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**The Subject Position:
Modern Knowledge Formation in Japan as
Translational Practices**

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The Subject Position: Modern Knowledge Formation in Japan as Translational Practices

(English)

How and why had a knowledge tradition that was hitherto foreign and exotic come to be regarded as *the* knowledge? This dissertation seeks to consider modern knowledge formation in Japan, not as a history of the acquisition of new ideas, theories, and technologies from the 'West,' but as a genealogy of epistemic reconfiguration that revolved around practices of translation. Weaving together the approach of *Begriffsgeschichte* and the critique of semantic transparency, this dissertation offers a reading of the temporality of epistemic changes that took place through translational practices within the semantic space of five ideas central for grounding knowledge: *gakumon* (scholarship), *ri* (principle), *kyūri* (pursuit of principle), *kagaku* (science), and *shukan* (the subject). In so doing, the dissertation argues that modern knowledge formation encompassed elaboration, refraction, and incommensurability. First, translation involved elaboration on ideas central to Western knowledge by forging semantic changes to existing Japanese lexicons. Second, because elaboration involved the semantics of other existing knowledge traditions, there were traces of semantic difference, refraction, for instance, between 'reason' and '*ri*,' between 'the subject' and '*shukan*.' Third, as the original meaning of that which sustained Western knowledge was, through translation, differed and suspended, there was possible incommensurability between Western knowledge and a knowledge tradition established in Japan as 'modern.' This possibility of incommensurability suggests that what we collectively refer to as 'modern' knowledge may be marked by differing orders of discourse, each of which in its own discursive address sustains modern knowledge.

(Italian)

Come e perché una tradizione fin lì considerata straniera ed esotica arrivò ad essere considerata *la* conoscenza? Questa tesi considera la formazione del sapere moderno in Giappone non come una storia di acquisizione di nuove idee, teorie e tecnologie dall'"Occidente", bensì come la genealogia di una riconfigurazione epistemica incentrata su pratiche traduttive. Intrecciando l'approccio della *Begriffsgeschichte* e la critica della trasparenza semantica, questa tesi offre una lettura della negoziazione e della riconfigurazione epistemiche che ebbero luogo sotto forma di pratica traduttiva all'interno dello spazio semantico di cinque idee centrali per il sapere: *gakumon* (scholarship); *ri* (principio), *kyūri* (perseguimento del principio), *kagaku* (scienza) e *shukan*

(soggetto). Così facendo, la tesi sostiene che la formazione del sapere moderno come pratica traduttiva includeva elaborazioni, rifrazioni e incommensurabilità. Primo, la traduzione prevedeva anche un ragionamento su idee centrali per il sapere occidentale, fra cui il soggetto, la scienza, ecc., forgiando mutamenti semantici sul lessico giapponese esistente. Secondo, proprio dal momento che l'elaborazione coinvolgeva la semantica di altre tradizioni di sapere, o che la materialità dei caratteri cinesi evocava determinate sensazioni, immaginazioni e significati, vi erano tracce di differenza semantica, per esempio, fra "ragione" e "ri", fra "soggetto" e "shukan". Terzo, nella misura in cui il significato originale di ciò che soggiaceva il sapere occidentale fu, attraverso la traduzione, permanentemente differito e sospeso, vi è sempre stata una possibile incommensurabilità fra il sapere occidentale e quella tradizione di sapere accreditata come sapere moderno in Giappone. Questa possibilità di incommensurabilità ci suggerisce che ciò verso cui facciamo collettivamente riferimento come sapere "moderno" potrebbe essere segnato da differenze discorsive, cioè variabili ordini del discorso, ciascuno dei quali, nel proprio indirizzo discorsivo, sorregge e unifica il sapere moderno.



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A Note on Translation

One of the issues I seek to address in this dissertation is the question of semantic transparency. Therefore, the obvious dilemma is whether to translate passages I quote from sources written other than in English. I was initially reluctant to translate those source texts. However, for the sake of brevity, I have decided to provide English translations for both direct and indirect quotes. Most of the translations in this dissertation are my own. Where established, trustful translations are available, I have borrowed them and indicated the sources in footnotes accordingly. Where more than two versions of translation are available, I have specified, also in a footnote, why I choose a specific translation among others. For some of the key concepts that the dissertation seeks to engage with, such as *gakumon* (学問), *kyuri* (窮理), *ri* (理), *shukan* (主觀), and *kagaku* (科学), I use Romanised Japanese terms instead of providing generally accepted English translation. Not to mention these concepts are variously defined in Japan throughout history, there is also and always a possibility of discursive difference between, for instance, the Japanese concept of ‘*shukan*’ and the English notion of ‘the subject.’ In a similar vein, I use Romanised Japanese names, rather than established English translations, to designate intellectual traditions developed in Japan, such as *Yōgaku* (洋学), *Kangaku* (漢学), and *Kokugaku* (国学), since the translated names sometimes border on unintelligibility.

Introduction

Modernity is a condition historically produced through processes of change around the globe over centuries. Though undoubtedly ‘Western’ in its origin, this historical provenance no longer specifies the delineation of its geo-cultural scope. Thus, modernity is – as it seems – not optional in our history; other forms of historicity are not readily available for societies to freely choose from. But this global conjuncture does not mean that localities are of no significance. There are – as it also seems – always local ‘inflections’ and ‘characteristics’ that shape the contour of modernity in a given location. While modernity is synchronic in that it is “historically a global and conjunctural phenomenon,”¹ modernising changes in a given location carry particular historical experiences concealed in the folds of globality and, therefore, unquestionably diachronic. Then, understanding modernity in conjunction with specific modernising changes in a given location requires both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.²

In synchronic terms, the available forms of political, social, and intellectual practices of the 19th and 20th centuries that we have come to associate with the word ‘modernity’ encompassed the

¹ Sanjay Subrahmanyam further notes that modernity is, therefore, “not a virus that spreads from one place to another.” See Subrahmanyam, “Hearing Voice: Vignettes of Early Modernity in South Asia, 1400-1750,” *Daedalus*, 127: 3, 1998: 99-100 [75-104].

² My understanding here is indebted to Carol Gluck’s reflection on writing about Japan’s modernity not as a case of ‘elsewhere’ but as that of ‘everywhere’. See Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now,” *The American Historical Review*, 116: 3, 2011: 676-687.

nation-state³ – not, I shall add, necessarily as the destination of the teleology of progress, but as a new unfolding condition for institutional and ideological changes. The period undoubtedly signals the temporal commonalities of modernising changes among ‘new’ nations, such as Japan and Germany. But it also signals the global conjuncture of modernity, in that the ‘old’ nations, including France and England, were also undergoing similar institutional and ideological transformations in accordance with the 19th-century idea of the nation-state. Think, for instance, the promulgation of the constitution, the drafting of civil codes, the introduction of military conscription, the standardisation of the national language, and the creation of a national educational system. These, among other things, indeed mark “the synchronicities of the nineteenth-century nation-form, seemingly bent on the nationalization of everything, from time and space to identity and empire.”⁴ At the same time, the spectrum of these institutional and ideological

³ Björn Wittrock, Johan Heilbron, and Lars Magnusson, “The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity,” in Johan Heilbron, Lars Magnusson, and Björn Wittrock (eds.), *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998: 2 [1-34].

⁴ Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere,” 681. This recognition of synchronicities of modernity has enabled some historians to write a history in comparative terms. In the case of Japan, Nishikawa Nagao, for example, has developed, based on his research on Meiji Restoration and French Revolution, a frame of reference for comparative analysis of modernity and modernising changes. According to Nishikawa, a modernity that encompasses the nation-state involves modernising changes – or else, in his term, ‘unifications’ – in four specific realms: economic (the network of communication, land reform, taxation, monetary and market policies); political (constitution, parliamentary system, centralised bureaucracy, policing and the court system, military); national subject (family register and census, school system, secularisation, museums, political parties, journalism); and, creation of cultural and symbolical representations (national flag and national anthem, national holidays, national language, national literature, arts, and architectures, maps, national history). See Nishikawa Nagao, *Kokumin-kokka no shatei: aruiwa ‘kokumin’ to iu kaibutsu ni tsuite* (The Horizon of Nation State: On the Monstrosity of ‘the Nation’), Tokyo: Kashiwa shobō, 2012 [1998]. What is perhaps much more pervasive in the contemporary academies is Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘imagined community,’ which he treats both as a means and end of modernisation and as an analytical category for his scholarly investigation into modernising changes. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York, NY: Verso, 1991 [1983]. While acknowledging that a claim for a universal model has exceedingly powerful analytical efficiency, the idea of ‘imagined community,’ when applied to the non-West, has some limitations. In Anderson’s text, the development of Japan as a modern nation-state is grasped in its “profoundly modular character” as something 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) To this end, establishing an ‘imagined community’ called Japan appears to be a smooth transition from a pre-modern form of community to a specifically modern form of political community. However, such reading about how Japan has come to be imagined as a nation-state is already dictated by Anderson’s conviction in the original pattern of imagination. As paradoxical as it may be, insofar as the pattern of Japan’s imagining is already prescribed as modular, Anderson’s reading of Japan becomes almost antithetical to his original notion of the ‘imagined’ nature of the nation. In turn, Japan comes to be represented as the first ‘non-Western’ consumer of ‘Western’ modernity. To

transformations exerts diachronic effects. Any modernising change has both anterior conditions and posterior consequences, which are specific to a given spatio-temporal location. A conjunctural moment of modernity reflects a particular historical condition of “the beforeness of change” and simultaneously has a “consequence in the path dependence of institutions and ideas.”⁵ One prominent example, for instance, of the diachronicity of Japan’s modernising changes is the role of the emperor in relation to the Meiji Constitution of 1889. While the constitution was based on the 19th-century notion of constitutional monarchy, this modern legal framework came to encompass, in Japan, the legendary imperial line and the mythical ‘*kokutai*’ (国体: national polity), which later had severe consequences for Japan’s imperialism and colonial expansion.

This dissertation addresses one of those modernising changes, namely, modern knowledge formation in Japan in the conjunctural moment of modernity. During the early modern period in Europe, a new knowledge tradition that took the name of *scientia* began to emerge and eventually

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, 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.” Chatterjee, “Whose Imagined Community?” *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 20: 3, 1991: 521 [521-525]. As I see 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.’ And 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 are often and most likely disregarded. 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 the history of the original. In contrast, Popperian historicism presumes that there are “the ‘rhythms’ or the ‘patterns’, 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 from the original, Anderson’s intellectual affinity seems to predetermine, or else delimit, the horizon of his own imagination. See Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957: 55; 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. See also Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome, Portrait of a Society 1500-1559*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1979: 14.

⁵ Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere,” 679, 681.

became integral to the formation of a modern political community organised around the idea of the nation-state, to economic life based on free capital, and to social dispositive of the autonomous individual.⁶ As the story goes, this knowledge came to Japan first in the 16th century with goods, guns, and Christian doctrines. For an extended period, the Japanese were keenly aware of the exoticism of Western knowledge. From those scholars of *Rangaku* (蘭学: Dutch studies) and *Yōgaku* (洋学: Western learning) to the governing ranks of *han* (藩: de facto administrative domains) and the officials of the Tokugawa shogunate,⁷ they saw Western knowledge in its novelty and foreignness, as something that sustained ‘Western civilisations,’ and treated it as an epistemological object to be transferred, shared, and appropriated at their own discretion for its utility and instrumentality.⁸ And yet, as modernity increasingly revealed itself as a global and

⁶ Peter Harrison offers us an illuminating historical analysis of how the idea of *scientia*, initially conceived as a personal quality or as a habit of mind, was transformed into systematic practices to produce a body of knowledge. See Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

⁷ Hereafter, I will use Romanised Japanese names (i.e. *Yōgaku*, *Kangaku*, and *Kokugaku*), rather than established English translations (i.e. Western learning, Chinese studies, nativist learning), to designate intellectual traditions developed in Japan, as those translated names sometimes border on unintelligibility.

⁸ This representation of Western knowledge as an epistemological object to be transferred, shared, and utilised, is evident, for instance, in Sakuma Shōzan’s (1811-1864) proposal in 1849 to publish Doeff-Halma’s dictionary. He reflected that, while Western expansionism in Asia was an imminent threat for all *han* domains, only a few had utilised scientific and technological knowledge of the West that seemed to sustain its expansion as a means to defend themselves against the Western encroachment. Then, Shōzan went on to suggest that, with the help of those knowledgeable in *Yōgaku*, Doeff-Halma’s dictionary should be translated, published, and disseminated so that the officials of *han* domains could equip themselves with a better understanding of Western science and technologies. See Sakuma Shōzan, “Haruma o hangyō nite kaihan sen koto o Kanō-kō ni tōshin su” (ハルマを藩業にて開板することを感慶公に答申す: A Proposal for Official Publication of Doeff-Halma Dictionary), in Shinano mainichi shinbun (ed.), *Shōzan Zenshū, Vol.2* (Complete Works of Shōzan), Nagano: Shinano mainichi Shinbun 1934: 63 [61-66]. Some empirical examples, especially of sharing Western military technologies, further corroborate this understanding of Western knowledge as an epistemological object. In Satsuma, the concerted effort among *Rangaku* scholars and *han* officials, with the help of some Shogunate bureaucrats, made it possible to translate Gideon Jan Verdam’s (1801-1866) thesis on a steamship. This resulted in the construction of a prototype of a ship with paddle wheel, which Tokugawa Nariaki (1800-1860) praised as a novel development to be appreciated (“新奇可喜”). In Saga, in their attempt of reconstructing its defence system, the blueprint of Dutch fortresses and Western cannons, which was hitherto kept by the Shogunate, was shared with Saga officials, scholars, Dutch translators, and blacksmiths. For detailed descriptions of these examples, see Suzuki Hiroo, “Bakumatsu-ki no gakusei-kaikaku ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu: Saga-han o chūshin to shite” (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” (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” (A Case Study on the Introduction of Western Technologies during the Late Edo Period: The Production of Refractory Bricks

conjunctural phenomenon, not because it had in and of itself a global tendency, but through the Western imperial and colonial desires of domination,⁹ ‘Western civilisations’ became much more than a mere description of contemporary Euro-America. Now, these ‘civilisations’ simultaneously represented a universal stage in world history. Accordingly, Western knowledge – the sustenance of these ‘civilisations’ – was no longer simply an exotic object but came to be regarded as indispensable for political, economic, and social reorganisation to become modern. By the end of the 19th century, under the politico-ideological project of *bunmei kaika* (文明開化: civilisation and enlightenment) and *fukoku kyōhei* (富国強兵: enrich the country, strengthen the army), this knowledge came to occupy the position of ‘modern’ knowledge or even knowledge *per se*.¹⁰ Not only did Western knowledge become – seemingly – the only available mode of thinking and reasoning, but also the acquisition and dissemination of this knowledge was no longer optional but a necessity and even inevitability as a crucial means for a newly emerging nation-state to strengthen its power and to inculcate, in the minds of its people, a collective, national sentiment.

For this reason, the Meiji period (1868-1912) appears momentarily significant for modern knowledge formation in Japan. Indeed, it was during this period that this knowledge, once designated with a geo-cultural marker of ‘Western,’ ceased to be a parochial mode of knowing the world. Various agencies served to learn and disseminate it, among them the institutions of the

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* (The Structure of Westernisation: Black Ships, Samurai Warriors, the Nation-State), Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1995.

⁹ As Immanuel Wallerstein succinctly summarises, “Indeed, it was generally supposed that achieving progress required that we rid ourselves completely of all inhibitions and restrain in our role as discoverers seeking to uncover the inner secrets and to tap the resources of a world within reach. Up until the twentieth century, it seems that the finitude of the earthly sphere served primarily to facilitate the explorations and exploitation demanded by progress, and to make practical and realizable Western aspirations to domination.” See Immanuel Wallerstein, *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Social Sciences*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996: 4.

¹⁰ As Douglas R. Howland points out, ‘*bunmei kaika*’ was a “double entendre” that designated “both ‘universal civilization’ and, more narrowly, ‘westernization’.” Douglas R. Howland, *Translating the West: Language and Political Reason in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002: 33.

nation-state, newly established universities, the reformed educational system, armies, newspapers and magazines. It was during this period that Western knowledge found a new home in the locales of a newly emerging nation-state that was geographically far removed from Euro-America. Thus, the temptation is to understand modern knowledge formation in Japan in synchronic terms, as a global unfolding of Western knowledge, as an occurrence credited to a few decades of history in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

However, the significance of the Meiji period is misleadingly momentous if we are to take a diachronic perspective.¹¹ The transposition of Western knowledge to Japan and its subsequent transformation into the knowledge of the modern – hence, modern knowledge formation – did not occur in a vacuum. There were long-established knowledge traditions, such as (Neo-)Confucianism, *Kangaku* (漢学: Chinese studies), and *Kokugaku* (国学: nativist learning), which, for all their differences, together constituted a specific intellectual and epistemic landscape. Further still, the transposition of Western knowledge was not an instance in which these existing traditions of knowledge were replaced all at once with the hitherto foreign knowledge tradition. Countless efforts were made both by its advocates and by its dissents to understand, appropriate, criticise, and remould this knowledge. Indeed, the unfolding of Western knowledge in Japan as knowledge of the modern was marked by a series of contestations and negotiations to map this hitherto foreign knowledge onto the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape – a long process of epistemic reconfiguration, which spanned over centuries, from the very onset of Japan’s encounter with Western knowledge in the 16th century, up until its formalisation and institutionalisation as knowledge of the modern in the early 20th century. Any account of modern

¹¹ Periodisation is a means of our historical scholarship to create a specific discursive space. As Karatani Kōjin maintains, to view the past through periodisation is to encode significance to certain events and project a particular logic of demarcation to reveal historical shifts and changes. See Karatani Kōjin, “The Discursive Space of Modern Japan,” *boundary 2*, 18:3, 1991: 193-194 [191-219].

knowledge formation requires both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. All the more so if we are to understand its unfolding in a place where this knowledge was not autochthonous.

The seemingly simple story of modern knowledge formation in Japan is, in fact, a complex one. And for its complexity, the story can spawn – and has indeed spawned – a diverse array of interpretations on how and why a knowledge tradition that was hitherto foreign and exotic had come to be regarded as *the* knowledge. Is modern knowledge formation in Japan an intellectual episode of the much larger story of universal intellectual progress marked by the triumph of Reason? Or, is it an emblematic historical example of specifically ‘Japanese’ intellectual capacity to appropriate and instrumentalise someone else’s knowledge for self-serving purposes? Or, is it a case to underscore the coercive nature of modernity, whereby the parochial (the West / Western knowledge) imposes itself as the hegemonic and even as the universal? What we write and how we write when we write about modern knowledge formation in Japan is, indeed, not at all a settled matter. And this unsettled nature of our scholarship brings to the fore a set of much more fundamental questions about our own scholarly operations. Does it make sense at all to write about modern knowledge with a qualitative marker of specification, that is, ‘Japan,’ when this knowledge has already been globalised and when we find ourselves inserted into the genealogy of this knowledge? Is any work about modern knowledge, such as this one, essentially an effort to recuperate or validate epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises that ground our own knowledge? Or should it constitute a locus of criticism to make visible the metaphysical foundation from which our categories of knowledge derive? What is it that we are *looking for*, rather than *looking at*, when we write about modern knowledge?

My usage of the adjectives ‘modern’ and ‘Western’ is to suggest that a knowledge tradition, which first unfolded in Enlightenment Europe and was subsequently globalised, is fundamentally

different from other knowledge traditions, be it medieval or Renaissance knowledge. More specifically, the difference I am implying here is not about the content of knowledge, such as concepts, theories, and ideas. Instead, it is about the worldview, about the metaphysical sustenance, about the epistemic ground that guarantees systematised intellectual beliefs and practices of a knowledge tradition as ‘valid’ and ‘serious.’ To be sure, the unfolding of modern Western knowledge in Europe was a long historical process of discursively separating the physical, the ethical, and the theological from one another to determine the limits and conditions of what one could know and how one could know it.¹² At the same time, this historical process was – and still is – marked by numerous disputes and constant changes “as previously accepted positions are challenged and sometimes abandoned.”¹³ However, at the fundamental level, this knowledge – modern and Western knowledge – can be characterised, as I shall characterise it here, as a knowledge tradition conceived as and grounded on an *a priori* forged subject-object relation. It is this epistemic ground that makes specific ways of thinking and reasoning possible within the remits of this knowledge tradition and simultaneously enacts the boundaries between knowledge and non-knowledge by arbitrarily determining what counts as a ‘serious’ and ‘valid’ practice of knowing.

This dissertation offers a reading of modern knowledge formation in Japan as a process of epistemic reconfiguration to establish a new qualification of ‘valid’ and ‘serious’ knowledge vis-à-vis Japan’s encounter with Western knowledge, by accounting for the ways in which the idea of knowledge, once grounded on what I call the ‘*ri* (理: principle)-knowledge structuration,’ was (re)conceived as a subject-object relation. To do so, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this dissertation

¹² Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 148-170.

¹³ Sanjay Seth, *Beyond Reason: Postcolonial Theory and the Social Science*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021: 12.

seek to establish a general orientation and methodological perspective of my inquiry. More specifically, Chapter 1 outlines four tropes of scholarly writings on modern knowledge formation in Japan that have been prevalent in our historical scholarship, each of which expresses and attempts to stabilise certain entrenched expectations – *our* expectations – about what we write and how we write about modern knowledge. These tropes include: ‘the politics of knowledge,’ whereby modern knowledge formation is reduced to a political process to instrumentalise knowledge and to press it into the service of power, the nation-state; ‘the institutionalisation of knowledge,’ through which the unfolding of modern knowledge is transubstantiated into the concern for academic freedom and institutional autonomy of the institution of knowledge, in many cases the university, established during the early Meiji period as the apex of the centralised and hierarchised educational system; ‘the before-ness,’ which seeks to identify proclivities towards ‘modern’ in intellectual traditions of the Edo period and to reveal enabling anterior conditions for transforming Western knowledge into modern knowledge; and, ‘the transposition and translation,’ which focuses on translation as the primary means for transposing, introducing, appropriating, and disseminating foreign and exotic knowledge. In Chapter 1, I seek to read those scholarly narrativisations grounded on these narrative strategies, not simply as works *about* the history of modern knowledge formation in Japan, but also, and more importantly, as historical works *of* modern knowledge through which certain premises of the very knowledge tradition they seek to address are reiterated and concretised, in their writings, as the ground for their own scholarly operations. Both as works *about* the history of modern knowledge in Japan and as historical works *of* modern knowledge, the existing literature offers us two general orientations to engage with modern knowledge formation. First, the unfolding of modern knowledge in Japan involves the *transposition* of a knowledge tradition from one location to another, which requires us to

theoretically (re)consider what ‘transposition’ actually entails. And second, *power*, be it the Tokugawa shogunate or the Meiji government, often inserts itself in knowledge to dictate the loci of pursuing knowledge and the ways of pursuing it and, therefore, to offer heteronomous authorisation, which necessitates us to contextualise modern knowledge formation on the nexus between power and knowledge.

Building upon these general orientations, Chapter 2 clarifies some conceptual and theoretical assumptions and methodological perspectives that constitute the backdrop of my inquiry. As I have indicated earlier, modern knowledge has a specific spatio-temporal origin. It is “not simply global but rather as something that has become global over time, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it.”¹⁴ Even if it seems almost impossible to talk about knowledge today without invoking this knowledge, it is essentially one, among many, “knowledge settlement”¹⁵ or “knowledge culture”¹⁶ that is undergirded by the *a priori* established order of discourse that conceives knowledge as a subject-object relation. It is to this end that the ‘transposition’ of this knowledge to Japan was not a mere instance of imitation and appropriation of Western theories, concepts, and ideas; it was also, and more importantly, an instance of *problématique*, whereby the core premises of this hitherto foreign and exotic ‘knowledge culture’ had to be translated and reconfigured within the semantic space of the Japanese language, and more broadly, within the intellectual space occupied by the other long-existing knowledge traditions.

Translation, therefore, is not a mere linguistic exercise, that is, an exercise of translating source texts – *contents* of Western knowledge, such as theories, concepts, and ideas – into the Japanese

¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2000: 7.

¹⁵ Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 25.

¹⁶ Margaret R. Somers, “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].

language. Translation is fundamentally an epistemic exercise that involves elaboration, refraction, and incommensurability. More specifically, translation involves elaborating on a set of premises, the *form* rather than *contents* of Western knowledge, by forging semantic changes to the existing intellectual lexicons.¹⁷ However, those lexicons are not at all value-free. They have long been the sustenance for concepts, categories, and discourses of the existing knowledge traditions, such as (Neo-)Confucianism, *Kangaku*, and *Kokugaku*. In a similar vein, the translator is not a blank canvas, so to speak, transparently absorbing and internalising the form of knowledge that sustains Western knowledge. Their translational practices are often marred by their own intellectual itineraries, which, more often than not, begin with basic training in (Neo-)Confucianism, *Kangaku*, and other existing intellectual traditions. Thus, translation as elaboration necessarily encompasses the semantics and the worldview of multiple knowledge traditions and, as such, leaves traces of difference between what is elaborated (Western knowledge) and the outcome of elaboration (a knowledge tradition articulated through translational practices). Hence, refraction. This, in turn, suggests a possible incommensurability between, on the one hand, the order of discourse that sustains Western knowledge and, on the other hand, the order of discourse that grounds a knowledge tradition established in Japan as modern knowledge.

If translation as an epistemic exercise is the crucial means to reconfigure the epistemic ground of knowledge, it is power that not only instrumentalises the contents of knowledge but also and more importantly, authorises such reconfiguration. Thus, in seeking to understand the

¹⁷ By ‘form,’ I mean to suggest what Conal Condren calls ‘presumption.’ According to Condren, a ‘presumption’ is not “cohesive as a doctrine, a theory, a set of ideas, concepts, and ideology” but “what is tacitly accepted at a given point in order that something might be said. Effectively, a presumption comes to us as the contingent silence that helps structure the diversity of discourse.” Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presuppositions of Oaths and Offices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 3-4.

entanglement of knowledge and power, Chapter 2 also considers a possible modality of contextualising the unfolding of modern knowledge, specifically in its relation to power.

Again, the language of imitation and appropriation does not bode well with the diachronicities of modern knowledge formation in Japan. Think, for instance, the 18th-century Kantian enunciation of the relationship between rational inquiry (knowledge) and republication subject (power) established hermeneutically through Reason. Or think also the 19th-century German idealist's discourse of *Wissenschaft* (knowledge) and *Bildung* (power) interlinked through the mediation of the institution of knowledge, that is, the university. As these examples illustrate, the question of power and knowledge, within the context of early modern and modern Europe, are often transubstantiated into the aporia of autonomy of knowledge and authority of knowledge. And, if problematisation already embeds within itself a possible solution, Kant, German idealists, and many other prominent thinkers see this aporia as *something to be resolved* into a hermeneutic process of systematic and objective knowledge production and cultivation of national subjects at the institution of knowledge.¹⁸ To be sure, the institution of knowledge established in Japan during the early years of the Meiji period was indebted to the Western and, more specifically, the German models, particularly in its mandate, institutional structure, and curricula. However, the relationship between knowledge and power – be it between (Neo-)Confucianism and the Tokugawa shogunate or between Western knowledge and the shogunate / the Meiji government – was not necessarily that which signalled antipathy, opposition, or incommensurability, hence an aporia. It is perhaps even plausible to characterise the relationship as symbiotic. Then, we must recognise the inadequacy of projecting, for instance, the Kantian or the German idealist's discursive strategy onto the unfolding relationship between knowledge and power in Japan.

¹⁸ Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996: 180.

That the modern institution of knowledge in Japan was modelled after the Western equivalence, does not constitute sufficient reason to extract specific discourses of Kant or the German idealists from their contexts of enunciation and to utilise them as an analytical framework. As the chapter seeks to argue, the central concern for the relationship between knowledge and power in Japan was not necessarily about resolving the aporia of autonomy of knowledge and authority of knowledge through institutional mediation. Instead, the concern was about how to *establish* an appropriate relationship between knowledge and power. To put it otherwise, my attention is placed not on the question of how power had instrumentalised and institutionalised modern Western knowledge for the service of political interests. Instead, it is on the question of how power had inserted itself in knowledge to sanction and authorise (authority of knowledge) the practice and product of epistemic reconfiguration through translation (autonomy of knowledge), that is to say, how power offered heteronomous sustenance for this knowledge to come to occupy the hegemonic status as *the* knowledge of the modern.

My reading of modern knowledge formation in Japan as epistemic reconfiguration through translational practices participates in a particular strand of historical scholarship. First, this inquiry is informed by the interdisciplinary approach to historiography developed by Reinhart Koselleck and Melvin Richter under the aegis of *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history), which purports to reveal a temporality of epistemological changes by weaving together histories of philosophy with historical linguistics.¹⁹ However, to address the translational nature of modern knowledge formation in Japan, whereby the core premises of modern and Western knowledge were not transparently available, either because they were completely foreign or because they did not have

¹⁹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985; Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.

a natural fit to the existing intellectual concepts, categories, and ideas, a certain theoretical mediation is necessary. In other words, one must take the problem of semantic transparency seriously. For this reason, I combine the approach of *Begriffsgeschichte* with John Dunn's and Quentin Skinner's scepticism towards semantic transparency in the field of history of ideas, proposing to trace the temporality of epistemic change that occurred through the epistemic reconfiguration and to examine how localities inserted themselves in that process of reconfiguration through the translation of the core premises that informed modern Western knowledge. To put it differently, what I seek to do is to take seriously the possibility not of 'discursive diversity' but of 'discursive difference' that had marked modern knowledge formation in Japan, and that was – and still is – encoded to the knowledge we have come to regard as 'modern' and indeed *our* knowledge.²⁰

Of course, from the onset of Japan's encounter with Western knowledge and throughout the process of modern knowledge formation in Japan, many ideas, concepts, and notions were translated. Accordingly, many hitherto familiar signifiers, for instance, of (Neo-)Confucianism, within the semantic space of the Japanese language, were transubstantiated into that which now signified something new and different. While it is beyond my present means to discuss each and every signifier reconfigured as part and parcel of modern knowledge formation, some were relatively more pivotal than others for the epistemic reconfiguration to (re)conceive knowledge as a subject-object relation. These include: '*gakumon*' (学問: scholarship, fields of knowledge, learning), which had long marked the realm of 'serious' learning since at least the introduction of

²⁰ Inspired by Homi Bhabha's rendering of racial, cultural and historical difference, I define 'discursive difference' as an instance in which signifiatory boundaries of, for instance, the idea of the subject become somewhat uncertain, and hence requires reconstitution by establishing a different order of discourse, whereas 'discursive diversity' may be understood as a strategy to treat for example the idea of the subject as an epistemological object to be transparently transferred and appropriated in different spatio-temporal locations. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Abingdon and New York, NY: Routledge, 1994, especially Chapter 8, 199-244.

the *Ritsuryō* (律令) system and the establishment of *Daigakuryō* (大学寮) in the 7th century; ‘*ri*’ (理: principle, reason, or laws of nature), which had been the primary qualifier for ‘serious’ knowledge that many knowledge traditions as well as religious teachings in Japan, including Buddhism, (Neo-)Confucianism, and Christianity, sought to attain within the remit of their own practices; ‘*kyūri*’ (窮理: the pursuit of principle, of reason, or of laws of nature), which derived from the Neo-Confucian tradition to specify the appropriate mode of learning and subsequently became the epithet for the pursuit of ‘serious’ knowledge; ‘*kagaku*’ (科学: science), which was developed as a neologism and came to replace, by the end of the 19th century, the then-prevalent notion of ‘*kyūri*’ to transform the standard qualification of ‘serious’ knowledge from one that defined knowledge as revolving around the idea of ‘*ri*’ to one that grounded knowledge on the systematic application of scientific methods and principles, hence scientificity; and, ‘*shukan*’ (主観: the subject / subjective, as opposed to ‘*kyakkan*’ 客観 the object / objective), which was emerged also as a neologism during the early years of Meiji to designate the specific capacity and consciousness of the knower that enabled one to have recourse to the external world (objective knowledge) and simultaneously to know that one indeed knew (self-knowledge).

The term *gakumon* derived from Chinese classical texts, such as *I Ching* (易經: Book of Changes), and since its introduction to the Japanese semantic space around the late 7th century, its meaning had changed variously to designate what qualified as learning, what scholarship ought to do, and how one might attain knowledge. For the Meiji politicians and intellectuals, the idea of *gakumon* was a crucial conceptual device to legitimate Western knowledge as the knowledge integral for politico-social reorganisations and, thus, as part and parcel of modernisation. Chapter 3, by focusing specifically on political discourses of the early years of Meiji, examines the ways

in which new meanings were encoded to the idea of *gakumon* for three specific purposes: first, to reconfigure the scope and nature of knowledge, learning, and education; second, to determine the institutionalised locus for modern Western knowledge as formalised inquiries; and, third, to resolve the politico-ideological conundrum of ‘becoming modern, being different.’

While an extensive array of discussions was spawned out of the concern for knowledge, learning, and education, *Kyōgaku seishi ronsō* (教学聖旨論争: the controversy over the Imperial Thoughts on Education) of 1879 was one of the crucial instances for encoding new meanings to *gakumon* and determining its institutionalised locus. As the chapter seeks to demonstrate, the efficacy of this controversy is twofold. First, it enacted the boundary between the realm of *gakumon* and the realm of *kyōiku* (教育: education). And second, it determined the general orientation of how these two realms may be instituted as part and parcel of the centralised and hierarchised educational system. Through the controversy, the realm of *kyōiku* came to designate a locus both for ‘*chiiku*’ (智育: knowledge education) and ‘*tokuiku*’ (徳育: moral education) based on the pedagogy of instruction and guidance. In contrast, the realm of *gakumon* was discursively equated to the independent pursuit of knowledge at the institutional apex of the educational system, the university, whereby one would seek to acquire at one’s own discretion specialised knowledge of various ‘lofty subject’ (高尚の学問), including law, natural sciences, medicine, history, philology, philosophy, and Chinese and Japanese classical literature. This conceptual and institutional separation of *gakumon* from *kyōiku*, in turn, brings to the fore the question of what qualifies ‘lofty subjects’ as such, as something to be pursued in the realm of *gakumon*. Instructive for considering this question is the discussion among the officials of the Ministry of Education and scholars at the University of Tokyo on how to institutionalise and structure the realm of *gakumon*.

Through an engaged reading of the discussion, I seek to argue that what qualified a subject as a ‘lofty subject’ was not necessarily its specialised nature that commanded certain intellectual proficiency. Rather, it was the idea that, for a subject to be qualified as a ‘lofty subject’ pursued in the realm of *gakumon*, it must address and seek to reveal the ‘truth’ (真理) about the world.

To be sure, this discursive strategy to weave ‘serious’ knowledge with truth, with the pursuit of truth, is not at all a novel strategy of Meiji politicians and intellectuals. For many intellectuals before them, the validity of their knowledge tradition was intimately tied to the discursive imbrication of truth – otherwise defined as the principle or ‘*ri*’ – and a mode of attaining that truth. Think, for instance, the (Neo-)Confucian enunciation that to know is to grasp *ri*, the ordering of the universe, the transcendental principle that dictates each and everything in *tianxia* (天下: the realm under Heaven). Think, also, Motoori Norinaga’s (1730-1801) claim that to know is to embrace ‘*taenaru kotowari*’ (妙理), the ineffable intention of heavenly deities that created the imperial land of Japan. Indeed, this imbrication of the idea of *ri* and a mode of attaining *ri* – the *ri*-knowledge structuration – had long been the fundamental discursive strategy to qualify knowledge as ‘serious’ and ‘valid.’

Chapter 4 examines how this *ri*-knowledge structuration had provided the Meiji intellectuals with a conceptual ground for understanding Western knowledge, for mapping it onto the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape, and ultimately for legitimating it as ‘serious’ knowledge. The works of the advocate of Western knowledge, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) and Nishi Amane (1829-1897), are the apparent loci of investigation here. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, their works sought to legitimise the seriousness of Western knowledge by rendering the structure and nature of this knowledge within the familiar discursive frame of *ri*-knowledge structuration, that is to say, by designating *ri* as universal laws and regularities of nature, or as

Reason, or as scientific law. However, precisely because of their translational strategy of glossing over the semantics of, for instance, (Neo-)Confucianism, the product of their translation – their understanding of Western knowledge and their discursive justification of the seriousness of this knowledge – often blurs the purported boundaries between Western knowledge and the (Neo-)Confucian tradition. In turn, this blurriness derived from the semantic and lexical limitation seems to have enabled the dissent of Western knowledge to forge a place for this knowledge under their own regimes of truth also by resorting to the *ri*-knowledge structuration. Therefore, the chapter also discusses the works of some (Neo-)Confucian scholars, such as Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891) and Sakatani Rouro (1822-1881), which sought to resuscitate the Confucian worldview by reconfiguring the *ri*-knowledge structuration to accommodate Western knowledge within the Confucian regime of truth.

For all their differences, these discursive enunciations of Meiji intellectuals reiterate the idea of *ri* not merely as that which structures knowledge but also, more importantly, as a liminal space to anchor the hitherto foreign and unfamiliar knowledge tradition – Western knowledge – into the familiar semantic field. To this end, the idea of *ri* becomes an intermediary, or even an empty vernacular, for the Meiji intellectuals, upon which they project their own vested interests and intellectual affinities. What enables their discursive enunciations, hence translational practices, is not necessarily their idiosyncratic concerns for what *ri* actually is and how one can discover or attain it, but the fact that one can indeed (re)define *ri* and establish new significations as one saw fit.

