

#### IV. Critical Comparability in Philosophy



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## *Modern Enlightenment in China and Japan:*

*Hu Shi and Fukuzawa Yukichi*

### *1. Enlightenment and “Individual Autonomy”*

What is it to think about Enlightenment today, especially in East Asia? It is often pointed out that Enlightenment thinking is a universal phenomenon, but the spirit of Enlightenment is a unique invention in eighteenth-century Europe. For example, Tzvetan Todorov explains it as follows:

To begin with, we cannot help but note that Enlightenment thinking is, in fact, universal, even though it cannot be observed everywhere at all times. This is not only a matter of the practices that presuppose it, but also of a theoretical awareness. Traces can be found of it in India in the third century BCE in the precepts addressed to emperors and in the edicts issued by the latter. They are found again with the “freethinkers” of Islam from the eighth to tenth centuries; in Confucianist renewal during the Song dynasty in China from the eleventh to twelfth centuries; and in the movements against slavery in black Africa in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Let us enumerate, in no particular order, a few characteristics of this thinking from the most varied places. [...]

These multiple developments attest to the universality of Enlightenment ideas, over which the Europeans had no monopoly. And yet, it was in Europe in the eighteenth century that this movement gained momentum and that a great synthesis of thought was formulated that later spread across the continents: first in North America, then

in Europe itself, in Latin America, in Asia and in Africa. One cannot help wondering why in Europe and not, for instance, in China? Without attempting to find a definitive answer to this difficult question (historical changes are hugely complex phenomena, with multiple, even contradictory causes), it is worth noting one characteristic that existed in Europe and nowhere else—namely, political autonomy, that of the collectivity and of the individual. Such individual autonomy was situated in Europe within the framework of society and not outside of its confines (as was the case for the Indian “renouncers,” mystics in Islamic countries and Chinese monks). What characterizes the European Enlightenment is that it prepared the way for the emergence of both these notions, individual and democracy, together. (Todorov 2009, 129–133)

The idea of “individual autonomy” that is presented here as unique to European Enlightenment has become a kind of cliché. This idea frequently appears, however, when we examine modern Enlightenment in East Asia. For example, Fukuzawa Yukichi, the leading Japanese thinker of Enlightenment, advocated “independence and pride,” and the idea of “individual autonomy” was almost an obsession in modern Japan.

Then, should we pick up this idea once again today? Does it lead us to thinking more clearly about Enlightenment? It is true that we are still in the spirit of modern European Enlightenment, but it is no longer necessary to reduce the spirit of European modern Enlightenment to the idea of “individual autonomy.” What we need, instead, is to historicize and deconstruct the spirit of modern European Enlightenment, and to invent a new understanding of Enlightenment that can criticize the cliché of “individual autonomy.” This is because we discern a power-relationship in the idea of “individual autonomy.” With the recognition that an individual or a group is not autonomous, a relationship of obedience in human beings, states, and culture is produced. This power-relationship is obvious in Enlightenment in East Asia. East Asia of the nineteenth and twentieth century possessed a self-consciousness as being not fully autonomous vis-à-vis modern Europe, wherein it intentionally created a division in its inner reality between

what is more and what is less autonomous, and forced the latter to obey the former. That is why we must be sensitive to the power-relationship of Enlightenment when we talk about it in East Asia today.

## 2. *Enlightenment, Religion, and China*

We start our consideration from Kant, because he is the thinker who defines “individual autonomy” as an exit [*Ausgang*] of Enlightenment. His essay “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’” starts as follows:

*Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without the guidance of another. (Kant 1970, 54)*

The enlightened state of maturity that Kant describes is a state in which one can freely exercise the “*public* use of man's reason”(55). In contrast, immaturity is a comfortable state that one does not think for oneself, but lets others think on behalf of him- or herself. However, what is this immaturity that is opposed to Enlightenment? What does “immaturity” mean? I argue that it is nothing but religion.

I have portrayed matters of religion as the focal point of Enlightenment, i.e., of man's emergence from self-incurred immaturity. (59)

Why was it religion? Kant said, “religious immaturity is the most pernicious and dishonourable variety of all” (59).

Then what attitude toward religion was needed? Kant asserted as follows:

But as a scholar, he is completely free as well as obliged to impart to the public all of his carefully considered and well-intentioned thoughts on the mistaken aspects of those doctrines, and to offer suggestions for a better arrangement of religious and ecclesiastical affairs. (56)

This is an exemplary case of what Kant describes using the phrase the “public use of man’s reason.” That is to say, traditional ecclesiastics say, “Don’t argue [*näsonieren*], believe” (55), while enlightened ecclesiastics say, “Argue as much as you like, but believe.”

