *jitsugaku* has to do with the learning of technical thoughts or skills, which he considers fundamental for people to achieve self-improvement and independence of mind. It is to cultivate individualism, which Fukuzawa dialectically links to the strength of the nation-state under the unfolding condition of modernity. In contrast, Takano’s notion of *jitsugaku* bears a particular attitude towards knowledge, *scientia*, which foregrounds a scholarship devoid of baseless speculations or divine intention. For Takano, modern Western knowledge represents a ‘real’ scholarship, to the extent that it operates on the basis of this general attitude. This is, of course, not to say that the proposition of the divine is wholly evacuated from modern Western scientific thoughts that Takano and other Rangaku scholars refer to. Descartes himself has alluded a number of times in his writings to the idea of the infinite, God, in the finite world. For example, in ‘The third Mediation’ in *The Discourse on Method* (1641), he famously notes that “Now it is indeed evident by the light of nature that there must be at least as much reality in the efficient and total cause as there is in the effect of that same cause.”²⁷ And again, Takano is acutely aware that Descartes’ works are not entirely free from the proposition of the divine when he notes that some of the Cartesian theories remain within the old paradigm. Nevertheless, Takano maintains that the very ethos of the Cartesian pursuit of the truth

²⁶ Takano Chōei, “*Seiyō gakushi no setsu*” 西洋学師ノ説 (“Doctrines of Western Philosophers,” in *Bunken manroku* 聞見漫録 (Stray Notes on Things Heard and Seen), 1836 [1835]: 208.

²⁷ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, Donald A. Cress (trans.), Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998: 73. Peter Harrison demonstrates, with a number of historical cases, that, in Cartesian writings, the purported division between the scientific and the divine was far murkier than we might initially surmise. See Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 77, 89.

manifests this general attitude towards knowledge that is characterised with terms such as observation, verifiability, facts, and phenomena. All those fields of scientific inquiry within modern Western knowledge, including optics, chemistry, hydrography, and mechanics, are part and parcel of what Takano calls *kakubutsu kyūrigaku* (格物窮理学: the pursuit of principle of each and everything), a ‘real’ scholarship.²⁸ Any other knowledge claims based on moral and ethical virtues, divine intention, or baseless speculations are simply transgression of this ‘real’ scholarship.

This signification of *kyūri* as a general attitude towards knowledge, as *scientia*, is by no means a customary use of the term. Other Rangaku scholars, including Udagawa Yōan (1798-1846) and Kawamoto Kōmin (1810-1871), understand modern Western knowledge as *kyūri* but with a far narrower signification. For Udagawa, for instance, *kyūri* is the signifier exclusive to a field of knowledge that we have come to recognise as physics. In *Shokugaku keigen* (植學啓原: Principles of Botany, 1833), Udagawa states that modern Western knowledge “about ten-thousand things of the world” is structured with a hierarchised division of labour, and that each division is founded upon a set of secular guarantees in forms of methods and postulates.²⁹ Then, he goes on to specify the following.

万物之学別為三門一曰斐斯多里記錄形状辨別種属蓋辨物之学也二曰費西加窮万物之所以死生以榮枯以蕃息之理蓋窮理之学也三曰舍密加知万物資以始生聚以成體之元素蓋離合之学也辨物啓窮理之端窮理為舍密之基辨物者学之門牆舍密者理之堂奧 (The study of all things is divided into three branches. The first is natural history, which records shapes and forms in order to distinguish and categorise the species. The second branch is physics, which observes why all things die, grow, and flourish. Physics is the study of principles and, therefore, is called *kyūri*. The third branch is chemistry, which understands the elements by which all things are created and brought together to form the body of a thing. Identifying elements is the beginning of reasoning. And reasoning is the foundation for learning. Chemistry is, therefore, the most intricate form of study to understand the fundamental principles of all things.)³⁰

Under this schema of categorisation, the most elementary of all is the field of natural history, which, in the parlance of the early 19th century, is a broader scholarship called *hakubutsugaku* (博物学).³¹ According to Udagawa, natural history is all about the systematic categorisation of plants,

²⁸ Takano Chōei, *Bunken manroku*, 210.

²⁹ Udagawa Yōan, *Shokugaku keigen* 植學啓原 (*Principles of Botany*), 1833.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Though named ‘natural history’, what Udagawa means by this labelling is different from history as we know it today, as a study grounded on a certain temporal schema that distinguishes the past from the present. Historical scholarship in this sense began to be formed in Japan in the late 19th century, with the introduction of historiographical methods of Herbert Spencer, Henry Thomas Buckle, and Leopold von Ranke. For example, Spencer’s notion of ‘rich ore’ – scientific theory of history – was instrumental for Nishi Amane to develop his understanding of scientificity and for Katō Hiroyuki to offer an evolutionary perspective on national emergence. Buckle’s historical perspective on civilisation inspired Taguchi Ukichi to render Japanese history as a civilisational history. Ranke’s historical methods based on the notion of ‘what really happened’ became the backdrop for institutionalisation and disciplinarisation of history at the University of Tokyo generally and the emergence of so-called *tōyōshi* (東洋史: oriental history) tradition more specifically. I will address this issue of temporalisation in conjunction with the formation of the subject of knowledge in Chapter 5. For general theoretical discussion on the relationship between historical scholarship and science in modern Europe, see, for example, Isaiah Berlin, “History and Theory: The Concept of Scientific History,”



Figure 3-4. Natural History, (*Principles of Botany*, 1833)

History and Theory, 1:1, 1960: 1-31; Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997; Robert L. Carneiro, *The Muse of History and the Science of Culture*, New York, NY: Kluwer Academic, 2000: 145-176.

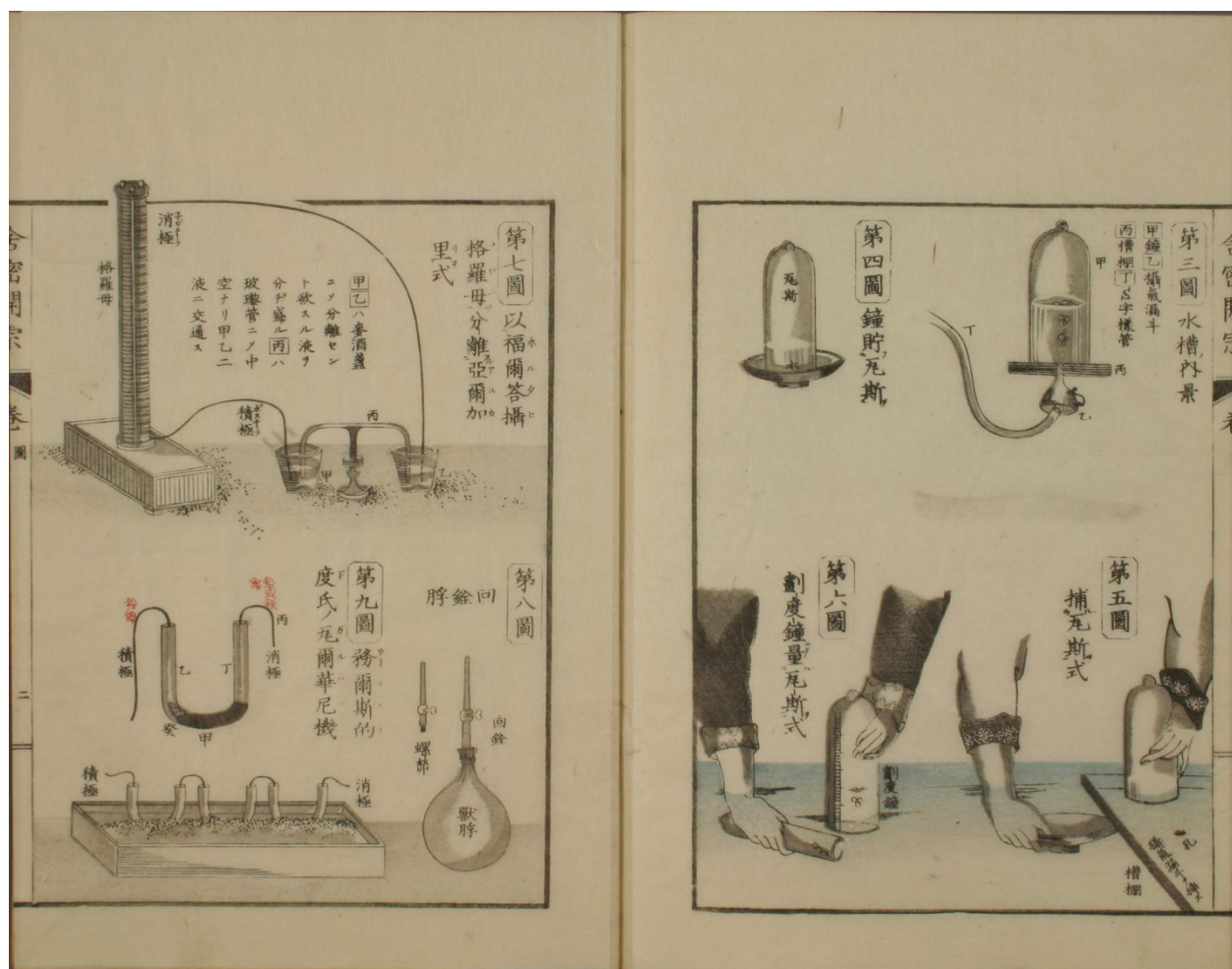


Figure 3-5. Chemistry (*Principles of Chemistry*, 1837-1847)

animals, and minerals based on established standards of categorisation and various observation methods. What is at the core, in other words, is the conviction in the cognitive capacity of the observing mind to aptly recognise differences and to rigorously apply and, at times, expand categories (see Figure 3-4). At the other end of the spectrum lies the field of chemistry. Udagawa views chemistry as that which seeks to uncover otherwise obscure elements of all things and, therefore, produces the most intricate form of knowledge through scientific experiments (see Figure 3-5). In between natural history and chemistry lies the field of physics. As Udagawa understands it, this field of knowledge seeks to understand, through observation and measurement, how things exist in ways that they exist, that is to say, the basic motion, behaviour, force, and energy of matters that constitute the world. And it is this field of physics that Udagawa designates as *kyūrigaku* (窮理学) or *rigaku* (理学). As it is immediately obvious, in this semantic, *kyūri* names not the general attitude towards knowledge but a specific field of scientific inquiry with a defined scope and formalised methods.

Kawamoto Kōmin also uses the term *kyūri* to designate a specific field of knowledge when he equates *natuurkunde* to *fysica* (physics) and defines the latter as *rigaku*. In the introduction to a revised translation of Johannes Buijs' (1764-1838) *Natuurkundig Schoolboek* (1809-1812), published in Japanese under the title of *Kikai kanran kōgi*, (気海観瀾廣義: Revised Introduction to Physics, 1851) (see Figure 3-6), Kawamoto maintains as follows.

「ヒシカ」ハ和蘭ニコレヲ「ナチュールキュンデ」ト云ヒ先哲譯シテ理学ト云フ。天地萬物ノ理ヲ窮ムルノ学ニシテ上ハ日月星辰ヨリ下ハ動植金石ニ至ルマデ其性理ヲ論辯シテ一モ残ス所ナシ。此学タルヤ諸勢百工ノ源ニシテ千百ノ事物須臾モ此理ヲ離ルベカラズ。

(What is called '*fysica*' means in Dutch '*natuurkunde*', which my predecessors designated as '*rigaku*'. It is the study of the principle that determines the quality of each and everything, ranging from the sun, moon, and stars above us to the plants, animals, and stones below us. This field of knowledge, *fysica*, is the very foundation of manifold works of craft and art. Even when we think something is beyond our cognitive capacity, nothing escapes the dictate of the principle.)³²

Again, we see here familiar allusions to Neo-Confucian concepts such as '*seiri gaku*' (性理学) and '*kakubutsu kyūri*' (格物窮理). Yet, at the level of signification, these familiar concepts mean something entirely different. In Kawamoto's discursive schema, *ri* and *sei* are wholly evacuated from the Neo-Confucian concerns for moral and ethical conclusions and relocated to the concerns about the world external to the human mind. This semantic atrophy, in turn, prepares Kawamoto to argue that *kyūri*, the pursuit of principle, does not always refer back to specifically human concerns about being and becoming.

Now that the primary locus for *kyūri* is defined as the world external to the knower, Kawamoto

³² Kawamoto Kōmin, *Kikai kanran kōgi 1-kan* 気海観瀾廣義 1 卷 (Revised Introduction to Physics, Vol. I), 1851. Waseda University Library, id-no.: 二. Kōmin's translation is based on the earlier work of Aochi Rinsō's (1775-1833), who initially translated the entire book of Buijs' *Natuurkundig Schoolboek* into *Kakubutsu sōhan* (格物綜凡: An Overview of Physics), but later selected some chapters on methodology and published them under the title of *Kikai kanran* (気海観瀾: On Physics) in 1827. Kawamoto expanded Aochi's *Kikai kanran* by translating other chapters excluded from Aochi's publication.

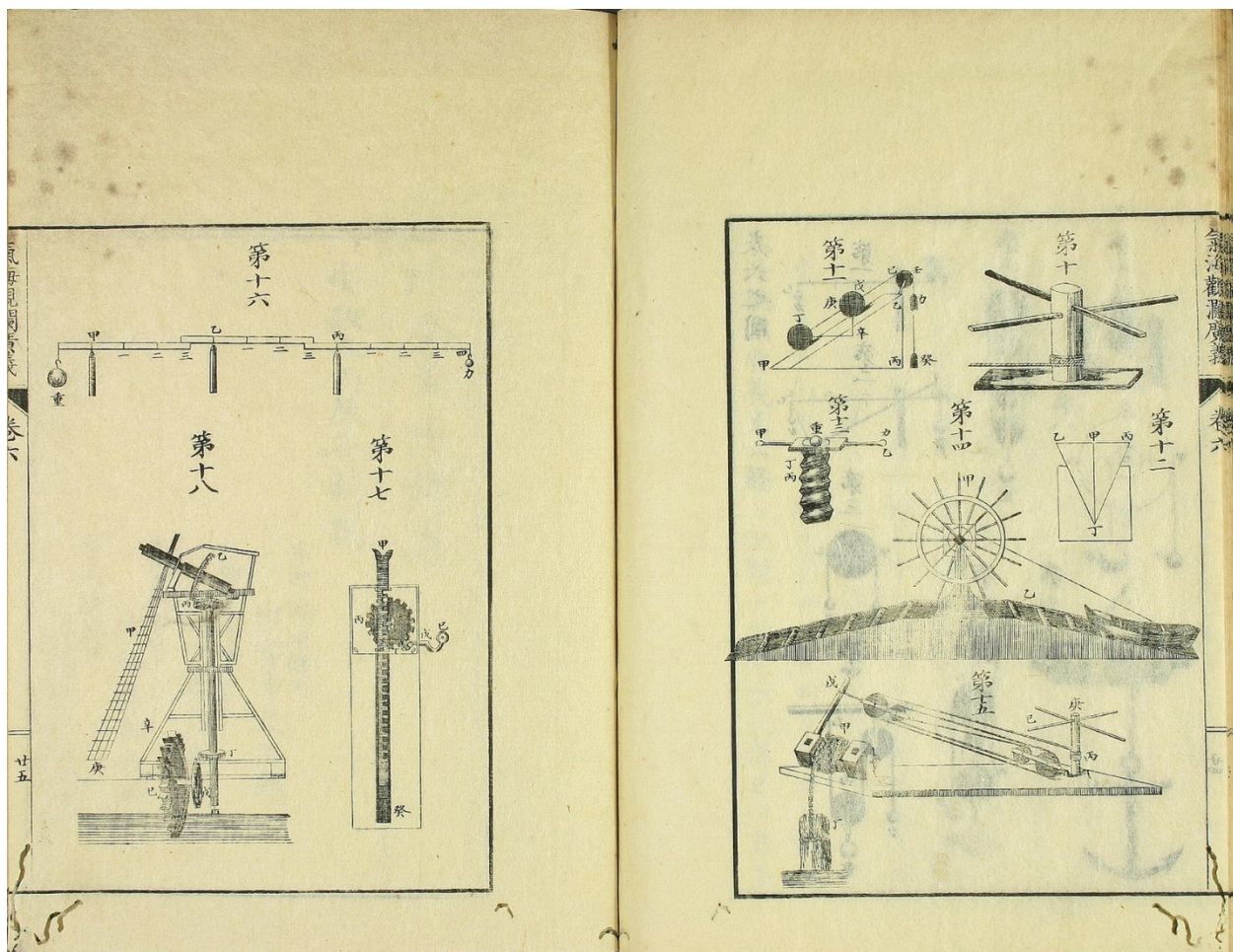


Figure 3-6. Instruments for Physics (*Revised Introduction to Physics*, 1851)

turns his attention to a deceptively simple question. Where does the interior dimension of the observing mind end, and where does the externality of the external world begin? The most conspicuous answer one can find is in Kawamoto's discussion of physiology. As a physician and avid learner of Ranpō (蘭方: Dutch medicine), Kawamoto sees physiology as a branch of physics, part and parcel of *kyūri*, for it concerns primarily with the principle, *ri*, of the human body.

蓋人身ハ能ク體外ノ諸物ニ感シテ以テ其運営ヲナス。其生機ヲ論スルニ方テハ必體外ノ諸物ヲ併セ説カザルルヲ得ズ。而シテ又人身生活ノ理ヲ教フル学ヲ「ヒシヨロジー」ト云フ。是亦「ヒシカ」ノ一派ナリ。[...] 先此「ヒシカ」ニ就テ萬有ノ理ヲ窮メ次ニ彼ノ「ヒシヨロジー」ヲ詳ニシ而シテ後「パトロギー」原病学ニ入ルベシ。[...] 費西加者窮理物理之学也。物トハ體アル者ヲ指ス。

(The human body functions as it does through external stimulus, such that, when discussing the function of the body, one must explain it in conjunction with other things outside the body. Physiology is the field of knowledge that seeks to understand the principle of bodily function and constitutes one branch of physics. [...] Therefore, the first step of learning is to study physics. Then, one can study physiology, which allows one to further engage in pathological studies of diseases. [...] Physics is the study of the principle of all things. And a 'thing' here refers to that which has ontological properties.)³³

According to Kawamoto, the external world is something that exists materially and is observable as ontological properties. The body, insofar as it is tangible physical property, is an extension not of the observing mind but of the physical world distinguishable from the thinking faculty of the knower.

At this juncture, the temptation, perhaps, is to view Kawamoto's ontological postulate of the human body as an allusion to that of Descartes. Indeed, the Cartesian view is that the body is perceptible as *res extensa* (the thing that exists and is visible) and is distinguishable from *res cogitans* (a thinking thing that is invisible).³⁴ In the early modern Western philosophical tradition, this Cartesian ontology – the duality of the mind and the body – is often sublimated into a concern about the ways in which the mind, which is in and of itself immaterial, can cause anything to the corporeal body, and vice versa. In other words, there is a considerable overlap within this philosophical tradition between philosophical contemplation and scientific inquiry.

In contrast, Kawamoto's discussion on the corporeal body does not invite any philosophical contemplation. The notable absence of interactionist contemplation is, however, not a failure on Kawamoto's part but derives from the specific concern that undergirds his translational practices.³⁵ As a practitioner of Dutch medicine, Kawamoto is interested less in partaking in philosophical matters that foreground modern Western scientific thought but more in specifying appropriate ways of engaging with the human body as the object of knowledge. His purpose is to elaborate on

³³ Kawamoto Kōmin, *Kikai kanran kōgi*, 1-kan.

³⁴ Descartes writes that “the faculties of willing, feeling, conceiving, etc.” cannot be parts of the body, “for it is one and the same mind which employs itself in willing and in feeling and understanding. But it is quite otherwise with corporeal of extended objects.” Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 56.

³⁵ If Kawamoto and his contemporaries attended primarily to the question of the known, of what constitutes the externality, scholars of the late 19th century began to shift their attention to the question of the knower, of what makes the mind the foundation for man to view rather than inhabit the world. As we shall see in Chapter 5, for those scholars of the early Meiji period, questioning human consciousness as an act of the mind paved the way to transform the knower into the specifically modern subject of knowledge.

a specific field of science – physics that includes physiology and pathology – rather than on what Descartes calls final causes. His intentionality predetermines how he reads, translates, and elaborates on Western texts. Here then emerges a sense of disjuncture. The field of *kyūri* and its territory that Kawamoto establishes through translation comes to exist in the Japanese semantics somewhat independently of the very knowledge – be it physics or *natuurkunde* – he seeks to understand. There is a certain disjuncture between what is translated and the outcome of the translation. This, in turn, suggests a possible instance of refraction in translational practices.

§

3.3. Semantics, Representation, and Temporality

Rangaku was instrumental in introducing concepts and theories of modern Western knowledge, including Copernican heliocentrism, new categories of animals, plants, and minerals, basic propositions of physics, and physiological facts of the human body. But what is more significant is the fact that Rangaku forged a space to accommodate, within the existing intellectual landscape, a new worldview and, thus, a new possibility of knowledge. Of course, the question of what exactly *kyūri* meant when applied to modern Western knowledge was never settled within the Rangaku tradition. Translational practices of Rangaku scholars were often replete with discursive differences. Because their translation relied largely on the strategy of elaboration, the product of translation was reflexive, not of, say, the Dutch semantics, but rather of the Japanese semantics that was not entirely independent from existing knowledge traditions, such as (Neo-)Confucianism. Translation never escaped certain interpretative imaginations of the translator about what modern Western knowledge ‘must be’ rather than what it ‘is’. And yet, the semantic transvaluation of *kyūri* not only expanded the semantic scope of the term but also redrew the territories of serious and valid knowledge. Now, knowledge was not just about arriving at moral and ethical conclusions but also about grasping the world that did not at all resonate with human purposes and aspirations. Knowing was tantamount not only to a rehearsal of existing knowledge but also to the accumulation of a body of knowledge. Translation engendered this new possibility of knowledge.

We can immediately notice that the writings of Rangaku scholars are less overtly polemical than those of early Meiji advocates of modern Western knowledge. Even if they clearly dissent from existing knowledge traditions such as (Neo-)Confucianism, as we have seen in the case of Maeno Ryōtaku, their dissents do not amount to the complete negation of those existing traditions. Rangaku scholars understand, or at least sense, that the existing knowledge traditions are not all-encompassing and that there is something that these traditions, while offering some cosmological speculations, have failed to adequately explain. They find, in modern Western knowledge, some plausible answers for matters concerning the natural world. But for matters concerning the human world, for a specifically human process of being and becoming, the existing knowledge traditions still hold their relevance.

This co-existence of multiple knowledge traditions, all of which were considered valid and serious within their own remits, was undergirded by three threads: semantics, representation, and temporality. The thread of semantics is the most obvious one. In their translational practices, Rangaku scholars were glossing over the familiar (Neo-)Confucian semantics. And yet, unlike the

strategy of conscious semantic rupture that the likes of Fukuzawa resorted to, which I have discussed extensively in the previous chapter, Rangaku scholars' strategy was that of conscious semantic expansion. For instance, Rangaku scholars expanded the semantic and conceptual scope of *kyūri*, hitherto the primary concept of Neo-Confucian learning, to legitimately claim that modern Western knowledge also sought to address *ri* that is, however, different from the Neo-Confucian postulate of the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. But this new signification of *kyūri* did not erase other possible significations. The signifier *kyūri* was simply stretched to accommodate a knowledge tradition that held a fundamentally different worldview and, thus, a different way of relating to the world. This strategy of conscious semantic expansion was possible because the West – and things Western – did not automatically invoke a sense of superiority as it did during the Meiji period. Of course, many Rangaku scholars were enchanted by the West and its knowledge. Some political and intellectual elites of the shogunate and *han*-domains feared European encroachment, which led to increasing anti-foreignism among them. However, the West did not represent the highest stage of universal intellectual progress, or what Hegel would call *Weltgeist*. For Rangaku scholars and other scholarly ranks of the 18th and early 19th centuries were not held in intellectual thrall of the West, modern Western knowledge simply represented one, among many other, forms of knowing the world. This, in turn, suggests a particular temporality, or more precisely put, the lack of linear, progressive, and irreversible temporality, which would otherwise enable one to view various knowledge traditions historically. If time does not flow in a linear manner, there is no justifiable qualification to regard a knowledge tradition as a thing of the past and thus as obsolete and irrelevant for contemporaries. For Rangaku scholars, (Neo-)Confucianism might be imperfect and, in some instances, incorrect in its postulates. And yet, this did not mean that (Neo-)Confucianism represented the obsolete. Such a judgment is possible only when one is sedated, as were many Meiji intellectuals, by the linear, progressive, and irreversible temporality that is in itself a modern product.

The expanded semantic and conceptual scope of *kyūri* epitomised a transformative threshold for a new possibility of knowledge. And yet, this liminality also indicates the existence of a myriad of tensions inherent in the intellectual space of the 18th and early 19th centuries. The first is the tension pertaining to worldview. One question to arise out of this extended semantic and conceptual scope is to do with whether one sees the world as the repository of human purposes and aspirations or as being composed of mechanical principles devoid of any implications for moral and ethical concerns. Second, one inevitable consequence of this heterogeneity of worldview is a tension also over the nature of knowledge and the position of the knower. If the world is the repository of human purposes and aspirations, then, knowledge is essentially ethical and moral. It is an instrument to inculcate specific habits of mind considered adequate for the spatio-temporal location that one inhabits. The knower, who conducts oneself in pursuit of such habits or in accordance with purposes and aspirations regarded as virtues, inhabits the very world they seek to understand. In contrast, if the world exists as it is with certain mechanical principles and, thus, devoid of any moral and ethical meanings, then, knowledge is factual if not entirely secular.³⁶ The knower, who seeks to reveal such facts of the world, stands outside the world that

³⁶ As pointed out earlier with the case of Descartes, the early modern European intellectual tradition that Rangaku scholars engaged with was not completely devoid of expressions of faith and postulates about the divine Creator. Sanjay Seth summarises this point when writing that “the intellectual transformation that produced modern Western knowledge was corrosive of certain long-standing forms of expressions of faith, but it was not ‘secular.’ Mechanical explanations of the natural world allowed for a divine creator, as captured in the widely used metaphor of physics as a clock, with a divine clockmaker. Many of the natural philosophers were deists, and many of the important thinkers of the Enlightenment were devout. Nonetheless, the new knowledge differed from the old in that God, the Devil,

they observe and investigate. These differences in the nature of knowledge and the positionality of the knower, in turn, inform contrasting methodological attitudes. One is notated by the cyclical time of learning with the derivation of moral and ethical conclusions from the words of the sages. All that one must know is already contained in texts. To this end, the most basic form of learning is textual immersion with attention to linguistic, signifiatory, and discursive integrity. Contrary to this methodological prevalence is an attitude grounded on linear time of learning. The acquisition of knowledge is an accumulative process notated by those methods of categorisation, measurement, observation, and experiment designed to discover laws and regularities of the world external to the knower. Therefore, the extended semantic and conceptual scope of *kyūri* also invokes a sense of heterotemporality in knowledge.

Granting all this, I have a lingering suspicion that the development of Rangaku alone cannot adequately explain how heterogeneous notions of worldview, knowledge, and time were all accorded certain roles in offering knowledge of various facets of the world. In other words, those dispersed efforts of Rangaku scholars to translate and elaborate on modern Western knowledge do not explain how Rangaku could gain a certain intellectual purchase vis-à-vis other existing knowledge traditions, whose intellectual, institutional, and even political purchases were far more imperative. What I am alluding to – and what I seek to discuss in the remainder of this chapter – is a certain enabling condition, which preparatorily forged a space of Rangaku to emerge and which heteronomously authorised modern Western knowledge not necessarily as knowledge tout court but as one constitutive element of the intellectual and epistemic landscape of the 18th and early 19th centuries.

§

3.4. Enabling Conditions

What was the enabling condition for Rangaku scholars to expand the semantic and conceptual scope of *kyūri*? What did authorise Rangaku's effort to map modern Western knowledge onto the existing intellectual landscape? Crucial insistences for reshaping worldview, knowledge, and time were both political and intellectual. The political condition marked by the shifting Tokugawa attitude towards Christianity was effective in disassociating modern Western knowledge, especially Enlightenment science, from the European empires, hence scientific progress from colonial expansion. Such politics of knowledge forged an intellectual space to engage with modern Western knowledge, at least in principle, without infringing the existing structure of power. At the same time, some developments in existing knowledge traditions, especially Neo-Confucianism, set a certain intellectual climate whereby intellectual scepticism towards authoritative voice became increasingly normalised. What I call 'scepticism as a method' was, as we shall see shortly, *laissez-faire* or even imperative for scholarly operations of Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism. This scepticism as a method, in turn, forged a recognition that there existed things outside the remit of Neo-Confucianism and that this knowledge was not adequately equipped to explain them. Woven

spirits, ghosts, dead ancestors, and the like could not be accorded a role in explaining natural or social phenomena. The knowledge producer could be religious, but the knowledge he or she produced did not count as such if God or gods were invoked in explanation." Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 25.

together, these political and intellectual conditions moulded a specific itinerary of modern Western knowledge travelling from one location to another. These conditions regulated a way in which this knowledge was authorised and integrated into the intellectual life of the Japanese archipelago.

3.4.1. Politics of Knowledge

The expansion of the semantic and conceptual scope of *kyūri* we see in Rangaku was undergirded by certain politics of knowledge vis-à-vis the advent of Christian missionaries and European colonial expansions in Asia. Especially concerning for the political centres in the Japanese archipelago were the Christian syncretism of faith and science and the alliance between Catholic churches and European political powers. With increasing trepidation, a political consensus began to emerge from the 16th century onwards that Japan's encounter with modern Western knowledge must be curtailed and that the power must insert itself in the itinerary of this knowledge tradition travelling from Europe to Japan. While individual interests and investments of Rangaku scholars were the vehicle for introducing modern Western knowledge to Japan, political power was crucial in heteronomously authorising the parameter of intellectual engagement with modern Western knowledge – who could have access to this knowledge, how to engage with it, and which position this knowledge should assume in relation to other existing knowledge traditions.

Japan's encounter with modern Western knowledge had exponentially accelerated in the 1540s with the arrival of Portuguese trade ships, which was followed shortly by the advent of Catholic missionaries. Thus, the century was dubbed the 'Christian Century' in Japan.³⁷ While those traders and missionaries had brought with them a wide array of intellectual doctrines, concepts, and scientific artefacts, the question here is not of which doctrines, concepts, and artefacts were introduced to the Japanese. Rather, what is of particular interest is the following: how those missionaries treated science and scientific knowledge within their religious order and for their missionary works; and how European powers saw their global exploration through trade and colonisation as being integral to the development of science.

For Catholic Christians of the 15th and 16th centuries, scientific knowledge was integral to their religious faith.³⁸ This is because the category of 'science' was not a distinct and systematic body of knowledge with formalised ways of thinking and reasoning. It did not exist autonomously from the category of 'religion'. Instead, scientific explorations and religious practices were both considered individual virtues. As Peter Harrison succinctly summarises with the example of Thomas Aquinas, Religion was seen as "a virtue – not, incidentally, one of the preeminent theological virtues, but nonetheless an important moral virtue related to justice," while science was

³⁷ See Boxer, *The Christian Century*. For my interest in translation generally and in the dissemination of knowledge through missionaries specifically, the following works are especially interesting. Diego Pacheco, "Diogo de Mesquita, S.J. and the Jesuit Mission Press," *Momumenta Nipponica*, 26:3/4, 1971: 431-443; Peter F. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginning to the Nineteenth Century*, Leiden: Brill, 1998; Rady Roldán-Figueroa, *The Martyrs of Japan: Publication History and Catholic Missions in the Spanish World (Spain, New Spain, and the Philippines, 1597-1700)*, Leiden: Brill, 2021.

³⁸ So too was science for Protestants, according to G.B. Deason. As he points out, Protestantism contributed indirectly, if not otherwise, to the rise of mechanical philosophy in the realm of secular knowledge. See G.B. Deason, "Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 38:2, 1985: 226-227 [221-240]. For a more nuanced reading of the relationship between Protestantism and science, see Reijer Hooykaas, "Science and Reformation," *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, 3:1, 1956: 109-139. See also, Max Weber, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," in Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (eds. and trans.), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*, Middlesex: Penguin Books., 2002 [1905]: 1-202.

viewed as “a habit of mind or intellectual virtue” that was “gradually acquired through the rehearsal of logical demonstration.”³⁹ Religion and science, which we now consider as “systems of beliefs and practices” distinct from one another, were then conceived primarily as “personal qualities.”⁴⁰

For instance, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), which played a significant role in the Americas and Asia as a missionary order, urged his followers to “seek God in all things,” whether in the Bible or in the natural world, so that one could discern “in all situations the will of God, and thus find the opportunity to serve God.”⁴¹ This assertion of teleological process towards the perfection of being found a certain intellectual resonance in the Aristotelian notion of *telé*. Insofar as all things have intrinsic tendencies towards certain ends, man has a tendency towards knowledge and, thus, as Aristotle famously proclaimed, “all man by nature desire to know.”⁴² For this reason, at colleges and universities operated by the Jesuit order, scholars were tutored not only in religious doctrines but also extensively in the Aristotelian empiricism. They were urged to “use their sense to observe and accumulate data in order to ascertain the final or first causes of the natural world.”⁴³ By the 18th century, the Jesuits had contributed considerably to the scientific developments. They observed “the coloured bands on Jupiter’s surface, the Andromeda nebula, and Saturn’s ring.”⁴⁴ They theorised “the circulation of the blood, the theoretical possibility of flight, the way the moon affected the tides, and the wavelight nature of light.”⁴⁵ This is, of course, not to say that faith and science existed autonomously from one another. In the Jesuit view of the divine architecture of the world, religious authority and hierarchy remained crucial. The instrumentalisation of Aristotelian empiricism shall never yield knowledge that would conflict with official religious doctrine. Therefore, the usage of the Aristotelian methodology was encouraged to the extent that it would “‘fill in the gaps’ where the church and scriptures were silent.”⁴⁶

Science was for the purpose of serving the Christian God. It, thus, became an important means of demonstrating the Jesuit’s faith to potential converts in the Americas and Asia. The most well-known case, perhaps, is that of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). Upon his arrival in China in 1582 and in seeking to gain a foothold for his missionary work, the best way, Ricci thought, was to impress Wanli Emperor (1563-1620) with a product of astronomical and mathematical sciences of the West, for astronomy was crucial for the emperor to preserve his power. The issuance of the calendar by the emperor, “considered as the mediator between Heaven and Earth,” was, as Michela Fontana observes, “an imperial prerogative,” and “its accuracy was a symbol of dynastic legitimacy and power.”⁴⁷ Knowing the political significance of accurately observing and predicting celestial

³⁹ Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 7, 11-12.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁴¹ Francis X. Clooney, *Western Jesuit Scholars in India: Tracing Their Paths, Reassessing Their Goals*, Leiden: Brill, 2020: 260. See also Andrés I. Prieto, *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America 1570-1810*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011:1-12.

⁴² W.D. Ross (ed. and trans.), *Aristotle’s Metaphysics, Vol. I*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924: 980a 21.

⁴³ Thayne R. Ford, “Stranger in a Foreign Land: Jose de Acosta’s Scientific Realizations in Sixteenth-Century Peru,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29:1, 1998: 23 [19-33]. See also, Francesco C. Cesario, “Quest for Identity: The Ideals of Jesuit Education in the Sixteenth Century,” in Christopher Chapple (ed.), *The Jesuit Tradition in Education and Missions: A 450-Year Perspective*, Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 1993: 21-23 [17-33].

⁴⁴ Johnathan Wright, *The Jesuits: Missions, Myths, and Histories*, New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004: 189.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ford, “Stranger in a Foreign Land,” 23.

⁴⁷ Michela Fontana, “Matteo Ricci and the use of science in cross cultural understanding,” in Paul Widmer (ed.), *Europe in China – China in Europe: Mission as a vehicle to intercultural dialogue*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag,

phenomena, Ricci presented to the emperor two mechanical clocks among an assortment of gifts. As the story goes, to Ricci's delight, the emperor was fascinated by the clocks and granted Ricci permission to establish a Jesuit mission in Beijing. In his letter to Rome in 1605, Ricci wrote, "Because of my world maps, astrolabes and the other things I do and teach, I have gained the reputation of being the greatest mathematician in the world."⁴⁸ Science, as Ricci recognised, was an effective means of attracting potential converts. He then argued for the instrumentalisation of science to spread the gospel of God: "Nothing could be more advantageous than to send some father and brother who is a good astrologer to this court" so that missionaries could "enhance [their] reputation, give [them] freer entry into China, and assure [them] of greater security and liberty."⁴⁹

Albeit lesser known, a similar strategy was used also by Jesuit missionaries to Japan. Francis Xavier (1506-1552), who reached the Japanese archipelago in 1549, resorted to science, as Ricci did in China decades later, in order to establish the presence of the Jesuit order.⁵⁰ In his letter to Loyola, Xavier expressed his pronounced conviction in science as a useful instrument for promoting Christianity in a place far removed from 16th-century Europe, suggesting that scientific competency must be one quality, among others, of missionaries to Japan.

That he ought, in the first place, to be a person of unblamable Conversation, for the Japonians judge of his Doctrine by his Manners; moreover that he ought to be of no less Capacity than Virtue, because Japan is also furnish'd with men profound in Science, and who do not yield up any Point in dispute without being first convinced by demonstrative Reasons [...] lastly that it is esteem'd very expedient to have them well vers'd in Astrology and the Mathematicks, because the Japonians are very curious to Understand the nature of Eclipses, and why Moon changes so frequently her Figures, and therefore such Sciences conduce extremely to win the affections of those people.⁵¹

This instrumentalisation of science for missionary works yielded results. Before long, the Jesuit order in Japan gained some high-profile converts. One such example is mentioned in the work of a Portuguese Jesuit missionary Luís Fróis (1532-1597).

There was one of the renowned scholars of astronomy in Japan, who was also a member of the court, a very noble person named Aquimasadono, who learnt [before learning Western astronomy] the science of China, but who, having heard from Father [Gaspar Vilela] about the eclipses of the sun and the moon, and some theories about movements of Heaven, was so impressed that he converted into Christianity with his wife, children, and family, and

2012: 27 [23-33]. See also Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci: A Jesuit in the Ming Court*, Paul Metcalfe (trans.), Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011: 193-209.

⁴⁸ Fontana, "Matteo Ricci and the use of science in cross cultural understanding," 27.

⁴⁹ James Poskett, *Horizon: A Global History of Science*, London: Penguin, 2023: 79.

⁵⁰ Science was not the only non-religious instrument used to convert the natives. The Jesuits in Japan also resorted to some European humanist canons, including stories of Cinderella and Aesop, in their attempt to entice the natives and mould them into Christians. See Chieko Irie Mulhern, "Cinderella and the Jesuits: An Otogizōshi Cycle as Christian Literature," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 34:4, 1979: 409-447; George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988: 65-69.

⁵¹ Jean Crasset, *Histoire de l'Eglise du Japon*, 1679. This English translation is borrowed from the 1705 translation version. See Jean Crasset, *The History of the Church in Japan*, N.N. (trans.), London, 1705: 77. Crasset's work was translated into Japanese and published by Taiyōdō shoten in 1925 under the title of *Nihon seikyō-shi* (日本西教史: History of Christianity in Japan).

was called Aquimasa Manoel.⁵²

For Xavier and other Jesuits in Japan, science was not an end in itself. The ultimate goal was religious. It was to demonstrate to the natives, not only through Christian doctrines but also through science, the necessary existence of the Christian God. Science was an instrument to show God as the final cause of all. This is not to understate the sense of enchantment and amazement allegedly expressed by the likes of 'Aquimasadono'. Yet, for our concern here, what is more salient is the fact that modern Western knowledge, especially modern Western science, was introduced to Japan by Jesuits as an instrument for seeking God in all things.

Christian missionaries were not alone in instrumentalising science for their vested interests. Science was also integral to European explorations and colonial expansions. What I am alluding to is much more than the well-known issue of individual scholars being the beneficiaries of colonial trade and slavery. Of course, Issac Newton (1642-1726) received tremendous financial returns from his investment in the South Sea Company, the British East India Company, and the Company of the Bank of England. John Locke (1632-1704) owned a number of shares in the Royal African Company, which was involved in the slave trade in Africa. Robert Boyle (1627-1691) established his career not only in science but also as a director of the East Indian Company.⁵³ But what these cases of Newton, Locke, Boyle, and many of their contemporaries suggest is much more than the issue of individual ties to colonial trade and slavery. In the most fundamental way, science was, as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) once succinctly pointed out, intimately intertwined with empires. Drawing on the earlier example of the Spanish Empire and its colonialism in the 15th and 16th centuries, Bacon reiterated the words of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506): "Many shall go to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."⁵⁴ Bacon then went on to argue that "thorough passage of the world (which now by so many distant voyages seems to be accomplished, or in the course of accomplishment), and the advancement of the sciences, are destined by fate, that is, by Divine Providence, to meet in the same age."⁵⁵ For Bacon, it was not an accident of time that the Age of Exploration and the Age of Scientific Development were contemporary occurrences.

⁵² Luís Fróis, *História de Japam, Vol. I*, José Wicki S.J. (ed.), Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 1976 [1549-1564]: 193. Ismael Abder-Rahman Gil helped me to translate the Portuguese text into English. The original text has been translated into Japanese. See Luís Fróis, *Kanyaku: Furoisu nihon-shi 1-12 kan* 完訳フロイス日本史 1-12 巻 (*Complete Translation: Fróis' History of Japan, Vol. I-12*), Matsuda Kiichi and Kawasaki Momota (trans.), Tokyo: Chūkō bunko, 2000. For historical contexts of Fróis' stay in Japan and his corpus, the most useful is an annotated version of his *Tratado em que se contém muito susinta- e abreviadamente algumas contradições e diferenças de costumes entre a gente de Europa e esta provincia de Japão*. See Richard K. Danford, Robin D. Gill, and Daniel T. Reff (eds. and trans.), *The First European description of Japan, 1585: A Critical English-language edition of Striking Contrasts in the Customs of Europe and Japan by Luis Frois, S.J.*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014. On the Japanese scholar named 'Aquimasadono' in Fróis' *História de Japam*, see Ebisawa Arimichi, "Manoeru Akimasa to Kamo Zaishō" マノエル・アキマサと賀茂在昌 ("Manuel Aquimasa and Kamo Zaishō"), *Shien*, 25:3, 1965: 37-45.

⁵³ Andrew Odlyzko, "Newton's Financial Misadventures in the South Sea Bubble," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 73:1, 2019: 29-59; Paul Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *The Journal of African History*, 23:4, 1982: 473-501; Mark Govier, "The Royal Society, Slavery and the Island of Jamaica 1660-1700," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 53:2, 1999: 203-217; Sarah Irving, *Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008. In addition, the Newton Project at the Faculty of History, University of Oxford, offers a comprehensive edition of Newton's non-scientific papers, including administrative papers he left as Master of the Mint.

⁵⁴ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, 1620: XCIII.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Opportunities presented by exploration and colonialism – new discoveries about the earth, seas, and stars – were for accelerating the growth of science.

Nor must it go for nothing that by the distance voyages and travels which have become frequent in our times many things in nature have been laid open and discovered which may let in new light upon philosophy. And surely it would be disgraceful if, while the regions of the material globe, that is of the earth, of the sea, and of the stars, have been in our times laid widely open and revealed, the intellectual globe should remain shut up within the narrow limits of old discoveries.⁵⁶

For Bacon and many other Enlightenment scientists, discoveries of and in new worlds and domination thereof went hand in hand with scientific discoveries and developments.

The story of Japan's encounter with modern Western science in the 16th century through Portuguese traders and Christian missionaries is a complex one. It is tethered to desires for religious and political power. Catholic missions to Japan were organised as a strategy of the Counter-Reformation following the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Portuguese monarchs also authorised them, seeing them as an effective religious arm of their colonial expansion. This means that European Enlightenment science came to Japan not as isolated works of individuals, be it Copernicus' or Newton's, but as an instrument for the Europeans to extend their religious and political power beyond their established sphere of influence.⁵⁷ This had an immediate and obvious repercussion. If and when modern Western scientific knowledge was to be integrated into the intellectual life of the Japanese archipelago, the political centres saw it necessary to delink this knowledge from European religious and political power. In other words, a condition had to be forged to disassociate science from the tethers of European religious and colonial orders and to reposition it away from the dictate of such non-intellectual instances. This, however, would require a certain authorisation of modern Western science by a political power within Japan as something beneficial not for Christianity, nor for European colonialism, but for the existing socio-political order and intellectual traditions.

The initial attitude towards Christianity and Jesuit missions shared among the Japanese governing ranks was that of acceptance, be it with reluctance or eagerness. There are numerous stories of religious conversion of so-called 'kirishitan-daimyō' (キリシタン大名: Christian feudal lords), such as Ōmura Sumitada (1533–1587), Ōtomo Sōrin (1530–1587), and Arima Harunobu (1567–1612). There was a documented case of a Japanese Christian emissary known as Tenshō ken'ō shōnen shisetsu-dan (天正遣欧少年使節団: The Tenshō embassy).⁵⁸ However, the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries saw an increasing political backlash against the Jesuit syncretism of faith and science. Examples include Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1537-1598) edicts against Christianity in 1587 and a series of systematic prosecutions of missionaries and

⁵⁶ Ibid., LXXXIV.

⁵⁷ The intimate entanglement between missionaries and colonialism and the ways in which the Jesuit had become the architect of the empire have been widely discussed tropes. See, for example, Edward Andrews, "Christian Missions and Colonial Empires Reconsidered: A Black Evangelist in West Africa, 1766-1816," *Journal of Church & State*, 51:4, 2010: 663-691; Ananya Chakravarti, *The Empire of Apostles: Religion, Accommodation and the Imagination of Empire in Modern Brazil and India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018; Alejandro Cañeque, "In the Shadow of Francis Xavier: Martyrdom and Colonialism in the Jesuit Asian Missions," *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 9:3, 2022: 438-458.

⁵⁸ See Boxer, *The Christian Century*; Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. 1: The Century of Discovery*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1965: 688-701.

Japanese converts under the reign of the Tokugawa shogunate.⁵⁹ The anti-Christian sentiment underlined concerns for territorial integrity vis-à-vis European colonial encroachment and domestic political control, especially over the peasant population and lower-ranking samurais who found salvation in Christianity. Hideyoshi made his decision to expel Jesuit fathers upon learning about the territorial rather than mere religious ambition of the Portuguese, which confirmed his suspicion that the Portuguese were indeed instrumentalising Jesuit missions for their colonial endeavour.⁶⁰ Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651) interrogated and prosecuted missionaries and apostates as he became increasingly perplexed and dismayed by those converts, who staunchly remained disobedient towards the authority.⁶¹ Their concerns were not necessarily about the content of Christian doctrines but about what the European syncretism of religious and political power might mean for their own power.

It is, however, important to remind ourselves here that the anti-Christian sentiment of the late 16th and early 17th centuries did not measure up to the anti-Western sentiment. Those in the ruling ranks had long-sustained interests in the West. They also recognised the necessity to maintain a certain degree of interaction with European countries through trade. The political concern was, thus, about how to strike a balance between anti-Christian policies deemed necessary for territorial integrity and domestic stability on the one hand and economic interests in maintaining trade relationships with the Europeans on the other. This concern was especially pronounced, for example, in Hideyoshi's insistence on the separation of trade from religion that we see in the 1587 edicts. Fróis himself translated the edicts sent to Catholic fathers and traders, commenting as follows: "Henceforward, not only merchants but anyone else coming from India, who does not interfere with the laws of the deities, may come freely to Japan, and thus let them take due note of this."⁶² Hideyoshi's insistence is clear. With the edict, Catholic religious missions were banned from engaging in trade transferring goods, including, among other things, Western scientific knowledge, texts, and instruments, and the scope of what those missions could do in Japan was extensively curtailed. Conversely, however, this did not amount to a complete ban on the transfer of science to Japan. While, during the 17th century, Jesuits had lost their privilege as the primary prolocutor of modern Western science in Japan, those traders of non-Catholic nations, such as the Netherlands and England, continued to bring to Japan numerous texts and products of scientific developments in Europe.⁶³ Ultimately, this political manoeuvre to separate trade from religion was woven into what we know today as 'sakoku' (鎖国: seclusion) – a strategic approach to foreign

⁵⁹ Kiri Paramore characterises the 17th century as the period of the first outbreaks of anti-Christian writing, propaganda and discourses, analysing them in conjunction with the formation of nationalist ideology of early modern and modern state. See Kiri Paramore, *Ideology and Christianity in Japan*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

⁶⁰ Yamanaka Yoshitomo, "Jukyō rangaku no dentō to kindaika no rinri ni tsuite no shiron" 儒教蘭学の伝統と近代化の倫理についての試論 ("A Hypothesis on the Relationship between Confucianism and Rangaku, and the Ethics of Modernisation"), *Kwansei Gakuin University School of Sociology Journal*, 13, 1966: 29-40. From a much broader perspective, Michael Adas observes the role of the explorers, merchants and missionaries in shaping "European attitudes toward the world beyond Europe" and the subsequent convergence of science and technologies with colonial and imperial expansion. See Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 47.

⁶¹ Anesaki Masaharu wrote, "it must have been quite inconceivable to him [Iemitsu] how these people without power and wealth could resist the ruler's will, unless they were mysteriously seduced and supported by a foreign power. They were clearly traitors who deserved the sternest punishment." Quoted in Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 362.

⁶² Luís Fróis, *História de Japam*. This English translation is borrowed from Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 148, and slightly modified in accordance with the original edicts and notes in Japanese.

⁶³ Andrea Boscaro, "Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the 1587 Edicts Against Christianity," *Oriens Extremus*, 20:2, 1973: 219-241.

affairs that enabled Europeans to continue participating in the trade as long as their activities would not destabilise the politico-social order of the Tokugawa reign.⁶⁴

The separation of trade from religion had far-reaching implications for our Wittgensteinian concern about the instance in which two principles really did meet. This separation, then primarily a political manoeuvre, prefigured the de-commodification of science. It forged a cognitive condition to delink modern Western science first from the Jesuits' conversion strategy and, by extension, from the colonial desires of European empires that saw religious missionaries as instrumental for empire-building. As we have seen earlier, for Jesuits, science was an important means of 'seeking God in all things' and scientific knowledge an instrument to spread the gospel of God in Asia and elsewhere. As we have also seen, with Hideyoshi's edict, subsequent seclusion policies, Christian persecution, and the arrival of non-Catholic traders, science was no longer a commodity almost exclusive to missionaries. This de-commodification of science, in turn, enabled the political centres to classify Christianity simply as 'heresy' because, without science, Christianity did not have any intellectual purchase. 'Heresy' was especially a convenient category for the political centres, for there existed a wide array of intellectual and religious traditions in competition and syncretism, many of which were "operating outside hierarchical authority and doctrinal orthodoxy."⁶⁵ Being classified as heresy, Christianity was no longer a foreign religion, but it was a practice deviating from the authoritative vision of the politico-social life of the Tokugawa period.⁶⁶ At the same time, the category of heresy also worked as a mirror image of orthodoxy. Confucianism, Shintoism, and some sects of Buddhism were reiterated as that which constituted the moral and ethical foundation for the political. Where, then, does de-commodified science fit in all these intellectual and religious dynamics? The separation of trade from religion became an undergirding condition to legitimately claim that modern Western science was not in the fold of European religious and political power. It was to negate the Jesuits' vision of a monistic order of discourse that connected faith and science. Science was no longer an instrument to reinforce a certain moral and ethical predilection. For it had nothing to do with moral and ethical concerns, science could now be mapped onto the existing intellectual landscape.

It was now possible for political centres to view modern Western science not as an inner disposition or personal quality but as an epistemological object of utility and instrumentality. This, in turn, amounted to an enabling condition for Rangaku to emerge and for Rangaku scholars to expand the semantic and conceptual scope of *kyūri* to legitimise modern Western knowledge as equally valid and serious as other existing traditions. Of course, we cannot understate the importance of those dispersed efforts of Rangaku scholars who contributed immensely to translating and disseminating modern Western knowledge. And yet, the political effect of this knowledge in Japan was already curtailed by the political power, which sanctioned the ways in which this knowledge could be imported, and which authorised the location of this knowledge vis-à-vis existing knowledge traditions.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 193.

⁶⁵ Paramore, *Ideology and Christianity in Japan*, 33.

⁶⁶ Jason Ananda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2012: 23.

⁶⁷ The politics of knowledge continued to influence the subsequent course of development of Rangaku. Towards the end of the Tokugawa period, there was a shift from the general interest in modern Western science to the enthusiasm for technical applications to improve defence and military capability. This shift was reflexive of a broader geopolitical climate and domestic politics of the 19th century, such as the British defeat of Qing at the conclusion of the first Opium War (1839-1842) and the so-called *Bansha no goku* (蛮社の獄: the Incident of the Society for Barbarian Study, 1839) resulted in the deposition of hitherto prominent scholars, including Takano Chōei and Watanabe Kazan (1798-1841).