Such semantic transvaluation of *ri* during the early years of Meiji was merely the culmination of a centuries-long process of epistemic negotiation. The before-ness of the semantic transvaluation prefigured the enabling condition for perceiving Western knowledge through the

ri-knowledge structuration and, therefore, for understanding *ri* in its heterogeneity. In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I delve further into the before-ness. By focusing on the intellectual development and political authorisation of some knowledge traditions, including *Rangaku*, *Yōmeigaku* (陽明学: Yangming school), *Kogaku* (古学: ancient studies), *Kokugaku*, *Jōrigaku* (条理学: rationalist studies), and *Koihō* (古医方: ancient medicine), I seek to discuss various applications of the *ri*-knowledge structuration to verify knowledge traditions. Here, the idea of *kyūri*, which originated in Neo-Confucianism but became a conceptual apparatus for many other intellectual traditions to determine the scope and nature of their intellectual exercises, functions as a conceptual device to anchor my discussion and to reveal discursive strategies to heterogenise the idea of *ri* that foregrounds the various applications of the *ri*-knowledge structuration. Admittedly, my discussion of these intellectual traditions is deliberately partial and limited. The intention here is not necessarily to offer extended and detailed expositions of these traditions. Instead, what I seek to do through my discussion is to locate these traditions within the broader historical process of epistemic reconfiguration – the process marked by the gradual shift from the idea of knowledge sustained by the *ri*-knowledge structuration to the idea of knowledge grounded on a subject-object relation.

Chapter 5 focuses on the *Rangaku* tradition and its discursive practices to encode new meanings to the idea of *kyūri*. Not surprisingly, *Rangaku* scholars often utilise, in their discursive enunciations, (Neo-)Confucianism as their negative foil to validate Western knowledge in comparative terms and to justify their own intellectual affinity to this knowledge. Despite its polemical tendency, *Rangaku*'s rendering of *kyūri* foregrounds the emergence of a new worldview within the existing intellectual landscape. This worldview sees the world as being constituted by *ri*, understood here as mechanical principles of nature, devoid of human purposes and aspirations,

which is juxtaposed, in *Rangaku*'s discursive addresses, to other worldviews that see the world as the repository of individual virtues and personal qualities. Of course, the juxtaposition is arbitrary and, as the chapter seeks to suggest, the difference between Western knowledge and (Neo-)Confucianism is smaller than *Rangaku* scholars lead us to believe. Furthermore, the emergence of a new worldview does not necessarily mean the dissolution of other worldviews. The efficacy of the *Rangaku* tradition lies in its proposition that there indeed exists a possibility to know the world, especially the natural world, without arriving at moral and ethical conclusions and, by extension, a possibility to know things that lie outside the remits of the existing knowledge traditions. To this end, to pursue knowledge, that is, *kyūri*, was no longer merely to cultivate the inner disposition of individual virtue. It was now also to discover and accumulate facts about nature.

Undoubtedly, the development of *Rangaku* was sustained by the discursive transvaluation of *ri* and the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri*. However, as I seek to argue in the chapter, such discursive transvaluation and semantic expansion were possible, not because Western knowledge was – and was seen as being – inherently better. It was a broader political and epistemic dispositive that enabled *Rangaku* scholars to project the *ri*-knowledge structuration onto Western knowledge, hence encoding new meanings to *ri* and expanding the semantic space of *kyūri*.

For instance, the shift in the political attitude of the Tokugawa shogunate towards Christianity was instrumental, first, in disassociating Western knowledge from European political desires to expanding the sphere of their influence and, second, in negating the Christian idea of scientific knowledge as part and parcel of the inner disposition of the individual. In other words, the political condition of the 17th and 18th centuries effectively sanctioned and authorised a mode of perceiving Western knowledge as apolitical and areligious, as being de-linked from moral and ethical concerns, hence perceiving it in its utility and instrumentality. This perception, in turn, enabled the

articulation of a specific intellectual space to engage with Western knowledge as one among many ‘serious’ knowledge traditions that addressed and sought to attain *ri*. At the same time, the epistemic dispositive of the then-hegemonic knowledge tradition, Neo-Confucianism, was also the crucial backdrop for *Rangaku* scholars to valorise the idea of *ri* and expand the semantic space of *kyūri*. The Neo-Confucian predilection towards scepticism as a method, which was evident in the works of, for example, Hayashi Razan (1583-1657) and Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714), had set the standard orientation of intellectual exercises to question the authoritative voice and even to abandon previously accepted positions. This orientation is crucial as it permits heterogeneous significations of *ri* and projection of the *ri*-knowledge structuration onto various knowledge traditions, including Western knowledge, as the primary qualifier of ‘serious’ knowledge. In other words, scepticism as a method inherent in the Neo-Confucian tradition constitutes an enabling intellectual condition to map Western knowledge onto the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape and treat it as a ‘serious’ knowledge tradition that seeks to understand *ri* in its own remits. As these examples demonstrate, the development of the *Rangaku* tradition was as much heteronomously sanctioned and authorised by the political and epistemic dispositive as sustained by the *Rangaku* scholars’ vested interest in Western knowledge.

What emerges at this juncture is the necessity to engage further with a broader context in which the transposition of Western knowledge, which was signified by the development of *Rangaku*, became possible in the first place. Chapter 6 is concerned with various discursive developments within the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape during the early modern period in Japan. While my discussion revolves primarily around the heterogeneous significations of *ri* and the consequent expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri* in *Yōmeigaku*, *Kogaku*, *Kokugaku*, *Jōrigaku*, and *Koihō*, I begin this chapter with a consideration of what enabled the Neo-Confucian scepticism

as a method – the backdrop of the heterogeneous signification of *ri* and the semantic expansion of *kyūri* – in the first place. Essential for such consideration are the notions of spatio-temporal distance and spatio-temporal proximity that mark the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan. More specifically, the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism was marked by a spatio-temporal distance between Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) initial enunciation of Neo-Confucian thought in 11th-century China and its appropriation in Japan in the 17th century. Because of this distance, Zhu Xi's thought, when introduced to Japan, was constantly re-examined, either with reference to someone else's interpretations and critiques or in conjunction with other scholarly renderings of the Confucian canon prevalent in different strands of Confucianism. To this end, the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan was also marked by spatio-temporal proximity, or else contemporaneity, between the advocate and the dissent. That Neo-Confucianism came to Japan with a diverse array of interpretations and critiques and with renewed opportunities to re-read canonical texts – was indeed itself an enabling condition not only for scepticism as a method that Hayashi Razan resorted to but also for developing other scholarly traditions, such as *Yōmeigaku*, *Kogaku*, *Kokugaku*, *Jōrigaku*, and *Koihō*.

This spatio-temporal distance and proximity warrant the heterogeneous signification of *ri*. For Nakae Tōju (1608-1648), *ri* is not the absolute transcendence as Neo-Confucians would define it, but indwelling in the human mind, such that to attain *ri* is, essentially, to embody it in one's action. For Itō Jinsai (1627-1704), *ri* is accorded to material things and, therefore, is the logical principle, *ki* (氣: material force). For Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), *ri* means the ground for thinking and judgement. For Motoori Norinaga, *ri* is the ineffable intention of heavenly deities of the imperial land called Japan. For Miura Baien (1723-1789), *ri* designates various principles of the natural world in which humans have a small part. And for scholars of *Koihō*, who seek to understand the

facts about the human body, the idea of *ri*, or else an *a priori* presumed principle of the world, no longer constitutes the fundamental ground for knowledge and knowledge production. In these discursive enunciations, *ri* comes to be defined in its heterogeneity. And in turn, such heterogeneous signification of *ri* effectively suspends the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* – to attain moral and ethical conclusions through ‘investigation of things’ (格物: *gewu*) and ‘perfection of knowledge’ (到知: *zhizhi*).

Notably, the heterogeneous signification of *ri* and the suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* is not merely an instance of semantic change whereby new meanings are encoded to the signifier *ri*. It is also an instance of epistemic change. Through these intellectual developments emerges a new predilection for perceiving knowledge either as a *thing-for-itself* (in the case of *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku*) or as a *thing-in-itself* (in the case of *Rangaku*, *Jōrigaku*, and *Koihō*). Further still, whether one sees knowledge as a *thing-for-itself* or as a *thing-in-itself*, these new perceptions of knowledge signal a certain significance ascribed to the knower, more specifically, the power of the knower to determine what *ri* is and how one may attain it. The discursive developments during the early modern period in Japan are significant, insofar as it is in these developments that we begin to see a new orientation to reconfigure the relationship between the knower and the known. The knower no longer simply inhabits the world. Through these discursive developments, the knower begins to transform itself into the enunciating subject who sees the world as the repository of knowledge.

However, this knower that emerges from the discursive developments of the early modern period is sustained by a specific discursive order that is different from that which grounds the knowing subject that emerged in the early modern European philosophy. And the relationship between the knower and the known that begins to be reconfigured in these discursive developments

is by no means equivalent to the subject-object relation that we have come to associate with modern knowledge. Chapter 7 traces the subsequent process of moulding the knower into the subject of knowledge by attending to the development of two conceptual devices, namely *kagaku* and *shukan*, both of which are neologisms of the late 19th century.

The unfolding of the idea of *kagaku* in the early Meiji period is in large part reflexive of the political interest in acquiring practical and utilitarian knowledge of the West and institutionalising it with a specific division of labour based on disciplinary categories. However, once entangled with the recognition that the transposition of Western knowledge involves not only the acquisition of its contents but also the reconfiguration of its form, the idea of *kagaku* begins to designate systematised practices of knowledge production grounded on scientificity, or else, what Inoue Tetsujirō (1856-1944) describes as ‘scientific culture.’ This signification is crucial, as it enacts a new boundary that demarcates science from non-science, knowledge from non-knowledge. And in this instance of enacting a new signifiatory boundary, the idea of knowledge as the pursuit of *ri*, hence the *ri*-knowledge structuration, no longer represents the primary qualification of ‘serious’ knowledge. ‘Scientific culture’ is now the primary qualifier to determine whether a knowledge tradition is ‘serious’ and ‘valid.’

Naturally, such a shift in the qualification of knowledge engenders questions pertaining to the knower as the primary bearer of scientific methods and principles. Here, the idea of *shukan*, that is to say, the idea of ‘I’ as the possessor of both objective knowledge and self-knowledge, becomes the primary locus of scholarly contemplation. And some of the most instructive addresses can be found in the works of Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) and Nishi Amane. Nishimura, for instance, equates the idea of *shukan* to the understanding of the Self, or more precisely self-consciousness, developed by Western associationist psychology, which sees the Self as that who not only knows

the external world but also knows that they indeed know. In Nishimura's enunciation, the Self is enacted as the medium to produce objective knowledge of the world and, at the same time, self-knowledge. While Nishimura argues that the idea of *shukan* is a commodity exclusive to the Western intellectual tradition, Nishi, who coined the Japanese term *shukan*, has a different translational strategy. When translating Joseph Haven's *Mental Philosophy* (1862), Nishi elaborates on the associationist psychological idea of consciousness by anchoring it into the semantic field of (Neo-)Confucianism and argues that the idea is what (Neo-)Confucians would define as '*shendu*' (慎独: conscience), which constitutes the nucleus of Zhu Xi's moral psychology. Thus, in Nishi's enunciation, *shukan* comes to occupy, in its semantics, the liminal space between the Western notion of consciousness and the (Neo-)Confucian notion of conscience. To this end, the idea of *shukan* expresses a possibility of discursive difference – that the order of discourse that sustains this idea is different from the order of discourse that grounds the Western notion of the conscious Self as the knowing subject.

Of course, the contour of the Self, *shukan*, which emerges in the liminal discursive space between consciousness and conscience and which possesses objective knowledge and self-knowledge, remains at the level of abstraction. In the final analysis, Chapter 7 also seeks to address how this Self – 'I' emerge in the liminal discursive space – comes to operate in knowledge as the subject of knowledge. To address such a question, it is indispensable to bring our attention to the intersection between the realm of abstraction and the purported reality of Japan. How was the boundary of the Self enacted and repositioned in relation to the world external to it, to the non-Self, to the Other, under the politico-social climate of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which was marked by the specific power dynamics of international relations epitomised, for example, by the unequal treaties and the European colonisation of the Asian countries? How could one de-link

modernisation from Westernisation and ‘modern’ knowledge from ‘Western’ knowledge through discursive enunciations of the knowing Self, so that the conundrum of becoming modern and yet being different may be resolved?

At this juncture of abstraction and reality emerge two specific intellectual and institutional developments. One such development is the appropriation of particular temporality encoded in evolutionary theories and social Darwinism, more specifically, the appropriation of the temporal schema to conceptualise groups of people in evolutionary terms and to scale differences hierarchically. This temporality effectively enabled the Meiji intellectuals to enact the boundary of the Self along the imagined boundary of ‘Japan.’ At the same time, the schema of categorisation foregrounded by the evolutionary temporality provided a ‘scientific’ ground to determine the temporal location of this collective Self, ‘Japan,’ along the linear temporality of human progress. Put otherwise, the evolutionary temporality functions here as a discursive device to add contours to ‘I’ as the possessor of knowledge, and to transform it into the collective knowing Self, ‘Japan.’ The other development is the call for making a ‘national’ language the lingua franca of *gakumon*, hence that of research and education at the university. Such a call was reflexive not only of the reality of the institution of knowledge towards the end of the 19th century, marked by the increasing number of appointments of Japanese professors in place of foreign instructors and the growing demand to teach students in their mother tongue. The call was also reflective of the general politico-ideological predilection to treat a ‘national’ language as the primary means and locus for the subjective enunciation of the collective Japanese Self. To be sure, the notion of a ‘national’ language can never exist in its unity without abstraction, and the concern for what a ‘national’ language of ‘Japan’ actually entailed was never a settled matter. And yet, at least, the idea that the command of a ‘national’ language was instrumental for the Japanese to produce ‘serious’

knowledge – both objective and self-knowledge – came to foreground both the epistemic and institutional (re)organisation of the site of knowledge production. In essence, these new intellectual and institutional developments provided the ground for determining a spatially bounded, localised configuration of the Self, ‘Japan,’ as the subject of collective enunciation and cognition.

Arguing so, I seek to pursue the following line of argument to conclude this chapter. Through the unfolding of modern knowledge in Japan, language became a liminal space, first and most obviously, for reconfiguring the epistemic ground of knowledge through translational practices, through which the qualification of ‘serious’ knowledge was re-oriented from the *ri*-knowledge structuration to a subject-object relation. Second, and more importantly, language became a liminal space also for articulating a spatially bounded, localised configuration of ‘I,’ the enunciating and knowing subject. Therefore, language became a liminal space in which ‘Japan’ transubstantiated itself from the translator of Western knowledge to the producer of modern knowledge.

To emphasise the itinerary of Western knowledge – from West to Japan, from the parochial to the global, from ‘Western’ to ‘modern’ – is by no means to validate the spurious idea that this knowledge came to Japan as inherently better, universal mode of thinking and reasoning, simply having replaced the hitherto prevalent modes of inhabiting and knowing the world. This is not to endorse the “‘first in Europe, then elsewhere’ structure of global historical time.”²¹ Nor is it “the denial of coevalness.”²² Modern knowledge formation in Japan is synchronic to the extent that, through epistemic reconfiguration, knowledge comes to draw its sustenance from a specific

²¹ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 8. As he writes, “There was a time [...] when the process of translating diverse forms, practices, and understanding of life into universalist political-theoretical categories of deeply European origin seemed to most social scientists an unproblematic proposition. That which was considered an analytical category (such as capital) was understood to have transcended the fragment of European history in which it may have originated. At most we assumed that a translation acknowledged as ‘rough’ was adequate for the task of comprehension. [...] To challenge that model of ‘rough translation’ is to pay critical and unrelenting attention to the very process of translation.” *Ibid.*, 17.

²² Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983. 32.

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 of Western knowledge, 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. Further still, it is specifically to this end that modern knowledge formation in Japan is also an instance of ‘de-Westernisation’ – an instance to question and challenge the control over knowledge, or to put it more precisely, to question and challenge the complicity between the West – whether imagined or real – and the core premises of modern knowledge.

What I seek to tell in this dissertation is not a story of modern knowledge formation in Japan as a historical episode of the forward march of intellectual progress; nor a story of specifically ‘Japanese’ intellectual capacity to appropriate foreign and exotic knowledge for self-serving purposes; nor a story of how a parochial mode of thinking and reasoning, Western knowledge, has come to impose itself as universal. Instead, what I seek to tell is a story of how Japan *partook* in the making of modern knowledge.

To read modern knowledge formation in Japan as a moment of *partaking* is to account for the muddiness of Japan’s historical positionality in relation to the knowledge tradition that has long been operating with power and as a form of power. One scholarly consensus today is that modern knowledge, which is in its origin European but has become global through often unequal and

coercive processes of modernity, cannot assume its adequacy when juxtaposed with non-European histories and lifeworlds, because its fundamental assumptions are derived from parochial experiences and thus do not have apodictic status.²³ Yet, history tells us that, through a long process that spanned centuries, Japan internalised and utilised this knowledge for its own self-realisation as the modern and for its own colonial project as the self-proclaimed bearer of modernity in Asia.²⁴ This dissertation seeks not only to fill the gap described here with the innocuous word ‘yet,’ but also to move beyond the familiar – and almost banal – denouncement of modern knowledge as European and parochial. If the unfolding of modern knowledge in Japan was simultaneously synchronic and diachronic; if it was an attempt of all at once ‘becoming modern’ and ‘being different’ to join the rank of the – purported – universal while maintaining particularities; and if such opposition were discursively connected to one another and dialectically resolved within the semantic field of ‘national’ language, then, we must now turn to the language of textuality, discourse, and *différance* to account for traces of difference encoded to the tradition of knowledge that we call ‘modern’ knowledge. As a work *about* the history of modern knowledge, this dissertation seeks to address language, semantics, and translation as a transformative threshold for the particular – here ‘Japan’ – to partake in the albeit spurious universal. At the same time, if

²³ See, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards A History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999; Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the Worlds of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006; Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

²⁴ Goi Naohiro, *Kindai nihon to tōyō shigaku* (Modern Japan and Historiography of Orient), Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1976; Kawamura Minato, *Ajia to iu kagami: Kyokutō no kindai* (Asia as A Mirror: Modernity in the Far East), Tokyo: Sishōsha, 1989; Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1993; Kang Sang-jung, *Orientalizumu no kanata e* (Beyond Orientalism), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996; Yasud Toshiki, *Teikoku nihon no gengo hensei* (Linguistic Structuration of the Japanese Empire), Yokohama: Seori shobō, 1997; Serizawa Kazuya, *Hō kara kaihō sareru kenryoku: hanzai, kyōki, hinkon, soshite taishō-demokurashi* (Power Emancipated from Law: Crimes, Madness, Poverty, and Taishō Democracy), Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2001; Yamamuro Shinichi, *Shisō kadai to shite no ajia: kijiku, rensa, tōki* (Asia as An Intellectual Problem: Axis, Connection, and Projection), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001.

modern knowledge formation in Japan was also a process of ‘de-Westernisation’ sustained by the isomorphism of the conscious and enunciating Self and the spatially bounded, localised location called ‘Japan’; if this process was to articulate the ground for commending authority over knowledge; and if a knowledge tradition established through this process of ‘de-Westernisation’ enacted the locus for discursively legitimising modes of domination and subjugation, then, we must also consider not only possibilities but also limits of modern – and indeed *our* – knowledge. As a historical work *of* modern knowledge, as a product of the very history it seeks to recount, this dissertation also seeks to bring us to the sobering present: to reconsider whether modern knowledge, a knowledge conceived as a subject-object relation, can arrive at a moment of “epistemological decolonization” to achieve “global cognitive justice” when we find ourselves inserted into the genealogy of this very knowledge tradition²⁵; and, to reassess whether the metaphysical foundation from which our categories of knowledge derive is as stable as we would like to presume.

²⁵ 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: 78.

Chapter 1.

Japan, Modern Knowledge, and Scholarly Narrative Strategies

We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things.
Michel de Montaigne¹

Why do we have to call into question “Japanese” thought or Japanese “thought”? Why do we have to regard the being of Japanese thought as questionable? Also, what sort of knowledge are we to pursue in the name of “Japanese thought”? And what should “Japanese thought” designate in the first place? [...] We might remind ourselves of a Foucauldian insight. It is not because the objects of knowledge are preparatorily given that certain disciplines are formed to investigate them; on the contrary, the objects are engendered because the disciplines are in place. [...] That is to say, ours is not a perspective from which the history of Japanese thought as a discipline is determined by the existence of its object, Japanese thought, but rather one from which the object is made possible by the existence of the discipline.

Naoki Sakai²

In invoking Derridean grammatology, I argue that writing is not a revelation of the fundamental stability of a thing, a meaning, or an object. Any act of writing is, in fact, an act of stabilisation.³

¹ Michel de Montaigne, quoted in Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sing and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass (trans.), Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1978: 351 [351-370].

² Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On ‘Japan’ and Cultural Nationalism*, Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997: 40-41.

³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans.), Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Scholarly writings on modern knowledge in Japan, for all their differences, express and stabilise certain entrenched expectations – *our* expectations – about what we write and how we write about modern knowledge by means of reconstructive acts in narrative forms. As I will specify further shortly, there are, generally speaking, four tropes of scholarly narrativisation: ‘the politics of knowledge,’ whereby the formation of modern knowledge is reduced to a political process to instrumentalise knowledge and to press it into the service of power, the nation-state; ‘the institutionalisation of knowledge,’ through which the unfolding of modern knowledge is transubstantiated into the concern for academic freedom and institutional autonomy of the institution of knowledge, the university, established in early Meiji as the apex of centralised and hierarchised educational system; ‘the before-ness,’ which seeks to identify proclivities towards ‘modern’ in intellectual traditions of the Edo period and to reveal enabling anterior conditions for transforming Western knowledge into modern knowledge; and ‘the transposition and translation,’ which focuses on translation as the primary means for introducing, appropriating, and disseminating foreign and exotic knowledge.

What I seek to do through my reading of secondary literature is to map the contours of scholarly debates on modern knowledge formation in Japan and to specify what has been conventionalised as entrenched expectations for our practice of writing. What I also seek to do is to tease out, so to say, a possibility of writing about modern knowledge formation in Japan, to bend Jacques Derrida for my purpose here, ‘strategically’ and ‘adventurously’: strategically, to remain conscious about the impossibility to achieve totality of narration, hence the possibility of the inadequacy of my own narration; and adventurously, to write about modern knowledge and its unfolding in Japan without finality, without an established goal of narration.⁴ Writing ‘strategically’ and

⁴ Derrida writes, “there is nowhere to *begin* to trace the sheaf or the graphics of *différance*. For what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principal responsibility. The

‘adventurously’ is crucial, as I am acutely aware that my perspective and narration do not possess in and of itself privilege over others. No writing is exempt from assumptions. Language, the primary means of communication and reflection here, is not exempt from the power of figuration. There is no outside to textuality. Seeking to establish a mode of writing about modern knowledge formation in Japan without totality, without finality, requires, first, making visible our own categories of thinking and reasoning, and, second, reordering certain priorities of scholarly practices set up by the authoritative voice of canons and disciplines. What I present in the following is, therefore, a reading of tropes of scholarly narrativisation, not simply as ‘works *about* history of modern knowledge in Japan,’ but also and more importantly as ‘historical works *of* modern knowledge’ – indeed *our* knowledge – through which certain premises of this knowledge are reiterated and concretised as the ground for our own scholarly operations.

1.1. The Politics of Knowledge

The first schema of narrativisation revolves around a premise that power – be it the Tokugawa shogunate or the Meiji government – perceived Western knowledge in its utilitarian efficiency, and enabled its transposition as a means, as an instrument, that was pressed into service of specific political interests. Works spawned out of this schema of narrativisation are multitude in their

problematic of writing is opened by putting into question the value *arkhé*. What I will propose here will not be elaborated simply as a philosophical discourse, operating according to principles, postulates, axioms or definitions, and proceeding along the discursive lines of a linear order of reasons. In the delineation of *différance* everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a *telos* or theme of domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the development of the field. Finally, a strategy without finality [...].” Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in Douglas L. Donkel (ed.), *The Theory of Difference: Readings in Contemporary Continental Thought*, Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2001: 282 [279-304].

temporal scope, focus, method, and conclusion, offering various readings of how the nexus between power and knowledge was established and how political interests had shaped and reshaped the very nexus over time. And yet, through the host of scholarly narratives on the politics of knowledge emerges a certain scholarly consensus – a consensus to treat Western knowledge as epistemological objects that were transferred, shared, and utilised at one’s own discretion.

Instrumentalisation of Knowledge

To be sure, the primary focus of those works that resort to this narrative strategy is not necessarily on modern (Western) knowledge *per se*. For those works I shall discuss shortly, this knowledge, instead, constitutes a latent backdrop for analysing political, social, economic, and cultural changes that are said to have marked Japan’s entry into modernity. Therefore, compared to other narrative strategies this chapter seeks to specify, their discussions on modern knowledge and modern knowledge formation are somewhat limited. Nevertheless, as a strategy of historical narrativisation, it embeds within itself a particular predilection on how to read the itinerary of modern knowledge and its unfolding in Japan.

The works that read modern knowledge formation in Japan as a political instrumentalisation of knowledge can be primarily divided into three categories: first, those that focus on the ways in which politics saw the utilitarian efficiency of Western knowledge vis-à-vis the intellectual development of *Rangaku* (蘭学: Dutch studies) and *Yōgaku* (洋学: Western learning); second, those that discuss an anti-Western political attitude which perceived Western learning as a crucial means of understanding ‘barbarians’; and third, those works which treat Western knowledge as

one of the political means available for the Meiji government to consolidate a new political community, nation-state, as a new repository of politico-socio-economic life.

While Christian missionaries of the 16th and early 17th centuries were the first ‘transmitter’ of Western knowledge to Japan, a commonly shared view is that it was with the development of the *Rangaku* tradition during the late 17th and 18th centuries that Western knowledge had begun to unfold rather relatively more systematically, as a distinctive scholarship with some institutions, both official and private, dedicated themselves specifically to the acquisition of Western knowledge.⁵ Importantly, the development and increasing relevance of *Rangaku* during that period was not a mere consequence of often idiosyncratic intellectual curiosity towards the West; it was also reflexive of a broader socio-political context. Timon Screech, for instance, argues in *The Lens Within the Heart* (1996) that growing fears of Western encroachment, as well as a series of domestic unrest in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, became significant factors for a wide array of intellectual and cultural activities. *Rangaku* was no exception.⁶ If the socio-political context nurtured the general interest in the West and things Western, it was the political affirmation by the shogunate of the purported utility of Western knowledge, especially its astronomical knowledge and calendrical science and agricultural methods, that effectively validated Western learning as meaningful scholarly pursuits that could be pressed into the service of the interest of the shogunate. Often referred to as the crucial instance of official authorisation of Western knowledge was

⁵ For the development of *Rangaku*, and more broadly *Yōgaku*, see, for example, Itazawa Takeo, *Rangaku no hattatsu* (Development of Dutch Studies), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1933; Numata Jirō, *Yōgaku denrai no rekishi* (History of Introduction of Western Learning to Japan), Tokyo: Shibundō, 1960; Ogata Tomio, *Rangaku to nihon bunka* (Dutch Studies and Japanese Culture), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1971; Numata Jirō, *Yōgaku* (Western Learning), Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1989; Sugimoto Tsutomu, *Edo no yōgaku jijō* (Western Learning in Edo), Tokyo: Yasaka shobō, 1990.

⁶ 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]: 1-30. Tozawa Yukio also points to the growing interest in the West cultivated not only among scholars and officials in Edo but also among people with a wide range of socio-political background as a result of Tanuma Okitsugu’s (1719-1788) liberal policies. See Tozawa Yukio, *Edo ga nozoita ‘Seiyō’* (The West that Edo Peeked In), Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan, 1999.

Tokugawa Yoshimune's (1684-1751) *Kyōhō no kaikaku* (享保の改革: Kyōhō Reforms), which lifted the ban on Western books and encouraged the application of Western astronomical and calendrical techniques to increase agricultural production.⁷ According to Grant Goodman's *Japan and the Dutch* (2000), the result of this official political affirmation, not to mention Yoshimune's own personal interest in Western knowledge and technologies, was twofold.⁸ The first was the geographical shift of the centre of *Rangaku*. Initially, Nagasaki was the centre of Western learning with those who were well-versed with Western languages, customs, religions, politico-economic systems, and sciences. However, with *Kyōhō no kaikaku*, there began to emerge communities of *Rangaku* scholars in and around the shogunate's turf, Edo, which had a closer connection to the shogunate than those in Nagasaki. Second, there was a shift in the mode of engaging with Western knowledge. If the earlier effort was often concentrated on interpretation and translation of Western texts, now the focus had begun to shift towards the utilization of knowledge gleaned from the West for political purposes, which in turn resulted in a certain degree of professionalisation of Western learning. It is to this end that Goodman concludes, "Western learning was officially sponsored as a matter of practicality," and "scholars in the employ of the Bakufu [...] began to respond to official stimulus."⁹ To be sure, this is not to say that every field of *Rangaku* was in a symbiotic

⁷ E. Herbert Norman even went so far as to characterise Yoshimune as reminiscent of Augustus Caesar. "Yoshimune is generally admitted by historians to have been one of the more industrious and competent of the Tokugawa Shoguns. He is singularly reminiscent of Augustus Caesar in his grandiose programme of public works, his sumptuary edicts against luxury and ostentation, his pathetic confidence in the power of legislation to canalize along safe channels all intellectual and literary forces." E. Herbert Norman, *Ando Soeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism*, Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan, 1949: 55. For Japan's relation to the West from the 16th to 18th century, see, for instance, Grant K. Goodman, *The Dutch Impact on Japan (1640-1853)*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967; Donald Keene, *The Japanese Discovery of Europe, 1720-1830*, Revised Edition, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969; Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984; W.G. Beasley, *Collected Writings of W.G. Beasley*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2001: 13-68; Christopher Joby, *The Dutch Language in Japan (1600-1900): A Cultural and Sociolinguistic Study of Dutch as a Contact Language in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan*, Leiden and Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2021.

⁸ Grant K. Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch 1600-1853*, London and New York, NY: Routledge Curzon, 2000: 66.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 50, 66. Tasaki Tetsurō and Aoki Toshiyuki offer an illuminating reading of the development of *Rangaku* in provincial locations. See Tasaki Tetsurō, *Zaison no rangaku* (Dutch Studies in Villages), Tokyo: Meicho shuppan,

relation to power. For instance, the advent of a heliocentric view in the field of astronomy was in direct conflict with the then more prevalent Confucian and Buddhist cosmology and was perceived as highly controversial. And yet, this apparent chasm between the Western astronomical presumption and the Confucian or Buddhist cosmology was, according to Goodman, often transubstantiated both by Rangaku scholars and by the shogunate officials into a mere dichotomy between technique and value, between matter and spirit, enabling co-existence of different knowledge traditions that offered opposing worldviews.¹⁰ In short, Western knowledge was perceived by power in its utilitarian nature, for “the use of nature,” while its philosophy that grounds its utilitarian efficacy, “the understanding of nature,” attracted little interest.¹¹ This tendency to treat Western knowledge as technique, matter, or a means for the use of nature effectively “set the pattern,” to borrow from Screech, of thinking “European works [as being] primarily intended for practical application.”¹² In a similar vein, Goodman also maintains that “the official ideal was to keep these practical aspects completely separate from Western abstract philosophy in order to maintain the indivisible philosophical base on Confucianism and its concordant political and economic theories.”¹³ In such a reading of political authorisation of Western knowledge as the knowledge of utility and instrumentality, *Rangaku* is often positioned as an arm of the political. While the intellectual curiosity and desire of *Rangaku* scholars to attain Western knowledge were the vehicle of the development of Western learning, those scholars, as the agent of acquiring and disseminating Western knowledge, were simultaneously “subjected to the often oppressive atmosphere of feudalism and isolation,” having little political power to

1985; Aoki Toshiyuki, *Zaison rangaku no kenkyū* (A Study of Dutch Studies in Villages), Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 1998.

¹⁰ Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch*, 93

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹² Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart*, 10.

¹³ Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch*, 190.

determine the parameter or the significance of Western knowledge.¹⁴ To this end, the unfolding Western knowledge in Japan, especially as a distinctive scholarship of *Rangaku*, was, as the literature suggests, often sanctioned by the way in which power perceived what Western learning ought to be.

Of course, the interest in the practical utility of Western knowledge was not the only impetus for the development of Western learning. The *Rangaku* tradition was one of many vehicles for introducing and disseminating Western knowledge. Those who were gravely concerned with the Western territorial encroachment, both in the north by Russia and in the south by Spain and England, saw Western learning as a crucial means for understanding and collecting information about ‘barbarians.’¹⁵ Unlike those scholars of *Rangaku*, whose intellectual orientation was largely shaped by curiosity and even by a sense of affinity to the West, those who nurtured varying degrees of ‘anti-foreignism,’ such as Hayashi Shihei (1738-1793), Aizawa Seishisai (1782-1863), Watanabe Kazan (1793-1841), Sakuma Shōzan (1811-1864), were driven by a sense of immanent crisis. Bob Wakabayashi succinctly summarises in *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan* (1986) four kinds of fear that were shared among them and their contemporaries: the fear that the Western idea of religious and spiritual autonomy would undermine the shogunate’s authority to “control the people’s spiritual and religious lives,” which

¹⁴ Ibid., 223. Though politics sanctioned what was permissible to learn within *Rangaku* and how Western knowledge must be treated, Terrence Jackson offers us a dynamic picture of the way in which *Rangaku*, once a locus of mere interpretation of foreign texts, had grown into a thriving intellectual community whose impact extended well into the Meiji period and Meiji intellectual life. Based on the theory of social network and Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, field, and capital, Jackson shifts our focus to the interplay between social structure and intellectual as well as cultural products of *Rangaku*, and recounts the historical process of establishing an extended network of *Rangaku* scholars and channel of information dissemination. Jackson then concludes that the significance of *Rangaku* lies in that scholarship, with its extensive network and open community of scholars, effectively changed the way in which information (knowledge) was collected and disseminated. See Terrence Jackson, *Network of Knowledge: Western Science and the Tokugawa Information Revolution*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016.

¹⁵ W.G. Beasley, “The Edo Experience and Japanese Nationalism,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 18:4, 1984: 559 [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.

was perceived as essential for “political stability at home and territorial integrity against foreign nations”; the fear that Europeans, through missionaries and traders, “were compiling and disseminating information on Japan among themselves”; the fear of Christian proselytising; and, the fear of non-aggressive European encroachment through which “European rulers annexed foreign lands,” which were “all too similar to the Way of the ancient sage kings” to expand their sphere of influence and control.¹⁶ Indeed, fear is a great motivator. And those fears led them to attain knowledge of Western geography, customs, political and religious doctrines, and, most importantly, military and defence technologies. Obviously, their advocacy of Western learning did not imply that Japan should be open to the West.¹⁷ And yet, perhaps inadvertently, their advocacy opened up another realm, parallel to *Rangaku*, to introduce, appropriate, and disseminate things Western, and by extension, reshaped the political will – of both shogunate and *han* (藩) domains – to prioritise the introduction of Western military and defence technologies and to reorganise their coastal defence policies accordingly.¹⁸

A wide array of scholarly works has panned on this trope of political instrumentalisation of Western knowledge for domestic stability and territorial integrity,¹⁹ collectively suggesting that

¹⁶ Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan*, 94-96.

¹⁷ Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), *Sources of East Asian Tradition, Vol 2: The Modern Period*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008: 351. See also, Sonoda Hidehiro, *Seiyōka no kōzō: Kurofune, bushi, kokka* (The Structure of Westernisation: Black Ships, Samurai Warriors, the Nation-State), Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 1995: 89.

¹⁸ Adachi Ritsuen, *Kindai nihon kokubō-ron* (Theory of Early Modern National Defence), Tokyo: Sankyō shoin, 1939.

¹⁹ See, for example, Suzuki Hiroo, “Bakumatsu-ki no gakusei-kaikaku ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu: Saga-han o chūshin to shite” (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” (On Military Reform in the Late Edo Period), *Journal of Hōsei Historical Society*, 19, 1967: 106-121; Tanaka Hiroyuki, “Watanabe Kazan to tahara-han no kaibō o meguru ishi shiron: Kazan no kaibō-kan nit suite” (An Essay on Watanabe Kazan and the Coastal Defence Policy of Tahara-Domain: Kazan’s View on Coastal Defence), *Journal of Historical Studies*, 38, 1988: 3-77; Suzuki Kazuyoshi, “Bakumatsu-ki no seiyō-gijutsu dōnyū ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu: Saga-han no hansharoyō taihi-renga no seizō-gijutsu nit suite” (A Case Study on the Introduction of Western Technologies during the Late Edo Period: The Refractory Bricks for Reverberatory Furnace in Saga-Clan), *Bulletin of the National Science Museum*, 15, 1992: 53-65; Uehara Mitsushi, “Yokoi Shōnann kara mierokusha e: Kindai nihon no etosu no kenkyū” (From Yokoi Shōnann to the Meiji 6 Society: Study on the Japanese Modern Ethos), *Osaka geijutsu daigaku kiyō*, 18, 1995: 40-50. Many of these works

the acquisition of Western knowledge was, though paradoxical it may sound, an essential political means to respond to the Western encroachment. Furthermore, some scholars observe that this interest in the West nurtured both by the advocate and dissent of the West and Western knowledge became a crucial bridge between the Edo period and the Meiji period, between the traditional and the modern. For instance, Marius Jansen concludes his ‘Rangaku and Westernization’ (1984) by stating that “*Rangaku* [...] served as a bridge between the world of Tokugawa and Meiji thought and action.”²⁰ In a similar vein, John Van Sant’s more recent assessment of the unfolding of Western medical knowledge in ‘Rangaku Medicine and ‘Foreign’ Knowledge’ reiterates Sakuma Shōzan’s call for investigating Eastern ethics and Western scientific arts, arguing that such predilection for appropriating ‘foreign’ knowledge effectively paved the way for Japan’s “long and diligent assimilation of Western technical knowledge.”²¹ Such assessments, as I read them, are interesting less for their analytical (in)accuracy but more for their discursive function. By arguing for a certain historical continuity sustained in the nexus between politics and (Western) knowledge, these assessments first reposition in their discursive addresses the intellectual developments of the Edo period as a latent backdrop for the subsequent Westernisation and modernisation during the Meiji period. At the same time, however, these assessments also function as a marker to differentiate the Meiji period from its before-ness, reiterating the Meiji elites’ self-representation that their political and intellectual exercises were the catalyst for transforming Japan from the pre-modern to the modern.

read Western learning as part and parcel of the notorious synthesis of ‘*wakon yōsai*’ (和魂洋才: Japanese spirit, Western technologies).