No doubt, to introduce “reason” into the sphere of religion constitutes a process of European modern secularization. As J.G.A. Pocock points out in *Barbarianism and Religion*, there is surely an encounter with Chinese thought in the background of this process (Pocock 1999). That is, China, which can constitute this world without God, is represented as a state of maturity, as getting out of religion.

In this sense, the Enlightenment movement of eighteenth-century Europe is not necessarily a spontaneous one. Todorov considers that Europe could develop the spirit of Enlightenment because of its own “diversity,” which is different from China which monopolizes everything (Todorov 2009, 133). However, in fact, without China as an external world, without China as a model of secular Enlightenment without God, the European Enlightenment would never have been possible.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. *Disquiet of Reason*

If that is the case, we could say that the spirit of the modern European Enlightenment has acted as if it were universal, with the erasure of China as its condition of possibility. However, it has been always haunted by the “disquiet of Reason.”

Is reason (*logos* or *ratio*) first of all a Mediterranean thing? Would it have made it safely to port, with Athens or Rome in view, so as to remain until the end of time tied to its shores? Would it have never broken away, in a decisive or critical fashion, from its birthplaces, its geography, and its genealogy? (Derrida 2005, 119)

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1. Todorov never forgets the Chinese Confucian education that deeply influenced philosophers of eighteenth-century Europe. Cf. Todorov 2009, 132.

Derrida does not refer to China in this text. However, for Derrida, reason is not rooted in a specific land. It sails across every ocean in the world. So he does not exclude China in his hetero-genealogy of reason. Through reading Kant's "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?,'" Michel Foucault said, "the Critique is, in a sense, the handbook [ship's logbook] of reason that has grown up in *Enlightenment*" (Foucault 1984, 38). If we keep Foucault's phrase in mind, we can see that Derrida tries to critique this characterization of reason, as something that can voyage across the world. However, the voyage of reason is full of danger. It always faces the crisis of "running aground" or "grounding" (Derrida 2005, 121). In this crisis or danger, how can we "save the honor of reason"? Derrida finds the answer in "translation."

In a Latin language, therefore, already burdened with translations, already bearing witness to an experience of translation that, as we will later see, takes upon itself the entire destiny of reason, that is, of the world universality to come? (119)

It remains to be known, so as to save the honor of reason, how to *translate*. For example, the word reasonable. And how to pay one's respects to, how to salute or greet, beyond its latinity, and in more than one language, the fragile difference between the *rational* and the *reasonable*. (159)

Reason calls for translation, and its honor could be saved by translation into other languages. Reason does not only have a genealogy of translation from the Greek "logos" to the Latin "ratio," the German "Vernunft," and the French "raison," but also has another genealogy from the Greek "nous" and Latin "intellectus" to modern notions. In addition, reason might have a hetero-genealogy relating with "risei" in Japanese or "li" in Chinese. In other words, reason that leads Enlightenment faces its own plurality through translation. And even if it is a hidden name, China is the *sine qua non* for this reason.

#### 4. *Modern Enlightenment in China and Japan*

As long as modern East Asia intended to repeat the way of European Enlightenment, it had to face its own “*matters of religion*,” as Kant said above. However, the meaning of “religion” in East Asia is different from that in modern Europe. So the features of Enlightenment in East Asia must be inevitably different too.

In the following sections, I shall discuss two eminent thinkers of Enlightenment in East Asia. One is Hu Shi (1891–1962) from China; the other is Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) from Japan. They belonged to different backgrounds and had different ways of thinking, but shared quite a similar attitude toward Enlightenment. In a word, they promoted a kind of pragmatic and shallow Enlightenment for East Asia, in contrast with the metaphysical and deep one in Europe. In order to understand this attitude precisely, I would like to explain their ideas about religion, especially Christianity and Confucianism.

For Hu Shi, Confucianism was not a religion like Buddhism and Daoism, but was to be redefined as a “new religion” that was similar to modern Christianity. His Enlightenment preserved Christianity and Confucianism as modernized and secularized “religions” or “morals.” However, it did not take the “deep” approach of European Enlightenment. There was no God to support the “depth.” Hu Shi’s Enlightenment was a pragmatic one that refuted the metaphysical interiority found in modern European Enlightenment.

For Fukuzawa Yukichi, Confucianism was a religion which was more powerful than Buddhism and Shintō, and a backward ideological system for China and Korea. It was precisely an object to defeat. However, he did not take the “deep” approach of European Enlightenment either. For Fukuzawa, Confucianism was a teaching to construct individual interiority as European metaphysics did. In this respect, he was a pragmatic thinker of Enlightenment, much more powerful than Hu Shi.