3.4.2. Scepticism as a Method

The shifting political attitude towards the syncretism of faith and science constituted an enabling condition for Rangaku to emerge as a legitimate intellectual endeavour removed from moral and ethical concerns. Equally important in fostering an intellectual space to engage with modern Western knowledge was the methodological predilection of the Tokugawa Neo-Confucian tradition. As we shall see shortly, the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan was marked by a sense of spatial and temporal distance from the original, that is, the Confucian development during the Song dynasty in China. One inevitable consequence of such a distance is that the Tokugawa Neo-Confucian scholars had access not only to the writings of Zhu Xi but also to various interpretations and commentaries on Zhu Xi's works. This, in turn, created a certain vacuum whereby scepticism became a legitimate attitude for Tokugawa Neo-Confucians to engage with a myriad of texts to grapple with the principle of all things. What I call here 'scepticism as a method' prevalent among Neo-Confucian scholars was instrumental in forging a representation of modern Western knowledge not as a replacement but as a supplement to compensate for epistemological limits of existing knowledge traditions.

As a point of departure, it is instructive to return to two basic premises of Neo-Confucianism I have discussed elsewhere. First, insofar as the absolute transcendental principle, *ri*, dictates everything in the realm under Heaven, Neo-Confucianism understands that the human mind is integral to the world external to the mind and vice versa and that moral and ethical concerns are intimately intertwined with concerns about the world. To this end, 'investigating things and perfecting knowledge' (格物致知) of the world constitutes part and parcel of the conditioning process of the self. And, this process is recognised as the principal means "by which the individual can refine his psychological being, thereby enabling the goodness that is his human nature to become manifest" and ultimately arrive at the utmost principle, *ri*, of all affairs and all phenomena.⁶⁸ Second, Neo-Confucians also understand that knowledge is always pressed into the service of governing. Knowledge and governing are inseparable, because acquiring knowledge is integral to the conditioning process of the self, and because the goodness cultivated through such a process foregrounds benevolent government and stability of the realm under Heaven. In other words, the Neo-Confucian teleology is that knowledge constitutes an intrinsic part of the ideal form of collective life.⁶⁹

Two texts are particularly instrumental in establishing these two premises: *Daxue* (大学: Great

Against these backdrops, scholarly interests of Rangaku began to be recentred around the interest of political power, that is, military and navel technologies, governing mechanisms including constitution and other legislations, and the art of diplomacy. This shift eventually culminated in the establishment of the Shogunate-sponsored institution in 1855, namely Yōgakusho (洋学所: the Office for Western Studies), which was renamed in 1856 as Bansho-shirabesho (蕃書調所: Institute for the Study of Barbarian Books) and merged with other Shogunate-sponsored institutions in 1877 as University of Tokyo.

⁶⁸ Daniel K. Gardner, "Conclusion: Interpreting the Four Books," in Zengzi, *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition*, Daniel K. Gardner (trans.), Indianapolis, IND and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007: 134 [131-147].

⁶⁹ Jiantao Ren, "'Self-Cultivation as the Root of All' – The Individual in the Recursive Process of 'Ensuring Peace for All Under Heaven, Good State Governance and Regulation of Family Affairs, and Self-Cultivation'," *International Confucian Studies*, 1:1, 2022: 64-80.

Learning), a Confucian classic on learning attributed to Zengzi (505-435 BCE), and *Daxue zhang-ju* (大学章句: Commentary on the Great Learning), Zhu Xi's interpretation of the classic. The former establishes the idea of 'investigating things, perfecting knowledge' as the central trope of Confucian learning and, in so doing, reorients Confucianism from 'propensity of time' (時勢) towards 'propensity of principle' (理勢).

古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國；欲治其國者，先齊其家；欲齊其家者，先脩其身；欲脩其身者，先正其心；欲正其心者，先誠其意；欲誠其意者，先致其知，致知在格物。物格而后知至，知至而后意誠，意誠而后心正，心正而后身脩，身脩而后家齊，家齊而后國治，國治而后天下平。自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以脩身為本。(The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy. From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.)⁷⁰

Zhu Xi's subsequent commentary on *The Great Learning* specifies further what it actually means by the 'extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things' (致知在格物) and why it is integral to the conditioning process of the self.

所謂致知在格物者、言欲致吾此知、在即物、而窮其理也、盡人心之靈、莫不有知、而天下之物、莫不有理、惟於理有未窮、故其知有不盡也、是以大學始教、必使學者即凡天下之物、莫不因其已知之理、而益窮之、以求至乎其極、至於用力之久、而一旦豁然貫通焉、則衆物之表裏精粗、無不到、而吾心之全體大用、無不明矣、此謂物格、此謂知之至也。

(The meaning of the expression, 'the extension of knowledge depends on the investigation of things,' is this: If we wish to carry our knowledge to the utmost, we must investigate the principles of all things we come into contact with, for the intelligent mind of man is certainly formed to know, and there is not a single thing in which its principles do not inhere. But so long as all principles are not investigated, man's knowledge is incomplete. On this account, the Learning for Adults [*Great Learning*] at the outset of its lessons, instructs the learner, in regard to all things in the world, to proceed from what knowledge he has of their principles, and pursue his investigation of them, till he reaches the extreme point. After exerting himself in this way for a long time, he will suddenly find himself possessed of a wide and far-reaching penetration. Then, the qualities of all things, whether

⁷⁰ Zengzi, *Daxue* 大学 (*Great Learning*). The translation is borrowed from James Legge's work with slight modifications. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol.1, 357-359.

external or internal, the subtle or the course, will all be apprehended, and the mind, in its entire substance and its relations to things, will be perfectly intelligent. This is called the investigation of things. This is called the extension of knowledge.)⁷¹

By investigating the workings of all that make up the world, one can expand knowledge and ultimately perfect knowledge. By perfecting knowledge, one can grasp the workings of one's mind and cultivate inner disposition. Put otherwise, these texts effectively have established the nexus of things-knowledge-mind and located intellectual learning, *kyūri*, within this nexus as a mode of cultivating the self.⁷²

Granting all this, let me enter three conjunctures. The first conjuncture is the most obvious one. At the core of (Neo-)Confucian learning is the dialectic convergence of knowledge and governing. As those quotes above demonstrate, the concept of *kyūri* is sustained by the pre-established discursive integrity between the realm of morality and ethics and the realm of knowledge. The concept of *kyūri* is also regarded as a kind of vehicle for a teleological movement from the investigation of things to the perfection of knowledge, from the perfection of knowledge to the proper grasp of the absolute principle, and from the grasp of the principle to the peace and stability of the realm under Heaven. The presumption here is that politics must be guided by learning and that the authority over learning belongs to those who have correctly mastered how to learn. This, however, also means that knowledge is always in a situation of heteronomy, authorised by the insistence of ideal, benevolent, stable governing. The second conjuncture, then, is that *kyūri*, through investigation of things and perfection of knowledge, is intimately intertwined with governing not merely in principle but also in the way in which learning is institutionalised. By the early 14th century, in China, *The Great Learning* and other treatises of the Four Books (*shisho*: 四書) came to constitute the core curriculum for learning both for those hoping to make their names in scholarships and for those eyeing a position in the imperial bureaucracy.⁷³

What is of particular interest here, however, is the third conjuncture, that is, the role of scepticism in Zhu Xi's treatment of 'investigating things, perfecting knowledge'. In the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, what is considered the most appropriate mode of *kyūri* is textual immersion with the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth. This is because everything that must be known, *ri*, is already in those texts, in the words of the sages. Zhu Xi himself asserts this point, when he argues that one must "read the book to observe the meaning of

⁷¹ Zhu Xi, *Daxue zhang-jü* 大学章句 (*Commentary on the Great Learning*). The translation is borrowed from Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. I*, 365-366.

⁷² I am acutely aware that such a schematic reading of *Great Learning* and Zhu Xi's commentary does not do justice to the original texts. Nor does it sufficiently address the depth and width of the contemporary scholarship on these texts. For a brief yet comprehensive survey on *Great Learning*, see Andrew H. Plaks, "The Daxue (Great Learning) and the Zhongyong (Doctrine of the Mean)," in Vincent Shen (ed.), *Dao Companion to Classical Confucian Philosophy*, Heidelberg, New York, NY and London: Springer, 2014: 139-152. On the relationship between Confucian teachings and institutions of knowledge, see Jingpan Chen, *Confucius as a Teacher: Philosophy of Confucius with Special Reference to its Educational Implications*, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1990; Thomas H.C. Lee, *Education in Traditional China: A History*, Boston, Mass. and Cologne: Brill, 2000. For re-reading *Great Learning* as a means of problematising Western metaphysical language, see Huaiyu Wang, "On Ge Wu: Recovering the Wat of the 'Great Learning'," *Philosophy East and West*, 57:2, 2007: 204-226.

⁷³ Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008: 115-193.

the sages so that the principle naturally becomes obvious to one.”⁷⁴ But the practice of reading, of textual immersion, must be grounded on a certain strategy. For Zhu Xi, the best strategy can be found in Cheng Yi’s (1033-1107) teaching, which encourages students to know how to doubt.⁷⁵ The basic idea is that to read is to systematically deploy one’s faculty of questioning and, hence, to exercise scepticism.

某向時與朋友說讀書也教他去思索求所疑。近方見得讀書只是且恁地虛心就上面熟讀久之自有所得亦自有疑處。蓋熟讀後自有窒礙不通處是自然有疑方好較量。今若先去尋箇疑便不得。又曰這般也有時候。舊日看論語合下便有疑。蓋自有一樣事被諸先生說成數樣所以便著疑。今卻有集注了且可傍本看教心熟。少間或有說不通處自見得疑只是今未可先去疑著。

(In the past, I taught my friends to seek points of doubt when reading books. Recently, I have seen that it is better to study with an open mind. After lengthy, careful reading, we will naturally get some of the material, and have doubts about some. Upon a close reading, we will encounter things that block our path and cause us to be perplexed. Thus doubts will naturally arise, prompting us to compare, weigh, and reflect on those matters. It is not beneficial to start out looking for things to doubt. When I studied the *Analects* years ago, doubts came to me immediately. That various commentators had given one passage so many different explanations prompted me to doubt.)⁷⁶

Upon arguing that having doubts is an indispensable part of learning, Zhu Xi goes even further. He maintains that scepticism is reserved not exclusively for the practice of reading, but it must also be applied to one’s own view of texts as a mode of self-doubt.

讀書無疑者須教有疑。有疑者卻要無疑到這裏方是長進。[...] 人之病只知他人之說可疑而不知己說之可疑。試以詰難他人者以自詰難庶幾自見得失。

(In reading books, if you have no doubts whatsoever, then you should be taught to entertain them. Conversely, if you harbor doubts about matters, you should try to resolve them completely. Only when students have reached this point will they have made progress. [...] It is a disease only to know that what others say is suspicious, if one does not know what he himself says is doubtful. The one who interrogates others interrogates himself, so he can see what he has gained and what he has lost.)⁷⁷

‘Scepticism as a method’ that Zhu Xi encourages students to pursue is, of course, controversial. It certainly dissents from the Confucian orthodoxy that the words of the sages are the sources of truth. It is, then, not entirely unwarranted that some historians today characterise Zhu Xi and his works as the infringement of “the dictum of ‘transmitting but not innovating’ in China’s tradition

⁷⁴ The original text reads as follows. “讀書以觀聖賢之意因聖賢之意以見自然之理.” See Ri Jinde, *Shushi gorui, 5-kan* 朱子語類 5 卷 (*Classified Conversations of Master Zhu, Vol. 5*), Ugai Sekisai and Yasui Sanesuke (eds.), Kyoto: Hūgetsudō, 1791.

⁷⁵ Zhu Xi describes this Cheng Yi’s teaching as “wonderful method” for learning. See W. T. De Bary, *The Liberal Tradition in China*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983: 62.

⁷⁶ Ri Jinde, *Shushi gorui, 5-kan* The English translation is modified from Tucker, “Skepticism and the Neo-Confucian Canon,” 13.

⁷⁷ Ri Jinde, *Shushi gorui, Vol. 5*. For the English translation, see Tucker, “Skepticism and the Neo-Confucian Canon,” 13.

of learning.”⁷⁸ For them, Zhu Xi’s approach is “subjective and arbitrary.”⁷⁹ Even so, my reading is that this idea of scepticism as a method had a profound effect on the development of Neo-Confucianism in Japan generally and on the semantic and conceptual reconfiguration of the concept of *kyūri* during the Tokugawa period more specifically.

The development of Neo-Confucianism in Japan from the late 16th century onwards generally followed Zhu Xi, his dialectic of knowledge and governing, and his emphasis on the Four Books as the primary sources of truth, that is, of the principle of all things.⁸⁰ With clarity of hindsight, it is equally verifiable that the itinerary of Neo-Confucianism in Japan was also marked by the multitude of challenges lodged from within the tradition against the canonical reading of their canon. This has led Maruyama Masao and others to argue that those internal challenges engendered an intellectual climate to cultivate new possibilities of knowledge while simultaneously resulting in the implosion of Neo-Confucianism.⁸¹ The development and subsequent implosion of Neo-Confucianism was, however, not because of “the ‘deep currents’” embedded within Tokugawa intellectual traditions that “developing unceasingly toward modernity.”⁸² Rather, it is because Neo-Confucian scepticism as a method engendered, from the onset of the development of this tradition, a space to entertain the possibility that there were certain limitations to what Neo-Confucianism could adequately explain. In other words, scepticism as a method engendered a space for other knowledge traditions, including modern Western knowledge, to be developed and accommodated.⁸³

This concern for the limitations of Neo-Confucianism is already evident in the writings of Hayashi Razan. Given his proximity to the shogunate and his influence as the founder of the Hayashi clan of Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan, his works can be read, as some historians do, as a representative of the principal Neo-Confucian ideology that served the Tokugawa politico-

⁷⁸ Mu, “Historical Perspective in Chu Hsi’s Learning,” 39. Mu observes that “Among Chu Hsi’s works, the one most susceptible to objection and debate is his ‘Supplementary commentary’ on the *ko-wu* (investigation of things) chapter of the *Great Learning*. In using his own ideas to fill the gap that existed in the interpretation of this Classic, Chu Hsi has obviously violated the dictum of ‘transmitting but not innovating’ in China’s tradition of learning. Even though Chu defended his action by claiming that his supplement was based on Master Ch’eng’s ideas, he could not justify how he deemed it proper to use Master Ch’eng’s interpretation to speculate on the intended meaning of the ancient sages.” Ibid.

⁷⁹ Kao Ming, “Chu Hsi’s Discipline of Propriety,” in Waing-tsit Chan (ed.), *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1986: 327 [312-336].

⁸⁰ Evidently, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) endorsed Neo-Confucianism as the primary educational apparatus. Honda Tadakatsu (1548-1610) recalled Ieyasu’s words as follows: “われ儒生をして経籍を談しめて聞に、おほよそ天下の主たらん者は四書の理に通ぜねばならぬ事なり、もし全部しる事叶はずば、よくよく孟子の一書を味ひ知るべきなり。” (I have heard from Confucian scholars versed in Confucian canon that the ruler of the realm under Heaven must follow the principle specified in the Four Books. If one cannot know all, then at least one should learn the *Mencius* inside out.) See Honda Tadakatsu, *Honda Heihachirō Tadakatsu kikigaki* 本多平八郎忠勝聞書 (*A Verbatim Account of Honda Tadakatsu*), 1793.

⁸¹ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 3-68.

⁸² Ibid., 32.

⁸³ My issue with the notion of ‘deep current’ is its apparent teleology. What Maruyama does in his otherwise apposite analysis is to proximate the decline of Neo-Confucianism to the development of Enlightenment science, that is to say, to understand those internal challenges as effectively modern forms of critique because, in his view, those challenges engendered a separation of the subject of knowledge from the object known. Hence, ‘deep currents’ towards modernity. In arguing so, however, Maruyama reiterates the familiar temporal regime, whereby the movement of time is understood as linear, progressive, and irreversible, and modernity is preparatorily given the status of desirable and even inevitable end of human intellectual progress.

social system.⁸⁴ Yet, this ideo-political nature should not be the final judgment of Hayashi's scholarship. In fact, what emerges from his corpus is a dilemma, a sense of oscillation between his desire to uphold his intellectual affinity to Zhu Xi and his intellectual suspicion towards the logical rigour of Zhu Xi's claims. In other words, Hayashi suspects that there exists an incongruity between Neo-Confucian premises and realities of human existence.

This oscillation is especially pronounced in Hayashi's reading of Zhu Xi's doctrine of *xing ji li* (性即理: human nature is the principle) – a doctrine based on Mencius' claim that human nature has an incipient but innate predilection towards good (benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, and propriety) and, thus, can be equated to *ri*, the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. Of course, Hayashi first declares his affinity and indebtedness to Zhu Xi. For Hayashi, no one has ever offered a better understanding of the Six Classics than Zhu Xi. Treating Zhu Xi's corpus frivolously is tantamount to putting oneself willingly in a state of confusion.⁸⁵ Not surprisingly, then, Hayashi also endorses Zhu Xi's notion of proper learning that in order to arrive at *ri*, that is to say, in order to extend one's knowledge, one must begin with investigating things (致知在格物).

凡そ天地造化の迹、苟も理を以て之を推さずんば、必ず幻恠偏誕の説に入りて、
終に明かなること能わず。故に君子理を窮ることを要となす。

(If one seeks to understand why the world is what it is without knowing the fundamental principle of all things, one will surely become delusional and will never be able to reveal what one sets out to reveal. This is why the sages sought to pursue the fundamental principle.)⁸⁶

Insofar as *ri* is the dictate of all things, it can be found not just in the human mind but in everything that makes up the world. Introspection into one's mind is not enough. One must seek *ri* in all that are ontologically and phenomenologically observable to man.⁸⁷

Hayashi's reasoning thus far is rather predictable. However, upon clarifying his general affinity to Zhu Xi, Hayashi's train of thought begins to diverge from the orthodoxy of Song Neo-Confucianism. This is especially manifest when Hayashi juxtaposes Neo-Confucianism with other strands of Confucianism, such as Wang Yangming's. In one instance, for example, Hayashi ponders on the plausibility of Zhu Xi's postulate that perspicuously separates *ri* from *ki*.

極は理なり、陰陽は気なり、太極の中、本と陰陽あり、陰陽の中、亦未だ嘗て太極あらずんばあらず、五常は理なり、五行は気なり、亦然り、是を以て或は理氣分つべからざるの論あり、勝其朱子の意に戻るを知ると雖も而も或は強ひて之れ

⁸⁴ Wim J. Boot, *The Adoption and Adaptation of Neo-Confucianism in Japan: The Role of Fujiwara Seika and Hayashi Razan*, Leiden: Lectoria, 1982; Kiri Paramore, "The Nationalization of Confucianism: Academism, Examinations and Bureaucratic Governance in the Late Tokugawa State," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 38:1, 2012: 25-53.

⁸⁵ Hayashi, "Tagen kore ni yosu," 14. The original text reads, "其夫子の道は六經にあり、經を解すること紫陽氏より粹なるはなし、紫陽を捨てて之に従はず、而して唯区々たる象山を是れ信ず、惑へるに似たるに幾からずや。"

⁸⁶ Hayashi Razan, "Hono ikazuchi ōkami ben" 火雷神弁 ("On the Gods of Thunder"), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū, 1-kan* 羅山先生文集 1 卷 (*Essays of Hayashi Razan, Vol. 1*), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918 [1602]: 297 [296-297].

⁸⁷ Ibid. This is obviously a subtle negation of Wang Yangming's (1472-1529) school of Confucianism and its doctrine of *xin ji li* (心即理: the mind is the principle).

を言ふ。

(The principle is the ultimate. The material force is *yin-yang*. The ultimate cosmological state of the universe is sustained by something cardinal and a dualistic monism of two opposing forces. Then, the two forces must also embed within themselves the ultimate cosmological state. Of course, the five cardinal virtues are the principle, and the five elements are the material force. For this reason, some have argued that the principle and the material force are inseparable. Though I remain convinced that all interpretations arrive ultimately at Zhu Xi's view, I am compelled to point to the possibility that the principle and the material force are inseparable.)⁸⁸

Is *ri* really autonomous from *ki*, as Zhu Xi presumes, even though the two are co-constitutive? Can one arrive at an apposite understanding of *ri* without considering *ki*? Hayashi's intuitive answer to these questions contradicts Zhu Xi's postulate. To justify his dissent, Hayashi refers to the cosmological premises of Cheng Yi and Zhang Zai (1020-1077), as well as, to a lesser extent, to the works of Wang Yangming. First, Hayashi reiterates the dictum of Cheng Yi's scholarship, which maintains that attending either to human nature (*ri*) or to the material force (*ki*), hence neglecting one component of a dualistic monism, only leads to partial knowledge. *Ri* and *ki* are inseparable, and learning must reflect this inseparability. With this reference to Cheng Yi, Hayashi also alludes to Wang Yangming's premise that *ri* and *ki* are one.⁸⁹ In one instance, Hayashi even goes further to suggest, with reference to Zhang Zai, that what is nominally understood as *ki* is, in fact, the foundational impetus of the universe. For example, Hayashi ponders that the ruler is explained by his dominating and authoritative character; the universe is elucidated by visible structures and shapes; and a pair of opposite forces is characterised by human disposition.⁹⁰

All of these intellectual detours from Zhu Xi are for Hayashi to suggest not conceptual blunders but discursive inconsistency he finds in Zhu Xi's corpus. On the one hand, Zhu Xi's cosmology is monistic as it presumes that everything is one. *Ri* structures all that exist in the universe as a coherent whole. However, on the other hand, when seeking to understand and explain this monistic cosmology, Zhu Xi's language becomes increasingly hylomorphic. *Ri* manifests itself as *ki*. 'What is above' dictates 'what is below.' An investigation into things aids moral introspection. Consequently, such hylomorphic language engenders a textual discernment, a kind of textuality, that reshapes monistic cosmology into a myriad of duality.

Hayashi is obviously having issues with this hylomorphic language. This is because the dualism of *ri* and *ki* forged through this language, in turn, draws the conceptual boundaries of *ri*, beyond which exist things that escape the dictate of *ri*. To allude to this point, Hayashi asks a rhetorical question. If human nature (*sei*) is essentially the principle (*ri*) as in the Neo-Confucian proposition of *xing ji ri* (性即理: nature is the principle), how can there exist what Hayashi views as '*aku*' (悪:

⁸⁸ Hayashi, "Tagen kore ni yosu," 18. This passage was originally written in a letter to Suminokura Soan (1571-1632), in which Hayashi, then 22 years old, asked for a meeting with Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619) in the hope of becoming his disciple.

⁸⁹ Hayashi Razan, "Zuihitsu yon" 随筆四 ("Essay, No.4"), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū*, 2-kan 羅山先生文集 2 卷 (*Essays of Hayashi Razan*, Vol.2), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918 [1621]: 408 [394-410]. The original passage reads as follows. "程子曰く、性を論じて気を論ぜざれば備はらず、気を論じて性を論ぜざれば明かならず、之を二にすれば、即ち是ならずと、古今理気を論ずるもの多きも、未だこれに過ぐるものあらず、独り大明の王守仁云く、理は気の条理、気は理の運用と"

⁹⁰ Hayashi Razan, "Saimei kōkai" 西銘講解 ("On Zhang Zai's Western Inscription"), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū*, 1-kan, 335 [335-337].

evil)? If human nature is inherently good, why do negative emotions and harmful actions exist?

子思曰く天命之を性と謂ふと、孟子曰く性は善なりと、又曰く、其の情は則ち以て善と為すべしと。宋儒之を解きて云く、性は即ち理なり。之を要するに善の至りは則ち理なり。理の極は則ち善なりと。推し広めて之を説いて謂ふ、天下理外の物なしと。是に由て之を言えは則ち善歟。何ぞ悪あらんや、吉のみ。何ぞ凶あらんや、若し本と悪あらば則ち性善と謂ふべからずなり。性本と善にして理外の物あらずんば、則ち所謂悪何れの処より出るや。果して理内か。理外か。

(Confucius says that the mandate of Heaven is human nature. Mencius says that human nature is good and that, therefore, human emotion is good. Song Confucians explain that human nature is the principle. This means that the ultimate good is the principle, and the ultimate principle is goodness. For this reason, it is said that, in the realm under Heaven, there is nothing outside the principle. There is, in principle, no evil. If there is evil, then, we cannot surmise that human nature is inherently good. Granting all this, where does evil come from? Within the principle? Or from outside the principle? But the principle is goodness, and nothing exists outside the principle.)⁹¹

One premise, typically reiterated by Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty, is that human emotion, *qing* (情), is a reaction to circumstance that affects human nature, which is a priori defined as inherently good and, thus, equated to the principle. If human nature is good and if human emotion dictates human nature, negative emotions and harmful actions have no place in the realm under Heaven. But the reality tells Hayashi otherwise. Does this mean that immoral conduct and unethical behaviour exist outside the principle? If so, how can one claim that the principle is all-encompassing? How can one negotiate the seeming incongruity between the monistic cosmological vision undergirded by goodness and the reality that is far murkier than one would like to presume?

Hayashi's scepticism toward the Neo-Confucian discursive inconsistency brings to the fore some fundamental questions about knowledge and learning. What is the relationship between postulate and reality? Should speculative entities, such as *ri*, *sei*, and *qing*, always conform to reality? Or, are these speculative entities mere epistemological tools to render reality explainable? While Hayashi did not offer concrete answers, these questions had become, as I read it, the central tropes for the subsequent development of (Neo-)Confucianism in Japan. Solutions offered by various strands of Confucianism that subsequently emerged during the Tokugawa period can be categorised broadly into two approaches. One is to recentre the dialectic of *sei* and *ri*, human nature and the principle, around practical concerns for ethics and morality rather than around metaphysical concerns for Confucian cosmology. By following Wang Yangming's conviction in the internalisation of *ri*, the likes of Nakae Tōju (1608-1648) and Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691) maintain that the search for *ri* should be solely in the human mind and that the purpose of doing so is to make moral judgements and attain moral knowledge (致良知: *zhi liang zhi*). As they see it, the problem of Neo-Confucianism lies in its claim that *ri*, the moral principle, can be found not only in the human mind but also in the external world, as the dictum of 'investigating things, perfecting knowledge' indicates. By re-establishing *ri* as something internal only to the human mind and by redefining *kyūri* as the rehearsal of moral and ethical actions, Nakae and Kumazawa

⁹¹ Hayashi Razan "Montai yon" 問對四 ("Questions and Answers, No.4"), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū, 1-kan*, 387 [374-388].

reorient Confucian learning, redraw the territory of ‘proper’ knowledge, bypass any metaphysical questions, and effectively relegate questions about the external world outside the remit of their concern.⁹² In contrast, the other approach, epitomised by the works of Kogaku scholars including Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685), Itō Jinsai (1627-1705), and Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), views that both the human virtue (mind) and the external world – or else, what they call ‘*tenchi-shizen*’ (天地自然: nature) – are important components of the Confucian worldview and, thus, must be treated equally as loci of learning. However, these scholars also suggest that, insofar as the mind and nature are autonomous from one another, the method of intervening in the mind cannot be the same as the method used to understand nature.⁹³ Of course, Kogaku is by no means a homogenous scholarship. But the upshot at this juncture is that this distinction between mind and nature enables scholars of Kogaku to legitimately concentrate their efforts to re-establish a mode of intervening in the mind. What emerges from their efforts is a pragmatic attitude towards knowledge. That is to say, knowledge can be located not in the transcendental absolute but in documented human experiences and in human history. This signals a shift in *kyūri* from the pursuit of ‘must be’, cosmological postulates, to the pursuit of ‘be’ (experiences and history). At the same time, this distinction between mind and nature effectively liberates the latter from the dictate of moral and ethical conclusions. Nature is now conceptualised as a separate field of *kyūri*, also understood as the pursuit of ‘be’ but not from the historicist position but from the empiricist position.⁹⁴ In short, the distinction between mind and nature effectively authorises *laissez-aller* engagement with natural phenomena as a legitimate pursuit of knowledge.

To be sure, the Confucian corpus on nature is limited. And yet, this unfolding of (Neo-)Confucianism during the Tokugawa period, which began with the Neo-Confucian predilection towards scepticism as a method, engendered not only an autonomous realm of investigating nature but also a legitimate case to develop a distinctive methodological approach to the study of nature. This, as I shall even go so far as to argue, prepared a condition for integrating modern Western scientific knowledge, such as astronomy, calendrical science, natural history, physics, chemistry, and medicine, into the existing intellectual landscape. Modern Western science was to fill the vacuum created by the particular discursive development within Confucianism. It

⁹² For the development of Yangming school of Confucianism in Japan, see Inoue, *Nippon Yōmeigakuha no tetsugaku*; Andō Hideo, *Nihon ni okeru yōmeigaku no keifu* 日本における陽明学派の系譜 (*A Genealogy of Yangming School in Japan*), Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1971; Yoshida Kōhei, *Nihon no yōmeigaku* 日本の陽明学 (*Yangmingism in Japan*), Tokyo: Perikansha, 1999.

⁹³ As Ogyū Sorai writes, “先王の道は、先王の造る所也。天地自然の道にあらざるなり。蓋し先王聰明叡智の徳を以て、天命を受け、天下に王たり。其の心一に天下を安んずるを以て務となす。是を以て其の心力を尽し、其の知巧を極め、是の道を作爲し、天下後世の人をして、是に由て之れを行はしむ。豈に天地自然に之れ有らんや。” (The Way of the rule is what the ruler makes. It is not the Way of nature. The ruler becomes the king of the realm under Heaven with the virtue of wise wisdom. His responsibility is to maintain the stability of the realm under Heaven. He devotes himself to the purpose, mobilises all knowledge he has, and demonstrates the Way of the rule for the generations to come after him. Nature does not have such a purpose.) See Ogyū Sorai, *Bendō* 弁道 (*Distinguishing the Way*), in Yoshikawa Kōjirō, Maruyama Masao, Nishida Taichirō, Tsuji Tatsuya (eds.), *Nihon shisō taikēi 36-kan: Ogyū Sorai* 日本思想体系 36 卷: 荻生徂徠 (*An Outline of Japanese Intellectual Thoughts: Ogyū Sorai*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973 [1717]: 14. See also, Inoue, *Nippon Kogakuha no tetsugaku*; Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 206-222.

⁹⁴ Tetsuo Najita, “History and Nature in Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Thought,” in John Whitney Hall and James L. McClain (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 4: Early Modern Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 621 [596-659].

was brought in not as a replacement of but as a supplement to existing knowledge traditions.

§

3.5. Disjuncture

In 1824, Satō Issai (1772-1859), a prominent Neo-Confucian scholar at Shōheizaka-gakumonjo, admitted the inadequacy of (Neo-)Confucianism for the study of nature.

吾が儒の窮理は唯義を理すのみ。義は我に在り、窮理も我に在り。若し外に徇ひ物を遂ふを以て窮理と為さば、恐らくは終に欧羅巴人をして吾が儒より賢ならしめん。

(As a Confucian, pursuing the principle means to me understanding righteousness, which is in me. Thus, the pursuit of the principle is introspective. However, if we define the pursuit of the principle as the pursuit of knowledge about things external to my mind, then, I must admit that Europeans are wiser than Confucians.)⁹⁵

Is it a Neo-Confucian concession to modern Western knowledge? Is Satō admitting a sense of intellectual defeat? Yamamuro Shinichi thinks that is the case. (Neo-)Confucian scholars of the mid-19th century harboured, according to Yamamuro, a sense of overall inadequacy of their knowledge tradition, which subsequently created a vacuum to be filled by the advocates of modern Western knowledge.⁹⁶

I am, however, not as certain as Yamamuro. Acknowledging the limit of (Neo-)Confucianism vis-à-vis modern Western knowledge does not automatically amount to the former's concession to the latter. What is more interesting here is Satō's admission that what *kyūri* means depends on how one defines *ri*. If *ri* is about the matters of the external world, Satō thinks that modern Western knowledge, a form of *kyūri*, offers a better understanding. But if *ri* is about the matter of the human mind, (Neo-)Confucianism continues to be the appropriate mode of *kyūri*. Then, my reading of Satō's opinion here is that it is simply a reflection of the general intellectual climate. Because of the certain itinerary of (Neo-)Confucian development, the mind and nature were now distinct from one another and, thus, constituted distinctive realms of pursuing knowledge. While this separation of mind from nature resulted in the (re)territorialisation of (Neo-)Confucianism vis-à-vis modern Western knowledge, the foundational conceptual devices for knowledge, that is, the concepts of *ri* and *kyūri*, were now valorised to authorise multiple knowledge traditions as valid and serious.

One immediate repercussion for our understanding is that we cannot assume stable structures of the meaning of a concept. The concepts of *ri* and *kyūri* were, if anything, transformative thresholds. The signifiatory valorisation of *ri* and *kyūri* enabled, on the one hand, those Rangaku

⁹⁵ Satō Issai, *Genshiroku* 言志録 (*Things I Think*), in *Genshi shi-roku* 言志四録 (*Four Records on Things I Think*), Tokyo: Matuyamadō, 1907 [1824]: 1-42.

⁹⁶ For Yamamuro's comment on this specific passage from Issai, see Yamamuro Shinichi, "Nihon gakumon no jizoku to tenkai" 日本学問の持続と展開 ("Continuities and Changes in Japanese Scholarships"), in Matsumoto et al. (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taikēi 10-kan*, 474 [465-498].

scholars to legitimate a new knowledge tradition through an appeal to the existing signifiers. On the other hand, it also enabled (Neo-)Confucian scholars to re-establish the horizon of their own knowledge tradition, which engendered a possibility of other serious knowledge traditions beyond that horizon. Consequently, by the mid-19th century, *ri* and *kyūri* had become floating signifiers, encompassing multiple worldviews, multiple notions of knowledge, multiple relations between the knower and the known, and multiple methods of attaining knowledge.

Now, recall here two representative claims of the early Meiji period. Fukuzawa Yukichi maintains, as I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that the appropriate mode of *kyūri* cannot be properly implemented without completely overcoming the predicaments of Chinese cosmology. Fukuoka Takachika suggests, as I have discussed in an earlier chapter, that Neo-Confucianism cannot be the legitimate foundation for the institutionalised locus of learning, that is, the university, whose purpose is to pursue truth based on established and formalised methods of scientific inquiry. When submitted to my analysis thus far, these claims represent disjuncture in twofold. First, the scope of *kyūri* Fukuzawa speaks of is markedly different from the scope of *kyūri* reconfigured by the mid-19th century. *Kyūri* of the Tokugawa period permits the existence of various knowledge traditions, some based on Chinese cosmology and others on the distinction between the observing and the observed. As long as it pursues the principle – however it is defined – within its own remit, any knowledge tradition is a legitimate intellectual endeavour. In contrast, the scope of *kyūri*, as Fukuzawa sees it, is far narrower. Cosmological speculations and postulates have nothing to do with proper knowledge. This is because *ri* does not encompass cosmological tethers of what one thinks the world must be. Only those regularities of the phenomenal world can be qualified as *ri* and, thus, as the legitimate things to be known. Second, however, how Fukuzawa qualifies knowledge as valid and serious differs from what Fukuoka views as the nucleus of valid and serious knowledge. Evidently, Fukuzawa's justification of valid and serious knowledge remains dependent on the familiar qualification, that is, the *ri*-knowledge structuration. For him, the difference between knowledge and non-knowledge is determined by the very definition of *ri*. Scholars of (Neo-)Confucianism and other Chinese intellectual traditions, despite their claim to knowledge, simply misconceptualise *ri* as something tethered to divine intentions. Thus, in order to attain proper knowledge, as Fukuzawa suggests, one must first recognise that *ri* signifies regularities of the phenomenal world. In comparison, Fukuoka infers that what makes knowledge different from non-knowledge lies not in the definition of *ri* but in established and formalised methods of scientific inquiry, or else, what we may call scientificity. What guarantees the legitimacy of knowledge is how one arrives at a conclusion, whatever the conclusion may be.

This, in turn, suggests an important shift in the overall concern about knowledge. If the qualification of knowledge no longer relies on the *ri*-knowledge structuration but on methods, one must also address the relation between the knower and the known that dictates what constitutes appropriate methods. A shift I am referring to is the shift in the qualification of knowledge from the *ri*-knowledge structuration to a subject-object relation. It is from this shift that, as I shall demonstrate in the remaining chapters, the subject of knowledge reflexive of lifeworlds and histories of late 19th-century Japan emerges.

CHAPTER 4

EPISTEMIC RECONFIGURATION

Hypotheses are therefore allowed in the field of pure reason only as weapons of war, not for grounding a right but only for defending it. However, we must always seek the enemy here in ourselves. For speculative reason in its transcendental use is dialectical in itself. The objections that are to be feared lie in ourselves. We must search them out like old but unexpired claims in order to ground perpetual peace on their annihilation.

Immanuel Kant¹

§

4.1. Precondition

When writing about the intersection of language and natural science, Ian Hacking identifies three kinds of war fought in the modern Western philosophy of science. The first of which he calls ‘colonial war’. This is a war to expand the realm that we call ‘reality’ by discovering truths, the inner constitution of things, not only about familiar and observable entities but also about theoretical entities, such as protons and fields of force, postulated by theories but nevertheless unobservable. The second kind of war is what Hacking characterises as ‘civil war’. This is a war to determine whether familiar and observable entities, such as a chair and a dog, exist independently of human thoughts or do not exist outside the human mind. In this way, arguing for a certain position in a civil war already determines one’s position also in a colonial war, and vice versa. Lastly, Hacking identifies ‘total war’ as the most foundational of all that seeks to reject hitherto accepted assumptions and to establish instead a new way of relating to knowledge. Total war is total because it dismisses existing colonial and civil wars as irrelevant for these are fought on fanciful assumptions, redraws the parameters of new colonial and civil wars, and establishes a new set of rules of engagement to fight these wars.²

Alluding to Hacking’s analogy, I shall venture to suggest here that the shift in the qualification of knowledge from the *ri*-knowledge structuration to a subject-object relation is a consequence of total war. Yet, for total war to be fought, certain conditions had to be met. In Hacking’s analogy, it

¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 663.

² Hacking, *Representing and Intervening*, 95-96.

was Immanuel Kant who began a total war by rejecting the relevance of the existing dispute between Locke and Berkeley, between transcendental realism and empirical idealism. For Kant, this juxtaposition is on an erroneous ground. The question is not about whether or not something exists independently of human thoughts. It is rather about how something comes to exist as part of a system of representation. Something exists ‘out there’ because it is constituted as such. All knowledge, for Kant, is of things thus constituted within a system.³ In other words, the dispute between Locke and Berkeley, between transcendental realism and empirical idealism, was the very precondition for Kantian total war. Without it, Kant would have never called himself all at once an empirical realist and a transcendental idealist. What, then, was the precondition for the shift from the *ri*-knowledge structuration to a subject-object relation to occur? What were the parameters, assumptions, and rules of engagement in intellectual disputes that took place before knowledge came to be defined as a subject-object relation? Why and how did then-accepted parameters, assumptions, and rules become a new battleground for a total war?

To address these questions, my focus in this chapter remains on what may be otherwise labelled as premodern. More specifically, I seek to recount, in the following, various intellectual disputes during the Tokugawa period over what *ri* actually entailed. While Neo-Confucianism retained its political purchase, intellectual discords among its advocates and dissents had resulted in the heterogenisation of *ri*, the foundational concept for qualifying knowledge as valid and serious, and the subsequent suspension of the Neo-Confucian concept of *kyūri* as the dominant mode of attaining knowledge. My argument is that the heterogenisation of *ri* and the suspension of *kyūri* brought about the overall valorisation of the *ri*-knowledge structuration and that, as a result, this primary qualification of knowledge became almost meaningless.

The peculiarity of the Tokugawa intellectual landscape is a certain sense of intellectual freedom ascribed to it. It is true that, throughout the Tokugawa period, Neo-Confucianism had established an intimate connection to the political centre and thus gained a relatively hegemonic status. But this did not erase spaces for entertaining other intellectual possibilities, be they within the remit of Confucianism or outside it. This was in large part due to a chronotope of the Neo-Confucian development in Japan – a space-time as a form of the most immediate reality represented in language and discourse, a conduit through which certain meanings enter into the semantic space of intellectual life of the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴ As I have suggested elsewhere, Neo-

³ Ibid., 97-98.

⁴ The concept of chronotope was initially proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin as the central premise of his theory of language and literature. Against Kantian transcendental understanding of space-time, Bakhtin writes as follows. “In his ‘Transcendental Aesthetics’ (one of the main sections of his *Critique of Pure Reason*) Kant defines space and time as indispensable forms of any cognition, beginning with elementary perceptions and representations. Here, we employ the Kantian evaluation of the importance of these forms in the cognitive process, but differ from Kant in taking them not as ‘transcendental’ but as forms of the most immediate reality [...]” Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics,” in Michael Holquist (ed.), Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trans.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981: 235 [85-258]. Bakhtin’s conceptualisation offers a general orientation to view space-time as a content-dependent and qualitative variable. But, my usage of the term chronotope aligns with a slightly narrower definition developed in linguistics, which sees chronotope as an essential socio-linguistic qualification for discourse analysis, and which proposes “to see chronotopes as the aspect of contextualization through which specific chunks of history (understood here in the Bakhtinian sense as spatiotemporal) can be invoked in discourse as meaning-attributing resources or, to refer to earlier terminology, as historically configured and ordered tropes.” Jan Blommaert, “Chronotopes, Scales, and Complexity in the Study of Language in Society,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 44:1, 2015: 111 [105-116]. See also Jan Blommaert, *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Confucianism in Japan deviates from the ‘original’ form that Zhu Xi developed.⁵ However, as I have also suggested, a deviation is not a vindication that Japanese Neo-Confucians have failed to understand the original correctly. In a perverse way, deviation is an inevitable consequence if one remains true to Zhu Xi’s teaching to exercise one’s faculty of doubt. Scepticism as a method inherent in Zhu Xi’s thought enabled those Japanese Neo-Confucians to challenge the original. Scepticism was especially pronounced because of the spatiotemporal distance from Chinese Neo-Confucianism. Zhu Xi’s rendering of the Confucian canon in the 11th century did not establish an immediate foothold in Japan. It was centuries later, in the 17th century, that Neo-Confucianism began to take hold in Japan under the Tokugawa regime.⁶

This spatiotemporal distance had some immediate repercussions. First, the appropriation of Zhu Xi’s thought paralleled the introduction of various interpretations and critiques of Zhu Xi. This created a condition under which even those advocates of Neo-Confucianism, such as Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken, exercised their faculty of doubt and entertained the possibility that Zhu Xi’s thought might be limited. Second, such an influx of interpretations and critiques brought renewed opportunities to engage with the works of Confucian scholars produced before Zhu Xi’s time. Dissenting from Neo-Confucianism, other intellectual traditions, such as Yōmeigaku, Kogaku, Kokugaku, Jōrigaku, and Koihō, began to articulate new discursive orientations to redefine what it meant to know both within and outside the remit of Confucianism. Or put otherwise, dissents effectively heterogenised the concept of *ri*. This, in turn, resulted in the suspension of the Neo-Confucian concept of *kyūri*. Because *ri* had now become heterogenous, the concept of *kyūri*, first used in the Neo-Confucian tradition, no longer fully summoned forth what it meant. It could only be defined by appeal to additional signifiers and significations.

The itinerary of Neo-Confucianism travelling from 11th-century China to 17th-century Japan

⁵ That Neo-Confucianism in Japan must be treated as different from Zhu Xi’s thought, is an argument also put forward by Tahara Tsuguo. However, Tahara’s reasoning differs from mine. He argues that the point of differentiation derives from the fact that any intellectual thought is reflexive of a mode of thinking and reasoning specific to a ‘national’ community, even if the thought in question embodies a sense of universality. I find this reasoning rather problematic. First, this emphasis on ‘national’ may be a way to lodge claims for a new kind of relativism vis-à-vis foundationalist epistemology. However, it reduces differences in epistemic enunciations into mere cultural differences. Second, this emphasis on ‘national’ justifies rather problematically an engagement with a time and place removed from our own through categories such as nation and national culture that are either entirely modern inventions or with significations that belong essentially to our own historical time. My argument is that Neo-Confucianism in Japan is different from Zhu Xi’s because of the inherent predilection towards scepticism. See, for instance, Tahara Tsuguo, “Ogyū Sorai ni okeru Shushigaku no rikai to hihan” 荻生徂徠における朱子学の理解と批判 (“Ogyū Sorai’s Understanding and Critique of Neo-Confucianism”), *Shigaku zasshi*, 68:11, 1959: 48-75; Tahara Tsuguo, “Itō Jinsai ni okeru shushigaku hihan no imi” 伊藤仁斎における朱子学批判の意味 (“The Meaning of Itō Jinsai’s Critique of Neo-Confucianism”), *Nihonshi kenkyū*, 72, 1964: 64-74. Tsuji Tetsuo makes an argument similar to Tahara. See Tsuji Tetsuo, *Nihon no kagaku shisō: Sono jiritsu eno mosaku* 日本の科学思想: その自立への模索 (*Scientific Thought in Japan: The Search for Autonomy*), Tokyo: Kobunshi shobō, 2013: 87.

⁶ Thus, Maruyama Masao characterises the Tokugawa period as “the golden age of Confucianism in Japan” and attributes the rapid development of (Neo-)Confucianism to three factors. The first is a sense of universality embodied by (Neo-)Confucianism that transcends particularities. As Maruyama observes, “all modes of thought that are more than guides or programs for action in specific situations contain within them the possibility of universality.” Confucianism is no exception, and “this is why it was accepted in Japan.” The second factor is “the social and political structure of Tokugawa feudal society,” which “were comparable with those on which Confucianism was based in the Chinese empire.” According to Maruyama, this similarity enabled the transposition of Confucianism from China to Japan without much abstraction. Lastly, the vested interest of the Tokugawa shogunate was crucial for remoulding Confucianism to reflect specific socio-political concerns and for heteronomously authorising it as the legitimate mode of thinking and reasoning. See Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 7-8.

prevented this strand of Confucianism from becoming the timeless rendering of the Confucian canon.⁷ This, in turn, prefigured the emergence of dissents, the heterogenisation of *ri*, and the suspension of Neo-Confucian *kyūri*. These, as we shall see, were the conditions that subsequently enabled a shift from the *ri*-knowledge structuration to a subject-object relation. These were the conditions under which a new figure of the knower emerged and began to reconfigure its relation to the known.

§

4.2. Learning and Its Methods

Within the remit of Confucianism, Yōmeigaku and Kogaku offer the most pronounced dissenting perspectives vis-à-vis Neo-Confucianism. Scholars of Yōmeigaku detested the Neo-Confucian dialectic of ‘nature is the principle’ and its teleological principle of learning, that is, ‘investigating things, perfecting knowledge’. Yōmeigaku’s call for ‘*chikō gōitsu*’ (知行合一: knowledge and action are a unity), the idea that one can grasp *ri* not through investigating things but through a continuous struggle to make moral and ethical decisions, is essentially a negation of Neo-Confucian predilection towards knowing rather than acting upon the principle.⁸ Scholars of

⁷ My observation here intersects with some questions about canon and canonisation. Admittedly, though, these are beyond the present scope of my inquiry. I shall thus reiterate here Michael Nylan’s analysis of how the five Confucian classics had been canonised in the Confucian tradition in China. As Nylan maintains, discussions on these classics in China “seem to have established at least five important, if contested, notions concerning canon formation [...]. (1) a person arrives at decisions about value on the basis of information received from members of the community. Within a particular community, tastes tend to converge, [...] so that appreciation of the canon will be adjudged simply as ‘good taste’ and ‘rational choice’; (2) the inclusion of a work in the canon depends as much upon the successive subjective judgments of influential tastemakers who find the work in fundamental ways to be timeless (that is, applicable to their own situation) as upon the original authorial design, labor, and skill; (3) texts are plural and ambiguous from the beginning; given that methods employed to address such indeterminacy vary over time, new meaning can in theory be generated endlessly from the same classic; (4) once a work has been in the canon for a sufficient length of time, it begins to perform key cultural functions, for example, as an unquestioned authority, as a witness to persistent community interests, as a testament to cultural superiority, as a selective compendium of ideals and traditions; it then no longer merely reflects but also shapes and creates the cultural that transmits its values, as often by setting limits to the parameters of cultural discourse as by the direct promotion of a set values; (5) certain purportedly objective truths embodied in the canon can sometimes serve as enabling alibis or cultural cover for the relentless pursuit of special economic and political interests by those who have or wish to attain power.” Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001:14.

⁸ Ogyū Shigehiro offers a brief yet concise reading of the development of Yōmeigaku in Japan and its wider influence. See Ogyū Shigehiro, “The Construction of ‘Modern Yōmeigaku’ in Meiji Japan and Its Impact in China,” Barry D. Steben (trans.), *East Asian History*, 20, 2000: 83-120. Ogyū maintains that just as Neo-Confucianism in Japan was not a ‘pure’ translation of Zhu Xi’s thought, Yōmeigaku in Japan was marked by a certain inflection from Wang Yangming’s teachings and influenced by other strands of Confucianism. Yōmeigaku in Japan was by no means homogenous. Thus, Bitō Masahide points out the incommensurability between the thought of Japanese Yōmeigaku scholars such as Nakae Tōju (1608-1648) and Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691), and Wang Yangming’s thought, and goes so far as to argue that Chinese Confucianism was unsuited for Japanese society. Against a commonly held view that suggests the influence of Wang Yangming in the works of Yoshida Shōin (1830-1859) and Saigō Takamori (1827-1877), Harry Harootunian argues that it is hard to identify the predilection towards Yangming’s thought in their writings. See Bitō, *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū*; Harootunian, *Toward Restoration*, 139-41.

Kogaku admonished that the Japanese brand of Neo-Confucianism was essentially a translation of a translation, an interpretation of an interpretation, and a refraction of a refraction. For them, Zhu Xi's thought was problematic not because it was in and of itself wrong but because it was based on what they viewed as incorrect interpretations of the Confucian canon. Neo-Confucianism in Japan was, thus, futile because it was a translation of incorrect interpretations. Hence, Kogaku's call for returning to the original Confucian texts and establishing of a new way of reading, thus translating these texts.⁹ Though Yōmeigaku and Kogaku were markedly different from one another, these strands of Confucianism curved out, as I explain further in the following, a new discursive orientation to redefine what learning ought to be and how one could attain knowledge.

4.2.1. *Embodying Rather Than Understanding*

In emphasising the importance of action, scholars of Yōmeigaku identify the twofold problem of Neo-Confucianism: its engagement with cosmological contemplation about *tian* (heaven) and *tianxia* (the realm under heaven) and its ontological speculations about a way of being and becoming. Contemplation and speculation, in other words, will not lead one to a proper grasp of the all-encompassing principle. If the principle is indeed all-encompassing, the best possible recourse one can have is to one's own mind. The human mind is where "divine illumination equivalent to the ultimate source of both human life and the natural world" indwells.¹⁰ Yōmeigaku thus urges to re-centre intellectual exercises around the establishment of practical methods for attending to oneself and for making moral and ethical judgements in everyday life.

The centrality of the human mind is succinctly summarised by Nakae Tōju, who writes as follows.

天地萬物皆神明発光の中に生化する者なる故に、よりて我心の孝徳明らかなれば、神明に通し四海に明かなるものなり、故に我心の孝徳を明らかにして、天地萬物に通ずるやうに心がけを以て、人間第一のつとめとす。

(The permanent divine illumination is the source of everything in heaven and on earth.

⁹ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 76-102; Katō, "Meiji-shoki no honyaku," 351. Just as Yōmeigaku was not a homogenous scholarly enterprise, so too was Kogaku. Inoue Tetsujirō was the first to distinguish the Confucian scholarship of Sokōgaku (素行学) or alternatively, Seigaku (聖学: Sacred Learning) of Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685), Kogigaku (古義学: Studies of Ancient Meanings) of Itō Jinsai (1627-1705), and Kobunjigaku (古文辞学: Studies of Ancient Texts) of Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), while discussing them together under the broader epithet of 'kogaku-ha' (古学派: School of ancient studies). The upshot is that Kogaku is an epithet rather than a unified field of knowledge within the Confucian tradition. See Inoue, *Nippon Kogakuha no tetsugaku*. The historical significance of Kogaku remains a contested matter. The likes of Maruyama Masao read the diachronic development of Kogaku within a synchronic moment of modernity, suggesting that this strand of Confucianism had effectively overcome feudal modes of thought and paved the way for foregrounding a modern mode of thinking and reasoning. See Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*. Others, focusing on the intellectual genealogy from Kogaku to Kokugaku, designate the former as a manifestation of intellectual creativity, specifically of the Japanese, as a reflection of a quintessentially 'Japanese' modality of thinking. See, for example, Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Jinsai, Sorai, Norinaga* 仁斎、徂徠、宣長 (*Jinsai, Sorai, Norinaga*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975; Takeuchi Seiichi, Kubota Takaaki, and Nishimura Michikazu (eds.), "Kogaku" no shisō: *Nihon shisō-shi josetsu 4-kan* 「国学」の思想: 日本思想史序説 4 卷 (*Intellectual Thought of Ancient Studies: History of Japanese Thought, Vol. 4*), Tokyo: Perikansha, 1994.

¹⁰ Ogyū, "The Construction of 'Modern Yōmeigaku'," 87.