²⁰ Marius B. Jansen, “Rangaku and Westernization,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 18:4, 1984: 553 [541-553].

²¹ John E. Van Sant, “Rangaku Medicine and ‘Foreign’ Knowledge in Late Tokugawa Japan,” *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, 34, 2012: 213 [207-214].

That Western knowledge was instrumentalised as a means to an end for political concerns is a recurring trope of those scholarly works focusing on the early years of Meiji. However, here, we see some discursive inflections in scholarly narrativisation. If those works on *Rangaku* and anti-foreignism treat, just as those intellectuals during the Edo period did, Western knowledge as one knowledge tradition among many others, the works on the political instrumentalisation of knowledge equate, as Meiji modernisers did, Western knowledge to knowledge of the modern.²² And it is this equation that enables those works to treat the Meiji period as symbolical of a “clean break with the past” and to read the instrumentalisation of Western knowledge as being “synonymous with modernization.”²³ For example, by focusing on the role of a reformed education system increasingly oriented towards Confucian moral education and Western knowledge acquisition, Ardath Burks argues in ‘The Role of Education in Modernization’ (1985) that ‘modern’ was equated to “concepts of scientific and rational behavior, the primacy of secularity in human relations, the acceptance of human values, and the application of rational-legal norms for administration,” all of which derived from the European politico-intellectual tradition.²⁴ Further still, for such ‘modern’ political developments in Japan, education was perceived as a “formal system of training” to provide “the specialized skills needed in a modern society” and to produce

²² 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, Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989: 523-524. At the same time, in order to underscore the uniquely ‘Japanese’ historical progress to appropriate Western and indeed modern knowledge, the socio-political condition of the Edo period is, in their reading, repositioned as the important backdrop that foregrounded and fostered the appropriation. Often reiterated are: the political stability of the Edo period that fostered popular interests in learning; the traditional civic education system organised around *terakoya* (寺子屋: temple schools, private elementary schools), various *hankō* (藩校: Educational institutions for children of feudal lords and their retainers), and a number of *shijuku* (私塾: private educational institutions), and some ‘official’ shogunate institutions of knowledge. See for instance, Ronald P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011[1965]; 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: 255-256 [254-263]; Lincicome, *Principle, Practice, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan*, 3-9.

²³ Lincicome, *Principle, Practice, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan*, 1-2.

²⁴ Burks, “The Role of Education in Modernization,” 256.

“the modern bureaucratic, managerial, technical, and professional cadres.”²⁵ Thus, David Wittner concludes *Technology and the Culture of Progress in Meiji Japan* (2008) by stating that

Japan’s technological transformation was not happenstance. It grew out of the political, social, and economic loci of Meiji modernization efforts. Meiji Officials were faced with a daunting task, one for which they had vision but no single plan. They needed to unify the country – raising its ‘level of civilization’ – while demonstrating the legitimacy of their new order to the former domain authorities. Simultaneously, they had to provide similar evidence to the foreign powers whose presence in the recently established treaty ports was a constant reminder that Japan too, could share the ignominious fate of Qing China. Meiji officials, like the many samurai from whom they became distanced, knew the importance of ‘knowing one’s adversary.’ Early contacts with the West provided the basis of Meiji cultural materialism as men like Sibusawa Eiichi, Sugiura Yuzuru, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and later Itō Hirobumi and Ōkubo Toshimichi quickly learned that technological artifacts produced from iron and powered by steam were as crucial for measuring a country’s physical ‘level of civilization’ as they were for the ideological superstructure of ‘civilization building.’ Each trip to the West only served to reinforce what already seemed apparent: Europe and the United States represented higher ‘levels of civilization’ as exemplified by their dominant positions in the world, made possible by demonstrably superior technologies. A ‘semi-civilized’ nation such as Japan would have to rapidly assimilate Western technology in order to survive.²⁶

What emerges from such a reading of the political instrumentalisation of knowledge during the early years of the Meiji period is a historical narrative that essentially – and as I read it, somewhat problematically – reiterates discourses of those modernisers, which equate Western knowledge to modern, and in so doing abstract a spatio-temporally specific knowledge tradition, Western knowledge, from its context and turn it into a qualitative yardstick for modernisation process. Such reified reconstruction of Western knowledge as modern problematically concretises, in writing, the familiar ‘first in Europe, and then elsewhere’ structure of time, and therefore the Hegelian

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ David G. Wittner, *Technology and the Culture of Progress in Meiji Japan*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2008: 125.

ontology of universality whereby the universal is ontologically located in a bounded space, the West. Further still, by reiterating discourses of Meiji modernisers, this reading of political instrumentalisation of knowledge seems to endorse, though implicitly and perhaps without an intention, the very Meiji idea that Japan, unlike China, had the capacity to leave the locus of the premodern and to enter the ranks of the modern.

Power and Knowledge

This ‘reified construction’ of Western knowledge as modern and reiteration of discourses of Meiji modernisers are that which I take issue with here. The scholarly narrativisation that perceives modern knowledge formation in Japan as an *effective* political process, despite the ascertainable fact that the process was replete with negotiations and contestations, seems to overlook the deep entrapment of historicism that underlies discourses of modernisers. The historicism I am referring to here is “the idea that to understand anything, it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development.”²⁷ It allows one to think of modern knowledge not merely as global but as something that has become global *over time*, “originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it,” and therefore to posit that linear historical time is a measure of differences between bounded spaces of here and there.²⁸ It was this historicism that enabled modernisers of Meiji, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, to discursively position Japan as being on the path of historical progress, as a

²⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000: 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7. We may recall here, it was this historicism that enabled Karl Marx to declare that the “country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.” See Karl Marx, “Preface to the First Edition,” in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1*, Ben Fowkes (trans.), New York, NY: Random House, 1977: 91 [89-93].

historical entity with the ‘capacity’ to enter the rank of the progressed, the civilised, the modern. Those scholarly works that treat modern knowledge formation in Japan as a process of effective political instrumentalisation to become modern, then, seem to reiterate, in their writings, rather problematically the very historicism that enabled discourses of Meiji modernisers, rehearsing the progressive linear temporality, inscribing the Hegelian ontology, and distinguishing Japan as a bounded location with a capacity to appropriate things modern.²⁹ To this end, this scholarly narrative strategy cannot but converge with the ‘autobiographical’ discourses of Meiji modernisers.

This brings to the fore two further issues. The first issue concerns knowledge as power, as a means of domination and subjugation, which constitutes a significant trope for reflecting on imperialism and colonialism. Against the backdrop of postcolonial critique, this issue has been taken up by those scholars who seek to account for the ways in which power instrumentalised knowledge, not merely for the ‘progress’ of Japan, but also and more importantly, for Japan’s imperial and colonial desires justified under the all-encompassing ideology of ‘progress.’ For instance, the eight-volume *‘Teikoku’ nihon no gakuchi* (2006) reconsiders the power/knowledge nexus against the backdrop of Japan’s imperial and colonial expansion, providing us with a detailed reading of how various fields of knowledge, such as economics, political sciences, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and colonial studies, had developed as the primary loci for producing knowledge of Japan’s Asian Other, while simultaneously had enabled Japan to distance itself from other European empires.³⁰ More to the point, those essays in the volume collectively

²⁹ Stefan Tanaka offers us an illuminative reading of the unfolding of this historicism in Japan. See Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1993.

³⁰ Yamamoto Takeshi, Tanaka Kōji, Sugiyama Shinya, Suehiro Akira, Yamamuro Shinichi, Kishimoto Mio, Fujii Shōzō, and Sakai Tetsuya (eds.), *‘Teikoku’ nihon no gakuchi, Vol.1-8* (Knowledge of the Japanese Empire), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006. There are also some other notable works that offer detailed expositions how each of these fields of knowledge was developed as a means of imperial and colonial expansion. See, for example, Hara Kakuten, *Gendai nihon ajia-kenkyū seiritsushi-ron* (Development of Asian Studies in Modern Japan), Tokyo: Keisōsha, 1984; Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*; Nihon shokuminchi kenkūkai (ed.), *Nihon shokuminchi kennkū no genjō to kadai* (Current Situation

suggest the ways in which knowledge had become instrumental for articulating and justifying a complex, discursive network of colonial and imperial differences.³¹ Knowledge and its formalised fields of inquiry, when tied to the specific spatial and temporal coordinates of the Japanese Empire, came to be instrumentalised, first, for articulating the external colonial difference between Japan and its colonies, including Taiwan and Korea. Various fieldworks organised in colonies throughout Japan's imperial and colonial expansion to collect information about local customs, religions, laws and norms, ethnic make-up, folklore stories, etc., were utilised by the political centres to legitimise the reality of domination as a mode of necessary 'guidance' and 'leadership' for modernising Asia and liberating Asia from the Western colonialism. This articulation of colonial difference – a specific discursive relationship between the mother country, Japan, and its colonies – then reiterated the external imperial difference between the Japanese Empire and the European empires, providing a discursive ground for characterising Japanese colonialism as relatively humane and Japanese imperialism as a historical necessity. Furthermore, the colonial difference also enabled the articulation of the idea of 'Japanese,' as one of the categories of imperial subject, as the primary bearer of the promise of History. In turn, the category of 'Japanese' became a marker of internal differentiation, a classificatory schema, to forge the internal Other, such as Ainu, Ryūkyūans, Zainichi Koreans and Chinese.³² This attention to the ways in which knowledge became the

and Challenges of Colonial Studies in Japan), Tokyo: Astenesha, 2008; Karashima Masato, *Teikoku nihon no ajia kenkyū: Sōryokusen taisei, keizai rearizumu, minshu-shakaishugi* (Asian Studies of the Japanese Empire: All-Out War System, Economic Realism, and Democratic Socialism), Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 2015.

³¹ For a theoretical rendering of colonial/imperial difference, see Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*, Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2012. See also Kang Sang-jung, *Orientalizumu no Kanata e* (Beyond Orientalism), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996.

³² For the issue of the internal Other, see George DeVos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, *Japan's Invisible Race: Cast in Culture and Personality*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1966; Hiyane Teruo, *Kindai nihon to Iha Fuyū* (Modern Japan and Iha Fuyū), Tokyo: Sanichi shobō, 1981; Tonomura Masaru, *Zainichi chōsenjin shakai no rekishigaku-teki kenkyū: Keisei, kōzō, henyō* (Historical Research of Korean Society in Japan: Development, Structure, and Change), Tokyo: Ryokuin shobō, 2009; Segawa Takurō, *Ainu-gaku nyūmon* (Introduction to Ainu Study), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2015. This attention to knowledge as a means of domination and subjugation has opened new fields of scholarly inquiry. First, there has been a development in the realm of literature and language, which

instrument for domination and subjugation aptly suggests that “the hegemonic ways of knowing and disciplinary world-making [...] were instruments of colonization” but also that Japan, being subjected to the imperatives of Western modernity, effectively transformed itself into “the modern subject and therefore the modern knowing subject,” and utilised this very position of the modern knowing subject for maximising its own political interest.³³

The second issue derived from this narrative strategy of ‘the politics of knowledge’ concerns our own practices of history writing. As works *about* history (about history of political instrumentalisation of knowledge), the literature that resorts to this schema of narrativisation

problematizes the language-agency-nation state nexus by questioning the categories of *kokubungaku* (国文学: national literature) / *nihon bungaku* (日本文学: Japanese literature) and *kokugo* (国語: national language). See, for instance, Suzuki Takao, *Nihongo to gaikokugo* (The Japanese Language and Foreign Languages), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1990; Lee Yeounsuk, ‘Kokugo’ to iu shisō: *Kindai nihon no gengo ninshiki* (Ideology of ‘National’ Language: Linguistic Consciousness of Modern Japan), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996; Suzuki Sadami, *Nihon no ‘bungaku’ gainen* (Japanese Concept of Literature), Tokyo: Sakushinsha, 1998; Rachael Hutchinson and Mark Williams (eds.), *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2006. Second, there has been increasing scholarly attention to praxis, to knowledge production in peripheries – including the works of *Yuibutsuron kenkyūkai* (唯物論研究会), *Shisō no kagaku kenkyūkai* (思想の科学研究会), the network of Japanese communists based in the U.S., critical journalism of for example Hasegawa Nyozeikan – which offers a reading of the emergence of other possibilities of imagining and thinking about Japan, its national consciousness, and its national subjectivity. See Wada Haruki, *Rekishī to shite no Nosaka Sanzō* (Nosaka Sanzō as A History), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1996; Yamagiwa Akira, *Beisenji jōhōkyoku no ‘enan’ hōkoku to nihonjinmin-kaihō-undō* (‘Enan’ Report of the United States Office of War Information and the Japanese Liberation Movement), Tokyo: Ōtsuki shoten, 2005; Yamamoto Taketoshi (ed.), *‘Teikoku’ nihon no gakuchi, Vol. 4: Medyia no naka no teikoku* (Knowledge of the Japanese Empire: The Empire in the Media), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006; Yoshimi Shinya, *Daigaku to wa nanika* (What is the University?), Tokyo: Iwanami shinsho, 2011. And third, there has been a scholarly effort to establish a perspective to address ‘the Dark Valley’ of Japanese history, by resorting to the Foucauldian notion of as well as postcolonial critique of power/knowledge. This is of course not to say that nothing substantial has been written on Japanese imperialism and colonialism. See for instance, Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peatti (eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984; Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998; Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998; Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukoku and the East Asian Modern*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004. Against these works emerges a collection of inquiries to address some of the basic issues and categories of the historical study of empires, such as ethnic competition, class interests, mobilisation of the Other, the notion of ‘national’ and national identity, and reconsider these issues and concepts in reference to Japanese imperial and colonial experiences. See, for example, Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009; Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011; Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011.

³³ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011: 189.

presumes, as it seems to me, incommensurability between ‘modern’ knowledge and ‘traditional’ knowledges that were hitherto prevalent in Japan, including *Kangaku* (漢学: Chinese studies), (neo-)Confucianism, and *Kokugaku* (国学: nativist studies) – the incommensurability that Meiji modernisers themselves had articulated and utilised for their own discursive addresses. ‘The politics of knowledge’ narrative strategy seems to presume that modern knowledge and traditional knowledge are essentially different modes of enunciation, through which a specific worldview is forged and a particular order of discourse is legitimated. In the most general sense, I, too, share such a view that knowledge is much more than its content (concepts, ideas, and theories) but it is a worldview, a mode of structuring the world in such a way that specific political, social, intellectual orders come to appear as natural, and even as universal. Acknowledging this, I see here lies a problem with this narrative strategy. While perceiving knowledge as a worldview, while presuming modern knowledge formation in Japan as a shift from a worldview (‘traditional’ knowledge) to another (‘modern’ knowledge), the analytical scope of this ‘politics of knowledge’ narrative strategy is often limited to the transposition of concepts, ideas, and theories, treating ‘contents’ of modern knowledge as something transparently transferred, shared, and internalised in a location (Japan), which, in their initial premise, is designated as a locus with a different worldview. Just as the official of the Tokugawa shogunate and modernisers of Meiji saw Western knowledge in its utility and instrumentality, just as they treated Western knowledge as epistemological objects to be transparently transposed and utilised at their discretion, this narrative strategy seems to reduce, in its narration, modern knowledge to mere objects. Little consideration is offered on how differing, and at times opposing, worldviews were negotiated to articulate an epistemic ground for effective transposition and appropriation of concepts, ideas, and theories that

were not autochthonous in Japan.³⁴ To put it differently, the incongruity is between, on the one hand, the idea of knowledge as the enunciation of worldview, which is in and of itself spatio-temporally specific, and on the other hand, the idea of knowledge as an epistemological object to be transparently transposed from one location to another. I am effectively suggesting here a necessity to treat modern knowledge formation in Japan as an instance, first and foremost, of the transposition of a ‘form’ of knowledge, an instance, therefore, of epistemic negotiation between two – or more – worldviews. To attend to the transposition of a ‘form’ rather than ‘contents’ of knowledge is to understand the entanglement of politics and knowledge in terms not only of how power instrumentalises knowledge, but also and more importantly, of how power inserts itself in the realm of knowledge and authorises a specific tradition of knowledge (a worldview, a form) as valid and serious.

As historical works of modern knowledge that participate in the genealogy of the very knowledge tradition they seek to address, the literature grounded on ‘the politics of knowledge’ narrative strategy necessitates a further consideration of history writing. What does it mean to write a history of modern knowledge when our scholarly exercises are part and parcel of this knowledge and when we find ourselves inserted into the genealogy of this knowledge? How can we move beyond historicism which has long been a close ally of temporalising the relationship between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’? How, to bend Chakrabarty for my purpose here, might we find a form

³⁴ This is indeed one of the primary tropes of postcolonial and decolonial inquiries into modern knowledge. My theoretical position in this inquiry is particularly indebted to the following works. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1994; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000; Arturo Escobar, “Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise,” *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 2007: 129-210; Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007; Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity: Time-Space, Disciplines, Margins*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

of history writing that embraces the idea of history, which is in and of itself modern, without erasing “the question of heterotemporality from the history of the modern subject”?³⁵

To critique historicism in all its varieties is to unlearn to think of history as a developmental process in which that which is possible becomes actual by tending to a future that is singular. Or, to put it differently, it is to learn to think the present – the “now” that we inhabit as we speak – as irreducibly not-one. To take that step is to rethink the problem of historical time and to review the relationship between the possible and the actual. [...] At the core of this exercise is a concern about how one might think about the past and the future in a nontotalizing manner.³⁶

As I will expand further in the following chapter, to attend to epistemic negotiation without erasing the question of heterotemporality is to remain conscious about ‘discursive difference’ encoded to the core presumption of modern knowledge when they were reconfigured in Japan. It is to attend to the possibility that the idea of, for instance, ‘the knowing subject’ of knowledge was (re)configured in Japan vis-à-vis other knowledge traditions, such that its discursive justification may be different from the way in which this subject emerged in the history of European intellectual tradition. It is, to put it simply, to address multiple temporalities encoded to categories, concepts, and presumptions – ‘form’ of knowledge – of that which we call with the epithet ‘modern knowledge,’ and to heterogenize the homogenous linearity of historicism that narrates the global unfolding of modern knowledge along the linear progressive temporality.

1.2. The Institutionalisation of Knowledge

³⁵ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 239.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

The second schema of narrativisation equates modern knowledge formation in Japan to historical developments of the site of knowledge production and dissemination. Here, by treating the university as the apex of modern, centralised, and hierarchised educational system, as the locus of knowledge production and dissemination, this schema of narrativisation offers a reading of modern knowledge formation as institutional processes of and at the university, which revolved around, among other things, issues of institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

Modern Knowledge Formation as Institutional Processes

The modern university was established in Japan in the late 19th century as part and parcel of modernising changes in the educational system, whereby education was subsumed under the concern for the modern nation-state and, therefore, became a field of statist activities. Unlike modern universities in Europe, whose precedents can be found in medieval universities, emerged as “spontaneous products of that instinct of association,”³⁷ the first modern university established in Japan, the University of Tokyo, had its origin in *Shōheizaka gakumonjo* (昌平坂学問所), *Bansho shirabesho* (蕃書調所: Institute for the Study of Barbarian Books), and *Seiyō igakusho* (西洋医学所: Institute for Western Medicine), all of which were established during the Edo period as ‘official’ institutions of the shogunate, being pressed into service of power and its politico-social

³⁷ Therefore, as “a scholastic Guild, whether of Masters or Students [...] sprang into existence, like other Guilds, without any express authorization of King, Pope, Prince or Prelate.” See Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europa in the Middle Ages, Vol.1*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895: 17-18.

interests. As these institutions existed and were authorised on the knowledge-power nexus, integrating these institutions into the modern university was very much a political process. A series of laws and ordinances, including 1872 *Gakusei* (学制: Fundamental Code of Education)³⁸, 1879 *Kyōiku-rei* (教育令: Education Order)³⁹, and 1880 *Kaisei kyōiku-rei* (改正教育令: Revised Education Order)⁴⁰, defined and redefined the purpose, the scope, and the character of the university, which eventually culminated in the idea that, as proclaimed in the first article of 1886 *Teikoku daigaku-rei* (帝国大学令: Imperial University Decree), the university was to expand the horizon of knowledge in the arts and sciences that would meet the needs of the nation-state.⁴¹

To be sure, the idea of the modern university as an ideological arm of the nation-state, as an institutionalised form of knowledge production and dissemination specifically in the service of power, is not at all unique to Meiji Japan. The 19th century was also marked by the transformation of medieval European universities into modern institutions of knowledge, which came to reflect, in their programs of research and pedagogy, concerns for reorganising political communities into the modern nation-state.⁴² Therefore, the temptation is to treat the university in Japan, as some

³⁸ *Gakusei* (学制: Fundamental Code of Education), the Grand Council of the State, No.214, 1872. <https://dajokan.ndl.go.jp/#/detail?lawId=00004928¤t=5> (07.09.2022)

³⁹ *Kyōiku-rei* (教育令: Education Order), the Grand Council of the State, No.40, 1879. <https://dajokan.ndl.go.jp/#/detail?lawId=00016745¤t=1> (07.09.2022)

⁴⁰ *Kaisei kyōiku-rei* (改正教育令: Revised Education Order), the Grand Council of the State, No.59, 1880. <https://dajokan.ndl.go.jp/#/detail?lawId=00017613¤t=5> (07.09.2022)

⁴¹ The article states, “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” *Teikoku daigaku-rei* (帝国大学令: Imperial University Decree), Imperial Decree, 1886. <https://hourei.ndl.go.jp/#/detail?lawId=0000000161&searchDiv=1¤t=5> (07.09.2022). A digitised version of the original text of the Imperial University Decree is available at the National Archives of Japan: https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/DAS/meta/Detail_F000000000000000014057 (26.07.2022).

⁴² I will expand further in Chapter 2 on this synchronic unfolding of modern universities and the ways in which diachronicities inserted themselves in this unfolding. See pp.94-96. On the development of modern universities in the West, see, for example, George Weisz, *The Emergence of Modern Universities in France, 1863-1914*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983; Jürgen Habermas, “The Idea of the University: Learning Processes,” *New German Critique*, 41, 1987: 3-22; Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996; John S. Brubacher and Wills Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities*, New York, NY: Routledge, 1997; Walter Rüegg (eds.), *A History of the University in Europe, Vol.3:*

may treat Japan's modernisation as essentially Westernisation, in its profoundly modular form, imported and adopted from elsewhere – from the West – as part and parcel of the process of modernisation. Indeed, scholars in the 1960s seem to comment, rather contently, on Japan's indebtedness to the modern Western and in particular modern German models of the university. For instance, Robert Scalapino writes in his *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan* (1962) that “the [Meiji] government had accepted a far-reaching system of education patterned essentially after German concepts, a move entirely consistent with the trends governing Japanese evolution.”⁴³ Ronald P. Dore, in a similar vein, maintains in “Education: Japan” (1964) that, while oppositions spawned through their affinity to French radicalism or English liberalism, “the state-centered ideology of Bismarck's Germany” received the warmest welcome among the ranks of the Meiji government officials, such that “the government, in its political, educational, military, and administrative reforms in the eighties [1880s] increasingly embraced German models.”⁴⁴ And precisely because the Japanese university was established as a field of statist activities, Dore even goes so far as to suggest that not only the institutional purpose, scope, and character of the university but also “Japanese scholarship [...] had [...] become heavily Germanic.”⁴⁵ Herbert Passin and Chitoshi Yanaga respectively observe that the university in Japan was conceived essentially as a “training school for officials,” just as German universities were catered to inculcate in the minds of the people a consciousness of national subject through its program of *Building*.⁴⁶

Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800-1945), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Robert D. Anderson, *European Universities from the Enlightenment to 1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; Charles Coulston Gillispie, “English Ideas of the University in the 19th Century,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 96:5, 2006: 27-46.

⁴³ Robert Scalapino, *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1962: 296.

⁴⁴ Ronald P. Dore, “Education: Japan,” in Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (eds.), *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964: 181 [176-204].

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

⁴⁶ Herbert Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*, New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1965: 129; Chitoshi Yanaga, *Big Business in Japanese Politics*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968: 21.

Perhaps – and in their defence – the university and its institutional formation are not necessarily the primary object of their studies. For instance, Dore’s overall scholarly concern revolves instead around the issues of social change. Thus, he questions: how the dilemma – or perhaps more accurately, balancing – of merit and achievement, which was latent but nonetheless existent in the Tokugawa value system, had survived the shattering of the nucleus of the Tokugawa worldview and had taken new valences in a new politico-educational nexus of the Meiji period⁴⁷; and how education generally in the Meiji period was repositioned as to resolve the aporia

of individual aspiration and collective responsibility.⁴⁸ Here, the university and its institutional formation merely constitute a latent backdrop for his analysis. However, such rendering of the university – that is to say, as a modular, as a mere backdrop for socio-political reorganisation, or as an ideological arm of the nation-state whose contribution to knowledge was gravely compromised by deficiencies in this politico-academia relationship – is nothing but schematic, failing to account for complex patterns of institutional development. This led James Bartholomew to conclude in the following decade that “in the entire body of scholarly writing – Japanese and Foreign – on modern Japanese history, perhaps no subject has been treated with less care or greater indifference than the imperial universities.”⁴⁹

Indeed, the schematism of scholarly perception in the 1960s on the institutional unfolding of the university in Japan became, in the following decade, the primary point of scholarly contestation. And the works spawned from the sense of discontent effectively articulated a new settlement on how to read the formation of the university: to read the university as the institutional locus of

⁴⁷ Ronald P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 212-213.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁴⁹ James R. Bartholomew, “Japanese Modernization and the Imperial Universities, 1879-1920,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 37:2, 1978: 251 [251-271]. His observation in this article was later expanded in *The Formation of Science in Japan: Building a Research Tradition*, New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989.

modern knowledge formation in Japan. Nakayama Shigeru's *Rekishi to shite no gakumon* (1974) is perhaps one of the first comprehensive readings of modern knowledge formation in Japan as an institutional process.⁵⁰ In his attempt to locate the institutional formation of modern knowledge in Japan within a much broader history of knowledge, Nakayama introduced a schematic distinction between 'East' and 'West.' This distinction, in turn, enables him to narrate the institutionalisation of modern knowledge in Japan as a story of Japan's negation of the Eastern intellectual traditions and its historical convergence with the Western intellectual tradition.⁵¹ By designating Japan as a location where we can observe "the most dramatic instance of [...] the entry of modern science (that most excellent product of the modern West) into a non-Western country [...] for the first time," Nakayama explains that this entry cannot be treated as a mere paradigm shift. It is because what happened at the onset of the Meiji period is not the reconfiguration of an existing academic tradition within which many competing paradigms may exist and paradigm shifts may occur, but a complete overhaul of one academic tradition into another.

Inasmuch as the academic traditions of East and West have grown out of different paradigms and present different spectrums, the reception of Western scientific thought in Japan could not have taken place at the paradigm level. The paradigms of modern science, in other words, could not have been subsumed under traditional

⁵⁰ Nakayama Shigeru, *Rekishi to shite no gakumon* (Scholarships as History), Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1974. My reference hereafter to this work is based on the English translation published in 1984. Shigeru Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions in China, Japan, and the West*, Jerry Dusenbury (trans.), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1984.

⁵¹ Of course, Nakayama's text is less polemical than, for instance, Fukuzawa Yukichi's "Datsua-ron" (脱亜論: Good-bye Asia) which effectively sets both analytical and historical schema of narrating modern Japanese history as a shift from the East to the West. However, one cannot but notice a certain parallel between them. Put simply, Fukuzawa's text asserts the self-representation of modern Japan as occupying a unique historical place and reiterates the West's self-image that presumes its political, social, and intellectual standards as the apex of human progress, thus as being bound to be accepted by the non-West. So too, does Nakayama's text, albeit to a lesser extent. Nakayama's reading of "History as social scientific enterprise" is perhaps so sedated by the very knowledge (Western science) which history he purports to narrates that his reading cannot but converge with the self-representation of modern Japan and the self-image West (Western knowledge) that Fukuzawa also asserts in his writing. For Fukuzawa's text, see "Datsua-ron" (脱亜論: Good-bye Asia), *Jiji-shinpō*, 16th March, 1885, in Tomita Masafumi and Tsuchihashi Shunichi (eds.), *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū, Vol.10* (Complete Works of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Vol.10), Tokyo: Iwamami shoten, 1970: 238-240.

paradigms. [...] The introduction of Western learning as a system left little room for a comparative examination of paradigms in particular fields. If the learning of the West was advanced, this was entirely due to the fact that the West had undertaken to pursue scholarship in an open, regularly organized, institutional way. The first imperative then was the adaptation of the Western type of scientific institution. This conviction and commitment underlay the introduction of the sciences *en bloc* and inspired wholesale Westernization in the 1870s and 1880s.⁵²

And the adaptation of the Western type of scientific institution, the university, was, according to Nakayama, primarily a political process.

When foreign learning is systematically introduced by the state, the establishment of an educational system under government auspices comes first. Paradigms and canons become part of the school curriculum and advocate-support groups are created as a part of national policy. Though this has become typical wherever scholarly paradigms have been imported on a national scale by modern state, Japan's introduction of Western science after the Meiji Restoration (1868) remains the classic and earliest example of this pattern [...]."⁵³

Rekishi to shite no gakumon has, for all its deficiencies, effectively set a new orientation for scholarly engagement with the institution of knowledge, the university, in Japan, delimiting what the issues and problems are and how they should be pursued and providing a spectrum of analytical possibilities and frames of references for subsequent inquiries. More specifically, scholarly works spawned subsequently tend to veer between two specific questions. One is about the degree of indebtedness of Japanese universities to the 19th-century German model. And the other is about institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

Nakayama's later work, *Teikoku daigaku no tanjō* (1978), Ushiogi Morikazu's *Kyōto teikoku daigaku no chōsen* (1984), as well as James Bartholomew's *The Formation of Science in Japan*

⁵² Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions*, 193, 212.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 195.

(1989) directly address the first question.⁵⁴ While acknowledging German influences on many areas of modernising changes in Japan, these works suggest that the appeal was not solely derived from the state-centred ideology of Bismarck's Germany, its legal positivism, and its notion of official service, questioning the extent to which the German model was absorbed and replicated into the realities of the university in Japan. A seemingly innocuous question that Ushiogi poses in *Kyōto teikoku daigaku no chōsen* represents the point of their contention rather emblematically. He asks why there were notable differences between the American and the Japanese universities of the 19th and 20th centuries, even though both were said to have been 'modelled' on the German university.⁵⁵ For Ushiogi, the claim for the indebtedness of the Japanese universities to the German model was not a scholarly invention of the 1960s but, in fact, prevalent among the Meiji elites, which functioned less as the cornerstone for institutional developments and subsequent reforms of higher education than as mythology. The German university of the 19th century was undoubtedly recognised for its outstanding achievements in science and engineering and its pre-eminence in medicine. The emphasis on the 'Germanness' of the Japanese universities was reflexive of the battery of Meiji elites' desires and investments to be on par with that which was at the time considered the most prestigious.⁵⁶ As I read it, Ushiogi here implies that to blindly emphasise the indebtedness means to reiterate the self-image of the university that its architects consciously imposed, and that the scholarly consensus of the 1960s cannot but converge with 'autobiographical' accounts of the university. Addressing a concern similar to Ushiogi's, Bartholomew points to

⁵⁴ Nakayama Shigeru, *Teikoku daigaku no tanjō* (The Birth of the Imperial University), Tokyo: Chūkō shinsho, 1978; Ushiogi Morikazu, *Kyōto teikoku daigaku no chōsen* (Challenge of the Kyoto Imperial University), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1984; Bartholomew, *The Formation of Science in Japan*. In addition, Amano Ikuo's comprehensive historical survey contextualises the establishment of the university within a series of reforms of the overall educational system, locating the university and its institutional formation in its relations to lower schools, vocational schools, and other educational and research institutions. See Amano Ikuo, *Daigaku no tanjō, Vol.1 and Vol.2* (The Birth of the University), Tokyo: Chūkō shinsho, 2005.

⁵⁵ Ushiogi, *Kyōto teikoku daigaku no chōsen*, 264-266.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

practical factors of the pervading myth of the German model both among the Meiji elites and among today's observers of history. According to Bartholomew, the accessibility of German universities and the German academic system not only allowed the Japanese students to study at not one but various German universities, but also and importantly, made it easier for the Japanese officials to collect information about how the institution of knowledge was structured into various departments and disciplines, how the state mandated it, how the accreditation system was organised, and so on and so forth.⁵⁷ Upon specifying what German 'model' or 'influence' actually means, these works discuss multiple, diachronic developments of various qualities that defined the university in Japan, including its institutional mandate and legal status; its social functions; its administrative and managerial structures; and, its programs of research and pedagogy. As these scholarly works have recounted, each of these qualities embodied a distinctive chronological temporality, certain political and social dispositive, and a sense of hybridity that negates any attempts to point to the 'original' model.

This problematisation of the notion of the 'original' and 'imitation' has also reconfigured the ways in which scholars intervene in the issues of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Bartholomew's *The Formation of Science in Japan* and Terasaki Masao's *Nihon ni okeru daigaku-jichi-seido no seiritsu* (1979)⁵⁸, for instance, offer counter-narratives to the pre-1970s scholarly

⁵⁷ Bartholomew, *The Formation of Science in Japan*, 72. As Bartholomew explains, Germany "was more willing than most other countries (especially Britain) to relax the special privileges accorded its nationals under the system of unequal treaties (1857/1899). German political philosophy had won considerable favor with the majority of Japanese officials. In particular, the German academic system made it easy to collect information. Unlike the French or British systems, where students studied at one institution, the German system encouraged migration. A student could attend lectures at Leipzig one term, at Munich the following term, and finish at Berlin in the term after that. Registration was easy, requiring just a letter, the array of courses impressive, and the number of German universities (almost two dozen) more than twice that of any other European country." Ibid.

⁵⁸ Terasaki Masao, *Nihon ni okeru daigaku-jichi-seido no seiritsu* (The Establishment of Institutional Autonomy in Japan), Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1979. To note, Ienaga Saburō and Igasaki Akio had worked on the issue of institutional autonomy and academic freedom in the 1960s. However, Terasaki's text offers the most comprehensive account of institutional autonomy not merely as the locus of constant tension between the university and the government, but also as the locus through which power inserted itself in the realm of knowledge by authorising it as an institution. See Ienaga Saburō, *Daigaku no jiyū no rekishi* (History of Academic Freedom at the University), Tokyo: Hanawa shobō,

presumption that reduces the university to the mere locus of politico-ideological imposition, whereby institutional autonomy and academic freedom were, to a large extent, curtailed by certain deficiencies of the politics-academy relation. Taking up the issue of academic freedom, Bartholomew argues that the university during the Meiji and Taishō period was not a mere ideological arm of the nation-state as a ‘training school’ for government officials, but contributed to the expansion of scientific knowledge, the development of which “represented a departure from the pattern of development in Europe.”⁵⁹ Bartholomew’s intention here is to tell a story of the formation of a scientific community in Japan from a diachronic perspective. What emerges from his analysis in *The Formation of Science in Japan* is an image of a vibrant scientific community, which, although sanctioned by the political in several ways, nevertheless promoted healthy competition, tolerance of dissents, and meritocracy over hereditary promotion – a scientific community, which exercised certain academic freedom to expand the horizon of scientific knowledge.⁶⁰ Terasaki, on the other hand, specifically addresses the issue of institutional autonomy. By moving away from what he criticises as a ‘pathological historical diagnosis’ (*byōri-shi teki shindan*: 病理史的診断) that merely accounts for the tension between the university and the government, and by relocating his analysis within a ‘physiological historical analysis’ (*seiri-shi teki kōsatsu*: 生理史的考察),⁶¹ Terasaki reads the unfolding of various issues of institutional autonomy as an overall historical development of the government-led university system. With a particular focus on management and administration in relation to the Meiji politico-ideological regime of the nation-state, Terasaki’s reading offers us the ways in which power inserted itself into

1965; Igasaki Akio, *Digaku no jichi no rekishi* (History of Autonomy of the University), Tokyo: Shin-nihon shuppansha, 1965.

⁵⁹ Bartholomew, *The Formation of Science in Japan*, 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 271-272.

