

THE ESSENCE OF THE MODERN WORLD

Methods in the study of a new civilization

It is one thing to have seen a new world and to wish to bring its best features to an old one. It is quite another to explain what one has seen in terms that make it comprehensible and attractive. Here we find another part of Fukuzawa's genius. Like all the great thinkers I have considered, he devoted special attention to style and rhetoric. Montesquieu wrote and re-wrote everything with great care, Adam Smith attempted a very clear and simple style, as did Tocqueville, trying out all his writing on close friends. It was important for them to be widely understood. It is thus interesting to find the same pre-occupation with style and writing in Fukuzawa. Again in his case there is perhaps even more attention to the matter for he faced problems which were much greater than his European mentors, as we shall see.

In his early days Fukuzawa was given very good advice by his teacher Ogata. 'At that time, I was engaged in translation of a book on fortification by a Dutch man named C.M.H. Pel. One day, Ogata Sensei gave me a kind advice, saying: "The book you are translating is for the use of the **samurai**. If **samurais** are to be your target, be careful in the use of the Chinese characters. Never use any difficult character or words, because most of them are poor in scholarship and for them high-flown words are tabu. Take the average of the **samurais** you know, you would find yourself high above the average though you are still young and not a scholar of Chinese classics. And so, your effort in decorating your translation with high-sounding words will simply add to the difficulties for the reader. Use only those words and characters you know. Never look in a dictionary for grander words. Such dictionaries as '**Gyokuhen**' and '**Zatsuki Ruihen**' you should never keep near your desk.¹ Fukuzawa took this to heart. 'While writing, whenever a rare word began to appear at my pen point, I reminded myself of the master's admonition and made a special effort in looking for an easier word.'²

So he began to develop his own simple and direct style which would break down the barrier between the old Chinese-influenced **literati** and the mass of a well-educated but basically Japanese speaking public. 'And here I came to the conclusion that I must change the whole style, or concept, of expression in order to reach a wider public. However much **kana** (Japanese syllabary) one might use between the Chinese characters, if the basic style was Chinese, the result would stay difficult. On the contrary, suppose one used the plebeian Japanese for basic style, even when some Chinese characters were mixed in for convenience, it would stay plebeian and easy to read. And so, I mixed the popular Japanese and the graceful Chinese together in one sentence, desecrating the sacred domain of the

¹Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 4

²Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 5

classical, so to say, but all for the convenience of reaching a wide circle with the new thoughts of the modern civilization.³

His freedom to experiment and to avoid over-elaboration was increased by his conscious decision not to show his work to high-brow readers before it was published. 'All of my books were done entirely on my own initiative without orders from or consultation with others. I never showed the manuscripts to any of my friends, to say nothing of asking prominent scholars for prefaces and inscriptions.⁴ On the other hand he did want to make sure that they could be understood by ordinary readers. And so, just as Tocqueville had every word read by his father and brother, Fukuzawa showed his work to ordinary members of the household. 'At that time, I used to tell my friends that I would not be satisfied unless these books could be understood by uneducated farmers and merchants, or even a serving woman just out of the countryside when read to her through the paper door. And so, I did not once show my manuscript to a scholar of Chinese for criticism and correction. Rather, I let women folks and children in my house read it for rewriting those portions which they had difficulty in understanding.⁵ He believed, correctly, that this attention to simplicity of style was one of the major reasons why his books reached millions of ordinary Japanese readers; 'the style of my writing is generally plain and easy to read. That has been recognized by the public and I too fully believe it is.⁶ Nishikawa comments that 'Fukuzawa's style in **An Encouragement of Learning**, and in other textbooks and manuals was completely new in Japan.'⁷

As well as overcoming the much greater gap in vocabulary, Fukuzawa faced problems which were far greater than that of his Enlightenment predecessors. One of these was the intricacy and ambiguity of even the ordinary Japanese language. He gave the following example of its notorious ambiguity. 'Since the first line may signify either "gourd" or "warfare", the second has the idea of "the beginning", and the last may equally be taken for "cold" or "rocket", the whole verse may be read in two ways: 1) The first drink from the gourd, we take it cold. 2) The first shot of the war, we do it with the rocket.'⁸