### *5. Enlightenment and Religion in Hu Shi*

Hu Shi, the leading figure of the Chinese Enlightenment, intended to repeat the modern European Enlightenment as such in China. Therefore he took a severe attitude against Chinese religions under the name of Enlightenment. He introduced an atheistic attitude in his autobiography as follows:

Because my mother preserved it with her hurtful concern, this small shrine (to honor Confucius) was still unbroken even when I came back home from abroad at age twenty seven. However, I had already become an atheist at age twelve. (Hu 1933b, 59–60)

Hu Shi reported that he had been already an atheist at age eleven or twelve. He proposed two reasons for that. One was his deceased father's Confucianist influence that made him think things rationally. The other was the influence from Fan Zhen, an atheistic Confucianist and writer of "Shen mie lun" (On the Soul's Disappearance after the Death of the Body) (57–62). In sum, there was Confucianism as a discourse of Enlightenment serving as the condition of possibility for Hu Shi's self-Enlightenment.

"I never worshipped gods and buddhas after this liberation of thought" (62). Then what is Hu Shi's concrete approach to criticism of religion? According to Zhao Na's "On Hu Shi's Thinking of Religion" (Zhao 2009), for Hu Shi, the religions of China that deserved the name of religion were Buddhism and Daoism, but he criticized them as "being bogus" and "doing more harm than good."

Religion in medieval China, especially Buddhism, excludes the body and forbids desire. It is most opposed to human sentiment and is not adequate to humanity. (Hu 1925a, 583)

There is no doubt that Daoism is devalued as superstition in current general academic society. "Daozan," Daoism's so-called bible, is truly a bogus pseudo-book. Daoism's so-called canons that occupy a major part of "Daozan" are almost what imitate and intentionally pirate the

Buddhist canons. They are full of unbelievable superstitions. They have no academic value. [...] I have to confess that I have no positive feeling for both the religion and philosophy of Buddhism. In fact, I have no respect for the whole of Indian thought from ancient times to the later Mahayana Buddhism. I have been thinking that Buddhism diffused “from later Han to north Song” for one thousand years, but it did more harm than good for the lives of the Chinese, moreover the degree that it harmed was so broad and deep. (Hu 1998, 416.)

Hu Shi criticized Daoism and Buddhism as religions that “are not adequate to humanity” and “do more harm than good.” This form of criticism is quite appropriate for one who is a champion of Chinese Enlightenment.

He carried out his form of criticism in a manner similar to Confucianism that became the feudal system. For example, Hu Shi gave his approval to Wu Yu who severely criticized Confucianism in the May 4<sup>th</sup> new cultural movement and described him as “an old hero who defeated Confucianism with one hand in Sichuan province” (Hu 1921, 763). Just before this description, Hu Shi himself expressed his attitude toward Confucianism as follows:

A ritual and legal system which has been eating human beings for two thousand years puts up a sign of Confucius. That is why the sign of Confucius—even though it is an old tenant, the sign is a false one—must be taken down, broken apart, and burnt up! (Ibid.)

Young Hu Shi shared this severe criticism of Confucianism with Wu Yu and Chen Duxiu. However, as far as there resides in Confucianism the condition of possibility for his Enlightenment, his criticism of Confucianism was somehow different from that of Buddhism and Daoism. In order to comprehend this difference, we have to explore his attitude toward Christianity, for he would come to reaffirm Confucianism via his detour through Christianity.

### 6. *Hu Shi's Attitude toward Christianity*

In contrast to his attitude toward Chinese religions, Hu Shi did not take a severe attitude toward Christianity. There must be two reasons here. One is that Hu Shi self-evidently presupposed that Christianity supported the modern European Enlightenment and its Reason. Another is that Hu Shi was affected by the asymmetrical power relationship between the West and the East, and between Christianity and Chinese religions. In addition, we should consider the fact that Hu Shi was educated in the United States where Christianity was involved in the public sphere as a kind of “civil religion,” in contrast to France where the separation of religion and politics was achieved. In sum, for Hu Shi, Christianity as a modern religion that transcended old religious practices was an important element supporting European modernity. It was a device to connect the interiority of independent individuality with the public sphere. Hu Shi would later redefine the role of this device of modern, new religion as “morals.”

In sum, current Christianity has already fully accepted modern civilization. If modern civilization does not possess the signs of Christianity, the latter receives or uses the merit of the former. These two have been already mingled and are indivisible. (Hu 1925b, 178)

To Hu Shi, modernized Christianity overcame its old religious practices and became a new religion united with modern civilization. “It changed direction from the pursuit of individual liberation to the fulfillment of social duty,” and contributed to the nation state and capitalism (177–178).

If so, Hu Shi was obliged to invent a new religion that was modeled after modern Christianity. However, how could it be realized in China? As long as it was difficult to make Buddhism and Daoism a foundation for this new religion, the introduction of Confucianism had to be considered in the process of inventing a new religion.