⁶¹ See introduction of Terasaki, *Nihon ni okeru daigaku-jichi-seido no seiritsu*.

the realm of knowledge production and dissemination as the guarantor of its autonomy, and the ways in which the concern for institutional autonomy had expanded from the mere prerogative over the appointment, to the areas of internal regulation, pedagogy, and curriculum.⁶²

Autonomy, Authority, and Epistemic Negotiations

While a diverse array of scholarly works have since been produced, the historical scholarship of the 1970s remains significant, for it has effectively settled a general direction of research in this field: to understand modern knowledge formation primarily as institutional processes, and to understanding institutional processes as issues of autonomy of knowledge (academic freedom notated by certain standards of knowledge production and scientific competence) and authority of knowledge (institutional autonomy guaranteed by the university's relation to power). Put otherwise, the scholarship of the 1970s has concretised an orientation to treat the institution of knowledge, the university, as the locus whereby the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge is to be resolved.

However, as I see it, it is precisely at this juncture that irony lies. While these works of the 1970s seek to move beyond the language of imitation by emphasising diachronic developments of the institution of knowledge in Japan, their analyses resort nonetheless to the very frame of reference that, on the one hand, constituted the very *raison d'être* of German – and by extension Western – universities of the 19th century, and on the other hand, grounds many analyses of those

⁶² Ibid., 46-73, 143-156, 279-281. See also, Terasaki Masao, “Teikoku daigaku keiseiki no daigakukan” (The Idea of the University During Its Formative Years), in Terasaki Masao, Satō Hideo, Matsuno Kenji, Miyazawa Yasuto, Yamachi Tarō, *Gakkō-kan no shiteki kenkyū* (Historical Studies of the Idea of the University), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1972: 185-267.

universities. More specifically, the idea of the university as the locus to *resolve* the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge into a hermeneutic circle of knowledge and power was first enacted by Immanuel Kant in his *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798) both as a philosophical guideline for transforming the medieval university into modern and as an analytical imperative to understand the historical development of the university.⁶³ This idea of the aporia to be resolved subsequently became the primary trope for German idealist's enunciations, including the works of Schelling, Schiller, Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Humboldt, the architects of the modern German university. At the same time, as an analytical imperative, this idea of the university as the institutional locus to resolve the aporia of the autonomy and authority knowledge seems to have constituted itself as the stable ground for works, for instance, of Charles Percy Snow, Jürgen Habermas, Wolf Lepenies, and Bill Readings.⁶⁴ Surely, the 1970s scholarship on the historical formation of the university in Japan offers a diachronic reading with detailed accounts of the character of scientific communities and administrative and managerial standards as being reflexive of broader political, ideological, and social dispositive of Meiji Japan. And yet, there seems to be little to no reflection on the adequacy of utilising the idea of the aporia to be resolved as an analytical imperative for a historical analysis of the Japanese universities, even when the study negates the language of imitation and appropriation. Is it really adequate to begin one's analysis

⁶³ Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (*Der Streit der Fakultäten*), Mary J. Gregor (trans.), New York, NY: Abaris Books, 1979 [1798]. I will specify further in Chapter 2 the problem of transposing this idea of resolving the aporia as an analytical imperative, as a frame of reference, for the studies of the Japanese university of the 19th century. See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

⁶⁴ See respectively, Charles Percy Snow, *Two Culture and A Second Look*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969; Jürgen Habermas, "The Idea of the University: Learning Processes," in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, Shierry Webber Nichol森 (ed. and trans.), Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989: 100-127; Wolf Lepenies, *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology (Die Drei Culturen)*, R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996.

of the institutionalisation of the university in Japan with the presumption of the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge as something to be resolved?

My contention here is deceptively simple. If, as these scholars of the 1970s claim, modern knowledge formation in Japan was a political process precisely because it took a form of systematic introduction of Western scholarships through institutionalisation, if Western knowledge was already subsumed under the dictate of power, was there anything really to ‘resolve’? Indeed, as I seek to argue in the subsequent chapters, from the onset of its arrival in Japan in the 16th century, Western knowledge had had a certain symbiotic, if not consistently stable, relation to power. And the modern university established in the late 19th century was itself a pastiche of existing ‘official’ institutions of knowledge established and authorised by the Tokugawa shogunate. Then, the question at the end of the 19th century, in the midst of modernising changes, was not necessarily of ‘resolving’ the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge, but rather of ‘establishing’ the very aporia – more specifically, (re)articulating the autonomy of scientific evaluation, the nucleus of modern knowledge, as absolute and unconditional, and (re)configuring the symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power into a dialectic relation between the autonomy and the authority of knowledge. If our attention is recentred, as I seek to recentre it, around the question of ‘establishing’ the aporia, then we must consider historical and discursive processes of (re)articulating the autonomy of scientific evaluation, the epistemic ground of knowledge, and political processes of authorising such reconfiguration. What I am effectively suggesting here is that modern knowledge formation in Japan cannot be treated simply as an institutional process. Any analysis of modern knowledge formation must address the vicissitude of epistemic premises that went into the formation of this knowledge.

To attend to epistemic negotiations, those works of the 1970s pose further problems. Insofar as their primary focus is on institutions and institutional processes, modern knowledge is treated merely as epistemological objects that can be transparently transposed from one location to another. For instance, nowhere in Nakayama's observation on the development of Western astronomy, medicine, materia medica, and mathematics in Japan can one find a sustained analysis of how an epistemic tradition, which was grounded on specific ontological, epistemological, and methodological presumptions and which was hitherto foreign to the Japanese, was appropriated, internalised, and eventually institutionalised into specific departments at the university.⁶⁵ Nakayama instead completely dismisses even a possibility of philosophical contemplation by stating that

In giving priority to the construction of an institutional system within which to transplant Western paradigms, Meiji Japan paid more attention to the configuration and format of learning than to its content. Scholars troubled themselves little over how new scholarly paradigms were being born. Neither did they entertain the notion of participating in the ongoing advance of normal science. Their first preoccupation was the creation of an institutional framework to house knowledge previously canonized and accepted as standard in other traditions.⁶⁶

Echoing Nakayama, Bartholomew also comments, rather casually and almost innocuously, that “the conceptual schema of Western science at the time were taken as true because they came from the West.”⁶⁷

That conceptual schemas, theories, and methodologies of Western scholarships were taken as true and were appropriated within an institutional framework, is the kind of argument with which

⁶⁵ Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions*, 195-207.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁶⁷ Bartholomew, *The Formation of Science in Japan*, 4.

I take issue here. Such argument problematically presumes transparency of transposition of knowledge from one place to another, hence transparency of knowledge and its epistemic ground communicated through language, meaning, and signification. Even what these scholars treat ubiquitously as ‘the West’ was, in fact, replete with problems of semantic transparency. For instance, Samuel Weber notes that the German term ‘*Wissenschaft*’ is translated in French as ‘*science*’ that determines forms of ‘*connaissance*.’ However, in English, ‘science’ names not the unifying principle of all knowledge, but the ensemble of knowledge particularly in hard science.⁶⁸ Knowledge requires language, but language is not transparent. Further still, the argument also problematically enables a claim that new ideas derived from the European intellectual tradition came to Japan and simply replaced ‘old’ ideas developed throughout the Edo period. On the Tokugawa intellectual legacy, Bartholomew has this to say.

Meiji (1868-1912) scientists did not draw on Tokugawa ideas, for they were almost entirely abandoned after 1868, replaced by the ideas from the West. The Tokugawa contribution to modern science was not in the realm of the intellect but in recruitment: the kinds of people, in terms of family background and class origin, who had shown serious interest in science during Tokugawa times were the same kinds who came forward after 1868. [...] Tokugawa developments also affected the growth of research institutions, not because modern institutions had Tokugawa predecessors though a few important ones did, but by the continuity of political synergies.⁶⁹

What is at play here is a certain scholarly expectation to treat the Meiji period, more specifically the year 1868, as a marker of disjuncture in the history of knowledge – a disjuncture at which Japan enters the familiar temporal schema of ‘first in Europe, then elsewhere’ structure of

⁶⁸ Weber demonstrates brilliantly that institutions are, in fact, never free from the necessity of establishing and consolidating their authority through a process of reinstating themselves, in which interpretation and translation are crucial. See Samuel Weber, *Institution and Interpretation*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

⁶⁹ Bartholomew, *The Formation of Science in Japan*, 4-5. See also, *ibid.*, 50.

historical, intellectual progress. While, as Bartholomew suggests, certain continuities may have been sustained by some institutions and by those individuals who partook in institutional production and dissemination of knowledge, what emerges from his and others' treatment of the Tokugawa intellectual traditions, or else lack thereof, is a story of the beginning – a story of modern knowledge formation as institutional processes that began almost abruptly at the beginning of the Meiji period. Such narrativisation results in over-signification of the significance of the Meiji modernisation. At the same time, however, I have a lingering suspicion towards their view of knowledge as a mere epistemological object transparently transposed from one location to another and their emphasis on epistemic disjuncture to create a discursive space to argue for the significance of the Meiji period. For a work that concerns with the unfolding of a knowledge tradition – that is, the transposition of a 'form' rather than 'contents' of knowledge – especially in a context in which the knowledge tradition in question was not autochthonous, the question about how this knowledge came to be grounded is as much important as the question about how this knowledge was authorised and institutionalised. It is not that modern knowledge came to Japan from the West and simply replaced 'old' traditions of thinking and reasoning. In order to map this new knowledge onto the existing intellectual space, in order for modern knowledge to become *the* knowledge to be instituted, produced, and disseminated, the existing epistemic landscape had to be reconfigured. This, in turn, means that the Tokugawa intellectual traditions cannot be treated as mere oppositions, nor as 'premodern' that were inevitably replaced by 'modern' forms of thinking and reasoning. It was the intellectual landscape marked by these traditions onto which a new tradition of knowledge, Western knowledge, was mapped and subsequently established itself as *the* knowledge. In other words, one must address epistemic negotiations that went into the formation of modern knowledge in Japan, and consider the ways in which epistemic

reconfiguration was authorised by what Bartholomew calls ‘political synergies,’ the symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power.

1.3. The ‘Before-ness’ of Modern Knowledge Formation

While these two forms of narrativisation I have discussed above treat the Tokugawa intellectual traditions and their developments either with little care or as the epitome of ‘Eastern,’ ‘premodern,’ and ‘old’ modes of thinking and reasoning to be replaced, re-evaluation of the Tokugawa intellectual traditions has long been one of the primary tropes of scholarly inquiries in the field of Japanese intellectual history. The third schema of scholarly narrativisation I shall discuss here has indeed emerged from this field of inquiries, which addresses specifically the ‘before-ness’ of modern knowledge formation by locating, within Tokugawa intellectual traditions, enabling discourses that articulated a predilection towards modernity, and hence an enabling condition for the subsequent formation of modern knowledge in Japan.

‘Deep Currents’ of the Tokugawa Intellectual Traditions

The most notable writing that has established this strategy of narrativisation is Maruyama Masao’s seminal work, *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* (1952).⁷⁰ By tracing the emergence of the ‘modern’

⁷⁰ Maruyama Masao, *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* (Study of Japanese Intellectual History), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1952. My reference hereafter to this Maruyama’s work is, unless otherwise specified, based on the 1974 English translation. Maruyama Masao, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, Mikiso Hanne (trans.), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974.

mode of thinking and reasoning in the Tokugawa period, Maruyama sees its culmination in *Kogaku* (古学: ancient learning), especially in *Kobunjigaku* (古文辞学: the study of ancient words and phrases) of Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), which, by rejecting the Neo-Confucian presumption of the transcendental principle, *ri* (理: principle, *li* in Chinese), establishes a clear separation between moral laws only valid for man and natural laws that govern the natural world, between “what ought to be” and “what (naturally) exists.”⁷¹ If this separation is the primary epistemic achievement of Sorai, Maruyama also points to a political, ideological, social, and discursive shift in Sorai’s enunciation from “Gemeinschaft consciousness” to “Gesellschaft consciousness”: in other words, a shift from a feudal community to a modern society, which, in Maruyama’s view, derives from the separation of the realm of moral and ethical conclusions from the realm of facts about nature.⁷² It is precisely to this end that, for Maruyama, Tokugawa intellectual ideas embed within themselves a “‘deep current’ [which] could be seen as developing unceasingly towards modernity.”⁷³ This claim effectively expresses a certain scholarly expectation that a reading of Tokugawa intellectual traditions must trace historical vicissitudes built not only into the disintegration of the Neo-Confucian mode of thought but also, and more broadly, into the disintegration of the ‘orthodox’ worldview of that period.

Of course, this attention to Tokugawa intellectual traditions was reflexive, more than anything, of Maruyama’s own desire to stand on the “intellectual battleground on the side of ‘modernity,’” to combat what he perceives as the perilous idea of ‘overcoming modernity,’ the pathogen of pathological decay of Japanese intellectual life during the war period.⁷⁴ Therefore, to ascribe

⁷¹ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 70, 148-149.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 221.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxi. Harry Harootunian offers an erudite rendering of ‘overcomers’ especially in the field of philosophy who in the 1920s and 1930s clustered their effort around oppositions to modernisation which they perceived as the

particular significance to *Kogaku* – more precisely, to ‘read’ *Kogaku* as the significant instance that signalled the maturity of a ‘modern’ mode of thinking and reasoning – is not a revelation of the significance of this tradition of knowledge as if it is transparent in texts. Instead, such reading is an act of stabilisation of this tradition as one that occupied a specific place in the early modern discourse of modernity. And in so doing, Maruyama sought to retrieve, as I read it, the origin of modern Japanese consciousness and to (re)establish the subject position by re-reading Japanese intellectual history as something unceasingly and irreversibly developing towards modernity. Crucially, however, the most important premise of his analysis, modernity, envisaged as a universal destination – at least, as a temporally plausible universal destination – of human intellectual progress, is very much ‘Western’ in its designation. By resorting to the ideas such as ‘Gesellschaft consciousness’ as a cornerstone of modernity, the spatio-temporal specificity of those ideas that are said to have foregrounded the European, more specifically German, enlightenment and its modernity is effectively erased in Maruyama’s discursive strategy. In other words, these ideas are abstracted from the context in which they are articulated, both as the ideal for historical progress and as an analytical imperative. Such abstraction, which John Dunn criticises as “reified construction,” renders the very ideas with certain timeless elements.⁷⁵

For all its limitations, Maruyama's reading had nonetheless become, whether one sought to build upon it or challenge it, the point of reference for many subsequent studies of the early modern and modern Japanese thoughts. As Albert Craig declared in the 1960s, “all who write on Tokugawa thought must at some point ask themselves how their work relates to Maruyama Masao’s brilliant

embrace of materialistic and empty Western capitalism and culture. See Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

⁷⁵ John Dunn, “The Identity of the History of Ideas,” *Philosophy*, 43:164. 1968: 87 [85-104]. James Clifford’s conceptualisation of ‘travelling theory’ is also illustrative in understanding the problem of such abstraction. See James Clifford, “Notes on Theory and Travel,” *Inscriptions*, 5, 1989. <https://culturalstudies.ucsc.edu/inscriptions/volume-5/james-clifford/> (30.07.2022).

elucidation of the development of the school of Ancient Learning in his *Nihon seiji shiōshi kenkyū*.⁷⁶ The popularisation of Maruyama's reading in the 1960s was, of course, due in part to the increasing prevalence of modernisation theory developed both as an intellectual analytical category and as a primary ideology for the post-war reconstruction and geo-political repositioning of Japan.⁷⁷ And many of the proponents of modernisation theory in the field of Japanese studies resorted, to varying degrees, to Maruyama's reading of Tokugawa intellectual traditions, in their attempt of authorising their own readings of social, political, economic, and intellectual predilections towards modernity that they thought were inherent in the historical development of Japan.⁷⁸ What emerges through such rendering of the 'before-ness' is a representation of Japan as

⁷⁶ Albert Craig, "Science and Confucianism in Tokugawa," in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965: 155 [133-165].

⁷⁷ As evident in Edward Shils' initial proposal, modernisation theory is not a mere theoretical rendering of an ideal type of society that 'development' and 'progress' should strive for and a specific way in which discourses about 'development' and 'progress' should be integrated into a broader debate about modernity. Shils' conviction in the modern as "democratic and equalitarian, scientific, economically advanced and sovereign" reflects the desire to promote particular ideals of 20th-century American liberalism in the context marked by ideological antagonism of the Cold War. Shils' concept of modernisation with a singular path of progressive transformation – and his albeit naïveté to presume a universal human desire to follow that prescribed path – had extensive explanatory power to understand the otherwise complicated historical process of the 1950s and 1960s and political purchase to implement interventionism that marked the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson eras. See 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, New York, 1958: 1-3. Nils Gilman charts the development, proliferation and subsequent demise of modernisation theory. See Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America*, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

⁷⁸ Modernisation theory spawned a bewilderingly diverse 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 resorted to the general discursive structure of modernisation theory are not at all homogenous, not only in terms of their analyses but also with regard to the 'intention' that foregrounds these works. To put it in general terms, the primary intention for American scholars of Japan was to find a perspective that would combine a universal theory with particular Japanese historical experiences. While "the modernization of Japan is a phenomenon which cannot be viewed casually by any serious observer" and "we need a common understanding of the meaning of modernization," wrote John Whitney Hall, "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." For those American scholars, the concern was primarily to develop a common perspective specifically catered to understand 'Japanese' modernisation not as Westernisation, but without necessarily disregarding the idea of modernity as a progressive path. See John Whitney Hall, "Changing Conceptions of the Modernization of Japan," in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965: 7, 8, 33 [7-42]. As Sheldon Garon later reflected, "[it] is in this sense that modernization as applied to Japanese history has been less a rigorous theory or methodology than a general outlook." 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]. In contrast, for Japanese scholars, modernisation theory represented an opportunity to

a case history that participates in a story of modern knowledge as the forward march of human intellectual progress. And in order to locate the origin of ‘modern’ thought in the writings of, for instance, *Kogaku* scholars, in order to ascribe particular significance to their writings, this schema of narrativisation *a priori* presumes the existence of something ‘premodern’ against which Ogyū Sorai’s and others texts can be situated as expressions of ‘modern.’ Here, Neo-Confucianism is often positioned as a stagnant, homogenous, and indeed ‘premodern’ thought that dominated the Tokugawa intellectual life, which had to be challenged and replaced by a ‘modern’ mode of thinking and reasoning. While acknowledging that Maruyama’s reading remains one of the most comprehensive readings of *Kogaku*,⁷⁹ this *a priori* presumed oppositionality between Neo-

combat Marxist historiography that pathologically depicted the events of the previous decades with a vocabulary of deficiencies, incomplete transitions, and time lags, and instead to render in their re-reading what was hitherto defined feudal and traditional as the catalyst for modernisation. And this – almost – Nietzschean transvaluation in history writings permitted Japanese scholars to emphasise the ‘transformative ability’ or ‘internal capability’ of their own traditional society and culture as the primary engineering force of historical progress. See Umesao Tadao, “Bunmei no seitaishikan josetsu” (Thought on Ecological View of History), *Chūō kōron*, February 1957: 32-49; Tōyama Shigeki, “Genjitsu to dentō wa chiagu mo gakusha no kyōroku wa kanō” (Possibility of Scholarly Cooperation Despite the Differences in Realities and Traditions), *Mainichi Shimbun*, 9th September, 1960; Kawashima Takeyoshi, “Kindai nihonshi no shakaigaku-teki kenkyū” (Social Scientific Studies of Modern Japan), *Shisō*, 442, 1961: 483-488. Of course, modernisation theory and its application to Japanese history have since been criticised by a number of scholars. Tetsuo Najita argues that this linear temporality of progress tends to treat Japan’s imperial expansion and militarism as a mere aberration of otherwise steady Japan’s progress as a modern nation state, and suggests that historical research on the Japanese experiences should address the multitude of historical agents and complex actuality of historical moments. 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. In a similar vein, Sebastian Conrad maintains that in the discursive schema of modernisation theory, Japan’s imperial past and its colonial desires were methodologically rendered invisible, such that “colonial ties are” rather conveniently “liquidated.” 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 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,” and concludes that “America’s Japan became Japan’s Japan.” Harry D. 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].

⁷⁹ And for this reason, I am also following Albert Craig’s declaration. However, as it will become clearer in the subsequent chapters, one of the key differences is my understanding of the idea of modernity, not as an ideal type extracted and abstracted from a bounded location, but in its aporetic nature, as something that we all *partake* of its (re)articulation. I have offered a theoretical rendering of this notion of ‘partaking’ elsewhere. See Aya Hino, “Expatriating the Universal: A Decolonial Imagination beyond Authentic ‘Asia’,” *International Quarterly of Asian Studies*, 50:304, 2019: 31-54.

Confucianism and *Kogaku* (and *Kokugaku* that is intimately connected to the development of *Kogaku*), as well as the homogenous image attributed to the former, are bound to be problematic.

Most obviously, what is presumed as a given, as natural, is, in fact, what is signified as such. To borrow from Harootunian here, “we have no reason to suppose that such relationships are either natural or permanent and no reason to assume that we are prevented from producing different positions for *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku* texts by redefining the set of relationships governing the cultural field of the eighteenth century.”⁸⁰ More concretely, the story of Neo-Confucianism as an already established, homogenous socio-political ideology which dissolved vis-à-vis critique by *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku*, does not necessarily account for the temporality of the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan. The hegemonic status of Neo-Confucianism and the emergence of *Kogaku* are marked rather by a sense of contemporaneity. The ideological purchase of Neo-Confucianism became increasingly robust towards the end of the 17th century through the implementation of *Kansei igaku no kin* (寛政異学の禁: the edict to ban unorthodox schools of thought, 1790) and the establishment of *Shōheizaka gakumonjo* as an ‘official’ institution to teach Neo-Confucianism.⁸¹ Further still, Neo-Confucianism in Japan, not necessarily as an ideology for governing but as an intellectual tradition, was not at all a homogenous appropriation of Zhu Xi’s

⁸⁰ Harry D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism*, Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988: 16. Maruyama’s overarching schema is also challenged by Jeffrey Marti, who points out the problem of Maruyama’s intention to subsume individual thinkers into the larger schema of shift from the feudal to the modern. See Jeffrey Marti, “Intellectual and Moral Foundation of Empirical Agronomy in Eighteenth-Century Japan,” *Selected Papers from the Center for Far Eastern Studies*, University of Chicago, 2, 1977-978: 41 [41-80].

⁸¹ I will expand further on this point in Chapter 6, pp. 453-454. Maruyama himself acknowledges this defect. 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.

(1130-1200) thought, as evident in the case of, for instance, Hayashi Razan (1583-1657) and Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714). As it will become clearer as my argument develops in the subsequent chapters, the Japanese Neo-Confucian thought was propelled by scepticism towards Zhu Xi's thought and developed through a kind of 'revisionist' interpretation of Zhu Xi's writings.⁸²

The scholarly tendency to treat Neo-Confucianism as a frozen thought being transposed from China to Japan without any mediation was, in fact, propped much earlier than Maruyama's work by the pioneer of Tokugawa intellectual history, Inoue Tetsujirō. Take but one example of his characterisation of Neo-Confucianism in his *Nihon shushigakuha no tetsugaku* (1905).⁸³

朱子学派は其中に尚ほ幾多の分派あるに拘らず、洵に単調なり「ホモチニオス」なり、朱子の学説を叙述著し、敷衍するの外復たなす所なきなり、若し大臚に朱子の学説を批評し、若くは其れ以外に自己の創見を開くが如き態度に出づとせば、最早朱子学派の人にあらざるなり、苟も朱子学派の人たらんには、唯々忠実に朱子の学説を崇奉せざるべからず、換言すれば、朱子の精神的奴隷たらざるべからず、是故に朱子学派の学説は殆んど千篇一律の感あるを免れず

(Although there are many branches in the Chu Hsi school, it is very simple and homogenous. The Chu Hsi scholars merely described and propagated Chu Hsi's theories. If any of these scholars had been as bold as to criticize or to attempt to present his own ideas, he would not have belonged to the Chu Hsi school. Anyone wishing to belong to the Chu Hsi school had to stick faithfully to Chu Hsi's theories. In other words, he had to be Chu Hsi's spiritual slave. As a result we can read volumes of the Chu Hsi scholars' work and find that they all say the same thing.)⁸⁴

⁸² Chapter 5 expands further on this point, suggesting how this scepticism as a method inherent in the Neo-Confucian tradition enabled the development of other intellectual traditions. See pp.353-369. This scepticism eventually resulted in the heterogenization of the idea of *ri* (理) and the subsequent suspension of the neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* (窮理). See Chapter 6.

⁸³ Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nippon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku* (Philosophy of the Zhu Xi School Confucianism in Japan), Tokyo: Huzanbō, 1905.

⁸⁴ Inoue, *Nihon shushigakuha no tetsugaku*, 598. The English version is borrowed from Mikiso Hane's translation, which appeared in Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 32-33. This characterisation seems somewhat counter-productive to Inoue's own assessment of Hayashi Razan as the primary figure of transforming the nature of Confucianism already in the early Edo period into something reflexive of the politico-social realities of Japan. Tetsuo Najita offers a brief yet comprehensive account of the complexity of the neo-Confucian tradition in Japan and how it differs from Chinese Neo-Confucianism. See Tetsuo Najita, "Intellectual Change in Early Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Confucianism," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 34:4, 1975: 931-944. More recently, Kiri Paramore problematises such assertion of a 'particular quality' of Japanese Confucianism distinct from the Chinese orthodoxy

In Inoue's reading, Neo-Confucianism is treated as if it is a frozen historical thought, replicated faithfully by the 17th-century Japanese 'spiritual slaves' of Zhu Xi. However, such treatment of Neo-Confucianism is, for Inoue, essentially to establish a point of reference, to juxtapose *Kogaku* and *Yōmeigaku* (陽明学: Yangming school) as intellectual traditions that move us beyond the standardised Neo-Confucian worldview.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, it is upon this image of Neo-Confucianism in Japan as rigid, homogenous, fixed intellectual tradition devoid of any critical exercise that Maruyama's overarching schema of textual engagement rests. As Maruyama maintains,

It might seem logical to examine how the specific features of the Chu Hsi school analyzed above emerged in the work of the early Tokugawa Chu Hsi scholars, but since these scholars treated Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi with the devotion due to sages, their works are no more than faithful introductions to Chu Hsi's theories. [...] After the middle of the Tokugawa period, that is, after the Chu Hsi system had been subjected to the criticisms of the scholars of Ancient Learning and National Learning, conciliatory elements and compromises, whether conscious or not, began to appear in the works of the Chu Hsi scholars.⁸⁶

– which is evident not only in Inoue's assessment of Razan, but also in the scholarly emphasis on Ogyū Sorai's rejection of neo-Confucianism as well as in the scholarly predilection to treat the Mito's School as the epitome of 'Japanese' way of thinking and being – and analyses how such representation of Confucianism in Japan had paved the way for the rather disastrous political ideology of fascism. See Kiri Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism: A Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016: 141-166.

⁸⁵ Inoue, *Nihon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku*, 598-600. In contrast to Inoue's reading, Abe Yoshio, for instance, views Neo-Confucianism in Japan not as an opposition but as an enabling condition for developing other strands of Confucian thought. Abe identifies, in his seminal work on the influence of Korean neo-Confucianism on Japan, two distinctive strands of Japanese neo-Confucianism: what he calls '*rigaku*' (理学: the school of principle) epitomised by Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619), which was concerned primarily with *ri* as the transcendental principle, and which foregrounded later developments within the Confucian tradition exemplified by the works of Yamazaki Ansai (1618-1682) and the works of scholars of *Kimon-gaku* (崎門学); and what Abe describes as '*kigaku*' (気学: the school of material force), which emerged from the works of Hayashi Razan, and which paved the way for the works of Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714), Andō Seian (1622-1682), Itō Jinsai (1627-1705), as well as Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685). See Abe Yoshio, *Nihon shushigaku to choson* (Japanese Neo-Confucianism and Korea), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1965.

⁸⁶ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 32-33.

It is through this treatment of Neo-Confucianism in Japan as a fixed mode of thinking and reasoning that encapsulated ‘medieval *Einheit*’ that Maruyama is able to narrate Tokugawa intellectual history as a dissolution of a feudal worldview, of “an ideology guaranteeing the permanence of existing order” of the Tokugawa regime.⁸⁷ A similar overarching schema of textual engagement can also be found in another seminal work on Tokugawa intellectual history, that is Bitō Masahide’s *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū* (1961).⁸⁸ In his reading of feudal moralities and ethics, Bitō positions Fujiwara Seika’s (1561-1619) Neo-Confucian enunciation as a dogmatic mode of thought, whose symbiotic relation to Tokugawa power was sustained by its core premise that connected, through the rendering of the transcendental principle (*ri*), the realm of governing to the ideal of moral and ethical being. For Bitō’s analysis of intellectual developments and historical locations of scholars such as Yamazaki Ansai (1619-1682), Satō Naokata (1650-1719), Nakae Tōju (1608-1648), and Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691), Seika’s Neo-Confucianism is a priori established as a fixed frame of reference, as a litmus paper.

I am in sympathy with their general predilection that intellectual developments during the Edo period, the ‘before-ness’ of modern knowledge formation, is essential for articulating an enabling intellectual condition to transform knowledge that was hitherto foreign and exotic, Western

⁸⁷ Ibid., 198-199. The term ‘medieval *Einheit*’ is borrowed from Tahara Tsuguo’s critique of Maruyama. See Tahara, “Yamaga Sokō ni okeru shisō no kōsei nit tsuite” (Structure of Yamaga Sokō’s Theory), *The Annual Reports on Cultural Science*, 14:1, 1965: 44 [41-121]. A number of scholarly works have reiterated Maruyama’s claim of neo-Confucianism as an ideology that sustained the Tokugawa regime. See, for example, Peter Nescio, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan*, Cambridge, Mass and London: 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; John H. Berthrong, *Transformation of the Confucian Way*, New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1998.

⁸⁸ Bitō Masahide, *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū: Bakuhann taisei no genre to shusigaku-teki shisui* (Studies of the History of Japanese Feudal Thoughts: The Principle of Tokugawa Political System and Neo-Confucian Thought), Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1961. See also, Bitō Masahide, “Hōken rinri” (Feudal Moralities), in Ienaga Saburō (ed.), *Nihon rekishi, Vol.10: Kinsei 2* (Japanese History, Vol.11: The Early Modern Period 2), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1963: 273-312.

knowledge, into the knowledge of the modern, into that which we, too, have come to recognise as *our* knowledge. Therefore, my analysis in the subsequent chapters treats intellectual traditions of the Edo period as significant loci for understanding how the overall epistemic landscape was (re)configured in order to map a knowledge tradition derived from the European intellectual tradition onto that landscape. However, as I have indicated, I also take issues with some analytical categories those scholarly works on the ‘before-ness’ utilise for their analyses. Thus, some further qualifications are necessary.

Reading and Intentionality

Let me enter here precisely three qualifications to articulate an analytical orientation for the subsequent chapters that I shall draw from the above consideration of the literature on the ‘before-ness’ of modern knowledge formation.

First, my contention is the treatment of Neo-Confucianism. As William T. de Bary posits in his analysis of Neo-Confucianism in China, this intellectual tradition was not at all rigid, unchanging, or authoritarian. Rather, debates and dissents were very much a part of this intellectual tradition, so that “conflict and controversy cannot in themselves be taken as signs of disaffection or deviation from Neo-Confucianism as a whole.”⁸⁹ Neo-Confucianism in Japan, too, was far from homogenous.⁹⁰ The image of Neo-Confucianism that Inoue, Maruyama, and others have

⁸⁹ Wim Theodore de Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1981: 210. See also de Bary, *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1975.

⁹⁰ Berthrong also points out that, unlike in Korea where Zhu Xi’s tradition was established as early as in the 13th century not merely as a tradition of learning but as a means of reorganising the state and education, the unfolding of neo-Confucianism in Japan was marked by the simultaneous development of the multitude of different and at times opposing strands, including those who laid the groundwork such as Seika and Razan, those who inclined towards a

articulated and concretised – the image of Neo-Confucianism as a rigid, frozen, homogenous thought – becomes increasingly inadequate if we are to read, for instance, Razan’s and Ekken’s texts not as reproductions by ‘spiritual slaves’ but as ‘revisionist’ interpretations or even refractions. Through such reading emerges a sense of irreconcilable quandary that had gripped Razan’s and Ekken’s intellectual exercises: a quandary between their intellectual affinity to Zhu Xi and their increasing scepticism towards the central premises of Zhu Xi’s rendering of the Confucian canon. Importantly, this quandary was engendered not because Razan and Ekken ‘incorrectly’ understood Zhu Xi’s thought; but because it was predestined by the very method of learning Zhu Xi himself endorsed, that is to say, scepticism as a method of reading canonical texts. Razan’s and Ekken’s scepticism towards Zhu Xi are not so much dissension but a way of reclaiming Zhu Xi’s concerns for learning as a frame for their own intellectual exercise.⁹¹ It was,

kind of empiricism such as Ekken and Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), and scholars of *Kaitokudō* school (懷徳堂) such as Miyake Sekian (1665-1730) and Nakai Shūan (1693-1758) who focused primarily on the moral education of people of the merchant class. Berthrong, *Transformation of the Confucian Way*, 144-161. Moving away from the scholarly expectation to narrate Tokugawa intellectual traditions as a story of the dissolution of monolithic orthodoxy, some works, produced especially in the 1980s against the backdrop of disillusionment towards modernisation theory, demonstrate the complexity of Tokugawa intellectual life. Among them, the most important for this dissertation are 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; Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*; Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The Statues of Language in Eighteenth-century Japanese Discourse*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992. There has also been an effort to account for Tokugawa intellectual traditions developed outside the scope of Confucianism, as what we may call today an ‘interdisciplinary’ field. Federico Marcon’s study of natural history in Japan called *Honzōgaku* (本草学: a scholarly field encompassing materia medica, agronomy, and natural history) offers a perspective to understand the development of natural history in the liminal intellectual space between various scholarly traditions, without the direct influence of Western medicine, convincingly arguing that natural history in Japan was subsequently integrated into Western science not by substitution or suppression, but through adaptation and transformation. See Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

⁹¹ Mary Evelyn Tucker makes this observation, especially on Ekken, as a way of challenging Maruyama’s account of positioning Ekken as an intermediary between Neo-Confucianism and *Kogaku*. However, her reading does not necessarily touch upon scepticism as a method, which I intend to emphasise in my engagement with Neo-Confucianism. Instead, she offers a re-reading of Ekken’s *Daigiroku* (大疑録: Grave Doubts) as a rendering of Zhu Xi’s thought to make it reflexive of “his own ethical and empirical thought” and “his own time, place, and circumstances.” See 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: 68.

in fact, through such re-interpretation and refraction within the Neo-Confucian tradition that an enabling condition for *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku* was articulated.

This, in turn, means, and as the second qualification I shall enter here, that textual engagement is never free from intentionality – how a text must be read and why it must be read – that the reader projects on texts. As much as the text we are reading is a discourse in the historical field of Tokugawa Japan or Meiji Japan, our reading of it is a discourse in the historical field of our knowledge production. “There is no innocent reading,” writes Harootunian, “in which an invariant reality is transparently reflected in words; words are [...] opaque, layered, filled with differing and contrary valences, ideologically charged; lucidity is illusory, as is its claim that an utterance must necessarily be true because it is ‘obvious,’ ‘familiar,’ and ‘clear’.”⁹² Language is neither neutral nor transparent.⁹³ Reading a text, therefore, is always mediated by a set of presumptions, a schema, a contingent silence, about language and meaning, about words and things, about signs and significations, which forms a specific intentionality of how to read a text and why read it.

For Inoue, the intentionality of reading texts of Neo-Confucianism is to assert a particular way of philosophising – metaphysics and cosmology, or else the way we know, the way the world is constructed, and the way human nature is conceived – as the guarantor of beliefs and claims to knowledge. At the very end of his study on Neo-Confucianism, Inoue writes,

我邦の朱子学派に就いて学ぶべき所は其躬行実践の餘に成れる崇高清健なる倫理説にあるなり、否、倫理説より一層学ぶべきは其崇高清健なる徳行にあるなり、学説は時代によりて消長あるを免れざれども、徳行は永遠に

⁹² Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 10.

⁹³ This, indeed, is the central point to be taken from post-Saussurean theories of linguistics and semiotics. See, for example, Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, London and New York, NY: Methuen, 1980; Gregory R. Guy, “Post-Saussurean Linguistics: Toward an Integrated Theory of Language,” University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics, 3:1, Article 2, 1996. <https://repository.upenn.edu/pwpl/vol3/iss1/2/> (30.07.2022).

光を放って易はらざるものなり、其宇宙論の如きは単に史的事実として時に比較対照の為に回顧するの価値あるに過ぎざるのみ

(The Neo-Confucian school in Japan should be studied for its sublime and sound ethical theories, more concretely, it should be studied for its sublime and sound virtuous deeds. While an academic theory is a product of a specific time, place, and circumstance, virtuous deeds are timeless. The Neo-Confucian theory of the universe is merely a historical fact that is worth looking back on only for comparison and contrast.)⁹⁴

Here, Inoue seems to imply that an ‘appropriate’ intellectual exercise is, essentially, to expand our knowledge by challenging a standard view of the world that was hitherto prevalent. A specific image of Japanese Neo-Confucianism articulated through Inoue’s reading, and a certain value judgement we see in his argumentation, are possible precisely because his perspective is *a priori* grounded on a philosophical tradition that emphasises forms of reasoning aiming at expanding our knowledge, which contradicts the Neo-Confucian tradition that treats the sages and the authors of influential commentaries with at most deference and respect, and that is grounded on “the dictum of ‘transmitting but not innovating’.”⁹⁵

Similarly, Maruyama’s reading is also notated by specific intentionality. As I have indicated earlier, Maruyama seeks to retrieve, through his engagement with the ‘premodern,’ the origin of modern Japanese consciousness as to ‘view’ rather than ‘inhabit’ the world. He seeks to recuperate the contour of a conscious mind, the subject of knowledge, which he thinks was marred by the ‘overcomers’ of the 1930s. Here, Mikiso Hane’s comment on Maruyama’s intellectual life is telling. In the translator’s introductory note to *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, Hane writes,

⁹⁴ Inoue, *Nihon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku*, 603.