Another difficulty lay at the heart of his enterprise. He was trying to introduce a whole new world from the West, full of alien concepts. Many of these had no Japanese equivalents. He therefore had to invent a new language to deal with such topics as profit, rights of man, and so on. Thinking about this, 'I was led finally to determine that I should make myself a pioneer in creating new words and characters for the Japanese language. Indeed, I created a number of new words. For instance, the English word "steam" had traditionally been translated **joki**, but I wanted to shorten it.'⁹ In this process he

³Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 6

⁴Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 217

⁵Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 6

⁶Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 2

⁷ Nishikawa, 'Fukuzawa', 8

⁸Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 146

⁹Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 10

was faced with innumerable difficulties. The very things which he had been most interested in and were distinctively western, small details of everyday life, important institutional features, were the most difficult to translate. "Therefore, what gave me the most difficulty was the common words which were too common in the native land to call for explanation in a dictionary."¹⁰ And it was equally difficult to move out of his Japanese categories to understand what he was to translate. "Another reminiscence is of "direct tax" and "indirect tax" which I came upon in an English book. Direct means "straight reaching", and with the negating "in-" it will indicate "deviating". So far, quite clear. But then, in taxes how could there be "straight" and "deviating" taxes?"¹¹

Given all this, it is not surprising that his translations contain numerous cases where he has shifted the meaning somewhat. Often this was deliberate. In the original account of how the western family worked, Fukuzawa read that the primary relationship was between husband and wife. When he translated this, he deliberately changed this to read so that the primary relationship was between parents and children.¹² Another example is as follows. The original work upon which the 'translation' comes is: "From these few examples, it is perceived that political economy is not an artificial system, but an explanation of the operation of certain natural laws. In explaining this system, the teacher is not more infallible than the teacher of geology or medicine."¹³ This was translated as follows: 'Economics is in its essentials clearly not a man-made law. "Since the purpose of economics is to explain natural laws (**tennen no teisoku**) that arise spontaneously in the world, the explanation of its principles is [to trade or commerce] like making clear the relation of geology to descriptive physical geography or of pathology to medicine."¹⁴ There are several subtle shifts here which change the meaning quite considerably. A great deal could be learnt about Japanese mentality by studying the way Fukuzawa refracted western concepts through the lens of his mind.

As for his actual method of working, his writings contain a few hints. It is clear that he worked at great speed. In one record case 'There was no pausing for the master nor the employees before the thirty-seventh day when all the work was done and several hundred copies of the two volumes of '**Eikoku Gijūn Dan**' were ready. This thirty-seven days from the day the author took up his writing till the publication was a record speed in the days of woodblock printing.'¹⁵ Or again, we are told that 'Fukuzawa Sensei commenced writing "A Critique of 'The Greater Learning for Women'" and "The New Greater Learning for Women" last year in the middle of August. Writing one or two or three installments a day, he finished the whole on September 26...The actual time he spent on the work was some thirty-odd days.'¹⁶ On the other hand his **Outline of a Theory of Civilization** 'took an

¹⁰Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 36

¹¹Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 37

¹² I owe this example to the kindness of Toshiko Nakamura.

¹³ See William and Robert Chambers, (publisher), **Political Economy for Use in Schools, and for Private Instruction** (Edinburgh, 1852), 53-4, actually written by John Hill Burton.

¹⁴From Craig, 'Fukuzawa', 106, and note 10

¹⁵Fukuzawa, **Collected Works**, 51

¹⁶Fukuzawa, **Women**, 170

exceptional amount of time and toil... The manuscripts, which are preserved today, show that they were revised again and again.¹⁷

This speed was partly due to the fact that the final writing was often merely putting together thoughts which had occurred to him over a long period and which he had jotted down, like Montesquieu or Tocqueville, mulled over and then turned into prose. In his busy schedule, he would, every now and then, take out a copy of **The Greater Learning for Women** by Kaibara Ekken, and for future reference, he would jot down comments in it. Sometimes he would misplace the book and buy a new copy. It is said that there were two or three copies that were lost and replaced, proof that Sensei's interest in the present problem endured over a very long period in time.¹⁸ In fact, much of his work reads more like a conversation between Fukuzawa and his readers. It flows directly out of his life and experiences and is almost autobiographical. In this, again, it is very reminiscent of Tocqueville or Montesquieu's style. Of them, also, it could be written, as it is of Fukuzawa, that 'these thoughts are simply an organized expression of his everyday words and deeds, or a study of his actual life.'¹⁹ Yet, unlike Montesquieu and Adam Smith, it seems to have been important for him to write himself, rather than dictate his work to an amanuensis. It is true that in an illness shortly before his death he did dictate his **Autobiography**, but after that when he found some spare time and tried dictating some of his criticisms of **The Greater Learning for Women**...he found that dictation was unfit for the purpose, and he took to seriously writing his views...²⁰