Therefore, once we elucidate the inner dispositions of our mind, we will become conversant with the divinity, and all that is to be clarified will be clarified. Our principal duty is to understand everything in heaven and on earth by recognising virtues already in our mind.)¹¹

To elucidate the inner disposition of the human mind, Neo-Confucian approaches to didactics and debates are not appropriate. Nakae argues that learning, *gakumon*, must be directed at turning one's body into a 'lived-in' entity, an embodiment of the words of the sages.

俗儒は儒道の書物をよみ訓話をおぼへ、記誦詞章を専らとし、耳にきき口に説ばかりにて徳を知り道を行はざるものなり [...] 正真の学問は [...] 明德の実珠を磨き、五等の孝行五倫の道の至善をよく行ひ、[...] 独り其身をよくし性を盡し、命にいたりて孔孟の教化をなす、かくの如く学ぶを正真の学問といふなり。

(A mediocre Confucian scholar tells you this: the proper Confucian learning is to read Confucian texts, memorise exhortations, and recite verses and texts. It is all about knowing the virtues through didactic teaching and polemical debates but never about actually practising the way of the sages. [...] True learning is [...] to refine the core of virtuous quality, to practice the five virtues of filial piety and of the Way, [...] to improve one's body and one's nature, and to spread the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. That is what I call true learning.)¹²

What is at stake here is the established convention of Neo-Confucian learning based on cosmological contemplation and ontological speculation. If the Neo-Confucian scepticism as a method already indicates a sense of impasse, as we have seen in the corpus of Hayashi Razan, Nakae here seeks to offer an alternative route to arrive at the all-encompassing principle, that is, *ri*. His argument is that attempts at 'understanding' the principle through contemplation and speculation can never overcome the problem of language manifesting itself as competing interpretations, flaws of dialectics, and teleological inconsistencies. Nakae's insistence to 'embody' rather than 'understand' the principle is, thus, to bypass the problem of language and to truly grapple with the principle as lived experiences.

One obvious and legitimate question at this juncture is this: what renders the space of experience, body, into a lived-in entity, embodiment, of the principle? In other words, what grounds actions and practices as legitimate exercises to grapple with the principle? Here, Kumazawa Banzan's juxtaposition between '*michi*' (道: the Way) and '*hō*' (法: law), between transcendence and immanence, is instructive. As Kumazawa sees it, the Way is constant and timeless, while the law is anomalous and subjected to spatiotemporal specificities. Thus, he maintains:

道と法とは別なるものにて候を、心得違て、法を道と覺えたるあやまり多候。法は中国の聖人といへども代々に替り候。況や日本へ移して行ひがたき事多候。道は三綱五常是なり。天地人に配し、五行に配す。いまだ徳の名なく聖人の教なかりし時も、此道は既行はれたり。いまだ人生ぜざりし時も、天地に行はれ、いまだ天地わかれざりし時も、太虚に行はる。人絶天地無に歸すといへ共亡ることなし。況後世をや。

¹¹ Nakae Tōju, *Okina mondō* 翁問答 (*Dialogue with An old Man*). Inoue Tetsujirō (ed.), Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1910 [1640-1641]: 14.

¹² *Ibid.*, 36-38.

(The Way and the law are two different things. And yet, many people incorrectly equate the law to the Way. To be sure, the law was established by the sage. But it has changed from generation to generation. This is why it is difficult to transfer the law from China to Japan. The Way encompasses three fundamental bonds and five constant virtues. It regulates man and five fundamentals of the world. The Way existed even before virtues were thus named and the teachings of the sages were thus established. The Way regulated the heaven and the earth even before humans existed. The Way was there in emptiness even before the heaven and the earth were separated. Even if humans cease to exist, even if the heaven and earth come to nothingness, the Way remains.)¹³

The Way has an a priori existence. It transcends space and time, which are otherwise necessary preconditions for things to exist. In contrast, Kumazawa sees the law essentially as a historical entity instituted by the sages. It reflects the circumstances of the time that it is instituted. Insofar as the law is immanent and cannot transcend its historicity, it is subjected to historical changes. To turn one's body into an embodiment of the principle, one must thus distinguish the Way from the law, transcendence from immanence, and practice the Way in matters of governing, businesses, and relationships. For those scholars of Yōmeigaku, to learn is to live according to the Way, according to the transcendence, rather than to subjugate oneself to standards, norms, and expectations specific to a given spatiotemporal location.

The point here is not the plausibility of premises and assertions put forward by Nakae and Kumazawa. Inferences I shall draw here concern the broader implications of these premises and assertions. What does the development of Yōmeigaku say about the state and nature of knowledge?

One consequence of the development of Yōmeigaku is the further compartmentalisation of knowledge. I use the term 'further' here because compartmentalisation is not necessarily a phenomenon ascribed solely to Yōmeigaku. Recall my discussion in the previous chapter. The Neo-Confucian predilection towards scepticism as a method that we see in Hayashi Razan's corpus, for instance, had already forged a realm of investigating nature autonomous from moral and ethical concerns. This prepared a condition for integrating modern Western scientific knowledge into the existing intellectual landscape. In other words, Neo-Confucianism, whether intentionally or otherwise, had asserted the possibility of two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of mind and knowledge of nature. Of course, in the Neo-Confucian scheme of learning, these two kinds of knowledge remained intertwined. As its mantra of 'investigating things, perfecting knowledge' indicates, Neo-Confucians ultimately saw material relations as moral relations because both were dictated by the same and the only absolute principle, *ri*. Knowledge of nature was thus a means for expanding moral and ethical knowledge, for attaining individual virtue. Yōmeigaku, in a sense, negated this bearing between the material and the moral. Its attention to the exercise of the human mind effectively detached moral and ethical knowledge from knowledge of things external to the mind.

Yōmeigaku also offers a pronounced sense of time. This is, of course, not to say that other strands of Confucianism are devoid of any temporal concerns. 'The propensity of time' or 'timeliness of actions' was indeed the prominent postulate in earlier Confucian traditions. However,

¹³ Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi gaisho* 集疑外書 (*Unofficial Writings on the Accumulation of Righteousness*), in Satō Yōichi and Tomoeda Ryūtarō (eds.), *Nihon shisōshi taikai 30-kan: Kumazawa Banzan* 日本思想体系 30 卷: 熊沢蕃山 (*An Outline of Japanese Intellectual History, Vol.30: Kumazawa Banzan*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971 [1686]: 380.

in the distinction between the Way and the law, between transcendence and immanence, we see a clearer pronouncement of time that is different from ‘the propensity of time’. The idea that the law is immanent and subjected to temporal changes indicates an underlying notion of time not as a qualifier for good actions but as a precondition for the immanent, for the law to exist as such in a specific circumstance. Further still, this temporal consciousness is tied to a spatial consciousness. This is especially evident in Kumazawa’s argument that the law cannot be easily transferred from one location to another. The specificity of a circumstance is determined not only by time but also by space. The law is bounded by space and time. It cannot thus transcend its own spatiotemporal specificities. Scholars of Yōmeigaku evaded this conclusion by simply reorienting their learning towards the Way, towards the transcendence, which they saw as both the means and the end for attaining knowledge.

4.2.2. Historical Consciousness

In contrast, spatiotemporal specificities were at the centre of Kogaku’s concern. This is because such specificities were, as scholars of Kogaku argued, the very determinant of how one would read and interpret Confucian canon and, thus, how one would understand what the Way actually entailed.

How did spatiotemporal specificities inform the works of Kogaku? To consider this, let us first turn to Itō Jinsai and his dissatisfaction with Neo-Confucian learning. What concerns Itō is the Neo-Confucian equation of human nature to the principle, Zhu Xi’s thesis of *xing ji li* (nature is the principle). For Itō, “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom name moral quality” and cannot be equated to the principle that dictates everything under heaven “and thus is not commodities exclusive to the human.”¹⁴ Human nature is not the principle. It is something different.

性とは、専ら己れに有するを以てして言ふ。天下の該ぬるところにあらず。これ、性と道德との弁なり。[...] 漢唐の諸儒より、宋の濂溪先生に至るまで、みな仁義礼智を以て徳として、いまだかつて異議有ラズ。伊川に至って、始めて仁義礼智を以て性の名として、性を以て理とす。これによりして学者みな仁義礼智を以て理とし性として、徒にその義を理会し、復た力を仁義礼智の徳に用ひず、その功夫受容に至っては、すなわち別に持敬・主静・到良知等の条目を立てて、復た孔氏の方徇はず。これ予の深く弁じ痛く論じ、繁詞累言、聊か愚衷を尽くし、以て自ら已むこと能はざる所以の者は、実にこれが為めなり。

(Human nature is said to be possessed solely by man. It is not something that regulates the entire world. From the Confucian scholars of the Han and Tang dynasties to Zhou Dunyi of the Song, they regarded benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom as virtues. And there had never been any dispute. It was with Cheng Yi that these virtues became the name of the principle. This is why all scholars after him took these virtues as the basis of their knowledge of the principle, promoted this false understanding to their followers, and never properly practised these virtues. Even worse, in their efforts to grasp these virtues as the principle, they devised themselves with concepts such as *chi jing* [持敬: a method of Neo-Confucian moral learning], *zhu jing* [主静: Cheng Yi’s method of moral practices],

¹⁴ Itō Jinsai, *Gomō jigū*.

and *zhi liang zhi* [到良知: Wang Yangming's claim for attaining moral knowledge], which, in fact, Confucius never discussed in his teachings. I may have said too many words and made too many mistakes. But this [the Neo-Confucian misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Confucius' teachings] is why I have thought so deeply and argued painstakingly. The problem is so obvious and grave, which is why I have not been able to stop myself from challenging such [Neo-Confucian] understanding of human nature, virtues, and the principle.)¹⁵

The Neo-Confucian doctrine of *xing ji li* has, for Itō, little to do with the original teachings of Confucius. Since Chang Yi, the question of virtues has been reduced rather problematically to the question of cultivating the self, hence to the question of being and becoming. However, as Itō argues, nowhere in the writings of Confucius and Mencius can one find any reference to these conceptual devices that establish a teleological relationship between virtues and self-cultivation. From Itō's point of view, the whole corpus of Neo-Confucianism is based on a misinterpretation.

This also means that a mode of learning promoted by Neo-Confucianism is futile. On this futility, Itō has the following to say.

宋明の儒先、みな性を尽すを以て極則として、学問の功ますます大なることを知らず。殊に、己が性は限り有りて、天下の道は窮まり無きを知らず。限り有るの性を以てして窮まり無き道を尽さんと欲するときは、則ち学問の功に非ずんば、得べからざるなり。

(Confucian scholars of the Sung and Ming dynasties all perceived that the ultimate rule of learning was to exhaust one's own nature. They never understood that the merits of learning were much broader than the cultivation of the Self. In particular, they did not realise that one's nature is limited, nor did they grasp that the Way under Heaven is not limited. When you desire to use your limited nature to attain the limitless Way, learning is futile and it is impossible to achieve its objective.)¹⁶

Upon arguing thus, Itō re-establishes the purpose of learning. It is to connect the finite and limited self to the infinite and unlimited Way. As he maintains, learning should not rely on invented conceptual devices for textual interpretation, such as *chi jing*, *zhu jing*, and *zhi liang zhi*. Instead, one should engage directly with the original teachings of Confucius and Mencius to grasp the essential quality of each and everything that makes up the world. This is because everything one must know is already in the writings of Confucius and Mencius. For this reason, Itō calls for returning to ancient texts so that one can have direct recourse, without any mediations or false interpretations, to the Way of the sages. To do so, as Itō argues, one must devote one's effort to clarifying the meaning of various Confucian discursive categories defined in ancient texts, such as *tendō* (天道: the Way of Heaven), *jindō* (人道: the Way of Man), *ri* (理: principle), and *sei* (性: nature).

This methodological proposal to bypass various (mis)interpretations of ancient texts underlies Itō's conviction in the possibility of 'uncontaminated' reading, which is derived from two premises. The first is that language is a neutral means through which the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, that is to say, the meanings of Confucian discursive categories, are transmitted transparently across time and space. Because language is neutral and transparent, because language and meaning exist

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon*, 1.

in the eternal present, a coherent, univocal, and indeed authoritative reading of ancient texts is possible without any surplus of meaning. The second premise is that of the ability of the reader to move beyond their spatiotemporal specificities. To have recourse to invariant meanings transparently ascribed in ancient texts, the reader occupies a kind of disenchanted position. Combined together, these two premises foreground a sense of temporal symmetry between the ancient texts and the reader, between there/then and here/now. This, in turn, reinforces the possibility of uncontaminated reading. Though paradoxical as it may sound, the upshot, I shall argue, is that the reader is not innocently reading. Through their act of reading, the reader recapitulates what is said in ancient texts, reifies the texts as the source of their knowledge, and establishes pre-emptive discursive closure to determine the boundaries of ‘proper’ knowledge.

If the transparency of language and meaning and the ability of the reader to transcend their spatiotemporal specificities are at the centre of Itō’s methodological proposal, negating these premises is the point of departure for another prominent scholar of Kogaku, namely Ogyū Sorai. While pointing, *a la* Itō, to the problem of Neo-Confucian (mis)interpretations and the necessity to return to ancient texts, Ogyū insists on the impossibility of having recourse to there/then by simply presuming the transcendental nature of language and the disenchanted position of the reader. For Ogyū, Neo-Confucian (mis)interpretations are inevitable consequences of the fact that language is spatiotemporally specific. As he maintains, “the world changes, taking words with it. Words change, taking the Way with them. This is precisely why the Way is not clear.”¹⁷ Even though the way is and is presumed to be constant, how it is explained with language is inconsistent and has changed over time.

Here lies a conundrum. On the one hand, there is this timelessness ascribed to Confucian wisdom and truths. As James Legge puts it, Confucius thought his purpose was not “to announce any new truths, or to initiate any new economy. It was to prevent what had previously been known from being lost.”¹⁸ In a similar vein, Mencius maintained that “the superior man seeks simply to bring back the unchanging standard, and, that being correct, the masses are roused to virtue.”¹⁹ To learn is, therefore, to grasp what is untethered by the constraint of time. And yet, the very medium through which one partakes in the realm of timelessness, that is to say, language, is a manifestation of chronotope and thus not timeless. The relationships between signs and significations and between words and things established by language are ephemeral. For this reason, an attempt to grasp timeless wisdom and truths through spatiotemporally specific language is always inadequate.

The problem, as Ogyū sees it, of his contemporaries is that they have failed to address this conundrum. Or, in his own words, his contemporaries “view ancient literature in terms of current literature and ancient words in terms of current words. As a result, although they have diligently studied the ancient Way, they have not been able to understand it.”²⁰ Understanding ancient texts with the semantics of here/now, of the reader, offers nothing but a subjective interpretation. This is because such a reading is simply a projection of meanings prevalent in here/now onto texts far removed from here/now. For Ogyū, the question is how to mitigate the effect of the

¹⁷ Ogyū Sorai, *Sorai-sensei gakusoku* 徂徠先生学則 (*Rules of Learning*), in Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen* 6-kan 日本倫理彙編 (*Japanese Ethics, Vol. 6*), Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901[1715]: 121 [120-145]. The English translation appears in Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 76. The original sentence reads, “世載言以遷。言載道以遷。道之不明。職是之由。”

¹⁸ Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 1*, 95.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 501.

²⁰ Ogyū, *Benmei*. The English translation is borrowed from Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 76. The original text reads, “以今文視古文以今言視古言。故其用心雖勤。卒未得古之道者。”

spatiotemporally specific nature of language. Ogyū's solution is deceptively simple: one can grasp correctly the meaning of ancient texts by embracing the language of those texts. In practical terms, this means that one must be proficient in the ancient language to attend to the words that specify the way and to the facts that these words explain. This, for Ogyū, is the essence of learning. In other words, learning has nothing to do with cosmological contemplation and ontological speculation.²¹

Let me enter here a few qualifications for Ogyū's methodological approach. First, the emphasis on the spatiotemporally specific nature of language does not mean that Ogyū completely negates the possibility of semantic transparency. Just as Itō does, Ogyū sees that reading is for attaining the Confucian truth by correctly understanding the original meaning of the words of the sages. But unlike Itō's, Ogyū's view is that because language is not timeless, uncontaminated reading is not possible unless the reader consciously leaves their own semantic field. If Itō presumes that one can bring ancient text into one's own semantic field because language is transparent, Ogyū urges the reader to relocate themselves to the semantic field of the ancient language. The presumption, in other words, is that the reader has the ability to remove themselves from the constraints of here/now and to reposition themselves in there/then through proficiency in the ancient language. The meaning of ancient texts is transparently accessible, not because language is transparent, but because the reader can occupy, with sufficient training in ancient language, a semantic field removed from their own.

The underlying premise here is the unity of language. Ogyū's negation of the timelessness of language and his assumption that the reader can move between spatiotemporally different semantic fields implies the linguistic unity of ancient Chinese and of the early 18th-century Japanese language.²² This premise is especially pronounced in Ogyū's notion of '*shuri gekigetsu*' (侏離缺舌), which literary means Xirong's language (侏離) and chirping sound of bull-headed shrike (缺舌), and which, therefore, indicates the foreign-ness, unfamiliarity, and incomprehensiveness of other languages. Not surprisingly, for Ogyū, the ancient Chinese language with which Confucius and Mencius have explained the Way of the sages falls into the category of '*shuri gekigetsu*', a foreign language. Indeed, it is "ancient words" (古言) distinct from "today's words" (今言).²³ The Japanese language of Ogyū and his contemporaries belongs to the category of 'today's words'. When the texts of Confucius and Mencius are rendered into the contemporary Japanese language, as they are in Neo-Confucian tradition, the product of such rendering reflects meanings configured and ordered in the semantic field of 'today's words'.²⁴ The lucidity of meanings that such

²¹ He writes, “故學問之要。卑求諸辭興事。而不高求諸性命之微。議論之精。” (The essence of learning is to be found at the lower level of words and facts and not at the higher level of arguments about the subtleties of life.) See Ogyū, *Sorai-sensei gakusoku*, 138. The English translation is borrowed from Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 77.

²² Of course, as Naoki Sakai aptly points out, what Ogyū designates as the 'Japanese' language is, in fact, *an idea* of the 'Japanese' language. "In Ogyū's treatises, however, the unity of the Japanese language and Japanese culture had yet to be circumscribed; it had to be given, yet was absent. Diverse dialects were spoken and written around that time, and it was impossible to formulate the single unity of a national language." Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 217.

²³ Ogyū, *Sorai-sensei gakusoku*, 121. The original text reads, “則其禍殆乎有甚於侏離缺舌者也哉。然則如之何可也。亦唯言語異宜。” For his exposition of the 'Japanese' language (和字), see Ogyū Sorai, *Bunkai* 文戒 (*Warning against Writing*), 1714.

²⁴ Ogyū, *Bunkai*. This is what is typically called '*wakun*' (和訓) or '*kundoku*' (訓読), a method to read a Chinese character with Japanese phonetics. Ogyū, offers a detailed admonishment of this method of reading. “削去而字則字

rendering seeks to offer is, as Ogyū sees it, illusory. If anything, such rendering only problematically blurs the boundaries between the ancient Chinese language and the contemporary Japanese language. It muddles with the unity of language that sustains the ephemeral relationships between signs and significations and that, thus, grounds the meaning of words. In so arguing, Ogyū implies that the unity of language is that which guarantees the unity of knowledge.

In retrospect, one ascertainable fact is that neither Yōmeigaku nor Kogaku had come to occupy the hegemonic status in the Tokugawa intellectual life. Neo-Confucianism, with its proximity to the political centres, continued to enjoy its dominant position. The method of textual engagement that Ogyū harshly criticised remained as a primary means of reading, translating, and interpreting Confucian canonical texts. Does this mean that the development of Neo-Confucianism – and, for that matter, any other knowledge traditions introduced from elsewhere through translation, including Buddhism and modern Western science – was replete with misunderstandings and misinterpretations and, therefore, ultimately incomplete? My short answer is no. A longer answer is that the emergence of dissents from within Confucianism, represented here by Yōmeigaku and Kogaku, brings to the fore the fundamental nature, or else inevitable consequence, of any kind of transposition of a knowledge tradition from one location to another. It is not that history is a temporal field in which the original treated almost as an ideal type is faithfully replicated in another location. Transposition is, to refer to Wittgenstein once again, an instance in which different worldviews really do meet, which inevitably engenders a process of epistemic disruption and

卻與華人酷肖大抵和語比華語多用轉聲故和語習氣未悉脫者必多用而則者也等字而謂不如此不明白也殊不知文章各有體格故有多用助字者少用者全不用者皆視其聲勢語氣如何耳其必配諸和語而謂而て也則れば也可笑之甚” (If you remove the character ‘而’ and the character ‘則’, you will find that the Japanese language is very similar to the Chinese language. But the Japanese language, in comparison to the Chinese language, uses more declensions [転声 or better known as ‘okurigana’, kana suffixes following Chinese character, kanji, stems in Japanese written words]. This tendency to use declensions is still evident in the reading of Chinese texts, whereby the reading is oversaturated by characters such as ‘而’, ‘則’, ‘者’, ‘也’ [characters for declensions] as if one cannot understand these texts without adding such characters. Because they do not know that there are different styles of writing, some use many auxiliary characters, others less, and still others do not use any at all. But they all look only at how a sentence sounds and transcribe all these declensions, for instance, ‘而’ as ‘て’ [reads ‘te’ and means ‘and then’] and ‘則’ as ‘れば’ [reads ‘reba’ and means ‘in other words’ or ‘because of’] – this is laughable, really.) See Ogyū, *Bunkai*. On *kundoku* as a translational strategy, Rebekah Clements writes as follows. “In effect a form of highly bound translation, *kundoku* involves glossing a Sinitic character text with guides to producing a Japanese version that was not usually written down but rather voiced, either mentally or aloud. *Kundoku* may also be performed without the aid of glosses if the reader knows the rules for which the glosses would usually function as guides. These glossed guides used in *kundoku*, and the earlier systems of annotation from which *kundoku* developed, indicate to a reader how the order of characters contained in a Sinitic text may be rearranged according to the broad norms of Japanese grammar and syntax, which, unlike Chinese, usually places the verb after the object. In addition to this rearrangement, *kundoku* works by associating Sinitic characters with Japanese words, either native Japanese words or loanwords from Chinese that have become part of the Japanese lexicon. These associations between characters and words, established over long years of use, enable Sinitic characters to be read as Japanese, or Japanese to be written using Sinitic characters. [...] Strictly speaking it would only be correct to say that a *kundoku* reading [...] is not translation if the enscribed (i.e. source text) and voiced (i.e. target text) *kundoku* versions were identical. And that cannot be ensured unless the writer of the source text affixed the *kundoku* markers themselves and also added further glosses to indicate the exact pronunciation of the characters. [...] In any case, [...] there is inevitable translation of a different kind occurring: that between the literary Sinitic writing system and *kundoku* Japanese.” Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan*, 105-106, 111, 112.

reconfiguration. And through this process emerges new possibilities for defining what ‘proper’ knowledge entails. Hayashi Razan’s and Kaibara Ekken’s Neo-Confucianism was not a faithful replication of Zhu Xi’s thoughts. Their predilection towards scepticism as a method forged a space to legitimately accommodate modern Western science in the existing intellectual landscape. The spatiotemporal distance from Zhu Xi’s thoughts allowed Tokugawa Confucian scholars to reignite their interests in other Confucian traditions, such as Yōmeigaku, or to establish a new methodological approach to the writings of Confucius and Mencius, as we have seen in the case of Kogaku. The specific way in which Neo-Confucianism was transposed from China to Japan became an enabling condition to curve out new discursive orientations to redefine what learning ought to be and how one might attain knowledge.

§

4.3. Heterogeneity of *Ri*

Let us remain, for a moment, within the confines of Tokugawa (Neo-)Confucianism. What are the implications of those intellectual developments discussed above, implications especially to our concern for knowledge? What do these developments say about the *ri*-knowledge structuration long functioned as the primary qualifier of serious and valid knowledge?

In today’s historical scholarship, the evaluation veers between two poles. On the one hand, there is a view, epitomised by Maruyama Masao’s, that emphasises a ‘deep current’ towards a modern way of thinking and reasoning gathering force vis-à-vis the development of these Tokugawa intellectual traditions. Maruyama observes that

there was a shift from the Sung Confucians’ stress on the Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean, via Jinsai’s high evaluation of the Analects to Sorai’s concentration on the Six Classics. This shift from later to earlier texts is closely related to two other trends: on the one hand, a tendency to break the continuity between sages and common men, giving the former absolute value; and on the other hand, a gradual elimination of subjectivity – labeled *shichi* (private intellect) by Sorai – a process that extended from Chu Hsi rationalism, via Jinsai’s study of ancient meanings, to Sorai’s study of ancient words.²⁵

Making much of Ogyū’s methodological proposal, Maruyama concludes that in those intellectual challenges lodged against Neo-Confucianism, we see a shift from subjectivity to objectivity, which eventually foregrounded a process of reconfiguring knowledge as a subject-object relation. And this shift, as Maruyama sees it, constitutes an instance in which Japan’s intellectual developments converge into the universal intellectual progress towards the modern.

At the other end of the spectrum is a view, exemplified by Naoki Sakai’s, that points to a sense of Japanese-ness emerging in these intellectual developments during the Tokugawa period. By tracing intellectual genealogy from Kogaku to Kokugaku, Sakai argues that their presumption about the linguistic unity and their treatment of texts not as the enunciated (what the writings say) but as the enunciating (what initiates and regulates what is said in writing) engendered an idea of

²⁵ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 79.

the ‘Japanese’ language and ‘Japanese’ culture.

They [scholars of the 18th century] still retained some sense of the “idea” of the Japanese language, even though the poetic and creative aspect of ethical action was largely repressed in their discourse; they had not completely lost the insight that the Japanese language was possible only as an “idea,” particularly a lost “idea,” and that it was necessarily u-topian: it should be nowhere. In this sense, I claim that the Japanese language and its “culture” were born in the eighteenth century.²⁶

Of course, as Sakai cautiously argues, scholars of Kogaku and Kokugaku did not see the ‘Japanese’ language and ‘Japanese’ culture with “unobjectionable certainties.”²⁷ Establishing such certainties was the project of the Meiji period under the dictate of the newly formed idea of the nation-state. Nevertheless, the upshot of Sakai’s claim here is that the development of Tokugawa intellectual traditions marked an emergence of national consciousness.

My evaluation is somewhat in between these two poles. I recognise that the temporal consciousness we see in Yōmeigaku and Kogaku, whether defined as the law or spatio-temporality encoded in language, indicates a certain shift in the relationship between the knower and the known. The knower no longer simply inhabits the eternal present that is the known dictated by the timeless, absolute, and transcendental principle. The knower now exists in the immanent but seeks, in an effort to arrive at the principle and thus to relate to the known, a way of transcending the immanence of being. But this recognition alone cannot vindicate a ‘deep current’ unceasingly moving towards a modern way of thinking and reasoning, towards knowledge defined as a subject-object relation. Such a conclusion presumes that this position of the knower as the subject is transparent and available to all, as a fixed point to be arrived at. But it defeats the point. As I have been arguing thus far the subject is the mere name of the knower. It is a discourse built upon a series of discourses. How it is discursively established vis-à-vis the object is not uniform across time and space. The question is not just about how knowledge is (re)configured as a subject-object relation but also how the subject is established as a discourse specific to a spatiotemporal location. And yet, the argument that Kogaku and Kokugaku express, with their premises of linguistic unity, the consciousness of ‘Japanese’ is, in my view, equally impetuous, if not entirely incorrect. It is true that the premise of linguistic unity engendered a sense of linguistic and cultural differences between, say, Japanese and Chinese. But this sense of linguistic and cultural particularity is not the core achievement of Kogaku and Kokugaku, at least when viewed vis-à-vis the question about modern knowledge formation. My view is that the premise of linguistic unity was translated rather into a possibility of understanding *ri*, the core qualification of knowledge, in its multitude, hence in the heterogenisation of *ri*.

Let me expand on this notion of heterogenisation. An especially instructive departure for our consideration is Itō Jinsai and his attempt to clarify the meanings of basic Confucian discursive categories. His aim, as explained earlier, is to re-establish the primacy of the original texts of Confucius and Mencius, with a view that Neo-Confucianism, for its contemplative and speculative nature and for its emphasis on the all-encompassing concept of *ri*, problematically mars important distinctions between various discursive and conceptual categories that make up the Confucian worldview. The rationale for claiming so Itō finds, as is customary of Kogaku, in ‘Shuo Gua’ of *The Book of Changes*. He argues that in this ancient text, the Way of Heaven (“*yin* and *yang*”), the

²⁶ Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 335

²⁷ Ibid., 336.

Way of the Earth (“softness and hardness”), and the Way of Man (“benevolence and righteousness”) are, contra Neo-Confucian premise, clearly delineated from one another and thus cannot be viewed as one and the same.²⁸ This is, in effect, a negation of Neo-Confucian proclivity towards ‘the propensity of principle’, a view that because *ri* informs each and everything and vice versa because everything informs the dictate of *ri*, investigation into things, when properly done, leads one to perfecting one’s knowledge about *ri*.

What, then, is *ri*, according to Itō? He once again finds an answer in *The Book of Changes* and writes the following.

聖人曰天道曰人道而未嘗以理字命之易曰窮理盡性以至于命盡窮理以物言盡性以人言至命以天自物而人而天其措詞自有次第可見以理字屬之事物而不係之天興人

(The sages speak of both the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man, but they never say that it is *ri* that governs both. *The Book of Changes* maintains that *ri* must be investigated exhaustively, and the nature of things must be studied thoroughly so that the Will can be properly ascertained. To investigate *ri* is to survey material things, to study nature is to examine man, and to ascertain the Will is to know Heaven. There is a reason for these terms to be used in such an order. That is to say, everything begins with material things, followed by Man, and then by Heaven. Notice here that the term *ri* is accorded only to material things, but not to Heaven or Man.)²⁹

One immediate repercussion is that *ri* is not the manifestation of the Way of Heaven and that the investigation into material things does not necessarily lead one to the proper grasp of the Will, a manifestation of a decree that is at the centre of Confucian cosmology. If *ri* is not that which regulates the overall make-up of the world, what is it that constitutes the world as it is? Here, Itō reverses the Neo-Confucian hierarchical oppositionality between *ri* and *ki*, stipulating that “it is wrong to assume that *ri* exists first and *ki* emerges later” because *ri*, which in his view dictates material things, is, in fact, “the logical principle that is in *ki*.”³⁰ Then, he goes on to explain that

蓋天地之間一元氣而已或為陰或為陽兩者只管盈虛消長往来感應於兩間未嘗止息此即是天道之全體自然之氣機

(In between Heaven and the Earth, there is only a single *ki*, which manifests itself sometimes as *yin* and other times as *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* are in an inverse relationship: if one rises, the other declines; if one shrinks, the other expands; if one goes, the other comes; if one acts, the other reacts. This relationship never ceased to exist. This is the Way of Heaven. This is the spontaneous dynamics, that is *ki*, that regulates the whole.)³¹

The pursuit of *ri*, that is *kyūri*, can achieve only so much. It certainly leads one to the knowledge of material things, but it does not lead one to the grasp of the Way of Heaven, something that

²⁸ Itō, *Gomō jigi*. The original text reads as follows. “說卦明說立天之道曰陰興陽立地之道曰柔興剛立人之道曰仁興義不可混而一之其不可以陰陽為入之道猶不可以仁義為天之道也” (As ‘Shuo Gua’ clearly explains: the Way of Heaven consists of *yin* and *yang*; the Way of the earth consists of softness and hardness, and the Way of man consists of benevolence and righteousness. These Ways must not be viewed as one and the same. Just as benevolence and righteousness cannot be recognised as the Way of Heaven, *yin* and *yang* cannot be recognised as the Way of Man.).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. The original sentence reads, “非有理而後生斯氣所謂理者反是氣中之条理”

³¹ Ibid.

transcends materiality and even man himself.

To be sure, Itō is not negating transcendence. He is simply suggesting that the Neo-Confucian signification of *ri* as the one and only transcendental principle is fallacious and that its mode of *kyūri* to investigate things and to perfect knowledge brings one only to '*kyomu*' (虚無: nothingness).³² Itō then ponders if indeed all inquiries must – and can – address transcendence. As he writes, “When the sages spoke of the Way, they spoke of the Way of Man. Confucius rarely spoke of the Way of Heaven. Then, Duanmu Ci even suggested that the Way of Heaven is not a matter to be inquired into.”³³ The result, in other words, of returning to ancient texts and reinterpreting what *ri* actually entails is a growing sense of imperceptibility of the transcendent. Through Itō’s effort to specify various Confucian categories with reference to ancient texts emerges the rather agnostic nature of transcendence.

That *ri* is not the name of transcendence and that transcendence is ultimately imperceptible is an idea also central to Ogyū Sorai. However, if Itō reinterprets *ri* as the mere dictate of material things, as the logical manifestation of *ki*, Ogyū has a different reasoning. His reasoning begins with reconsidering the notion of ‘the Way’ and its three distinctive categories: of the Heaven, of the Earth, and of Man.

又有曰天之道曰地之道者。蓋日月星辰繁矣。風雷雲雨行為。寒暑晝夜往來不已。深玄也不可測。杳冥也不可度。萬物資始。吉凶禍福有不其然而然者。靜而觀之亦似有所由焉者。所謂之天道。載華嶽而不重。振河海面不洩。旁礴不可窮。深厚不可盡。萬物資生。不為乏為。死皆殲滅。不為增為。[...] 徐面察之。亦似有所由焉者。所謂之地道。皆因有聖人之道。借以言之耳。

(People speak of ‘the Way of Heaven’ and ‘the Way of the Earth.’ The sun, moon, and stars are fixed in their places in the sky; wind and thunder, clouds and rain, come and go; hot and cold weather, night and day, recur eternally. It is impossible to grasp the secret of these phenomena. The riddle cannot be solved. The causes of the birth and rebirth of all things, good luck and bad luck, fortune and misfortune, cannot be known, but they exist. Quiet reflection shows that all these phenomena seem to have certain regularities. We label this ‘the Way of Heaven.’ The earth supports high mountains but does not feel their weight. It moves the rivers and seas but does not spill any water. The immensity of the problem makes it impossible to investigate. Its depth cannot be fathomed. All things continuously reproduce, but they do not themselves diminish in size because of this. All things perish and return to their original source, but the latter does not gain in size because of this. [...] When we deliberate upon these matters carefully, there seems to be an explanation for everything. We label this ‘the Way of the Earth.’ But although we call these ‘the Way’, they are merely modelled on the concept of ‘the Way of the Sages.’)³⁴

The Way of Heaven and the Way of the Earth exist. So much can be surmised from sense data and

³² Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon 2 童子問 (Questions from a Child, Vol. 2)*, in Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen, 5-kan 日本倫理彙編 5 卷 (Japanese Ethics, Vol. 5)*, Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901 [1707]: 131 [104-135]. The original text reads, “万物は五行に本づき、五行は陰陽に本づく。再び推して陰陽の然る所以に至れば、之を理に歸せざる能はず。既に理に歸すれば自ら虚無に陥らざる能はず。”

³³ Itō, *Gomō jigi*. The original text reads, “凡聖人所謂道者以人道而言之於天道則夫子之所罕言而子貢之所以為不可得而聞也”

³⁴ Ogyū, *Benmei*. The English translation appears in Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 79.

reflection. And yet, what they actually are cannot be known. All one can know from ancient texts is the Way of sages, norms and virtues valid only for man. And only as analogies to the Way of sages, of Man, can one surmise what the Way of Heaven and the Way of the Earth could be.

What Ogyū's suggesting here is the limit of man's cognitive consciousness. Man does not have direct recourse to the Way of Heaven and the Way of the Earth. The argument that the Way of Heaven and the Way of the Earth are the manifestations of *ri* is possible only because man ascribes them as such. It is man's cognitive consciousness that understands the Way of Heaven and the Way of the Earth as *ri*, but such understanding does not verify what the Way of Heaven and the Way of the Earth actually are. For Ogyū, *ri* cannot be equated to the all-encompassing, transcendental principle because it is man who understands *ri* as he sees fit. What one knows as the Way of Heaven and the Way of the Earth is, in fact, a *thing-for-itself* represented as *ri* by cognitive consciousness. These Ways exist, but understanding them as a *thing-in-itself* is beyond the realm of possibility.

以我心推度之而有見其必當若是興必不可若是。是謂之理。凡人欲為善。亦見其理之可為而為之。欲為惡。亦見其理亦見其理之可為而為之。皆我心見其可為而為之。故理者無定準者也。

(When I judge something with my own mind, I know what is to be done and what is not. This is what is called *ri*. When a person desires to do good, he does it when he sees that he should do good. And when he desires to do evil, he does it when he sees that he should do evil. Everyone does what he does because he sees what he should do. Therefore, *ri* is not the fixed standard.)³⁵

In this nominalist understanding, *ri* is devoid of transcendence. Instead, Ogyū sees that *ri* is the reason that grounds the human mind to think and to form logical judgements. It is the reason that enables one to understand why something must be done and other things must not be done. Then, the pursuit of *ri*, that is *kyūri*, is not tantamount to the pursuit of transcendental principle. Cosmological contemplation and speculation would lead one nowhere. To pursue *ri* is rather to thoroughly learn the words the sages, the Way of Man, which clearly express *ri*, the reason for thinking and judgement.

The most obvious implication of these intellectual developments within the Confucian tradition is that the Confucian concept of *ri* is not a homogenous and sacrosanct concept. Any dogmatic signification of *ri* is impossible to establish. Neo-Confucians view *ri* as the transcendental principle of all things. Itō understands *ri* as the dictate of material things, as the logical manifestation of *ki*. And Ogyū sees *ri* as the reason for thinking and judgement. *Ri*, thus treated as the source of all things and the end of learning, is now heterogenised. What this all means is that a certain signification of *ri*, whatever it may be, is possible only within a given system of reference. The pursuit of knowledge can, then, no longer be simply equated to the pursuit of the absolute and transcendental principle of all things. One consequence of the heterogenisation of *ri* is the heterogenisation also of *kyūri* and, ultimately, of what constitutes proper knowledge. For Itō and Ogyū, knowledge now excludes the customary search for the final cause, not because it does not exist but because humans are fallible in penetrating it.

While *ri* remains the primary qualifier of knowledge for those Confucian scholars, the heterogenisation of *ri*, *kyūri*, and knowledge engenders new organising categories of intellectual

³⁵ Ibid.

labour, or proto-schools of thought, within the Confucian tradition. Some are concerned with cosmological knowledge. Others question the schema of classification and the meaning of categories. Still others examine the limit of cognitive consciousness in order to clarify the ground for thinking and judgment. Now that *ri* can designate many different things, depending on one's intellectual affinity, the pursuit of *ri* is recentred around a set of presumptions and methods deemed appropriate for whatever kind of *ri* one seeks to pursue. These developments of proto-schools of thought within the Confucian tradition suggest that what we nominally call Confucian knowledge was, in fact, dispersed. This, in turn, indicates the declining metaphysical purchase of *ri*. Of course, *ri* remained throughout the Tokugawa period the primary qualifier of serious knowledge. Knowledge was continued to be qualified as such with the *ri*-knowledge structuration. And yet, these intellectual developments internal to the Confucian tradition also point us to the fact that the concept of *ri* no longer sustained the totality of Confucian knowledge.

§

4.4. Suspending the Neo-Confucian Concept of *Kyūri*

The sense of temporal symmetry, the linguistic unity corresponding to the unity of knowledge, the imperceptibility of transcendence, the limit of cognitive consciousness, and the heterogenisation of the concept of *ri* and *kyūri* – these had far-reaching implications. The 17th and 18th centuries witnessed the emergence of new knowledge traditions away from Confucianism that offered alternative worldviews and methodological approaches. Attention has to be paid, in this regard, to three intellectual developments, namely: Motoori Norinaga's attempt to understand *ri* as specifically 'Japanese'; Miura Baien's effort to establish a holistic view to accommodate and address a multitude of *ri*; and the endeavour of scholars of ancient medicine, Koihō, to overcome the limit of language that seeks to describe the reality of materially existing entities.

I am, however, acutely aware that, at the onset, Kokugaku, Jōrigaku, and Koihō seem to have little to do with one another. Or, to put it differently, many of us, historians of Japanese intellectual traditions, are socialised into the view that these traditions are distinct from one another. Historians often see Motoori's contribution in terms of his reinterpretation of *Kojiki* (古事記: Records of Ancient Matters, 712) as the source of "the Way of Gods [...] governing the ancient land of Japan."³⁶ Miura's achievement is understood in terms of his "philosophical analysis" of nature "in which human affairs have a place as a small part of the whole scheme."³⁷ And, historians' assessment of Koihō centres around the revival of "the spirit and methods of the ancient medical classics" that parallels the development of Kogaku.³⁸ What I seek to do in my reading of these traditions is not necessarily to treat them independently from one another by assuming clear intellectual boundaries among them. Rather, the aim is to tease out common underlying tropes that engendered the subsequent shift in the qualification of knowledge from the *ri*-knowledge

³⁶ Sey Nishimura, "The Way of the Gods: Motoori Norinaga's Naobi no Mitama," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 46:1, 1991: 22 [21-41].

³⁷ Rosemary Mercer, "Preface to Translation," in Miura Baien, *Deep Words: Miura Baien's System of Natural Philosophy*, Rosemary Mercer (trans.), Leiden, New York, NY, Copenhagen, and Cologne: E.J. Brill, 1991: 3 [1-73].

³⁸ Masayoshi Sugimoto and David L. Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*, Rutland, VT and Tokyo, 1978: 280.

structuration to a subject-object relation.

4.4.1. *Absolute Transcendence and Cognitive Limits*

Motoori Norinaga is discontent that the Neo-Confucian claim of *ri*, despite its fallibility, remains indelible in contemporary intellectual life. He resents his contemporaries for assuming *ri* as the final cause of everything. He also resents them for continuing to treat the words of the sages as the expression of the principle and, thus, as the source of knowledge.

此方の物知人たち [...] 御国のあかぬことに思ひて、かにかくにいひまぎらはしつ
つ、未ださだかに断り説けることもなきは、かの聖人のさかしらをかならず当然
理と思ひなづみて、なほ彼にへつらふ心あるがゆえなり

(When confronted by things unexplainable about our country, those intellectuals just make excuses and fail to actually explain the unexplainable. Evidently, they are still entrapped in the folds of Confucianism, convinced that the words of the sages are the obvious expression of the principle and, thus, blandished by the sages.)³⁹

The problem, as Motoori sees it, is threefold. First, the words of the sages, irrespective of their accuracy, purchase, and authority, are foreign words, or more blatantly put, ‘Chinese’ words. These words cannot be transparently taken as ‘ours’. Second, the words of the sages are ultimately the words of men, whose existence is finite and immanent. For this reason, these words only reflect a particular spatiotemporal context in which the sages, men, are said to have uttered them. Third, by canonising men as sages and by treating their words as the expression of the all-encompassing principle, Neo-Confucians problematically assert the possibility of knowing things that are, in fact, beyond the remit of human cognition.

Here is Motoori’s own formulation of the first problem.

然るを世の人かしこきもおろかなるもおしなべて、外国の道々の説にのみ惑ひは
てて、此の意をえ知らず。皇国の学問する人などは、古書を見て必ず知るべきわ
ぎなるを、さる人どもだに、えわきまえ知らざるはいかにぞや。抑吉凶き萬の事
をあだし国にて、佛の道には因果とし、漢の道々には天命といひて、天のなすわ
ぎと思へり。是等みなひがごとなり。

(All my countrymen, wise and foolish, have been misled by foreign thoughts and do not understand why things are what they are in our country. How come those scholars of the imperial land, who are supposed to know what is supposed to be known about ancient texts of our land, do not know what they are supposed to know? They seek to explain everything with foreign thoughts. If you are a Buddhist, you say ‘Karma!’ If you are a follower of Confucianism, you say ‘the Will of Heaven!’ All of this, however, is an irrational fallacy.)⁴⁰

The underlying assumptions here are obvious. Language is context-dependent and cannot transcend its particularity. The unity of language translates into the unity of knowledge, but precisely because language is context-dependent, knowledge is contextual and cannot evade its

³⁹ Motoori, *Naobi no mitama*, 88.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 45. See also *ibid.*, 55-56, and 71.

particularity. In other words, Motoori's formulation of the first problem is, in effect, tantamount to discursive territorialisation, both spatially and temporally, of 'Japan' or what he calls 'the imperial land'. It is to territorialise 'the imperial land' as a distinct historical entity. As his argument goes, a distinct historical entity has its own distinct origin, which, in the case of the imperial land, can be found in the mythology of the Japanese archipelago narrated in *Kojiki*. In a similar vein, he maintains that a distinct historical entity has its own logic of being and becoming. The imperial land was established and has been ruled by the imperial descendants in order to actualise the divine intention of *kami* (神: heavenly deities) that bore and moulded the imperial land. For this reason, Motoori is adamant that 'Japan' can be neither explained nor guided by a foreign thought, be it the Buddhist notion of karma or the Confucian concept of the Will of Heaven.

Such discursive territorialisation of 'Japan' is a precondition for Motoori to formulate the second problem and ultimately resolve it. Based on the idea of 'Japan' as a distinct historical entity, Motoori lodges a sustained attack on Neo-Confucianism. More specifically, echoing Ogyū in his nominalist claim, Motoori argues that the Way of Heaven, the Way of the Earth, and the Way of Man are mere creations of man himself whose being is finite and embedded. Confucian categories cannot transcend the historicity encoded in them. The Neo-Confucian concept of *ri*, the transcendental principle of all things, is no exception. It is simply a manifestation of '*kangokoro*' (漢心: the Chinese mind). It, thus, cannot be treated as the a priori dictate of all things in the imperial land. Nor can it be operationalised as the ultimate reference for knowledge about the imperial land. *Ri* that Neo-Confucians speak of is, when and if imposed upon 'Japan', "empty and devoid of any substance or certitude."⁴¹

To be sure, Motoori is not negating the existence of some kind of transcendence. He denies only that *ri* as Neo-Confucians define it has a place in the imperial land. He argues only that there is something transcendental, *ri*, specific to the imperial land. The upshot, though paradoxical as it may sound, is that Motoori is suggesting here the spatiotemporal specificity of transcendence – an idea that what is transcendental in 'Japan' is immanent only in 'Japan'. This immanent-transcendence, as I venture to call it and which Motoori describes as '*taenaru kotowari*' (妙理), is equivalent to the concept of *ri*. It is the work of heavenly deities that has borne and moulded 'Japan'. It is the divine intention to be actualised.⁴²

Motoori's conceptualisation of immanent-transcendence, *taenaru kotowari*, has little resemblance to the Neo-Confucian conceptualisation of *ri*, not just in name and scope, but also in its fundamental nature and accessibility. Neo-Confucians understand *ri* as the all-encompassing principle, which, despite its transcendental nature, is nonetheless attainable for man through investigating things and perfecting knowledge and which, as the expression of virtues, at the centre of governing.⁴³ Conversely, Motoori stipulates that *taenaru kotowari* is beyond human cognition, something unintelligible and ineffable.

⁴¹ Ibid., 68. The original sentence reads, “ただ空き理のみにして、たしかに其物あるにあらず。”

⁴² For Motoori's concept of '*taenaru kotowari*' and his general discursive strategy to dissent from Neo-Confucianism see, for example, Shigeru Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga, 1730-1801*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970; Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 81-100; Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 260-261; Mark McNally, *Proving the Way: Conflict and Practice in the History of Japanese Nativism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005:65-95, 179-208.

⁴³ Motoori dismisses such Neo-Confucian understanding of *ri* by stating that “これはた世人をなづけ治めむためのたばかり事” (*ri* is invoked simply to tame people and govern them). See Ibid., 32.

そもそも天地のことわりはしも、すべて神の御所為にして、いともいとも妙に奇しく靈しき物にしあれば、さらに人のかぎりある智もては測りがたきわざなるを、いかでかよくきはめ盡して知ることのあらむ。

(One must know that all things in heaven and on earth are the divine work of heavenly deities. And yet, they are so mysterious and spiritual that limited knowledge of man cannot comprehend their work. Thus, one must also know that it is beyond our comprehension. We do not have recourse to the work of heavenly deities.)⁴⁴

Motoori's concept of *taenaru kotowari* and the Neo-Confucian concept of *ri* both resort to the character 理, which can be read either as '*kotowari*' or '*ri*'. Both assume that something labelled as '*kotowari*' or '*ri*' exists. Phonetically and conceptually, then, Motoori's *taenaru kotowari* and Neo-Confucian *ri* can invoke one another. However, when the question is about nature and accessibility, the difference cannot be starker. If Neo-Confucians see that it is possible to arrive at *ri* and that thus it is within the limit of man's cognitive consciousness, Motoori's view is that it is impossible to attain the correct meaning of *taenaru kotowari* because it is inexplicable and ineffable, just like wonder and mystery, and because it defies human logic and reason. To this end, Motoori is not even a nominalist like Ogyū. Motoori's claim is more than a statement that only one's system of reference makes it possible to sort the divine intention of heavenly deities from the words of the sages. It is also a statement that there is something that cannot be known and that there is a limit to one's knowledge. *Taenaru kotowari* is accessible not as knowledge but through its acceptance and embrace. Thus, for Motoori, '*jinchī*' (人智: human knowledge) is in and of itself limited.

Curiously, however, Motoori never abandoned his hope to penetrate into the realm of the ineffable, to transgress the horizon of man's cognitive consciousness that he himself had drawn. His premise is that *taenaru kotowari*, though itself ineffable, appears in a realm that is within the remit of man's cognitive consciousness and that, therefore, can be all at once the locus of learning and the source of knowledge. That realm, Motoori identifies, is "those ancient records of works of the heavenly deities," that is, ancient 'Japanese' texts.⁴⁵ Thus, he urges that "if you seek to know the work of the heavenly deities that appear to yourself, you must discard the contaminated Chinese mind. Instead, you should study classics with the purified mind of our divine land." He even goes so far as to argue that to know the futility of following the Way of the sages is, indeed, the first step "to know the Way of the heavenly deities."⁴⁶

Taking ineffability as the ultimate question of knowledge, Motoori argues for a mediating role of language. His argument is that when language is adequately connected to authentic experiences, ancient 'Japanese' texts become transparent to the reader. When language is connected to experiences uncontaminated by 'the Chinese mind', the ineffable, the silent, or else *taenaru kotowari*, reveals itself. To connect language (sings) to authentic experiences, 'Japanese' signs must be privileged over Chinese signs. For this reason, Motoori refines Kamo no Chōmei's (1155-1216) concept of language and prioritises sounds over written forms, that is, phonetics over

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 71. Or else, what he describes as "もろもろの古書".

⁴⁶ Ibid., 104. The original text reads as follows. "もししひて求むとならば、きたなきからぶみごころを祓ひきよめて、清々しき御国ごころもて古典どもをよく学びてよ、然せば受行べき道なきことはおのづから知りてむ。其をしるぞすなはち神の道をうけおこなふにはありける。"

ideographs.⁴⁷ More specifically, his method is to attend to verbs and postpositions, which, according to him, function as the communicative mode for the heavenly deities but which have been completely erased by the servitude towards Chinese ideographs. Then, he identifies syntagmatic relations specific to the ancient ‘Japanese’ language as a space for action and performance – as a space for *taenaru kotowari* to reveal itself and as a space for enunciating specifically ‘Japanese’ vocalisation, hence authentically ‘Japanese’ subject voice. With this emphasis placed on phonetics over ideographs, on sound over writing, Motoori seeks to surmise *taenaru kotowari*, to render the silent audible to humans. With this emphasis, he seeks to retrieve the lost sense of immanent-transcendence.

Motoori’s attention to phonetics and syntagmatic relations is especially interesting because it engenders a certain consciousness of time and a specific relation between the enunciating (the reader of ancient texts) and the enunciated (*taenaru kotowari* revealing itself in ancient texts). With his stipulation about the mediating role of language, Motoori is discrediting the idea that the meaning of a word where the immanent-transcendence dwells is settled over time. Granted that *taenaru kotowari* has been dictating the imperial land since the time immemorial. Granted also that phonetics and syntagmatic relations of the ancient ‘Japanese’ language are the loci for *taenaru kotowari* to reveal itself. Then, language, upheld here as sounds rather than written forms, is in the realm of ahistorical. The act of speaking, or more precisely, the act of reading ancient texts with an emphasis on sounds rather than ideographs, becomes an act of partaking in the ahistorical. In this sense, time is experienced not as a linear, continuous sequence of becoming but as the permanence of being punctuated by the act of speaking. For Motoori, the prevalent emphasis on ideographs is inappropriate for learning, not only because ideographs are the representation of ‘the Chinese mind’ but also because ideographs are signs that only resemble things they purport to signify. Whatever one learns from such an emphasis is mere knowledge by emulation and imitation but not quite authentic or original. In contrast, the emphasis on phonetics and syntagmatic relations, according to Motoori, brings forth a performative dimension. Through the act of speaking, one performs and embodies *taenaru kotowari*, becoming the enunciating that elicits correct words without compromising the sentient nature of their authentic experiences. What this all means is that language, as Motoori sees it, is a vehicle, or a medium, for one to transform oneself into the active speaker of authentically ‘Japanese’ subject voice who renders the world as the manifestation of *taenaru kotowari*. Of course, we must recognise here that this enunciating is not a settled position or premise. One becomes the enunciating only in the act of enunciation. One partakes in the permanence of being only in the act of enunciation. One becomes the possessor of an authentically ‘Japanese’ subject voice only in the act of enunciation. Enunciating is becoming.