⁹⁵ 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: 39 [32-42].

The task facing the Japanese, in Professor Maruyama's opinion, is the creation of an autonomous mind that can function as an intermediary between reality and ideas. It would seek to objectify reality and, on the basis of a fixed standard of values, bring order to the complexities of the external world by a process of conceptualization and abstraction. Such a mind (subject), because of its sensitivity to the process by which ideas are abstracted from reality, would not turn them into fetishes and worship them as absolute dogmas. On the other hand, it would not rely upon non-conceptualized, felt, or immediately apprehended truth as the guidepost of life, a tendency that is widespread in Japan. The task that the author has set for himself then is to work for the creation of this independent subject in Japan.⁹⁶

It is this intentionality to locate the origin of the subject in the 'premodern' intellectual life, especially in Ogyū Sorai's texts, that the Neo-Confucian thought is – and ought to be – read as an opposition, as the stable point of reference against which 'modern' consciousness had emerged.

Third, the question that arises at this juncture is of how *I* read 'premodern' – for this matter, also 'modern' – texts and why *I* read them. If, as I have argued, our reading of a text is as much discursive as the text itself and therefore participates in a specific historical field of our own knowledge production, what kind of historical field does my reading participate in? As I see it, the efficacy of Maruyama's work (and to a lesser extent, Inoue's work), despite the problems I have discussed above, lies in its scope: its strategy of narrating 'Japanese' intellectual history not merely as a history that is 'Japanese,' but as a history that participates a much broader history by positioning 'Japanese' intellectual history *in reference to* the developments in the European intellectual tradition. For instance, think Maruyama's analysis of how the 'public' and the 'private' – very much 'modern' social categories – were separated from one another vis-à-vis the process of that which dissolved the Neo-Confucian continuum of '*butsuri*' (物理: the principle of things)

⁹⁶ Mikiso Hane, "Translator's Preface," in *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, x [vii-xiii].

and ‘*dōri*’ (道理: the principle of [human] way), and how this separation enabled the liberation of individuals and the independence of politics from feudal dispositions. Needless to say, such 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 Renaissance. Transposing Borkenau’s perspective on 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 the European intellectual tradition. And in so doing, Maruyama makes ‘Japanese’ intellectual history analogous, parallel, and comparable to European intellectual history. This comparative scope of Maruyama’s analysis is enabling, to the extent that it offers a possibility of going beyond the confines of ‘Japanese’ history. My intention here is also to offer a reading of ‘Japanese’ intellectual history not as a history that is ‘Japanese’ but as a global conjuncture. However, instead of positioning ‘Japanese’ intellectual history *in reference to* the European intellectual tradition, I seek to read the former *in conjunction with* the latter. The problem of Maruyama’s work, as I have already specified, is that it *a priori* establishes the European intellectual tradition both as a qualitative yardstick for his analysis and as a predestined destination of human intellectual progress – hence, as the point of reference and as finality, hence ‘in reference to.’ Intentionally or otherwise, this validates the self-image of the European intellectual tradition as the epitome of human progress and enables the authoritative and hegemonic voice of this tradition. Reading ‘Japanese’ intellectual history *in reference to* the European intellectual tradition can never escape the potential pitfall of making the referred a fixed analytical imperative and a fixed ideal. By arguing for ‘*in conjunction with*,’ I am effectively suggesting to treat the European intellectual tradition, or else Western knowledge, as one among many other forms of thinking, knowing, and essentially being.

My intention is, therefore, to read texts that encapsulate the ‘before-ness’ by locating them at the intersection, not of the presumed opposition between the premodern and the modern, but of various knowledge traditions, including Neo-Confucianism, *Kogaku*, *Kokugaku*, *Rangaku*, and of course Western knowledge – at the intersection at which the contours of ‘modern’ way of thinking and reasoning was emerged not through epistemic replacement, but through epistemic negotiation among various knowledge traditions.⁹⁷

1.4. Transposition and Translation

If we are to locate ‘Japanese’ intellectual history – including the unfolding of modern knowledge – at the intersection of genealogies of various knowledge traditions, we must treat this history as one that participates in histories of transcultural exchanges. Indeed, from the Confucian canon to the Buddhist teachings, from the Christian doctrines to the Western theories and concepts of natural and human sciences, a bewilderingly wide array of thought was brought to Japan and appropriated as part and parcel of ‘Japanese’ intellectual traditions.⁹⁸ For such transposition and

⁹⁷ I am therefore making an implicit distinction between ‘Western’ knowledge and ‘modern’ knowledge. If ‘Western’ knowledge is a heritage of spatio-temporally specific intellectual tradition, ‘modern’ knowledge is conceived through interactions and negotiations among various knowledge traditions and is aporetic in its nature. I will come back to this point in the following chapter. See Chapter 2, pp. 104-117.

⁹⁸ It is perhaps for this reason that ‘Japanese’ intellectual history is also replete with attempts to recuperate the lost unity of the ‘Japanese’ language and culture. From the *Kokugaku*’s quest to locate the ‘original’ Japanese language and to establish original meanings lost in the superimposition of the Chinese language, to the pre-war overcomers’ attempt of repositioning premodern histories from the rank of prefiguration of the modern to the realm of what Nietzsche describes as ‘suprahistorical’ or ‘eternalising’ forces within a culture, a reading of ‘Japanese’ intellectual history as a series of adaptation of foreign thought invites us to read this history also as a series of intellectual exercises to fix the ground of cultural and historical authenticity. See Harry D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*; Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*; Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in Daniel Breazeale (ed.), R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), *Nietzsche: Untimely Meditations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997: 57-124. For the itinerary of Western knowledge from the West to Japan, see, for instance, Masayoshi Sugimoto and David L. Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*, Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1989; Sugimoto Tsutomu, *Edo no yōgaku jijō*; Peter F. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History*

appropriation of foreign thoughts, translation was essential and indeed necessary, which has led to Sugimoto Tsutomu to declare that “Japan is a country with a distinctive translation culture.”⁹⁹ The fourth schema of narrativisation, therefore, reads modern knowledge formation as a history of transposition and translation, by questioning not only what were translated and disseminated, but also and more importantly how they were translated and disseminated. What emerges from this reading of modern knowledge formation is a picture of diverse, dynamic and indeed creative processes of appropriating what was hitherto foreign and unfamiliar. As I read it, though the literature that resorts to this narrative strategy is manifold in its scope, method, and analytical framing, at least these scholarly works articulate and are articulated on two specific analytical orientations: that methods of translating Western theories, concepts and ideas had been largely settled not through translational practices during the Meiji period but by scholars of the Edo period; and that translation had been a critical part of constructing the fabric of ‘Japanese’ modernity.

A Cultural History and Methods of Translation

The question of what was translated and disseminated has long been part and parcel of studies which concerns the transposition of Western knowledge to Japan. Cataloguing translated works of *Rangaku* and *Yōgaku* scholars is not an exercise exclusive to today’s historical scholarship. One

from the Beginning to the Nineteenth Century, Leiden: Brill, 1998: 277-305; Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart*.

⁹⁹ Sugimoto Tsutomu, “Edo no honyaku-ron to honyaku-hō” (Theories and Methods of Translation during the Edo Period), *Kokubungaku kenkyū*, 95, 1988: 57 [57-68]. See also, Sugimoto Tsutomu, *Edo jidai rangaku-go no seiritsu to sono tenkai Vol.1-5* (The Establishment of Rangaku Translational Terms and Their Development), Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppanbu, 1976-1982; Sugimoto Tsutomu, *Nihon honyaku-shi no kenkyū* (A Study of Translation History in Japan), Tokyo: Yasaka Shobō, 1983.

of the earliest catalogues of translated works, entitled *Waran honyaku-sho mokuroku* (和蘭翻譯書目録: Catalogue of Dutch-Japanese Translated Works), was compiled by a publisher named Yoshida Jibei in 1841. A much-expanded catalogue was published about a decade later, in 1852, by Hotei Omobito under the title of *Seiyōgakka yakujutsu mokuroku* (西洋学家訳述目録: Catalogue of Translations with Elaboration by Scholars of Western Studies).¹⁰⁰ While there is still a sustained interest today in expanding and reorganising bibliographical information about what was translated,¹⁰¹ the recent scholarly concern has been recentred instead around questions of ‘how’: how Western texts were translated; how methods of translating Western texts were established; how the authority, be it the Tokugawa shogunate or the Meiji government, authorised and sponsored translational projects, and professionalised translation. At the same time, however, this historical scholarship on transposition and translation has been marked by a division of labour. While – or perhaps, precisely because – the number of translated books, of languages translated, of translators involved, and of publication and circulation avenues were staggeringly large, today’s scholarly works on transposition and translation are, as it seems, often compartmentalised: either in a given discipline, most often linguistics and literature; or by the language of the original texts including Chinese, English, German, French, and classical Japanese. So much so that offering a

¹⁰⁰ 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> (15.05.2022). 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> (15.05.2022).

¹⁰¹ See for example, Kaikoku hyakunen kinen bunka jigyōkai (ed.), *Sakoku-jidai nihonjin no kaigai-chishiki: Sekai-chiri seiyō-shi ni kansuru bunken kaidai* (Japan’s Knowledge of Foreign Countries during the Period of National Isolation: 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 shisō-shi ni okeru honyaku no yakuwari” (The Role of Translation in Early Modern Japanese Intellectual History), in Tsujimoto Masashi and Xu Xingqing (eds.), *Shisō-shi kara higashi-ajia o kangaeru* (Thinking East Asia from the Perspective of Intellectual History), Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2016: 271-294.

comprehensive overview of a wide array of translational practices seems a daunting, if not impossible, task.

Rebekah Clements has taken up the task in *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan* (2015), providing a broader analytical framework to reconsider a history of translation as a cultural history.¹⁰² Taking a cue from Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia,¹⁰³ Clements treats translation as a significant cultural practice that foregrounds the contour of Japan's modernisation. More specifically, she specifies "what forms of translation were practised, who were the translators, and what, exactly, were they translating (or not translating)" in three domains of translations that had shaped translational practices in Japan: from classical Japanese to vernacular Japanese; Chinese to Japanese; and Western languages to Japanese. Crucially, what emerges from Clements' reading is an understanding that translational practices in Japan encompassed much more than what Roman Jakobson once described as 'translation proper.' That is to say, translational practices to appropriate foreign thoughts were much more than that which revolved around linguistic accuracy, authenticity, and faithfulness to the original.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, as a reading of 'a

¹⁰² Rebekah Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

¹⁰³ Peter Burke, *Language and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia, "Introduction," in Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 1-4. In defining the central aim of Translation Studies spawned in the 1970s, Burke and Hsia have this to say. "All major cultural exchanges in history involved translation: be it the rendering of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit and Pali into Chinese during the early medieval period; or the transmission of Greek philosophy into Arabic in the early medieval, and the subsequent translation of the same texts from Arabic into Latin during the high medieval centuries; or the more recent translation of Western texts into Japanese and Chinese that marked the modernization of those two East Asian civilizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. [...] Earlier books on the art of translation were generally normative, but the focus of Translation Studies – like that of sociolinguistics – was and is descriptive, stressing what translators actually do rather than what they should do. In the second place, where earlier studies had focused on the source, such as Ariosto or Calvin, the new studies – like the theory of 'reception' and the history of reading – focused on the audience, viewing translators as 'facts of the culture which hosts them' and as agents of change in that culture. Cultural exchange was viewed from a new perspective, that of the horizon of readers and their culture, whether we call it the 'host culture' or the 'target culture'." See Burke and Hsia, "Introduction," 1-2.

¹⁰⁴ Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in Reuben Arthur Brower (ed.), *On Translation*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1959: 233 [232-239]. Jakobson identifies three kinds of translation: "1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. 2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some

cultural history’ of translation, Clements’ work goes beyond the confines of linguistic approach or of literary analysis, and narrates a history of translation also as a history that was sanctioned by idiosyncratic intellectual interests as well as non-intellectual instances, such as the will of power and hopes for commercial gain.¹⁰⁵ It was, accordingly, through this entanglement of the intellectual and the non-intellectual instances, translational practices (both processes and products) became instrumental for broader political, economic, cultural and intellectual changes, including, of course, modernising changes of the Meiji period.

While Clements’ work provides us with a broader scope to unify dispersed scholarly efforts to understand translational practices, those dispersed efforts offer us specific contours and details of various modes of translation, determining certain scholarly expectations to read modern knowledge as a history of translation. Katō Shūichi’s observation in “Meiji-shoki no honyaku” (1991) is perhaps emblematic in this instance.¹⁰⁶ He writes, the oversaturation of translated works published and circulated in the Meiji period, which he describes as a “miracle,” was a result of the gradual establishment of translational techniques and professionalisation of translation in the previous decades, not only and obviously in the field of *Rangaku* and *Yōgaku* (translation from Western languages to Japanese), but also in the field of *Kogaku* (translation from Chinese to vernacular Japanese) and *Kokugaku* (translation from classical Japanese to vernacular Japanese).¹⁰⁷ It was, according to Katō, through those translational practices during the Edo period that techniques of translation and philosophical renderings which sustained those techniques – how

other language. 3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign system.” Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation*, 212.

¹⁰⁶ Katō Shūichi, “Meiji-shoki no honyaku: Naze, nani o ika ni yakushitaka” (Translation in the Early Meiji Period: Why, What, and How They Translated), in Katō Shūichi and Maruyama Masao (eds.), *Honyaku no shisō* (Theories of Translation), 1991: 342-380. See also, Maruyama Masao and Katō Shūichi, *Honyaku to nihon no kindai* (Translation and Japanese Modernity), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Katō, “Meiji-shoki no honyaku,” 342-343.

to engage with texts, how to treat language, meanings, signs, and signification, and how to appropriate foreign texts as ‘Japanese’ – were established. As he goes on to argue, this, in turn, foregrounded an enabling condition for Meiji intellectuals and translators to read Western texts in the ‘Japanese’ language and, thus, to render Western knowledge as their own knowledge.¹⁰⁸

Many works that concern the development of translational techniques and the philosophical ground of translational practices emphasise the creativity of Edo and Meiji translators – creativity derived from a necessity to overcome purported untranslatability between cultures and between languages. For instance, Sugimoto Tsutomu argues that the awareness of untranslatability shared among those translators was the primary dictate that determined how foreign texts – be it Chinese, classical Japanese, or Western languages – were to be translated. In other words, the awareness of untranslatability effectively determined ‘appropriate’ translational methods. More specifically, Sugimoto traces such awareness in the works of Fujitani Nariakira (1738-1779), a scholar of *Kokugaku*, and Ban Kōkei (1733-1806), an Edo poet and writer.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Nariakira reiterated in his text on grammar, *Ayuishō* (あゆひ抄: On Particles and Auxiliary Verbs, 1773), the Buddhist notion of ‘five kinds of untranslatability’ (五種不翻), which Xuanzang (玄奘) had proposed in his attempt of translating Sanskrit into Chinese. As Xuanzang specified, and as Nariakira reiterated,

¹⁰⁸ Of course, there remains a question of whether there was indeed a unified, homogenous, authentic language called ‘Japanese.’ Naoki Sakai argues that at least the idea of the ‘Japanese’ language was articulated through the discursive practices of *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku*. See Sakai, *Voices of the Past*. Lee Yeounsuk aptly suggests that while Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) made a clear connection between the ‘Japanese spirit’ and the Japanese language, what he and other *Kokugaku* scholars called the Japanese language was nothing but an idealisation of *yamato kotoba* (大和言葉), the ancient language free from ‘the Chinese mind’ and thus was confined to ancient writings. See Lee Yeounsuk, *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan*, Maki Hirano Hubbard (trans.), Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010: 4. However, this idea that the Japanese language was connected to ‘Japanese spirit’ nonetheless articulated an essential backdrop for establishing *kokugo* (国語: national language), and overcoming the *Kokugaku*’s discourses of the Japanese language became a crucial scholarly exercise in the early years of Meiji for establishing the status of *kokugo*. See, for instance, Hoshina Kōichi, *Kokugogaku shōshi* (Abbreviated History of the Study of National Language), Tokyo: Dai-nihon tosho, 1899: 10-11. Hirai Masao offers us a comprehensive survey of historical development of *kokugo*. See Hirai Masao, *Kokugo kokuji mondai no rekishi* (History of the National Language Controversy), Tokyo: Sangensha, 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Sugimoto, “Edo no honyaku-ron to honyaku-hō,” 58-59.

untranslatability would emerge when one seeks to translate: secret teachings that are not available for all; words with multiple meanings; words that do not have corresponding words in the target language; ancient words; and wisdom that should not be semantically inverted through translation.¹¹⁰ Being aware of untranslatability, Kōkei then argued, in *Kunitsubumi yoyo no ato* (国文世々の跡: The Language of Our Country from Age to Age, 1777), that the ‘appropriate’ attitude when translating Chinese into Japanese was to use one’s mind and to grasp general ideas a text sought to convey (“自心を用ひ義をとりて訳すべし”).¹¹¹ This attitude towards translation, as Sugimoto maintains, was not limited to the translational practices from classical Japanese to vernacular Japanese (in the case of Nariakira), nor to the translational practices from Chinese to Japanese (in the case of Kōkei). It also constituted a general backdrop for translational practices within the *Rangaku* tradition. Sugita Genpaku’s (1733-1817) attitude towards translation is a case in point. In his *Rangaku kotohajime* (蘭学事始: The Beginning of Dutch Studies, 1815) and *Oranda iji mondō* (和蘭医事問答: Questions Concerning the Matters of Dutch Medicine, 1795), Genpaku made a clear parallel between his translational practices and Chinese translation of Sanskrit, arguing that in his translation of a Dutch version of Johann Adam Kulmus’ *Anatomische Tabellen* (1741), he had to make a number of approximations, rather than word-to-word translation, in order to convey the gist of the original text.¹¹² Upon analysing translation methods of Genpaku,

¹¹⁰ Fujitani Nariakira, *Ayuishō*, Tokyo: Ōokayama shoten, 1932 [1773]: 8. A digitised version is accessible online at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1240201> (30.07.2022).

¹¹¹ Ban Kōkei, *Kunitsubumi yoyo no ato*, 1777. A digitised version of the manuscript is available online at: <http://www.lib.ehime-u.ac.jp/SUZUKA/011/index.html> (30.07.2022).

¹¹² Genpaku wrote, “人々の曉し易きを目当として定る方と決定して、或は翻訳し、或は対訳し、或は直訳、義訳と、さまざまに工夫し、彼に換へ、此に改め [...]” Sugita Genpaku, *Rangaku kotohajime*, Tokyo: Hayashi Shigeka, 1890 [1815]: 48. For a digitised version, see, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/826051> (29.07.2022). See also, Sugita Genpaku, *Oranda iji mondō, Vol.1 and Vol.2*, Tokyo: Takebe Seian, 1795. For a digitised version, see, https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ya09/ya09_00957/index.html (29.07.2022). Aoki Toshiyuki points out the importance of earlier works of Dutch-Japanese translation by the scholars of ‘provincial’ Dutch learning produced prior to the publication of *Kaitai shinsho* (解体新書: A New Treatise on Anatomy), which

Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757-1827), Motoki Yoshinaga (1735-1794), and Shizuki Tadao (1760-1806), Sugimoto specifies three translational techniques established by the Edo translators based on those translational methods prevalent in the Chinese Buddhist tradition. The first is the technique of ‘*taiyaku*’ (対訳) or ‘*honyaku*’ (翻訳), translation in a restricted sense, which aims at establishing a semantic equivalence between the original and the target language by resorting to *kango* (漢語: Japanese words of Chinese origin). The second is called ‘*giyaku*’ (義訳) or ‘*iyaku*’ (意訳), which is to paraphrase the original text in the target language based on the translator’s reading and comprehension, and by inventing new *kango* with Chinese characters to convey meanings. And the third technique is ‘*chokuyaku*’ (直訳), transliteration converting foreign words using phonetically similar Chinese characters or Japanese *kana*.¹¹³

On untranslatability, Katō Shūichi and Maruyama Masao even go further than Sugimoto’s linguistic approach. For them, the awareness of untranslatability was the genesis of Japanese self-consciousness vis-à-vis the Other – a kind of consciousness that marks what Immanuel Kant once described as “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity,” hence a consciousness of the modern.¹¹⁴ Katō and Maruyama trace this kind of awareness of untranslatability in the works of the *Kogaku* tradition, especially of Ogyū Sorai, who suggested in *Yakubun sentei* (訳文筌蹄: A Tool for Translation, 1714-1715) a possibility of semantic dissonance emerged from the practice

pioneered translational practices and establishment of translational techniques. 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*; Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation*, 148. For the Shogunate-sponsored Dutch studies, see Satō Shōsuke, *Yōgaku-shi no kenkyū* (Study of the History of Western Learning), Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1980.

¹¹³ Sugimoto, “Edo no honyaku-ron to honyaku-hō,” 62.

¹¹⁴ Maruyama et al., *Honyaku to nihon no kindai*, 24-43; 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].

of reading Chinese texts (Chinese words with distinctively Chinese connotations) with the method of *wakun* (和訓, more widely known as *kundoku* 訓読), a method of reading a Chinese character with Japanese phonetics. Semantic dissonance emerges because, while *wakun* annotation retains many Chinese vocabularies, the phonetics of a Japanese word could designate two or more Chinese characters – think, for instance, Japanese phonetic ‘*hashi*’ (はし), which can mean 橋 (bridge), 端 (edge), or 箸 (chopsticks), depending on the textual context and the context of enunciation. In other words, the meaning of a word is not independent of the specific syntax of a given language nor the larger context of its enunciation. To this end, Sorai recognised that the Chinese language and the Japanese language were fundamentally different from one another.¹¹⁵ It is for this reason that, for Sorai, what is read with the *wakun* method is nothing but an imperfect translation. That is to say, *Rongo* (論語: the Analects) that the Japanese read is not the same as *Lun Yu* (論語: the Analects) that the Chinese read.¹¹⁶ Katō and Maruyama read this Sorai’s recognition of the difference between the Chinese language and the Japanese language, derived from his awareness of untranslatability, as an acute consciousness of linguistic and cultural plurality of the worlds, as

¹¹⁵ Emanuel Pastreich points out that “Sorai coined the term ‘the language of the Chinese’ (*Kajin gengo* 華人言語) to refer to Chinese writing, or *kanbun* [...]. Sorai was the first Confucian to formulate a term for ‘Chinese language’ that made it a specific language rather than a part of the greater universal discourse of *bun* (literate writing [文]).” See Emanuel Pastreich, “Grappling with Chinese Writing as a Material Language: Ogyū Sorai’s *Yakubunnsentei*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 61:1, 2001: 132 [119-170].

¹¹⁶ Sorai writes at the beginning of the text, “此の方の学者、方言を以て書き読み、号して和訓と曰ふ。諸を訓詁の義に取れり。其の実は訳なり。而も人其の訳たることを知らず矣” See Ogyū Sorai, *Yakubun sentei*, Saitama: Suwaraya shoten, 1908 [1714-1715]: 2. This printed version is available online: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/991006> (30.07.2022). With the clarity of hindsight, Sorai’s proposed method of translation – to be competent in the original language – does not necessarily solve the problem of untranslatability that he found in the *wakun* method. By arguing that competency in the original language would allow one to have direct recourse to the original meaning, Sorai relegates the problem of untranslatability outside his primary concern and simultaneously presumes the neutrality of the reader who reads ancient Chinese texts without any spatio-temporal constraints of their own. This purported neutrality of the reader, achieved once the reader becomes competent in the original language, seems to contradict Sorai’s initial premises of language as a spatially and temporally specific unit. I will expand this observation in Chapter 6, pp. 399-402.

an attempt to grapple with the otherness of other cultures, which, in turn, enabled Sorai to objectify the ‘Japanese’ language and culture.¹¹⁷

To be sure, Sorai’s method of engaging with ancient Chinese texts was not necessarily widely accepted by his contemporaries, and the method of *wakun* remained the mainstream way of dealing with foreign texts.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, Katō and Maruyama seem to suggest that Sorai’s ethos of dealing with foreign texts and, by extension, foreign cultures – that is to say, the ethos to recognise the foreign as foreign and to render the foreign as ‘Japanese’ through annotative methods – had lived on to the following Meiji period, constituting not only the basis for Meiji translational practices, but also the latent backdrop for modernisation notated by the dialectic of ‘becoming modern, being different.’ As Katō argues, with the example of Mitsukuri Rinshō (1846-1898), the method of translation that resorted to *kango* enabled concise transposition of foreign, abstract concepts and ideas to the Japanese semantic space, because *kango* allowed the overlapping of two languages. Put otherwise, *kango* became a semantic locus whereby the meaning of a translated term (Japanese) could be approximated to the meaning expressed in the original language – recall, for instance, the case of ‘*hashi*’ (はし) as 橋 (bridge), 端 (edge), or 箸 (chopsticks).¹¹⁹ At the same time, the technique of *yomikudashi* (読み下し, more widely known as *kakikudashi* 書き下し: a method of reading classical Chinese texts as Japanese based on the *wakun* / *kundoku* method) articulated a space for rendering the foreign as Japanese, especially in its syntax, a space, therefore,

¹¹⁷ Maruyama et al., *Honyaku to nihon no kindai*, 34. Indeed ‘objectification’ is a primarily ‘modern’ mode of rendering the world knowable.

¹¹⁸ Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation*, 42-45.

¹¹⁹ Mitsukuri Rinshō reflected in 1887 on his project of translating French criminal law, admitting that to translate the term such as ‘droite’ and ‘obligations,’ he relied heavily on *kango* used in the Chinese version of Henry Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law* (1836) translated by William Martin and published under the title of *Wan guo gong fa* (萬國公法). See Mitsukuri Rinshō, “Mitsukuri Rinshō-shi no enzetsu” (箕作麟祥氏の演説: A Speech of Mitsukuri Rinshō), in Katō Shūichi and Maruyama Masao (eds.), *Honyaku no shisō* (Theories of Translation), 1991 [1887]: 305-306 [303-315].

for specifically ‘Japanese’ enunciation. As Katō suggests, this combined method of translation, when used to translate Western knowledge, became instrumental in realising the dialectic of ‘becoming modern, being different.’¹²⁰ On the one hand, *kango* became a vehicle for transposing Western words, concepts, and ideas, therefore a locus to establish equivalence between the Western (language) and the Japanese (language) – equivalence that marked Japan’s entry into the civilised, the modern. On the other hand, *yomikudashi* enabled certain inversion of the meanings of a word to reflect specific syntax and context of the language usage in Japan, therefore becoming a means to retain the specifically ‘Japanese’ nature – whatever that may be – of thinking and reasoning expressed through language, hence being different from the West. It is precisely to this end that Katō and Maruyama see translational practices as the catalyst for Japan’s modernisation.¹²¹

Différance and the Consequence of Translation

What emerges from those analyses on the methods of translation derived from the awareness of untranslatability is a specific understanding of the nature of language and translation. Translational

¹²⁰ Katō, “Meiji-shoki no honyaku: Naze, nani o ika ni yakushitaka,” 348; see also, Maruyama et al., *Honyaku to nihon no kindai*, 109.

¹²¹ While making a similar observation on discursive practices of scholars of *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku*, Naoki Sakai arrives at a slightly different conclusion. He writes, “they could maintain awareness that the unity of a language could not be directly equated to the unity of their existing contemporary community. Certainly, they perceived the Tokugawa polity as fragmented, disrupted, and far from internally coherent or harmonious, but there is more to their refusal to superimposed the unity of an internally homogenized and coherent whole, or the status of the ‘interior,’ on their contemporary polity. For one thing, their argument still carried a strong critical impulse, so that they posited the image of the homogenized ‘interior’ in order to highlight the estranged and fragmented state of affairs. But more important, they still retained some sense of the ‘idea’ of the Japanese language, even though the poietic and creative aspect of ethical action was largely represented 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.” See Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 335.

practices during the Edo and Meiji period were an act of approximation, which cannot be evaluated solely by the notion of accuracy, authenticity or faithfulness. Language, as translators of the Edo and Meiji period seem to have understood, is not transparent. This, in turn, means that the transposition of a knowledge tradition – be it Buddhism, Confucianism, or Western scholarships – necessarily involves certain inversion of meanings, such that there is always a possibility of semantic differences between the product of translation, for instance, ‘*kagaku*’ (科学), and the original, be it Dutch ‘*Natuurkunde*,’ English ‘*science*,’ German ‘*Wissenschaft*,’ or French ‘*science*.’¹²²

In *Honyakugo no ronri* (1972), Yanabu Akira addresses directly and in a theoretical manner the issue of untranslatability, reminding us of the inevitable possibility of semantic differences.¹²³

およそ言葉の意味というものを、孤立した一つの言葉の概念として理解する試みは、常に不十分である。言葉の意味を概念として理解する試みには、もちろんそれなりの意義はある。意味の分析的な考察にとって、不可欠の方法である。が、常に不十分であり、不完全なのである。言葉の意味の、もう一つの重要な部分は、文脈によって決定されている。言葉は、文脈中の他の多くの言葉と関係を持ち、その関係の中で機能として働く意味を持っている。言葉の意味を孤立した言葉の概念として理解する試みは、このような文脈上の意味を理解し難い。同じ言葉が、異なる文脈に置かれたとき、どのように異なる意味を持つか、という事情について、「概念」はよく理解できないのである。

(Attempts to understand the meaning of a word as an isolated, single concept are always inadequate. Of course, such attempts have their own significance and constitute an essential method for the analytical consideration of meaning. But it is always inadequate and incomplete. Partly because the meaning of a word is determined by context. A word has a meaning in relation to many other words in the context, and is functional in that relationship. If we are to understand the meaning of a word as an isolated concept, we would only partially grasp the

¹²² Again, we must also remind ourselves here that even those European terms are marked by semantic differences and therefore not exactly the same.

¹²³ Yanabu Akira, *Honyakugo no ronri: Gengo ni miru nihon bunka no kōzō* (Theory of Translated Words: The Structure of Japanese Culture Encoded in Language), Tokyo: Hōsei daigaku shuppankyoku, 1972.

contextual meaning of the word. If we are to treat a word as an independent concept, we would never fully understand why and how the same word can have different meanings when used in other contexts.)¹²⁴

Insofar as the meaning of a word exists as such in relation to other words, insofar as the meaning of a word is context-dependent, translation of a word or a concept can never fully capture the intended meaning of an enunciation in the original language. By highlighting this conundrum of translation in his analysis of the semantic discrepancy between, for example, ‘*ken*’ (権) and ‘right,’ ‘*jiyū*’ (自由) and ‘liberty/freedom,’ ‘*shakai*’ (社会) and ‘society,’¹²⁵ ‘*shizen*’ (自然) and ‘nature,’¹²⁶ Yanabu argues that concepts that foregrounded modern intellectual exercises in Japan embedded within themselves various differing and at times competing meanings derived from the Chinese intellectual traditions, Buddhism, and the Western intellectual tradition. To this end, as I read it and as Yanabu seems to suggest, the formation of a knowledge tradition in Japan – be it Buddhism, Confucianism, or modern knowledge – was always a process in which the original meaning of a word or a concept was suspended through the act of translation.

Suppose Western knowledge had travelled to Japan and been appropriated in Japan through translation, at the intersection of the original language (be it Dutch, English, German, or French), the Chinese language (*kango*), and the Japanese language (*yomikudashi* / *kakikudashi*). Suppose also that language is not transparent, translation involves untranslatability, and there is always a possibility of semantic differences. Then, there are two – perhaps slightly devastating but extremely interesting – possibilities. One such possibility is that ‘modern’ knowledge that emerged

¹²⁴ Ibid., 205.

¹²⁵ Yanabu Akira, *Honyaku towa nanika: Nihongo to honyaku bunka* (What is Translation?: Japanese Language and Culture of Translation), Tokyo: Hōsei daigaku shuppanyoku, 1976.

¹²⁶ For his analysis of ‘*ken*,’ ‘*jiyū*,’ and ‘*shakai*,’ see *ibid.* For ‘*shizen*,’ see Yanabu Akira, *Honyaku no shisō: Shizen to Nature* (Theory of Translation: ‘Shizen’ and ‘Nature’), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1977.

out of translational practices in Japan inevitably embeds within itself certain semantic differences and, by extension, discursive differences, such that it may be different from ‘Western’ knowledge in its semantics and in its order of discourse. And the second possibility is that what we come to recognise as ‘modern’ knowledge – indeed *our* knowledge – cannot be grasped in its totality, precisely because of its globalised status today that draws its sustenance from the multitude of discursive practices in various languages (translation).

Suggesting thus, my lingering sense of discontent is that many works that seek to understand the unfolding of modern knowledge in Japan as a history of transposition and translation remain silent on those possibilities. For this reason, I read Douglas R. Howland’s *Translating the West* (2002) as an especially instructive account that directly addresses ‘the silent,’ providing us with a sustained engagement with the complex entanglements of Japan’s modernisation, translation, and the impossibility of semantic transparency. Weaving together the perspective of Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* and the critique of semantic transparency, Howland offers us an elucidated reading, not only of how concepts such as liberty, right, authority, power, sovereignty, and society were translated during the Meiji period, but also and more importantly of how the process and product of translation changed the very condition of Enlightenment that those concepts sought to address in the original place of their enunciation. As Howland observes,

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 – especially regarding international relations – compromised concepts like liberty, right, and sovereignty from the outset. And the stabilization of these concepts in the early Meiji movement to establish a national assembly simultaneously began to change the conditions of that enlightenment project. For the decline of attention to the people’s right(s) and the abstraction of liberty into a

nonspecific ideal corresponded to the reification of society and the location of sovereignty in the emperor.¹²⁷

What Howland suggests through his analysis is the fact that structures of meaning that hold reality are never fixed, and that once the structures change, the reality changes too. This is especially the case in Japan, where “words, their cultural references, and multiple temporalities flow and ebb among Japan, China, Western Europe, the United States.”¹²⁸

This, in turn, means, as I understand it here, that translation is not merely a linguistic exercise; but an exercise that reconfigures, whether intentionally or otherwise, a reality that language holds. In a study such as this one that seeks to address modern knowledge formation, translation should be treated, as I shall treat it here in this dissertation, as both linguistic exercise and epistemic exercise. It is because translation of Western knowledge was much more than an attempt to establish linguistic equivalence between the source language, be it Dutch, German, French, or English, and the target language, Japanese; translation was a conscious labour to interpret and expound on a way of thinking and reasoning those Japanese intellectuals and translators thought as the sustenance of this knowledge. To this end, to view modern knowledge formation in Japan as a history of translation is to account for how translational practices shifted the conceptual focus away from the original enunciation, and how the original meanings were suspended and deferred in translation, in a web of language, which in turn necessitated and enabled reconfiguration of the very order of discourse that sustained concepts and ideas derived within the Western intellectual tradition, and by extension reconfiguration of the very order of discourse that sustained Western knowledge. In other words, to view modern knowledge formation as a history of translation is to attend to the possibility that what we collectively refer to as ‘modern’ knowledge may, in fact, be

¹²⁷ Howland, *Translating the West*, 184.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

marked by discursive differences – differing orders of discourse, each of which in its own discursive address sustains and unifies ‘modern’ knowledge.

Chapter 2.

On Knowledge, Power, and Translation: A Semantic Approach

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

The existing literature I have discussed in the previous chapter offers a general orientation for a work such as this one, which seeks to engage with questions about the synchronic and diachronic unfolding of modern knowledge. First and most obviously, the formation of modern knowledge in Japan involved the ‘transposition’ of Western knowledge. However, inflecting from much of the existing literature, I understand transposition not as an instance of imitation and appropriation of Western theories, concepts, and ideas, but rather as an instance of problematic, whereby the hitherto exotic and foreign had to be translated into familiar lexicons of the Japanese language. Translation, as I understand it here, is not a mere linguistic exercise – that is, translating source texts, *contents* of Western knowledge such as theories, concepts and ideas, into the Japanese language; translation is fundamentally an epistemic exercise – translating a set of presumptions, a

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].

form of knowledge that grounds this knowledge as valid and serious, by encoding new meanings to existing intellectual semantics that had long sustained the existing knowledge traditions, such as (Neo-)Confucianism, or by inventing new words, most often with Chinese as the standard vehicle. This, in turn, means that to account for modern knowledge formation in Japan, one must move beyond the confines of *Rangaku* (蘭学: Dutch studies) or *Yōgaku* (洋学: Western learning), the apparent loci in which Western knowledge was discussed and shared, and locate oneself at the intersection of various knowledge traditions, a liminal space of translation as an epistemic exercise. Second, the existing literature also suggests that modern knowledge formation in Japan must be understood in relation to power. However, my attention, unlike that of the literature I have discussed in the previous chapter, is not necessarily on the question of how power had instrumentalised modern knowledge, be it for the purpose of governing or for imperial expansion. My attention is instead on the ways in which power had inserted itself in knowledge to sanction and authorise Western knowledge as *the* knowledge of the modern, offering a heteronomous sustenance for this knowledge to occupy the hegemonic status.