As for his speculations on those deeper problems of logic and causation to which Montesquieu, Smith and Tocqueville devoted so much attention, I have not been able to find anything particularly novel or original in his translated work. He was perfectly familiar with the current logic of scientific and social explanation and as a great admirer of J.S. Mill expounded these ideas to his audience. 'Every action has a cause. We can subdivide this into proximate and remote causes. The proximate are more readily visible than the remote causes. There are more of the former than of the latter. Proximate causes are apt to mislead people by their complexity, whereas remote causes, once discovered, are certain and unchanging. Therefore, the process of tracing a chain of causality is to begin from proximate causes and work back to the remote causes. The farther back the process is traced, the more the number of causes decreases, and several actions can be explained by one cause.'²¹ He illustrated this with two examples.

¹⁷ Nishikawa, 'Fukuzawa', 9

¹⁸ Fukuzawa, **Women**, 171

¹⁹ Fukuzawa, **Women**, 172

²⁰ Fukuzawa, **Women**, 171

²¹ Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 53

In one he showed how by tracing back along links of a chain, the proximate causes of water boiling was burning wood, but if one moved back along further one found oxygen - the same cause that made humans breath.²²

Likewise as a student of Buckle and others he was perfectly familiar with the idea of the statistical tendencies which lie behind everyday life, made famous later in Durkheim's study of suicide. 'If we chart the figures for land area and population, the prices of commodities and wage rates, and the number of the married, the living, the sick, and those who die, the general conditions of a society will become clear at a glance, even things one ordinarily cannot calculate. For example, I have read that the number of marriages in England every year follows fluctuations in the price of grain. When grain prices go up, marriages decline, and vice versa. The ratio can be predicted...' Thus, while the proximate cause of marriage 'were the desires of the couple, the wishes of their parents, the advice of the matchmaker, and so forth' these were not 'sufficient to explain the matter'. 'Only when we go beyond them to look for the remote cause, and come up with the factor of the price of rice, do we unerringly obtain the real cause controlling the frequency of marriages in the country'.²³ He was thus competent in a wide area of sociological and scientific method.

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In order to see where Japan fitted into the scheme of things and how it could develop further into a higher 'civilization', Fukuzawa made use of a 'stage theory' of progress. He believed that 'civilization is not a dead thing; it is something vital and moving.' Therefore 'it must pass through sequences and stages; primitive people advance to semi-developed forms, the semi-developed advance to civilization, and civilization itself is even now in the process of advancing forward.' He reminded his readers that 'Europe also had to pass through these phases in its evolution to its present level'.²⁴ His 'stages' of civilization are very similar to those of Adam Smith, Kames, Ferguson and other Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, which then became absorbed as the foundations for anthropology in the following century.

We are told that 'As early as 1869 Fukuzawa had described humanity as divided into four "kinds". Of the lowest kind, **konton**, the aborigines of Australia and New Guinea were examples; the second lowest kind, **banya**, was represented by the nomads of Mongolia and Arabia; the third lowest, **mikai**, by the peoples of Asiatic countries such as China, Turkey and Persia; while the highest kind,

²² Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 52-3

²³ Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 52-3

²⁴ Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 15.

kaika-bummei, was exemplified by western nations such as America, England, France and Germany.²⁵ This, of course, more or less exactly parallels the normal anthropological division into hunter-gatherers, tribesmen, peasants and urban-industrial societies, although they would replace value-laden words like 'lower' and 'higher'.

A few years later he tried a three-fold model. We are told that he 'had already read the stage theory in J.H.Burton's **Political Economy**, pp.6-7, in which three stages are called "barbarous and/or primitive", "half civilized" and "civilized".²⁶ In 1876 he distinguished between **Yaban** - illiterate savages; **Hankai** - peoples such as Chinese and Japanese 'who, though they might possess flourishing literatures, yet had no curiosity about the natural world, no original ideas for inventing new things, and no ability to criticize and improve on accepted customs and conveniences; and **Bummei** - civilized people who had all these qualities.²⁷ Or again, he wrote that 'present-day China has to be called semi-developed in comparison with Western countries. But if we compare China with countries of South Africa, or, to take an example more at hand, if we compare the Japanese people with the Ezo [Ainu] then both China and Japan can be called civilized.²⁸ These 'stage' models, so popular after Darwin, were combined with a view of the inevitable **progress** from one to another which is another of the features which he shared with many European thinkers.