Having recourse to *taenaru kotowari* is partaking in the realm of ahistorical. However, this proposition is ultimately undergirded by a historical sense. To partake in the ahistorical through language, one must first see language historically. As Motoori postulates, the ancient ‘Japanese’ language was once a pure manifestation of human conditions created by the heavenly deities. Yet, along the temporal passing, this language was contaminated by ‘the Chinese mind’. The very purpose of enunciation, the purpose of speaking the ancient ‘Japanese’ language, is to retrieve that which has been lost. It is to relocate, or more precisely, revive the hitherto lost language with its

⁴⁷ For Kamo no Chōmei’s concept of language, see Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 50-56. Motoori articulated his concept of language particularly towards the end of his life, with the publication of *Kotoba no tamanoo* 詞の玉緒 (A Thread of Words, 1779) and *Kanji san-on kō* 漢字三音考 (Reflection on the Three Modes of Pronouncing Chinese Characters, 1785).

purity in the present, in the moment of enunciation. To this end, partaking in the realm of ahistorical is simultaneously tapping into a historical consciousness.⁴⁸

4.4.2. Seeing the Unity and Order of the Universe

Miura Baien also dissents from (Neo-)Confucianism.⁴⁹ The point of departure for him is a rather simple observation. Since the introduction of Western scholarships, as he explains, great many efforts have been made to understand laws and regularities of the phenomenal world, which, in turn, have contributed to increasing the depth and breadth of the fields of astronomy, geography, and celestial navigation. And yet, “no one has thoroughly understood the absolute principle of the universe.”⁵⁰ The failure, according to Miura, derives from the habit of mind. “From the time we were born without knowledge, we have formed a habit of simply accepting what we see and what we hear. Such a habit is our own fault. We have yet to develop a mind to question what we see and what we hear.”⁵¹ To overcome the predicament of such a habit of mind and to understand the absolute principle, rather than laws and regularities of the universe, is the primary purpose for Miura to write his seminal work, *Gengo* (玄語: Deep Words, 1775).

Miura introduces here a new conceptual and analytical category, *jōri* (条理: absolute principle), which cannot be reduced to laws and regularities, which he sees as distinct from *ri* that is at the centre of the Western scholarships of astronomy, geography, and celestial navigation. According

⁴⁸ Some historians view this co-existence of ahistoricity and historicity in Motoori's rendering as a discrepancy that manifests itself as a chasm between his abstraction and his philological method that sought to reconstruct the original meanings of ancient texts. Offering a very much modern critique, Sey Nishimura, for instance, writes as follows. “Norinaga believed in interpreting a text exhaustively. For that reason, his work in *Kojikiden* is sometimes positivistic research at its most tedious, drawing from a vast amount of sources, including Confucian and Buddhist writings (of whose doctrines he disapproved). He showed himself to be a gifted scholar, however, extracting many insights from the material. His method is logical and objective, the delivery uncontrived, and the conclusions forthright. Unfortunately sustenance for such effort came from a passion, a belief beyond the ordinary realm of reasoning, that the *Kojiki* text was historically authentic. Positively, this passion generated and propelled his work. But it was also a negative factor since the belief that all the records in *Kojiki* were valid undermined the persuasive power of his otherwise academically formidable study.” See Nishimura, “The Way of the Gods,” 21.

⁴⁹ My engagement with Miura's corpus here is deliberately limited, as my concern is not necessarily to provide a comprehensive exposition of his intricate worldview and theoretical premises but to specify the location of his corpus within a broader question about the concepts of *ri* and *kyūri*. For more detailed accounts of Miura's corpus, see Saigusa Hiroto, *Miura Baien no tetsugaku* 三浦梅園の哲学 (*Philosophy of Miura Baien*), Tokyo: Daiichi shobō, 1941; Saigusa Hiroto, *Baien tetsugaku nyūmon* 梅園哲学入門 (*Introduction to Baien's Philosophy*), Tokyo: Daiichi shobō, 1943; Umemoto Katsumi, *Keijijōgaku no hihan to ninshikiron* 形而上学の批判と認識論 (*Critique of Metaphysics and Epistemology*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1969; Mercer, “Picturing the Universe”; Takahashi Masakazu, *Miura Baien no shisō* 三浦梅園の思想 (*Thought of Miura Baien*), Tokyo: Perikansha, 2006.

⁵⁰ Miura Baien, “Taga Bokukei ni Kotauru” 答多賀墨卿 (“Answering Taga Bokukei”), in *Baien zenshū 2-kan* 梅園全集 2 卷 (*Complete Works of Baien, Vol.2*), Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1914 [1778]: 83 [83-85]. The original sentence reads, “天地の条理にいたりては今に徹底と存する人も不承候” Here, I translate ‘天地’ (literary means heaven and earth) as ‘universe’, as Miura describes the term in *Gengo* as “天地則一宇宙” (Heaven and earth are one universe). See Miura Baien, *Gengo* 玄語 (Deep Words), in *Miura Baien zenshū, 1-kan* 三浦梅園全集 1 卷 (*Complete Works of Miura Baien, Vol.1*), Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1914 [1775]: 3 [2-279].

⁵¹ Miura, “Taga Bokukei ni Kotauru,” 83. The original sentence reads, “生まれて智なき始より只見なれ聞馴れ解なれ何となしに癖づきて是が己が泥みとなり物を怪しみいぶかる心萌さず候”

to Miura, *jōri* is something that structures all that exists in the universe with certain laws and regularities as a whole, the fundamental dictate of the phenomenal world of both humans and nature. On the distinction between *jōri* and *ri*, Miura has this to say.

条理を天門の鎖鑰とも申候条はもと木のえだにして理は其すぢ也是を木に就ていふに其一本の身木根を有し標を有し根には次第に根をわかち標には次第に標をわかち其分るる内子細にみればすぢといふもの何の為にすぢなれば世其筋に従つて運び形其気の運びによつて成るにて候 [...] 試に何なりとも草木の葉をとりて御覧候べし大理小理を先眼精の及ばざる迄も理はしき候て気運び己己が形をなし候此故に理といふ物は天にも地にも山にも水にも乃至鳥獸龜竜蟲豸菌寓の類にも形は気の運ぶに成り候へば気運ぶべき理なきはなく候此故に条理の理は古人の説ける理も其内の事には候へども死活の隔ある事に [...] 形はなるものなれば美醜長短も皆此理のなす虜なり

(*Jōri* is called ‘the key to the gates of the heaven’. ‘*Jō*’ originally meant a branch of a tree, and ‘*ri*’ referred to a wood grain. Take an example of a tree. A tree trunk has roots below and branches above. A root gradually divides into more roots, and a branch into more branches. If you look closely at the point where a root or a branch separates into two or more, you find these lines called wood grains. Why are these lines there? They are there to spread nutrients, or else *ki*. Their patterns are determined by the movement of *ki*. [...] Pick a green leaf and observe these lines on it. A thicker line, *ri*, separates into finer lines, also *ri*. It continues thus until these lines are so thin they are no longer visible. *Ri* forms the shape of all things by transporting *ki*: from heaven and earth, seas and mountains, to all kinds of birds, fish, turtles, worms, and fungi. Without *ri*, there is no *ki*. Although the Chinese character ‘*ri*’ of *jōri* encompasses the concept of *ri* that the ancients had promoted, the concept of *jōri* is different from the concept of *ri* as the living is from the dead. All that is tangible, even its appearance and its size, are determined by *ri*).⁵²

To clarify Miura’s line of argument, recall here the Neo-Confucian premises of *ri* as the absolute, all-encompassing, transcendental principle. For Neo-Confucians, there is only one ultimate principle. As the dictate of all things, it makes up the world as it is. As the mandate of heaven, it addresses specifically human concerns for being and becoming. Miura’s understanding of *ri*, however, inflects from Neo-Confucian’s. He perceives *ri* not in singular as Neo-Confucians do. Instead, somewhat analogous to Rangaku scholars’ postulate, Miura understands *ri* in its multitude. For each and everything in this universe has its own regularity, appearance, and size, *ri* of one thing is different from that of another. But Miura’s concern, unlike Rangaku scholars’, is not about revealing *ri* distinctive of each and everything. Of course, he acknowledges that Western scholarships have greatly expanded knowledge about various kinds of *ri* in the fields of astronomy, geography, and celestial navigation. And yet, he resolutely maintains that revealing various *ri* should not be the end of intellectual inquiry. This is because these manifold investigations into various kinds of *ri*, though important, do not offer any plausible explanation of why various *ri* manifest themselves in specific ways.

⁵² Miura, “Taga Bokukei ni Kotauru,” 89-90. The translation is borrowed, with some modifications, from Miura Baien, *Deep Words: Miura Baien’s System of Natural Philosophy*, Rosemary Mercer (trans.), London, New York, NY, Copenhagen, and Cologne: E.J. Brill, 1991: 161-162.

人之言曰。火陽也。故熱。水陰也。故寒。晉則以為陽者奚為熱。陰者奚為寒。人之言曰。陽輕而升。陰重而降。人之思也。至此而止。晉之疑也。於是已甚。隆然烏者何為視。邃乎谷者。何為聽。目何為弗聽。耳何為弗視。人則至是而積。晉則不能積。

(People say the fire is *yang*, therefore, hot. Water is *yin*, therefore cold. I say that what is *yang* is, therefore, hot, and what is *yin* is, therefore, cold. People say *yang* is light and rises, while *yin* is heavy and falls. Then, they stop thinking. I suspect there is so much more to be considered. Eyes – what are they that they see? Ears – what do they hear? What are they that eyes do not hear? What are they that ears do not see? One must explain the unexplained. I shall explain the unexplainable.)⁵³

Miura's concern is, thus, of the final cause, which he classifies conceptually as *jōri*.

Just as Itō Jinsai, Ogyū Sorai, and Motoori Norinaga do, Miura takes the hitherto received knowledge as the point of departure for his exploration into new concepts, premises, and worldviews. Dissents, critiques, and alternatives are the intellectual zeitgeist of the 18th century. However, unlike his contemporaries of Kogaku and Kokugaku, who have established specific realms of intellectual inquiry by forging semantic inversions to the Neo-Confucian concept of *ri*, Miura develops, without completely negating the existing significations of *ri*, a new conceptual and analytical category, *jōri*, which he defines as “the law of the universe.”⁵⁴ And with this concept of *jōri*, he seeks to offer a unifying view of the universe made up of a diverse array of things that are structured and ordered in a way that appears to man.

Miura sums up his view of the world as all at once unified and diverse with a simple phrase, ‘*hankan gōitsu*’ (反觀合一: seeing unity in opposites), which also functions for him as a methodological postulate. As he states, “*jōri* is composed of a pair. When separated, it appears oppositional. But when unified, it is one. This is to see unity in opposites.”⁵⁵ His assertion, in other words, is that *jōri* is the objective reality or a real structure of the universe and simultaneously a logical principle or a method of perceiving that reality (see Figure 4-1). For Miura, the universe is rational to the extent that all things with particular *ri* that make up the universe, which appear to be contradictory to one another, are, in fact, following an intricate pattern that is a priori determined by the absolute principle, that is *jōri*. As the foundational worldview, the notion of *hankan gōitsu* represents a perspective that is all at once unified and dispersed. As the methodological postulate, *hankan gōitsu* prefigures knowledge that is simultaneously dispersed (inductive inquiry into various *ri*, studies of the phenomenal world) and unified (deductive inquiry into *jōri*, studies of the non-phenomenal principle).

At this juncture, Miura clearly departs from the Neo-Confucian mode of pursuing knowledge, *kyūri*, which is centred around the attainment of ideal knowledge, the will of the sages, for moral and ethical conclusions. In a similar vein, Miura also dissents from modes of learning promoted by Kogaku and Kokugaku, which, irrespective of their differences, seek to address the question of being and becoming. At the same time, Miura also distinguishes himself from the Rangaku tradition, for which *kyūri* entails the investigation into laws and regularities of the natural world. In other words, the notion of *hankan gōitsu* has a double metaphysical function to forge a

⁵³ Miura, *Gengo*, 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

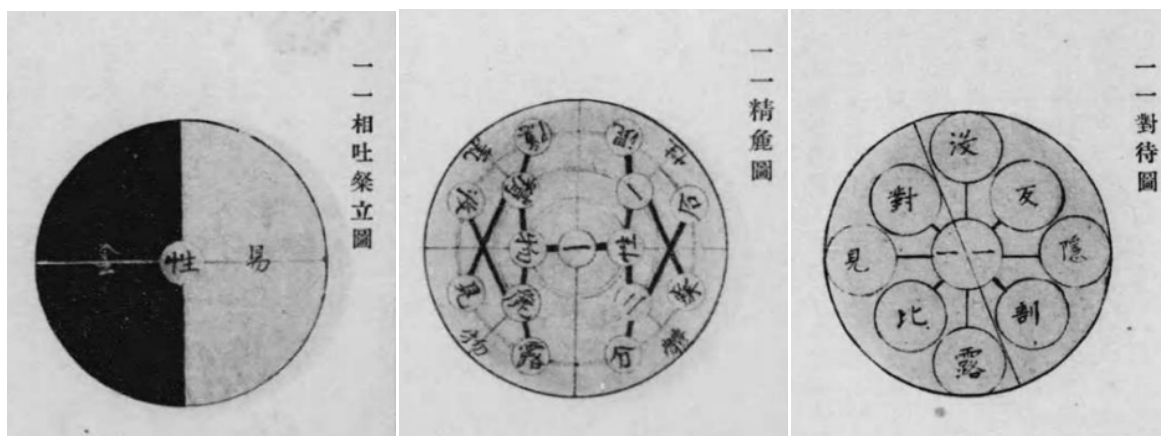


Figure 4-1. Unified and Dispersed (*Deep Words*, 1775)

distinctive space for Miura's thesis within a broader intellectual landscape of the 18th century. First, as a worldview, *hankan gōitsu* negates the distinction between the natural world and the human world. Humans are part and parcel of the universe, inhabiting that which is dictated by *jōri*. The pursuit of facts about the natural world and the pursuit of moral and ethical conclusions are ultimately intertwined. *Jōri* informs both. Therefore, the scope of proper knowledge must encompass both. I shall even venture to say that we see here Miura's predilection towards something universal that cuts across both spatiotemporal boundaries and boundaries between the natural and human worlds. This predilection contradicts Kogaku and Kokugaku, whose concerns are centred around the specifically human question about being and becoming. Itō Jinsai discusses the futility of pursuing *ri*, which is in its nature agnostic, and suggests instead to return to the original meaning, the original intent of the sages, in ancient texts. Ogyū Sorai declares that *ri* is not the fixed standard but the ground for man's reasoning and judgment. Motoori Norinaga argues that the imperial land has been dictated by the specifically 'Japanese' principle, *taenaru kotowari*, and urges people to embrace it through performative enunciation of ancient 'Japanese' words. In contrast, Miura's concern about *jōri* is not simply about being and becoming, nor is it about specifically 'Japanese' immanent-transcendence. Second, as a methodological postulate, *hankan gōitsu* grants a certain capacity to the knower to view the universe in their intellectual exercises while inhabiting it. The knower distinguishes various *ri* from one another while seeking to identify a general pattern that connects them. All investigations into various *ri* inform and are informed by *jōri*, but not all investigations can be reduced to self-cultivation. Of course, as we have learnt, the investigation into manifold things is, under the Neo-Confucian treatise of 'investigating things, perfecting knowledge', a crucial exercise and an important intellectual virtue. However, while Neo-Confucianism views such an investigation as a path for self-cultivation, Miura views otherwise. Not everything in the universe informs the human question about being and becoming. Humans only have a very small part in this universe dictated by *jōri*.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Here is one additional interjection. I see a temptation to establish certain similitude between Miura's concept of *jōri* and Nishi Amane's 'tōitsu-no-kan' (統一の観: the principle of unity), and between Miura's notion of *hankan gōitsu* and Nishi's notion of knowledge as all at once unified and dispersed, which I have discussed extensively in Chapter 2. There is also a temptation to read Miura's concept of *jōri* as a dialectical method to understand essential

4.4.3. Empirical Methods and Verifiability of Facts

Historians' assessment of a medical tradition called Koihō, though limited both in quantity and scope, veers between two poles. One participates in the historical scholarship of Chinese medicine in Japan, positioning Koihō as a reaction to the then-prevalent medical tradition of Goseihō (後世方: literary means a 'school of later age') that was profoundly influenced by Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism.⁵⁷ The other views Koihō, from a perspective of Japanese intellectual history, as a branch of medical tradition undergirded by Kogaku's predilection towards ancient texts and treats this medical tradition as *koō* (呼应: correspondence), *'heikō* (並行: parallel), or *'mohō* (模倣: imitation) of Kogaku.⁵⁸ Either way, the implicit consensus among historians is that Koihō emerged as an antithesis to the increasingly abstract and yet decided all-encompassing cosmological speculations promoted by Neo-Confucianism and permeated into the field of medicine. As Masayoshi Sugimoto and David Swain observe, Koihō sought to recover the simplicity of early Chinese medicine by returning to the works Zhang Zhongjing (150-219) specifically and ancient Confucian texts more generally.

qualities of things as being determined by the synthesis of opposites and, therefore, to see it as being analogous to Hegelian dialectic. These temptations are indeed expressed, whether implicitly or otherwise, in, for example, Saigusa, *Miura Baien no tetsugaku*, 189; Umemoto, *Keijijōgaku no hihan to ninshikiron*, 98. But analogies would only take us so far. As various illustrations in *Deep Words* indicate, Miura's thesis remains strictly within the frame of *yin* and *yang*. He treats *yin-yang* not as *ri* as the ancients did but as *jōri* that a priori regulates *ri*. His latent aim here is to reconstitute the frame of *yin-yang* by thoroughly following the methodological doctrine defined in *The Great Treaties*: “仰以觀於天文，俯以察於地理” (looking up, contemplates the brilliant phenomena of the heavens, and, looking down, examines the definite arrangements of the earth). Thus, it is not at all surprising that *Deep Words* offers little reflection on the potential inadequacy of the frame of *yin-yang* itself – a reflection on whether this frame is indeed viable and universally applicable. To this end, Miura's worldview and his knowledge remain firmly within the remit of Chinese cosmological reasoning.

⁵⁷ See for example, Margaret M. Lock, *East Asian Medicine in Urban Japan*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1980; Kosoto Hiroshi, “Chūgoku igaku koten to nihon” 中国医学古典と日本 (“Classics of the Chinese Medicine and Their Acceptance and Succession in Japan”), *Nihon tōyō igaku zasshi*, 47, 1996: 227-244; Yasuo Ōtsuka, “Chinese Traditional Medicine in Japan,” in Charles Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical Systems: A Comparative Study*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998: 322-337; Hiruta Genshiro, “Japanese Psychiatry in the Edo Period,” *History of Psychiatry*, 13, 2002: 131-151; Endō Jirō and Nakamura Teruko, “Nagoya Geni no igaku taikai: Gosei-ha kara kohō-ha eno tenkai” 名古屋玄医の医学体系: 後世派から古方派への展開 (“The Structure of Nagoya Geni's Medical Thought: From Gosei School to Kohō School”), *Kagakushi kenkyū*, 43, 2004: 13-21; Terasawa Katsutoshi, *Yoshimatsu Tōdō no kenkyū: Nihon kanpō sōzō no shisō* 吉松東洞の研究: 日本漢方創造の思想 (*A Study of Yoshimatsu Tōdō: Central Thought for the Development of Chinese Medicine in Japan*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2018; Wei Yu Wayne Tan, “The Brain in Text and in Image: Reconfiguring Medical Knowledge in Late Eighteenth-Century Japan,” in Andrew Graciano (ed.), *Visualizing the Body in Art, Anatomy, and Medicine since 1800*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2019: 87-104.

⁵⁸ See respectively, Kosoto Hiroshi, *Kanpō no rekishi* 漢方の歴史 (*History of Chinese Medicine*), Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1999; Ogawa Teizō, *Igaku no rekishi* 医学の歴史 (*History of Medicine*), Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1984. Not only do such descriptions trivialise Koihō as almost a mere extension of Kogaku, these descriptions somewhat disregard ascertainable facts. Nagoya Geni (1628-1696), the pioneer of Koihō, in fact declared his affinity to ancient Chinese medicine a decade before Yamaga Sokō and Itō Jinsai distanced themselves from Neo-Confucianism and called to return to ancient texts.

the Ancient Practice advocates were not totally rejecting the broad basic assumptions of correspondence between the human organism and the cosmos, or even the use of yin-yang and Five Phases concepts to describe bodily functions – these ideas were deeply imbedded in the ancient medical classics and were taken for granted in China and, by this time, in Japan as well. What they objected to in the “modernist” traditions were schemas constructed with more concern for metaphysical symmetry and function than for observable (but seldom observed) physical structures and action, as well as therapeutic emphasis derived in one-sided ways from such elaborately abstract theories (though the therapies were not as innovative as sometimes represented).⁵⁹

My aim here is not so much about adding to the existing debates in historical scholarship but to re-read Koihō vis-à-vis the question about the qualification of valid and serious knowledge. How was the semantic and conceptual shift of *ri* addressed by the scholars of Koihō? How did they define the purpose and method of *kyūri*? What constituted an appropriate ground for knowledge within Koihō? What were the overall implications of their effort to recuperate the ancient Chinese medical tradition to the *ri*-knowledge structuration?

There are two intertwined scholarly impulses to develop Koihō: the dissatisfaction with the then-dominant medical tradition of Goseihō and the lack of a coherent alternative to address both theoretical and practical concerns of medicine. Nagoya Geni (1628-1696), the pioneer of Koihō, succinctly explains these issues in his memoir.⁶⁰ In his view, his contemporaries of Goseihō have forgotten the fact that the ultimate purpose of medicine is to treat diseases. He, thus, castigates scholars of Goseihō for indulging themselves in theoretical and abstract matters and for moving the field of medicine away from practice. To overcome what he sees as a perilous tendency, Nagoya advocates Yu Chang’s (1585-1664) call in *Shuang han lun* (傷寒論: Treatise on Cold Damage, 1648) to return to a much simpler and practical tradition established with ancient medical texts. To be sure, Nagoya is aware of the fact that some of those ancient texts have already been read and discussed by medical practitioners, such as Manase Dōzan (1507-1594), Manase Gensaku (1549-1632), and Manase Genyū (-1644), who have complied practical guidelines for medical treatment independently of Neo-Confucianism.⁶¹ And yet, Nagoya remains frustrated, for those practitioners, in his view, only pick and choose whatever is deemed useful for them and, thus, have failed to grasp the ancient medical tradition systematically and in its entirety. Nagoya even goes so far as to lament that “I cannot help but think that the proper way of medicine is hidden from their view.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Sugimoto and Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*, 280-281.

⁶⁰ Nagoya Geni, *Tansuishi* 丹水子 (Memoir), 1688. ‘Tansuishi’ is Nagoya’s pseudonym.

⁶¹ Ibid. Some of the ancient Chinese medical texts circulated among those practitioners include *Nan Jing* 黃帝八十一難經 (*The Huang Emperor’s Canon of Eighty-One Difficult Issues*) and *Huangdi Neijing* 黃帝內經 (*The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*).

⁶² Nagoya Geni, *Sangen hōkō* 纂言方考 (*Compendium of Dictionaries*), 1679. Kitayama Juan compiled *Sangen hōkō* and published it in 1732 with his own commentary under the title of *Sangen hōkō hyōgi* (纂言方考評議: On the Compendium of Dictionaries). My reference hereafter to Nagoya’s *Sangen hōkō* is based on Kitayama’s 1732 edition. In full, the original text reads as follows. “近世、道三一溪民間より出て、独立に多くの方書を閲すると雖も、儒術を歴ずして素問を講せず、其の著す所の明藍、啓迪、群方を集拾するに過ぎず、薬を用いる凡例を録するのみ、況んや其下の者をや、うべなるかな、医道隱晦せることを” (In recent years, Mananse Dōzan’s school of medicine has emerged from private practices and independently reviewed many books. However, he and his disciples did not properly study ancient Confucian medicine. Nor did they teach its basics. They merely collected what

These reflections have directed Nagoya towards the development of a theoretically grounded practical approach to medicine with heavy reference to the ancient Chinese medical tradition purportedly uncontaminated by Neo-Confucian speculative and contemplative premises.⁶³ In the introductory comment to *Honzō sangen* (本草纂言: On Materia Medica, 1682), Nagoya confidently declared the following.

知らる可きことを為すとはなんぞや、治を為すの道を知り、病論に精しく、方意を弁へ、薬性を明らかにして、又、恒あるべし。この五つのものを備えて以て人を療するときは、則ち信ぜざるの人莫く、癰えざるの理莫し。[...] 故に、我は治を為すの道を知るに、難経、陰陽応象論の註疏あり。病論を審にするに、医方問畧、及び若干の論註あり。方意を辨ずるに、纂言方考、続方考あり。薬性を明らかにするには [...] 鳩めて若干巻を為す。名づけて本草纂言と曰う。

(What should one know to practice medicine? Understand the way to cure diseases. Be familiar with theories of disease. Recognise the best medical approaches. Clarify medicinal properties. And be consistent in your practice. When you satisfy these five requirements and treat people, everyone will believe in your competency, and there is nothing you cannot cure. [...] Therefore, to understand the way to cure diseases, I have made extensive notes on the *Huang Emperor's Canon of Eighty-One Difficult Issues* and the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*. To study theories of disease, I have written *Inquiries on Medical Methods* and other commentaries. To identify the best medical approaches, you should refer to my *Compendium of Dictionaries*. On medicinal properties, I have also compiled several volumes, which I now present as *On Material Medica*.)⁶⁴

The underlying premise of Nagoya's five requirements is twofold. First, for Nagoya, medical knowledge should be systematic and total. It should be structured with an overarching medical philosophy, medical theories, pathological knowledge, and practical methods of treatment catered for each symptom. In other words, Nagoya views medical knowledge as all at once unified and dispersed, as a coherent whole composed of various sub-fields. Second, this understanding of knowledge prefigures what learning ought to be. It must be a holistic and yet culminative process. The entirety of medical knowledge cannot be achieved all at once, but at least there is a correct order to follow in order to correctly accumulate knowledge. According to Nagoya, learning must begin with a thorough reading of the ancient Confucian medical texts (medical philosophy), followed by the study of various theories to further one's pathological knowledge. Then, one shall learn about medicinal properties through *Honzōgaku* (本草学: studies of the pharmacological

they had learnt in their books and recorded some common examples of the use of medication. I cannot help but think that the proper way of medicine is hidden from their view.)

⁶³ Interestingly, however, the ancient medical texts Nagoya referred to are somewhat devoid of theoretical basis. And his subsequent works are, to say the least, not as coherent and systematic as he claimed. Endō and Nakamura aptly point out certain inconsistencies in Nagoya's text. See Endō Jirō and Nakamura Teruko, "Nagoya Geni no igaku taikēi: Gosei-ha kara kohō-ha eno tenkai," 15-17.

⁶⁴ Nagoya Geni, *Honzō sangen* 本草纂言 (*On Materia Medica*), 1682. Nagoya's notes on *Nan Jing* (黄帝八十一難経) and *Huangdi Neijing* (黄帝内经) were compiled respectively under the title of *Nagyō chūcho* 難経註疏 (*Notes on the Huang Emperor's Canon of Eighty-One Difficult Issues*) published in 1684 and *Inyō ōshō dairon chūcho* 陰陽応象大論註疏 (*Notes of the Yin-Yang Correspondences*) published in 1681. His *Ihō monyo* 医方問余: (*Inquiries on Medical Methods*) was published in 1679.

properties of plants, minerals, and animals). All of these, then, can be utilised for the study of practical methods of treatment.⁶⁵

Knowledge must be systematic and total. Learning must be a culminative process. These premises represent a new possibility to engage with the natural world within the remit of Confucianism but as a realm clearly delineated from moral and ethical concerns. The subsequent development of Koihō thus addresses methodological questions about how to intervene in the natural world and to seek a kind of knowledge devoid of moral and ethical meanings. The upshot, however, is far more than methodological. As we shall see in the following, these questions invariably verge on the epistemic. What is it that knowledge devoid of moral and ethical meanings seeks to grapple with? What is *ri* of the natural world that such knowledge informs and is informed by? To what extent does Koihō's definition of *ri* reshape the standard qualification of knowledge, that is, the *ri*-knowledge structuration?

Especially interesting cases in this regard can be found in the works of Yamawaki Tōyō and Yoshimasu Tōdō.⁶⁶ Yamawaki sought to establish the primacy of ancient medical knowledge by comparing it to modern Western medicine introduced by Rangaku scholars. His comparison, however, resulted in the recognition that there was, in fact, an undeniable chasm between theories and observable facts. This, in turn, opened a new space for Yoshimasu to reorient Koihō away from theories and towards empirically grounded practical methods for treating diseases. These developments went a step beyond what had thus far been central for any knowledge, that is, the primacy of *ri*, suggesting that the concept of *ri* – what it is and how to arrive at it – no longer held the privileged position for the production of knowledge at least in the medical tradition.

Let me expand further. Being increasingly sceptical of the received anatomical theory of '*gozō roppu*' (五臟六腑: five internal organs and six bowels), which is based on *yin-yang* and five elements and promoted by the scholars of Goseihō, Yamawaki Tōyō decides to test the accuracy of the theory. His method is a twofold comparison based on the first-ever official autopsy of a corpse.⁶⁷ He compares, based on his own anatomical observation, the *gozō roppu* theory to the description of '*kyūzō*' (九藏: nine organs) he previously encountered in ancient Chinese medical texts.⁶⁸ He also examines, based on his anatomical observation, the accuracy of ancient Chinese

⁶⁵ This culminative process of learning is discussed in Nagoya Geni, *Tansui kakun* 丹水家訓 (*Rules of My Medical Practices*), 1693.

⁶⁶ Yamawaki Tōyō was educated under the guidance of Yamawaki Genshū (1654-1727), whose father was a disciple of Manase Gensaku, and Gotō Konzan (1659-1733), who was also a prominent scholar of Koihō. See Ōtsuka Keisetsu and Yakazu Dōmei (eds.), *Kinsei kanpō igakusho shūsei 13-kan: Gotō Konzan, Yamawaki Tōyō* 近世漢方医学書集成 13 卷: 後藤艮山、山脇東洋 (*Collection of Early Modern Medical Texts: Gotō Konzan, Yamawaki Tōyō*), Osaka: Meicho shuppan, 1979. Yoshimasu Tōdō independently learnt Nagoya Geni's and Gotō Konzan's medical theories and sought to establish a guideline for medical treatment based on *the Treaties of Cold Damage*. After spending much of his life without professional success and in poverty, Yoshimasu became acquainted with Yamawaki Tōyō and established himself as a prominent medical scholar and practitioner. See Terasawa, *Yoshimasu Tōdō no kenkyū*, 2012.

⁶⁷ Yamawaki sought to obtain official permission from *Kyōto shoshidai* 京都所司代 (the administrative office of the Tokugawa shogunate in Kyoto) to conduct an autopsy, which was granted in 1754. The result of his autopsy was compiled into *Zōshi* 蔵志 (Record of the Viscera) with mimetic descriptions of a corpse rather than with the hitherto familiar schematic diagrams of the body's contents. It offered an anatomical understanding of the human body devoid of theoretical postulates of *yin-yang* and the five elements. See Yamawaki Tōyō, *Zōshi* (蔵志: Record of the Viscera), 1759.

⁶⁸ Maki Fukuoka, *The Premise of Fidelity: Science, Visuality, and Representing the Real in Tokugawa Japan*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012: 34-42.



Figure 4-2. Human Anatomy (*Syntagma Anatomicum*, 1666)

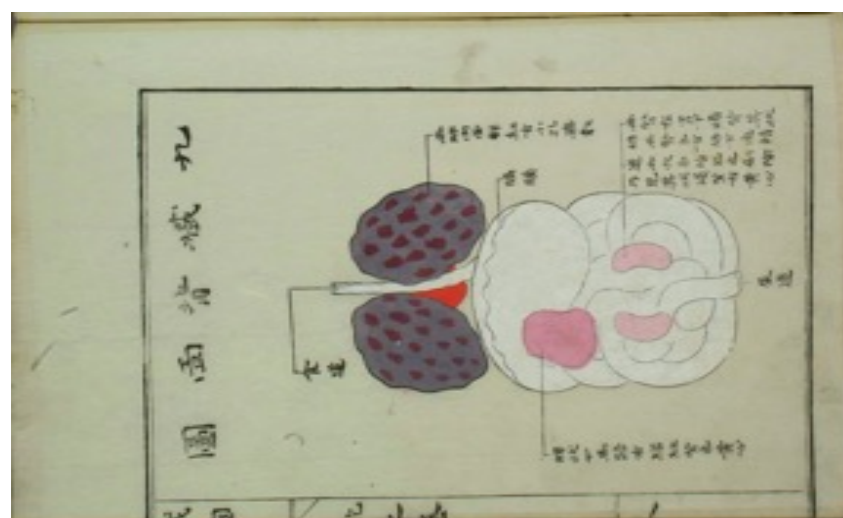
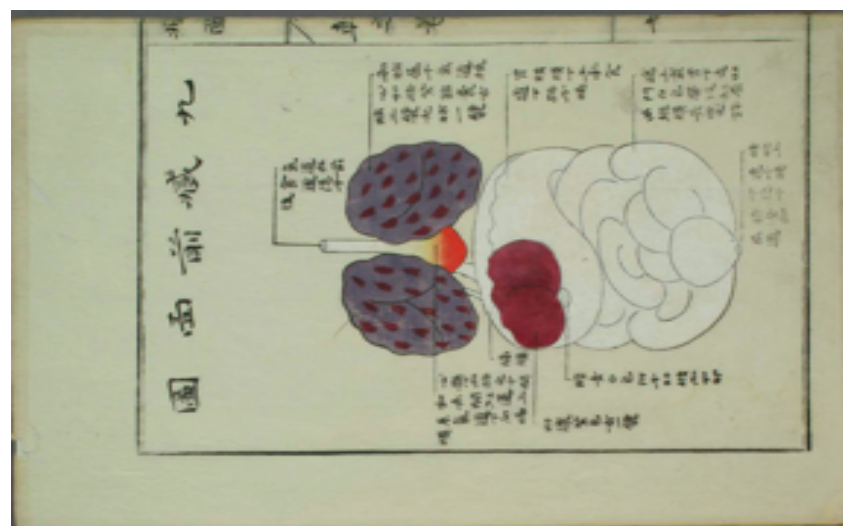
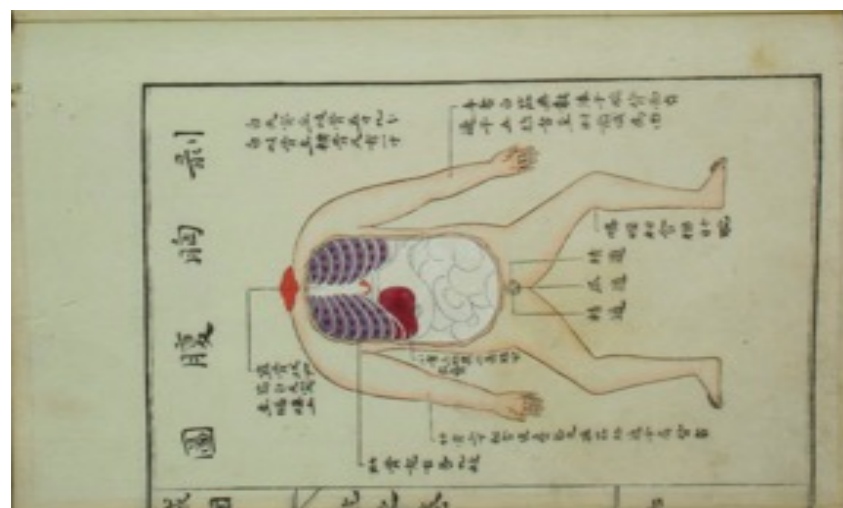


Figure 4-4. Intestine (Record of the Viscera, 1759)

texts by comparing them to Johannes Vesling's (1514-1564) illustrated textbook, *Syntagma Anatomicum* (1666), written on the basis of Vesling's own anatomical dissection (see Figure 4-2).⁶⁹

To Yamawaki, what becomes increasingly apparent is a chasm between theories and facts. One such chasm is between the theoretical postulate of intestines and the fact about this organ observed during the autopsy. On the one hand, Chinese medical texts based on Neo-Confucian cosmology, such as *Leijing* (類經: Classics in Categories, 1624) written by Zhang Jiebin (1563-1640), describe that the human body contains two distinctive intestines: 'shōchō' (小腸: small intestine) and 'daichō' (大腸: large intestine). However, on the other hand, Yamawaki observes in his autopsy that there is, in fact, only a single 'chō' (腸: intestine) and nothing indicates where the small intestine ends and the large intestine begins (see Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4).

What this chasm represents is a nominalist dilemma. Zhang Jiebin distinguishes two intestines on the basis of their locations: 'large intestine (大腸),' not because it is larger in size than the other intestine but because it is located in the area called 'daifuku' (大腹: the upper abdomen); 'small intestine (小腸),' not because it is smaller in size than the other intestine but because it is located in the area called 'shōfuku' (小腹: the lower abdomen). The Chinese character '大' signifies the upper part of the abdomen, whereas the character '小' designates the lower part.⁷⁰ The large intestine and the small intestine are not natural kinds. Only if and when one agrees with such a mode of classification, and indeed with the semantics of classification, can one distinguish these two intestines from one another. Certainly, Yamawaki does not. From the vantage point of anatomical observation, these intestines are indeed connected, one single organ in a coiled form. It cannot be naturally and intrinsically sorted into two categories.⁷¹

This nominalist dilemma had proven to be difficult to overcome. It continued to yield new anatomical meanings even outside the confines of Koihō. An illustrative example can be found in Suzuki Sōun (n.d.-n.d.) and his effort in the early 1770s to edit and publish Motoki Ryōi's (1628-1697) translation manuscript of Johannes Remmelin's *Pinax Microcosmographicus* (1615) that Motoki prepared around 1680.⁷² While compiling Motoki's manuscript, Suzuki compared it to

⁶⁹ *Syntagma Anatomicum* was one of the Western medical textbooks that Sugita Genpaku and other Rangaku scholars referred to for their 1774 publication of *Kaitai shinsho* (解体新書: New Treatises on Anatomy). While *Kaitai shinsho* is known today as a translation of Kulmus' *Anatomische Tabellen* (1722), for its translation, Sugita and others made use of other Western medical textbooks available at that time, including Volcher Coiter's (1534-1576) *Externarum Et Internarum Principalium Corporis Humani* (1572), Ambroise Paré's (1510-1590) *Opera Ambrosii Parei Regis Rimarii Et Parisiensis Chirurgi* (1582), Caspar Bartholin's (1585-1629) *Anatomicae Institutiones Corporis Humani* (1611), Steven Blankaart's (1650-1704) *De Nieuw Hervormde Anatomia* (1678), and Vesling's *Syntagma Anatomicum*.

⁷⁰ Endō Jirō and Nakamura Teruko point out that this usage of 'large' and 'small' intestines is inconsistent. While some Chinese texts use 'large' to designate the intestine in the upper abdomen and 'small' for the intestine in the lower abdomen, there is an inversion of the labels in other texts, whereby 'large' designate the intestine in the lower abdomen and 'small' in the upper abdomen. See Endō Jirō and Nakamura Teruko, "Kanpō igaku ni okeru shōchō to daichō no saikentō" 漢方医学における小腸と大腸の再検討 ("Reconsidering 'Large Intestine' and 'Small Intestine' in Chinese Medicine"), *Nihon igaku-shi zasshi*, 39:2, 1993: 158 [157-168].

⁷¹ In a similar vein, Kawaguchi Shinnin (1736-1811), a prominent Dutch translator and Rangaku scholar, later admitted that, given the coiled form of these intestines, it was rather difficult to clearly distinguish one from the other. See Kawaguchi Shinnin, *Kaish-hen* 解屍編 (*On Dissecting A Corpse*), 1772.

⁷² Motoki translated Remmelin's work into a manuscript entitled *Oranda keiraku kinmyaku zōfu zukai* 阿蘭陀經絡筋脈臟腑図解 (*Dutch Illustration of Human Anatomy*). Suzuki subsequently published this manuscript with a new

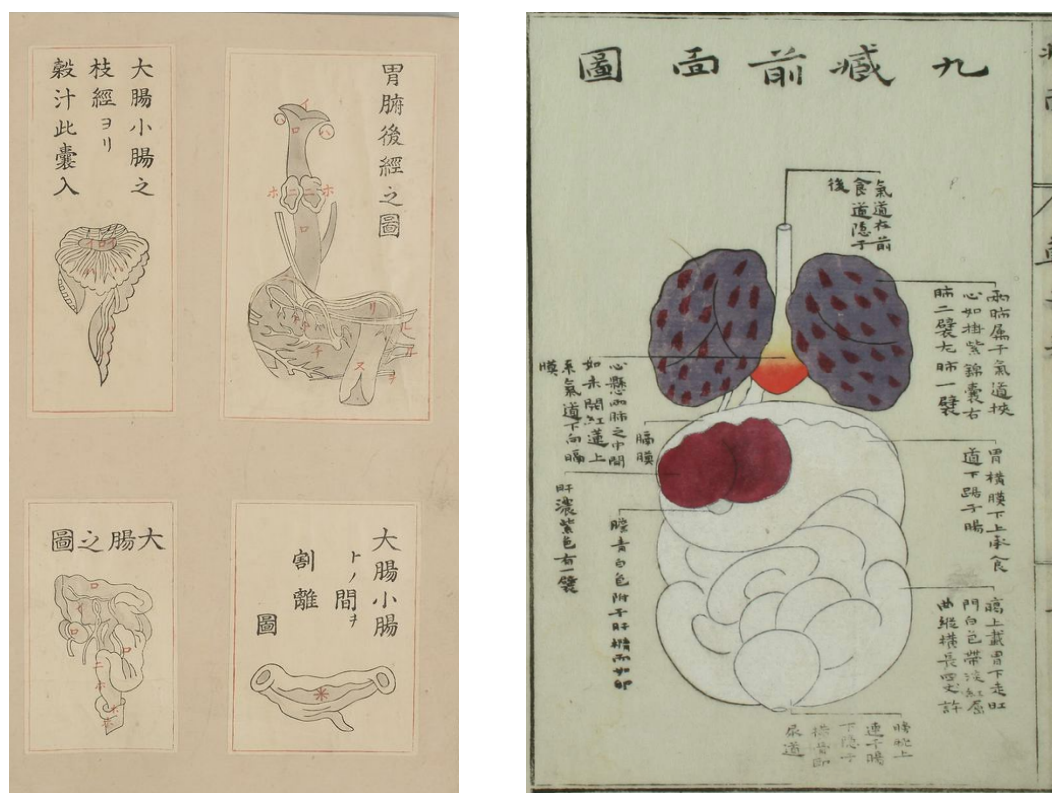


Figure 4-5. Dutch Flapbook of the Interior and Exterior of the Body (1772) and Record of the Viscera (1759)

Zōshi (蔵志: Record of the Viscera, 1759), which detailed the result of Yamawaki Tōyō's autopsy. Suzuki was puzzled, for there were apparent discrepancies between Motoki's and Yamawaki's illustrations and descriptions of intestines (see Figure 4-5). Motoki, in his manuscript, made a clear distinction between the large intestine and the small intestine. However, as we can rightly surmise, such distinction did not correspond to Yamawaki's observation of these intestines as one organ. Furthermore, Suzuki noticed that Motoki's vocabulary of 'daichō' and 'shōchō' did not even match Remmelin's original description of these intestines. This mismatch, as Suzuki surmised, derived from the fact that Motoki relied on the ancient Chinese medical lexicons – 'daichō' and 'shōchō' – when translating Remmelin's work. In the hope of clarifying the matter, Suzuki raises the issue to Yoshio Kōgyū (1724-1800), a Dutch translator and practitioner of Ranpō. Their exchange was summarised by Suzuki as follows.

問曰蔵志云未見有大腸而小腸尚微之古言其論分明也此書別大小者何吉雄子曰按何害之有所謂小腸蠻語底武禰太留武直訳之酷然弱便之處所謂大腸蠻語底都幾太留武直訳之棘然強便之處非小大之謂也固一物而為兩用也

(In Yamawaki's *Record of the Viscera*, there is no distinction between the large and small intestines. But the difference was clearly stated in ancient texts. Where does this difference

title, *Oranda zenku naigai bungō-zu* 和蘭全軀内外分合図 (*Dutch Flapbook of the Interior and Exterior of the Body*) in 1772.

come from? Mr Yoshio has told me that the so-called small intestine is called in the language of the foreigners ‘*dunne darm*’, which signifies the place of softer bowel movements. The so-called large intestine is called ‘*dikke darm*’, which designates the place of firmer bowel movement. The small intestine is to fermented rice as the large intestine is to rice balls. These terms, *dunne darm* and *dikke darm* do not mean ‘large’ and ‘small’: it is one organ that fulfils two distinctive functions.)⁷³

What Suzuki forges here is a conscious semantic change. If the Chinese medical tradition that is in the fold of Neo-Confucianism establishes a system of classification of these intestines based on their location, Suzuki operationalises a system of classification based on the function of these intestines. One organ that Yamawaki observed can be, under this classificatory schema, divided into two distinctive functions.

Sings that Suzuki uses – *daichō* (大腸) and *shōchō* (小腸) – may be the same as those used in the Chinese medical tradition. But significations are not. Importantly, Suzuki is not negating the Chinese medical tradition and its lexicons. Nor is he questioning the accuracy of Yamawaki’s observation. Rather, his work indicates that how we understand something is necessarily determined by a classificatory schema that we operationalise. More broadly, this episode suggests that in a liminal space between Koihō, Goseihō, and Ranpō, it becomes possible to treat different understandings of the human body not with the language of error or transgression but with a sense of continuum sustained by factual observation. To this end, I shall even go so far as to say that while Yamawaki’s impulse was to re-establish the primacy of ancient Chinese medical practices, his autopsy had resulted in the increasingly blurred boundaries between various medical traditions.⁷⁴

And yet, the nominalist dilemma remains. One solution to this dilemma emerges from the writings of Yoshimasu Tōdō. His is a solution to erase the question of classification, semantics, and discrepancies between theory and fact altogether and, instead, to re-orient Koihō towards methods and practices. What undergirds this shift is Yoshimasu’s conviction that “the nucleus of medicine lies in practice and nothing else matters.”⁷⁵ Undoubtedly, this conviction is a succinct

⁷³ Motoki Ryōi / Suzuki Sōun, *Oranda zenku naigai bungō-zu*.

⁷⁴ Daniel Trambaiolo points out that it was with Rangaku scholars that specific differences between various understandings of the body were enunciated and concretised. As he observes, “Motoki [Ryōi] had assumed a continuity between European and Chinese understandings of the body, allowing him to freely adapt existing Sino-Japanese words to describe the structures in Remmelin’s images. Rangaku translators drew much stricter distinctions between two types of anatomical concepts that they encountered in European texts: those that they saw as present in both the European and East Asian traditions (e.g., Heart, lungs, spleen) and those that they saw as specific to European anatomy (e.g., blood vessels, nerves, glands). For the latter group, they developed a systematic translational lexicon, avoiding the ambiguities that Motoki had introduced into his translation by borrowing concepts such as the conduits and the triple burner. It was through this novel lexicon, as much as through their novel visual style, that the rangaku translators sought to distinguish their new knowledge of the body from older anatomical traditions.” Daniel Trambaiolo, “Translating the Inner Landscape: Anatomical Bricolage in Early Modern Japan,” *Osiris*, 37, 2022: 181 [163-191]. See also, Benjamin A. Elman (ed.), *Antiquarianism, Language, and Medical Philology: From Early Modern to Modern Sino-Japanese Medical Discourses*, Leiden and Boston, Mass: Brill, 2015. On visual anatomical representations of the body, Koori Yoshiko, Tanabe Kenichirō, and Orita Toshirō offer us a brief yet informative historical observation. See Koori Yoshiko, Tanabe Kenichirō, and Orita Toshirō, “Nihon kaibōgaku-teki bijutsu no hensen” 日本解剖学的美術の変遷 (“Changes in Japanese Anatomical Art”), *Teikyō tanki daigaku kiyō*, 22, 2021: 167-174.

⁷⁵ Yoshimasu Tōdō, *Ruijuhō 類聚方 (Classified Assemblage of Prescriptions)*, 1764. The original sentence reads, “医の学は方のみ也”

critique of his contemporaries, whom Yoshimasu rather derogatively characterises as “yin-yang doctors” and whose aetiological and pathological discussions based on Chinese cosmology are “mere speculation” resulting in ineffective treatments.⁷⁶ If doctors are concerned more with classification and semantics than actually treating diseases, what good can come out of such a medical tradition? Yoshimasu, then, glosses over the familiar signifier ‘*michi*’ (道: way) and argues that “the way of medicine is to cure diseases. The cure for diseases lies in methods.”⁷⁷ Of course, Yoshimasu is acutely aware that there is no shortcut to acquiring proper methods of medical practice. For him, Medicine, after all, is “a lifelong art.”⁷⁸ But when a doctor forgets his true calling and deviates from the Way of medicine to “keep others alive,” then “he only creates death.”⁷⁹ For this reason, Yoshimasu insists on the following: “The Way of medicine is not easy to attain. Do not argue with language. Know it only in silence.”⁸⁰

With this conviction, Yoshimasu lodges a challenge against the most foundational premise of Neo-Confucianism, that is, *ri* to which all things under heaven, including diseases and treatments, are said to conform.

夫理無定準疾有定証證豈可以無定準之理臨有定証之疾哉

(The principle is not at all fixed, but the cause of a disease has definite proof. How can we treat a disease with a proven cause by projecting the principle that has no evidence?)⁸¹

Yoshimasu is not even seeking to redefine the concept of *ri*. With this rhetorical question, he insists on the inadequacy of explaining and treating diseases on the basis of *ri* and, more generally, the futility of pursuing *ri* in the field of medicine. The kernel of medical practices and accumulation of practical knowledge is not *ri* that he sees as ‘*teijun*’ (定準: categorical standard) but what he calls ‘*teishō*’ (定証: definite, sustained proof). In so arguing, Yoshimasu, in effect, entirely suspends any consideration of *ri*.

This discursive suspension of *ri* is particularly important. It enables Yoshimasu to reconfigure medicine as a field organised around a set of verifiable facts collected through observation and a set of empirically informed methods of treatment. In other words, it foregrounds an orientation towards medicine without abstraction and without moral and ethical conclusions. Of course, Yoshimasu does not entirely negate the existence of *ri* itself. He maintains that “*ri* is not to be aggravated; the problem is that we are enchanted by it.”⁸² There may be *ri* that informs human questions about being and becoming. Yet, for Yoshimasu, the medical field exists separately, outside of that which *ri* dictates. The notion of proven fact functions here as the marker of such a

⁷⁶ Yoshimasu Tōdō, *Iji wakumon* 医事或問 (*Questions about Medicine*), in Kure Shūzō and Fujikawa Yū (eds.), *Tōdō Zenshū* (Complete Works of Tōdō), Tokyo: Tohōdō shoten, 1918 [1769]: 5-6 [1-36]. The original text reads, “病に名をつけ、病因を論ずるは、もと憶見ゆへに、[...]”

⁷⁷ Yoshimasu Tōdō, “送南元珠還北奥青森序,” in Kure Shūzō and Fujikawa Yū (eds.), *Tōdō Zenshū* 東洞全集 (*Complete Works of Tōdō*), Tokyo: Tohōdō shoten, 1918: 536 [535-536]. The original sentence reads as follows. “夫医之為道也、治疾而已、治疾在方”

⁷⁸ Ibid. In his own words, “故医者終身之術也”

⁷⁹ Yoshimasu, *Iji wakumon*, 33.

⁸⁰ Yoshimasu Tōdō, “復宗梅諄書,” in Kure et al., (eds.), *Tōdō Zenshū*, 526. The original text reads, “夫医道難獲也。不可以言語而論。有默而知之爾。”

⁸¹ Yoshimasu Tōdō, *Idan* 医断 (*Lectures on Medicine*), 1762.

⁸² Ibid.

separation between a realm of enchantment and a realm of observable and verifiable facts, between a realm of being and becoming and a realm of knowing. This, in turn, informs a new territory of knowledge, at least from a medical perspective. Knowledge is composed of those observable and verifiable facts. All the rest, all the cosmological speculations and abstractions, are beyond the scope of knowledge. Observable and verifiable facts underpin knowledge, not the words of the sages. To this end, the pursuit of knowledge is no longer tantamount to the pursuit of moral and ethical conclusions. One can remain enchanted by *ri* in private matters, but the medical profession demands one to be disenchanted. The efficacy of Koihō, thus, lies in its negation of the (Neo-)Confucian concept of the propensity of *ri* and its suspension of the Neo-Confucian mode of *kyūri*.