My intervention in this dissertation generally follows this twofold orientation developed through my reading of the existing literature. However, as I have just flagged up, my treatment of, for instance, knowledge, transposition, translation, and power deviates from the ways in which these are treated in those works discussed earlier. This chapter, as a preparatory chapter, seeks to enter some specifications about my usage of the term such as knowledge, transposition, translation, and power; to outline the contour of a deep-seated epistemic transformation that came to be regarded as modern knowledge formation; and, to articulate a methodological orientation for my analysis of modern knowledge formation in Japan.

2.1. Western Knowledge and Modern Knowledge

I have been thus far treating ‘modern’ knowledge and ‘Western’ knowledge almost interchangeably. But let me make here a clear distinction. As it will become clearer as the chapter develops, this distinction is important, because modern knowledge formation in Japan was not a mere instance in which Western knowledge was imitated, and its systematised and formalised modes of inquiry were replicated at the institution of knowledge. The distinction is important, because it enables us to understand modern knowledge formation in Japan as an instance of problematic in which the parochial became the global, and to reveal contestations and negotiations that took place in that very process of becoming.

‘Western’ knowledge, to put it in familiar terms, is a mode of rendering the world with “systematic, secular knowledge about reality that is somehow validated empirically.”² It claims the departure of God (secular) and the arrival of *scientia* (empirical, verifiable). Yet, it posits a quasi-theological attitude that, just like God, man can attain a certitude about the world. Hence, it embeds within itself a tendency towards the universal. Further still, Western knowledge presumes that man can achieve such certitude, because man can have recourse to “eternal matters in accordance with eternal and necessary laws” through systematised and formalised intellectual inquiries.³ Hence, its methods and modes of inquiry are said to be universally applicable across time and space. However, as we all are aware today, the development, systematisation, and formalisation of Western knowledge into intellectual disciplines were, of course, “principally

² Wallerstein, *Open the Social Sciences*, 2.

³ Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957: 276.

European events,” such that it was never free from gross cultural and historical particularities.⁴ Therefore, this knowledge is diachronic and parochial both in a geographical and historical sense.

In this dissertation, I use the term ‘modern’ knowledge to designate ‘Western’ knowledge in its globalised form. ‘Western’ knowledge had been promoted to the rank of ‘modern’ knowledge, when it was globalised – that is to say, accepted and embraced in the non-European worlds – through a highly unequal and often coercive process of modernity, and when it began to draw sustenance from the sense of both spatial and temporal infinitude articulated under the rubric of human progress and through the very global process of modernity. To this end, I argue, modern knowledge embodies a certain temporal paradox. On the one hand, it presumes temporal symmetry between past, present, and future in its operation (to have recourse to “eternal matters regulated by eternal and necessary laws”). Yet, on the other hand, it is dependent on temporal asymmetry to relegate other kinds of knowledge (religious knowledge, indigenous knowledge, wisdom, witchcraft etc.) to the realm of the traditional, the backwards, the premodern, something irrelevant to the modern. In other words, modern knowledge depends as much on temporal asymmetry as on temporal symmetry, through which its reality of coerced globality is disguised as the vindication of – albeit spurious – universality. Modern knowledge is, therefore, synchronic and global, if not universal, in its unfolding and its justification of hegemonic status.

Let me expand further in the following on this notion of temporal paradox by referring to some of the received works on and about the historical development of modern Western knowledge, and explain why this paradox is a crucial foundation for conceiving knowledge as a subject-object relation and for legitimating this knowledge as *the* knowledge of the modern vis-à-vis other forms of knowing.

⁴ Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 10-11. See also Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*.

Temporal Symmetry

The knowledge tradition we have come to regard as modern knowledge is built upon two premises. One is the Newtonian assumption of objective reality: everything exists in an eternal present, since universal laws that regulate objects remain constant and true over time and space. As Newton writes,

Ax: 100 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^c same celerity, quantity & determination of its motion.⁵

The second premise derives from the Cartesian assumption of the power of the observing mind: man's capacity lies in his vigorous mind, through which an independent reality of objects – or else, a universal law – is rendered accessible and accurately represented for its utility, and with which man makes himself a master and possessor of the world external to him. In Descartes' own words, this premise is explained as follows.

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

⁵ Isaac Newton, quoted in Richard S. Westfall, *The Life of Isaac Newton*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993: 47.

employ these entities for all the purposes for which they are suited, and so make ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.⁶

Woven together, these two premises understand knowledge in terms of repeatability (because everything in an eternal present can be repeated) and representability (because a vigorous observing mind has a capacity to accurately represent the discrete reality of objects).⁷ In other words, knowledge, the act of knowing, hence the knowing subject, is predicated on a temporal symmetry between past, present, and future in its operation.

This temporal symmetry signals the arrival of *scientia* that replaced divine intentions. But it is only supposedly so, because the departed God has left a certain imprint in the operation of the knowledge in question. Or, to put it rather blatantly, the temporal symmetry is indeed a quasi-theological presupposition, which cannot be validated by the very mechanism of internal vilification – we may call it objectivity, or scientificity, or scientific rigor – of this knowledge. Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls it “a God’s-eye view.”⁸ Thomas Nagel describes it as a conviction in man’s capacity to “get outside of himself and view the world from nowhere within it.”⁹ Whatever the nomenclature, it is through this quasi-theological presupposition that man, the subject, is *a priori* set up against the world of objects, in an eternal present so that this man can

⁶ 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].

⁷ Among many others, Horkheimer and Adorno challenged this understanding of knowledge when they wrote, “The principle of immanence, the explanation of every event as repetition, that the Enlightenment upholds against mythic imagination, is the principle of myth itself.” See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, John Cumming (trans.), London and New York, NY: Verso, 1997: 12.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

attain, just like God, certitudes about the world. It is through this presupposition which conceives knowledge as a subject-object relation that knowledge becomes accurate representations of the world produced by the conscious mind – or, put it in a conceptual language of philosophy, “mirror of nature.”¹⁰ To be sure, this quasi-theological presupposition that *a priori* constructs and positions the knower as the knowing subject 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 “in order that something might be said.”¹¹ Even if we presume for the sake of discussion here that we have indeed a capacity to attain this ‘view from nowhere,’ our knowledge of the external world 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 to naturalise and concretise the disenchanted position of knower can effectively rule out all possibilities of things otherwise. And yet, none of these problems, as Nagel predicts, “deter us from the effort to

¹⁰ 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 summarises, “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].

¹¹ Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Offices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 4.

make objective progress so far as our minds, our culture, and our epoch may permit.”¹² So long as the temporal symmetry is tacitly accepted as a contingent silence for knowledge production, the subject continues to occupy its privileged position, and knowledge continues to be an accurate representation of the external world of objects.¹³

Suppose modern knowledge is conceived as a subject-object relation, accurately representing the external world of objects. Suppose this subject as one representing an independent reality and attaining certitude about the world is sustained by the quasi-theological presupposition about temporal symmetry between past, present, and future. Then, in the most general sense, any exploration into the enabling condition for knowledge production must consider the ways in which these fundamental presuppositions have become a tacitly accepted, contingent silence for intellectual operation. However, to be concerned with the articulation of temporal symmetry, the epistemic ground of knowledge, in Japan, in a context where these presuppositions were not autochthonous, requires much more than reiterating “frozen historical arguments” of Western knowledge that have been abstracted into the category of the subject.¹⁴ To understand the articulation of temporal symmetry, which was hitherto not necessarily recognised as the requirement for thinking and reasoning, one must ask questions that are about much more than mere “undoing” and “unthinking.”¹⁵ How did the temporal symmetry established within the

¹² 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.

¹³ Thus, Foucault notes, the history of Western knowledge is replete with the question of “the meaningful subject.” Michel Foucault, “About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth,” *Political Theory*, 21:1, 1993: 201 [198-227].

¹⁴ Margaret R. Somers, “Where Is Sociology after the Historic Turn?,” in Terrence J. McDonald (ed.), *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996: 73-74 [53-90].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

epistemic landscape of Japan, which was marked simultaneously by the synchronic unfolding of modernity and diachronicity of knowledge traditions? If any knowledge tradition bears a specific relation to things to be known, what negotiations took place among various modes of construing a knower-known relation? Was the category of subject emerged out of such negotiation somewhat different from the category of (Western) subject? And if so, what are the implications for the conception of knowledge? To understand the articulation of temporal symmetry in Japan, we must take a sobering possibility seriously that what grounds the subject may not be as stable as we might otherwise want to think.

Temporal Asymmetry

If temporal symmetry serves to conceive knowledge as a subject-object relation and to establish a ‘view from nowhere’ for the subject to accurately represent, in their mind and consciousness, the external world of objects, temporal asymmetry functions as to dialectically resolve a strange yet inevitable contortion of modern metaphysics. More to the point, modern knowledge carries within it a certain quandary. On the one hand, there is this conviction in absolute certitude about the world of objects. Yet, on the other hand, certain normativity and historicity are built into the primary bearer of such certitude, the knowing subject. Thus, at the onset of intellectual transformation in Europe that conceived knowledge as a subject-object relation through which "systematic bodies of knowledge (‘the sciences’)" were to be produced as accurate representations of the external world,¹⁶ the question arose of how one could assert this knowledge as *the* knowledge vis-à-vis

¹⁶ Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 15.

other available modes of thinking and reasoning. To put it otherwise, the question was how one could relegate other kinds of knowledge, be it religious or indigenous, to the realm of the irrelevant.

In European Enlightenment thinking, ‘self-consciousness’ became the operative word. If knowledge was no longer sustained by divine intentions, and if the departed God had left a certain vacuum, it must be filled by human consciousness. Recall, for instance, Immanuel Kant’s famous proclamation that the Enlightenment marked “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity.”¹⁷

As he went on to specify,

Immaturity is the inability to make use of one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. *Self-incurred* is this inability if its cause lies not in the lack of understanding but rather in the lack of the resolution and the courage to use it without the guidance of another. *Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your *own* understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment.¹⁸

Max Weber’s later pronouncement of ‘man’s capacity’ is similarly 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.”¹⁹ Or think also T.S. Eliot’s retrospective reflection 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, thus by “a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.”²⁰ This intelligibility of the temporal difference was not something endowed by a divine intention. The difference became intelligible, because Europe had actively gained self-consciousness to mark its origin of the modern age and to mark the

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,” 58.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ 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].

²⁰ T.S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” *Perspecta*, 19, 1982 [1919]: 37 [36-42].

discontinuity between the past Self and the present Self: self-consciousness achieved through the formation of autonomous individuals and the emergence of free capital, that is to say, through a process of liberating itself from its feudal dispositions. To this end, the knowledge that this subject had come to produce was essentially self-knowledge, which would feed back into and concretise the very presumption of temporal asymmetry that enabled this knowledge in the first place.

The story does not end here. The subject with the capacity to objectify and historicise, the capacity undergirded by temporal asymmetry, was further ensconced when power inserted itself in knowledge, in order to make the Western aspiration to dominance realisable and in order to facilitate exploitation demanded by such aspiration. Needless to say, this complex entanglement of knowledge and colonialism has long been the central trope of many, especially those Saidian-inspired works on modern global history.²¹ So much can be said, as has been said, of this entanglement. What is, however, especially relevant for my concern here is the following: the European outward explorations and its encounter with the non-Europeans provided this subject instances of further validation. The subject, which was 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. The externality of Europe came to constitute the anthropological Other that continued – or was thought to continue – to inhabit the foregone European past, whose difference from Europe was seen as synonymous with the traditional, the backward, and the premodern. In other words, the self-consciousness of modern Europe, though itself was an arbitrary presumption, was now projected onto realities of the Other, locating them “outside the temporal sphere of [European] modernity.”²²

²¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, NY: Random House, 1978; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1993.

²² Charles L. Briggs, “Linguistic Magic Bullets in the Making of a Modernist Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist*, 104:2, 2002: 481 [481-498].

While recognising that my own problematisation is indeed indebted to the temporal asymmetry to objectify and historicise discourses of the past, the very historicity of this subject is, as I see it, the necessary starting point for my hermeneutic endeavour for understanding how Japan, once considered by Europeans as its anthropological Other, negotiated the parochialism at the heart of this subject so as to establish a vantage point to produce modern knowledge. More specifically, the temporal asymmetry that enabled the subject to subjugate the Other and, by extension, other traditions of knowledge, that is to say, the very historicity of this acute consciousness of one's place in time, certainly imprints a rather restricted view of the subject who knows. After all, as Takeuchi Yoshimi succinctly contended, this subject was “first possible only in this history [of Europe], and that history itself is possible only in this Europe.”²³ Those outside this history, outside Europe, did not have unmediated access to this subject. A question arises of whether this subject could be reworked within the epistemic landscape of Japan to accommodate different ways of inhabiting the world and different ways of becoming and being the knower.²⁴

Knowledge Traditions

By problematising the temporal paradox embedded within modern knowledge, I am effectively entering two further qualifications here. First, any knowledge is *an* epistemic tradition among many others. We, the contemporaries, have been so sedated by modern knowledge that it seems almost impossible even to imagine other possible forms of knowing. But as I have argued above,

²³ Takeuchi Yoshimi, “What is Modernity,” in Richard F. Calichman (ed. and trans.), *What is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005 [1948]: 54 [53-81].

²⁴ Chapter 7 of this thesis specifically deals with this concern about the subject. See pp. 518-547.

this knowledge that we have come to regard as *the* knowledge is never free from its gross cultural and historical particularities. Second, precisely because Western knowledge is *an* epistemic tradition, modern knowledge formation in Japan was and must be understood as a process of negotiation among various epistemic traditions. It was and must be understood as an instance, to bend Wittgenstein for my purpose here, “where two principles really [did] meet.”²⁵

To specify further, knowledge is much more than a set of truths about the world: it is an epistemic tradition that is sustained by a specific ‘epistemic frame’ – or what Daston calls ‘the precondition,’ Poovey ‘foundational assumptions,’ and Condren ‘a common ground’ or ‘presumptions’.²⁶ Whatever the nomenclature, an epistemic frame is not “cohesive as a doctrine, a theory, a set of ideas, concepts, ideology.”²⁷ It is rather “the contingent silence” that is “tacitly accepted at a given point in order that something might be said.”²⁸ That is to say, an epistemic frame is that which permits us to separate truths from untruths and to validate theories about truths as *etic* and methods to attain truths as universally applicable. But an epistemic frame that grounds knowledge is neither ahistorical nor universal. Think, for a moment, terms such as ‘*épistémè*,’ ‘social imaginary,’ ‘intellectual tradition,’ and ‘knowledge culture’ proposed by various critics of modern and Western knowledge.²⁹ All suggest that this knowledge is indeed one tradition, among

²⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, G.E.A. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds.), Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (trans.), New York, NY and London: Harper Collins, 1972: OC612 [81]. Because communication and rational thought are, according to Wittgenstein, only possible when there is a common epistemic ground, the inevitability of an epistemic encounter is an extreme form of doubt over that which grounds one’s notion of truth and one’s regime of discourse.

²⁶ 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]; Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England*, 3.

²⁷ Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ 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

many others, constituted by “the specific range of thinking, reasoning, and institutional practices possible in a given historical time and space.”³⁰ In a similar vein, a host of inquiries in the last century have revealed the temporal and spatial vicissitudes that marked the making of this epistemic tradition. For example, analytical and conceptual tools such as Gaston Bachelard’s ‘epistemological rupture,’ Michel Foucault’s genealogy, and Thomas Kuhn’s ‘incommensurability’ have been effective in illustrating historical contingencies, negotiations, and discursive transvaluations that went into the making of modern and Western knowledge.³¹ Consequently, the story of the historical emergence of this knowledge no longer appears as a story of universal intellectual progress, but as a story of human psychology (in the case of Bachelard), or of power immanent in knowledge (in the case of Foucault), or of social determination (in the case of Kuhn).

This, in turn, suggests that beyond the horizon of an epistemic tradition lies a vast terrain marked as exteriority – that is to say, other modes of knowing the world, or at least a possibility

Press, 1980; Somers, “What Is Sociology after the Historic Turn?,” 53-89. Hereafter, I use these and other terms such as ‘epistemic tradition’ and ‘form of knowledge’ interchangeably unless indicated otherwise.

³⁰ Sommers, “What Is Sociology after the Historic Turn?,” 54-55.

³¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind: A Contribution to a Psychoanalysis of Objective Knowledge*, Mary McAllester Jones (trans.), Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2002; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Robert Hurley (trans.), New York, NY: Pelican, 1984; Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 3rd edition, Chicago, IL and London: Chicago University Press, 1996 [1962]. Bachelard argues that the history of science is replete with ‘epistemological obstacles’ which are immanent within the realm of scientific knowledge, and which cause a certain inertia in the act of cognition. These obstacles are overcome not by progressive rationalism or transparent empiricism that seeks to correct deficiencies of knowledge, but by ‘epistemological rupture’ – an attempt to reorganise the very condition of possibility of knowledge. And through this reorganisation of what is known and what can be known, the field of scientificity is (re)defined and is (re)distinguished from the non-scientific. Foucault expands this notion of ‘epistemological rupture’ in relation to power in the history of prison, sexuality, and psychiatry, arguing that those intellectual categories that we deem obvious and even universal are hardened as axioms through exercise of power. To this end, knowledge depends not on the formalisation of correct methods but on power and its regime of truth that inserts itself in knowledge. Kuhn uses the term ‘incommensurable’ to describe three interrelated aspects of a ‘paradigm shift’: changes in what constitute scientific problems and in standards that determine the admissibility of solutions (for example, the Newtonian theory of general relativity, once widely rejected, eventually illegitimated the proponents of Aristotle and Descartes’ theories); changes in concepts used to define and solve problems (for example, what Aristotelians see ‘constrained free fall’ was for Newtonians a ‘pendulum’); and changes in the meaning of a word that refers to different sets of things in different paradigms (for example, in the Ptolemaic theory, the term ‘planet’ referred to the sun, but in the Copernican theory it designated the earth). Here, the notion of ‘incommensurability’ functions as a Gestalt switch, by means of which the development of scientific knowledge is reconstituted not in terms of accumulation and progress but as a series of changes in that which determines what problems are and how one should pursue them.

thereof. And just as any scheme of Self (interiority) requires the Other (exteriority), both the certitude and limitation of a given epistemic tradition are confirmed when juxtaposed with other traditions. Thus, to reify the certitude of, for instance, Western knowledge, Max Weber argues that “a systematically correct scientific proof [...], if it is to achieve its purpose, must be acknowledged as correct even by a Chinese,” and “the successful logical analysis [...] and the discovery of consequences [...] must also be valid for the Chinese.”³² In a similar vein but for the opposite effect, Foucault writes in the preface of *The Order of Things* that the book is inspired by “the wonderment of this taxonomy” of animals he has found in a “certain Chinese encyclopaedia,” which for him represents “the stark impossibility of thinking” and in turn compels him to think about “the limitation of our own” thought.³³ And he reminds the reader that his work is specifically concerned with the developments of episteme since the 16th century “in the mainstream of a culture such as ours.”³⁴ Similarly, Derrida also gestures towards unspoken, other epistemic traditions, when he specifies that his deconstruction of metaphysics is 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.”³⁵

Modern knowledge formation in Japan also began with ‘the wonderment’ of another knowledge tradition – Western knowledge – which occasioned reflections on those traditions of knowledge already prevalent in Japan. However, the purpose and outcome of such reflections were not always to reiterate the certitude of, for instance, the (Neo-)Confucian thought or the *Kangaku* tradition (漢

³² Max Weber, “Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy,” 58.

³³ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xvi.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

³⁵ Jacques Derrida, “White Mythology,” 213. This limitation of the scope of his analysis is precisely why I take Derridean approach of deconstruction not as a theory but as an ethos. See my discussion in later in this chapter, pp.141-149.

学: Chinese studies) vis-à-vis Western knowledge. If, for Weber, Foucault, and Derrida, other traditions of knowledge (i.e. Chinese) constituted the exteriority ('the stark impossibility of thinking') that simultaneously signified the horizon of the interiority for their inward reflection, 'the wonderment' of another knowledge tradition represented, for the Japanese, other possibilities of thinking and reasoning.³⁶ The instance when two or more traditions really did meet became a liminal space in which the otherness of Western knowledge effectively stretched the existing categories of knowledge beyond their limit. The instance became a liminal space for epistemic reconfiguration.

This liminal space constitutes a specific locus of my intervention. In the following chapters, I seek to address primarily to this liminal space of epistemic reconfiguration, and to account for the multitude of intellectual negotiations that took place between advocates of Western knowledge and advocates of other knowledge traditions such as (Neo-)Confucianism, *Kogaku* (古学: ancient studies), and *Kokugaku* (国学: nativist learning), through which knowledge was reconceived as a subject-object relation, hence through which the subject position – temporal symmetry and temporal asymmetry – was forged.

2.2. The Institution of Knowledge

³⁶ Of course, the element of coercion and the power dynamics that sustained 19th-century European colonialism cannot and should not be ignored. However, the language of coercion is, I believe, inadequate to explain epistemic reconfiguration that took place in the context of 19th-century Japan and that this dissertation seeks to discuss.

While my attention to the liminal space for epistemic reconfiguration participates a familiar trope of philosophical concern (ontology, epistemology, and methodology), the itinerary of Western knowledge travelling from Europe to Japan and transforming itself from the Western to the modern requires a perspective that moves us beyond the realm of the philosophical. Because the very history of Western knowledge in Japan was also a history of knowledge and power, because the unfolding of this knowledge in Japan was also an unfolding of power inserting itself in knowledge, modern knowledge formation in Japan cannot be adequately grasped solely by entertaining abstract thoughts on ontology, epistemology, and methodology. However, I must emphasise, my intention here to focus on knowledge and power is not necessarily to reiterate a – rather banal – claim that the Meiji authority fostered the learning of the contents of Western knowledge, nor to add anything substantial to those analyses of political instrumentalisation of knowledge for the purpose of both internal governing and external colonial expansion. By knowledge and power, I specifically mean that which revolves around the question of how a knowledge tradition, which is grounded on a specific epistemic frame that guarantees knowledge as ‘valid’ and ‘serious’ and thus that grounds autonomy of knowledge, is authorised as *the* mode of thinking and reasoning to be institutionalised, taught, and disseminated, and how political effect of knowledge is controlled, measured and overseen by a non-intellectual instance. In other words, I am proposing to consider the relationship between the autonomy of knowledge and the authority of knowledge.

Institutions of knowledge constitute a focal point for such concern for knowledge and power. It is because, to follow Wang Hui here, the often taken-for-granted hegemonic status of a given knowledge tradition is intimately intertwined with institutions of knowledge where power inserts itself in knowledge to authorise a knowledge tradition in question as *the* knowledge. In his analysis

of the shift from Neo-Confucianism (what he calls “Heavenly Principle”) to Western (modern) knowledge (“Universal Principle”) in China, Wang maintains the following

The transformation from Heavenly Principle to Universal Principle is a process of extreme conflict. Just as the dominance 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. If the worldview of Heavenly Principle used the order and institutions of rites as a natural and rational order, then the worldview of Universal Principle used atomism and individualism to deconstruct and critique the worldview of Heavenly Principle and its social significance.³⁷

Among many institutions of knowledge (re)established throughout modernising changes, especially in the educational system in Japan, the university came to occupy the apex of modern knowledge production. One of the persisting claims – both as a scholarly claim and as a popular myth – today is that the university in Japan was modelled on 19-century universities of the ‘West’ generally and German universities more specifically.³⁸ But this synchronic unfolding of the university as a modern ‘national’ institution of knowledge was also and simultaneously conditioned by diachronic concerns specifically of the late 19th century Japan, which may be summarised here as the trope of ‘becoming modern, yet simultaneously being different.’ To specify such diachronicities further, let me take, for a moment, a brief detour and discern a genealogical development of the *idea* of the German model of the university as a modern ‘national’ institution of knowledge.

³⁷ Wang Hui, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, Michael Gibbs Hill (trans.), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2014: 70.

³⁸ On the question of the extent of German influence, see my discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 60-66.

Autonomy and Authority: The Kantian Beginning

In Europe, the historical emergence of what Wang Hui calls the ‘Universal Principle,’ that is, Western knowledge – and the narrative of its historical emergence – was intimately intertwined with the reconstitution of the medieval university into a locus of scholarly inquiries sanctioned and authorised by a new form of power, that is the nation-state.³⁹ In this narrative, the university is said to have incarnated, to reiterate Bill Readings’ observation, “a pure bond of sociality” of a national community “around the disinterested pursuit of the idea” of a rational community of scholars.⁴⁰

The University is supposed to be the potential model for free and rational discussion, a site where the community is founded in the sharing of a commitment to an abstraction, whether that abstraction is the object of tradition or a rational contract. [...] In modernity, the University becomes the model of the social bond that ties individuals in a common relation to the idea of the nation-state.⁴¹

Marek Kwiek, in a similar vein, narrates the historical emergence of the institution of knowledge in modern Europe as follows.

³⁹ History of European universities precedes the period marked by modernity, and the modern university I am concerned about here evolved from the medieval institutions known as *studia generalia*. For history and historical transformations of the medieval university, see Helen Wieruszowski, *The Medieval University: Masters, Students, Learning*, New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand, 1966; Michael D. Byrd, “Back to the Future for Higher Education: Medieval Universities,” *The Internet and Higher Education*, 4:1, 2001: 1-7; Hunt Janin, *The University in Medieval Life, 1179-1499*, Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008; Rashdall, *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, Vol.1-2*; John C. Scott, “The Mission of the University: Medieval to Postmodern Transformations,” *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77:1, 2016: 1-39. For the intellectual proclivity of the medieval university, see, for example, Russell L. Friedman, *Intellectual traditions at the Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250-1350, Vol.1-2*, Leiden and Boston, Mass: Brill, 2013; Ana Paula Tavares Magalhães, “The Medieval University and the Ethos of Knowledge: Franciscan Friars, Patristic Tradition, and Scholastic ‘Instruments’,” *Acta Scientiarum*, 37:3, 2015: 237-245.

⁴⁰ Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 180.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

Being a modern institution, [the university] is relatively new and was born together with the rise in national aspirations and the rise in the significance of nation-state in the nineteenth century. A tacit deal made between power and knowledge on the one hand provided scholars with unprecedented institutional possibilities and, on the other obliged them to support national culture and to help with constituting national subjects: citizens of nation-state. The alliance between modern knowledge and modern power gave rise to the foundations of the modern institution of the university.⁴²

Such a narrative of the historical emergence of modern and Western knowledge and institutional formation of this knowledge, indeed, reiterates the institutional possibilities and limits of the university advanced by the architects of this institution of knowledge. The narrative began, as do so many other narratives of the modern, with Immanuel Kant. In the opening of *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1979 [1798]), Kant stated that,

Whoever it was that first hit on the notion of a university and proposed that a public institution of this kind be established, it was not a bad idea to handle the entire content of learning (really, the thinkers devoted to it) by mass production, so to speak – by a division of labor, so that for every branch of the sciences there would be a public teacher or professor appointed as its trustee, and all of these together would have certain autonomy (since only scholars can pass judgement on scholars as such), and accordingly it would be authorized to perform certain functions through its faculties [...]: to admit to the university students seeking entrance from the lower schools and, having conducted examinations, by its own authorities to grant degrees or confer the universally recognized status of “doctor” on free teachers [...] – in other words, to create doctors.⁴³

⁴² Marek Kwiek, “The Nation-State, Globalisation and the Modern Institution of the University,” *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 96, 2000: 76 [74-98].

⁴³ Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, 23.

Within this introductory paragraph, Kant already elucidates two fundamental characteristics of the university as an institutional locus through which power inserts itself into knowledge: autonomy of knowledge and authority of knowledge.

In this Kantian enunciation, autonomy is said to be grounded on a kind of tautology – scholars alone can judge, with a faculty of judgement, other scholars – that is derived from and sustained by the scholarly conviction in what makes knowledge ‘valid’ and ‘serious,’ hence conviction in *scientia*. For Kant, this faculty of judgement is *Vernunft* (Reason): the principle which determines the division among various fields of knowledge and regulates the interaction among these fields. As Kant goes on to argue, on the one hand, there are what he calls ‘higher faculties’ – 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. To this end, those higher faculties represent in and of themselves the interests formed in those domains outside scholarship (i.e. Christianity, civic life, medical practices) and, therefore, speak the performative language of those external domains. On the other hand, there is a ‘lower faculty’ – philosophy – that speaks a purely constative language, whose knowledge is autonomous in a sense that it legitimates itself by asking fundamental questions on the basis of the principle of Reason alone, and whose knowledge intervenes into the higher faculties by critiquing and problematising, through the principle of Reason, their grounds of knowledge production. In this Kantian enunciation, these two faculties of knowledge, while appearing to be in a perpetual contestation between the established traditions of the higher faculties and rational inquiries of the lower faculty, are, in fact, unified with a certain totality provided by the principle of reason. And it was this internality of the discourses of justification – discourses of guaranteeing knowledge as ‘valid’ and ‘serious’ – that foregrounds the autonomy of knowledge.

At the onset, such an understanding of the autonomy of knowledge may seem to forbid any intervention of political and ideological interests and desires into knowledge. However, as Derrida has aptly pointed out in his rendering of this Kantian enunciation, Kant, in fact, directly addresses the question of the authority of knowledge which, in his view, is legitimated and guaranteed externally.

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 authorized by itself. It is authorized (*berreichtigt*) 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.⁴⁴

For those concerned with the historical emergence of the modern university, such as readings, Kwiek, and Derrida, the efficacy of this Kantian enunciation on the university lies not necessarily in its specification of institutional categories of knowledge (i.e. higher faculties, lower faculty), nor in its acknowledgement that the public effects of knowledge were authorised by power; but in its determination of the primary problematic for inquiries into the university – that is, the question of how one could guarantee the autonomy of knowledge while simultaneously justifying the heteronomously sanctioned authority of knowledge, the question of a possible discursive address

⁴⁴ 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].

to legitimate all at once the autonomy of knowledge and the authority of knowledge, thus to legitimate the modern institution of knowledge.

Kant's own resolution remains in the realm of the abstract. Clearly, he was not interested in understanding empirical history of power, the state of Prussia. Nor was he interested in understanding historical development of Prussia as something rational in and of itself, which would have otherwise justified the ways in which this power inserted itself in a rational community of scholars regulated by Reason. Essentially, Kant was not intended to argue, unlike Hegel, that history was in and of itself a rational process. Instead, being perhaps true to the Enlightenment ethos, he resorts to the idea of an autonomous individual who, in his/her ideal, hermeneutically links the autonomy of knowledge and the authority of knowledge through exercising the principle of Reason. In arguing for a possibility of Reason to install itself in history through autonomous individual, Kant proposes the necessary cultivation of the republican subject, who represents all at once the unity of knowledge and power, reason and the state, autonomy and authority, by exercising rationality in matters of knowledge and by being republican in the matters of power.⁴⁵

But, of course, this Kantian resolution was speculative, to say the least. If and when a rational community of scholars becomes an institution, its institutional arrangements would rest upon a certain regime of power, be it Church during the medieval period or the nation-state of the 18th and 19th centuries. Autonomy will be already curtailed when this rational community is institutionalised. At the same time, the Kantian notion of Reason, the purported antidote to the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge, cannot, in principle, be instituted. If Reason in scientific knowledge is, as Kant himself defines it, the "faculty of principle"⁴⁶ or the "faculty of

⁴⁵ Kant, *The Conflict of Faculties*, 153-157.

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1781]: 387.

the unity of the rules of understanding under principles,”⁴⁷ then, it cannot for its very nature be instituted, be subjected under a regime of power. As Readings aptly summarises, the Kantian resolution that resorts primarily to the principle of reason would work, only “if the institution remains a fiction, functions only ‘as if’ it were not an institution. If the institution becomes real, then reason departs.”⁴⁸

The Kantian speculative resolution may be marked by a sense of deficiency, especially when applied to the reality of Prussian state and the persistently medieval character of the university at that time.⁴⁹ At least, however, it was this Kantian enunciation of the university as the locus to resolve the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge that effectively defined a specific orientation for debates about the university in the following centuries. And the subsequent development of the university in Germany as a modern institution of knowledge revolved largely around the question of how to resolve this Kantian aporia.

Wissenschaft and Bildung: The German Idealist’s Intervention

⁴⁷ Ibid., 389.

⁴⁸ Readings, *The University in Ruin*, 60.

⁴⁹ As Charles E. McClelland writes, “Most ‘German’ universities in the last quarter of the 18th Century were relics of the Middle Ages or pedagogically hyperactive Reformation period. They had mostly been founded as princely or church institutions. [...] With few exceptions, these universities came in for heavy criticism for their hidebound ways, ossified curricula, corruption, moral laxity and irrelevance to the scientific and philosophical ferment of the Enlightenment.” See McClelland, “The Emergence of Modern Higher Education: The German University and Its Influence,” in John L. Rury and Eileen H. Tamura (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the History of Education*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019: 277 [275-288].

The most notable resolution came with the development of German idealist thought.⁵⁰ The efficacy of German idealism lay in the fact that its discursive practices effectively replaced the Kantian principle of Reason with the principle of national culture, whereby institutionalised and formalised knowledge was pressed directly into the service of the emerging modern nation-state.

It is worth mentioning here the broader diachronic condition for such replacement and subsequent reorganisation of discursive address about autonomy and authority of knowledge. First, the structure and workings of the university, as well as its presumed social role, which embodied the ethos of *studia generalia*, seemed to have become increasingly irrelevant under the new unfolding condition of the late 18th century. By referring to the historical development of German universities, Timothy Bahti describes that “the eighteenth century had been a lowpoint for German universities: unruly students, dropping enrolments, little apparent correlation between subjects taught and post-university positions available, financial marginality, etc.”⁵¹ One proposed solution was to abolish the university entirely, replacing it with academies of sciences and practical vocational schools (*Hochschulen*),⁵² which, in turn, led to a call internal to the university for reinventing the institution as something being adequate for the time. Second, there was also a call to reform the university, which was prevalent outside the university, for what Björn Wittrock suggests as “a new political order to address the social and cultural questions” about the German nation.⁵³ The political resolution articulated and arrived at gradually was the notion of modern

⁵⁰ Notable both in the sense that the resolution regulated the subsequent development of the German model of the university, and in the sense that this German model has offered a point of reference for the pre-1980s scholarship on the institutional formation of (Western) knowledge in Japan.

⁵¹ Timothy Bahti, “History of the University: Kant and Humboldt,” *Modern Language Notes*, 102:3, 1987: 438 [437-460].

⁵² Leibniz’s despair to reform the university, which led to the creation of new academies of science to effectively bypass the university, is a good example here. See Ayval Ramati, “Harmony at a Distance: Leibniz’s Scientific Academies,” *Isis*, 87:3, 1996: 430-452.

⁵³ Björn Wittrock, “The Modern University: The Three Transformations,” in Sheldon Rothblatt and Björn Wittrock (eds.), *The European and American University Since 1800: Historical and Sociological Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993: 344 [303-362].

nation-state. And higher education institutions were said to have significantly benefitted from this resolution. “They were given,” writes Wittrock, “access to much greater resources than had previously been the case; and for almost a century, it largely seemed as if the knowledge explosion and occupational specialisation were but two different aspects of one and the same pervasive process of modernisation.”⁵⁴ Third, there had been a necessity to legitimate the German state as an ethnic unity, especially in relation to or opposition to the post-revolutionary French republican state that revolved around the notion of universal humanity, the notion that cut across in its principle national – that is to say, ethnically defined national – boundaries. Thus, an appeal to national culture, explicitly defined as ethnic culture, mediated by speculative knowledge had come to orient both the German state and its institution of knowledge, the university, in primarily national (ethnic) terms.⁵⁵

This threefold broader condition was reflected in the writings of German idealists. 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 universal⁵⁶; 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)⁵⁷; Friedrich Schleiermacher’s synthesis that positions the university as the intermediary of hermeneutic relationship between nature and reason⁵⁸; Johann

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ This observation can be found in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 [1979]: 31-34.

⁵⁶ Friedrich W.J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, E.S. Morgan (trans.), Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981 [1802].

⁵⁷ 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.

⁵⁸ 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].

G. Fichte's privileging of pedagogy, as one that directly addresses the nation-state and that constitutes a backdrop for national emancipation⁵⁹; and last but not least, Wilhelm von Humboldt's proposal to unify research and teaching (*die Einheit von Forschung und Lehre*), which was materialised 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.⁶⁰ In these writings of German idealists, the university was repositioned as a cultural function of the nation-state, as a locus for “the simultaneous search for [the nation-state's] cultural meaning as a historical entity and the subjective moral training of its subjects as potential bearers of that identity.”⁶¹

The primary efficacy of German idealist's discourses on the university lies in the fact that, through these discourses, this institution of knowledge was reinvented as a modern institution of the nation-state. By the early 19th century, the Kantian aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge was resolved by what I call here ‘a double-articulation of national culture’ as the fundamental principle of hermeneutic process between knowledge and power. On the one hand, national culture became a name of identity, which represented the unity of all knowledge and constituted the object of study, that is *Wissenschaft*. On the other hand, national culture also became a process of personal development, of cultivation of subjects, which was defined as *Bildung*. Here, institutionalised and formalised knowledge and its institution, the university, were reinvented as the safeguard of the idea of the nation-state, the idea of what national cultural ought

⁵⁹ Johann G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, R.F. Jones and G.H. Turnbull (trans.), Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1979 [1808]. See also Johann G. Fichte, *The Purpose of Higher Education*, John K. Bramann (trans.), Mt. Savage, Maryland: Nightsun Books, 1988 [1794].

⁶⁰ Johan Östling, *Humboldt and the Modern German University: An Intellectual History*, Lena Olsson (trans.), Lund: Lund University Press, 2018.