### 7. *New Religion: The Moralization of Religion*

After the First World War, the prevailing vision was that Western civilization is materialistic, but the Eastern is spiritual. Hu Shi refuted this vision with an emphasis on the spirituality of Western civilization, when he presupposed the modern European “new religion” as the locus of spirituality. It had three features: “rationalization” to doubt the existence of God and the immortality of the soul by scientific knowledge; “humanization” to believe in the human being rather than God; and “socialization” to increase imagination and sympathy for others (Hu 1926, 6–7). The last feature of “socialization” best expressed the character of this “new religion.”<sup>2</sup> That is to say, this “new religion” appeared as a “new morals.”

As material enjoyment gradually increased for two or three hundred years, human sympathy was also enlarged accordingly. Such an enlargement of sympathy is a basis for a new religion and new morals. When one aims for one’s own liberty and others’ liberty at the same time, the notion of liberty is not limited to the non-invasion of others’ liberty, but demands further the liberty for the absolute majority. And when one enjoys one’s own happiness and gives thought to others’ happiness, utilitarian philosophers invoke the criterion of the “greatest happiness for the greatest number” as the end of human society. These are the propensities of “socialization.” (9–10)

In this way, Hu Shi tried to re-affirm religion as socialization and moralization in the name of a “new religion.” This re-affirmation is in concert with his former assertion of “social immortality” expressed in the period of the Wu-Si new cultural movement.

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2. Tan Yuquan points out that the essence of Hu Shi’s religion consists in “completely excluding the irrational part of religion and making the moral element in religion as the fundamental spirit of the religion” (Tan Yuquan, *Critical Essay on Hu Shi’s Thought* [Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 1996] 179). You Xiuqing says that “Hu Shi’s modern religion is the moralization, plebeianization, and socialization of religion, but the real figure is a kind of religion without religion” (You Xiuqing, “On Hu Shi’s Religious Thought,” *Shantou Daxue Xuebao*, vol. 21, no. 5 [Shantou: Shantou Daxue Chubanshe, 2005]: 43).

I would like to say that this notion of “social immortality” defines my religion. The intention of my religion is as follows:

My present “small self” has a great responsibility to the infinite past and the future of the eternal and immortal “big self.” What I always have to think is how I use my present “small self” through my efforts not to betray the infinite past of the “big self” and not to harm the infinite future of the “big self.” (Hu 1919, 666–668)

As an atheist, Hu Shi had already sought the possibility of constructing “my religion” based upon an infinite responsibility to society in 1919. It is natural that he went in the direction of morals later.

The moralization of religion turned into a kind of inversion. Hu Shi asserted that every religion had been a moral “teaching” at the beginning, but later it was made into religion to value credo and rite. That is why what should be done is just to return to the original figure of religion.

The last and great mission of modern religion is to enlarge the meaning and extent of religion. We Chinese have called religion a “teaching.” Actually, this is quite reasonable. At the beginning, every religion had been a great system of morals and social teaching, but later it was changed into something that protected a servile spirit based upon credo and rite. [...]

Therefore, the mission of every modern religion is to enlarge our concept of religion, that is, to recover moral teaching as the original effect of religion. (Hu 1933a, 78–79)

As far as moralized religion or “teaching” is concerned, Confucianism as a Chinese “teaching” has a great advantage. Hu Shi consistently asserted that Confucianism was not a religion in the Western sense (75). Consequently, this assertion allowed Confucianism to be revived as a moral “teaching.” After its death, Confucianism threw away “false interpretations and falsifications added by late scholars” in order to recover the original figure of “teaching.”

As doctor Hodons said, Confucianism is already dead. It committed

suicide not by a mistaken impulse, but by a kind of effort. That is to say, it tried to discard every excessive privilege and to throw away false interpretations and falsifications added by late scholars. (Ibid.)

Then how would Confucianism appear as a “new religion”? It was necessary to re-define Confucianism as a “new religion” similar to Christianity.

### *8. Confucianism as a New Religion*

Among Hu Shi's essays on Confucianism, “Shuo Ru” (On the Meaning of Being a Confucianist) is the most unique. The aim of this essay is to grasp Confucianism as a religion of Yin conquered by Zhou, to compare it to Judaism, and to define Laozi as a conservative Confucianist who defends traditional Confucianism, and Confucius as a reformist Messiah who is similar to Christ.