This is perhaps the irony of Koihō and its unfolding. Its initial impulse was to return to the ancient Chinese medical tradition by treating ancient texts as mediative loci. And yet, Koihō's subsequent unfolding resulted in a move away from the ancient medical tradition. What emerged was a new methodological orientation away from textual engagement towards observation; a new ontological premise that the observable and the verifiable constituted the known; and a new epistemological conjuncture that delimited the scope of knowledge to the phenomenal world. It is here that we begin to see the emergence of a new way of relating to the world, or else a new positionality of the knower vis-à-vis the known. Through the unfolding of Koihō, the purpose of the knower had shifted. The knower no longer saw its purpose as pursuing the absolute principle of all things, the final cause, *ri*, which was said to dictate its own being and becoming so that it could inhabit the world in a way that it was supposed to inhabit. The knower now understood its purpose as observing what was observable that had much utility and practical efficacy for improving human conditions. The knower came to view as much as to inhabit the world, the known, as the repository of knowledge. Recognising this, it seems increasingly untenable to argue that what separates knowledge from non-knowledge is *ri*. With Koihō, the familiar qualification of valid and serious knowledge, the *ri*-knowledge structuration, became increasingly inadequate.

§

4.5. Institutionalisation and Authorisation

One immediate implication of those intellectual exercises discussed above is the following: the concept of *ri* does not have a sustained, commonly shared meaning. Of course, for many knowledge traditions of the Tokugawa period, *ri* continued to function as the primary signifier for valid and serious knowledge and as the ultimate end for learning processes. However, each knowledge tradition had developed a specific signification of *ri* to address its intellectual interests, concerns, and projections. What *ri* actually meant and how one should pursue it – answers to such questions were now multitude. The conceptual heterogenisation of *ri* and the suspension of the (Neo-)Confucian mode of *kyūri* were the consequences of those intellectual exercises.

Especially noteworthy is the fact that these consequences were, in turn, consolidated into an unfolding reality of the Tokugawa intellectual life. What I am alluding to is the intersection between knowledge and power. The Tokugawa shogunate's interest in establishing various

institutions of knowledge effectively authorised those epistemic changes marked by the heterogeneity of *ri* and the suspension of *kyūri*.

To be sure, the shogunate was concerned less with knowledge *per se* but with questions about governing, about how knowledge could be pressed into the service of governing. This is especially evident in the case of Shōheizaka-gakumonjo (昌平坂学問所) established in 1790 as the ‘official’ institution to study and promote Neo-Confucianism. This institutionalisation of Neo-Confucianism was part and parcel of a reactionary policy to mitigate the effect of then-prevalent two problems. One problem was socio-political. As a consequence of the famine and plague of 1783-1784, the food price rose, and those demoralised farmers, townsfolks and samurais took part in a series of rice riots. Mastudaira Sadanobu (1759-1828), a newly appointed chief councillor of the shogunate, responded with a number of policies under the aegis of the Kansei Reforms (寛政の改革, 1787-1793). One of those policies was educational reform. However, during that period, the realm of education itself was plagued with its own problems. With the development of various intellectual traditions within and outside Confucianism, including Yōmeigaku, Kogaku, Koihō, Kokugaku, Jōrigaku, and Rangaku, Neo-Confucianism, which the shogunate considered as the basis for its feudal *kyōgaku* system, was losing its intellectual purchase. This also meant that the shogunate did not have a tight grip over the realm of knowledge and education. This intellectual heterodoxy, as the shogunate feared, adversely affected the process of socialisation into a certain moral and ethical dictum, the foundation of the social fabric. To re-enforce the teaching of Neo-Confucianism as the official strand of Confucianism in Japan, to rebuild the feudal *kyōgaku* system, and ultimately to consolidate the governing power of the shogunate, Matsudaira implemented in 1790 *Kansei igaku no kin* (寛政異学の禁: the edict to ban unorthodox schools of thought). Under this edict, Hayashi Razan’s private academy, initially established in 1630 as Kōbunkan (弘文館), was renamed Shōheizaka-gakumonjo and subsumed under the direct control of the shogunate. As the primary ‘official’ institution, the school was then tasked to revive Neo-Confucianism both as a scholarly and political doctrine.⁸³

It is not surprising, predictable even, that the shogunate inserted itself into the realm of knowledge and education and warranted the authoritative status of Neo-Confucianism. After all, power and knowledge are often in a symbiotic relationship. A tacit deal made between the shogunate and Neo-Confucianism, on the one hand, provided Neo-Confucian scholars with new institutional possibilities and, on the other hand, obliged them to support the political, social, and economic aspirations of the shogunate. What is surprising, however, is the fact that the shogunate, as it seems, sought to establish its influence over the entire realm of knowledge and education not by prohibiting ‘unorthodox’ schools of thought as the Kansei edict otherwise stipulated but by authorising, directly or otherwise, the institutionalisation of a wide range of intellectual traditions and recognising those institutions as ‘official’ institutions of the shogunate. In retrospect, we can see the irony here. The shogunate’s vested interest in controlling the entire field of knowledge and education inadvertently contributed to the subsequent demise of Neo-Confucianism, as the

⁸³ See Ishikawa Ken, “Shōheizaka Gakumonjo no hattatsu katei to sono yōshiki” 昌平坂学問所の発達過程とその様式 (“The Process of Establishing Shōheizaka Gakumonjo”), *Ochanomizu University Studies in Arts and Culture*, 7, 1955: 1-46; Wajima Yoshio, *Shōheikō to hangaku* 昌平校と藩学 (*Shōheikō and Learning in Provinces*), Tokyo: Shibundō, 1962; Makabe Jin, *Edo-kōki no gakumon to seiji: Shōheizaka Gakumonjo jusha to bakumatu gaikō henyō* 江戸後期の学問と政治: 昌平坂学問所儒者と幕末外交変容 (*Scholarship and Politics in the Late Edo Period: Confucian Scholars of Shōheizaka Gakumonjo and Changes in Foreign Policies*), Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2007.

authorisation of those institutions also meant the authorisation of the conceptual heterogeneity of *ri* and the suspension of the Neo-Confucian mode of *kyūri*.

Take an example of the field of Chinese medicine. In 1791, the shogunate took control over a private medical academy, Seijukan (躋寿館), established initially by Taki Mototaka (1695-1766) in 1765. Renamed as Igakukan (医学館), this institution saw its purpose in undeniably political terms. It was a period when *Koihō* became quite popular among the court nobles and was promoted extensively by the imperial court in Kyoto. To expand its sphere of influence, the shogunate saw an opportunity in Igakukan and tasked this institution to expand and promote a strand of Chinese medicine based on Neo-Confucian cosmology and its premises of *yin-yang* and five elements. However, if we delve further into its curriculum, we begin to see some disparities between what Igakukan was tasked to do and how the institution actually operated. The curriculum, of course, emphasised the importance of Neo-Confucian cosmology. Yet, it also encouraged students to branch out from the Neo-Confucian fold and to study what *Koihō* would claim as its nucleus, namely ancient Chinese medical texts and practical methods of treating diseases.⁸⁴ While Igakukan was designated by the shogunate, as was *Shōheizaka-gakumonjo*, as the official institution to promote Neo-Confucianism, its scope of learning and teaching was extended far beyond what Neo-Confucians would permit. To this end, the operation of Igakukan constituted a certain degree of deviation from the shogunate's political interest and, thus, also constituted a breach of the shogunate's prohibition of heterodoxy.

With a sense of necessity to consolidate its political legitimacy, the shogunate also turned to the field of *Wagaku* (和学: Japanese Study), a strand of *Kokugaku*. The idea was that *Wagaku* would provide an opportunity to re-order the past into 'Japanese' history and to create a meaning of the past that would legitimate the shogunate's authority. In 1793, the shogunate granted the establishment of *Wagaku-kōdansho* (和学講談所) led by Hanawa Hokiichi (1746-1821) as a shogunate-affiliated institution of *Wagaku*. With the aim of reviving so-called '*Jōdai bunka*' (上代文化: ancient culture), including mythologies of the national origin, Japanese poetry, legendary tales, quasi-history, and geographical surveys, the institution organised various notable projects: re-interpreting *Kojiki*, *Rikkokushi* (六国史: Six National Histories), and *Genji monogatari*; compiling 'historical' materials, especially diaries and personal correspondences of court officials who served under the ancient *ritsuryō*-system; publishing the shogunate-commissioned 'historiographical' accounts of Japan, including a philological catalogue called *Gunsho ruijū* (群書類従: a collection of old Japanese books and Japanese literature), a revised version of *Nihon kōki* (日本後紀: a 'historical' text initially completed in 840), a reconstructed version of *Ryō no gige* (令義解: an explanatory text of *ritsuryō*-system compiled initially in 833), and a cultural record called *Buke myōmokushō* (武家名目抄: a catalogue of rituals, ceremonies, events, legalities, costumes, military formations, and other customs of the renowned military families between the 9th and 15th century).⁸⁵ Undoubtedly, these projects based on archival and philological works were

⁸⁴ Machi Senjirō, "Edo-kōki no igaku no baai: Bakufu igakukan no gakuseki o chūshin ni" 江戸後期の医学の場合: 幕府医学館の学績を中心に ("A Case of Medicine in the Late Edo Period: Scholarly Contributions of Igakukan"), *Nihon shisōshigaku*, 35, 2003: 33 [30-36].

⁸⁵ Yamashita Takeshi, "Wagaku kōdansho no jittai" 和学講談所の実態 ("The Reality of Wagaku Kōdansho"), *Nihon no kyōikushigaku*, 4, 1961: 62-87; Sakamoto Tarō, "Wagaku kōdansho ni okeru henshū shuppan jigyō" 和学講談所における編集出版事業 ("Editing and Publishing Projects at Wagaku Kōdansho"), *Nihon rekishi*, 194, 1664: 3-

to formulate usable pasts, that is, usable for the shogunate to forge ‘historical’ evidence and legitimacy of its authority within a spatially-bounded, localised configuration of ‘Japan’.⁸⁶ Such a proclivity towards ‘Japan’ seems somewhat incongruous with the shogunate’s adherence towards Neo-Confucianism, which was not ‘Japanese’ in its origin and which Kogaku scholars criticised for its ‘Chinese mind’. Here, political necessity overrode intellectual and epistemic differences. And, as a consequence, it created an enabling intellectual and epistemic condition to dissent from the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy.⁸⁷

Glossing over intellectual and epistemic differences for political purposes is also a general tendency we can observe in the shogunate’s dealing with modern Western knowledge. In 1811, the shogunate established Banshowage-goyō (蕃書和解御用: Shogunal Office for Translating Barbarian Texts) within the existing institutional structure of Tenmonkata (天文方: Astronomical Bureau). As an institution dedicated to translating and studying Western, especially Dutch, texts, the institution attracted some of the most then-renowned Rangaku scholars and translators, including Takahashi Kageyasu (1785-1829), Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757-1827), Udagawa Yōan (1798-1846), and Aochi Rinsō (1775-1833). And, with its proximity to the political centre, the institution enjoyed a near-monopoly on shogunate-sponsored translational projects.⁸⁸ In its earlier days, the goal of the institution was primarily utilitarian, translating and disseminating Western texts that were deemed useful for improving existing astronomical, medical, and agricultural knowledge. However, 1853 changed the stature of the institution. With the arrival of Commodore Perry and his black ships, there was a sudden increase in demand to translate a wide array of diplomatic documents and various Western texts, especially on Western military science and technologies, to emulate and appropriate those technologies for Japan’s own coastal defence.⁸⁹ To satisfy these demands, institutional reform was necessary. The institution was renamed first in 1855 as Yōgakusho (洋学所: Institute for Western Learning) and separated from Tenmonkata, becoming an independent institution. In 1857, the institution was yet again renamed as Bansho-shirabesho (蕃書調所: Institute for the Study of Barbarian Books) and mandated as the primary shogunate-sponsored, official institution for Western learning. Unsurprisingly, the institution then became an

14; Ōta Yoshimaro, *Hanawa Hokiichi* 塙保己一 (*Biography of Hanawa Hokiichi*), Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966: 140-141; Saitō Masao, “Edo bakufu to wagaku kōdansho: Wagaku-goyō o megutte” 江戸幕府と和学講談所: 和学御用をめぐる (‘The Tokugawa Shogunate and Wagaku Kōdansho: On ‘Official’ Studies of Japan’), *Onko sōshi*, 54, 2000: 43-49.

⁸⁶ As Alex Schneider and Stefan Tanaka write, an “archival project” is “to formulate a usable past.” Alex Schneider and Stefan Tanaka, “The Transformation of History in China and Japan,” in Stuart Macintyre, Jean Manguerra, and Attila Pok (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writings, Vol. 4: 1800-1945*, 2011: 496 [491-519]. Or, in the words of Thomas Richards, “the archive was not a building, not even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master plan, a virtual focal point for heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire.” Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, London and New York, NY: Verso, 1993: II.

⁸⁷ In 1869, Meiji government transformed Wagaku-kōdansho into an official institution for ‘national’ history and renamed it as Shiryōhenshū-kokushikōsei-kyoku (史料編輯国史校正局: the Office for the Collection of Historical Materials and Compilation of a National History). And, in 1949, as part and parcel of the post-war educational reform, the Office for the Collection of Historical Materials and Compilation of a National History was officially integrated into the University of Tokyo as Shiryō-henshūjo (史料編纂所: Historiographical Institute).

⁸⁸ Judy Wakabayashi, “Imports and Institutions: Official Patronage and (Non-)Publishing of Translations in Early Modern Japan,” in Ahmed Ankit and Said Faip (eds.), *Agency and Patronage in Eastern Translatology*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015: 11, 15 [3-22].

⁸⁹ Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Tūshi 1-kan*, 7-8.

incubator for producing generations of scholars, including Mitsukuri Genpo, Kawamoto Kōmin, Nishi Amane, Tsuda Mamichi, Nakamura Masanao, and Katō Hiroyuki, who, during the early Meiji period, yielded their influences as intellectual powerhouse. This institutional unfolding climaxed in 1862 with the so-called Bunkiyū Reforms (文久の改革). The institution was once again given a new name, Yōsho-shirabesho (洋書調所: Institute for the Study of Western Books), and elevated to the rank of ‘national’ institution along with Shōheizaka-gakumonjo. This means that the institution dedicated to studying modern Western knowledge became part of the twin-apex of the late Tokugawa educational system.⁹⁰ Of course, it was fear, not adoration, of the West that was behind the political impulse for institutionalising modern Western knowledge. The 1854 proposal for Bansho-shirabesho clearly expressed concerns over the possible proliferation of ‘barbaric’ (夷狄) thought and the Christian influence. The proposal argued that, in order to mitigate the influence of barbarians and Christians, all scholars of the institute must begin their formative training in Kangaku and that those working on ‘barbaric’ texts must strictly observe the anti-Christian policies of the shogunate. The proposal also stipulated that the institutional purpose was to collect “information about enemies,” in particular about their geography, political systems, religious beliefs, customs, social conditions, military technologies and shipbuilding techniques, arts, and other industrial products.⁹¹ The purpose, in other words, was to understand rather than emulate the West. Yet, such a political investment nonetheless became a symbolic instance in which modern Western knowledge firmly established its foothold, at least as an institution, if not as an epistemic foundation, in the Tokugawa political life with the institutional stature equal to Neo-Confucianism.

A similar symbolic instance can be found also in the field of Western medicine. In 1860, Shutōsho (種痘所: Institute for Smallpox), originally established two years earlier by a group of Ranpō practitioners to respond to the smallpox epidemic and promote vaccination, was mandated as the ‘official’ shogunate institution for Dutch (Western) medicine. In the following year, the institute was renamed Seiyō-igakusho (西洋医学所: Institute for Western Medicine) and underwent a significant institutional restructuring and reformed with a new division of labour: the section dedicated to eradicating smallpox with vaccination; the section conducting anatomical research; and the section for medical pedagogy offering educational opportunities for aspiring doctors. In other words, this reform transformed the institute into an all-encompassing institution for Western medical practices, research, and education.⁹² This institutional reform continued well into 1862. By the end of the year, the shogunate, with its appointive power, made various ranks at Seiyō-igakusho comparable to those at Igakukan, the institutional locus for Chinese medicine. The

⁹⁰ Ibid., 7-28.

⁹¹ The proposal was compiled with other documents in Edo Kyūji Saihō-kai, “Oda Matazō banshohonyaku-goyō ni kansuru shorui” 織田又三蕃書翻訳御用に関する書類 (“Oda Matazō’s Documents on Office for Translating Barbarian’s Texts”), *Edo*, 33, 1919: 9-20. The original text reads as follows. “表向蛮書御名義を以御国え相建候義は、開闢以来前後始て之御事と相聞、依ては異国筋之義近年一体相開ケ、美惡之取捨も無之一図右学筋之奇特を申唱候者も多々有之候折柄、公辺二於て新規御創建之義伝承仕候ハ、世上一般公然相成、本を忘れ末二走り華を以て夷二変スと申義も有之、如何様流入之端を開き申間敷物二も無之、[...] 当時夷秋義は邪宗門教法を主二相立、本国より仕出候事二付、土俗之信從二寄土地人民を挙て服属いたし候類国々不少相聞、[...] 殊更於当時右学筋漸々相開ケ候上は、深く其始を相慎、禍を未然に防キ、前以嚴制を被立後弊を生し不申候様御取斗無之候ては相成間敷義と奉存候”

⁹² Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Tūshi 1-kan*, 58.

shogunate also appointed Ogata Kōan (1810-1863), who had been practising and teaching Western medicine in Osaka in the orbit of the imperial court and who played a crucial role in developing and promoting a vaccine for smallpox, as the head of the institute.⁹³ Granting an official status to Seiyō-igakusho equal to that of Igakukan was, as with the case of Yōsho-shirabesho, a politically-tainted affair. The shogunate saw utility in Western medicine, especially in tackling the effects of the epidemic not only on the welfare of the people but also on the social psyche. The shogunate traded off the intellectual orthodoxy of Neo-Confucianism for immediate political gains.

These instances of institutionalisation are interesting less as political investments by the shogunate but more for their overall implications for knowledge. Of course, these were instances in which various knowledge traditions were subsumed under the interest of the political centre. However, these were also instances in which those knowledge traditions, each of which presumed *ri* in a distinctive way and defined *kyūri* accordingly, were heteronomously authorised by power as legitimate loci for pursuing knowledge. To this end, the way in which power inserted itself in knowledge justified the intellectual predilection to view *ri* in its heterogeneity and to suspend the Neo-Confucian mode of *kyūri*. What this meant is that the primary qualification of valid and serious knowledge, the *ri*-knowledge structuration, became increasingly untenable. The institutionalisation and authorisation of various Tokugawa knowledge traditions concretised a new opportunity, necessity even, to reconfigure the epistemic foundation of knowledge.

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4.6. Relating to the World

If the *ri*-knowledge structuration no longer functions as the primary qualifier of valid and serious knowledge, how can knowledge be qualified as such? Those Tokugawa knowledge traditions discussed above do not necessarily offer a coherent answer. At least, however, we can observe a certain shift in a way in which the knower relates to the knower – a shift that prepares the reconfiguration of the knower as the subject. Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai view that the knower has the capacity to move across time and space, having recourse to the original meaning of ancient Chinese texts. Motoori Norinaga maintains that the knower embodies authentically ‘Japanese’ subjective voice when reciting ancient ‘Japanese’ texts. Yamawaki Tōyō and Yoshimasu Tōdō understand the knower as the observing, who, without cosmological speculations, distinguishes facts from nominally agreed categories. What these examples suggest is that the capacity of the knower, whatever one may define it, is now a tacitly agreed presumption not only to determine how to have recourse to knowledge but also to legitimate certain acts of knowing as appropriate. While the concept of *ri* remains, for many, if not all, as the determinant of the territory of

⁹³ By this point, even some shogunate officials began to urge the practitioners of Chinese medicine to learn also Western medicine and to become competent in both medical traditions. Ogata Kōan recorded in his diary, a comment made by Ogasawara Hironari, a shogunate official who was in charge of overseeing Igakukan. Ogata’s entry reads as follows. “御医師之義其家に規則相立候儀尤二は候へ共、向後漢科之家にても蘭科相学ヒ、蘭科辿も漢科相学候儀不苦旨、去酉年〔1861〕相達候趣も有之候へ共、追々西洋医術御採用相成、既二御匙にも被仰付候儀二付、漢方而已心懸候御医師も弥西洋療法をも相学、抜群御用立候様相互に可被心懸候事。” Ogata Tomio, *Ogata Kōan den* 緒方洪庵伝 (*Biography of Ogata Kōan*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1963: 395.

knowledge, the capacity of the knower now conditions methodological and epistemological orientations.

However, I shall add that this figure of the knower that emerged in these Tokugawa intellectual traditions cannot be impetuously equated to the figure of the knower defined as the subject in the Western philosophical tradition. Of course, the Western subject is also premised on its capacity, as Max Weber, for instance, famously points us to man's capacity to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it significance. But there are still some differences, especially in discourse, in discursive legitimation about what undergirds man's capacity as the knower.

To allude to my point, let me briefly consider some examples from Western philosophy. The first is Leibniz. The point of departure for him is the Greek-Roman concept of '*subiectum*', which means literally 'the subject' and ontologically 'an individual being'. Extending this concept of *subiectum*, Leibniz understands the knower as the individual with a physical body who perceives the physical world from their own point of view. His emphasis is on 'from their own point of view.' For the knowing individual, as Leibniz maintains, there is no outside. The subject does not have any means to position themselves outside the foil of their own physical body. This, in turn, means that what one sees and knows is a mere mirror image of the physical world, '*realitas obiectiva*', reflected through the subject's senses. Reality is equivalent to consciousness. It is this consciousness that undergirds the subject as such.⁹⁴ Kant's rendering of the knower, for all its differences from Leibniz', also points to self-consciousness as the crucial sustenance for the subject's capacity to know. Kant's primary concern is the limit of self-consciousness, which he divides into three kinds: transcendental, empirical, and supposed. But none of them gives rise to authentic knowledge, knowledge of noumena, of thing-in-itself. What the subject can know, what self-consciousness can be conscious about, is the phenomenal world as it appears to them. Knowledge is of whatever the knower constitutes as the known, as objects external to them. Knowledge is, thus, thing-for-itself. For Kant, self-consciousness to constitute objects within a schema undergirds the subject's capacity to arrive at knowledge pertaining only to objects thus constituted.⁹⁵ Then, there is Hegel. For him, neither the subject nor the object is a fixed position. The distinction between the subject and the object arises, that is to say, the subject becomes such only when consciousness conceives objects. Consciousness delineates one's experiences into intelligible segments, fragments, or objects of knowledge.⁹⁶ A common trope of these examples is self-consciousness. The subject's capacity to know (what to know and how to know them) is predicated on self-consciousness. It is not that the subject must conform their knowledge to the way objects are (thing-in-itself) but rather that the way objects are must conform to the subject's perception (thing-for-itself). The world exists as the object of knowledge because self-consciousness of the subject constitutes it as such.

⁹⁴ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Discourse on Metaphysics," in Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (eds. and trans.), *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989: 35-68.

⁹⁵ See for example, Tamar Japaridze, *The Kantian Subject: Sensus Communis, Mimesis, Work of Mourning*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000: 1-40; Luca Forgiione, "Kant and the I as Subject," in Stefano Bacin, Alfredo Ferrarin, Claudio La Rocca, Margit Ruffing (eds.), *Kant und die Philosophie in weltbürgerlicher Absicht (Kant and Philosophy in a Cosmopolitan Sense)*, Vol. 2, Boston, Mass.: De Gruyter, 2013: 117-128; Eduardo Molina, "Kant's Conception of the Subject," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 17:2, 2017: 77-94.

⁹⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, George di Giovanni (trans., and ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. See also Tom Rockmore, *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997: 180-195; Maurizio Pagano, "Hegel: The Subject and the Absolute," *Teoria*, 35:1, 2015: 81-97; Clinton Tolley, "The Subject in Hegel's Absolute Idea," *Hegel Bulletin*, 40:1, 2018: 143-173.

My argument is that, for most of those knowledge traditions of the Tokugawa period discussed above, the question is not that of idealism but of nominalism. The question is not about existence but classification. For this reason, what matters is language. This is because language is a means of classification, a means of establishing a relation between word and meaning, between signifier and signification. Recall, once again, Itō Jinsai's, Ogyū Sorai's, and Motoori Norinaga's attention to language and meaning. Whether one privileges the ancient Chinese language or the ancient Japanese language, whether one attends to written forms or vocal forms, to possess an adequate language is to possess the capacity to signify, to render things with meanings, and to delimit what meanings are available for signifying practices. In their works, language is treated as a means of knowing, better yet, the very position of the knower to have recourse to the world. Recall also the nominalist dilemma that emerged from Yamawaki Tōyō's autopsy. As those medical practitioners recognise, anatomical categories such as 'small intestine' and 'large intestine' are not natural kinds. Only within a scheme of categorisation that these body parts can be sorted as such. Further still, as Suzuki Sōun's comparison suggests, the relationship between signifier and signification is not fixed. Nor is it absolute. The distinction between 'small intestine' and 'large intestine' is arbitrary, referring sometimes to the locations of these intestines and other times to their functions. The upshot is that these Tokugawa scholars do not deny that there is indeed real stuff, be it *ri*, *taenaru kotowari*, or certain body parts, independent of the human mind, of consciousness. They deny only that it is intrinsically accessible without the mediation of language. Thus, their understanding of the knower's capacity is intimately intertwined with language. The capacity of the knower to move across time and space; the capacity to embody distinctively 'Japanese' subjective voice; the capacity to distinguish observable facts from nominally agreed categories – these capacities are doubtless undergirded by language.

What does this figure of the knower mediated by language imply? It implies that the knower, conceived in these Tokugawa knowledge traditions, is unquestionably parochial. Any language, whether Chinese or Japanese, whether ancient or contemporary, is not universal and does not transcend its own particularities. To conceive the knower based on language is to ground the act of knowing firmly on a given semantic and linguistic space. At the same time, to conceive the knower thus is also to consolidate an image of a unified language and to equate linguistic boundaries to cognitive boundaries. Beyond these boundaries exist possibilities of alternative meaning, discourse, and knowledge. As we shall see in the next chapter, this localised configuration of the knower mediated by language foregrounded the emergence of the specifically 'Japanese' subject of knowledge during the early years of the Meiji period.

CHAPTER 5

SCIENCE, LANGUAGE, AND THE SUBJECT POSITION

A reflex action, strictly so-called, takes place without our knowing anything about it, and hundreds of such actions are going on continually in our bodies without our being aware of them. But it very frequently happens that we learn that something is going on, when a stimulus affects our afferent nerves, by having what we call a *feeling* or *sensation*. We class sensations along with *emotions*, and *volitions*, and *thoughts*, under the common head of states of *consciousness*. But what consciousness is, we know not; and how it is that anything so remarkable as a state of consciousness comes about as the result of irritating nervous tissue, is just as unaccountable as the appearance of the Djin when Aladdin rubbed his lamp in the story, or as any other ultimate fact of nature.

Thomas H. Huxley¹

§

5.1. From *Kyūri* to *Kagaku*

During the late Tokugawa period, a sense of diffusion was paramount in the field of knowledge. The conceptual heterogenisation of *ri* had led to the development of various knowledge traditions. The politics of knowledge, while resulting in a symbiotic relationship between power and knowledge, sanctioned intellectual and epistemic heterodoxy. Neo-Confucianism may have established proximity to power, but the reality of intellectual life was that the Neo-Confucian mode of *kyūri* and its authoritative voice were suspended. Now, the familiar imbrication of *ri* and knowledge, that is, the *ri*-knowledge structuration, was becoming increasingly an inadequate qualification for knowledge to be legitimised as valid and serious. *Ri* no longer functioned as the marker of distinction between knowledge and non-knowledge. Any knowledge tradition could be valid and serious insofar as it sought to address *ri* defined variously within the remit of that given knowledge tradition.

This increasing inadequacy of the *ri*-knowledge structuration was reflected in semantics. During the early years of the Meiji period, the reference to the term *kyūri* became, in political and

¹ Thomas H. Huxley, *Lessons in Elementary Physiology*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1866: 193.

intellectual discourses, much less frequent. In its stead, the term ‘*kagaku*’ (科学) entered the Japanese semantic space as a new lexicon to designate a specific mode of learning and attaining knowledge.² For instance, Nishi Amane equates the pursuit of knowledge, which he argues consists of ‘*gaku*’ (学: science, pure knowledge) and ‘*jutsu*’ (術: art, applied knowledge), to “what people would call ‘*kagaku*’ (いわゆる科学)”.³ To be sure, this adnominal adjective ‘*iwayuru*’ (いわゆる: so-called) indicates that Nishi is, perhaps, not fully convinced by the term *kagaku*.⁴ And yet, paradoxically, this adnominal adjective also indicates the increasing popularity of the term itself.⁵

Indeed, the early Meiji period was marked by the lexical and conceptual replacement of *kyūri* with *kagaku*. However, it was a gradual process which involved various semantic negotiations, methodological reorientations, and political authorisation. How did this lexical and conceptual replacement of *kyūri* with *kagaku* occur? How did this replacement reconceive the field of knowledge? And most importantly, what were the implications for modern knowledge formation?

² Tanomura Tadanori offers a comprehensive list of texts published between 1821 and 1974 that used the term ‘*kagaku*’ or that invented new terms by combining ‘*kagaku*’ with other terms, such as ‘*kagaku-shugi*’ (科学主義: scientism) and ‘*ningen-kagaku*’ (人間科学: human science). According to the list, from around 1883, the references to the term ‘*kagaku*’ began to increase exponentially. See Tanomura Tadanobu, “Kagaku no goshi: zenjiteki, dankaiteki henbō to fukyū no yōsō” 科学の語史: 漸次的段階的変貌と普及の様相 (“The Etymology of ‘Kagaku’: Its Gradual and Phased Changes and Its Popularisation”), *Osaka daigaku daigakuin bungaku-kenkyūka kiyō*, 2016: 152-156 [123-181].

³ Nishi, *Chisetsu*, 209. On the difference between ‘*gaku*’ and ‘*jutsu*’, Nishi specified that “学はもっぱら知の性に根ざし、観門に属するものなり。術はもっぱらその知るところの理にしたがいてこれを行うにかかわり、行門に属するものなり。[...] 学術のもって判ずるところ、理の知りやすきものなり。[...] 事実を一貫の真理に帰納し、またこの真理を序で、前後本末を掲げ、著わして一の模範となしたるものを学（サイエンス）という。すでに学によりて真理瞭然たる時は、これを活用して人間万般の事物に便ならしむるを術という。ゆえに学の趣旨はただもっぱら真理を講究するにありて、その真理の人間における利害得失のいかんたるを論ずべからざるなり。術はすなわちその真理のあるところにしたがい、活用して吾人のために害を去りて利につき、失に背して得に向かわしむるものなり。(What I call ‘science’ is concerned with the nature of knowledge and, therefore, belongs to the realm of observation. What I call ‘art’ is concerned with the application of the principle of what one knows and, therefore, belongs to the realm of action. [...] Woven together, ‘science’ and ‘art’ allows us to fully grasp the principle. [...] Attributing facts inductively to the constant, the principle, using the principle to understand the details of a thing, and to deductively establish a holistic model – this is what I call ‘science.’ When the principle is clear and used for utilitarian purposes, this is what I call ‘art.’ The primary purpose of ‘science’ is to investigate the truth but not to discuss how the truth may be beneficial or disadvantageous to human beings. The work of ‘art’ is to follow the truth and utilise it for the advantage of humankind, to eliminate harm for gain, and to turn a loss into a benefit.)” Ibid., 207-208.

⁴ Nishi went on to complain that while his distinction between ‘*gaku*’ and ‘*jutsu*’, between ‘science’ and ‘art’, between pure and applied knowledge that together constituted the pursuit of knowledge was pronounced one, the term ‘*kagaku*’ did not offer any clear distinction between pure and applied knowledge. For Nishi, such a distinction was a fundamental conceptual device to specify the nature, structure, and scope of proper knowledge. The original text reads, “しかるにかくのごとく学と術とはその旨趣を異にすといえども、しかれどもいわゆる科学にいたりては両相混じて判然区別すべからざるものあり。” Ibid., 209.

⁵ Nakayama Shigeru observes that, with the recognition that modern Western knowledge had an array of fields, “the current Japanese term for science, *kagaku* (literary ‘classified learning’), gained currency” during the early Meiji period. See Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions in China, Japan, and the West*, 208.

5.1.1. A Field of Utilitarian Knowledge

In our semantics today, the term *kagaku* has a double meaning: one as ‘science’ in the broadest sense, as a deliberate attitude towards knowledge, as a mode of thinking and reasoning based on the established methods to view the natural and human worlds objectively; the other in a narrower sense, as ‘natural sciences’ composed of various fields of knowledge production about the natural world, divisions of which are implemented as disciplinary and institutional categories. However, when the term first emerged in the Japanese semantic space during the 19th century as ‘*wasei kango*’ (和製漢語: Japanese word invented by combining two or more Chinese characters), its meaning was different. The signification of *kagaku* as a deliberate attitude to and/or specific fields of knowledge was, in fact, the product of semantic negotiations that took place throughout the 19th century.⁶

In some writings of Rangaku scholars, we find the term ‘一科学’. The temptation is to project our own semantics and read it as ‘*ichi-kagaku*’ (one science). However, in the semantics of the 19th-century Rangaku tradition, the term actually reads ‘*ichika-gaku*’ (one field of knowledge) to pursue principles, *kyūri*, of the natural world. Western astronomy is ‘*ichika-gaku*’. Calendrical science is another ‘*ichika-gaku*’. Botanical classification is still another ‘*ichika-gaku*’. One earliest usage of the term can be found in Takano Chōei’s work on physiology. When explaining the importance of learning physiology, which he describes as ‘*jinshin kyūri*’ (人身窮理: the pursuit of the principle of the human body), Takano writes as follows.

人身窮理ハ極致ノ学ニシテ其義宏博其論精詳ナレバ小冊子ノ説キ盡ス可キ所ニ非ズ [...] 故ニ或ハ責メテ曰人身窮理ハ医家ノ一科学ニシテ人ノ解シ難ク訳シ難シトスル所ナリ

(Physiology is the ultimate scholarship with an expansive scope and detailed theories, which cannot be fully explained in this small pamphlet. [...] Some people complain that physiology, as one field of knowledge within medicine, is so complex that it is difficult to translate [Western texts on physiology] into Japanese.)⁷

In a similar vein, Udagawa Yōan uses the term ‘*sanka-no-gaku*’ (三科之学: three fields of knowledge) to explain the division within modern Western science into ‘*benbutsu*’ (辨物: natural history), ‘*kyūri*’ (窮理/究理: physics), and ‘*seimi*’ (舍密: chemistry).

天地之大莫所不容而萬物之擾々莫所不有参天地而統紀萬物是乃人道也西聖立三科之学曰辨物也曰究理也曰舍密也以綜錯萬物

⁶ Itakura Kiyonobu, *Kagaku-teki towa dōiu kotoka* 科学的とはどういうことか (What Does ‘Scientific’ Mean), Tokyo: Kasetsuma, 1977; Asō Yoshiharu, *Kinsei nihon tetsugakushi: Bakumatsu kara meiji-ishin no keimō-shisō* 近世日本哲学史: 幕末から明治維新の啓蒙思想 (History of Philosophy in Early Modern Japan: The Enlightenment Thought During the Period between the End of the Edo to Meiji Restoration), Tokyo: Shoshi shinsui, 2008. The semantic genealogy of ‘*kagaku*’ is a contested matter today. Scholars of the intellectual and conceptual history of China now argue that *kagaku* is not the 19-century Japanese neologism, but its origin can be found in ancient China, where the term was used to designate ‘*kakyo-no-gaku*’ (科挙の学: Learning for imperial examination). See Tanomura, “Kagaku no goshi,” 152-156.

⁷ Takano Chōei, *Igen sūyō* 医原枢要 (Fundamentals of Western Medicine), 1832.

(The universe and the earth are so vast that they contain everything. No place in the universe and on the earth is marked by inconsistencies. Everything has existed and is existing in harmony. This is the Way of man. Western knowledge has established three specific fields of learning to discern the workings of things and to integrate all things as a whole: natural history, physics, and chemistry.)⁸

In these examples from the Rangaku tradition, the signifier ‘*ka-gaku*’ (‘*ka*’ 科 as division or branch and ‘*gaku*’ 学 as study or learning) denotes not ‘science’ but ‘one field of knowledge’. This relationship between signifier and signification is generally consistent with Rangaku’s perception that modern Western knowledge is all at once unified and dispersed – a unified knowledge with various fields of investigation.

This usage of the signifier ‘*ka-gaku*’ as ‘one field of knowledge’ continued well into the Meiji period, especially in translating Western texts.⁹ At the same time, however, the late 1860s also saw the emergence of a new signification. Some scholars began to use the term *kagaku* to denote ‘practical, utilitarian, and specialised knowledge’. Of course, this new signification did not come out of nowhere. It was reflexive of the general politico-intellectual climate, whereby many elites saw the utilitarian and instrumental efficiency of modern Western knowledge for their effort to modernise the country. This teleology of practical knowledge and modernisation is clearly expressed, for instance, by Hirosawa Yasutō (1830-1891), a feudal retainer of the Aizu domain. While arguing that the attainment of knowledge is dialectically connected to the strength of the nation-state, Hirosawa designates the term *kagaku* as practical, utilitarian, and specialised knowledge.

交際愈廣眼界愈大則人位等品之說不得不自廢々之則不得不予之自主權而使人自立其家產也人有家產猶有國產亦天理也是為初頭下手第一着眼而導之以科學學不分科則不專不專所以不為用也則民智自開民智自開則器械自精巧国力百倍用器械者以一人成百人事所以也 [...]人生八歲入小學村落必設之十五寄宿大學大都會必設之十八大沙汰之撰其所能而就科學以專門除

(Now that our relationship with the West is expanding and deepening, the system of hereditary succession should be abolished. And if we are to abolish it, we shall have no choice but to give individuals autonomy and allow them to build up their own family fortunes. When a man leads his own life, the nation leads its own life – that is the universal law. This shall be the primary focus of the early stage of our development. If practical knowledge is used to guide us, but if there is no specialisation to learn it, this knowledge would not be utilitarian. And if it is not utilitarian, then it is of no use. Everyone shall attain

⁸ Udagawa, *Shokugaku keigen*.

⁹ For example, Obata Tokujirō wrote in the introduction to a translated version of *Introduction to the Science* (1836) by William Chambers and Robert Chambers that the purpose of this translational work was to offer a wholistic view of science rather than to detail the specifics of ‘*ichika no gaku*’ (一科ノ学), one field within science. See Obata Tokujirō, *Hakubutsu shinpen hoi* 博物新編補遺 (*Introduction to the Science*), 1869. In a similar vein, the translation of Emile Schalk’s *Summary of the Art of War: Written Expressly for and Dedicated to the U.S. Volunteer Army* (1862) by Fukuzawa Yukichi, Obata Tokujirō, and Obata Jinzaburō also used the term ‘*ichika no gaku*’ (一科ノ学) to designate the field of study about military strategy. See Fukuzawa Yukichi, Obata Tokujirō, and Obata Jinzaburō, *Yōhei meikan* 洋兵明鑑 (*Outline of the Western Art of War*), 1869. Katō Hiroyuki also used the term ‘*ka-gaku*’ in a similar vein in his translation of Johann Kaspar Bluntschli’s *Allgemeines Staatsrecht* (1851-1852). See Katō Hiroyuki, *Kokuhō hanron* 国法汎論 (*An Outline of Constitutional Government*), Tokyo: Monbushō, 1872-1874.

practical knowledge to enlighten themselves. And when people attain such knowledge, instruments used for their lives will become more sophisticated, and the national power will increase a hundredfold. One man can do the work of a hundred if he uses the right instruments. [...] When a person is eight years old, he shall enter a primary school, which should be established in each village. When he turns fifteen, he shall enter a boarding higher school, which should be established in metropolises. When eighteen, he shall understand his ability, choose a field of practical knowledge at his own discretion, and devote himself to acquiring specialised knowledge.)¹⁰

For Hirosawa, knowledge is and must be utilitarian and instrumental. It is the foundation for individual autonomy, and such autonomy is the foundation for national strength. In this discursive enunciation, *kagaku* signifies much more than one field of knowledge. It means a field of practical and specialised knowledge tied to the progress of both individuals and a collective community.

Hirosawa was hardly alone in his usage of the term. In the early 1870s, on the eve of the promulgation of the Fundamental Code of Education, *kagaku*, as a field of practical and specialised knowledge, became a political lexicon and began to appear in many white papers circulated among politicians and government officials. For instance, Inoue Kowashi, a then-instructor at Daigaku-minamikō, penned an opinion on the Fundamental Code of Education, writing as follows.

新ニ貢生ヲ徴シ語学ヲ教ヘ往々洋人ニ口伝シテ科学ニ涉ラシメントス。[...] 三年書生成リ立ズ語学熟セザルコトモアラバ、僕甘シテ妄言ノ罪ニ就ン。語学已熟ス其科学ニ於ルハ流ニ楫ノ勢ナラン。

(Recruiting new students, educating them first in Western languages, having them frequently interact with Westerners and, then, admitting them to a specialised field of learning. [...] If, after three years of language education, the students have not acquired sufficient language skills, I am open to criticism that this proposal of mine is delusional. Once they are proficient in a Western language, their studies of specialised knowledge should progress very well.)¹¹

Here, Inoue uses the term *kagaku* to designate specialised knowledge, which can be attained at the apex of the learning process and which must be pursued after completing education in Western languages. With such a signification and with the emphasis on Western languages as a prerequisite for attaining knowledge, not only does Inoue envision a hierarchised process of learning but also equates *kagaku* to various fields of modern Western knowledge. In other words, *kagaku* designates not simply those fields of practical and specialised knowledge. It is an epithet of all kinds of utilitarian and instrumental knowledge that are thought to sustain the progress of the West.

¹⁰ Hirosawa Yasutō, *Shūchū hashu engi* 囚中八首衍義 (*On Eight Poems from the Prison*), 1869.

¹¹ Inoue Kowashi, “Gakusei iken” 学制意見 (“Opinion on the Fundamental Code of Education”), in Inoue Kowashi denki hensan iinkai (ed.), *Inoue Kowashi den: Shiryō-hen 1-kan* 井上毅伝: 資料編 1 卷 (*Biography of Inoue Kowashi: Documents, Vol.1*), Tokyo: Kokugakuin daigaku toshokan, 1966 [1871]: 8 [1-9]. This proposal was submitted to Katō Hiroyuki, then *daigaku-taijō* (大学大丞: a high-ranking official being in charge of the university). For Inoue’s general idea on education, see, for example, Yanagida Fumio, *Inoue Kowashi to kyōiku-shisō* 井上毅と教育思想 (*Inoue Kowashi and Ideologies of Education*), Kyoto: Kōyō shobō, 2020. Another point to emphasise here about this specific address is the certain teleology of language (language learning) and knowledge (attainment of knowledge) that Inoue endorses. I shall come back to this point later in this chapter.

This semantic and discursive shift in the signification of *kagaku* paralleled the transformation of institutions of knowledge. In 1869, Bansho-shirabesho, once a Shogunate-sponsored institution for the studies of Western texts, was restructured into Daigaku-minamikō, which later, in 1877, integrated into the University of Tokyo. This institutional restructuring was much more than the change in official mandate, the expansion of school premises, and the increase in the number of departments. It amounted to a significant change in what was hitherto labelled as Yōgaku. Now that the depth and breadth of Yōgaku had expanded exponentially vis-à-vis political and societal demands, a new consensus emerged among Yōgaku scholars that an individual could not possibly attain encyclopaedic knowledge of all things Western and that a division of labour was necessary, inevitable even. Accordingly, three institutes were established within Daigaku-minamikō: Kōshūjo (講習所) with faculties and departments to teach and advance knowledge of natural sciences (physics, engineering, astronomy, chemistry, zoology and botany, geometry, and geology), law (jurisprudence, civil law, constitution, commercial law, criminal law, international law, and economics), letters (history, literature, logic, geography, and philosophy), and military studies; Denshūjo (伝習所) offering Western language education to students as the basic training for specialised learning at Kōshūjo; and Sūgakujo (数学所) focusing on research and education in mathematics.¹² Put simply, Yōgaku was now reconstituted with dispersed institutional and disciplinary categories, which were nonetheless unified not only with the geo-cultural marker ‘Western’ but also with the sense of urgency to attain utilitarian and instrumental knowledge through practical and specialised learning.

This new propensity towards *kagaku* began to take hold in realms beyond politics and Daigaku-minamikō. The notions of utilitarian knowledge and practical learning became general tropes for many other schools and educational institutions. For instance, immediately after the promulgation of the Fundamental Code of Education, the official of Sakai Prefecture published a short booklet entitled *Gakumon no kokoroe* (学問之心得: Rules for Learning, 1872). Its main purpose was to encourage pupils and students at elementary and middle schools to acquire an aptitude towards practical and specialised knowledge required for one’s chosen occupation.¹³

今日学校の主本となすところは、智識を世界に求め、専ら皇基を振起し、従前迂闊の教は決然排斥し、農にあれ商にあれ 各 職分の実地に用ひて実功の立処を目的とし、男女共六七歳より日用常行言語筆算を始めとして一通ハ天地万物大体の理合をも合点し、万国の形勢事情をも心得、皇漢洋共片ひずみなく人間の心得べき文一通り知るを以て普通学と云なれば、[...] 返す返すも従前の如くあたら歳月を素読の間に費すなかれ。此の如くすれば多くの中には秀才異等のものも出べければ [...] 中学大学に入、専門科学に就、国家の御為を量り身を起すの基本を立てし。

(Schools today must fulfil the following objectives: to seek knowledge from around the world; to resuscitate the imperial authority; to reject all misguided teachings of the previous decades; and to use knowledge for practical purposes, whether in agriculture or commerce, of achieving practical successes. For this reason, general education from the age of six or seven must encompass the following: learning vernacular language for speaking and writing and basic arithmetic; understanding general principles of the universe; attaining

¹² Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Tūshi 1-kan*, 155-156.

¹³ Sakai-ken Gakkō, *Gakumon no kokoroe* 学問之心得 (*Rules for Learning*), 1872.

general knowledge about other countries; gaining a general overview of knowledge offered by Nativist Learning, Chinese Studies, and Western learning. [...] And students must refrain from spending their time merely reading and reciting texts, as they have done in the past. If, among those students, there are some gifted and talented ones, they should pursue further education at a higher school and university, study in a specialised field of knowledge, and devote themselves to serving the state.)¹⁴

The reference to *kagaku* here has some obvious discursive functions. By imbricating *kagaku* with the adjective ‘specialised’, this booklet reiterates the idea that *kagaku* occupies the apex of the newly reformed educational system with an ascending hierarchy. To attain utilitarian knowledge through specialised learning requires basic training. What this means is that, with the concept of *kagaku*, the time of learning is reconfigured into a linear progressive process, at the end of which one can properly engage with knowledge of utility and instrumentality, that is, with modern Western knowledge.

5.1.2. *Kagaku as Science*

In the mid-1870s, the semantic scope of *kagaku* was transformed with a new signification. *Kagaku* was now increasingly equated to the English word ‘science’. This discursive and semantic shift was noticeable especially in materials published by the Ministry of Education. This is, however, not so surprising, given the politico-ideological project of modernisation that saw science and technology as its necessary means.

This discursive and semantic shift is can be found, for example, in an article published in 1875 in *Monbushō zasshi* (文部省雑誌: the Journal of Ministry of Education). This article is a translation of J.M. Long’s ‘Live Teaching’ (1874), initially published in the *American Journal of Education*. In it, Long advocates the pedagogy of spontaneous and active learning. The translated Japanese version begins with the following sentences.

教育ハ学問ノ一科ト雖、其義ヲ釈キ理ヲ推スニ至テハ他ノ科学ト同シカラス。物理学、数学ノ如キハ理ヲ推シテ大ヨリ小ニ及ホシ小ヨリ大ニ及ホシ以テ一定ノ規則ヲ立テ而シテ之ヲ実地ニ経験スレハ、則其人原理ヲ知ラスト雖亦ヨク功ヲ成スコトヲ得。人民ノ教育ハ則然ラズ。教則ハ縦令理ヲ尽ストモ徒ニ其教則ノミヲ嚴守シテ活用スルコトヲ知ラザレハ教授モ終ニ不濟ノ作業トナリ方法モ終ニ無機ノ器械トナリ、遂ニ児童ノ精神ヲシテ敏捷ナラシメスシテ却テ之ヲ遲鈍ナラシムルニ至ル。

(Education, though a science, does not admit as precise definitions and rigid deductions as those which belong to what is called the exact science. In the physical sciences and the mathematical inductions may be made and formulae deduced therefrom which can be applied empirically, and made to lead to true results by those who know nothing of the theorems on which they rest. But if the teacher undertakes to practice the difficult art of human culture by a passive and mechanical application of pedagogical formulae, however philosophical they may be in themselves, his teaching will become a lifeless routine, and

¹⁴ Ibid.

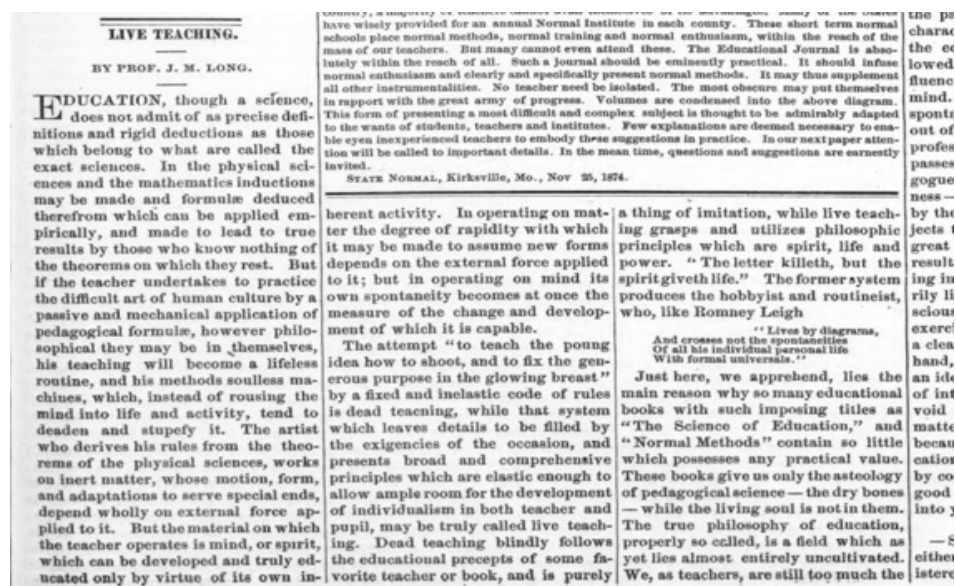
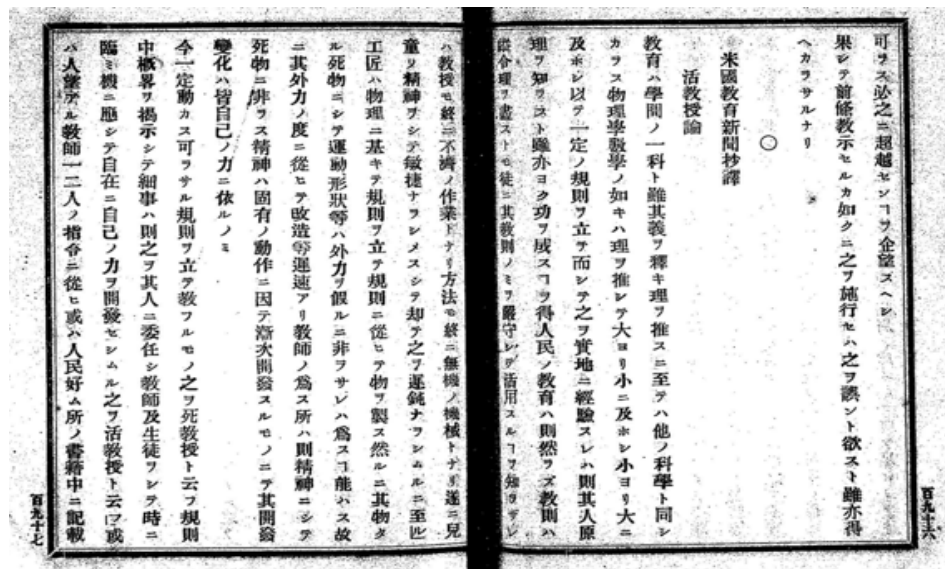


Figure 5-1. Science and *Kagaku* ('Kakkyōju-ron', 1875, and 'Living Teaching', 1874)

his methods soulless machines, which, instead of rousing the mind into life and activity, tend to deaden and stupefy it.)¹⁵

In the original article, Long uses the term ‘science’ in two ways: ‘a science’ and ‘the exact science’. This distinction is to suggest that the field of education, the primary concern for Long, is as scientific as those fields of natural sciences, even though the result of a scientific approach to education does not always elicit the same outcome as it does in natural sciences. Education, a field nominally understood as different from natural sciences that is the field of the exact science, is and can be a science. The Japanese translation, however, communicates an idea that is slightly different from Long’s. Here, ‘a science’ is translated as ‘*gakumon-no-ikka*’ (学問ノ一科), a field of *gakumon*, of the pursuit of proper knowledge. It does not specify whether ‘a science’ is indeed a field of knowledge with a scientific approach and whether the general premise of scientificity is operationalised for a field of knowledge named ‘a science’. In contrast, ‘the exact science’ that Long equates to physics and mathematics is translated as ‘*kagaku*’ (科学), designating those fields of natural sciences that seek to have recourse to empirical realities of the natural world with a set of established methodological approaches. Here, the term *kagaku* is used with a much-restricted meaning. *Kagaku* is those fields of knowledge within *gakumon* marked by empirical certainties (see Figure 5-1 for a comparison between the original article and Japanese translation).