Carmen Blacker describes his general belief in the inevitability of progress as follows. 'Simply, Fukuzawa believed, because progress was a "natural law". Man's nature was such that he was bound and destined to progress, and hence would naturally, even unconsciously, fulfil the conditions which would lead to progress. The process could, certainly, be arrested artificially for a certain time, but ultimately it would prove to be like a tide which would sweep all obstacles out of its way.'²⁹ Hence his reference, as we have seen, to the surge of individual rights and liberty. And hence his belief in the inevitability of growing freedom. He followed Tocqueville in believing that "Careful study of politics will show us that there is an unceasing force causing autocracy to change to freedom, just as water always flows towards the low ground. There may certainly be reversals of this tendency, but they are only temporary fluctuations. The facts show indisputably that the long-term trend stretching over tens of

²⁵Blacker, **Fukuzawa**, 146, note 15

²⁶ Nishikawa, 'Fukuzawa', 17, note 26

²⁷Blacker, **Fukuzawa**, 146, note 15

²⁸ Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 14.

²⁹Blacker, **Fukuzawa**, 98-9

thousands of years is for monarchy to give way to democracy, and for tyranny to give way to liberalism."³⁰ Like Tocqueville, he had visited America and seen the future - and there could be little doubt in his mind that the future lay in wealth, equality and liberty.

Hence his interest in those historians in the west who most fully endorsed the strong 'whig' view of history, the march of civilization and progress. We are told that 'Buckle's **History of Civilization in England** and Guizot's **General History of Civilization in England** were examples of the supremely optimistic school of positivist historical writing which grew up in Western Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century...Both...were translated early into Japanese and became the guiding scriptures of the **Keimo** school of historiography known as **bummeishiron** (history of civilisation)...³¹

Despite the belief that history was, in the long term, on his side, Fukuzawa recognized that there could be hiccups - like the 250 years of Tokugawa rule. He also had periods of doubt. As Albert Craig argues, we can detect three main phases in his thought. During the 1860's and first half of the 1870's he believed that rapid progress was possible. Then the 'year 1875 is a transitional point in Fukuzawa's thought. He has become uncertain. He has become a moderate relativist. Utopian civilization has receded several thousand years into the future.'³² After some twenty years or so of doubt, he returned to his greater optimism and 'In some respects this was a revival of Fukuzawa's earlier "enlightenment" belief in a beneficent natural order, for once again he saw progress toward an ideal society as possible within a finite period of time.'³³ The period from roughly 1875 to 1895 exactly coincides with the nationalistic and aggressive phase of his thought.

Yet whether the highest level of civilization was close or far, Fukuzawa's main task was to analyze its constituent elements and to understand how a country like Japan could adopt it. This took him to his deepest analysis of what was special about the West. Having located the mystery roughly in the area of liberty and equality, he was still faced with the problems of the institutional mechanisms needed to encourage these nebulous virtues. It was not a simple matter of setting up schools, newspapers, universities and so on. All this would help, but there was a deeper essence to be grasped. In attempting to penetrate to the 'spirit' of the West, Fukuzawa provides a number of insightful passages on the mystery of the unusual civilization which he saw and read about on his trip to America and Europe.

³⁰Blacker, **Fukuzawa**, 112

³¹Blacker, Fukuzawa, 92-3 - CHECK NOTE

³² Craig, 'Fukuzawa', 124

³³ Craig, 'Fukuzawa', 137

The essence of modernity: the separation of spheres

Fukuzawa based his ideas on the work of Guizot and Mill. This led him to believe, like Montesquieu, that there must be a separation and balance of powers. If there was the Confucian fusion of kinship and politics, there would be hierarchical absolutism. If there was a fusion of politics and religion, there would be despotism. For instance, he commented that in the case of Buddhism, 'its teaching has been entirely absorbed by political authority. What shines throughout the world is not the radiance of Buddha's teachings but the glory of Buddhism's political authority. Hence it is not surprising that there is no independent religious structure within the Buddhist religion.'³⁴ Or again, if there was a fusion of society and economy there would be stagnation. If there was a fusion of public life and private morality there would be absolutism. The parts needed to be separated and artificially held apart.