The Yin people seem to have kept the dream of a restoration of the people for a couple of hundred years since they became a people without a country. They gradually developed a prophecy of a “Messianic Saint.” This type of prophecy is always found in a people without a country, and the most famous example is the prophecy of the Hebrew (Judaic) people who await the birth of the Messiah. This prophecy, later, brought on the great movement led by Jesus. (Hu 1934, 42)

The story of Confucius is quite similar to this story of Jesus. [...] As was expected, six hundred years after they became a people without a country, there appeared a great Saint who “studied without satiety and taught others without weariness” (*Analects*, 7: 2). This great man was soon respected by many people. They recognized him as the Saint for whom they had been waiting. (56)

Laozi represented the orthodoxy of “Ru” (Confucianist), whereas Confucius had earlier transcended such orthodoxy. Laozi still represented the mentality of the people who lost their country, such as

obedience and amenability, whereas Confucius bore the high ambition of state-building in East Zhou, saying that the “whole world would obey us.” (82)

Against this background, how did Confucius as a Messiah reform Confucianism? Hu Shi explains it as follows:

“To take ren as my mission” (*Analects*, 8: 7) is to regard all human beings as the object of my responsibility. When Jesus saw the people coming one after another, he was moved and said “the harvest indeed is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” (*Matthew*, 9: 37) This is the same emotion in what Zengzi said: “my mission is heavy and my course is long.” (*Analects*, 8: 7) The class of the scholar-gentry losing their country was changed to the teacher-Ru who harmonized the cultures of three dynasties. It is Confucius who bore the absolute mission “to take ren as my mission” by his enlarged spirit that “I shall follow the Zhou.” (*Analects*, 3: 14) This is the new Confucianism of Confucius. (Hu 1934, 62–63)

Confucius transcended the atmosphere of Ru that was soft and obedient, and constructed a new way of “Ru” that was strong, dignified, and independent. (*Liji*, chap. Ruxing) (Hu 1934, 73)

The new Confucianism is based upon individual independence and equality, and is responsible to all human beings. This is nothing other than a modern European “new religion,” “socialized” and “moralized” by the imagination with respect to others and the enlargement of sympathy to others.

### 9. “Shallow” Enlightenment

As described above, Hu Shi intended to re-read a “new Confucianism” as an enlightened “new religion.” At this point, Confucianism was not yet an object to be defeated. Late in his life, Hu Shi pointed out that he himself was never against Confucianism, by saying in his oral autobi-

ography that “it was not necessary to defeat Confucianism” (Hu 1998, 418). Did this mean that Hu Shi as a leading figure of Enlightenment was entangled by Confucianism?

However, the matter is not so simple. It is true that Hu Shi’s Enlightenment could not wholly criticize Christianity and actually protected morals as a form of the socialization (secularization) of religion. In this respect, we have to say that Hu Shi’s Enlightenment was not thorough. It was a pitfall of East Asian Enlightenment too, because East Asian Enlightenment was conditioned by European modernity, as long as the former modeled itself upon the latter. However, on the other hand, we could say that Hu Shi’s redefinition of Confucianism was a restoration of Confucianism as a hidden condition of modern European Enlightenment, if we agree that modern European Enlightenment was never possible without the encounter with China, especially with Confucianism that showed Europe another system of the world that could thrive without God. If so, Hu Shi’s Enlightenment is a kind of repetition of the modern European Enlightenment.

Then what is the biggest difference between Hu Shi’s Enlightenment and the modern European one? The latter is Enlightenment based upon the depth of individual interiority, whereas the former is a kind of “shallow” Enlightenment refuting metaphysical devices such as individual interiority. This difference derives from a pragmatism that Hu Shi inherited, for pragmatism as anti-Hegelianism tried to explain this world plainly without the *telos* established by the profundity of God.

The good points of what I wrote were evident and clear, whereas the bad points of what I wrote were shallow and easy. At that time I was not yet fifteen years old. Twenty five years have since passed, and I keep bearing my motto that writing is necessarily understood by others. That is why I have never been afraid that people might laugh at the shallowness and simplicity of my writing. (Hu 1933b, 80)

This is the “shallowness” of Hu Shi. However, there must be another possibility for Enlightenment in modern East Asia. It is a pragmatic Enlightenment which never appeals to the depth of individual interiority.



Here, we can find a similar example in Japan. That is also a kind of “shallow” Enlightenment, performed by Fukuzawa Yukichi.

### *10. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Confucianism*

It is no exaggeration to say that to talk about “Enlightenment” in our country is to talk about Fukuzawa.

—Maruyama Masao, *Philosophy of Fukuzawa Yukichi*

We turn here to the Enlightenment in Japanese modernity. According to Maruyama Masao, the leading figure of the Enlightenment in Japan is Fukuzawa Yukichi (Maruyama 1947a, 34). The essence of Fukuzawa’s Enlightenment is expressed in this way:

Moreover, the outward circumstances of national wealth and power are not irrevocably fixed by nature’s decree. They can be changed by the diligent efforts of men. Today’s fools can become tomorrow’s sages. The rich and mighty of the past can become the poor and weak today. There are not a few examples of this in both ancient and modern times. If we Japanese will begin to pursue learning with spirit and energy, so as to achieve personal independence and thereby enrich and strengthen the nation, why shall we fear the Powers of the West? Let us associate with men of truth [reason], and be rid of those who are not. We shall achieve national independence only after we achieve personal independence. (Fukuzawa 1969, 16)

Independence means to manage one’s own personal affairs and not to have a mind to depend upon others. The person who can himself discern the right and wrong of things, and who does not err in the measures he takes, is independent of the wisdom of others. The person who makes his own livelihood through his own physical or mental labors is independent of the financial support of others. (Ibid.)