This sense of inconsistency in translation implies, once again, that translation is much more than establishing a linguistic equilibrium. It is rather about elaborating on the meaning of the original text by rendering it with semantic and conceptual devices available in the target language. What emerged from translation is not the faithfully replicated original meaning of ‘a science’ and ‘the exact science’ but a new meaning of the existing signifier, *kagaku*, as an allusion to ‘the exact science’. *Kagaku* now designates not utilitarian knowledge attained through specialised learning but knowledge with empirical certitudes. With this new semantic remit of *kagaku*, those fields without empirical certitudes are, albeit constitutive of *gakumon*, relegated to the outside of the scope of *kagaku*. In other words, the realm of pursuing serious knowledge, *gakumon*, is now reorganised into two loci: one with the orientation towards empirical certitude and the other without.

Again, this new semantics of *kagaku* was reflected in the institutional reorganisation of Kaisei-gakkō (開成学校: previously known as Daigaku-minamikō). Educational courses offered at Kaisei-gakkō were initially structured along the linguistic axis. That is to say, for their basic training, the students would first choose not a specific area of study but a language, be it English, German, or French. After completing language education, then, the students would proceed to specialised learning based on their chosen language. If you have chosen the German language, then you may proceed to study German laws and constitutional theories. If you have been trained in the English language, then you may acquire specialisation in agriculture that generally follows

¹⁵ Monbushō, “*Beikoku kyōiku shinbun: Kakkōjū-hō*” 米国教育新聞: 活教授法 (“American Journal of Education: Live Teaching”), in the Ministry of Education (ed.), *Monbushō zasshi*, Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1876: 196-197 [196-200]. The English translation is borrowed from Long’s original article. See J.M. Long, “Live Teaching,” *American Journal of Education*, 7:12, 1874: 7. While German influence on the educational system of Meiji Japan is widely accepted – and widely challenged too – this period also saw, with the arrival of Davide Murray as an adviser at the Ministry of Education, the increasing political interest in the American educational system. See Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Tūshi I-kan*, 424; Takahashi Miho, *Miei-shoki ni okeru amerika kyōiku-jōhō juyō no kenkyū* 明治初期におけるアメリカ教育情報受容の研究 (*Information on American Education and Its Appropriation in the Early Meiji Period*), Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1998.

學科	語學	理學	數學	科學	歷史	交際學	佛語	書學	唱歌	体操	上 等 學 科	
											第一學期	第二學期
第一學期	第一期	六時	六時	六時	三時	六時		三時			第一學期	第二學期
	第二期	六時	六時	六時	三時	六時		三時				
第二學期	第一期	六時	六時	六時	三時	六時		三時			第二學期	第三學期
	第二期	六時	六時	六時	三時	六時		三時				
第三學期	第一期	六時	六時	六時	三時	六時	三時	六時			第三學期	第四學期
	第二期	六時	六時	六時	三時	六時	三時	六時				

Figure 5-2. Curriculum at Tokyo English School

scholarly developments in the U.S. This arrangement, however, was replaced by an alternative with the 1873 amendments to the Fundamental Code of Education. Kaisei-gakkō was now reorganised with a new institutional structure based on what we may now call disciplinary divisions with English as the institutional lingua franca. Specialised learning was restructured with three disciplinarily oriented departments, the Department of Law, of Chemistry, and of Engineering, with two supplementary fields, that is, arts and mining science.¹⁶ If we recall, at Daigaku-minamikō, the predecessor of Kaisei-gakkō, the Faculty of Letters occupied one of the three pillars of the institutions, offering research and educational opportunities in the fields, such as literature and philosophy, that could be relegated, with the new semantic of *kagaku*, to the outside of knowledge with empirical certitudes. In contrast, the institutional scope of Kaisei-gakkō is rather restricted. With these new departments, the emphasis is placed rather narrowly on those scholarly fields derived from the modern West that are generally qualified as empirical and

scientific.

Of course, this new arrangement at Kaisei-gakkō was against the backdrop of Meiji modernisation, whereby newly established ‘national’ institutions were all mobilised to materialise the teleological premises of *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei*.¹⁷ And, naturally, this new signification of *kagaku* as natural sciences, as knowledge with empirical certitudes, was then incorporated into the curriculums of other post-secondary educational institutions. One example is Tōkyō-eigo-gakkō (東京英語学校: Tokyo English School).¹⁸ Among those subjects taught at the

¹⁶ Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Tūshi 1-kan*, 286-288.

¹⁷ One allusion to clarify my argument further is that these departments are akin to what Immanuel Kant once called ‘higher faculties.’ As Kant wrote, “We can therefore assume that the organization of a university into ranks and classes did not depend entirely on chance. Without attributing premature wisdom and learning to the government, we can say that by its own felt need (to influence the people by certain teachings) it managed to arrive a priori at a principle of division which seems otherwise to be of empirical origin, so that the a priori principle happily coincides with the one now in use. [...] All three higher faculties based the teachings which the government entrusts to them on *writings*, as is necessary for a people governed by learning, since otherwise there would be no fixed and universally accessible norm for their guidance. It is self-evident that such a text (or book) must comprise *statutes*, that is, teachings that proceed from an act of choice on the part of an authority [...] for otherwise it could not demand obedience simply, as something the government has sanctioned.” See Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, 31, 33.

¹⁸ Tōkyō-eigo-gakkō was established initially as a department at Tōkyō-gaikokugo-gakkō (東京外国語学校: Tokyo School of Foreign Languages). However, it was subsequently separated as an independent institution in 1873, which the Meiji government sanctioned as the institutional locus for foreign language education and for offering students the basic linguistic training necessary for the subsequent specialised learning at the university.

school, its curriculum listed ‘*kagaku*’ with rubies ‘サイエンス’ (science) (see Figure 5-2).¹⁹ The curriculum also specifies that *kagaku*/science includes lessons on physical geography, introductory zoology, introductory botany, biology and physiology, physics (theories and experiments), and chemistry (theories and experiments).²⁰

At the same time, this signification of *kagaku* as natural sciences gained a normative status through scholarly discourses. One common trope we see in those discourses is the propensity toward comparison. That is to say, in order to mark the territory of *kagaku*, the term itself was often juxtaposed with other terms, such as ‘*geijutsu*’ (芸術: arts) that signifies the fields of knowledge without empirical grounds, and ‘*gijutsu*’ (技術: arts) that denotes the fields of application of knowledge for utilitarian and instrumental purposes.²¹ Take, for example, Takahashi Isō’s selected translation of an article on British education and teacher’s training, published in *Monbushō zasshi* in 1876. Juxtaposing *kagaku*/science to *geijutsu*/arts, the article argues that *kagaku*/science has established pedagogy distinct from the pedagogy of *geijutsu*/arts. Teachers, as the article encourages, must learn the differences and organise students’ learning experiences based on the appropriate pedagogy.²²

While Takahashi’s distinction between *kagaku* and *geijutsu*, between science and arts, remains rather vague, another translation work published in the same year offers a clear distinction. In *Kakubutsu zensho* (格物全書: On Natural Philosophy, 1876), a translation of Richard Green Parker’s *A School Compendium of Natural and Experimental Philosophy* (1856), Ōishi Michinao, the translator, explains the distinction by juxtaposing *kagaku*/science with *gijutsu*/arts in the introduction. On the one hand, *kagaku*/science is defined as “the collection, combination, and proper arrangement of such general and particular laws.” When institutionalised, *kagaku*/science encompasses chemistry, geometry, natural philosophy, and so on and so forth. On the other hand, *gijutsu*/arts denotes the fields “depends on practice or performance.” It means practical applications of “general laws” or “abstract and speculative principles” that *kagaku* examines.²³

¹⁹ Tōkyō-eigo-gakko, “Tōkyō-eigo-gakko kyōsoku” 東京英語学校教則 (“Rules for Teaching at Tokyo English School”), Tokyo: Tōkyō-eigo-gakko, 1875: 22.

²⁰ Ibid., 23-24, 27, 29.

²¹ ‘*Gijutsu*’ (技術) in today’s semantic usually means ‘technology’. However, as we shall see shortly, the semantic of the early Meiji period translates the English term ‘arts’ into either ‘*geijutsu*’ (芸術) or ‘*gijutsu*’ (技術).

²² Takahashi Isō, “Kyōin yōsei no kaku bekarazu ron” 教員養成ノ缺ク可カラサル論 (“On the Importance of Teachers’ Training”), *Monbushō* (ed.), *Monbushō zasshi*, Tokyo: Monbushō, 1876: 657 [651-663]. The original text reads, “科学及ヒ芸術学ニ於テ教員ヲ養成セシムルコトハ当時迄未タ完全ナラザリキ。而シテ教員ヲシテ生徒ヲ一校ニ集ムルモ全ク同一ノ課集ヲ教授セサルナリ。” The original article in English is not specified in Takahashi’s translation. To speculate, it was probably one of those articles published in the then widely-circulated periodicals on education in the UK, including the Educational Record, The National Society’s Monthly Paper, The Shaftesbury Magazine, and the Ragged School Union Magazine. For the 19th-century educational periodicals in the UK, see Asher Tropp, “Some Sources for the History of Educational Periodicals in England,” *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 6:2, 1958: 151-163.

²³ Komiyama Hiromichi (trans.), *Kakubutsu zensho* 格物全書 (*On Natural Philosophy*), Nagano: Chōyōsha, 1876: 11. The Japanese translation reads as follows. “此ノ如キ定則ヲ集成セルモノヲ「サイアンス」科学ト名ク。故ニ「ケミストリー」ナル「サイアンス」アリ、「ジヨメトリー」幾何学ナル「サイアンス」アリ、又「ナチュラル、フィロソフィ」物理学ナル「サイアンス」アリ。「アート」技術ト「サイアンス」トノ二語ニ於テハ世間往々其區別ナク之ヲ用ヒタレトモ、今茲ニ大略之ヲ區別ス。乃チ「アート」ハ人ノ練習術業ニ関シ、「サイアンス」ハ其定則ノ研究ニ関ス。” This Japanese translation was in fact by Ōishi Michinao, who was asked by Komiyama to translation the introduction of Parker’s original text. The English translation is borrowed

What is especially interesting about this juxtaposition is that, in tethering the signifier ‘*kagaku*’ to laws and regularities, it offers a much more expansive understanding of what can be qualified as science than the understanding of *kagaku* as natural sciences grounded on empirical certitudes. Also in the introduction, Ōishi elaborates on science with an example Parker offers in the original.

例ヘバ音楽ノ理ヲ解スルハ「サイアンス」ニシテ弹琴吹笛ノ術ハ「アート」ナリ。
「サイアンス」ト「アート」ト相異ナルヤ知識ノ熟練ニ於ケルガ如シ。畫人ノ熟練能ク人ヲシテ驚カシムルモ自カラ其畫ノ理ヲ知ラザルハ「サイアンス」ニ暗キナリ。学者ノ知識能ク人ヲ驚スモ之ヲ活用スルノ実業ニ疏キハ「サイアンス」ニ長ジ「アート」ニ短ナルニ非スヤ。又「メカニック、アート」器械術ト云ヘバ器械ヲ用イテ物ヲ製造スルノ実業ナリ。「メカニック、サイエンス」ト云フハ器械ノ造法ト其利用等ノ理ヲ解スルモノナリ。故ニ「サイエンス」ハ諸学ノ一科ニ於テ其開渉スル所ノ定則ヲ集成セルモノナリ。而メ其「アート」ト相開スル所以ハ何ゾヤ。「サイアンス」中ノ定則ハ「アート」上ノ規則トナルヲ以テナリ。

(The theory of music is a science; the practice of it is an art. Science differs from art in the same manner that knowledge differs from skill. An artist may enchant us with his skill, although he is ignorant of all scientific principles. A man of science may excite our admiration by the extent of his knowledge, though he does not have the least skill to perform any operation of art. When we speak of the mechanic arts, we mean the practice of those vocations in which tools, instruments and machinery, are employed. But the science of mechanics explains the principles on which tools and machines are constructed, and the effects which they produce. Science, therefore, may be defined, a collection and proper arrangement of the general principles or leading truths relating to any subject; and there is this connection between art and science, namely – “A principle in science is the rule of art.”)²⁴

The qualification of science does not depend on immediate utility and instrumentality. Nor does it depend on empirical certitudes. Science is both a means and an end: a means, principles of investigation, to arrive at the leading truth relating to a subject of investigation, and an end, a proper arrangement of these truths, that one establishes through investigation. The question of whether knowledge is useful for, for instance, industrial modernisation or the question of whether knowledge is about the natural world of empirical certitude – these questions do not determine if a field of knowledge can be qualified as science. The upshot of conceptual boundaries between *kagaku*/science and *gijutsu*/arts is that *kagaku*/science is an ethos, a mode of thinking and reasoning, an attitude towards knowledge.

A widely circulated, influential dictionary of academic vocabularies, *Tetsugaku-jii* (哲学字彙: Dictionary of Philosophical Terms, 1881), alludes to this point. In the dictionary, the English term ‘science’ is defined as ‘*rigaku/kagaku*’ (理学/科学). And under this entry of ‘science’, various fields of scholarly inquiries, whether into the natural world or the human world, are listed as sub-categories of science. These include ethical science, immaterial science, material science, mental

from Parker’s original text. See Richard Green Parker, *A School Compendium of Natural and Experimental Philosophy*, New York, NY: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1856: XV.

²⁴ Komiyama (trans.), *Kakubutsu zensho*, 11-13. For English translation, see Parker, *A School Compendium of Natural and Experimental Philosophy*, XV-XVI.

School	學派
Schopenhauerism	勾邊哈兒學派
Science	理學・科學
Ethical science	倫理學
Immaterial science	無形學
Material science	有形學
Mental science	心理學
Moral science	道義學
Physical science	物性學
Political science	政理學
Social science	世態學・社會學
Scientist	理學士
Sciolism	淺學
Sciolist	淺學士
Scionichy	口論・舌戰
Scope	範圍
Scorn	侮慢・輕蔑・嘲笑
Scripture	經文
Scrutiny	究察・推究
Search	推究・尋繹
Seclusion	隱遁・沈冥
	仕故曰 屏石

Figure 5-3. Science (*Tetsugaku-jii*, 1881)

science, moral science, physical science, political science, and social science (see Figure 5-3).²⁵ Inoue Tetsujirō, one of the authors of this dictionary, further specifies this new ethos, this new attitude towards knowledge in his article published in 1882 as “*kagaku-no-hō*” (科学の法) and equates it to the English phrase “scientific culture” (サイエンチフヒツク、コルチュール).²⁶ In the same vein, Chikami Kiyoomi (1856-1916), an educator and politician, used the term ‘scientific culture’ to denote a way of thinking and reasoning that sustains validity and seriousness of knowledge.

以上反覆評論シタルカ如ク、正面ノ事実ノミヲ挙ケテ直チニ断案ヲ下ス者ノ虚謬タルヤ此ノ如ク明白ナルニモ拘ハラズ、尚ホ世人ノ之ニ従事シテ自カラ疑ハザルモノハ要スルニ科学修練 (サイエンチツク、カルチュア)ノ未タ洽ネカラスシテ推論力ノ発達セサル証左ナリ。

(As I have argued so far, those who take things at face value and make impetuous decisions only offer fallacious claims. Though pitfalls and fallacies are obvious, people blindly accept these claims and never exercise the power of doubt. This only proves that they have not yet

²⁵ Inoue Tetsujirō, *Tetsugaku-jii*, 113.

²⁶ Inoue, “Tōkyō Keizai zasshi ni kotau,” 6.

properly cultivated scientific culture and, thus, have not yet equipped themselves with the ability to logical reason.)²⁷

What is at the centre of Inoue's and Chikami's conviction is that scientific culture, or else *kagaku-no-hō*, is all at once the sustenance of serious and valid knowledge and the analytical orientation for scholarly inquiries.

Inoue alludes to this point while comparing some of the widely-read European writings about 'Eastern' religion and philosophy.²⁸ There is, as he points out, an apparent inconsistency in the way European scholars evaluate Confucianism. Some call it mythology, others theology. Some describe it as a religion, others a philosophical rendering. He, then, reasons that the inconsistency derives from the difference in the foundational premises that European scholars mobilise for their analyses. To support such an assessment, Inoue offers a comparison between two seminal works on Confucianism. One is Friedrich Ueberweg's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1863), which argues that Confucianism is not in accordance with scientific culture. The other is Samuel Jonson's *Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion* (1877), which views Confucianism as being analogous to Western philosophy as it addresses the question of reason. On Ueberweg's work, Inoue writes as follows.

ユーベルウェグ氏カ哲学史一ニ云ク「孔孟ノ理論ハ、科学ノ法ニ合ハス」ト。余ヲ以テ之ヲ見レハ、是レ公正ノ論ナリ。然レトモ孔孟ノ理論ハ科学ノ法ニ合ハス、故ニ皆虚妄ナリト、此ノ如ク推論スヘカラス。但タ理論ノ法ニ合ハサルトキハ、基本鞏固ナラス。基本鞏固ナラサル者ハ、得テ信スヘカラス。

(In his *History of Philosophy*, Ueberweg argues that "the theories of Confucius and Mencius are not in accordance with scientific culture." I see this as a just argument. However, we shall not conclude that just because these theories do not correspond to scientific culture, they are delusional. When I say these theories are not in accordance with scientific culture, it simply means that they are not firmly grounded on the rules of logic and reasoning. We do not trust these theories because they lack a solid foundation.)²⁹

As a comparison, Inoue then introduces Johnson's argument, which views Confucius as "a philosopher" who "appeals to Reason and Reason only" and, therefore, understands Confucianism as a "branch of intuitionism corresponding to scientific culture."³⁰ From Inoue's perspective,

²⁷ Chikami Kiyoomi, "Mikan kansatsu no kyobyū" 未完観察ノ虚謬 ("The Fallacy of Incomplete Observation"), *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 13, 1882: 318 [315-319].

²⁸ Inoue Tetsujirō, "Taisei-jin no kōshi o hyōsuru o hyōsuru" 泰西人ノ孔子ヲ評スルヲ評ス: ("Evaluating the European's Evaluations of Confucius"), *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 4, 1882: 53-56.

²⁹ Ibid., 55. In the original text, Ueberweg described Confucianism as follows. "Die theoretische Spekulation (die auf der verallgemeinerten Anschauung von dem Gegensatze des Männlichen und Weiblichen, des Himmels und der Erde etc. beruht) ist bei Confucius nicht wissenschaftlich durchgebildet, doch fehlt es ihm nicht an logischer Schärfe." Friedrich Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, Erste Theil: Das Altertum*, Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1886 [1863]: 19.

³⁰ Inoue, "Taisei-jin no kōshi o hyōsuru o hyōsuru," 55-56. The original text reads, "然ルニジョンソン氏カ東洋宗教論支那ノ部ニ云ク「孔子ハ哲学士ナリ。万事但タ理性ニ質ス」云云。「其信スル所ハ、性ト天道トナリ、其教ノ基本ハ、此ノ如ク科学ノ法ニ合ヒ、且ツ直覺主義ニ由ルナリ」ト。" Johnson's own evaluation of Confucianism is as follows. "Confucius is a philosophy; he appeals to reason only; he claims no divine commission, nor messianic destiny. It is in the name of all history and experience, that he announces laws of private and public ethics, and enforces them on his time. He recalls a wild chaotic age to these laws as to a true life, which it knows, as

however, Johnson's imbrication of reason with scientific culture is problematic, and this imbrication ultimately leads Johnson to an incorrect conclusion. As Inoue writes,

思フニ、ジヨンソン氏ハ唯タ理性ニ質スノミヲ科学ノ法トナスナルベシ。然レトモ科学ノ法ハ、其要、定義ヲ下タシ彙類ヲ設ケ、実験ニ質シ、以テ基本ヲ鞏固ニスルニアリテ、唯タ理性ニ質スノミニアラス。若シ唯タ理性ニ質スノミヲ科学ノ法トセハ、如何ナル論ト雖モ理性ニ質サ、ルハナキヲ以テ、如何ナル論ト雖モ科学ノ法ニ合ハサルハナシト謂ハサルヲ得ス。

(The problem with Johnson's claim, as I see it, lies in the fact that he perceives scientific culture purely in terms of reason. However, scientific culture is much more than that. It encompasses a set of definitions, specific vocabularies, and methods of experiment. If we are to understand scientific culture merely in terms of reason, any theory, granted it does not consider reason, would be irrelevant to that culture.)³¹

Inoue's argument is that an appeal to reason is not tantamount to an appeal to *kagaku-no-hō*/scientific culture. Reason is a faculty to view the world, both physical and metaphysical, with unity. Scientific culture is a set of principles and premises that gives knowledge a logical consistency. More broadly, then, those fields of inquiry designated with the signifier *kagaku*, such as ethical science, physical science, and political science, are that which rigidly follow those principles and premises. Put otherwise, what makes knowledge produced by those fields of inquiry is a set of a priori established principles and premises, including definitions, vocabularies, and methods. The validity of knowledge depends on those principles and premises of inquiry.

The conceptual development of *kagaku*, especially during the early Meiji period, was not a mere intellectual phenomenon. For it to become a new vernacular of intellectual life, for it to acquire a new meaning and signify a certain ethos or attitude towards knowledge, non-intellectual insinuations were crucial. The politics of modernisation demanded the acquisition of utilitarian and instrumental knowledge. The politico-ideological imagination located the West at the apex of scientific and technological progress. The political legitimacy of the Meiji government necessitated a discourse of 'a clean break from the past' whereby anything that was thought to symbolically represent the past, be it the Tokugawa hereditary social structure or an intellectual tradition of Chinese origin, had to be vehemently negated. These non-intellectual insinuations contributed to the semantic unfolding of *kagaku* that we have seen above.

Equally important is the fact that the semantic transformation of *kagaku* signalled a shift in the qualification of knowledge. For knowledge traditions of the Tokugawa period, including Kogaku, Kokugaku, Jōrigaku, and Rangaku, the concepts of *ri* and *kyūri* were foundational. These concepts determined the orientation and methods of learning and the end of learning processes. Any of these knowledge traditions, as we may recall here, sought to understand *ri* that was variously defined

well as he, that it is rejecting. The penalties he proclaims are already matters of experience; the rewards he promises are pointed by ideals as old and familiar as the history of his country supplied: his faith is in human nature and its normal relation to the universe. His basis is thus scientific and intuitional. And his entire reliance on the force of his own personal character and moral appeal causes the personal element to be everywhere peculiarly prominent in the record, to which it gives an objective value of no ordinary kind." See Samuel Johnson, *Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion*, Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1877: 575-576.

³¹ Inoue, "Taisei-jin no kōshi o hyōsuru o hyōsuru," 55-56

within the remit of a given tradition. To this end, the validity and seriousness of knowledge these knowledge traditions produced was grounded on the *ri*-knowledge structuration. However, precisely because *ri* was conceptually and semantically valorised, the *ri*-knowledge structuration began to lose its purchase as the primary qualification of valid and serious knowledge. At this juncture, *kagaku* came to fill the void and became a new qualifier for knowledge. The validity and seriousness of knowledge no longer depended only on what knowledge sought to reveal, that is to say, *ri*. A set of principles and premises recognised as scientific inquiry was now an alternative qualification for knowledge to be regarded as valid and serious. What began with the conceptual and semantic development of *kagaku* became a process of re-orienting knowledge towards scientificity.

§

5.2. Scientific Culture and the Knower

We must refrain from making an impetuous judgment. The conceptual and semantic development of *kagaku* does not necessarily mean that scientific culture became all at once a guiding principle of intellectual exercises. There was a quandary between ‘ought’ and ‘be’, between what knowledge ought to be and what knowledge actually was, between the ideal of knowledge grounded on scientific culture and the reality of knowledge remaining far removed from that ideal. How could one re-orient not only the understanding but the production of knowledge towards scientific culture? How could one embody scientific culture in intellectual exercises? What did it actually mean to produce knowledge scientifically?

These questions are subsumed under the general concern about the knower. Suppose scientific culture is, as Inoue explains, the process of attaining objective facts about the world through established principles and premises of scientific inquiry. Then, scientific culture necessarily presumes a particular nature, aptitude, and positionality of the knower as the primary bearer of this process of knowing. For this reason, the conceptual and semantic development of *kagaku* was inseparable from the emergence of another neologism instrumental in the formation of modern knowledge in Japan. What I am referring to is the concept of *shukan* (主觀), developed during the 1880s and 1890s as a new conceptual device to transform the knower into the knowing self, the knowing ‘I’ that views the world objectively and scientifically in order to arrive at the truth.

A wide array of texts had spawned out of this concern about the knower. In the following, however, I shall discuss two general discursive orientations represented respectively by the works of Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) and Nishi Amane. As we shall see shortly, their works, for all differences, resorted to translation as epistemic exercises and sought to locate *shukan* at the intersection between the modern Western notion of ‘consciousness’ and the Neo-Confucian idea of ‘conscience’.

5.2.1. On Consciousness, the Self, and Knowledge

At the centre of Nishimura Shigeki's concern was the difference, imagined or otherwise, between the 'Western' and 'Eastern' forms of knowing. He wondered if the difference was really incommensurable, as contemporary polemics claimed, and if it was impossible to combine these two forms of knowing together. The concern became especially salient when he became the president of Tōyō-gakkai (東洋学会: the Association for Oriental Studies) in 1888. His general argument was that, despite the difference, Japanese scholarship would benefit immensely if it would be woven with modes of inquiry derived from the West.

To arrive at such a conclusion, Nishimura begins with a general observation. He maintains that contemporary academia can be divided into three categories based on the scope of methodological orientation. The first encompasses those scholarly fields that engage with the human world by combining both the 'Western' and 'Eastern' forms of knowing. The second includes those scholarly fields that seek to understand the natural world by resorting primarily to the 'Western' form of knowing. Lastly, there are those fields in 'the East' that produce knowledge about itself, self-knowledge, on the basis of the 'Eastern' form of knowing. As Nishimura elucidates, however, these three categories are not value-neutral; these are possible if and only if one seeks to understand the state of knowledge with reference to the contemporary relationship between 'the West' and 'the East'.³²

On knowledge about the human world, Nishimura's argument is that, insofar as the object of knowledge is manifestly heterogeneous, the mode of pursuing knowledge must also be heterogeneous, encompassing both 'Eastern' and 'Western' perspectives. One perspective, be it Eastern or Western, cannot adequately explain every aspect of the human lifeworld, because this lifeworld is, in fact, multiple and because there are undeniable differences between 'the East' and 'the West'.³³ To be sure, for today's scholarly standards, this schematic juxtaposition of 'the East' and 'the West' is dubious, to say the least. However, the point is not that. What is interesting about

³² Nishimura Shigeki, "Tōyō-gakkai no zento" 東洋学会の前途 ("The Future of the Association for Oriental Studies"), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikēi 10-kan: Gakumon to chishikijin* 日本近代思想体系第 10 巻 学問と知識人 (*Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1888]: 95 [94-99]. The original text reads as follows. "東洋西洋ノ関係上ヨリ観ルニ、学科ニ三種ノ別アリ。其一ハ東西ノ学ニ通ゼざれば真理ヲ發揮スルコト能ハザル者、其二ハ西洋ノ学ニ依リテ東洋ノ事実ヲ知ルコトヲ得ル者、其三ハ東洋ノミノ学問ヲ以テ研究スルコトヲ得ベキ者、是ナリ。" Tōyō-gakkai (The Association for Oriental Studies) was established in May 1886 by scholars including Naitō Chisō (1827-1903), Konakamura Yoshitaka (1861-1923), and Ichimura Sanjirō (1864-1947). This article by Nishimura was written when he became the president of the association.

³³ Nishimura writes, "政治、経済、道徳、心理、理学、意法ノ如キハ、東西ノ学ニ通ゼザレバ真理ヲ發揮スルコト能ハザル者ナリ。蓋シ是等ノ無形事物ハ東西人ノ観ル所同一ニ歸スルコト能ハズシテ、其立論ニ精アリ粗アリ大アリ小アリ、東西人ノ説ク所ヲ通観セザレバ、其全体ヲ知ルコト能ハズ、一偏ノ見ヲ以テ其説ノ正邪理否ヲ判断スルトキハ、禪家ノ所謂担板漢ノ愚ニ陥ルベシ。故ニ東洋ニ於テ是等諸学ノ論ヲ立ントスルトキハ、必ズ東西ノ学ニ通ジ、其長短得失ヲ考ヘテ後ニ其判断ヲ下サザルベカラズ。" (Politics, economics, ethics, psychology, philosophy, and linguistics – the truth about these matters cannot be attained without combining Western and Eastern scholarships. These matters are intangible. The Eastern perception of these matters is necessarily different from the Western perception. Some theories are precise, but others inaccurate. Some theories are grand, and other narrow. If we are not well-versed in both Eastern and Western scholarships, we will not be able to attain the whole picture. If we judge the validity of these theories based on a biased view, we will fall into the pitfall of what Zen masters would call "seeing only one aspect of a thing and not understanding the whole." If we wish to establish a theory of those matters of the human world, we must equip ourselves with both Eastern and Western perspectives, carefully examine their advantages and disadvantages, and avoid making any impetuous judgment.) See *ibid.*

Nishimura's juxtaposition is the assertion that 'the East', including Japan, becomes as such, and its particularities become obvious as such only when juxtaposed to other territorially bounded historical locations, such as 'the West'. The Eastern self can be recognised as such only in its relation to the non-self, the Western other. One immediate repercussion of this assertion is that, for Nishimura, combining the 'Eastern' and 'Western' forms of knowing does not amount to dialectically establishing a middle ground. To grapple with 'Eastern' particularities requires an 'Eastern' perspective. And, vice versa, to understand 'Western' particularities requires a 'Western' perspective. In other words, a theory or a perspective does not transcend normativity and historicity encoded in itself. Only an 'Eastern' theory can address the 'Eastern' lifeworld. Only a 'Western' theory can have recourse to the 'Western' lifeworld. Nishimura's emphasis on the juxtaposition and comparison between 'the East' and 'the West' is interesting because it functions as a discursive schema to foretoken the figure of 'the East', of Japan, of the self as a spatially, historically, and culturally bounded entity. Hence, the repository of specific historical and cultural knowledge. Predictably, then, Nishimura rehearses this emphasis on an 'Eastern' theoretical perspective when discussing the second and the third categories he has established for his analysis, namely knowledge of the natural world and self-knowledge.³⁴

The question at this juncture is of how one could establish an 'Eastern' perspective. Is the fact of being 'Eastern' not sufficient for the Japanese to claim their perspective, whatever it may be, as 'Eastern'? Nishimura refutes such an oversimplified view. For him, for a perspective to be the primary framework for scholarly investigation, it must satisfy certain criteria. Thus, he explains that if one wishes to expand the horizon of 'Eastern' knowledge, the question is not about accumulating more contents of knowledge but about methods of accumulating knowledge. This is because sophisticated methods are the foundation for knowledge and for general intellectual

³⁴ On knowledge of the natural world, Nishimura writes as follows. “格物、化学、地理、地質、博物等ノ諸学ハ、西洋ノ学ニ依リテ、東洋ノ事実ヲ知ルベキ者ナリ。[...] 古来ヨリ東洋ハ東洋ダケノ知識ヲ有シ居ルコトナレドモ、西洋ノ学士ノ彙類区分ノ法ヲ見レバ、東洋人ノ説ト大ニ異ナル者アリ。[...] 此ノ如キ類ハ、何レモ東西ノ説ヲ対照シ、又之ヲ実物ニ徴シテ東洋ノ学説ヲ定メザルベカラザルナリ。” (The fields of physics, chemistry, geography, geology, and natural history have been relying on Western scholarships to understand things Eastern. [...] The East has developed its own knowledge in those fields, and the classificatory schema used by Western scholars is very different from that which is used in the East. [...] In engaging with these scholarly fields, one must compare a wide array of theories of the East and the West and establish Eastern perspectives based on observable facts.). On self-knowledge, Nishimura argues in a similar vein. “第三ニ自国ノ歴史、言語、文章、制度、風俗、衣食、生業、詩歌、音楽等ノ類ハ東洋ノ学問ノミヲ以テ研究スルコトヲ得ベキ者ナレバ、[...] 本会ノ学説ハ大抵之ニ因リテ成立スル者ナリ。然レドモ、既ニ自国トイヘバ之ニ対スル他国アリ。東洋ト云ヘバ之ニ対スル西洋アリ。自国（或ハ東洋）ノ歴史、言語、文章、制度、風俗、衣食、生業、詩歌、音楽等ヲ考究スルニ当リ、他国（或ハ西洋）ノ歴史、言語、文章云々等ヲ以テ対照比較スルトキハ、其優劣精粗ヲ観ルニ於テ極メテ明白確實ナルコトヲ得ベシ。然レバ此第三ノ者トイヘドモ、西学ノカヲ仮ルトキハ大ニ其学説ヲ完全精美ニスルコトヲ得ベシ。” (Thirdly, the history, language, writing, institutions, customs, food, clothing, livelihood, poetry, music, and other aspects of our own country should be studied within the frame of Eastern scholarship. [...] Most academic theories promoted by this association are about these matters. However, our country is what it is in comparison to other countries. The East is what it is in comparison to the West. When we study the specificities of our country (or of the East) in comparison to the specificities of other countries (or of the West), we will be able to understand the superiority or inferiority of our country with great certainty. And if we are to appropriate Western scholarships for the study of our own country, we must aim not at emulating its theories but perfecting them.) See *ibid.*, 95-96.

progress.³⁵ This is where Nishimura sees the strength and vigour of Western knowledge. According to him, Western knowledge is renowned for its sophisticated methodology and, therefore, it offers a point of reference to refine methodological orientations of Eastern knowledge.³⁶ ‘The East’ is different from ‘the West’. An ‘Eastern’ perspective’ is different from a ‘Western’ perspective. But at the very foundational level, knowledge about ‘the East’ must be grounded as much as knowledge about ‘the West’ on scientificity. Nishimura encourages here to establish methodologically sound ‘Eastern’ perspectives and theories to understand ‘the East’, ‘our own country’, and ourselves.

This imbrication of knowledge and the self has a double function. First, it is with this self that fields of knowledge are to be reconfigured and reorganised so that intellectual exercises become the production of knowledge rather than the emulation of modern Western knowledge. Here, the self, the medium through which the world is rendered with meanings, is anchored not to the universal but to the geo-culturally specific ‘our own country’. It is this localised configuration of the self that functions as a cognitive device to have recourse to the reality of the human and natural worlds. Second, it is also through this self intimately tied to ‘our own country’ that the field of self-knowledge is reoriented away from China, which has long been regarded as the source of the Japanese self. Thus, Nishimura writes,

学問ノ大小浅深ヲ論ズルトキハ、本邦ノ学問ハ大ニ支那ノ学問ニ及ブコト能ハズ。是古ヨリ政事家学士ガ支那ノ学問ヲ以テ公共ノ学問トシ、本邦ノ学問ヲ用ヒザリシ所以ナリ [...] 蓋シ古代ノ君相ハ惟知識ヲ他国ニ取ルノミヲ務トシテ、別ニ本邦ノ学問トイフ者ヲ立ツルノ意ナカリシ者ノ如シ。[...] 元来本邦ノ學術トイフ者ヲ建立セントスルノ意ナカリシヲ以テ、本邦ノ事ヲ記セルハ歴史ニ止マリテ、其他詔勅ノ如キ、法律ノ如キ、文章ノ如キ者アレドモ、俱ニ其時代ノ実用ヲ弃ジタルニ過ギズシテ、学問ノ全体ヲ具ヘタル者ナシ。

(If we are to compare the scope of scholarly traditions, scholarship in Japan can never be comparable to that in China. This is why politicians and scholars alike have long promoted, since ancient times, the Chinese scholarly tradition as the mode of public learning, while disregarding the Japanese scholarly tradition. [...] The ancient sovereigns of Japan did not have any intention to establish our own scholarly tradition, simply taking knowledge from other countries, [...] so much so that the works about our own country have been limited to its history. Of course, there are other historical documents, such as imperial edicts, laws, and other writings. But they merely represent practical utilities of a given period of time and, therefore, do not embody the entirety of what scholarship ought to be.)³⁷

Nishimura is equally frustrated with the fact that the Meiji government has failed to establish a Japanese scholarly tradition.

王政維新後、政府ニテ従来ノ儒学ヲ廃シ、西洋ノ学ヲ以テ之ニ代ヘ、其干涉シテ教育スル所ハ専ラ西洋ノ学ニ在ルヲ以テ、西洋ノ学ハ封建時代ノ儒学ト同一ノ勢力ヲ得、本邦ノ学ハ封建時代ト同ジク政府教育ノ範疇外ニ置カレタリ。

³⁵ Ibid., 94. The original sentence reads, “蓋シ時運ノ開クルニ從ヒ、学問ノ研究考察其法ヲ進ムルハ自然ノ理ナリ”

³⁶ Ibid., 95.

³⁷ Ibid., 97.

(After the Meiji Restoration, the government abolished Confucianism and replaced it with Western learning as the sole basis for education. Western learning has gained the dominant status that Confucianism used to enjoy during the feudal period, while the scholarship on our own country remains to be relegated, just as it was during the feudal period, to the outside of the official educational system).³⁸

His discontent is that the political and intellectual centres have been treating a foreign knowledge tradition, be it Chinese or Western, as if it were ‘our’ own, conflating the other with the self. But what is adequate knowledge for China or for the West is different from what is adequate for Japan. The adequacy of knowledge, often translated as utility and instrumentality of the contents, that is to say, theories, concepts, and institutions of a given knowledge tradition, is context-specific. For this reason, knowledge must be grounded on something other than its utility and instrumentality. For Nishimura, it is the spatiotemporally specific position of the knower, the ‘Japanese’ self, that warrants the adequacy of knowledge in Japan. It is through this Japanese self that the world can be rendered with meanings, and the self is objectified in relation to the other. Hence, it is through this Japanese self that a scholarship of ‘our own country’ shall be organised.

Of course, this notion of the self, both as the knower (the subject of objective knowledge) and as the known (the object of self-knowledge), requires further qualifications. How can one recognise oneself simultaneously as the knower and the known? How can one occupy all at once the position of the subject to produce knowledge and the position to objectify oneself in relation to the other? What is the foundational cognitive condition for such recognition?

The operative word for Nishimura is ‘*jishiki*’ (自識: consciousness), which he distinguishes from other core functions of the human mind, such as ‘*shikisei*’ (識性: the faculty of thinking, judgment, reasoning, abstraction), ‘*kansei*’ (感性: the faculty of feeling, senses, desires), and ‘*isei*’ (意性: the faculty of instinct, intention). In one of his seminal works on psychology, Nishimura defines *jishiki* as follows.³⁹

自識コンシュスネス

[...] 自識ハ三性中ノ何レニモ属セズシテ、三性ヲ通貫シテ其働ヲ現ハス者ナルヲ以テ、之ヲ三性ノ前ニ置クコトナリ。自識トハ如何ナル物ナルカト問フニ吾心ノ働ヲ知ルノ智是ナリ。[...] 自識トハ如何ナル物カト言フニ、心ノ中ニ有スル所ノ一個ノ知ニシテ、心ノ外ニ別ニ自識ト云フ物アルニ非ズ。故ニ吾儕自識ノカヲ以テ我心ノ働ヲ知ルト云フコトハ、[...] 約シテ之ヲ言ヘバ、我心ハ自ラ己ノ現象ヲ知ルト云フコトナリ。

(Consciousness:

[...] Consciousness does not belong to any of these faculties. Rather, it is that which works through all these faculties. Consciousness is the prerequisite for us to understand all faculties, all the functions of our mind. [...] Consciousness is a form of knowledge that exists not outside but within the human mind. When I say that consciousness enables us to understand the functions of our mind, I mean to suggest that my mind is aware of its own phenomena.)⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., 96-97.

³⁹ Nishimura Shigeki, *Shingaku kōgi 1- and 2-kann* 心学講義 1-2 卷 (Lectures on Psychology Vol.1 and Vol.2), Tokyo: Yoshikawa hanshichi, 1892.

⁴⁰ Nishimura, *Shingaku kōgi 1-kan*, 94-96.

Consciousness, for Nishimura, is the foundation for psychological phenomena, for exercising three faculties of the human mind to relate to the external world: the world as the object of thinking, judgment, reasoning, and abstraction; the world as the stimulus of feelings, senses, and desires; and the world as that which instinct and intention act upon. Nishimura then clarifies further this relationship between consciousness and psychological phenomena.

自識ト性相トハ共ニ心ノ範圍内ニ在ル者ニシテ、自識ハ主観トナリ、性相ハ客観トナリテ現ハルル者ナリ。而シテ此二者ノ主観トナリ客観トナルト云フコトハ、亦自識ノカヲ以テ之ヲ知ルナリ。

(Consciousness and psychological phenomena are all but in one's mind. Consciousness is subjective, while faculties of mind are objective. Knowing that consciousness is subjective and faculties are objective is also the work of that consciousness.)⁴¹

Consciousness is *shukan* (主観: subjective), and faculties of mind are *kyakkan* (客観: objective).

But what exactly does Nishimura mean here? It is a legitimate question, as Nishimura's semantics seem to escape our own semantics of these terms, such as *shukan* and *kyakkan*. A temptation here is to view Nishimura's concept of *shukan*, the foundational principle for relating to the world, as analogous to the Cartesian concept of *res cogitans*, a non-physical substance that is nominally referred to as consciousness. As Descartes writes, what he calls "'act of thought', such as understanding, willing, imagining, having sensory perceptions, and so on [...] all fall under the common concept of thought or perception or consciousness," and what he calls "a 'thinking thing' or a 'mind'" is the substance in which consciousness inheres.⁴² It is, however, important to recognise here the irrefutable difference between Nishimura's concept of *jishiki*-cum-consciousness-cum-*shukan* and Descartes' concept of *res cogitans*-cum-consciousness. The difference is in the scope of that which consciousness acts upon.

In other words, and as Nishimura clarifies, the difference lies in the distinction between metaphysics and psychology. He maintains that since Plato and Aristotle, the study of consciousness in the West has been established as a branch of philosophy called metaphysics, which seeks to understand not only the human mind but also all the intangible.⁴³ Within this philosophical tradition, with the works of Descartes, Nicolas Malebranche, Leibnitz, and John Locke, consciousness is defined as the metaphysical foundation for all knowledge about the intangible.⁴⁴ In comparison, Nishimura observes that psychology has been established as a

⁴¹ Ibid., 98.

⁴² René Descartes, "Objections and Replies," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. 2*, John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984: 124 [66-398]. Descartes' usage of the term 'thought' ('*cogitatio*' or '*pensée*'), which includes not just thought as we understand it today but will, imaginary, and sensory perception, is expansive and somewhat curious. John Cottingham offers a comprehensive explanation of Descartes' employment of the term. See John Cottingham, "Descartes on 'Thought,'" *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 28:112, 1978: 208-214. Descartes himself defines the term 'thought' as follows. "I use this term to include everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately aware of it. Thus all the operations of the will, the intellect, the imagination and the sense are thoughts. I say 'immediately' so as to exclude the consequences of thoughts; a voluntary movement, for example, originates in a thought but is not itself a thought." See Descartes, "Objections and Replies," 113.

⁴³ Nishimura, *Shingaku kōgi 1-kan*, 12-13.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 13-15. Nicolas Malebranche, when discussing passions, argues that "not all our passions are accompanied by some awareness of the mind's part [...] we often feel moved by some passion without knowing it and sometimes

scholarship independent of philosophy, especially with the works of Rudolph Goclenius, who is often credited with coining the term ‘*Psychologie*’, and Christian Wolff, who wrote extensively on empirical psychology.⁴⁵ If metaphysics is concerned with consciousness as the general structure of human experiences vis-à-vis all the intangibles, Nishimura understands psychology as being concerned with consciousness as the ground for the mind to act and react vis-à-vis one’s own experiences. To study consciousness is to study “phenomena (emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure) and principles (why people seek pleasure and avoid pain) of the human mind” and “direct causes of those phenomena and principles.”⁴⁶ Everything else falls outside the remit of psychology. Everything else falls outside the remit of consciousness. For this reason, Nishimura’s concept of *jishiki-cum-consciousness-cum-shukan* is a recognition of one’s own mental process vis-à-vis one’s own experiences of the external world. It is a state of the self to consciously know one’s own mental phenomena and physical experiences. Thus, by *shukan*, Nishimura is implying particularities inhered by the knower, whose act of knowing the world is contingent upon their own spatiotemporally specific being. The world conforms to how *shukan* makes sense of one’s own mental phenomena and physical experiences. Not vice versa.

This is a rather restricted view of the knower. As a medium through which the knower relates to the external world, as a metonymy of the subject of knowledge, *shukan* is intimately intertwined with subjective mental phenomena and subjective experiences of the external world. And yet, for Nishimura, the concept of *jishiki-cum-consciousness-cum-shukan* and the study thereof in psychology are foundational for all the other fields of knowledge.

凡ソ身ヲ修ムルモ、家ヲ齊フモ、國ヲ治メ天下ヲ平カニスルモ、其本ハ何レモ心ヨリ発セザル者ナシ。故ニ今日法律学ト云ヒ、経済学ト云ヒ、修身学ト云ヒ、政治学ト云フモ、亦心学ヲ以テ必要ノ原質トスルニ至レリ。然レドモ是等ハ皆形而上ノ学問ナレバ、心ヲ以テ其学ノ根本トスルハ誰ニモ知ラルルコトナレドモ、彼形而下ノ学問ナル数学化学格物学博物学生器学ノ類ノ如キモ亦皆何レモ心学ノ大意ヲ知ザレバ、之ニ通達スル能ハザルコトナレリ。

(To train one’s body, to run a household, to govern a country, and to maintain peace – everything begins with the mind. Those scholarships belonging to ‘what is above’, such as law, economics, ethics, and politics, are all grounded in psychology. Even those who inquire into that which we recognise as ‘what is below’, including mathematics, chemistry, physics, natural history, and physiology, cannot produce adequate knowledge without attaining general principles of psychology.)⁴⁷

Knowledge is, then, necessarily a consequence of subjective mental and physical processes. It is objective, that is, *kyakkan*, not in the sense that we understand the term today. Rather, knowledge

even without feeling its cause.” However, as he also emphasises, in these instances of experiencing passions, the mind, in fact, knows that it does not know why and how we feel moved. See Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1674]: 407. On consciousness, John Locke maintains that “I do not say, there is no soul in a man because he is not sensible of it in his sleep; but I do say, he cannot think at any time, waking, or sleeping, without being sensible of it. Our being sensible of it is not necessary to any thing but to our thoughts; and to them it is, and to them it will always be, necessary, till we can think without being conscious of it.” See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London: William Tegg, 1860 [1688]: 63.

⁴⁵ Nishimura, *Shingaku kōgi 1-kan*, 15-16.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2-3.

is objective to the extent that it is a representation of the world, to the extent that it mediates the relationship between the conscious self and the world external to the self.⁴⁸

5.2.2. *Between Western Consciousness and Confucian Conscience*

If it is necessary to establish specifically ‘Japanese’ scholarship to produce knowledge adequate for Japan, and if knowledge is necessarily mediated by *jishiki-cum-consciousness-cum-shukan* that inheres particularities, Nishimura is tacitly arguing for the specifically ‘Japanese’ *jishiki*, ‘Japanese’ consciousness, ‘Japanese’ *shukan*. And yet, somewhat curiously, Nishimura also emphasises that the concept of *jishiki-cum-consciousness-cum-shukan* is entirely a Western concept and that existing knowledge traditions in Japan have neither the conceptual language nor intellectual predilection for grounding knowledge in *jishiki-cum-consciousness-cum-shukan*. Is such a claim simply a discursive strategy for Nishimura to gloss over existing knowledge traditions? Is he implying the necessity to appropriate ‘Western’ consciousness? But how can it be possible if consciousness is essentially subjective? This is the aporia we find in Nishimura’s corpus. And this is also the underlying aporia of many of the early Meiji intellectual discourses about knowledge.

It is instructive at this juncture to return to the initial instance in which the term *shukan* entered into the Japanese semantic space with Nishi Amane’s translation of Joseph Haven’s *Mental Philosophy* (1857).⁴⁹ In the translator’s preface, Nishi admits that the term *shukan* is an invented word, semantically equated to the English adjective ‘subjective’ that Haven defines in the original as one of the primary elements of the human mind to perceive objects.

本邦從來欧州性理ノ書ヲ訳スル者甚タ稀ナリ。之ヲ以テ訳字ニ至リテハ固ヨリ適從スル所ヲ知ラス、且漢土儒家ノ説ク所ニ比スルニ心性ノ区分一層微細ナルノミナラス、其指名スル所モ自ラ他義アルヲ以テ、別ニ字ヲ撰ヒ語ヲ造ルハ、亦已ムヲ得サルニ出ツ。故ニ知覚、記性、意識、想像等ノ若キハ從來有ル所ニ從フト雖モ、理性、感性、覚性、悟性等ノ若キ、又致知家ノ述語、觀念、實在、主觀、客觀、歸納、演繹、総合、分解等ノ若キニ至リテハ大率新造ニ係ハルヲ以テ、読者或ハ其義ヲ得ルヲ難スル者アラン。然ルニ [...] 上下文義ノ為ニ已ムヲ得サル勢アルニ非レハ、敢テ漫リニ他語ニ換ヘ、意ヲ取りテ翻サセルヲ以テ、読者其上下文義ヲ推シ通篇前後ヲ照シテ之ヲ熟考セハ、其旨趣ニ通スル亦難キニ非ルヘシ。

(European texts on human nature have rarely been translated into Japanese. For this reason, appropriate Japanese lexicons for translation are scarce. Nor Chinese Confucian theories are of much help because Europeans use far more intricate categories to analyse human nature and because these categories have, at times, multiple meanings. Therefore, I have chosen what I think are appropriate Chinese terms to convey these meanings and, if necessary, invented new words by combining some Chinese characters. For example, I have resorted to existing terms to translate perception (*chikaku* 知覚), memory (*kisei* 記性), consciousness (*ishiki* 意識), and imagination (*sōzō* 想像). In contrast, those terms such as

⁴⁸ To this end, I venture to suggest that Nishimura’s concepts of *shukan* and *kyakkan* are akin less to Cartesian concepts but more to the Latin concept of *subiectum* and *obiectum*.

⁴⁹ Nishi Amane (trans.), *Shinrigaku* 心理学 (*Mental Philosophy*), Tokyo: Meiji shobō, 1878 [1875].

reason (*risei* 理性), sensibility (*kansei* 感性), sense (*kakusei* 覚性), understanding (*gosei* 悟性), idea (*kannen* 観念), being (*jitsuzai* 実在), subjective (*shukan* 主観), objective (*kyakkan* 客観), induction (*kinō* 帰納), deduction (*eneki* 演繹), synthesis (*sōgō* 総合), and analysis (*bunkai* 分解) – these are my own inventions. Perhaps some readers may find these terms difficult to understand. Therefore, [...] when necessary, I have provided in my translation the general meaning of the original text, rather than word-by-word translation, for the reader to surmise and ponder these terms in specific textual contexts. This should help the reader grasp the gist of the original text.)⁵⁰

Upon acknowledging that *shukan* is a neologism he has invented to signify the term ‘subjective’, Nishi translates the portion of the original text on the term as follows.