Let us look first at a few of his general remarks on the necessity for a dynamic balance, a tense contradiction or separation between spheres. To use a simile, if you take metals such as gold, silver, copper and iron, and melt them together, you would not end up with gold, or silver, or copper, or iron, but with a compound mixture that preserves a certain balance between the various elements, and in which each adds strength to the others. This is how Western civilization is.³⁵ There must be a never-ending contest, which no part wins. The point of difference between Western and other civilizations is that Western society does not have a uniformity of opinions; various opinions exist side by side without fusing into one. For example, there are theories which advocate governmental authority; others argue for the primacy of religious authority. There are proponents of monarchy, theocracy, aristocracy, and democracy. Each goes its own way, each maintains its own position. Although they vie with one another, no single one of them ever completely wins out. Since the contest never is decided, all sides grudgingly are forced to live with the others.³⁶

The general openness of the society can only be guaranteed if freedom to dominate is held in check. Now in the first place, the freedom of civilization cannot be bought at the expense of some other freedom. It can only exist by not infringing upon other rights and privileges, other opinions and powers, all of which should exist in some balance. It is only possible for freedom to exist when freedom is restricted.³⁷ Again we have the idea of the dynamic balance of powers and opinions. Many opinions

³⁴ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 147

³⁵ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 135

³⁶ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 125

³⁷ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 135

and many institutions should flourish in healthy competition; this is the essence and secret of western civilization. 'Once they start living side by side, despite their mutual hostility, they each recognize the others' rights and allow them to go their ways. Since no view is able to monopolize the whole situation and must allow the other schools of thought room to function, each makes its own contribution to one area of civilization by being true to its own position, until finally, taken together, the end result is one civilization. This is how autonomy and freedom have developed in the West.'³⁸

The domination of one sphere, for instance the kinship or political system, is a 'disease'. 'All of this is the result of the imbalance of power, an evil that has arisen from not paying attention to the second step of things. If we do not take cognizance of this evil and get rid of the disease of imbalance, whether the country is at peace or in turmoil no real progress will be made in the level of civilization of the country.'³⁹

A particular danger, of course, was for the imbalance to lead to the growth of central political power, political absolutism. 'This I call the curse of imbalance. Those in power must always take stock of themselves.'⁴⁰ There must be limits on the powerful. 'Thus, in any area of human affairs, whether it be the government, the people, scholars, or bureaucrats, when there is one who has power, whether it be intellectual or physical, there must be a limit to that power.'⁴¹ As Carmen Blacker summarizes his thought here, 'The reason why it was so important for the government's and people's respective spheres to be kept separate was that in the proper balance between the two lay one of the secrets of progress in civilisation.' Thus 'It was precisely in her failure to appreciate the importance of this balance, Fukuzawa was convinced, that Japan's greatest weakness lay.'⁴² He argued that the government should be strictly limited in its objectives. Like the 'nightwatchman state' advocated by his Scottish Enlightenment predecessors a hundred years earlier, he believed that the view that the 'government should not encroach on the private sphere meant that it should have nothing to do with such activities as religion, schools, agriculture or commerce...'⁴³

³⁸Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 125

³⁹Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 160

⁴⁰Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 135

⁴¹Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 135

⁴²Blacker, **Fukuzawa**, 110

⁴³Blacker, **Fukuzawa**, 108

In advocating this balance and separation, he realized that he was going against the grain of the Confucian and Chinese legacy in Japan. There was the strong inclination we have already seen to merge kinship and political allegiance which tended towards autocracy in both. 'In the countries of Asia, the ruler has been called the parent of the people, the people have been called his subjects and children. In China, the work of the government has been called the office of shepherd of the masses, and local officials were called the shepherds of such-and-such provinces.'⁴⁴ It permeated the whole of the hierarchical structure of deference and arrogance which he had noted in his youth. 'While bowing before one man, he was lording it over another. For example, if there were ten people in A,B,C, order, B in his relation to A expressed subservience and humility, to a point where the humiliation he suffered ought to have been intolerable. But in his relation with C he was able to be regally high-handed. Thus his humiliation in the former case was made up for by the gratification he derived from the latter. Any dissatisfaction evened itself out. C took compensation from D, D demanded the same from E, and so on down the line. It was like dunning the neighbour on one's east for the sum loaned to the neighbour on one's west.'⁴⁵