⁶¹ Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 68. For a comparative survey of German idealist's discourses of nationalisation of the university as an institution of modern nation-state, see Marek Kwiek, “The Classical German Idea of the University Revisited, or on the Nationalization of the Modern Institution,” The Center for Public Policy Studies (CPP), the University of Poznan, Poland, Research Paper Series (RPS), Vol. 1, 2006. The text is accessible online at: https://cpp.amu.edu.pl/pdf/CPP_RPS_vol.1_Kwiek.pdf (30.05.2020).

to be and how an individual could become the bearer of that culture. At the same time, the nation-state came to occupy the position of the protector of this hermeneutic process of *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung* at its institution of knowledge.⁶²

⁶² I shall add here three slightly extensive notes. First, Jürgen Habermas later criticised these German idealist discourses, which describe the relation between knowledge and power as something necessary and inherent, as an oversimplification. He argued, “when the classical German university was born, the Prussian reformers sketched an image of the university that suggests an oversimplified connection between scientific and scholarly learning processes and forms of life in modern societies. Taking the perspective of an idealist philosophy of reconciliation, they attributed to the university a power of totalization that necessarily overburdened this institution from the beginning.” See Habermas, “The Idea of the University: Learning Processes,” 108. What Habermas suggests here is that any attempt to (re)establish the idea of the university as the project of embodying an ideal life form of the nation-state is futile. Then, he redefines the position of the university as the locus of communication “to which all forms of objective spirit are structured.” (ibid., 100). Ironically, his justification depends entirely on one of the central claims of a German idealist, Schleiermacher, which declares that “the first law of all efforts aimed at knowledge: communication. Nature herself has clearly enunciated this law in the impossibility of producing something, even if only for oneself without language. Thus, purely from the drive for knowledge itself [...] one can derive all the associations necessary for its satisfaction, all the various types of communication and community necessary for enhancing knowledge.” Schleiermacher, *Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German State*, 224. Second, the German idea of national culture as the unifying concept of knowledge and power had unfolded in other nations with notable inflections. For instance, in England, two distinctive yet intimately intertwined ideas emerged: one was the idea of ‘organic community’ set up against the Church of England, which was then sanctioned by the state power as the primary bearer of cultural unity; the other was the idea of national culture as the foundation of the organic community set up against technological advancement, the epitome of industrialisation, which was said to have resulted in a threat to social unification. See John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University: Defined and Illustrated*, I.T. Ker (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 [1852]; Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, J. Dover Wilson (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932 [1868]. If, both in Germany and in England, the idea of national culture was treated as something absolute and transparent to itself, such an idea was not readily available in the U.S., where the nation-state itself was founded not on the idea of an ancient tradition, nor on ethnic unity, nor on an organic historical community, but on the trope of future promise based on the social contract. In the U.S., the unfolding of national culture was marked by an understanding that it was not something to be ‘discovered’ in or ‘excavated’ from the foregone past, but something to be ‘formed’ through the republican will and rational consensus of American people who ultimately would decide what tradition was for them. This is precisely why the Habermasian notion of the university of communicative rationality was rather expedient for the Americans. See Robert C. Holub, “Habermas Among the Americans: Modernity, Ethics, and Public Sphere,” *German Politics & Society*, 33: Fall, 1994: 1-22. This is also precisely why, for instance, debates on what constitutes canonical texts are specifically American phenomena. See Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1987; Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994; Bernard Knox, *The Oldest Dead White European Males and Other Reflections on the Classics*, New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994; John Searle, “The Storm Over the University,” *The New York Review of Books*, 6th December, 1990. Third, the juxtaposition between national culture and technology, which I have pointed out in the case of England, engendered what Charles Percy Snow described as a split between two cultures (the literary and the scientific) within the university. Put it simply, the split that Snow spoke of was between two kinds of reflection: reflection on value and reflection on practical utility. While the literary was concerned with the social orientation of knowledge and its cultural implication, the scientific was concerned with the pursuit of technological rationality without much reflection on social implication. See Snow, *Two Cultures and a Second Look*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969. Wolf Lepenies, for instance, saw this split as constituting the ground for imperialism and for the fascist idea of the state as an organic machine. Lepenies then called for synthesising the question of value and social orientation with the question practical utility, arguing for the importance of ‘the third culture,’ broadly defined sociology or social sciences, as an alternative locus for the hermeneutical process of *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung*. See Lepenies, *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of*

Transposition and Différance

The institutional formation of knowledge in modern Europe was, as we have just seen, marked by the aporia of autonomy and knowledge and authority of knowledge, and by discursive attempts to dialectically *resolve* this aporia, that is to say, by establishing a hermeneutic circle of the subject of knowledge and national subjectivity. Given the itinerary of Western knowledge travelling from Europe to Japan, and given also the purported enthusiasm of the Japanese to formalise, institutionalise, instrumentalise, and disseminate this knowledge as part and parcel of modernising changes of the 19th century, it is indeed tempting to presume that this aporia was also replicated in the context of Japan, and that its resolution through the principle of ‘national culture’ was also appropriated in the institutional unfolding of the university in Japan. It is tempting to read discussions about knowledge and the university during the Meiji period as attempts to establish a hermeneutic circle of the subject of knowledge and national subjectivity.

However, such a conviction in certain transparency of transposition of a knowledge tradition and its institution, in fact, obscures the historically specific nature of, on the one hand, the German idealist’s discursive resolution of the aporia, and on the other hand, the institutional formation of this knowledge in Japan. The problem here is twofold. First, the conviction in the transparency of transposition fails to account for the rather symbiotic relationship between Western knowledge and power that enabled the transposition of this knowledge to Japan and its institutionalisation in the first place. From Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s (1537-1598) insistence on the separation of religion

Sociology (Die Drei Culturen), R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; Lepenies, “The Direction of the Disciplines: The Future of the Universities,” *Comparative Criticism*, 11, 1989: 51-70.

and trade, which, in turn, allowed the continuous flow of Western scientific books into Japan, to the blatant interests of *han* (藩: domain) authorities in acquiring Western military and defence technologies, from the Edo Shogunate's sponsorship of *Rangaku* and its institutionalisation into, for example, *Shōheizaka gakumon-jo* (昌平坂学問所), to the systematic investment of Meiji government in those programs for learning the Western knowledge tradition, power often had – or at least seems to have had – an authorising role for this knowledge. Second, the conviction in the transparency of transposition *a priori* presumes that the category of the knowing subject was all at once available for the Japanese. However, this subject and its discursive sustenance – temporal symmetry and temporal asymmetry – cannot be free from gross cultural and historical particularities. These were autochthonous in Japan. Even before *resolving* the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge, the very aporia *had to be established*. That is to say, the autonomy of Western knowledge had to be reconfigured within an epistemic landscape specific to Japan.

By this problematisation, I am effectively suggesting that the transposition of Western knowledge to Japan should not be treated as a mere temporal signifier of the global unfolding of this knowledge. The formation of modern knowledge in Japan should not be treated with a sense of transparency, whereby Japan constitutes a mere case history of this specific tradition of knowledge. Rather, transposition must be treated as a problematic: as an instance in which fundamental presumptions of Western knowledge are – and had to be – reworked in a specific spatio-temporal context outside Europe; as an instance marked by ‘discursive difference’ rather than ‘discursive diversity,’ because such reworking would inevitably reconfigure the order of discourse that sustains this knowledge; therefore, as an instance of *différance* in which the fundamental presumptions of Western knowledge are differed and suspended in discourse. And to treat the transposition as a problematic is to turn to the language of textuality, discourse, and

différance to account for a different order of discourse within the tradition of knowledge that we have come to call ‘modern’ knowledge, often without reflecting on its own historicity.

Proposing thus, let me point to another crucial locus of intervention – along with the liminal space of epistemic reconfiguration that I have discussed earlier – that emerged from my specification of power, knowledge, and institution. As suggested above, the question of power and knowledge in the context of Japan cannot be narrated as a mere case history of the unfolding of Kantian aporia and its eventual dialectic resolution into a hermeneutic circle of the subject of knowledge and national subjectivity. Suppose power and knowledge had been marked by a symbiotic relationship from the onset of Japan’s encounter with Western knowledge. Then, my task here is to understand the ways in which this symbiotic relationship was reconfigured at various points in time, when attempts were made to rework the fundamental presumptions of this knowledge. My task, in other words, is to account for the ways in which power had authorised epistemic reconfiguration and transubstantiation of the reconfigured epistemic ground into specific institutional categories of knowledge production.

2.3. A Semantic Approach

I have thus far pointed to, through my specification of knowledge, power, institution and transposition, two distinctive loci of intervention: a liminal space of epistemic reconfiguration in which Western knowledge had been mapped onto the existing epistemic landscape in its relation to other traditions of knowledge; and, instances in which power had authorised such epistemic reconfiguration by inserting itself in knowledge and by reshaping its symbiotic relationship to

Western knowledge. Now the question is *how* – how should I intervene in these loci? How can I write modern knowledge formation without resorting to the language of imitation, appropriation, and replication, without reiterating the familiar historical narrative of ‘first in Europe and then elsewhere’? How can I write modern knowledge when that very knowledge informs my own exercise?

Modern Knowledge Formation as Translational Practices

My general methodological attitude may be best characterised as “to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things.”⁶³ As I have argued earlier in this dissertation, modern knowledge formation in Japan primarily involved practices of translation, not merely as linguistic exercises but as epistemic exercises. The transposition of Western knowledge to Japan was an instance of a problematic, whereby the hitherto exotic and foreign had to be translated into the familiar lexicons and anchored into the semantic space of the Japanese language, so that this knowledge tradition conceived as a subject-object relation could be grasped as an epistemic structure of attitude and reference, as an epistemic tradition, and that the discursive sustenance of the subject could be

⁶³ Michel de Montaigne, quoted in Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” 351 [351-370]. Apart from those theories of conceptual history, which I will discuss shortly, my approach to interpreting interpretation is informed also by the idea of ‘secular interpretation’ that Edward Said proposed as a general attitude towards scholarly writing. Echoing Gramsci and Vico, Said wrote, “the fundamental thing is that history and human society are made up of numerous efforts crisscrossing each other. [...] interpretation must take account of this secular horizontal space [with many interrelated structures] only by means appropriate to what is present there. I understand this to imply that no single explanation sending one back immediately to a single origin is adequate. And just as there are no simple dynastic answers, there are no simple discrete historical formations or social processes. A heterogeneity of human involvement is therefore equivalent to a heterogeneity of results, as well as of interpretive skills and techniques. There is no center, no inertly given accepted authority, no fixed barriers ordering human history, even though authority, order, and distinction exist.” See Edward W. Said, “Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community,” *Critical Inquiry*, 9:1, 1982: 12 [1-26].

reworked within a specific semantic and epistemic space of early modern Japan. The transposition of Western knowledge through translational practices is, therefore, much more than establishing the linguistic equivalence between the language of source texts, be it Dutch, German, French, or English, and Japanese; translation is a conscious labour to interpret and expound on a way of thinking and reasoning – epistemology, ontology, and methodology – that sustains this knowledge. It is precisely to this end that I understand modern knowledge formation in Japan essentially as translational practices, and define my task here as to account for various translational practices, strategies, and consequences for epistemic reconfiguration.

To specify further, modern knowledge formation as translational practices encompass elaboration, refraction, and incommensurability. First, translation involves elaboration on the idea of, for instance, the subject, science, and principle, articulated initially within the Western intellectual tradition by forging semantic changes to lexicons of the Japanese language. A semantic change may be forged: either by encoding new meanings to existing signifiers – many of which originated and had been prevalent in other traditions of knowledge, such as (Neo-)Confucianism, *Kogaku*, and *Kokugaku* – and thus by expanding a semantic space of a given signifier; or, by rendering the meaning of foreign ideas into Japanese signs, that is to say, by inventing new signifiers, by resorting – most often – to Chinese characters as the standard vehicle. Second, translation involves refraction from the original meaning. Precisely because the strategy of elaboration involves semantics of other existing traditions or materiality of a given Chinese character that evokes certain feelings, imagination, or even meanings, there are traces of difference between what is elaborated and the outcome of elaboration, between, to put it blatantly for the sake of brevity, the original idea and the translated idea. Third, because of this consequence of elaboration, hence refraction, translation embeds within itself possible incommensurability.

Insofar as the original meanings of that which sustain *scientia* in the West are, through translation, differed and suspended in the liminal semantic space of epistemic reconfiguration, there is always a possibility of incommensurability between, for instance, discourses that sustain the (Western) subject and discourses that enact the (Japanese) subject. Of course, this is not to endorse an idea of cultural differences grounded on the understanding of culture as ahistorical, fixed, and stable. Rather, by incommensurability, I mean to suggest a certain dissonance derived specifically from a semantic difference.⁶⁴ And this possibility of incommensurability, in turn, suggests that what we collectively refer to as ‘modern’ knowledge may be marked by discursive differences – differing orders of discourse, each of which, in its own discursive address, sustains and unifies modern knowledge.

Of course, from the onset of Japan’s encounter with Western knowledge and throughout the process of modern knowledge formation in Japan, many ideas, concepts, and notions were translated. Many hitherto familiar signifiers within the semantic space of the Japanese language were transubstantiated into that which now signified something wholly new and different. It is admittedly beyond my present means to ‘interpret interpretation’ of each and every signifier

⁶⁴ To be sure, the relationship between culture and language has long been one of the primary scholarly concerns for psycho-/socio-linguistic. And the field is overwhelmingly diverse, partly because of the difficulty of arriving at a standard definition of culture and language, respectively. Culture has been viewed as a cognitive system, as social practice, or as a symbolic system. In a similar vein, language has been regarded as a faculty of mind, as action, as social practice, or as a complex adaptive system. I am by no means equipped to discuss this overwhelmingly diverse field. But to offer my general take on culture and language in this dissertation, I understand language much more than as lexicons and grammar, but as an embodiment of indexical values which regulate and are regulated by narratives, ideologies, subjectivities, and identities. Language encodes conceptual structures such as cultural schemas and cultural categories, which are by no means static but subjected to change vis-à-vis change in a narrative, an ideology, a subjectivity, or an identity. The following works have provided me with a basic and comprehensive overview of the diverse field of studies of language and culture. William A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997; Alessandro Duranti, “Language as Culture in U.S. Anthropology: Three Paradigms,” *Current Anthropology*, 44, 2003: 323-47; Claudia Strauss, “Language and Culture in Cognitive Anthropology,” in Farzad Sharifian (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Culture*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2015: 386-400.

reconfigured throughout the process of modern knowledge formation in Japan. However, some signifiers were relatively more pivotal than others for epistemic reconfiguration.

The year 1872 marked a significant moment, both in synchronic and diachronic terms, for Japan's institutional formation of modern knowledge. The proclamation of *Gakusei* (学制: the Fundamental Code of Education) on 2nd August signalled, in synchronic terms, the beginning of the systematic development of modern 'national' education, and in diachronic terms, the legalised pronouncement of a specific understanding of what kinds of knowledge would be counted 'valid' and 'serious' and who may have the authority to produce and disseminate such knowledge. In defining the purpose of the university, especially in its relation to primary and secondary education institutions, the Fundamental Code stipulated the university as the institutional locus specifically for "lofty subjects (高尚ノ諸学)" – subjects to be engaged in the realm of '*gakumon*' (学問: scholarship, fields of knowledge, learning), subjects that must be pursued after completing one's education in so-called '*futsū-gaku*' (普通学: general and introductory learning for university studies).⁶⁵ Further still, the Fundamental Code defined, though still loosely, the institutional categories of 'lofty subjects' called "*senmonka* (専門科: specialised faculties)," which included *rigaku* (理学: physics and/or philosophy), *kagaku* (科学: science), *hōgaku* (法学: law), *igaku* (医

⁶⁵ Takeda Kōji translates 普通学 as 'common science', preparatory learning required for engaging with 'lofty subjects' at the university, which he distinguishes from 'common education' (普通教育) as what we now call compulsory education. See Takeda, "Meiji shoki ni okeru 'hutsuu-gaku' 'hutsū-kyōiku' gainen no kanren kōzō" (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. Nakauchi Toshio understands 普通学 as something akin to what we call today 'liberal arts', which foregrounds further education in a specialised field of one's choice (専門学), while 普通教育 as 'elementary education for the mass', which is not necessarily connected to subjects engaged at the university level. See Nakauchi, *Kyōzai to kyōgu no riron – kyōiku gennron II* (Theory of Educational Material and Teaching Tools: Basic Theory of Education II), Tokyo: Ayumi shuppan, 1990: 202-204. Whatever the nomenclature, we see already, in this instance, a problem of translation. While following their distinction between 普通学 and 普通教育, their translation of the former – be it 'common science' or 'liberal arts' – I find rather problematic. 'Science' is already a loaded term, and 'liberal arts' implies a specific intellectual genealogy of deeply European origin.

学: medicine), and *sūrigaku* (数学: mathematics).⁶⁶ It is important to recognise here that the Fundamental Code was not a mere mandate for the new institution of knowledge, the university. It also authorised an understanding that ‘lofty subjects,’ the subjects of *gakumon*, which were derived essentially from the Western intellectual tradition, must be treated as the most ‘serious’ intellectual endeavour, the apex of knowledge production and dissemination. The Fundamental Code, therefore, effectively sanctioned the hegemonic status of Western (modern) knowledge. Further still, Western (modern) knowledge was considered ‘valid’ and ‘serious’ not because of its specialised nature but because of its primary purpose of seeking truths about the world. Western (modern) knowledge was envisaged here, in the words of a government official, as being conceived on the basis of “a separation of the subject from the object (主客ヲ分チ)” and as that which represented “true principles (真理)” of things that made up the world.⁶⁷ And in this enunciation, the pursuit of such principles, designated as ‘*kyūri*’ (窮理), was recentred around the secular guarantees of *scientia*, rather than reiterating the moral, ethical, or religious language. By the end of the 1880s, four specific signifiers had come to be treated, as it seems to me, as crucial ideas for

⁶⁶ Article 38 of the Fundamental Code specified, “大学ハ高尚ノ諸学ヲ教ル専門科ノ学校ナリ”. While the Fundamental Code of Education of 1872 was relatively short-lived and replaced by *Kyōiku-rei* (教育令: the Education Order) in 1879, its idea of ‘lofty subjects’ as ‘serious’ knowledge and its idea of the university as the primary locus of *gakumon*, that is, a locus for engaging with ‘lofty subjects’, remained as the fundamental frame of reference in the following decades. The Education Order defined the university as “大学校ハ法学理学医学文学等諸科ヲ授クル所トス”. On the political process of replacing the Fundamental Code of Education with the Education Order, see Morikawa Terumichi, *Kyōiku chokugo e no michi* (The Road to The Imperial Rescript on Education), Tokyo: Sangensha, 2011.

⁶⁷ Fukuoka Takachika’s (1835-1919) comment to Kawashima Atsushi’s (1847-1911) proposal in 1882 for educational reform, entitled “Hyakuse no chi wa gakusei o kaisei shite ikkoku no shisō o hitotsu ni suru ni bekararu 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). The Original document of the proposal with Fukuoka’s comment in the margin is archived at Tōsho-bunko under the title of “Gakusei kaisei nit suki Kawashima Atsushi no kengi oyobi hon-kengi nit suki Fukuoka monbu-kyō, Kuki Ryūichi, Katō Hiroyuki ra no shuhi” (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: Kawashima Atsushi’s Proposal for Amending the Fundamental Code of Education and Responses from Fukuoka Takachika, Kuki Ryūichi, and Katō Hiroyuki to the Proposal). ID-NN0.110-3-2. I will return to their discussion in Chapter 3, pp. 214-223.

establishing the autonomy of a new knowledge tradition and for authorising this new tradition as an institutionalised and formalised mode of knowledge production. These signifiers are *gakumon* (学問: scholarship, learning, a field of knowledge), *ri* (理: principle), *kyūri* (窮理: the pursuit of principle), *kagaku* (科学: science), and *shukan* (主観: the subject/subjective, as opposed to *kyakkan* 客観 the object/objective).

As it will be clearer as my argument develops in the following chapters, new significations encoded to these signifiers vis-à-vis Western (modern) knowledge – significations that granted a hegemonic status to Western (modern) knowledge in Japan – were articulated within the complex entanglement of various epistemic traditions. For example, the term *gakumon* was derived from Chinese classical texts, such as I Ching (易經: Book of Changes) and first appeared in the quasi-historical text of *Shoku-Nihongi* (続日本紀) to denote the Confucian modality of learning necessary for governing introduced to Japan as the *Ritsuryō* (律令) system in the 7th century. Since then, the meaning of *gakumon* had been altered at various points in time to accommodate specific societal, political and intellectual demands of knowledge and learning, until the 1880s when the meaning was settled to designate the mode of learning grounded on scientificity. The idea of *ri* had long been the primary qualifier for ‘serious’ knowledge, and the doctrines of many knowledge traditions and religious teachings, including but not limited to Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity, were centred around this idea of *ri* as the ultimate principle to attain. The idea of *kyūri* was articulated initially in the Chinese Neo-Confucian tradition. It became a prominent concept with the teachings of Zhu Xi, which, in Japan, came to encompass not only the Neo-Confucian mode of learning during the Edo period but subsequently also other traditions of knowledge that claimed to be ‘serious’ intellectual explorations. Through the manifold attempts to establish

Western knowledge as *the* knowledge of the modern, the semantic space of *ri* and *kyūri*, respectively, was first expanded so that Western knowledge could be mapped onto the existing epistemic landscape as ‘serious’ knowledge. Then, the semantic space of those ideas was eventually contracted with the increasing intellectual predilection towards *scientia*, becoming a commodity almost exclusive of modern and Western knowledge. In contrast to *gakumon*, *ri*, and *kyūri*, the term *kagaku* was a neologism of the Meiji period, which initially denoted ‘one field of knowledge’ (一科の学). However, with the increasing political interests in acquiring practical and utilitarian knowledge of the West and institutionalising Western knowledge as part and parcel of modernising changes, the term *kagaku* began to designate specifically “*kagaku-no-hō*” (科学の法), a set of established premises of scientific inquiries into both the natural and human world, which Inoue Tetsujirō explained as ‘scientific culture.’ And by the early 1900s, *kagaku* had replaced *ri* as the primary qualifier for ‘valid’ and ‘serious’ knowledge, enacting the boundary between science and non-science, between knowledge and non-knowledge. The term *shukan*, the specific capacity and consciousness of the knower, was also a neologism of the Meiji period, the invention of which is attributed to Nishi Amane, who coined the term by combining two Chinese characters: ‘主’ which designated master, proprietor, guardian, principal, and foremost; and ‘觀’ which designated appearance, view, and observation. Not to mention the materiality of these characters inserted themselves in Nishi’s – and our – interpretative imagination of the idea of the subject, Nishi’s invention followed Joseph Haven’s (1816-1874) rendering of the idea of (self-)consciousness, weaving this Western associationist psychological idea with the (Neo-)Confucian notion of ‘*shendu*’ (慎独: conscience).

By accounting specifically for epistemic reconfiguration in the semantic space of *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, and *shukan*, and by understanding translation as elaboration, refraction, and incommensurability, the following chapters seek to retell the story of modern knowledge formation in the semantic continuum that, first, during the Edo period, regulated the formation of cognitive claims with the multitude of ambits; that, in the synchronic encounter with a distinct epistemic apparatus imported from Europe, reorganised those cognitive claims; and that, in the formation of new terminological apparatus during the early years of Meiji, reconfigured a new division of cognitive labour that consequently promoted Western knowledge to the rank of the modern. My method for narration is to focus as much as possible on individual writings: ranging from those written by (Neo-)Confucian scholars such as Hayashi Razan, Sakatani Rouro, and Nakamura Masanao, to canonical texts of Chinese (Neo-)Confucian tradition, including Zhu Xi's; from those written within the tradition of *Kogaku*, *Koihō*, *Kokugaku*, and *Jōrigaku*, to the products of translational practices within the *Rangaku* tradition; and, from the writings of some prominent figures of Meiji intellectual life such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nishi Amane, and Katō Hiroyuki (1836-1916), to those written by political figures of Meiji including Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), Inoue Kowashi (1844-1895), and Motoda Nagazane (1818-1891). I read these texts first as great creative and interpretative imaginations that account for what it means to know and what it means to produce knowledge, and then to show, with scepticism towards semantic transparency, how these writings respectively and collectively contributed to establishing new semantic of *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, or *shukan*, and how they constituted themselves as crucial part for (re)articulating a symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power.

Ideas, the Problem of Semantic Transparency, and Double Diagnosis

My perspective that revolves around the semantics of *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, and *shukan*, semantic negotiations over these ideas, and consequent epistemic reconfiguration, is, of course, grounded on a specific conceptual and theoretical position. In the final analysis, let me clarify the latent theoretical backdrop and a broader philosophical concern for my intervention.

First and foremost, the pivotal term for my analysis in the following chapters is ‘idea’ – of *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, or *shukan* – which I heuristically differentiate from the term ‘reality.’ Surely, the semantic intricacies of terms such as ‘idea’ and ‘reality’ have long been the object of philosophical inquiry, and it is beyond my present means to add anything meaningful to the debate. Thus, for my purpose here, let me reiterate the claims of Gabriel Tarde, as well as of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. On the relationship between ‘idea’ and its materiality – or else material manifestation of an idea – Tarde writes as follows.

Invention and imitation are, as we know, the elementary social acts. But what is the social substance or force through which this act is accomplished and of which it is merely the form? In other words, what is invented or imitated? The *thing* which is invented, the *thing* which is imitated, is always an idea or a volition, a judgement or a purpose, which embodies a certain amount of *belief* and *desire*. [...] Beliefs, principally religious and moral beliefs, but juristic and political beliefs as well, and even linguistic beliefs [...] are the plastic forces of societies. Economic or aesthetic wants are their functional forces.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Gabriel Tarde, *Laws of Imitation*, Elsie Clews Parsons (trans.), New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1903: 144-146.

Berger and Luckmann transpose this relationship between ‘idea’ and its materiality to the relationship between ‘idea’ and ‘reality’ in the field of historical sociology of knowledge, arguing that,

No ‘history of ideas’ takes place in isolation from the blood and sweat of general history. But we must once again stress that this does not mean that these [ideas] are nothing but reflections of ‘underlying’ institutional processes; the relationship between ‘ideas’ and their sustaining social processes is always a dialectical one.⁶⁹

Echoing these claims, I define ‘idea’ and ‘reality’ as follows. ‘Reality’ – say, of *gakumon* or of *kyūri* – is a quality appertaining to specific institutional and social characteristics, which are (re)established and concretised through modernising processes. In comparison, ‘idea’ – of *gakumon* or of *kyūri* – is that which one must, or else one thinks one must, tend towards, but which, by its very definition, may not be completely materialised. Importantly, the relationship between ‘idea’ and ‘reality’ should not be grappled with a sense of linear order. If anything, the relationship expresses a certain causality dilemma – akin to the chicken-and-egg metaphor – such that it is perhaps best recognised as a hermeneutic circle. Think, for instance, the institutional autonomy of the university that is sustained by the idea of *gakumon*. The idea prefigures a set of institutional principles and procedures necessary for realising *gakumon* as autonomous practices at the institution of knowledge. And the set of principles and procedures, once instituted and elected as rules and regulations of the university, not only functions as the guarantor of institutional autonomy of the realm of *gakumon*, but also becomes the signpost for reconfiguring the very idea of *gakumon*.

⁶⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Penguin Books, 1991 [1966]: 145.

Then, my specific interest in and emphasis on the idea – of *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, and *shukan* – is by no means to privilege ‘idea’ over ‘reality.’ My emphasis on ‘idea’ derives from a reflection on today’s scholarly disposition that, in a sense, underrepresents the significance of ‘idea’ for the formation of modern knowledge in Japan. The existing literature I have discussed in the previous chapter is no doubt effective in their recounting of realities of modern knowledge in Japan, of diachronic developments of modern knowledge as institutional and social processes: importing, translating, and disseminating source texts; appropriating modern scientific technologies and ideologies; institutionalising and formalising knowledge production at the university; engendering of specific theories and knowledge regimes reflexive of spatio-temporal particularities. Some may indeed argue that an ‘idea’ is so abstract that it may be expressed in a more concrete manner in its institutional and social processes, and that it may be best understood in its tangible manifestations.⁷⁰ Yet, if, to bend Tarde for my purpose here, the thing which is instituted “is always an idea or a volition, a judgement or a purpose,”⁷¹ and if ‘idea’ and ‘reality’ are, as Berger and Luckmann suggest, not interchangeable but dialectically prefigure and reconfigure one another,⁷² it is worthwhile to explore ideas central to modern knowledge formation in Japan.

Further still, my emphasis on ‘idea’ also derives from a lingering sense of discontent that treats the transposition of ‘idea’ from one location to another with semantic transparency. By focusing almost exclusively on ‘reality,’ by accounting primarily for the transposition of the contents of Western knowledge, the existing literature seems to endorse a certain consensus of that which *a priori* treats normativity and historicity encoded to the fundamental presumptions of Western knowledge, a form of knowledge, as given, as transparent to all of us. This consensus is

⁷⁰ Joseph Pittau, *Political Thought in Early Meiji Japan 1868-1889*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967: 16.

⁷¹ Tarde, *Laws of Imitation*, 144.

⁷² Berger et al., *The Social Construction of Reality*, 145.

problematic, because it tends to abstract modern and indeed Western ideas of, for instance, scholarship, principle, science, and the subject, from their contexts, and turn them into analytical imperatives, qualitative yardsticks for analysing Japan's appropriation of modern knowledge. Not only does such abstraction, which John Dunn criticises as "reified reconstruction,"⁷³ simplify complex vicissitude built into those ideas, it also endows, as Quentin Skinner maintains, those ideas with certain "timeless elements" with "universal applicability."⁷⁴ And yet, as I have specified in this chapter, this knowledge is nothing but one tradition of knowledge among many others. As I have also specified, in Japan, this knowledge was not transposed in a vacuum but integrated into the existing epistemic landscape through a series of epistemic negotiations that involved translation. If transposition is an instance of problematic, and if translation, a strategy of transposition, is marked by elaboration, refraction, and incommensurability, we must take seriously the problem of semantic transparency.

Weaving together the proclivity towards 'idea' and scepticism towards semantic transparency, my work participates a certain strand of historical scholarship. First and most obviously, my work is informed by the interdisciplinary approach to historiography developed by Reinhart Koselleck and Melvin Richter under the aegis of *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history), which purports to reveal a temporality of epistemological changes by weaving together histories of philosophy with historical linguistics.⁷⁵ However, to address the translational nature of modern knowledge formation in Japan, a certain theoretical mediation is necessary. Thus, I combined the approach of

⁷³ John Dunn, "The Identity of the History of Ideas," *Philosophy*, 43:164, 1968: 87 [85-104].

⁷⁴ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8, 1969: 4 [3-53].

⁷⁵ Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*; Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts*. Koselleck's idea of 'basic concept', however, risks detaching concepts from their context and ordering them according to a temporal sequence, hence risks falling into the common pitfall of the conventional history of ideas. Nevertheless, despite this aspect of Koselleck's theory, his theory offers us a way of understanding 'ideas' as embodying a temporality of epistemological change, which may differ from the temporality of chronological developments of institutional processes.

Begriffsgeschichte with what John Dunn and Quentin Skinner describe as the problem of ‘semantic transparency’ in the field of the history of ideas.⁷⁶ Based on these theoretical perspectives, I seek to offer in the following chapters a consideration of what meanings the speaker and the author were transcoding when speaking and writing, hence when translating, so that we can begin to see “not merely what arguments they were presenting, [...] what questions they were addressing and trying to answer” with regards to modern knowledge formation, but also and more importantly, diachronicities of ideas spoken and written in a synchronic and conjunctural moment of modernity. As Koselleck once noted,

It is the connection between synchronic events and diachronic structures which is investigated social-historically. And it is the analogous connection between speech uttered at the time, synchronically, and the given language which always acts diachronically, which is thematized conceptual-historically. What occurs at some point in time may be unique and new, but it is never so new that longer-term, pre-given social conditions had not made the one-time event in question possible. A new concept may be coined which had never before expressed experiences or expectations which had been present in words. But it can never be so new that it was not virtually laid out in the pre-given language at the time and even drawing its sense from its conventional linguistic context.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Dunn, “The Identity of the History of Ideas.”; Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas.” These works are the critique of semantic transparency in the history of ideas normalised by Arthur O. Lovejoy. See Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1936. To note, my general affinity with the Derridean method of deconstruction and my specific reference here to Skinner in this chapter may appear at the onset contradictory, as Skinner indeed explicitly repudiates Derrida’s method of philosophising. However, Skinner’s history of ideas bears striking similarities to Derrida’s thought. Michael Drolet offers a comprehensive comparison between Derrida and Skinner. See Drolet, “Quentin Skinner and Jacques Derrida on Power and the State,” *History of European Ideas*, 33, 2007: 234-255. Of course, I am not the first to draw attention to this problem in the field of Japanese studies. Some works on new intellectual history have effectively amended methodological deficiencies. Other works have adequately attended to the problem of translational practices. See, for example, Tetsuo Najita and Irwin Scheiner (eds.), *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period: Methods and Metaphors*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978; Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985; Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*; Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*; Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*; Howland, *Translating the West*; Naoki Sakai “Translation and the Figure of Border: Toward the Apprehension of Translation as a Social Action,” *Profession*, 2010: 25-34.

⁷⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, “Social History and Conceptual History,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2:3, 1989: 318 [308-325].

Accordingly, I pursue two parallel lines of argument in this dissertation. First, I problematise those ideas central to modern knowledge formation in Japan by examining their diachronicities, that is to say, by examining specific temporalities of epistemic change that occurred in the semantic space of those ideas through translational practices. Because language does not stand outside its historical context, and because meaning is neither a fixed attribute of a word nor is it independent of the usage specificity of language, we cannot make transparent reference to *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, or *shukan*. We cannot assume that what these ideas meant in Japan in the late 19th and early 20 century is what they meant in other spatio-temporally specific locations, be it in pre-Meiji Japan, or in ‘the West’, or even in my own scholarly location from which I address these ideas. What I argue for is certain incommensurability emerged in those instances of epistemic changes. Second, I examine how translational labour within the specific semantic space of the Japanese language designates more than a mere shift in forms of expressions. Through modern knowledge formation as translational practices emerged new categorical imperatives, new spaces of experiences and expressions, and new horizon of expectation about what it meant to know and what it meant to produce modern knowledge.

It is through this diachronic intervention that I seek to draw a synchronic conclusion about modern knowledge formation. Whether in the case of Japan or that of elsewhere, modern knowledge formation encompasses semantics and is dependent on the regime of a given language. In pursuing these two lines of argument specified above, my analysis ultimately calls for a necessary consideration of what it means to know and to produce modern knowledge under the specific regime of a given language: a consideration of how the timeless pretence and universal folds of modern knowledge – what I have been calling ‘presumptions,’ ‘conditions,’ or ‘core

categories’ – may and can be validated through particular historical experiences encoded to the language, and whether such validation may, in fact, destabilise the very presumptions, conditions, or core categories that it seeks to validate.

In fine, this is a work both about ‘then’ and ‘now,’ about a tradition of knowledge that unfolded through a centuries-long process of epistemic reconfiguration and that we, too, have come to regard as *the* knowledge. In a sense, this work is an attempt of a double diagnosis of modern knowledge. At one level, as I will discuss in the following chapters, I am specifically concerned with the unfolding of this knowledge in Japan when the multitude of modernising changes was taking place. At another level, an inquiry such as this one necessarily challenges my own – our own – knowledge production, whose analytical categories and modalities of writing are also dependent on that which I purport to problematise here. Admittedly, I have been trained and writing from within a particular epistemic tradition that I call modern knowledge. As disenchanting as it may be, my affinity with those critical interventions organised with a modifier ‘post-’ (i.e. poststructuralism, postcolonialism) or ‘de-’ (decolonial tradition, de-construction) does not necessarily bring me beyond that tradition in question.⁷⁸ While we are aware of historical specificities and certain inadequacies of modern knowledge, it seems almost impossible to think about knowledge without invoking its core presumptions.⁷⁹ Being critical of modern knowledge is one thing, but going

⁷⁸ Apart from works already cited, my theoretical and philosophical register is indebted also to works such as the following. David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity, Hegel, Heidegger, and After*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986; William E. Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991; R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward A History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999.

⁷⁹ As Dipesh Chakrabarty once noted, “the so-called European intellectual tradition is the only one alive in the social sciences departments of most, if not all modern universities.” And by ‘alive’ he meant to suggest that “It is only within some very particular traditions of thinking that we treat fundamental thinkers who are long dead and gone not only as people belonging to their own times but also as though they were our own contemporaries. In the social sciences, there are invariably thinkers one encounters within the tradition that has come to call itself ‘European’ or ‘Western.’ [...] The point [...] is that, fabrication or not, this is the genealogy of thought in which social scientists find themselves inserted.” Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 5.

beyond that which we are critical of is quite another. Convincing accounts of alternative possibilities of knowledge are, therefore, notoriously difficult to find.⁸⁰

Perhaps, then, the whole point of this exercise – my intervention into modern knowledge formation in Japan – is not to offer an alternative, but to revive a moment of critique, to reflect on what we have regarded as given but what is, in fact, ‘swampy’ in its nature, to reflect, therefore, on the limits of *our own* knowledge.⁸¹ On reviving a moment of critique, Foucault offers us a formative instance of critical possibility.