一層綿密ニ此能力ノ情状ヲ見ル時ハ、此中ニ二様ノ元ヲ含ムコトヲ見ル。是他ノ語ヨリ寧ロ主観及び客観ナル語ヲ用イルノ勝レルニ如カサルナリ。先ツ第一ニハ、一ノ知識アリ。是我れ自己、攪性アル器官、攪動ヲ受クルコトヲ、自識ルナリ。又第二ニ、一ノ知識アリ。是我カ外部ニ物アルヲ知ルニテ心自己、即チ此我ナル者ニ拘ハラシテ之ヲ我カ機官ノ攪動ヲ生スル源由トシテ知ルナリ。故ニ吾人今知覚ト云フ同一ノ作為ニ於キテ、攪動ヲ受クル自己ト、我ヲ攪動スル外部ノ物ノ存在シテ、前ニ現在スルトヲ知ルナリ。是自然ニシテ、此我ナル者ト、我ニ非ル者トノ、互ニ相関ラスシテ、各々別ニ現存スルヲ、假ニモ定メシムル者ニテ、即チ意志アリ感性アル体ノ我ナル者トシ、又我カ外部ニ在リテ物質タル者ナリトス。此別凡テ覚性ノ知覚ニ於キテ、基礎タル者ナリ。凡テ五官ヨリ取ル知覚ハ、知覚スルコトヲ得ヘキ覚性ヲ具ヘタル体ト、知覚セラルルコトヲ得ヘキ物体トニツノ者ノ存在ヲ含有シ且つ擬定スヘキナリ。

(Looking more closely at the character of this faculty, we find it to involve a twofold element, which we cannot better explain than with the terms subjective and objective. There is, in the first place, the knowledge or consciousness of our own sentient organism as affected, and there is also the knowledge of something external to and independent of the mind itself, or the me, as the producing cause of this affection of the organism. We know, by one and the same act, ourselves as affected, and the existence and presence of an external something affecting us. This presupposes, of course, the distinct, independent existence of the me and the non-me – of ourselves as thinking and sentient beings, and of material objects external to ourselves – a distinction which lies at the foundation of all sense perception. All perception by the senses involves, and presupposes, the existence of a sentient being capable of perceiving and an object capable of being perceived.)⁵¹

Haven’s argument is that consciousness has a double function. Consciousness is that which enables one to perceive oneself as ‘I’, as the self, independent of and autonomous from the external world. This ‘subjective’ function of consciousness, thus, engenders knowledge about one’s own self. At the same time, consciousness is also that which enables one to perceive the world as objects external to oneself. This is the ‘objective’ function of consciousness, which foregrounds knowledge about non-‘I’, the non-self. While subjective consciousness and objective

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1-2.

⁵¹ Ibid., 66-67. The translation is borrowed from the 1862 edition of Haven’s original text. See Joseph Haven, *Mental Philosophy: Including the Intellect, Sensibilities, and Will*, Boston, Mass.: Gould and Lincoln, 1862: 60.

consciousness are conceptually and analytically separable from one another, Haven cautions us that, in their manifestations, they are “inseparable in time” and “incapable of being distinguished as distinct states of mind.”⁵² To this end, “all consciousness, properly so called, involves the idea of self, or the subjective element.” And the possessor of such consciousness is, as Haven defines it, what is called “the subject.”⁵³

In his translation, Nishi equates ‘subjective consciousness’ to *shukan* and ‘objective consciousness’ to *kyakkan*, which are together called ‘*ishiki*’ (意識), and the possessor of which are called ‘*shui*’ (主位).⁵⁴ However, this equilibrium established at the level of the signifier does not guarantee the equilibrium at the level of signification. These English terms and Japanese terms are not semantically transparent to each other. This is because, when expounding further on these translated terms, such as *shukan*, *kyakkan*, *ishiki*, and *shui*, Nishi adds a chain of signifiers borrowed from (Neo-)Confucian tradition. These translated terms are, in their semantics, replete with (Neo-)Confucian imperatives for knowing.

Take but one example from Nishi’s text entitled *Seisei hatsuu* (生性發蘊: The Relationship between the Physical and the Spiritual, 1871-1873). In a footnote to his rendering of Johann Fichte’s idealism, Nishi writes as follows.

英コンシウスニッス、佛コンネサンス、日ベウウツサイン、蘭ベウウツヘイト。爰ニ意識ト訳ス。我カ感覚作用心裏ニ起ル時、我之ヲ知ルト知ル者之ヲ独知ト指スハ体也、意識ト指スハ用ナリ。

(In English, *consciousness*; in French, *conscience*; in German, *Bewusstsein*; in Dutch, *bewustheid*. Here, translated as ‘*ishiki*’ (意識). When consciousness enables us to recognise ourselves as sentient beings, it engenders knowledge about one’s own self, ‘*dokuchi*’ (独知), which is tantamount to the essence (体). What I call ‘*ishiki*’ is the effect (用) of the essence, the effect derived from ‘I’ that knows that ‘I’ know.)⁵⁵

Immediately noticeable here is Nishi’s reference to three cardinal concepts of (Neo-)Confucianism: 体, 用, and 独知. Within the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, 体 is a metonymy of *ri*, the absolute and transcendental principle of all things, thus signifying the essence of a thing and representing the way a thing must be. 用 is a metonymy of *ki*, a tangible effect or manifestation of *ri*, thus representing what a thing is. And 独知, which appeared in *The Great Learning*, designates conscience or awareness to distinguish right from wrong, moral from immoral, ethical from unethical.⁵⁶ In his rendering, Nishi equates subjective consciousness (the state of knowing

⁵² Haven, *Mental Philosophy*, 44. In Nishi’s translation, “其作為ト作為ノ意識トハ時ニ於キテ前後ノ別ナク、又心ノ別種ナル情状ナリト、區別ス可ラス。” See, Haven, *Shinrigaku*, 44.

⁵³ Nishi (trans.), *Shinrigaku*, 269.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43-45.

⁵⁵ Nishi, *Seisei hatsuu*, 35.

⁵⁶ Nishi Amane, “Seisei sakki” 生性筭記 (“Reading Notes on the Physical and the Spiritual”), in Ōkubo (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū I-kan*, 1960 [1884]: 135 [130-158]. In the European philosophical tradition, especially that of Hegel, consciousness and conscience are understood as the intimately intertwined mental state of – or else, to become – the modern. Hegel formulated the principle of conscience as the principle of self-knowledge (or else, the principle of the mind), arguing that for the Spirit to be free, hence to possess self-knowledge, individuals and communities must know that they were indeed free, which was understood as the process of self-conscious action. As Hegel wrote, “Only in the principle of the mind that is aware of its essence is in itself absolutely free, and has its actuality in the activity of

that ‘I’ know) to 体 (the essence) and ultimately to 独知 (conscience). For Nishi, the Western psycho-philosophical concept of subjective consciousness, which foregrounds the distinction between (knowledge of) the self and (knowledge of) the non-self and that reconceive knowledge as a subject-object relation, is equivalent to (Neo-)Confucian concept of conscience.

Indeed, Nishi’s conceptualisation of *dokuchi* – a kind of self-awareness that ‘I’ know that I know – owes much to the (Neo-)Confucian concept of ‘*shendu*’ (慎独: to preserve proper behaviour in private life).⁵⁷ One of the first references to *shendu* can be found in *The Great Learning*.

所謂誠其意者、毋自欺也、如惡惡臭、如好好色、此之謂自讓、故君子必慎其独也
(What is meant by “making the thoughts sincere,” is allowing no self-deception, as when we hate a bad smell, and as when we love what is beautiful. This is called self-enjoyment. Therefore, the superior man must be watchful over himself when he is alone.)⁵⁸

For this slightly arduous passage, Zhu Xi offers an extended explanation in his *Commentary on the Great Learning*. Here, Zhu Xi equates *shendu* to ‘*duzhi*’ (独知) and maintains as follows.

誠其意者、自脩之首也。毋者、禁止之辭。自欺云者、知爲善以去惡、而心之所發有未實也。謙、快也、足也。独者、人所不知而已所独知之地也。言欲自脩者、知爲善以去其惡、則當實用其力、而禁止其自欺、使其惡惡則如惡惡臭、好善則如好好色、皆務決去、而求必得之、以自快足於己、不可徒苟且以徇外而爲人也。然其實與不實、蓋有他人所不及知而已独知之者、故必謹之於此以審其幾焉。

(“Making the thoughts sincere” is the very first step to cultivating oneself: ‘毋’ means here prohibition; ‘自欺’ means that while knowing one must do good and avoid evil, this act of the mind is not accompanied by action; ‘謙’ means being comfortable or satisfied; and, ‘独’ is the realm that no one but oneself knows. In other words, if you want to cultivate yourself, you must first know good and evil and avoid self-deception. Just as you hate the stench and love the beauty, your mind becomes lively and satisfied. You must not give up thinking for yourself. Nor must you be concerned with what others would think of you. However, there are things that are true and untrue, which are not known to others but to yourself alone. [This is the realm of ‘独’]. Therefore, you must examine and know in this realm of ‘独’ what distinguishes the true from the untrue.)⁵⁹

its liberation, is the absolute possibility and necessity to be found for state power, religion, and the principles of philosophy to coincide, for the reconciliation of actuality in general with the mind, of the state with the religious conscience as well as with philosophical knowledge, to be accomplished.” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*, William Wallace and A.V. Miller (trans.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007: 256. See also Dean Moyar, *Hegel’s Conscience*, Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.

⁵⁷ For Nishi’s indebtedness to (Neo-)Confucianism, see, for example, Nishi Amane, “Soraigaku ni taisuru shikō o nobeta bun” 徂徠学に対する志向を述べた文 (“On My Preference for Sorai’s Intellectual Tradition”) in Ōkubo (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū 1-kan*, 3-6.

⁵⁸ The English translation is borrowed from James Legge, *The Chinese Classics: A Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes, Vol. 1, Confucian Analects, the Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Means*, London: Trübner & Co., 1861: 230.

⁵⁹ Zhu Xi, *Daxue zhang-ju*.

What Nishi calls *dokuchi* is explained here by Zhu Xi as ‘to know that no one but oneself knows’. And it is this mental phenomenon that distinguishes one as a conscious being that Nishi equates to what Joseph Haven calls ‘subjective consciousness’ and what Nishi translates as ‘*shukan*’.

On this equivalence between the subjective consciousness and the (Neo-)Confucian concept of conscience, between *shukan* and *dokuchi*, Nishi writes as follows.

又有一種與意識、連絡相通之一心術、[...] 是於道德學、佔樞要之地位者、古今東西、儒哲教門之徒、取其道德之元於此者極多、英語孔腮然斯コンサイエーシス、大學所謂誠意之義、独知之論、專指此工夫、凡我人知識所誨告、情緒所攪動、千差萬別、莫有窮極、然其初頭一芽之萌動、所謂天真流露、謂之独知、是其萌動之幾微、已独知之、未顯乎顏色、未發乎容貌、所謂未發之中、他人未及知之也、我人於此處、着一點工夫、把持此天真、惟精惟一、赤誠以奉之、應接外界、所謂如好々色、如惡々臭、必自慊而已、謂之誠意、苟於此機、把持不堅、滑脱怠惰、乃利害計較之慮續興、迷惑斯生、所謂人鬼關是也、是濂洛關閔相博之秘 [...] 孟子說良知良能、是本平素持論、指四端等而已、[...] 其名稱、或為独知、或為良知、亦不必論也、唯知是為與意識連絡相通之一現象、則足矣。

(There is another kind of consciousness, a constitutive element of the workings of the mind, [...] which, in the study of ethics, is treated as the important site for inquiry and which many people, from Eastern Confucians to Western philosophers of the past and present, consider the nucleus of morality. In English, this is called ‘conscience’. In *The Great Learning*, this is conceptualised as *cheng yi* (誠意: sincerity) and referred to with the theory of *dokuchi* (独知). What knowledge teaches us and what emotions incite in us is manifold. There is no limit. However, at the very beginning of any mental phenomenon, there is *dokuchi*, a revelation of one’s natural sincerity. *Dokuchi* does not manifest itself to the world external to the mind. It is known none other than one’s own self. We make an effort to grasp this natural sincerity with devotion and integrity. Just as when you are consumed by lust or when you instinctively hate stench, your own mind shall not deceive yourself. This is what is called sincerity. If you do not have a firm grasp of this primary consciousness when it arises, if you neglect it, or if you are simply lazy, you will become meritorious and calculative. You will be lost and confused. It is this sincerity that separates man from the brute. And, this sincerity is at the core of the teachings of Zhou Dunyi, Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, Zang Zai, and Zhu Xi. [...] [The genesis of their teachings is in] Mencius, who expounded on the concepts of *liangzhi* (良知: the goodness in conscience) and *liangneng* (良能: the inborn ability to be good) within his theory of *si duan* (四端: four good sides of the human mind including compassion, shameful heart, letting heart, and judgment of right and wrong). [...] Whether we call it ‘*dokuchi*’ or ‘*liangzhi*,’ the point is to know that this is a phenomenon of the mind closely connected to consciousness.)⁶⁰

Nishi forges here a conceptual and semantic equivalence between the Western philosophical concept of consciousness and the (Neo-)Confucian concept of conscience, between *shukan* and *dokuchi*. As a discursive strategy to make sense of the hitherto unfamiliar concept of consciousness, this is an interesting one. It is not that Nishi is simply comparing consciousness and conscience. He is anchoring the Western concept of consciousness into the (Neo-)Confucian semantic field and redefining the concept of consciousness with a chain of (Neo-)Confucian

⁶⁰ Nishi Amane, “Seisei sakki,” 135.

signifiers that are non-existent in the cluster of cognitive apparatuses established in the Western scholarly tradition of associationist psychology. At the same time, this discursive strategy of translating the Western concept of consciousness expands the semantic scope of the (Neo-)Confucian concept of conscience and, thus, the horizon of intellectual and cognitive practices.

The immediate implication is that the Japanese concept of *shukan* cannot be semantically equated to the Western concept of subjective consciousness that forges a position of the knower to distinguish themselves from the external world and that prefigures knowledge as a subject-object relation. Translation of subjective consciousness into *shukan* is mediated by the (Neo-)Confucian concept of *dokuchi*/conscience. The concept of *shukan* embodies a web of language, or what Derrida describes as “the complex structure of a weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning – or of force – to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others.”⁶¹ To be sure, *shukan* can be understood, as can subjective consciousness be, as a foundational character and operational principle of the knower, hence the bearer of scientific culture in the production of knowledge. And yet, the order of discourse that sustains the signification of *shukan* represents *différance* – deferral and suspension, through translation, of the order of discourse that sustains the Western concept of subjective consciousness.⁶²

In the parallel conceptual and semantic developments of *kagaku* and *shukan*, we begin to see a shift in the qualification of knowledge. *Ri* – whatever one may define it – no longer guarantees the validity and seriousness of knowledge. Now, what grounds knowledge is consciousness, which separates the self from the non-self, the knower from the known and which, therefore, ascribes to the self/the knower a certain positionality to know the external world (objective) and to know that ‘I’ know (subjective). In other words, knowledge is now mediated through the self.

§

5.3. Boundaries of ‘I’ and Evolutionary Temporality

The conceptual formation of *shukan* at the intersection between the Western concept of consciousness and the (Neo-)Confucian concept of conscience was a significant juncture, for it raised the question of how the self could be enacted under the specific political, social, and intellectual conditions of the early Meiji period. It is a question about the ways in which *shukan* came to operate in knowledge as the subject in Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

⁶¹ Derrida, “Différance,” 3.

⁶² As Derrida maintains, “It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called ‘present’ element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not.” See *ibid.*, 13.

It is a question about the ways in which the specific boundaries of the abstract self, boundaries of *shukan*, were enacted with some localised configurations and in relation to the non-self, the other.

A question such as this one necessarily turns us to the consideration of knowledge and power – the intersection between abstraction through which the self/the knower was conceptualised as *shukan* and politics of the age of the nation through which the self was remoulded into the collective ‘Japanese’ self vis-à-vis other nations. To be sure, the entanglement of knowledge and power during the early Meiji period is not necessarily a novel question for today’s historical scholarship. For example, Stefan Tanaka points us to the entanglement while discussing the development of *tōyōshi* (東洋史: oriental history). As Tanaka succinctly argues, *tōyō* (東洋: Orient) was configured with a twofold function. It was constructed as “the spatial and temporal object” for historical knowledge but also as that through which the Japanese defined themselves” vis-à-vis the Western idea of the Orient.⁶³ Japanese historians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw Asia/*tōyō* as Japan’s past, while the Western orientalist saw Asia/Orient as the origin from which Europe had developed both in a literal and figurative sense. Thus, Tanaka writes as follows.

Asia then was the common denominator that connected East and West with a shared and equal origin, but at the same time, because of the different emphases, which were “scientifically” and “objectively” determined, it led toward very different – though equally modern – world visions. [...] Both the various European and Japanese scholars sought to capture the alien world as part of their own national history.⁶⁴

This purportedly ‘scientific’ and ‘objective’ nature of *tōyōshi* specifically, and historical scholarship more generally, was an essential, basic premise here. This is because it provided Meiji scholars with “an authoritative, objectivistic language that proved the validity of discourses” for “self-authorisation.”⁶⁵

Taking a cue from Tanaka’s observation, I shall go a little further into the realm of epistemology. My argument is that such an authoritative, objectivistic language was sustained not only by a tacitly accepted contingent silence for the operation of knowledge, that is, scientificity and objectivity, but also by a temporal imagination that reshaped political, social, and cultural differences into historical differences. What was at work was not just a premise of temporal symmetry but also a premise of temporal asymmetry.⁶⁶

A temporal imagination I am referring to is that which is inherited in evolutionary theories and social Darwinism. As Thomas McCarthy observes, “in the wake of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* (1859), and through the intermediation of Hubert Spencer and his American disciples, social Darwinism became the dominant ideology” in Euro-America to conceptualise groups of people “in explicitly evolutionary terms.”⁶⁷ Social Darwinism was, thus, a mode of thinking about the self, often bracketed with ‘nation-state’, vis-à-vis the other with “a particularly potent and protean version of the hierarchical scaling of difference.”⁶⁸ Doubtless, a specific temporal imagination was

⁶³ Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*, 77.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁶ For temporal symmetry and temporal asymmetry, see my discussion in the introduction.

⁶⁷ Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009: 69-70.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* While this is the general trope of social Darwinism, there are variations in terms of how to interpret Darwin’s ideas into analytical imperatives of human sciences and how to operationalise social Darwinism as the key driver of

at work here: time moves unceasingly and in a linear manner with the expectation of progress, along which each nation-state moves at a speed different from other nations. As a synchronic global conjuncture of the late 19th and early 20th century, social Darwinism had an appeal also to those Meiji political and intellectual elites preoccupied with progress, modernisation, and Japan's historical positionality in relation to Euro-America and to Asia.⁶⁹ However, there were some

political projects. See, for example, Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915*, revised edition, Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1992 [1944]; Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1979; Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860-1914*, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981; Linda L. Clark, *Social Darwinism in France*, Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1984.

⁶⁹ To view the world through the lens of evolution was not completely foreign to the Japanese. We see an evolutionary perspective akin to Darwin's, for instance, in the observation of plants and animals made by Kamata Ryūō (1754-1821), a medical practitioner and a scholar of Sekimon-shingaku (石門心学: a religio-scholarly movement that combined the Neo-Confucian teachings with the principles of Zen Buddhism and Shintō). See Kamata Ryūō, *Shingaku oku no kakehashi* 心学奥の棧 (*The Fundamental Structure of Shingaku*), Osaka: Kagaya Zenzō, 1822. But it was during the early Meiji period that Western evolutionary theories were systematically introduced to the Japanese. One of the first mentions of the name of Darwin is in Aoikawa Nobuchika's *Hokkyōdan* (北郷談: A Story of Going to the North, 1874). In his effort, as a Shintō priest, to criticise Christianity, Aoikawa mentioned Darwin, a scholar of science from England, who offered a worldview contradictory to the Christian worldview. Around the same time, Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) recorded that, in a lecture, Franz Martin Hilgendorf (1839-1904), a professor of biology at Tōkyō-igakkō (東京医学校: Tokyo Medical School, later the Department of Medicine, the University of Tokyo), discussed theories of biological evolution. A consensus in today's historical scholarship, however, is that two Western scholars had played a pivotal role in Japan's appropriation of Western evolutionary theories: Edward Sylvester Morse (1832-1925), who gave a series of public lectures on evolutionary theories in 1877; and Ernest Francisco Fenollosa's (1853-1908), who, in his lectures at the University of Tokyo between 1878 and 1886, introduced ways of appropriating evolutionary theories as perspectives for social sciences. Japanese scholars equally contributed to the popularisation of social Darwinism. Toyama Masakazu (1848-1900) offered lectures on historiography, which emphasised Spencer's idea of social evolution as the primary theoretical perspective for historical scholarship and which, therefore, complemented Fenollosa's argument. Following these developments, in 1879, Isawa Shūji (1851-1917) translated and published Thomas Henry Huxley's *On the Origin of Species, Or the Causes of the Phenomena of Organic Nature* (1863) under the Japanese title *Seibutsu genshi-ron* (生物原始論). Darwin's seminal work was translated by Tachibana Senzaburō (1867-1901) and initially published in 1896 with the title *Seibutsu shigen ichimeishugen-ron* (生物始源一名種源論). Later in 1903, Oka Sajirō (1868-1944) retranslated it and published it with a new title *Shu no kigen* (種の起源). By 1910, at least twenty different versions of translation of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* were available to the Japanese readers. In addition, some commentaries and explanatory texts on Darwin's theory were also published, examples of which include Ishikawa Chiyomatsu's *Shinka shinron* (進化新論: New Theory of Evolution, 1892), and Oka Asajirō's *Sinka-ron kōwa* (進化論講話: Lecture on the Theory of Evolution, 1904). For those earlier instances of Japan's encounter with Western evolutionary theories, see Mizoguchi Hajime, "Nihon ni okeru Dāuin no juyō to eikyō" 日本におけるダーウィンの受容と影響 ("Introduction of Darwin's Theory to Japan and Its Implications"), *Gakujutsu no dōkō*, 3, 2010: 48-57. On Morse, see Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions in China, Japan, and the West*, 221; Sherrie Cross, "Prestige and Comfort: The Development of Social Darwinism in Early Meiji Japan, and the Role of Edward Sylvester Morse," *Annals of Science*, 53:4, 323-344. For the development of social Darwinist perspectives at the University of Tokyo, see Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Bukyokushi 1-kan* 東京大学百年史: 部局史 1 卷 (*One Hundred Years of Tokyo University: Section History, Vol. 1*), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku, 1987: 839-841. On translation and publication of the works of Huxley and Darwin, see Suzuki Zenji, *Nihon no yūsei-gaku* 日本の優生学 (*Eugenics in Japan*), Tokyo: Sankyō kagaku sensho, 1983: 53-54. Suzuki Shūji offers us an etymological analysis of terms central to the Japanese rendering of social Darwinism, such as 'shimpo' (進歩: progress), 'kyōsō' (競争: competition), and 'tōta' (淘汰: selection), suggesting that many of these terms were

diachronicities ascribed to Japan's appropriation of temporal imagination represented by social Darwinism and its discursive establishment of the hierarchical scaling of differences.

Most notably, the increasing purchase of social Darwinism was in part a result of politico-intellectual realisation, disenchantment even, that *bunmei kaika* had not achieved what it promised to achieve. During the 1880s, it became increasingly apparent that *bunmei kaika* as a positive soundbite did not specify an appropriate sequence, a temporal process, of modernising changes that were thought necessary for Japan to enter the ranks of the civilised. The question arose of whether the enlightenment of individuals should precede the constitutional inscription of individual rights and freedom, or vice versa.⁷⁰ The question also arose of what role education should play for *bunmei kaika*, when, in reality, a reformed educational system had produced not only its intended effects but also some adverse effects.⁷¹ In this climate, many intellectuals, with a broad spectrum of politico-ideological affinity, found a 'scientific' ground in social Darwinist thinking especially of Spencer to justify and promote whatever solution they deemed appropriate.

On the one hand, there were those involved in *Jiyū minken undo*, who promote the principle of equality and freedom as the means and end for human aspiration and human development. For them, Spencer's argument in *Social Statics* (1851) for the development of a doctrine of natural rights with limited statist intervention was a vade mecum. They interpreted Spencer's notion of 'fitness' as necessary individual progress under new social conditions, which would then foreground collective societal progress.⁷² On the other hand, there were those advocates of so-called '*kokken-ron*' (国権論) – the idea that rights emanate not from the individual but from the state. For them, the imperialist development based on the absolute power of the sovereign, the emperor, was the 'natural' evolutionary process of Japan. The tendency here was to read Spencer's *Principle of Sociology* (1876) and his idea of 'the survival of the fittest' in conjunction with the concept of '*Staatsrecht*' promoted by the likes of Lorenz von Stein and Johann Kaspar Bluntschli. Upon this theoretical basis, they then argued that the power and privilege of the emperor constituted rights of the state and that such rights were the necessary condition for collective progress.⁷³

borrowed from ancient Chinese texts or Buddhist teachings. See Suzuki Shūji, *Nihon kango to chūgoku* 日本漢語と中国 (*Japanese Kango and China*), Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1981.

⁷⁰ Douglas Howland, "Society Reified: Herbert Spence and Political Theory in Early Meiji Japan," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42:1, 2000: 71-72[67-86].

⁷¹ Ibid. See also my discussion in Chapter 1.

⁷² This reading of evolutionary theories can be found, for example, in Matsushima Gō's (1854-1950) translation of Spencer's *Social Statics*, as well as the writings of Baba Tatsui (1850-1880) and Ueki Emori (1857-1892). See Matsushima Gō (trans.), *Shakai byōken-ron* 社会平権論 (*Theory of Social Equality of Rights*), Tokyo: Hōkokudō, 1884 [1881]; Baba Tatsui, *Tenpu jinken-ron* 天賦人權論 (*Theory of Natural Rights*), Tokyo: Baba Tatsui, 1883; Ueki Emori, *Tenpu jinken-ben* 天賦人權弁 (*On Natural Rights*), Tokyo: Kurita Shintarō, 1883.

⁷³ The most prominent proponent is Ariga Nagao (1860-1921), who, weaving together *kokken-ron* and evolutionary theories, produced the following works. Ariga Nagao, *Shūkyō shinka-ron* 宗教進化論 (*Theory of Religious Evolution*), Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1888 [1883]; Ariga Nagao, *Shakai shinka-ron* 社会進化論 (*Theory of Social Evolution*), Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1890 [1883]; Ariga Nagao, *Zokusei shinka-ron* 族制進化論 (*Evolutionary Theory of Social Groups Organised on the Basis of Blood-Relations*), Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1890 [1884]; Ariga Nagao, *Kokka-gaku* 国家学 (*The Study of the State*), Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1889. Katō Hiroyuki was another important proponent of this reading of evolutionary theories. I will expand further on his writings, especially his *Jinken shin-shetsu* (人權新説: A New Theory of Human Rights, 1882) shortly in the following.

Those partisan positions, however, shared a common discursive thread. If the initial discourse of *bunmei kaika* in the late 1860s and 1870s mapped out the idea of progress in terms of enlightenment, this was no longer the case. In the 1880s, the idea of progress was re-centred around a collective form of human agency – be it the progress of ‘society’ as the advocates of *Jiyū minken undo* asserted, or the progress of ‘the state’ as those proponents of *kokken-ron* argued for. In other words, individuals were de-linked from the enlightenment model of progress and re-linked to a collective form of being and becoming. This de-linking and re-linking, in turn, engendered a perspective to treat progress, not as a contingent process of the individual, but as “an evolving process immanent within the totality” of society or of the state.⁷⁴ ‘Japan’, whether defined as a society or a state, became the primary unit of evolutionary historical process.

The implication of such discursive shift was not merely socio-political. The implication was also intellectual and epistemological. My argument is that this discursive shift from the individual-enlightenment nexus to the individual-collective nexus was especially a salient instance for determining the orientation of the self in knowledge. The shift prefigured how ‘I’, which emerged at the intersection between Western consciousness and Neo-Confucian conscience, would operate in knowledge. Now that the question of being and becoming was re-oriented towards the collective, the boundaries of ‘I’, of consciousness and conscience, became increasingly congruous with the boundaries of the collective. It became, in other words, possible to talk about *shukan*, the knowing self, with a specific qualifier of the collective, that is ‘Japanese’. The upshot, thus, is that this collective self signalled the emergence of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ in two insinuations: first as the subject of knowledge to render other societies and states with hierarchical scaling of difference; and second as the object of self-knowledge that functioned as a marker for disjunction between the past self and the present self.

Katō Hiroyuki’s *Jinken shin-setsu* (人権新説: A New Theory of Human Rights, 1882) is one illustrative example to corroborate my point.⁷⁵ A common way of reading this text today is to read it as the seminal representation of *kokken-ron* and as the manifestation of Katō’s ideological conversion to conservatism, which, more broadly, became the pretext for Japan’s authoritarian and subsequent fascist turn. Such a reading has a certain purchase. But my aim here is not necessarily to etch the contour of Katō’s ideological predilection nor to censure his allegedly empirical observations. Instead, the aim of re-reading the text is to consider the ways in which the idea of progress articulated on the individual-collective nexus enabled Katō to appropriate the temporality of evolutionary process and to view both the self and the other objectively and historically.

To locate and re-read *A New Theory of Human Rights* within the concern about modern knowledge formation, it is also important to trace Katō’s general conviction in science and scientificity expressed elsewhere in a number of essays.⁷⁶ For example, in his essay on natural

⁷⁴ Howland, “Society Reified,” 74.

⁷⁵ Katō Hiroyuki, *Jinken shin-setsu* 人権新説 (*A New Theory of Human Rights*), in Uete Michiari (ed.), *Nihon no meicho 34-kan: Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki* 日本 の 名著 34 卷: 西周・加藤弘之 (*Japanese Classics Vol. 34: Nishi Amane and Katō Hiroyuki*), Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1984 [1882]: 409-462.

⁷⁶ Katō’s essays, opinion pieces, and other short texts are collected in *Tensoku hyakuwa* (天則百話: A Hundred Stories of the Principles, 1899) and *Shin-jōshikiron* (新常識論: A New Thesis of Common Sense, 1914). Unfortunately, these collections do not specify when these texts were written or published. For this reason, it is rather difficult to determine the significance of these texts to Katō’s entire corpus and in relation to what Nagai Michio describes as Katō’s conservative turn said to be represented by *A New Theory of Human Rights*. At least, what I infer from Katō’s texts as well as his proximity to political centres is that his intellectual exercises were often reflexive of a kind of knowledge culture that political centres sought to promote and of a kind of temporality that undergirded Japan’s modernisation.

sciences and education, Katō argues that natural sciences, scientific methods, and predilection towards “the factual truths” must be the basis for all kinds of scholarship.⁷⁷ Letting students “indulge in abstract debates without well-grounded research” would never achieve the purpose of education, that is, “to cultivate true human.”⁷⁸ Such an argument is not a mere expression of his conviction in science and scientificity as the foundation for scholarly inquiries. It is also an expression of his belief that ‘true’ human under the intellectual condition of the late 19th century is a rational being and that an individual must cultivate, through science, a rational way of thinking and reasoning. Then, in another essay, Katō maintains the following in defence of what he calls “scholarships on the intangible” or “abstract learning” including philosophy, psychology, and sociology in their relation to “practical learning” such as engineering, physics, and chemistry: “if we are to appropriate scientific methods in all scholarships, [...] the generally assumed distinction between practical learning and abstract leaning becomes irrelevant. [...] What critics admonish as ‘abstract principles and empty theories’ are, though limited in terms of their immediate utility, constitutive part of social progress.”⁷⁹ Of course, his immediate purpose here is to defend the significance of abstract learning. However, behind his argument lies a much more fundamental claim about knowledge. That is to say, it is scientificity that undergirds the validity and utility of knowledge, irrespective of the fact that the said knowledge is regarded as practical or abstract. Insofar as knowledge is grounded on scientificity, then, it has certain efficacy for the progress of the collective.

It is at this juncture that I propose to re-read Katō’s *A New Theory of Human Rights* as an attempt to integrate his conviction in scientificity and rational being with his – albeit allegedly – empirical observation of evolutionary processes of territorially defined collective communities. Upon summarising some theoretical developments in the West, Katō aligns himself with an evolutionary theory of Bartholomäus Ritter von Carneri. The central tenant of Carneri’s thesis in his *Sittlichkeit und Darwinismus* (1871) is analogous to *kokken-ron*. The idea is that, in the natural sequence of progress, hence in a temporal process towards progress, the formation of a collective community in the form of the state and the concretisation of the state’s rights is the prerequisite for granting individuals their fundamental rights.⁸⁰ It is not a society but the state that undergirds human progress. It is not a society but the state that guarantees and bestows individuals their rights.

To this end, his *A New Theory of Human Rights* is not necessarily an instance of politico-ideological ‘turn’ as Nagai suggests, but a rather predictable culminative moment in Katō’s intellectual life. See Katō Hiroyuki, *Tensoku hyakuwa* 天則百話 (*A Hundred Stories of the Principles*), Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1899; Katō Hiroyuki, *Shin-jōshikiron* 新常識論 (*A New Thesis of Common Sense*), Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1914.

⁷⁷ Katō, “Jinbutsu shūyō-jō no shizen kagaku no hitsuyō,” 5. Katō uses here the Japanese phrase “真の事実”.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3. The original text reads, “自然科学によりて学問の基礎を作らうとしないで、即ち、着実な研究に従事しないで、大きな議論ばかりするといふ様なことは、決して、真の人物を作る方法ではなるまい。”

⁷⁹ Katō Hiroyuki, “Jitsugaku kūrī no ben” 実学空理の辨 (*On Practical Learning and Abstract Learning*), in *Tensoku hyakuwa*, 2 [1-3]. The original text reads as follows. “科学的方法を以て研究するを旨とするものなれば、[...] 実学空理の則を立るは、決して当れりと云ふべからざるなり。[...] 論者の空理空論と称する学科の如きも、社会に直接の大効益こそ少なけれども、社会の文明開化は到底是等の学科を借て、得らるべきものにあらざる所以を知らざるべからず。”

⁸⁰ Katō, *Jinken shin-setsu*, 440. He writes, “およそ権利なるものは吾人がはじめてやや鞏固なる社会を成すにいたりし時、すなわち邦国の体裁やや立ちたる時においてともに生じたりとなせるものにして、けだしもつとも確実なる説と思われる。”

For this reason, “first and foremost, the fittest must ensure its own survival” and the state and the power of the sovereign must be instituted.⁸¹

The state is the most advanced form of a collective community. The state is what guarantees a society. With an allusion to the evolutionary theory that places humans at the apex of the animal world, Katō suggests that there are also evolutionary differences among various human communities.

動物の団結共存にいたりては、多くは衆散離合つねなくして、けっして永続するものにあらず。しかのみならず、その中に治者・被治者の別いまだ立たず、分業の道いまだ起こらざるものなれば、したがいて他に対して独立の権力を有することあたわざるものにして、いまだかつて鞏固なる社会たるにあらざれば、けっしてこれを邦国の体制を備えたるものと称すべからざるはもちろなり。特に動物のみならず、吾人人類にいたりても、その団結共存のありさま今日にありてもなおまったく動物の社会に異ならずして、いまだ邦国と称すべからざるもの少なからず。

(Upon observing the animal world, we may conclude that animals never coexist in a stable collective community. Sometimes they gather together; other times they disperse from one another. Further still, there is no distinction between the sovereign and his subjects, nor a division of labour among them. No group possesses sovereign power vis-à-vis other groups. Their collective existence cannot be thus recognised as that which is akin to a stable society guaranteed by the system of the state. The same can be said about humans. How many of us live today is not so much different from how animals do. Only a few groups of humans have managed to institute the state.)⁸²

The state is not a mere ensemble of individuals. It is marked by a political relationship between the governing and the governed, an economic structure with a division of labour, and a spatial resolution that demarcates the inside from the outside.⁸³ It is the state, this form of collective community, that represents that last and highest stage of human progress.

Through what kind of evolutionary process do humans arrive at such a stage? To clarify, Katō refers to Christian Radenhausen’s theory. According to Katō’s own reading of *Der Mensch und die Welt* (1870), human progress can be divided into four stages. The first is the animal-like state of barbarism. This necessarily leads to the formation of a collective desire for security for their survival, which engenders a kind of community organised around a security interest. This is the

⁸¹ Ibid., 446. The original text reads, “吾人人類の権利なるものは、もとひたすら優勝劣敗のみの行われるを制して、社会および個人の安全を求むるがために専制者がはじめてこれを設けたるものなることはすでに明瞭なり。”

⁸² Ibid., 441.

⁸³ On sovereignty, R.B.J. Walker offers us a salient observation. Sovereignty is “the spatial resolution of claims about the possibility of meaningful political community within states and the impossibility of anything more than transient modes of accommodation between them,” which also constitutes “the crucial condition that permits and encourages the constitutive distinction between two traditions of thought about, and analysis of, modern political life: a tradition of properly political thought on the one side and a tradition of international relations theory on the other. This distinction between inside and outside, whether made explicitly, as it usually is in the theory of international relations, or tacitly, as it usually is in texts about political theory, continues to inform our understanding of how and where effective and progressive political practice can be advanced.” R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993: 13.

second stage. And yet, the savage nature of human existence remains as the general condition. Security of one community could mean a threat to others. Instances in which these communities compete against and eventually recognise the autonomy of each other are, thus, the third stage of human progress. The final stage is when those autonomous communities, now established themselves as states with specific internal politico-economic structures, bestow certain rights upon the brute, the barbaric, and the backwards in order to maintain the stability and security of their own as well as the power equilibrium in inter-state relationship.⁸⁴ Based on this four-stage theory of human progress, Katō observes contemporary world politics dominated by Western states and a handful of non-Western states including Japan, China, Turkey and Persia. His assessment is that those states have recognised the autonomous status of other states, established equal rights among themselves, and taken up responsibilities as the most developed. Of course, this assessment contradicts the reality of 1882, in which unequal treaties, for instance, continue to symbolise the curtailment of Japanese sovereignty. And, thus, the point of this assessment is less about recognising Japan's actual status in the world of the late 19th century but more about projecting a certain future expectation and forging a discursive ground to justify whatever means deemed necessary to fulfil that expectation. In other words, the assessment is to vindicate Japan's desire to be on par with the West, to become modern and yet to remain different from the West.

Katō continues to explain as follows.

けだし日本、シナ、トルコ、ペルシャ等その他全て欧米各国と人種を異にし、教法を異にし、風習を異にする各国も、またようやく同一の列国交際法によりて交際をなし、互いにほとんど権利・義務を同じくするにいたれり。

(Japan, China, Turkey, Persia, and others are different from Western states, in terms of race, religion, customs. But these [non-Western] states have finally come to interact with one another based on international laws that regulate relations among sovereign states, and now are exercising rights and fulfilling responsibilities almost equal to those of Western states.)⁸⁵

Irrespective of its accuracy, this description has a specific discursive function. What Katō implies here is that Japan, along with some other non-Western states, is now at the third stage of the human evolutionary process, in which competing states have acknowledged each other's sovereignty and are seeking to establish the stability of the world order. Then, as a way of orienting Japan towards the fourth stage, Katō goes on to argue that the imperial expansion of those sovereign states and colonial subjugation of those trapped in the earlier stages of evolutionary process are not simply an inevitable but constitutive part of human progress.

⁸⁴ Katō, *Jinken shin-setsu*, 448-449. Interestingly, Darwin himself questioned the viability of Radenhausen's theory. When responding to an inquiry from Bruno Schreiber, who asked Darwin his opinion about Radenhausen, Darwin wrote as follows. "I wish that I could give any answer to your courteous letter. [...] With respect to Dr. R views, I can hardly believe that he has sufficient facts to establish his successive periods in the formation of the world, & without facts all experience shows that such speculations are useless." Charles Darwin, "To Bruno Schreiber," in Frederick Burkhardt, James A Secord, Samantha Evans, Shelly Innes, Francis Neary, Alison M. Pearn, Anne Secord, and Paul White (eds.), *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin, Vol. 24, 1876*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016: 462.

⁸⁵ Katō, *Jinken shin-setsu*, 449.

實際上においては万国諸人種を同等のものとするも、けだし欧米人とおよびアジア人民中にて、日本、シナ等僅々の開明人種にとどまりて、その他は幸いに断滅をまぬかるるものといえどもかならず劣者となりて、勢い優等人種の制馭に服せざるをえざるはあえて疑うべきにあらずと信ず。

(All races are equal. Both in reality, only Europeans and some Asians such as Japanese and Chinese have achieved the state of the enlightened. Others, though they may have avoided the complete annihilation, have unfortunately become inferior. I believe that their subjugation to the superior is doubtless an inevitable consequence.)⁸⁶

In other words, Katō views imperialism and colonialism as an instance in which, or even a means through which, the dominant fulfils its responsibilities by bestowing certain rights upon the brute (Africans and aboriginals in Australia), the backward (people of the Indian subcontinent), and the slaves (in the Americas) and guarantees security for them.⁸⁷

For our postcolonial sensitivity today, this is doubtless a highly problematic claim. It can be read, as we rightly do, as a pretext for violence and coercive tactics Japan yielded upon its neighbours under its imperial and colonial project.⁸⁸ Acknowledging thus, my argument here is that Katō's *A New Theory of Human Rights* is an emblematic example of how the appropriation of evolutionary theories to the human world, that is to say, how the appropriation of a scientific perspective, however dubious it may be, legitimises in a perverse way Japan's present positionality vis-à-vis other states and its future orientation as the imperial centre. Progress, a temporalised human process, is no longer a contingent process of individuals but an evolving process immanent within the totality of the state. The state is now the unit of such a temporal process and simultaneously the object of scientific inquiry.

At the intersection between *kagaku* and *shukan*, between scientific culture and conscious/conscient 'I', which is mediated by evolutionary temporality of human progress, emerges this notion of 'Japan' – as a distinct bearer of human progress, as a distinct position to render other communities with evolutionary statuses, and as a distinct object of self-knowledge that, in a self-referential manner, affirms its distinctive character and temporal positionality. Japan as a spatially bounded and localised configuration of 'I' is now all at once an agent of history, the subject of knowledge, and the object of self-knowledge. Thus, Katō repeatedly reminds readers that to be on par with Western states is not tantamount to becoming a mimicry of the West.

東洋各国と欧州各国とは [...] 民情・風習の殊別あれば、欧州各国の安全・幸福を進むるにたるべき法律・権利はいまだもって東洋人民の安全・幸福を進るに適せ

⁸⁶ Ibid., 454.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 448-449.

⁸⁸ Not surprisingly, this is the interpretative trope with which historians evaluate Katō's political ideology generally and his *A New Theory of Human Rights* more specifically. See, for example, Nozomu Kawamura, "Sociology and Socialism in the Interwar Period," in Thomas Rimer (ed.), *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals During the Interwar Years*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990: 61-82; Michael Weiner, "Discourses of Race, Nation and Empire in Pre-1945 Japan," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18:3, 1995: 433-456; Tanaka Yukari, "Jinken shin-setsu igo no Katō Hiroyuki: Meiji-kokka no kakuritsu to 'kyōsha no kenri'-ron no tenkai" 人権新説以後の加藤弘之: 明治国家の確立と「強者の権利」論の展開 ("Katō Hiroyuki's Thought of the State after A New Theory of Human Rights: Theory of 'Recht des Starkeren' in the Formative Period of the Meiji State"), *En marge de l'histoire*, 64, 2012: 35-54.

ざるなり。これゆえに当路者もしくは学士・論者にいたりてはけっして今野ことを軽忽に看過すべからざるはもちろんなり。

(States in the East and those in the West are different, as their psych and customs are different. One immediate repercussion is that laws and rights of those states in the West, which were implemented to guarantee the happiness and security of their people, are not adequate for promoting the security and happiness of the people in the East. Therefore, those in power, scholars, and critics should not treat this fact lightly.)⁸⁹

In a sense, this spatially bounded and localised configuration of ‘I’ is an attempt of de-linking in twofold: ideo-politically de-linking the idea of progress from Western civilisations; and epistemically de-linking the subject of knowledge from Western histories and lifeworlds. The upshot for the formation of modern knowledge, then, is that at the intersection between *kagaku* and *shukan* emerges a possibility of specifically ‘Japanese’ subject position.

§

5.4. ‘National’ Language and the Subject Position

This discursive possibility of the ‘Japanese’ subject did not immediately translate into this subject actually speaking for itself as the producer of knowledge. The reality of knowledge production and dissemination, for example, at the institutional apex of *gakumon* was that the university remained as a locus of appropriation and reproduction of what Nakamura Masanao called ‘the surface’ or Fukuzawa Yukichi ‘the external forms’ of modern Western knowledge. How could this discursively forged ‘Japanese’ subject, what Nakamura described as ‘consciousness’ or Fukuzawa ‘spirit’, insert itself in knowledge?⁹⁰ How could this ‘I’, the Japanese self, actually speak? How could this ‘I’ really attain a subjective voice? And in so doing, how could this ‘Japanese I’ take control over knowledge as the subject and become the producer of modern knowledge rather than the consumer of modern Western knowledge?

It was at this juncture that the notion of ‘national’ language gained a discursive purchase for political and intellectual debates. The premise was that ‘national’ language was a means of subjective enunciation for the collective ‘Japanese’ self, a medium through which the ‘Japanese’ subject would produce knowledge. From the mid-1870s onwards, the premise became increasingly manifest in the realm of *gakumon* as a concern about the appropriate language for research and pedagogy and as a call for a shift from English, then the lingua franca at the university, to what was called ‘*hōgo*’ (邦語: ‘national’ language).⁹¹

⁸⁹ Katō, *Jinken shin-shetsu*, 455.

⁹⁰ For Nakamura’s and Fukuzawa’s terminologies, see my discussion in the introduction.

⁹¹ A more cumbersome translation would be ‘the vernacular language of the nation state’. However, as Kyōgoku Okikazu points out, the term ‘*hōgo*’ had long been used interchangeably with the term ‘*kokugo*’ (国語: often translated as national language) since the late Edo period. See Kyōgoku Okikazu, “‘Kokugo,’ ‘*hōgo*,’ ‘*nihongo*’ ni tsuite: Kinsei kara meiji-zenki ni itaru” 「国語」・「邦語」・「日本語」について: 近世から明治前期にいたる (“On ‘Kokugo,’ ‘*Hōgo*,’ and ‘*Nihongo*’: From the Edo Period to the First Half of the Meiji Period”), *Kokugogaku*, 146, 1986: 1-12.

In 1875, Tanaka Fujimaro (1845-1909), then a high-ranking official at the Ministry of Education, proposed to Daijōkan (太政官: the Council of State) the establishment of what he called Kokufudai-daigakkō (国府台大学校: a university in Kokufudai) as the ultimate apex of a reformed educational system. Of course, Tanaka's proposal was in parallel to the government plan of establishing the University of Tokyo.⁹² For Tanaka, however, the University of Tokyo, though still at a planning stage, did not represent the fundamental ethos of what a university ought to be and, thus, shall be integrated at a later point into Kokufudai-daigakkō. Tanaka explains his view as follows.

東京大学校設立之儀、[...] 新築スヘキ大学校ハ、今ノ開成学校等ノ如キ外国語学ヲ以専門科ヲ修学スル者ヲ教養スルノ一校ニシテ、[...] 真ノ大学校トハ自ラ体裁モ異ナリ、且同所 [国府台大学校] 之方ハ中小ノ学漸次完備而後逐々大学ニ登第之者輩出スルノ時機ニ至リ、高等大学校ヲ可相設将来之心算ニ候間、 [...]

(On the establishment of the University of Tokyo, [...] this currently planned university is not at all dissimilar to the Kaisei-gakkō and the likes – educating those students in specialised subjects upon completing their training in foreign languages. [...] But this is not what a 'real' university ought to be. Once elementary and middle schools are established around the country and begin to produce graduates for further education, the tertiary education, in the future, must be recentred around Kokufudai-daigakkō.)⁹³

The University of Tokyo will not, in Tanaka's view, be a 'real' university. This is because the pedagogical emphasis will be placed on foreign language education as a prerequisite for specialised learning and because specialised learning will be mediated through foreign languages. What is particularly interesting here is that Tanaka is expressing an idea that a 'real' university, the institutional apex of *gakumon*, is fundamentally linked to language. Using foreign languages as the language of research and education hinders the university from becoming a true pinnacle of knowledge. Learning Western theories, concepts, and ideas in Western languages is, for Tanaka, not tantamount to actually producing knowledge.

This concern about the appropriate language for research and education continued to prevail well after the establishment of the University of Tokyo, which forced Katō Hiroyuki, then the president of the University of Tokyo, to defend his institution. In 1880, he argued that

東京大学ニ於テハ、方今専ラ、英語ヲ以テ教育ヲナスト雖モ、此事決シテ、本意トスル所ニアラス [...] 将来教師ト書籍ト俱ニ、漸漸具備スルニ至レハ、遂ニ邦語ヲ以テ教授スルノ目的トナス [...] 三学部ニ於テ、現今施行スル所ノ規則ト雖モ、決シテ洋学校ノ性質ニ適セル規則ニアラス [...] 今ノ東京大学ハ、不充分ナカラモ

Of course, the imbrication of 'national' and 'Japanese' was intimately intertwined with the Meiji political ideology of nation-state. I will come back to this point shortly.

⁹² The University of Tokyo was established in 1877 by integrating two existing institutions, Tōkyō-kaisei-gakkō (東京開成学校), originally established as Yōgakusho (洋学所) in 1855 by the Tokugawa shogunate, and Tōkyō-igakkō (東京医学校), originally Seiyō-igakusho (西洋医学所) of the shogunate established in 1860. For a brief historical survey of these institutions, see Chapter 4. See also Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Tūshi*, Vol.1, 7-80.

⁹³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 387-398.

既ニ、日本大学ノ性質ヲ具セルモノト、云ハサルヲ得サルノ理ニシテ、決シテ洋学大学ト、認ムヘキニアラサルヲ知ルヘシ

(At the University of Tokyo, education is offered mainly in English. However, this is not what we actually wish. [...] When we eventually have enough [Japanese] instructors and [Japanese] texts in the future, we intend to educate students in the national language. [...] The rule at the existing faculties of Law, Letters, and Science is indeed to teach in English, but this rule does not make the university a school of Western learning. [...] Admittedly, the University of Tokyo is still evolving and not perfect. But it already has certain characters of a ‘Japanese’ university. This is the truth that we must acknowledge. For this reason, it is wrong to regard the university as an institution merely for Western learning.)⁹⁴

To be sure, the immediate objective for Katō was to defend the current stature of the university. Crucially, however, he was in agreement with the government officials that research and education at the university must be improved with a shift towards the ‘national’ language as the *lingua franca*, and that this shift was that which would foreground a characteristically ‘Japanese’ university. In other words, the consensus was that elevating the ‘national’ language to the status of scholarly language was both instrumental and symbolical for the university to be the institutional locus not of modern Western knowledge but modern knowledge.

The following years saw the increasing political demand to shift the *lingua franca* at the university from English to the ‘national’ language.⁹⁵ For instance, in 1883, Fukuoka Takachika, then the Minister of Education, submitted a letter of application to Sanjō Sanetomi (1837-1891), then the Chancellor, to change some of the foundational principles of the university. One of such principles was the language of research and education.⁹⁶ Fukuoka’s primary argument is that a language reflects histories and lifeworlds of the place that the language is used. Linguistic unity is historico-cultural unity. For this reason, “teaching politics in English,” for example, “will never yield a perfect outcome.” Subjects such as politics “must be taught with reference to that which is

⁹⁴ Kawasumi Testuo (ed.), *Shiryō nihon eigaku-shi 2-kan: Eigo kyōiku ronsō-shi* 資料日本英学史 2 卷: 英語教育論争史 (*Documents of English Studies in Japan, Vol.2: History of the Controversy over English Language Education*), Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1978: 92. See Also, Amano Ikuo, *Shiken no shakai-shi* 試験の社会史 (*Social History of Examination*), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2009: 28. The rationale behind Katō’s claim here is the existence of Wakan-bungaku-ka (和漢文学科: the Department of Japanese and Chinese Literature) established in 1877 as one of the inaugural departments at the University of Tokyo. For the establishment of Wakan-bungaku-ka, see Chapter 1. In the subsequent years, the university began to reorient itself towards the national. Take but one example of Shigaku-ka (史学科: Department of History). During the 1870s and throughout the 1880s, the department focused primarily on Euro-American history. However, with the establishment of Kokushi-ka (国史科: Department of National History) in 1889 and Tōyōshigaku-ka (東洋史学科: Department of Oriental History) in 1910, historical scholarship became increasingly national in its scope. See Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi: Bukyokushi 1-kan*, 607-643.

⁹⁵ Until the early 1880s, lectures of the Faculty of Law, of Letters, and of Science at the University of Tokyo were offered primarily in English, as was customary at its predecessor institution, Kaisei-gakkō. For example, nine out of eleven foreign professors so-called ‘*oyatoi gaikokujin kyōshi*’ (御雇外国人教師), who taught during the 1880 academic year, were from either the United Kingdom or the United States. See Tōkyō daigaku, *Tōkyō daigaku hōribun sangakubu ichiran* 東京大学法理文三学部一覧 (*Index of the Faculty of Law, Science, Letters at the University of Tokyo*), Tokyo: Maruie Zenshichi, 1882: 2-10.