It was thus a disease of imbalance which permeated all relations, not just governmental power but also all social relations. 'According to the above argument, arbitrary use of authority and imbalance of power is not found in the government alone. It is embedded in the spirit of the Japanese people as a whole. This spirit is a conspicuous dividing line between the Western world and Japan, and though we must now turn to seeking its causes, we are faced with an extremely difficult task.'⁴⁶

Japan did have one great advantage over China, however. This was that the crucial separation between ritual and political power had occurred many centuries earlier when the Shogun became the **de facto** political ruler, while the Emperor was the ritual head. Fukuzawa saw this separation, the breaking of what in the West was the tendency towards Caesaro-Papist absolutism, as a point at which freedom could enter. Whereas in China to attempt to challenge any part of the social or intellectual system was simultaneously to commit heresy, treason and filial impiety, in Japan reason could find a chink between the opposing concept of ritual and political power.

Fukuzawa expounded his interesting thoughts on this matter at some length. 'The two concepts of the most sacrosanct and the powerful were so obviously distinct that people could hold in their heads, as it were, the simultaneous existence and functioning of the two ideas. Once they did so, they could not help

⁴⁴Fukuzawa, **Learning**, 70

⁴⁵Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 155

⁴⁶Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 138

adding a third, the principle of reason. With the principle of reason added to the idea of reverence for the imperial dignity and the idea of military rule, none of these three concepts was able to predominate. And since no single concept predominated, there naturally followed a spirit of freedom.⁴⁷ 'It was truly Japan's great good fortune that the ideas of the most sacrosanct and of the most powerful balanced each other in such a way as to allow room between them for some exercise of intelligence and the play of reason.'⁴⁸

Japan's good fortune could be seen by comparing its situation with that in China, where the normal **ancien regime** blending of religious and political power was at its most extreme with the ancient rule of its God-Emperor. The situation in Japan 'obviously was not the same as in China, where the people looked up to one completely autocratic ruler and with single-minded devotion were slaves to the idea that the most sacrosanct and the most powerful were embodied in the same person. In the realm of political thought, therefore, the Chinese were impoverished and the Japanese were rich.'⁴⁹

Another fusion is between the economy and the society. Anthropologists have written a good deal about how the economy is 'embedded' in the society, that is to say it is impossible to separate economic and social transactions in the majority of societies. Polanyi believed that the 'great transformation' from this situation occurred in eighteenth century England with the rise of commercial capitalism.⁵⁰ Max Weber and Karl Marx believed it occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the rise of capitalism and the separation of the social and economic.⁵¹ Fukuzawa's **Autobiography** provides a delightful instance of an attempt to 'disembed' an economy, as an individual and at a theoretical level.

As a member of a Samurai family, Fukuzawa's **bushi-do** ethic was strongly opposed to purely commercial transactions. This took the form, for instance, of fearing money - that ultimate symbol of the market place. He described how there were embarrassing altercations with merchants, who refused to receive payment for their goods, presumably preferring social rewards. 'He wanted to give the money back to me, but I insisted on leaving it, because I remembered what my mother had told me. After some

⁴⁷Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 21-2

⁴⁸Fukuzawa, **Civilizations**, 22

⁴⁹Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 22

⁵⁰Polanyi, **Great Transformation**

⁵¹See Macfarlane, **Individualism**, ch.2, for a summary of their views.

arguing, which was almost like quarreling, I forced the money on the merchant and came home.⁵² Fukuzawa admitted that 'When I went to Osaka and became a student at Ogata school, I was still afraid of money.⁵³ He remembered that 'I had no taste or inclination to engage in buying or selling, lending or borrowing. Also the old idea of the samurai that trade was not our proper occupation prevailed in my mind, I suppose.⁵⁴ Thus he organized his life so that 'Our home is like a world apart; the new methods of Western civilization do not enter our household finances.⁵⁵ From this personal experience of the power, alienation and aggressiveness of capitalist, money, transactions, Fukuzawa gained the insight to be able to begin to bridge the gap between the competitive western capitalism he had seen in America, and the embedded world around him.