The phrase “[to] be rid of those who are not [men of reason]” is very interesting, because it shows that Fukuzawa thoroughly put off those

who seem unreasonable to him.

Then, what is the enemy of Fukuzawa's Enlightenment? As Christianity was for Kant, Fukuzawa chose Confucianism as the enemy. Fukuzawa spoke of Confucianism or Chinese teaching in his *Autobiography*.

The true reason of my opposing the Chinese teaching with such vigor is my belief that in this age of transition, if this retrogressive doctrine remains at all in our young men's minds, the new civilization cannot give its full benefit to this country. In my determination to save our coming generation, I was prepared even to face single-handed the Chinese scholars of the country as a whole. (Fukuzawa 1966, 216)

The main audience for Fukuzawa's Enlightenment is "young men." He tried to save them from the poisoned "immaturity" of "Chinese teaching" and educate them as independent and "mature" upon receiving Western civilization. Maruyama also pointed out that the enemy of Fukuzawa's Enlightenment was Confucianism.

Fukuzawa Yukichi is the greatest thinker of Enlightenment from the end of the Edo Period through the beginning of Meiji. By appealing to "Western Learning," he devoted himself to importing and dispersing European civil culture which could serve as material for the construction of a new Japan on the one hand and, on the other, he intended to break down feudal consciousness deeply rooted in the Japanese nation. Thus, the greatest barrier to his intentions was nothing more or less than Confucianism. (Maruyama 1942, 7)

However, why was it Confucianism? If Fukuzawa repeated the modern European Enlightenment as such, he had to pick up and conquer religions such as Shintō and Buddhism that were popular among the Japanese people. In fact, what Fukuzawa recognized as Japanese religion is not Confucianism, but rather Shintō and Buddhism. Why did he choose Confucianism as the enemy of his Enlightenment?

### *11. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Religion*

It is necessary to clarify Fukuzawa's attitude toward religion. He understood religion in its modern, Western meaning, i.e., as the belief in one's interiority. In Japan, what deserves to be called religion in this sense is only Buddhism. However, Fukuzawa regarded Buddhism as a powerless teaching absorbed by political authority.

Religion works within the hearts of men. It is something absolutely free and independent, not controlled in any way by others or dependent upon their powers. But while this is the way religion ought to be, such has not been the case here in Japan. Some people claim that, originally, religion in Japan consisted of Shintō and Buddhism. But Shintō never became a full-fledged religion. Even though it had its theories in the past, for hundreds of years now—ever since it became mixed with Buddhism—its original character has been obliterated. [...] No matter how one looks at it, the religion that has since ancient times represented one portion of Japanese civilization is Buddhism, and only Buddhism.

However, Buddhism, too, has belonged to the ruling class, and has depended upon the patronage of the ruling class, ever since its introduction. [...]

Buddhism has flourished, true. But its teaching has been entirely absorbed by political authority. What shines throughout the world is not the radiance of Buddha's teaching but the glory of Buddhism's political authority. [...] From this, then, we can conclude that the monks have been slaves of the government; indeed, we can even conclude that at present there is no real religion in Japan. (Fukuzawa 1973, 146–148)

Fukuzawa concluded that “at present there is no real religion in Japan.” So was it Confucianism that had captured the hearts and minds of the Japanese? No. As Maruyama points out, Confucianism was not widely received in Japan.

If you ask how widely Confucianism as an organized philosophical

system was received by the Japanese or how deeply its power regulated the lives of ordinary people in Japan, it is difficult to suggest that its influence was great, even in the Tokugawa Era, regarded as the peak of Confucianism. (Maruyama 1942, 7)

Instead of Confucianism, what grasped the hearts of Japanese people was religious custom based upon Shintō and Buddhism. Even if it is not a religion in the sense of belief, i.e., from the perspective of Western modernity, it is a religion as practice.<sup>3</sup> Once again, let us read Fukuzawa's *Autobiography*. He looked back on his childhood and said as follows:

When I grew a few years older, I became more reckless, and decided that all the talk about divine punishment that old men use to scold children was a lie. Then I conceived the idea of finding out what the god of Inari really was.