⁹⁶ Another change proposed was the ‘Germanisation’ of social sciences, whereby scholars and students were encouraged to disregard scholarly developments in Anglo-American academies and instead to appropriate theoretical models and analytical concepts developed in the German-speaking countries.

most reflexive of the contemporary condition of our own country. Otherwise, political dissents and political instability would be imminent.”⁹⁷ Then, Fukuoka list some necessary reforms, which include “to abolish English as the lingua franca” and “to teach in the national language.”⁹⁸ This proposal was followed up on by Fukuoka’s successor, Ōki Takatō (1832-1899), who, as the Minister of Education, sent an unofficial notice to the University of Tokyo in February 1884. In the notice, Ōki urged the university to offer lectures not in English but in the ‘national’ language, while guaranteeing that the ministry would take responsibility to compile dictionaries of ‘national’ language as well as dictionaries of scientific and academic vocabularies in the ‘national’ language.⁹⁹

This political call for the ‘national’ language was received largely favourably if not enthusiastically by scholars. Following Fukuoka’s initial proposal for the shift from English to the ‘national’ language, a group of scholars at the University of Tokyo submitted, in June 1883, a concrete plan for institutional reform to the Ministry of Education. Signatories of the plan included some of the most prominent Japanese professors at the Faculty of Law, such as Hozumi Nobushige (1855-1926) and Hijikata Yasushi (1859-1938). The general consensus undergirding the plan was similar to Fukuoka’s argument that equated linguistic unity to historico-cultural unity. Thus, the signatories of the plan argued, any scholarly subjects that were intimately intertwined with the interest of society and, thus, expected to reflect specificities of ‘Japanese’ society, such as law and medicine, must be taught in the ‘national’ language.¹⁰⁰ As the first step to change the lingua franca at the university, those signatories proposed to teach all the courses at preparatory level shall be taught no longer in English but in Japanese. The similar change, as they went on to maintain, would be implemented eventually also to those specialised courses students would pursue after their preparatory education.¹⁰¹

Of course, these changes required, as Katō Hiroyuki cautioned earlier in 1880, a certain basic condition: the existence of teachers and professors who could indeed teach in the ‘national’ language. At the time of the inauguration of the University of Tokyo in 1877, a little over seventy percent of all appointed professors were from Europe and the United States. Or, twenty-three out

⁹⁷ Fukuoka Takachika, “Tōkyō daigaku bō-gakka kyōju-jō ni mochiiru eigo o haishi hōgo o mochiu jiten yakusan-yōsho hanyaku tō narabini doitsu gakujutsu o toru no ken ni kakari jōshin” 東京大学某学科教授上ニ用フル英語ヲ廃シ邦語ヲ用ヒ辞典訳纂用書反訳等並ニ独逸學術ヲ採ルノ件ニ係リ上申 (“Proposal to abolish the usage of English for university education, to compile dictionaries in the national language, and to introduce Germanic curriculum”), Tōsho bunko, ID-No.110-87-1. The original proposal reads as follows. “英語ヲ用フル国即チ 英吉利及合衆国ニ於テハ政治ノ學問未タ進歩セス、[...] 故ニ到底英語ヲ用ヒテ政治學ヲ教授セント欲スルモ完全ヲ期スヘカラズ、且、政治學ノ如キハ最モ我國情ニ切ナルモノヲ択リテ教授セサレハ後來國ノ安寧ヲ害スル恐レアリ ”

⁹⁸ Ibid. The original sentence reads, “從來教授上用フル所ノ英語ヲ廃スコト” and “邦語ヲ用ヒテ教授スルコト”

⁹⁹ Ōki’s notice to the University of Tokyo can be found in Tōkyō daigaku, *Jūyō shorui ishū, meiji jūni-nen meiji nijūyo-nen* 重要書類彙集 明治十二年明治二十四年 (*A Collection of Important Documents from 1879 until 1891*), The University of Tokyo Archive, ID-No. S0014/SS2/01. The original text reads “其學教授上用語ノ儀、自今主トシテ邦語ヲ用ヒ、英語ヲ用フルヲ止メ [...] 邦語事典學術事典其他用書編纂等ノ儀ハ本省ニ於テ尚着手可致答ニ候事”

¹⁰⁰ “Tōkyō daigaku hōgakubu-nai ni bekka setsuritsu no gi ni tsuki kengi” 東京大学法学部内ニ別課設立の儀ニ付建議 (“A Proposal for Establishing Preparatory Courses at the Faculty of Law”), in *Tōkyō teikoku daigaku gojū-nen-shi 1-kan*, 595-601.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

of thirty-two professorial positions were offered to those experts and scholars from abroad.¹⁰² While the overall number of appointees changed in the following years, this ratio of foreign professors and Japanese professors remained consistent up until 1880.¹⁰³ However, we see a dramatic shift in 1881, with foreign professors now taking up only slightly above forty percent of all appointments. Or in other words, out of 37 positions, only sixteen were offered to foreign professors.¹⁰⁴ By 1884, the balance between foreign and Japanese professors was further tilted towards the latter's majority, with foreigners taking up only twelve professorial positions while forty Japanese professors were appointed.¹⁰⁵ Of course, some of those Japanese professors, especially those who studied abroad, may have offered their lectures in foreign languages. These numbers are, thus, mere indicators of the increasing proclivity towards 'nationalising' the language of research and education. But these are, nonetheless, good indicators, read especially in conjunction with the politico-scholarly interest in elevating the national language to a scholarly language in order to reorient the university towards what Katō earlier called '*nihon daigaku*' – a characteristically 'Japanese' university.¹⁰⁶

In those developments at the university discussed above, the political and intellectual classes viewed the 'national' language not only as a practical instrument to satisfy the need of students whose limited competency in foreign languages may have hindered their education. They viewed the 'national' language also as a symbolical trope, as a medium of collective subjective enunciation as Japanese. Given the overarching quandary of early Meiji – becoming modern and yet being different from the West – it is not surprising that those elites found in the idea of 'national' language a certain resolution for such a quandary.

Yet, I have thus far avoided the elephant, or perhaps a few elephants, in the room. The most obvious of all is the isomorphism of the 'national' language and the 'Japanese' language, which brings to the fore a few related questions. What does it mean to occupy the subject position that is discursively constituted as a spatially-bounded localised configuration, as the 'Japanese' subject and to produce knowledge in the 'national' language? How do these specificities encoded in the subject (the 'Japanese' subject) and in the means for the subject to produce knowledge (the 'national' language) intersect with the modern regime of truth that presumes that knowledge, when and if properly produced and validated, transcends all particularities? What does such 'nationalisation' of core premises of knowledge mean for the state of modern knowledge?

¹⁰² Monbushō, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō 5-kan* 日本帝国文部省年報 5 卷 (*The Annual Report of the Ministry of Education of Imperial Japan Vol.5*), Tokyo: Monbushō, 1914.

¹⁰³ Monbushō, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō 8-kan* 日本帝国文部省年報 8 卷 (*The Annual Report of the Ministry of Education of Imperial Japan Vol.8*), Tokyo: Monbushō, 1914.

¹⁰⁴ Monbushō, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō 9-kan* 日本帝国文部省年報 9 卷 (*The Annual Report of the Ministry of Education of Imperial Japan Vol.9*), Tokyo: Monbushō, 1914.

¹⁰⁵ Monbushō, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō 12-kan* 日本帝国文部省年報 12 卷 (*The Annual Report of the Ministry of Education of Imperial Japan Vol.12*), Tokyo: Monbushō, 1914.

¹⁰⁶ To note, Katō was not alone in promoting the idea of '*nihon daigaku*' (日本大学). In 1887, with some support from Katō and Toyama Masakazu (1848-1900), Inoue Enryō (1858-1919) established Tetsugakukan (哲学館: later Tōyō University). The initial purpose was to offer courses on a wide array of subjects, including Western literature, history and philosophy. However, upon returning from his year-long stay in Europe and the U.S., Inoue reoriented the institutional purpose to develop "*nihon-shugi no daigaku*" (日本主義の大学), or else "*nihon daigaku*" (日本大学). See Tōyō daigaku (ed.), *Tōyō daigaku sōritsu gojū-nen-shi* 東洋大学創立五十年史 (*Fifty Years of Tōyō University*), Tokyo: Tōyō daigaku, 1937: 59-60. A number of institutions, including Kōten-kōkyūjo (皇典講究所, 1882), Nihon hōritsu-gakkō (日本法律学校, 1889), and Kokugakuin (國學院, 1890) were also established during the 1880s and the early 1890s with a similar purpose.

When people are speaking, writing, and reading in what I nominally call their ‘dominant’ language, they are not necessarily conscious about in which language they are speaking, writing, and reading.¹⁰⁷ Nor are they consciously referring to the established standards of their dominant language as linguists and grammarians would otherwise do. Even the idea “that they are speaking a particular ‘language’ is,” as Lee Yoeunsuk succinctly puts it, “itself alien” to them.¹⁰⁸ In contrast, ‘national’ language is a kind of language constructed for a nation to be imagined and narrated into being. It marks, in the words of John Edwards, “the association between cultural and linguistic specificity,” from which arises “the desire to preserve and ‘protect’ what [is] increasingly seen as an important boundary marker.”¹⁰⁹ There is no one-fit-all explanation about how a ‘national’ language is constructed: at times through a series of standardisation of a specific ‘local’ language – someone’s ‘dominant’ language – and other times through hybridisation of various ‘local’ languages. Whatever the process may be, ‘national’ language is an instrument of the modern form of political community, the nation-state, to simultaneously homogenise and hierarchise its population.

Meiji Japan was, in this regard, no exception. There are ample examples of salient scholarly works that address the nexus between the Meiji project of nation building and the ideology of ‘national’ language and the consequent imbrication of ‘national’ language and ‘Japanese’ language, which in itself is a very ambiguous category.¹¹⁰ The upshot is that the Meiji invention of the ‘Japanese’ language as the ‘national’ language was part and parcel of ideo-political effort to imagine ‘Japan’ as a distinct historico-cultural entity with linguistic unity. Thus, Kamei Takeshi succinctly summarises that “if we are taught to treat the language of *Manyōshū* and that of the 20th century both as a form of ‘Japanese’ language, despite substantial differences, we are taught to do so because of biased arbitrary decisions, not because of the result of genuine linguistic inquiry.” It is, therefore, part and parcel of nationalist ideology that “mythologises” the ‘Japanese’ nation as “the absolute that transcends history.”¹¹¹ The Meiji politico-intellectual investment in changing the

¹⁰⁷ Terms such as ‘native language’ and ‘mother tongue’ are problematic not only because these terms are variously defined but also because they are often socio-political entities that enact arbitrary boundaries of the native and the non-native and reproduce normative assumptions about behaviours, experiences, and identities of the native, about what the native ought to do, think, and be. See M.B.H. Rampton, “Displacing the ‘native speaker’: expertise, affiliation, and inheritance,” *ELT Journal*, 44:2, 1990: 97-101; Alan Davies, *The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Yeounsuk Lee, *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan*, Maki Hirano Hubbard (trans.), Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010: 1.

¹⁰⁹ John Edwards, “Foreword: Language, Prescriptivism, Nationalism – and Identity,” in Carol Percy and Mary Catherine Davidson (eds.), *The Languages of Nation: Attitudes and Norms*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 2012: 13[11-36]. See also Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Tony Judt and Denis Lacorne (eds.), *Language, Nation and State: Identity Politics in a Multilingual Age*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Naoki Sakai, *Shizan sareru nihongo nihonjin: ‘Nihon’ no rekishi, chisei-teki haichi* 死産される日本語・日本人: 「日本」の歴史、地政的配置 (*The Stillborn Japanese Language and Japanese: History of ‘Japan’ and Geopolitical Constellation*), Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1996; Hirai Masao, *Kokugo kokuji mondai no rekishi* 国語・国字問題の歴史 (*The History of the Controversy over National Language and National Writing System*), Tokyo: Sangensha, 1998; Yasuda Toshiaki, *Kokugo’no kindaishi: Teikoku nihon to kokugo-gakusha tachi* 「国語」の近代史: 帝国日本と国語学者たち (*Modern History of Kokugo: The Japanese Empire and Scholars of Kokugo*), Tokyo: Chūō shinsho, 2006.

¹¹¹ Kamei Takashi, “Kokugo towa ikanaru kotoba nariya” 国語とはいかなる言葉なりや (“What Kind of Language Is Kokugo?”), in *Kamei Takashi ronbun shū I-kan: Nihongo no tame ni* 亀井考論文集 1 巻: 日本語のために (*Collection of Kame Takashi’s Essays: For the Japanese Language*), Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1971: 229,

lingua franca of research and education from English to the ‘national’ language certainly qualifies as part and parcel of myth-making of the ‘Japanese’ nation-state. It was an effort to mould the collective, through the idea of ‘national’ language, into a spatially bounded and temporally stretched community. It was, in other words, an effort to enact boundaries of the ‘Japanese’ self with a means of subjective enunciation.

In the realm of knowledge, the shift towards the ‘national’ language at the university created a liminal space in which the ‘Japanese’ subject attained a means of enunciation, and thus in which ‘Japan’ transubstantiated itself from the mere translator of modern Western knowledge to the possible producer of modern knowledge. Instead of consuming the content of modern Western knowledge in foreign languages, the ‘Japanese’ subject began to think and reason in their own ‘dominant’ and ‘local’ language that was nominally called ‘Japanese’. At the same time, this shift towards the ‘national’ language was also a process whereby a ‘local’ language, the ‘Japanese’ language, was elevated to the rank of a ‘scholarly’ language that was capable of producing not only culturally and aesthetically conciliatory prose but also intellectually and logically substantial exposition. When woven with the national idea, this ‘scholarly’ language shored up a legitimacy also as the ‘national’ language. Furthermore, for this bidirectional process – from a foreign to local language and from a local to scholarly language – that converged into the emergence of ‘national’ language, or at least the idea of ‘national’ language, translation as epistemic exercise was crucial. This is because it was translation that facilitated the bidirectional process in the first place.

Importantly, this is not a peculiarly Japanese phenomenon. Producing knowledge in the ‘national’ language is doubtless a global and modern phenomenon. As Benedict Anderson notes, “the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community.”¹¹² Building upon this, my argument is that the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a hetero-lingual form of knowledge production. The commitment to abstraction, to science, or to reason was now tied to the idea of the nation-state. In Europe, Dante (1265-1321) wrote *Commedia* (The Divine Comedy, c.a. 1321) in the dialect of Florence. Joachim du Bellay (1522-1560) wrote in French the manifest *La Défense et illustration de la langue française* (The Defense and Illustration of the French Language, 1549). Mikhail Vasilyevich (1711-1765) distinguished colloquial Russian from Old Slavonic in his work on literary theory, *Kratkoye rukovodstvo k krasnorechiyu* (A Brief Guide to Eloquence, 1748). Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) offered a critique of Hegelian philosophy in *To opbyggelige Taler* (Two Upbuilding Discourses, 1843) written in Danish. While many of them had formative education in classical Greek and Latin, hitherto ‘universal’ languages of scholarship in Europe, their corpus elevated ‘local’ languages to the ‘national-scholarly’ language. In other words, the ‘national-scholarly’ language came to bind together universal claims of knowledge and particular characters of the nation-state.

Meiji Japan was, in this regard, no exception. With the advent of ‘national’ language, Meiji scholars were no longer writing in the hitherto ‘universal’ language of scholarship, that is Chinese.

232. The original texts reads as follows. “すなわち万葉集の言葉と二十世紀の日本の言語とがその実質においていかにことなつたものであつても、なおかつこれらをわれわれがともに“ひとつの日本語のすがた”としてうけとるようにならねばならぬとすれば、このばあいにはそれはすくなくとも直接には純粋な意味での言語学の影響によるものではなく、ある固定した観念の独断である。そういう独断は歴史を超越する形而上学的な絶対の存在を暗黙のうちに—いわば神話として—仮定するそういう思想からのひとつの派生である。”

¹¹² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 46.

Nor were they writing in any of those languages of Western civilisation that they considered the apex of human intellectual progress. The medium of producing and disseminating knowledge, that is language, was shifted towards the particular. At the same time, their conviction in what Inoue Tetsujirō once called ‘scientific culture’ became a contingent silence, a tacitly agreed epistemic foundation, to argue for the universal purchase of their knowledge. The idea was that, while knowledge production was mediated by the particular, by the ‘national’ language, ‘scientific culture’ guaranteed that its outcome would transcend particularities. Katō Hiroyuki’s speech, for instance, alludes to this point.

然レドモ初メノホドハ、我邦ニ於テハ學術ト称スルニ足ルモノハ曾テコレアラザリシ由リ、已ムヲ得ズ欧米ノ學術ヲ攻究シテ其方法ヲ窺ヒタルニ、今ヤ彼国ノ學術ニ通ジタルノ学者輩出シタレバ、其方法由テ我邦ノコトヲ研究シ得ルノ期ニ達セリ。

(At the beginning, no scholarship in Japan could be adequately qualified as serious. Out of necessity, we dedicated ourselves to learning scholarly traditions of the West and patiently analysed their methods. Now that we have produced a number of scholars who have great expertise in Western scholarships, it is high time we apply those methods for the studies of our own country.)¹¹³

The shift towards the ‘national’ language was to satisfy the demand of the nation-state to become the enunciating subject of knowledge. The credo of scientific culture was to satisfy the demand of knowledge to be valid and serious.

Behind this imbrication of the particular and the universal lies a conviction that knowledge, when properly validated, transcends particularities represented by the ‘national’ language. The argument is that, ultimately, it does not matter much whether knowledge is produced in Japanese, in English, in Chinese, in German, or in any other ‘national’ languages, as long as the process of knowledge production follows established scientific procedures. This is a tempting argument. It was so, I imagine, especially for those Meiji scholars who wish to join the forward march of universal intellectual progress without becoming mimics of the West. However, such an argument is not a revelation of the fundamental truth about knowledge. It is rather a discursive act of stabilising what is otherwise an arbitrary belief that the subject, while bearing the national, can in knowledge remove itself from the national and attain “a God’s-eye view”¹¹⁴ or a view “from nowhere.”¹¹⁵

My argument here – and throughout this inquiry – is something contrary to that belief. Modern knowledge formation in Japan was a shift in the qualification of knowledge from the *ri*-knowledge structuration to the position of the knower as the conscious subject to view and accurately represent the world of objects. Modern knowledge formation in Japan was, thus, a process of reconceiving knowledge as a subject-object relation. This subject was, however, not given. As a discourse built upon a series of discourses, the subject was construed as a spatially bounded localised configuration, as the ‘Japanese’ subject. It was construed as such, first, through translation practices that transformed the meaning of key existing cognitive devices or concepts, such as *gakumon*, *ri*, and *kyūri*, and that engendered new cognitive devices, such as *kagaku* and *shukan* and, second, through reconfiguring the constellation of these cognitive devices. What does this all

¹¹³ Katō, “Gakuijuyo-shiki shukuji,” 197.

¹¹⁴ Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 67.

mean? It means that, contrary to the conviction held by Inoue, Katō, and many of their contemporaries, and perhaps also contrary to our general belief, the subject position forged in Japan did not come to exist as a transcendental position. It came to exist as a portmanteau for all that semantics, worldviews, political discourses, and future expectations that were ushered to imagine 'Japan' and to relate this 'Japan' to the world of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The 'national' language was not simply a means for this subject to produce knowledge. It was also a marker to reinforce the boundaries of this subject as a spatially bounded localised configuration. The knowledge that this subject produced was certainly true to this subject. However, as the subsequent development of supposedly scientific scholarships, such as Oriental history and so-called colonial studies that mobilised a cluster of scientific methods and approaches, indicate, the question of whether this knowledge could be true to others remains contentious.

CONCLUSION

THE AFTERLIFE OF THE ‘JAPANESE’ SUBJECT

All that is, is now either what is real [*das Wirkliche*] as the object or what works the real [*das Wirkende*] as the objectifying within which the objectivity of the object takes shape. Objectifying, in representing, in setting before, delivers up the object to the *ego cogito*. In that delivering up, the ego proves to be that which underlies its own activity (the delivering up that sets before, i.e., proves itself to be the *subjectum*. The subject is subject for itself. The essence of consciousness is self-consciousness. Everything that is, is therefore either the object of the subject or the subject of the subject.

Martin Heidegger¹

§

Legacies

‘Modern’ is not an instance in a sequence of historical construction. It is an attitude that questions what has, in fact, been at the root of such historical construction. It is an attitude that is premised on the conviction that we have achieved self-consciousness and that our self-understanding is final because it is unfettered by any kind of substantive values and thus formal. This modern self, as David Kolb succinctly points out, searches and brings “all other beings into ordered and controlled representation before its critical eyes” and “secures its own reality from doubt by its methodical treatment of its experiences.”² It is not that the self is absorbed in objective reality. Nor is it that the self is simply one pole of the subject-object relation. Rather, “it is the foundation of that relation.”³ This is a common theme of the modern that imputes such a unity to the subject.

What I sought to do in this inquiry was to challenge this purported unity of the subject. My argument is that the subject, a discourse built upon a series of discourses, cannot escape the histories and lifeworlds from which it emerges. In Japan, the subject emerged through semantic (re)configuration of conceptual and cognitive devices, such as *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, and *shukan*, and through re-ordering of the constellation of these devices – processes that were

¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, William Lovitt (trans.), New York, NY and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977: 100.

² David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986: 138.

³ Ibid.

intertwined with broader semiosis reflexive of political, social, and cultural demands. The subject, in other words, came to exist as the specially ‘Japanese’ subject sustained by a series of discourses that was distinct, for example, from that which undergirded the modern ‘Western’ subject. Modern knowledge formation in Japan was, therefore, not an instance in which the Japanese adopted and appropriated theories, concepts, and ideas derived from the modern Western intellectual tradition. Nor was it an instance in which the preparatorily given notion of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ became manifest in the field of knowledge as a cognitive capacity to occupy the position of the knowing subject. Rather, modern knowledge formation in Japan was an instance in which the subject was forged both as the foundational principle of knowledge and as the locus of national enunciation in a synchronic and conjunctural moment of nation-building during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

What this means is that this subject is a contingent silence that “provides a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment.”⁴ For this reason, we cannot assume “structures of meaning, structures which are at once the collective forms of experiences” remain the same across time and space.⁵ The impossibility of such an assumption is, in fact, twofold. First of all, we cannot assume that the structure of meaning undergirding the subject is universal and ahistorical. It is true, we are all so sedated by the modern subject that it seems almost impossible to think about knowledge without invoking this subject. But the subject is a historically specific discourse articulated to reconceive the way in which we relate to the world and the way in which we have recourse to the meaning of our being and becoming. At the same time, there is no one-fit-all formula to explain how this subject has been forged as such and hardened into an axiom. The question of how it has become the contingent silence for the operation of knowledge cannot be divorced from spatiotemporal particularities. When we think of knowledge, whether in Japan or in the West, we presume the subject as the foundational principle. At the level of the signifier, the subject appears to transcend particularities. And yet, once we attend to the level of signification, discourse, and structure of meaning, as I sought to do in this inquiry, we cannot simply assume thus. Second, the structure of meaning that undergirds the specifically ‘Japanese’ subject is by no means stable. This is because this subject with the qualifier ‘Japanese’ does not have a timeless vacuum in and of itself. It cannot deliver knowledge that is devoid of historical context. This is because this subject position, ‘Japan’/‘Japanese’, is an ongoing project without any closure. It requires a continuous investment in defining, enacting, and stabilising its own boundaries. What I have traced in this inquiry is not the revelation of the fundamental stability of this ‘Japanese’ subject but the very act of stabilising the subject as ‘Japanese’.

The subject of knowledge was forged as specifically ‘Japanese’. This subject is an ongoing project without any closure. As disenchanting as it may be for those seeking to rescue knowledge from its swampy epistemic ground, this reading of the subject, in fact, offers a new possibility to reconsider some persistent and perplexing questions about Japan and its knowledge production. Where does Japan’s seeming obsession with its own uniqueness come from? How does the conviction in objectivity and scientificity naturalise such purported uniqueness as a fact? In what way does Japan’s obsession with its own uniqueness condition and regulate the production of self-knowledge and knowledge of the other?

⁴ Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest,” in Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (eds.), *Formations of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992: 291 [275-332].

⁵ Talal Asad, “Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology,” *Man (New Series)*, 14:4, 1979: 612 [607-627].

To be sure, such obsession is, in part, a consequence of the structural inequality of a global system of knowledge. On the one hand, ‘the West’ has been regarded and has indeed regarded itself as a powerful place to objectify and historicise all that is to be objectified and historicised. It has been a hegemonic centre of knowledge production. On the other hand, what is nominally called ‘the rest’ has been relegated to the margin and conceived as the place to be anatomised, as the object of anthropological knowledge.⁶ Japan, as with the case of many other locations bundled as ‘the rest’, has been subjected to the West’s desire to mould Japan into its own imagery of what Japan is and ought to be. However, it is not a one-way street. Against what some may call ‘epistemological colonisation’ by ‘the cognitive empire’,⁷ Japan has cultivated some scholarly and popular genres of knowledge production with a specific aim to reconstitute its own history, culture, and identity. Examples are abundant, some in the form of complicit exoticism and as a popular discourse of *Nihonjinron* (日本人論: theories of Japanese), others as an effort to challenge misrepresentations, and still others as a way of appealing to externally projected theoretical models.⁸ The structural inequality of a global system of knowledge is such that there has always been a reactionary impulse to produce ‘correct’ understandings of Japanese history, culture, and identity. But it is not simply on ‘the surface’ or ‘external forms’ of knowledge – to return to Nakamura Masanao and Fukuzawa Yukichi – that such inequality was inscribed. What I sought to demonstrate in this inquiry is that the most foundational premise of knowledge, the subject, inheres

⁶ James Clifford, “Notes on Theory and Travel,” *Inscriptions*, 5, 1989; Michael Dutton, “Lead Us Not into Translation: Notes Toward a Theoretical Foundation for Asian Studies,” *Nepantla: Views from South*, 3:3, 2002: 495-537; David Szanton (ed.), *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004; Osamu Nishitani, “Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of ‘Human Being’,” in Naoki Sakai and John Solomon (eds.), T Maxey (trans.), *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference, TRACES: A Multilingual Seires of Cultural Theory and Translation, Vol.4*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006: 259-273; Naoki Sakai, “Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of Humanitas and Anthropos,” *Postcolonial Studies*, 13:4, 2010: 441-464; Ramon Grosfoguel, Roberto Hernandez, and Ernesto Rosen Velasquez (eds.), *Decolonizing the Westernized University: Interventions in Philosophy of Education from Within and Without*, Lanham and London: Lexington Books, 2016. As these works above and others demonstrate, this privileged place called ‘the West’ is not increasingly contested by other locations that embody cultural, historical, racial, and gender differences. Postcolonial scholars have provincialised ‘the West’ by anatomising the intersection between knowledge and power. The decolonial tradition has proposed to return to indigenous knowledge as a way of liberating ‘the non-West’ from the epistemic violence of ‘the West’. Challenges are also lodged directly against disciplinary claims made in the folds of universality and ahistoricity in order to reveal their inherent Western-centrism. From within area studies, a new recognition has emerged that an ‘area’ is not a location to apply, test, and amend theories but to contest Western-centrism ingrained in theory-building practices.

⁷ See, for example, Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 2007: 168-178; Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*. While having sympathy towards the intellectual and political impulses of the decolonial tradition, I also have a lingering sense of discontent with its tendency to make a sweeping juxtaposition between Western knowledge as a mode of domination and epistemologies of the South as a mode of emancipation. Sanjay Seth succinctly summarises the issue as follows. “the problem” with decolonial claims “is not simply the obvious one, namely that [they find] progressive politics and good knowledge to be in harmony through definitional fiat, declaring a correspondence between the two where there may, in fact, be differences and difficulties. Underlying this, and the more fundamental issue, is that knowledge and power are here fused; the slash or stroke in ‘power/knowledge’ has been replaced by an equal sign. [...] In short, that there is always a relation between knowledge and power does not tell us what that relation is, let alone allow us to make sweeping judgements that equate modern knowledge with capitalism and colonialism, and epistemologies of the South with emancipation.” Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 212.

⁸ See respectively, Kōichi Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism: Japan and Its Other,” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 8:2, 1994: 49-82; Pauline Kent, “Japanese Receptions of ‘The Chrysanthemum and the Sword’,” *Dialectical Anthropology*, 24:2, 1999: 181-192; Harootunian, “America’s Japan / Japan’s Japan”.

within it the structural inequality of a global system of knowledge. While the ‘Japanese’ subject enables Japan to be the producer of modern knowledge, the very qualifier ‘Japanese’ affirms, in a perverse way, the arbitrary yet unspoken sovereign of all subjects, that is, the West.

However, this ‘Japanese’ subject shall not be ushered towards some kind of postcolonial revenge. This is because knowledge produced by this subject was always for itself and because it was this subject that enabled Japan’s own ‘epistemological colonisation’ into Asian neighbours as ‘a cognitive empire’. To allude to my point, let me trace, albeit briefly, the subsequent unfolding of this ‘Japanese’ subject.

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the concept of ‘*shukan*’ (主観) began to lose its conceptual purchase in scholarly debates. In its stead emerged a new concept, ‘*shutai*’ (主体). While both *shukan* and *shutai* can be translated, as they often are, into the English term ‘subject’, there are some crucial semantic and discursive differences. Miki Kiyoshi’s (1897-1945) discussion on the philosophy of history, for instance, offers an especially viable point in this regard. He maintains that it is not our subjective consciousness, *shukan*, that undergirds the fact of our being, of our existence; it is our action/practice that is intimately tied to our sentience/pathos, *shutai*, that determines the nature of our being as distinct from the object external to ourselves.⁹ This doubtless represents a radical departure from *shukan*, the function of consciousness, that was once an operative concept for the ‘Japanese’ subject promoted earlier by the likes of Nishimura Shigeki and Nishi Amane. With *shutai*, the subject is now reconceived as that which revolves around the act of consciousness. In other words, this conceptual shift from *shukan* to *shutai* signals a fundamental shift in the ontology of the subject from the observing to the acting. The ‘Japanese’ subject no longer simply observes the object. It now acts upon the object.

This shift is not merely philosophical, which we find in the corpus of Miki and his contemporaries, including Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960), and Tosaka Jun (1900-1945).¹⁰ When woven with the rhetoric of the Japanese Empire, which Yamamuro Shinichi called ‘*kokumin-teikoku*’ (国民帝国: nation-empire), this acting ‘Japanese’ subject has some immediate and far-reaching repercussions.¹¹ My argument, in other words, is that, when operationalised in the context of the Japanese Empire, this subject became a means to an end for reconstituting ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ vis-à-vis colonial subjects and internal others and for legitimately subjugating those relegated outside the boundaries of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’.

Of course, such an argument requires further specifications. Some historians, such as Thomas DuBois, suggest that the history of the Japanese Empire began in 1868, when “Japanese named itself an empire (even creating a new term in its own language for the occasion)” without having actual colonies but “clearly thinking of the image of contemporary Britain.”¹² This observation certainly offers an explanation, for instance, to the otherwise perplexing statement of Mori Arinori made in 1872, in which he insisted as the ambassador to the U.S. on calling Japan an ‘empire’ and

⁹ Miki Kiyoshi, *Rekishi Tetsugaku* 歴史哲学 (*Philosophy of History*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1932: 241-246.

¹⁰ Their philosophical works are discussed extensively, for instance, in Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, especially Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

¹¹ Yamamuro Shinichi, *Shisō kadai to shite no ajia: kijiku, rensa, tōki* 思想課題としてのアジア: 基軸、連鎖、投機 (*Asia as An Intellectual Problem: Axis, Connection, and Projection*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001.

¹² Thomas David DuBois, “In the Center of It All: Thoughts from the Edge of Empire,” in Donna Brunero and Brian P. Farrell (eds.), *Empire in Asia: A New Global History*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018: 110 [103-157].

the Japanese government ‘imperial government’.¹³ However, this observation is inconsistent with the fact that the term ‘*teikoku*’ was not a neologism of Meiji and that the term was not semantically equivalent to the English term ‘empire’. One of the first mentions of the term ‘*teikoku*’ can be found in Kutsuki Masatsuna’s (1750-1802) sixteen-volume book on European geography, *Taisei yochi zusetsu* (泰西輿地図説: Illustrated Maps of the West, 1789), based primarily on his own translation of Johann Hübner’s (1668-1731) *Kurtze Fragen aus der altern und neuen Geographie* (1693). Here, Kutsuki uses the term *teikoku* as a Japanese equivalent to the Dutch word ‘*Keijzerrijk*’, designating a realm governed by ‘*teishaku*’ (帝爵: king). *Teikoku* simply meant a realm (国) of the sovereign (帝). An English-Japanese dictionary compiled by Motoki Masahide (1767-1822), *Angeria gorin taisei* (諳厄利亞語林大成: English Dictionary, 1814), defines *teikoku* in a similar vein. While *teikoku* is equated to the English term ‘empire’, such an equation is not a result of direct translation from English to Japanese. Since Motoki was more competent in French than in English, his translation of the English term ‘empire’ was, in fact, mediated through the French term ‘empire’, which denotes ‘*domination d’un empereur*.’ The upshot, as these examples suggest, is that there is a certain semantic and conceptual disparity between the Japanese term ‘*teikoku*’ and the English term ‘empire’.

More specifically, the concept of *teikoku* as an isomorphism of *Keijzerrijk* (Dutch) and *empire* (French) inheres particular spatial imaginations and, thus, has immediate implications for the categories of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’. Essentially, *teikoku* designates a location of the sovereign and its specific relation to its subjects within a demarcated territory. The expansion of *teikoku*, if and when it happens, entails the expansion of the realm of the sovereign, through which other nations are coerced into *teikoku*, into the realm of the sovereign, and through which those colonised are forced to become not just colonial subjects but imperial subjects of the sovereign. In other words, the expansion of *teikoku* necessarily blurs the purported boundaries between the imperial centre (the ‘Japanese’ nation and the ‘Japanese’ people) and imperial peripheries (colonies and colonial subjects such as Taiwanese and Koreans, as well as other minority groups, including Ryūkyūans and Ainu).¹⁴

¹³ Kanda Takao, “Teikoku daigaku no shisō” 帝国大学の思想 (“The Ideology of the Imperial University”), in Haga Tōru, Hirakawa Sukehiro, and Kamei Shunsuke (eds.), *Seiyō no shōgeki to nihon* 西洋の衝撃と日本 (*The Impact of the West and Japan*), Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1973: 122.

¹⁴ This concept of *teikoku* is quite different from the concept of empire born out of the experiences of modern European empires, which was theorised by the likes of Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Schumpeter, and more recently Benjamin Cohen, Michael Doyle, and Alexander Motyl, and which many historians have since referred to as a standard analytical imperative. For all their differences, these theoretical works share a general trope: the expansionist tendency of European nation-states has resulted not in the spatial expansion of the nation but in the extension of political power over territories and people deemed to be too foreign to be absorbed into the nation. A tacit presumption is that, throughout imperial expansion and colonisation, boundaries of the coloniser, be it Britain or France, and the colonised, be it India or Algeria, remain intact. Empire, then, denotes here a realm of political power and control established outside the nation that constitutes the imperial centre. Categories such as ‘British’ and ‘French’ are rarely threatened by categories such as ‘Indian’ and ‘Algerian’. John Atkins Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, New York: Cosimo Inc., 2005 [1902]; Vladimir Lenin, “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism,” in *Selected Works Vol. 1*, Moscow: Progress Publisher, 1963: 667-766; Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Class: Two Essays by Joseph Schumpeter*, Heinz Norden (trans.), Cleveland, OH and New York, NY: The World Publishing Co., 1955; Benjamin J. Cohen, *The Question of Imperialism: The Political Economy of Dominance and Dependence*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973; Michael W. Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1986; Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, such spatial and categorical ambiguities manifested themselves as some compelling problems. For example, those in the governing ranks, politicians and bureaucrats, never managed to settle the distinction between domestic politics and colonial governing. Boundaries between so-called ‘*naichi*’ (内地: interior territory) and ‘*gaichi*’ (外地: exterior territory) remained flawed and contested. This, in turn, constituted issues of jurisprudence. ‘*Naichi*’ was a legally recognised sovereign territory of Japan encompassing from the Kuril Islands and South Sakhalin in the north to the Ryūkyū Islands in the south. In contrast, ‘*gaichi*’ was used as an epithet for all the colonies and areas subjugated under the Japanese control and influence and did not have any legally recognised status. Each colony and each area under the Japanese influence constituted a unique jurisdiction. A question emerged of whether those laws designed for *naichi* could be applicable across the empire. A question also emerged of whether such standardisation of laws across the empire would inadvertently mar the presumed distinction between ‘Japanese’ imperial subjects and other colonial-imperial subjects, between Japan self-proclaimed as the leader and protector of Asian liberation on the one hand, and, on the other hand, other Asian nations which were deemed to be incapable of liberating itself from its own past and from the European empires and thus were deemed to be liberated by Japan. A similar issue of standardisation was also manifest in the realm of education. While education was a crucial instrument for imperial assimilation, it was also a means for (re)iterating historical and cultural differences between ‘Japanese’ and other colonial-imperial subjects. This seemingly paradoxical and yet simultaneous necessity of assimilation and differentiation engendered some further questions about nation and identity. Who could have recourse to the ‘Japanese’ nation? Who could represent the historical, cultural, and psychological sentiments of being ‘Japanese’? These and other related questions also became prevalent in the realm of cultural production, for instance, in the debate over nomination criteria for a ‘national’ literary award.¹⁵

My assertion is that, in this context, the concept of *shutai*, the acting ‘Japanese’ subject, functioned much more than as a philosophical underpinning. It was a conceptual device to re-enact the boundaries of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ in knowledge and to mitigate spatial and categorical ambiguities inherited in the Japanese Empire. It was an epistemic foundation to produce purportedly valid and serious knowledge that was true not necessarily to all but to itself, hence to this acting ‘Japanese’ subject.

Though it is beyond the scope of this present inquiry, I shall, at least, gesture towards some potential areas of exploring further the implications of this acting ‘Japanese’ subject of knowledge. One such area is the prewar scholarship of Nihongaku (日本学: studies of Japan) developed in the context of the 1930s.¹⁶ This scholarship was, to say the least, a political product. It was part and parcel of a concerted political effort to re-establish universities as institutions embodying *kokutai*

¹⁵ For these issues inherent in the Japanese Empire, see, for example, Yamamoto Takeshi et al., (eds.), *‘Teikoku’ nihon no gakuchi, 1-8-kan* 帝国日本の学知 1-8 卷 (*Knowledge of the Japanese Empire, Vol.1-8*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006; Sven Saaler and Victor Koschmann (eds.), *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2007; Komagome Takeshi, *Sekaishi no naka no Taiwan shokuminchi shihai* 世界史の中の台湾植民地支配 (*Colonial Rule over Taiwan in Global History*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2015; Tadashi Ishikawa, *Geographies of Gender: Family and Law in Imperial Japan and Colonial Taiwan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Yamamuro’s notion of *kokumin-teikoku* (nation-empire) is, therefore, both a description of spatial ambiguities which muddled Japan’s imperial and colonial project and an analytical tool to address conceptual ambiguities encoded to categories such as ‘Japan’, ‘Japanese’, and ‘empire’.

¹⁶ Nihongaku is a relatively under-discussed topic in historical scholarship and has only recently gained some scholarly attention.

in their research and education and to mobilise them for imperial and colonial causes.¹⁷ During the late 1930s, this political mobilisation was materialised into concrete projects at universities. Some influential chairs were established at imperial universities with the aim of expanding the scope of research and education on ‘Japanese’ history, economic and political thought, and cultural production and reconstituting the origin of ‘Japan’ firmly in Asia.¹⁸ A politically-led committee was established to organise, coordinate, oversee, and promote works and activities of scholarly associations of humanities, social sciences, and even natural sciences.¹⁹ Upon the request from the Ministry of Education, universities, high schools, normal schools, and other specialised technical schools began to implement a series of lectures to promote a ‘correct’ understanding of Japanese culture not only to Japanese students but also to students from the colonies as a means of scholarly and cultural assimilation.²⁰ It was under this general scholarly and institutional condition that the likes of Ōzeki Masakazu, Ono Masayasu, Hara Masao, Matsunaga Motoki, Shōshin Masayoshi, Urabe Naosuke, Miura Keizō, Kuzume Kisaburō, Nojiri Masakazu, and Terada Yakichi proposed the establishment of Nihongaku.

Its aim was succinctly summarised by Ōzeki, who maintained that “Nihongaku is to reflect on, embody, and clarify the national essence and investigate the future orientation that this imperial nation must pursue on the basis of *kokutai*.” Why did he think it necessary to render *kokutai* as a scholarly endeavour? “As Japan is about to make a great leap forward,” as Ōzeki went on to argue, “our empire envisions building a new order in East Asia.” Furthermore, “all the subjects of the empire have already pledged to unite under *kokutai* and to adhere to the imperial rule. In other words, *kokutai* is and has always been the very beacon for the future of our country.” Hence, a necessity to thoroughly study it. Hence, a necessity to establish Nihongaku.²¹ To study and promote *kokutai*, the national essence, is undoubtedly tied to the concern for the ‘Japanese’ nation, its boundaries, characters, and legitimacy. The unstated yet foundational impulse for Nihongaku was, as I read it, to distinguish ‘Japanese’ from other imperial subjects, to reconceive ‘Japanese’ as the subject of its own knowledge, and to produce a kind of self-knowledge that would legitimise,

¹⁷ This political mobilisation of universities was initially proposed by Kyōgaku-kyoku (教学局: Bureau for Kyōgaku-education) of the Ministry of Education. The first Konoe cabinet and the succeeding Hiranuma Cabinet then implemented a series of legislative measures to reconstitute universities as institutional loci to study and promote *kokutai*. See, for instance, Kyōgaku-sasshin-hyōgikai (Council for Educational Reform), *Kyōgaku-sasshin-hyōgikai shiryō 1 and 2-kan* 教学刷新評議会資料 1 巻・2 巻 (*A Record of Proceedings at Council for Educational Reform, Vol.1 and Vol.2*), Tokyo: Fuyō shobō, 2006; Takano Kunio, *Tennōsei-kokka no kyōikuron: kyōgaku-sasshin-hyōgikai no kenkyū* 天皇制国家の研究: 教学刷新評議会の研究 (*Theory of Education in the Imperial Nation-State: A Study of the Council of Educational Reform*), Tokyo: Fuyō shobō, 2006; Komagome Takeshi, *Senjika gakumon no tōsei to dōin: nihon-shogaku-shinkō-iinkai no kenkyū* 戦時下学問の統制と動員: 日本諸学振興委員会の研究 (*The Control and Mobilisation of Scholarships during the War: A Study of the Committee for the Promotion of Japanese Scholarships*), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2011.

¹⁸ These chairs included *Nihon shisōshi kōza* (日本思想史講座: Chair of the History of Japanese Thought) and *Tōyō seiji shisō kōza* (東洋政治思想講座: Chair of the History of East Asian Political Thought) at Tokyo Imperial University, and *Nihon seishinshi kōza* (日本精神史講座: Chair of the Japanese Psychohistory) and *Tōa keizai seiji kōza* (東亜経済政治講座: Chair of East Asian Political Economy) at Kyoto Imperial University.

¹⁹ The committee was called *Nihon-shogaku-shinkō-iinkai* (日本諸学振興委員会: Committee for the Promotion of Japanese Scholarships). See Komagome, *Senjika gakumon no tōsei to dōin*.

²⁰ These lectures were implemented under the aegis of *Nihonbunka-kōgi* (日本文化講義: Lectures on Japanese Culture). See Komagome, *Senjika gakumon no tōsei to dōin*.

²¹ Ōzeki Masakazu, *Nihongaku* 日本学 (*Studies of Japan*), Tokyo: Risōsha Shuppanbu, 1941: 1-4.

in a self-referential manner, the purported privilege of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ not only in politics, economic, and cultural (re)production but also in cognitive practice. In short, Nihongaku seems to embody a sustained desire for ontological closure of ‘Japan’ as the locus of subjective enunciation and ‘Japanese’ as the subject of enunciation vis-à-vis the inevitable spatial and categorical ambiguities of the empire. In what ways did the concept of *shutai* rather than *shukan*, the acting ‘Japanese’ subject rather than the observing ‘Japanese’ subject, insert itself in knowledge, forging an enabling condition for Nihongaku and other scholarly practices mobilised toward Japan’s imperial and colonial projects? In what ways did Nihongaku seek to stabilise in a self-referential manner the very condition of knowledge production, that is, the acting ‘Japanese’ subject? These are the questions worth pursuing in order to address the subsequent unfolding of the subject of knowledge, Japan’s seeming obsession with itself, and the intersection between this subject and epistemic violence Japan inflicted upon its Asian others.

The concept of *shutai* continued to dominate postwar intellectual debates. It, thus, symbolically represented a certain continuity of cognitive practices that were otherwise marked with a sense of disjuncture. At one end of the ideo-intellectual spectrum were those who stood on “the intellectual battleground on the side of modernity.”²² The likes of Maruyama Masao found, in the concept of *shutai*, a new possibility to dismantle the Japanese psyche that had long been anchored to *kokutai* and to the absolute figure of the emperor.²³ At the other end of the spectrum, there were those Marxist scholars, such as Mashita Shinichi. While acknowledging the manifold meanings encoded in the concept of *shutai*, Mashita sought to rescue the concept operationalised as the device of “bourgeoisie’s political evasion” and to resuscitate it as the medium for social practices based on Marxist materialism.²⁴ For all their differences, both Marxists and liberalists sought to develop new meanings of the foundational device of knowledge, *shutai*, with the aim of reorienting postwar intellectual, political, and social dispositive away from that of previous decades. While *shutai* was delinked from Japan’s imperial and colonial project, it came to embody postwar imaginaries of what ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ ought to be. To this end, the subject continued to operate with a specific geo-cultural marker.

It is not so surprising that the 1970s and 1980s also saw the revival of Nihongaku as a realm of reconfiguring the categories of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’. Umehara Takeshi, one prominent proponent of postwar Nihongaku, explained that the purpose was to “challenge the hitherto prevalent and yet decidedly narrow view on the Japanese nation,” which was tied to *kokutai* and mobilised for “parochial nationalism.”²⁵ At the core of postwar Nihongaku was a conviction that ‘Japan’ must be understood with its uniquely ‘Japanese’ essence untarnished by politics and ideologies of Japanese imperial and colonial projects. Almost like a gestalt switch, postwar

²² Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, xxxi.

²³ Maruyama Masao, “Chōkokkashugi no ronri to shinri” 超国家主義の論理と心理 (“Supranationalism, Its Theory and Its Mentality”), *Chūō kōron*, 79:10, 1964 [1946]: 206-221. Interestingly, this idea of the acting subject also pervaded into the realm of art. For instance, Okamoto Tarō argued for the importance of ‘*shutai*’ as the conscious acting mind that dialectically resolves contradictory realities. See Okamoto Tarō, *Okamoto Tarō no hon, I-kan: Jujutsu tanjō* 岡本太郎の本 1 巻: 呪術誕生 (*Book of Okamoto Tarō: The Birth of Magic*), Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 1998: 44.

²⁴ Oguma Eiji, ‘*Minshu*’ to ‘*Aikoku*’: *Sengo nihon no nashonarizumu to kōkyōsei* 「民主」と「愛国」: 戦後日本のナショナリズムと公共性 (*Democracy and Patriotism: Nationalism and the Public Share in Postwar Japan*), Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2002: 209; Mashita Shinichi, *Gakumon to Jinsei* 学問と人生 (*Scholarship and Life*), Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1971.

²⁵ Umehara Takeshi, *Nihongaku no tetsugakuteki hansei* 日本学の哲学的反省 (*Philosophical Reflection on Nihongaku*), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1976: 12-3.

Nihongaku proposed to view ‘Japan’ as an organic unity untouched by the perils of the modern. Thus, Umehara maintained that the “logos” of the organic ‘Japanese’ community could be excavated from the Jōmon period.²⁶ Kenmochi Takehiko argued that “the structure of consciousness of the Japanese nation” was already manifest in *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* and suggested, in a manner that invoked Watsuji Tetsurō, that the natural environment prefigured cultural essence.²⁷ Kasuya Kazuki concluded that the “national essence” of ‘Japan’ could be located in the “national tendency” formed prior to the formation of the modern nation-state.²⁸ These examples, though the most extreme and blatant of them all, suggest that the subject does not deliver knowledge that is devoid of substantial values. The subject produces, and continues to produce, a kind of knowledge that is true to itself.

§

A Hermeneutic Circle

These postwar scholarly efforts of reconstituting the categories of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japanese’ have since attracted a wide range of criticism. The obsession with the self, that is to say, the desire to stabilise the boundaries of the ‘Japanese’ self and to forge a locus for subjective enunciation, is variously admonished as “inward consciousness,” “nationalistic narcissism,” or “hikikomori nationalism.”²⁹ These are valid criticisms. Yet, I do not think that this is a problem peculiar to Japanese academia. The Western subject has long been preoccupied with itself vis-à-vis its anthropological others. With those premises such as eternal present, realities, and universals, the Western subject claims to deliver knowledge from a view from nowhere. But this claim, as we all know, has long been called into question. To borrow from Takeuchi Yoshimi once again, this Western subject was possible only in the history of Europe, and this history was possible only in this Europe. Those outside Europe, outside this history, cannot occupy the position of this subject.³⁰ In a similar vein, the subject forged in Japan was possible only in a particular history of Japan, in which particulars in space and time were viewed, interpreted, and represented in distinct ways. It was this subject, whose unity was grounded not on universals but on arbitrary and yet alluring

²⁶ Umehara Takeshi, *Nihongaku kotohajime* 日本学事始め (*The Beginning of Nihongaku*), Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1985: 182-183.

²⁷ Kenmochi Takehiko, *Hikaku nihongaku no susume: Nihonjin no minzokusei o saguru* 比較日本学のすすめ: 日本人の民族性を探る (*Encouragement of Comparative Nihongaku: Exploring the Japanese National Character*), Tokyo: PHP kenkyūjo, 1980: 37.

²⁸ Kasuya Kazuki, “Nihongaku kenkyū no chōryū” 日本学研究の潮流 (“The Current of Nihongaku”), *Gendai no riron*, 23:1, 1986: 24 [19-26].

²⁹ See respectively, Hoshino Tsutomu, “‘Nihongaku’ no kenkyū (meta-saiensu) no rironteki kōchiku ni mukete” 「日本学」の研究 (メタサイエンス) の理論的構築に向けて (“Toward A Theoretical Framework for the Study of Japanology as Metascience”), *Kokusai Nihongaku*, 3, 2005:17 [17-43]; Isomae Junichi, “The Adventure of Japanese Studies: The Case of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Conflict, Justice and Decolonization,” Lecture given at ‘Conflict, Justice and Decolonization Workshop,’ June 3rd, the National Chiao Tung University, 2017:2; Naoki Sakai, *The End of Pax Americana: The Loss of Empire and Hikikomori Nationalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022:4.

³⁰ Takeuchi, “What is Modernity?” 53-81.

categories of 'Japan' and 'Japanese', that enabled Meiji intellectuals to reconstitute knowledge as a subject-object relation. Hence, to become modern and simultaneously be different from the West in the field of knowledge.

Modern knowledge formation in Japan is interesting, not because it is an episode of the much larger story of universal intellectual progress marked by the triumph of Reason. Nor is it because it is an emblematic historical moment of the specifically 'Japanese' capacity to liberate 'Japan' from its own premodern past. Modern knowledge formation in Japan is interesting because it suggests that that subject, the foundational condition of modern knowledge – indeed, our knowledge – is swampy, for it is a discourse built upon a series of discourses. It is subjected to uncertainties that derive from all considerations of language and semantics. It is, by its nature, heterogeneous and without any closure. The subject that structures knowledge as a subject-object relation gives coherence to knowledge, but the subject does not exist as a fixed point of the structurality.

This coherence in contradiction, as Jacques Derrida states, indicates desire. Indeed, any knowledge desires a centre – absolute principle, a God, an ideal form, an origin, and now the subject – because the centre provides all the meaning. But this desire simply implies, according to Derrida, the fact that the centre does not exist. Thus, he writes,

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of centre or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word – that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.³¹

The uncertainty of the subject leads to more discursive investment in stabilising the subject as the foundational condition of knowledge and simultaneous investments in excluding all other possibilities of knowledge. But language is not definitive. As this inquiry sought to address, language is a transformative threshold with multiple possibilities. To this end, attempts to stabilise the subject, a discourse built upon a series of discourses, through discursive investment and with an endless chain of signifiers is also contradictory coherence.

The subject is the contingent silence for the operation of knowledge. Yet, once we begin to question the silence, we realise that the subject is not absolute. As disenchanting as it may be, this realisation is an important beginning for thinking about the limitations of our own knowledge from within. On reviving a moment of critique, Foucault offers us an eloquent reasoning.

I do not know whether we will ever reach mature adulthood. Many things in our experience convince us that the historical events of the Enlightenment do not make us mature adults, and we have not reached that stage yet. However, it seems to me that a meaning can be attributed to that critical interrogation on the present and on ourselves [...]. The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude,

³¹ Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing & Difference*, Alan Bass (trans.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967: 351-370.

an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them. [...] I do not know whether it must be said today that the critical task still entails faith in Enlightenment, I continue to think that this task requires work on our limit.³²

How has our own positionality as the subject of knowledge been discursively made possible? In what ways are our spatiotemporal specificities reflected in our own subject position? How have we been naturalising our own subject position? What are the aporias, oddities, and contradictions inherent in this position? Posing questions such as these is not an invitation to replace the subject with another supposedly transcendental position. It is rather to understand not only the possibilities but limitations of our own knowledge that derive from our own desires, instincts, contingencies, and perspectives – our own spatiotemporal specificities.

³² Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” 118-119 [97-119].

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