A key incident was when Fukuzawa started to read the educational course published by William and Robert Chambers. There was a volume explaining in a simple way the principles of western economics. Fukuzawa described how 'I was reading Chamber's book on economics. When I spoke of the book to a certain high official in the treasury bureau one day, he became much interested and wanted me to show him a translation.⁵⁶ So Fukuzawa began to translate the work into Japanese, a translation which formed a part of the second volume of his **Conditions of the West**. As he did so he ran into an illuminating difficulty in translating the central premise of western economic systems. 'I began translating it (it comprised some twenty chapters) when I came upon the word "competition" for which there was no equivalent in Japanese, and I was obliged to use an invention of my own, **kyoso**, literally, "race-fight". When the official saw my translation, he appeared much impressed. Then he said suddenly, "Here is the word 'fight'. What does it mean? It is such an unpeaceful word."⁵⁷ The confrontation between the war of all against all, competitive individualistic behaviour in the market-place, and the Confucian ethic of harmony and co-operation has seldom been more graphically exposed.⁵⁸

⁵²Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 262

⁵³Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 263

⁵⁴Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 281

⁵⁵Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 285

⁵⁶Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 190

⁵⁷Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 190

⁵⁸As Koestler, **Lotus**, 221, for instance, noted

It was now necessary for Fukuzawa to defend and explain his translation. "That is nothing new", I replied "That is exactly what all Japanese merchants are doing. For instance, if one merchant begins to sell things cheap, his neighbour will try to sell them even cheaper. Or if one merchant improves his merchandise to attract more buyers, another will try to take the trade from him by offering goods of still better quality. Thus all merchants 'race and fight' and this is the way money values are fixed. This process is termed **kyoso** in the science of economics."⁵⁹ All this was half-true, as he knew. But he was also aware of a basic difference between Japan and the West, and had to insist that the bitter confrontational element in western capitalism had to be swallowed, not merely by merchants, but by everyone. I suppose he would rather have seen some such phrase as "men being kind to each other" in a book on economics, or a man's loyalty to his lord, open generosity from a merchant in times of national stress, etc. But I said to him, "If you do not agree to the word 'fight', I am afraid I shall have to erase it entirely. There is no other term that is faithful to the original."⁶⁰

Fukuzawa noticed a strange paradox, which had also intrigued his Enlightenment predecessors. While western society was driven by narrow, anti-social and, it would seem, self-interested greed, the result was public wealth and a high standard of honesty and private morality. While his Japanese Confucian contemporaries subscribed to a benevolent Confucian desire to promote harmony and kindness, the product was dishonesty and private immorality. He summarized the difference very elegantly. 'Westerners try to expand their business to gain greater profits in the long run. Because they are afraid dishonest dealings will jeopardise long-range profits, they have to be honest. This sincerity does not come from the heart, but from the wallet. To put the same idea in other words, Japanese are greedy on a small scale, foreigners are greedy on a large scale.'⁶¹ While Japanese merchants, like Chinese ones, could not be trusted 'Western merchants, in contrast, are exact and honest in their business dealings. They show a small sample of woven goods, someone buys several thousand times as much of the material, and what is delivered differs in no wise from the sample. The buyer receives the shipment with his mind at peace; he does not even open any of the boxes to check the contents.'⁶² It was a strange paradox. Fukuzawa noted that growing affluence seemed to lead to an improvement in private morals. 'In England, France and other countries in the modern world, the people of the middle class progressively amassed wealth; with it they also elevated their own moral conduct.'⁶³

⁵⁹Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 190

⁶⁰Fukuzawa, **Autobiography**, 191

⁶¹Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 123

⁶²Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 122

⁶³Fukuzawa, **Civilization**, 145

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What Fukuzawa realized was that in order to increase 'rationality' in economic transactions, such exchanges needed to be separated from the social relationship, just as in order to achieve 'rational' social relations, one had to separate politics and kinship. He also realized that in order to achieve 'rational' science, one had to accept the separation of fact and value, of humanity and nature, of the moral and the physical. This was especially difficult in a neo-Confucian society where the very essence of the system was to blend the human and natural worlds. We are told that Japanese Confucianists 'thought that western science explained everything by physical laws: This was treating nature as dead and mechanical, unrelated to man, and hence destroying the harmony of the universe.'⁶⁴ Fukuzawa was indeed taking on a difficult task.

⁶⁴Blacker, **Fukuzawa**, 49; cf 87