There was an Inari shrine in the corner of my uncle's garden, as in many other households. I opened the shrine and found only a stone there. I threw it away and put in another stone which I picked up on the road. Then I went on to explore the Inari shrine of our neighbor, Shimomura. Here the token of the god was a wooden tablet. I threw it away too and waited for what might happen.

When the season of the Inari festival came, many people gathered to put up flags, beat drums, and make offerings of the sacred rice-wine. During all the rounds of festival services, I was chuckling to myself: "There they are—worshipping my stones, the fools!"

Thus from childhood I have never had any fear of gods or Buddha. Nor have I ever had any faith in augury and magic, or in the fox and badger which, people say, have power to deceive men. I was a happy child, and my mind was never clouded by unreasonable fears. (Fukuzawa 1996, 17)

It is obvious that the popular "religion" in Japan at that time was

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3. As for the distinction in Japan between religion as belief and religion as practice. See Isomae 2003.

Shintō and Buddhism. If so, why did Fukuzawa regard Confucianism as the enemy of Enlightenment?

### *12. The Structure of Fukuzawa's Enlightenment and Autobiography*

In order to answer this question, we have to consider two things. One is the unique structure of Fukuzawa's Enlightenment, and the other is its political meaning.

Let us examine the first. When we read Fukuzawa's *Autobiography*, we have the impression that Fukuzawa himself was never enlightened. As Fukuzawa said, "my mind was never clouded by unreasonable fears," Fukuzawa depicted himself as mature and not in need of any Enlightenment, even in his childhood. There is no history of personal Enlightenment. There is no story of inner struggle. Saeki Shōichi suggested that Fukuzawa had no "interior Ego."

Fukuzawa is a cheerful and flexible writer. He continuously published a volume of works in an almost enjoyable format. Although he was almost a born writer, I think he never worried about the problem of the expression of the Ego. He was indifferent to the continuously trembling interior Ego that awaits the moment of airing out or becoming fixed. (Saeki 1974, 95)

Instead, Fukuzawa showed an excessive attention to the body and a sense of distance that could be symbolized by the word "fun."

Ōsaka generally has a warm climate, and there was no difficulty for poorly-dressed students in the winter time. In the summer, indeed, we found it almost necessary to live without clothes. Of course, in class and in the dining room, we wished to appear somewhat respectable, so we wore something—usually the *haori*, or loose overgarment, next to the bare body. That was an odd sight—how a person of today would laugh to see it! (Fukuzawa 1966, 59)

I was born in a poor family and I had to do much manual labor whether I liked it or not. This became my habit and I have been exercising my body a great deal ever since. [...]

Originally I was a country samurai, living on wheat meal and pumpkin soup, wearing out-grown homespun clothes. Here I was trying to fit myself into the excessive care of the city-nourished with imported flannel clothes and many nostrums of civilization. It was ridiculous. My poor body must have been dismayed by this unfamiliar amount of care and coddling. (329–331)

Shortly after the insurrection in the tenth year of Meiji, when the whole country had settled down to peace and people were rather suffering from the lack of excitement, on a sudden inspiration I thought of writing an argument in favor of the opening of the national Diet. Perhaps some would join in my advocacy and might even stir up some interesting movement.

I wrote an article and took it to the editors of the *Hōchi*—this was before I had my own newspaper. I said to them, “if you can use this piece as an editorial, do so. I am sure the readers will be interested. But, as it stands, it is too obviously my writing. So change some wording to hide my style. I will be fun to see how the public will take it.” (319)

Fukuzawa’s attention to the body comes as no surprise if we recall that he studied medicine under the supervision of Ogata Kōan. However, while Fukuzawa spoke at length about care of bodily health, the “interior Ego” seldom appeared. If we dare to define his “interior Ego,” it must be a “laughing” Ego that takes distance from his own deeds.

What is apparent here is that Fukuzawa’s Enlightenment has a characteristic of pragmatic functionality and play, which resists interior depth. This is precisely what Maruyama Masao tried to grasp as Fukuzawa’s philosophy.

If we try to find a Western philosophy which is closest to Fukuzawa’s way of thinking, it must above all be pragmatism. Fukuzawa says that every cognition is regulated by a practical end (“standard of argu-

ment”) and that the value of a thing is not in its *immanent* nature, but is determined by its function in the concrete environment, by saying that “the thing is not valuable, but the function is so.” This idea is nothing but that of pragmatism. (Fukuzawa 1947, 82)

We have just confirmed that every single one of Fukuzawa’s major propositions is conditioned recognition, and it must be understood parenthetically. This is a characteristic of his thinking that continuously fluidizes any perspective. In this sense, we can say parenthetically that the affirmation that life is play is his most significant proposition. (112)

In this regard, Fukuzawa’s Enlightenment was not a simple repetition of the modern European one. It showed another possibility for the Enlightenment in East Asia, i.e., the pragmatic and “shallow” Enlightenment that does not appeal to the interiority.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, Fukuzawa had to make Confucianism the enemy of Enlightenment, because Confucianism explored interior depth in its own way and moralized it in order to give a foundation to the practical dimension. In other words, if the power of Enlightenment bestowed on Confucianism had been exerted, it would erase the meaning of the “shallow” Enlightenment overcoming the modern European Enlightenment.

### *13. The Political Meaning of the Exclusion of Confucianism*

There is one more reason for Fukuzawa to make Confucianism the enemy of Enlightenment. By excluding Confucianism, Fukuzawa intended to exclude China and Korea. This is the political meaning of Fukuzawa’s Enlightenment. In his *Autobiography*, it is easy for us to find his disdain for China and Korea.

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4. In this respect, it is worth comparing Fukuzawa to Hu Shi, the Chinese pragmatist. However, this comparison will be realized in a future study.

Applying this personal experience to a greater problem, I might say a few words about present-day China. I am sure that it is impossible to lead her people to civilization so long as the old government is left to stand as it is. However many great statesmen may appear—even a hundred Li Hung-changs—we cannot expect any marked improvement.

But if they break up the present administration and rebuild the whole nation from the foundation up, probably the minds of the people themselves would change, and these new minds may acquire the initiative to direct their way toward a new civilization. I cannot guarantee that this will work out as well for China as our Restoration did for us, but for the purpose of insuring a nation's independence, they should not hesitate to destroy a government even if it is only for an experiment. Even the Chinese should know whether the government exists for the people or the people exist for the government. (Fukuzawa 1966, 277)

For Fukuzawa, the reason for the political downturn of China and Korea at that time was solely the influence of Confucianism. In order to escape from its influence and reach “Cultural Enlightenment,” they have to consider the “Meiji Restoration” as the ideal model.

Maruyama Masao summarized this political attitude of Fukuzawa as follows:

Whereas Yukichi always resisted the thinking based upon anti-foreignism or xenophobia, he was always the severest hard-line interventionist for the diplomatic problem of *Korea* and *China*. These two attitudes seem contradictory, but they were united into a single intention in Yukichi's mind. It is noteworthy that what united them was nothing but his anti-Confucian consciousness. [...]

It is not difficult here to find that his severe criticism against past Japan that was developed in his books like *An Encouragement of Learning* or *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* was repeated in the criticism against China. That is why he asserted that “the reform of Korea is to exclude the underside of Chinese Confucianism and to realize the civilization that is daily renewed,” so “the authority of the



reform has to be prepared to do the reform as a divine vocation not only for the sake of Korea and Japan, but also for the development of worldly common civilization.” And when the battle between Japan and Qing China developed, he said that “this war is described as a war between Japan and Qing China, but *in fact it is a war between civilization and barbarism or between enlightened and unenlightened, the result of the war should be related to the momentum of the daily renewed civilization.*” So he took the severest hard-line opinion, claiming that Japan should never stop the advance of its army until it reaches Beijing. We can say that the Sino-Japanese war attested to the most explicit way that the combination of independence, freedom, and state sovereignty in Yukichi’s thought was possible through the mediation of his anti-Confucianism. (Maruyama 1942, 30–33)

As Maruyama points out sharply, Fukuzawa’s attitude of “anti-Confucianism” is directly connected with his stance on the political reform of China and Korea, and this extends to the Sino-Japanese war. In other words, because it made Confucianism the enemy of Enlightenment, Fukuzawa’s Enlightenment had a range of political meaning not only for Japan, but also East Asia. Therefore, we have to say that Fukuzawa’s Enlightenment is nothing but “de-Asianization” from its debut.

#### *14. Conclusion*

As Maruyama said, Fukuzawa should be seen as a representative of the modern Japanese Enlightenment. We should consider it not as the simple repetition of the modern European Enlightenment, but as another possibility for Enlightenment incorporated through its shallow and pragmatic features. Historically speaking, Fukuzawa’s Enlightenment went in the direction of “de-Asianisation” and oppressed China and Korea in the name of Confucianism. However, if we criticized Confucianism in a different way from Fukuzawa and brought out the conditions of possibility for Confucianism, the configuration of the modern Japanese Enlightenment would have been radically changed.

For this task, Hu Shi’s redefinition of Confucianism is quite sug-

gestive, because it could show another possibility for Confucianism in modern East Asia. However, we cannot follow Hu Shi's way without modification, for it is necessary for us to criticize his idea of "new religion" as such.

When we consider the Enlightenment in East Asia today, we have to ask how to criticize the Enlightenment of Confucianism and Western modernity as a whole. For this question, the thoughts of Hu Shi and Fukuzawa Yukichi are what we must overcome.

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