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 which Kant formulated by reflecting on the Enlightenment. It seems to me that Kant’s reflection is even a way of philosophizing that has not been without its importance of effectiveness during the last two centuries. 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, 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

⁸⁰ To this rather disenchanting realisation, two opposing reactions have merged in the field of philosophy. First, this presumed impossibility of ‘going beyond’ permits a tendency to dismiss altogether the implications of theories and discussions that emerged through and after the postmodern turn. 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 of critical interventions – the point to reflect on the rather uncertain nature of positivist epistemology itself. Second, some accounts express a celebratory tendency that resorts to Nietzschean or Heideggerian critique of familiar dichotomies, such as universality and particularity, history and contingencies, transcendence and imminence, and space and time. This tendency lodges claims for a new kind of relativism and diversity of human existence over the reductionist assumptions of polity, society and culture, celebrating our liberation from the foundationalist epistemologies. The problem here is that many of the accounts of relativism fail to engage with a concern for the ontological condition of our knowledge, which on the one hand, is the central protagonist of reductionist vision, and which, on the other hand, makes relativism possible in the first place.

⁸¹ I am extending here 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.

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.⁸²

A critical possibility of an inquiry into modern knowledge formation in Japan lies in its prospect of specifying the very limits of this knowledge tradition that we have come to be accustomed as *our* knowledge, in its prospect of offering an understanding of why this knowledge has come to be simultaneously indispensable and yet inadequate. Pressing into the service of those critical interventions, I shall take seriously, in the following chapters and in my writing more generally, the dubious nature of presumptions that have long informed our understanding of knowledge and that have revealed their limits in their unfolding in Japan.

⁸² Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in Joyce Appleby, Elizabeth Covington, David Hoyt, Michael Latham, and Allison Sneider (eds.), *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*, New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1996: 417 [411-417].

Chapter 3.

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

To be a foreigner, but in one's own language, not only when speaking a language other than one's own. To be bilingual, multilingual, but in one and the same language, without even a dialect or patois.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari²

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 – rather in passing – for “a more demanding style” of his writing and “elevated [...] meaning” of the section.³ While this work was, in his own words, “originally presented as a book for the public and as a text for lower schools,”

¹ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Encouragement of Learning*, David A. Dilworth (trans.), New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012 [1872-1876]: 82.

² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi (trans.), London and New York, NY: Continuum, 2004: 109.

³ Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, 132. The original text reads, “学問ノススメハモト民間ノ読本又ハ小学ノ教授本ニ供ヘタルモノナレバ初編ヨリ二編三編マデモ勉メテ俗語ヲ用ヒ文章ヲ読ミ易クスルヲ趣意ト為シタリシガ四編ニ至リ少シク文ノ体ヲ改メテ或ハムツカシキ文字ヲ用ヒタル処モアリ又コノ五編モ明治七年一月一日社中会同ノ時ニ述ベタル詞ヲ文章ニ記タルモノナレバ其文ノ体裁モ四編ニ異ナラズシテ或ハ解シ難キノ恐ナキモ非ズ畢竟四五ノ二編ハ学者ヲ相手ニシテ論ヲ立テシモノナルユヘ此次第ニ及ビタルナリ” The original text is available online at: <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/en/fukuzawa/a15/48> (12.08.2021).

Fukuzawa intended the fifth section, along with the previous section, specifically “for scholarly audience”.⁴ For us, this apology may sound nothing remarkable: a scholarly text often requires a technique of comprehension and prior knowledge of a given topic that pupils of ‘lower schools’ do not necessarily equip themselves with. To be sure, this sense of an ‘ascending hierarchy’ of knowledge acquisition and comprehension was not a new reality of education. The Tokugawa educational system was also marked by a sense of hierarchy, with those private educational institutions (*terakoya* 寺子屋) catered for providing children with basic skills of writing, reading, and arithmetic, and those official schools of *han* (藩) domains and private academies that offered more specialised education, for instance, in Confucianism, *Kangaku* (漢学: Chinese studies), and *Ranpō* (蘭方: Dutch or Western medicine).⁵ It was not that the Meiji period saw the emergence and consolidation of an educational system that was vertically structured. The difference, if anything, between the Tokugawa and the Meiji educational system lay rather in the determination of who had access to education, especially higher education and who authorised educational institutions. The abolishment of the hereditary system made it possible, at least in principle, for anyone from any social stratum to have access to higher education.⁶ The educational system was now centralised with the government, rather than each *han* domain, to authorise educational institutions and curricula, the shift legally confirmed by the Fundamental Code of Education of 1872.

⁴ Ibid., 131. For the original text, see above Footnote 3.

⁵ See for example, Ronald Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*; Richard Rubinger, *Private Academies of the Tokugawa Period*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982.

⁶ Of course, by ‘anyone’ I mean any male. Schooling and education of girls and young women had low priority during the earlier years of political discussions and reforms. See Martha Tocco, “Made in Japan: Meiji Women’s Education,” in Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (eds.), *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005: 37-60.

Among many writings and speeches discussing this centralised, relatively more inclusive, and hierarchical structure of the educational system, the 1887 speech of Mori Arinori (1847-1889) reiterates, perhaps most illustratively, the difference between education at ‘lower schools’ and that of tertiary institutions. On 15th November 1887, Mori, then the Minister of Education, travelled to Wakayama prefecture upon invitation to give a speech at a normal school, which, on that day, was packed with local dignitaries and school principals. Mori was primarily concerned with explaining 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*.

教育ト学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専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学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 *gakumon* and *kyōiku* is as follows. *Kyōiku* is catered for those under the age of majority who are not yet intellectually independent and thus require guidance for intellectual, moral and physical development. In contrast, *gakumon* is for those who have already attained the intellectual capacity to independently think in order to pursue whatever specialised subject one may wish to pursue.)⁷

Of course, the term *kyōiku* itself has multiple meanings. It could designate the general notion of ‘education’ (including primary, secondary, and tertiary education), or instruction and pedagogy,

⁷ Mori Arinori, “Wakayama-ken jinjyō shōgakkō ni oite gunkuchō jyōsetsu-iin 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* (Mori Arinori’s Opinions on Education), Tokyo: Kusakabe Sannosuke, 1888: 146 [145-152]. The text is available online at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/809324> (Accessed 12/04/2021).

or teaching. And this heterogeneity of the meaning of *kyōiku* is noticeable in various texts produced in the early years of Meiji. However, in his enunciation quoted above, Mori specifically juxtaposed *kyōiku* to *gakumon* in order to encode a specific meaning to *kyōiku* and vice versa to *gakumon*. Mori understood *kyōiku* as specifically catering for intellectual, moral, and physical developments of those under the age of majority, thus for the student of primary and secondary schools, achieved – or thought to be achieved – through pedagogy based on purposive instruction and deliberate guidance. In comparison, *gakumon* was defined, in his speech, as a mode of learning to be pursued independently, at the tertiary level, on a specialised subject chosen at one’s own discretion. In other words, tertiary educational institutions were specifically for doing *gakumon*, for those adequately accredited – through the ascending hierarchy of knowledge acquisition and comprehension – to engage with a subject that required specific ethos and methods.

To be sure, such a distinction between *gakumon* and *kyōiku* may appear almost banal today. And yet, as the above enunciation of Mori indicates, this distinction is nothing but arbitrary and historical. This historicity of the modern educational system – more precisely, the historicity of discursive separation of various ‘levels’ of education and historicity of encoded meanings of *gakumon* vis-à-vis *kyōikui* – should be treated as such rather than as given. How and why was such a distinction made? What specific meanings were encoded in the idea of *gakumon* as the apex of a unified system of knowledge acquisition, dissemination, and production? And how did such practices of encoding new meanings to *gakumon* articulate a new discursive space for (re)configuring the scope and nature of knowledge? As it will become clearer as my discussion unfolds, there was a multitude of vested interests in making such a distinction. There were also various political and social dispositive that demanded this distinction. By charting the discursive enactment of the boundary between *gakumon* and *kyōiku*, I seek to argue that the distinction was,

in fact, a deliberate enunciation for a semantic change in order to accommodate and appropriate Western knowledge as *the* knowledge to be pursued at the apex of the centralised, hierarchised educational system.

3.1. Shifting Meanings of *Gakumon*

The idea of *gakumon* articulated in Mori Arinori's speech was not necessarily synonymous with various meanings of *gakumon* that had long notated the intellectual life in the Japanese archipelago. The semantic dissonance between Mori's idea of *gakumon* and the hitherto prevalent meanings encoded in the term is worth mentioning here.

To begin with, the term '*gakumon*' was not a neologism of the late 19th century but derived from Chinese classical texts. For example, in *I Ching* (易經: Book of Changes), the term appears in a passage 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 and accumulates the results of his learning; puts questions, and discriminates among those results; dwells magnanimously and unambitiously in what he has attained to; 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).⁸

⁸ The text of *I Ching* is accessible at: <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/wen-yan/zh?en=off> (13.05.2022). 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.

Here, *gakumon* designates both a mode of learning that the sovereign pursues and knowledge acquired through learning used for governing by the sovereign. This understanding of *gakumon* – and the term itself – was integrated into the Japanese semantic field with the introduction of *I Ching* and other Chinese classical texts to Japan.⁹ And one of the earliest recorded usages of the terms as a Japanese lexicon in *Shoku-Nihongi* (続日本紀), an imperially-commissioned text of Japanese history, generally follows this idea of *gakumon* articulated in *I Ching*. In describing the establishment of *Daigaku-ryō* (大学寮), the educational branch of *Shikibu-shō* (式部省: the Ministry of Civil Service), *Shoku-Nihongi* refers to the term *gakumon* as the learning of literary Chinese, Chinese classics, and the legal codes of centralised administration of *Ritsuryō* (律令) system, thus as the acquisition of knowledge necessary for governing.¹⁰ This relatively narrow semantic scope of *gakumon* was expanded in the following centuries to encompass learning and knowledge that were not necessarily considered crucial for governing. By the end of the 11th century, the term began to appear in some literary texts with a slightly broader meaning, as something instrumental for one to be a cultured person. For example, in the *Hahakigi* (箒木: Broom Tree) chapter of *Genji Monogatari* (源氏物語: the Tale of Genji, 1008), in a sentence that describes the close relationship between Hikaru Genji and Tō no Chūjō, we find the term ‘*gakumon*’

⁹ Kawano Kimiko offers a comprehensive list of Chinese classical texts, including *I Ching*, 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” (The Appropriation of *I Ching* Divination in Ancient Japan), *Kokubungaku kenkyū*, 161, 2010: 22-32.

¹⁰ *Shoku-Nihongi* reads, “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 [...]” Quoted in Murakami Tadao, “Daigaku-ryō kyōiku no suitai gen’in ni kan’suru ichi kōsatsu” (Analysis on the Decline of the Daigaku-ryō), *Kyōiku-gaku kenkyū*, 24: 1, 1957: 25 [21-29].

in contrastive to the term ‘*asobi*’ (遊び).¹¹ Here, *gakumon* was used to designate specifically the study of Chinese classics, while *asobi* encompassed playing traditional musical instruments. Of course, cultured individuals were those who occupied the ranks of the imperial court, thus, governing ranks, but what they were supposed to learn through *gakumon* was not necessarily limited to the practical matters of governing. A few centuries later, in *Tsurezuregusa* (徒然草: Essays in Idleness, 1330-1332), Yoshida Kenkō (1283-1358) also used the term ‘*gakumon*’ but with a twofold meaning. In a narrower sense, the term meant, for him and his contemporaries, the practice of learning Buddhist teachings.¹² But this practice was organised around specific pedagogy based on instruction and guidance from one’s teacher to engage with a philological reading of texts. Thus, more broadly, *gakumon* also designated the practice of acquiring knowledge from one’s teacher and through textual engagement, less for one’s profession or profits but more for the betterment of Self, for learning ‘*michi*’ (道: way, doctrine, principle, holistic beliefs) as a desirable mode of being and doing.¹³

Though I am acutely aware of the narrow scope of this schematic reading of historical semantic changes of *gakumon*, I shall specify here three specific qualifications that emerged through its usage during the medieval period that, as it seems to me, determined the orientation of the semantic of *gakumon*. First, there is no distinction between what we today consider secular and what we

¹¹ As the sentence reads, “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[...]” Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji Monogatari*, Tukamoto Tetsuzō (ed.), Tokyo: Yūhōdō, 1932: 34-35.

¹² As Yoshida wrote, “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*, Agatsuma Junichirō (trans. to contemporary Japanese), Tokyo: Koten kyōyō bunko, 2015: 257.

¹³ The text reads here “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 the similar meaning also appears in the 13th century Setsuwa-collection, *Jikkinshō* (十訓抄: Stories Selected to Illustrate the Ten Maxims) and the 14th century tale of *Gikeiki* (義経記: The Chronicle of Yoshitsune).

perceive as religious in what was considered, during the medieval period, appropriate knowledge of a cultured person or those in governing ranks. Such an idea of knowledge is at odds with the ‘modern’ Western idea of knowledge that took the name of ‘*scientia*’ and was claimed to be resolutely secular and, by extension, with our idea of what knowledge ought to be.¹⁴ 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, to which Laplace replied, “*Je n'avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse-là* (I don’t need that hypothesis).”¹⁵ Then, subsequently, the Académie des sciences in Paris had banned entirely any mention of the name of God in their scientific journal articles.¹⁶ Or, think the often-cited Kantian expression that the Enlightenment marked “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity,” whereby enchanted knowledges were replaced by disenchanting, mature, and genuinely scientific knowledge.¹⁷ But the idea of *gakumon* and the kinds of knowledge acquired through *gakumon* in the medieval period in Japan transgress the boundary of that which we today presume two distinctive realms of the secular and the religious. This is not to say that individuals and societies of that period consciously negotiated the boundary. The boundary itself is a modern invention. If anything, these texts I have introduced above simply suggest that there is no universally applicable ahistorical idea of knowledge, and that a knowledge tradition and its discursive sustenance of what knowledge ought to be are marked by spatio-temporal specificities.

¹⁴ When tracing the historical development of the idea of knowledge during the early modern period in Europe, Sanjay Seth writes that “its producers may ‘believe’ in God or gods in their private capacity, but gods, spirits, and the like have no role in explanation in the natural or human science.” Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 87.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Oki Sayaka offers us a comprehensive account of the historical process in France of separating the secular from the religion as a fundamental backdrop for developing modern scholarships. See Oki, *Bunkei to rikei wa naze wakaretanoka* (On the Separation of Humanities and Sciences), Tokyo: Seikaisya, 2018: 26-32.

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?,” 58.

Hence, these medieval texts point to the possible inadequacy of our own categorial imperatives such as ‘secular’ and ‘religion’.¹⁸

Second, in pedagogical terms, *gakumon* was structured as a mode of learning through textual reading as well as through instruction and guidance from one’s teacher. In other words, anything and everything worth knowing was already in the text, and was already acquired by one’s teacher, such that doing *gakumon* was essentially absorbing what was in the text and/or what was taught by the teacher. This pedagogical predilection was, in fact, reflexive of the etymology of the Japanese word ‘*manabu*’ (まなぶ: learning), which is said to be articulated as a kind of morphological derivation of the word ‘*manebu*’ (まねぶ: imitating).¹⁹ For example, as Nakata Yoshiaki observes, in *Tsurezuregusa*, the word ‘*manabu*’ (learning) is used to designate the act of imitation, and in *Genji Monogatari*, ‘*manebu*’ (imitating) is used interchangeably with ‘*manabu*’ (learning).²⁰ That these two words were used interchangeably in many texts produced during the medieval period is indicative, at least, of a perception that recognises learning as imitating and, vice versa, imitating as learning.

Third, this pedagogical predilection provides us with a specific understanding of the purpose, scope, and nature of knowledge. The primary purpose of the knowledge tradition that bears the name of *scientia* was – and still is – to expand a body of systematic knowledge about the world, hence to make ‘progress’ in knowledge.²¹ Therefore, the scope of this knowledge tradition was – and still is – constantly expanding through ‘discoveries’ of objective truths, and its nature was –

¹⁸ Rajyashree Pandey’s illuminating work addresses the problem of imposing modern analytical concepts onto those texts far removed from our spatial and temporal position. See Rajyashree Pandey, *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair: Body, Woman, and Desire in Medieval Japanese Narratives*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016.

¹⁹ Nakata Yoshiaki, “Gakumon no kon’seputo: tōzai ni okeru sono rekishi to mon’daiten” (The Concept of Gakumon: Its History and Problem in the East and the West), *Bulletin of Seishin-jogakuin Junior College*, 10, 1992: 77-91.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 12.

and still is – marked by the *a priori* established position of the knowing subject to accurately ‘representing’ the world of objects, hence truths. Such an understanding of knowledge that we associate with ‘modern’ and ‘Western’ seems diametrically oppositional to a kind of knowledge envisaged in those medieval texts discussed above. The purpose of knowledge during the medieval period was, as I read it, the inculcation of certain habits of mind based on the available canon and doctrines, be they of Buddhism or Chinese classics, such that the scope of knowledge was a priori fixed. Whatever was considered canonical contains all the knowledge available to man, so much so that there was nothing more to ‘discover’ or ‘unveil’. To this end, the nature of knowledge was primarily interpretative. Instead of seeking to ‘represent’ the world of objects, the primary concern was to attain the principles – however one may define them – that were thought to govern the natural world and human world through a close textual engagement with the canon. In essence, knowledge was not something that ‘the subject’ – a meaning-endowing being – produced about the disenchanting world of objects. Rather, it was to be accessed and attained through textual engagement based on the methodological imbrication of learning and imitating, which, in turn, regulated the time of learning/imitating as cyclical rather than linear.²² Obviously, what we see here in the medieval understanding of knowledge is the immense influence of a mode of learning that had long been established in China, which Ch’ien Mu describes as “the dictum of ‘transmitting but not innovating’ in China’s tradition of learning.”²³ This dictum is apparent, as James Legge

²² On the question of how various knowledge traditions define time, Julian Baggini offers an – albeit schematic – comprehensive overview. See Julian Baggini, *How the World Thinks: A Global History of Philosophy*, London: Granata, 2018: 107-115.

²³ 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: 39 [32-42]. Ch’ien observes, “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.

observes, in, for instance, the works of Confucius and Mencius. Confucius thought 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.”²⁴ Mencius argued that “the superior man seeks simply to bring back the unchanging standard, and, that being correct, the masses are roused to virtue.”²⁵ To be sure, it was during the Edo period that Confucianism, in particular Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism, became the dominant scholarly as well as ideological tradition. However, I shall argue here that already during the medieval period, the idea of and orientation towards knowledge articulated within the Confucian tradition specifically, and China’s tradition of learning more generally had become prevalent in Japan, regulating the idea of *gakumon*.

Given the increasingly entangled relationship between politics and Confucianism during the Edo period, it is not at all surprising that this specific understanding of the purpose, scope, and nature of knowledge constituted the latent backdrop, or else the contingent silence, for the operations of those scholarships of that period, including Neo-Confucianism, *Kogaku* (古学: ancient studies), and *Kokugaku* (国学: nativist studies), all of which were, in one way or another, influenced by the Confucian tradition. Despite the apparent differences in their doctrines, methods of learning, and the idea of what constitutes the canon – hence, despite intellectual contestations among them – these intellectual traditions share a pattern of thinking about the ways in which learning must be temporarily structured.²⁶ To put it rather blatantly, these traditions advocate the mode of learning that revolved around the idea that meanings could be found in embracing the cyclical time of human existence, hence in engaging with whatever was considered as the source

²⁴ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.1*, London: Clarendon Press, 1893: 95.

²⁵ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.2*, London: Clarendon Press, 1895: 289.

²⁶ I am aware of my own schematism here. I shall expand further in Chapter 6 on the differences among these intellectual traditions.

of meanings, canonical texts, in their traditions, sometimes through rote memorisation and recitation, other times through philological interpretation of texts. All that was worth knowing had been in those texts, such that learning was essentially to absorb this body of knowledge specified in the texts.

The Neo-Confucian tradition, which had gained political and intellectual purchase in the Edo period, revolved around such an understanding of learning.²⁷ Take, for instance, Hayashi Razan's (1583-1657) writings. While he expressed certain scepticisms towards Zhu Xi's rendering of the concept of *ri* (理: principle) and *ki* (氣: material force), his scepticism nevertheless foregrounded his effort to recuperate the Neo-Confucian teachings. Thus, he wrote in "*Tagen kore ni yosu*" (寄田玄之: Questions about Classics of Confucianism, 1604) that no one could exceed the intellectual brilliance of Zhu Xi, arguing for the importance of engaging with Zhu Xi's interpretations of the words of the Sages.

其夫子の道は六経にあり、経を解すること紫陽氏 [Zhu Xi]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。

(The Way of Confucius is in Six Classics [Book of Songs, Book of Documents, Book of Rites, Classic of Music, Book of Changes, and Spring and Autumn Annals]. No one has ever offered an understanding of these classics better than Zhu Xi. Not following Zhu Xi is as if getting lost in all the things observable to man.)²⁸

²⁷ On its legacy to 'modern' educational system in Japan, Samuel Hideo Yamashita offers a comprehensive analysis. See Hideo Yamashita, "Confucianism and the Japanese State, 1904-1945," in Tu Wei-ming (ed.), *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996: 132-174. It is important to recognise here that the unfolding of Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan did not necessarily the genuine imitation and appropriation of Zhu Xi's thought. Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken, for instance, expressed a sense of scepticism when engaging with Zhu Xi's texts. I will return to this point in Chapter 5, pp. 353-369, and Chapter 6, pp.382-387.

²⁸ Hayashi Razan, "Tagen kore ni yosu," in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū, Vol.1* (Essays of Hayashi Razan, Vol.1), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918 [1604]: 14 [12-28].

For Razan, learning had to be centred around a close reading of what he considered the most appropriate interpretation of Chinese classics that expounded the Way of the Sages, so that one could attain moral and ethical conclusions about being and becoming. For this reason, his concern revolved specifically around defending the importance of those canonical texts that elucidated the five virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity. In a similar vein, Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714), whose later works are read, at times, by historians as the moment of his disavowing of Zhu Xi, sought to reclaim Zhu Xi's concerns for his own ethical and empirical thought, arguing that the primary goal of learning was practical moral rectification and that moral principles and virtues to be learnt were all written in the classics. As Ekken expressed in *Shinshiroku* (慎思録: Record of Careful Thought, 1714),

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 [...].
(Teaching must begin with things easily comprehensible and accessible, the Chinese classics of the Sage emperors are the best learning material to begin one's pursuit of knowledge)²⁹

Whether one seeks to engage with the Chinese classics or Zhu Xi's interpretations thereof, knowledge, here understood as moral and ethical conclusions, is not something out there to be discovered through an accumulative process, but something to be attained by following the cyclical time of learning, hence by textual immersion.

²⁹ Kaibara Ekken, *Shinshiroku* (慎思録: Record of Careful Thought), Tokyo: Tōadō, 1911[1714]: 15. For the intellectual landscape of Tokugawa Confucianism and Kaibara Ekken's contribution, see Tetsuo Najita, "Intellectual Change in Early Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Confucianism," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 34: 4, 1975: 931-944. As Najita observes, Kaibara came to reject, towards the end of his life, Neo-Confucian metaphysics by seeking a more empirical approach towards the study of nature without falling into the pitfall of the constrictions of Confucius metaphysical ethics. To this end, Kaibara and his mode of reasoning came to be aligned, to a considerably degree, with the tradition of *kogaku*.

Scholars of *Kogaku* also emphasise textual immersion as the primary method of learning. However, in its challenge to the Neo-Confucian presumptions that *ri*, the absolute transcendental, was indeed attainable through the reading of Zhu Xi's interpretations, scholars of *Kogaku* sought to establish a practice mode of learning that could bypass interpretations by calling for the return to the original Confucian canon. For instance, Itō Jinsai (1627-1705) resorted to Mencius' concept of '*kuochong*' (拡充: enlarging, accumulating) and reoriented the purpose of learning to the accumulation of knowledge about each and every thing that made up the world and that was already defined in the original teaching of Confucianism. As Jinsai maintained in *Dōjimon* (童子問: Questions from A Child, 1707),

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、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 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.)³⁰

What is paramount in learning that Jinsai proposed is to make clear distinctions among 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) based on the extensive engagement the original Confucian texts.

While calling for the return to the original texts, Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) equated *gakumon* to

³⁰ Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon, Vol.1* (童子問: Questions from A Child), 1707. The quote is taken from a printed version published in 1904, available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/757852> (02.08.2022).

‘*jitsugaku*’ (実学 : practical learning) for cultivating ‘*jinzai*’ (人材: talent).³¹ Sorai defined the central purpose of learning as to equip oneself with the necessary knowledge for governing, not for the pursuit of ‘*michi*’, through a close reading of the Chinese classics, more specifically, reading those classics in the ‘original’ language. In *Taiheisaku* (太平策: A Proposal for A Great Peace, 1721), Sorai specified this point.

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 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*?)³²

While Jinsai and Sorai were increasingly critical of Neo-Confucianism, their discursive enunciations of what *gakumon* ought to be generally followed the pattern of thinking similar to Neo-Confucianism, presupposing the centrality of canonical texts as the source of meaning, as the source of human knowledge.³³

³¹ On Ogyū Sorai’s thought and its legacy, see Olof G. Lidin, “Ogyū Sorai’s Place in Edo Intellectual Thought,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 18:4, 1984: 567-580; Mark E. Lincicome, *Principle, Praxis, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995: 1-17; Paulus Kaufmann, “Ogyū Sorai and the End of Philosophy,” in Raji C. Steineck, Ralph Weber, Robert Gassmann, and Elena Lange (eds.), *Concepts of Philosophy in Asia and the Islamic World, Vol. 1: China and Japan*, Leiden and Boston, Mass.: Brill Rodopi, 2018: 607-629.

³² Ogyū Sorai, *Taiheisaku* (太平策: A Proposal for A Great Peace), in Takimoto Seiichi (ed.), *Nihon keizai sōsho, Vol.3* (On Japanese Economics, Vol.3), Tokyo: Nihon keizai sōsho kankōkai, 1914 [1721]:563.

³³ For a more detailed exposition of *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku*, as well as their intellectual efficacy in the process of epistemic reconfiguration, see Chapter 6, pp.387-422..

This emphasis on the canon was also integral to the tradition of *Kokugaku*. But what was considered a canonical text in this intellectual tradition was markedly different from Neo-Confucianism and *Kogaku*. Motoori Norinaga's (1730-1801) distinction between 'foreign knowledge' and 'knowledge of the imperial land' explains, perhaps most emblematically, what was considered the appropriate text for learning, hence the appropriate source of meaning. A passage from Norinaga's *Naobi no mitama* (直毘靈: The Rectifying Spirit, 1771) contemplates the foreignness of Buddhist teachings and Chinese classics.

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。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。

(All the people, both the wise and the foolish, are misled by foreign thoughts and do not understand why things are what they are in our country. How is it that those scholars of the land of the Emperor, who are supposed to know what they are supposed to know through the reading of our ancient texts, do not know what they are supposed to know? They explain everything with foreign thoughts – with the Buddhist teaching of karma or with the Chinese teachings of the Will of Heaven that explain everything as the consequence of Heaven's act. All of this is nothing but wrong.)³⁴

As Norinaga bemoaned, learning was replete with foreign thoughts, such as Confucianism and Buddhism, which did have little viability in the historical context of the land of the Emperor. For Norinaga, learning had to be recentred around textual engagement with the ancient 'Japanese' text, such as *Kojiki* (古事記) and *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀), to embrace the mythical intention – *taenaru*

³⁴ Motoori Norinaga, *Naobi no mitama* (直毘靈: The Rectifying Spirit), in Kobayashi Ichirō, *Kōkoku seishin kōza*, Vol. 12 (On Psychology of Imperial Kingdom), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1941-1943 [1771]: 88: 45 [15-107].

kotwari (妙理) – of heavenly deities that created the imperial land called ‘Japan’. Then, in his later text entitled *Uiyamabumi* (うひ山ぶみ: First Step into the Mountain, 1798), Norinaga painstakingly explains which texts to read, how to read them, in which order, so that students could attain what Norinaga himself considers appropriate knowledge efficiently and without any ‘foreign’ influences.³⁵

My reading of these traditions of the Edo period in this chapter is deliberately partial and limited. While I shall expand further on these traditions later in this dissertation, especially in conjunction

³⁵ Though long, some passage from the text is worth quoting here to demonstrate Norinaga’s methodological orientation towards textual engagement. “第一に漢意儒意を、清く濯ぎ去て、やまと魂をかたくする事を、要とすべし、さてかの二典の内につきても、道をしらんためには、殊に古事記をさきとすべし、書紀をよむには、大に心得あり、文のまゝに解しては、いたく古への意にたがふこと有て、かならず漢意に落入べし、次に古語拾遺、[...] 次に万葉集、これは歌の集なれども、道をしるに、甚ダ緊要の書なり、[...] まづ道をしるべき学びは、大抵上ノ件りの書ども也、然れども書紀より後の、次々の御代々々の事も、しらでは有べからず、其書どもは、続日本紀、次に日本後紀、つぎに続日本後紀、次に文徳実録、次に三代実録也、[...] みな朝廷の正史なり、つぎつぎに必ずよむべし、又件の史どもの中に、御代々々の宣命には、ふるき意詞ののこりたれば、殊に心をつけて見るべし、次に延喜式、姓氏録、和名抄、貞観儀式、出雲国ノ風土記、釈日本紀、令、西宮記、北山抄、さては己が古事記ノ伝など、おほかたこれら、古学の輩の、よく見ではかなはぬ書ども也、然れども初学のほどには、件の書どもを、すみやかに読みわたすことも、たやすからざれば、巻数多き大部の書共は、しばらく後へまはして、短き書どもより先ズ見んも、宣しかるべし、其内に延喜式の中の祝詞の巻、又神名帳などは、早く見ではかなはぬ物也、[...] (It is essential that anyone resolving to learn the Way should first of all cleanse himself of the Chinese Confucian attitude and make firm his native Japanese spirit. Now, in order to understand the way of the two classics, *Kojiki* should be studied first, because reading *Nihon shoki* requires much preparation. Literation interpretation of *Nihon shoki* will cause misunderstanding of the original ancient meaning, and you will infallibly be trapped by Chinese thought. *Kogo Shūi* is helpful when you read the two classics, [...] Next, *Manyōshū*, although a poetry collection, is indispensable in learning the Way [...]. Although these writings will suffice as an introduction to the study of the Way, the matters pertaining to later reigns must not be neglected. These are found in *Shoku nihongi*, *Nihon kōki*, *Shoku nihon kōki*, *Nihon montoku tennō jitsuroku*, and *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* [... These are] standard histories of the Imperial Court. You must read them one after another. The spirit and language of ancient times are present in the decrees of each reign recorded in these histories, which you should study with special care. Next, *Engishiki*, *Shinsen shōjiroku*, *Wamyōsho*, *Jōgan gishiki*, *Izumo no kuni no fudoki*, *Shaku nihongi*, *Ryō*, *Saikyūki*, *Hokuzanshō*, and also my *Kojikiden*. These are the books that students of ancient learning must study closely. For beginners, however, it is not easy to read through these books quickly. You may begin with the shorter works; put aside those consisting of many volumes, to be read later. You might start by studying the Prayers and the list of the names of the Gods contained in *Engishiki*. These writings do not have to be read in a set sequence. Read them according to your convenience, choosing this one and that, and do not worry about their order.)” Motoori Norinaga, *Uiyamabumi* (うひ山ぶみ: First Step into the Mountain), in *Motoori Norinaga zenshū*, Vol.9 (Complete Works of Motoori Norinaga, Vol.9), Tokyo: Yoshikawa-kōbunkan, 1937[1798]: 479-506. The English translation is borrowed from the translation that appeared in *Monumenta Nipponica*. Motoori norinaga, “Uiyamabumi,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 42:4, 1987: 465-472 [456-493].

with the question of how these traditions reconfigured the intellectual and epistemic landscape of the 18th and 19th centuries, the point I shall emphasise here at this juncture is the following. It is not that the purpose, scope, and nature of knowledge, and by extension, those of *gakumon*, articulated on the basis of the isomorphism of learning and imitating, in other words, based on the dictum of ‘transmitting but not innovating,’ is improper or inadequate. Any critique such as Ronald Dore’s that characterises these intellectual traditions of the Edo period as being emblematic of “the neglect of curiosity and the pleasure of independent discovery” and not being “progressive branch[es] of study, constantly pushing at the frontiers of new knowledge,” is itself anachronistic.³⁶ Such a critique relies on a judgement only possible from the perspective of the modern, whereby knowledge is understood in the language of ‘progress,’ ‘discovery,’ and ‘representation’. Rather, the point is simply that there is a certain incommensurability between, on the one hand, what these earlier enunciations of what knowledge entails and what *gakumon* ought to do, and on the other hand, the idea of ‘lofty subjects’ that the Fundamental Code of Education of 1872 defined as what *gakumon* ought to engage, or the idea of *gakumon* Mori Arinori spoke for in his 1887 speech and his albeit schematic idea of knowledge that *gakumon* ought to engage with. How did the idea of *gakumon*, the semantics of which had changes over time and which was variously utilised by various intellectual traditions to validate those traditions, become in the early years of Meiji a conceptual device to legitimise the production and dissemination of knowledge that was markedly different from Neo-Confucianism, *Kogaku*, and *Kokugaku*? What enabled Mori Arinori to speak of *gakumon* as the realm of pursuing specialised knowledge distinguished from the realm of *kyōiku*?

³⁶ Ronald P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 52.

3.2. Teleology of the Modern and Etatization of Education

If the rise of a modern state depends on, among other things, various projects of socialisation of the people to inculcate within them a collective understanding and sentiment about ‘the national,’ then, socialisation under the condition of modernity is a distinctly political problem.³⁷ Education, in this context, is often instrumentalised by the political centres as an effective vehicle of socialisation. And without a doubt, this intimate entanglement of education and the modern state also constituted a fundamental backdrop against which some dispersed existing educational structures were reformed into a centralised, systematised, ascending hierarchy in late 19th-century Japan. Put otherwise, the synchronicity of the 19th-century nation-form encompassed the establishment of an intimately intertwined relationship between knowledge, education, and the nation-state. In diachronic terms, however, this relationship was forged and naturalised in Japan, both directly through policies expressly aimed at marking loci of learning and knowing, and indirectly through discourses aimed at inculcating the subject of the nation-state through learning and knowing.

To this end, education became the realm of statist activities. And the (re)organisation of an educational system became the process of statizing, or else ‘etatization,’ through which time and space of learning were reconfigured to reflect a new form of political power, that is, the nation-state organised not around disciplinary means but around governmentality. On the statist delineation of time and space of learning, Michel Foucault has this to say.

³⁷ 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), Volume 4*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015: 51-74.

The organization of a serial space was one of the great technical mutations of elementary education. It made it possible to supersede the traditional system (a pupil working for a few minutes with the master, while the rest of the heterogeneous group remained idle and unattended). By assigning individual places it made possible the supervision of each individual and the simultaneous work of all. It organized a new economy of the time of apprenticeship. It made the educational space function like a learning machine, but also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding.³⁸

While, understandably, some might prefer to render this process ‘nationalisation’, I use this rather cumbersome term ‘etatization’ 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 ‘nation’ and inculcate it within the people. If anything, activities of the state had, at times, even been at odds with the interests of the inhabitants.³⁹ As we shall see in the following, it is through the process of etatization, not nationalisation, of education that the idea of *gakumon* was re-established to designate a distinctive realm different from what Mori Arinori described as the realm of *kyōiku*. It is through the process of the etatization of education that new meanings were encoded in the idea of *gakumon*.

Becoming Modern, Being Different: Modernisation and Education in the Early Meiji Period

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

³⁹ Makihara Norio, *Kyakubun to kokumin no aida: kindai minshū no seiji-ishiki* (Being the Guest of the Nation, Being the People of the Nation: Political Consciousness of the Mass), Tokyo: Yoshikawa-kōbunkan, 2019 [1998].

The *Gokajō no Goseimon* (五箇条の御誓文: the Charter Oath), issued in 1868 as an official statement of the principles for new state building, clearly expressed two parallel teleologies for political and social changes, which, I argue, together constituted the basis of etatization of education. The fifth article of the Oath described the objective of acquiring and disseminating knowledge as follows.

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 [...] (Knowledge shall be sought all over the world, in order to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule and succeed in a transformation that the country has never seen before [...])⁴⁰

This statement, of course, implies the intertwined relationship between then-celebrated two ideologies that were dialectically linked to constitute a guiding teleology of modernisation: *bunmei kaika* (文明開化: civilisation and enlightenment) and *fukoku kyōhei* (富国強兵: enrich the country, strengthen the army). This statement, of course, implies the intertwined relationship between then-celebrated two ideologies that were dialectically linked to constitute a guiding teleology of modernisation: *bunmei kaika* (文明開化: civilisation and enlightenment) and *fukoku kyōhei* (富国強兵: enrich the country, strengthen the army). The Oath also made it clear in its third article that all individuals shall achieve their aspirations irrespective of their class origin or occupation (“官武一途庶民ニ至ル迄各其志ヲ遂ケ”). But the pursuit of individual aspiration was and must be conditioned nonetheless, as the second article specified, by a sense of duty towards a collective

⁴⁰ The full text of the Charter Oath can be found in Sashihara Yasuzō (ed.), *Meiji Seiji-shi, Vol.1* (Political History of Meiji, Vol.1), Tokyo: Huzanbō, 1892: 94-95.

community (“上下心ヲ一ニシテ”).⁴¹ As these articles clearly suggest, the teleology of *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei* was grounded upon another guiding teleology of socio-political changes in modernity, that is, the teleology of the individual and the collective. Although the Oath does not necessarily specify the function of education in the unfolding condition of modernity, these teleological discourses, as I argue, nevertheless set out a basic theme for education as a locus to be seized by the state, as a medium for statist activities for actualising – almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy – the two parallel teleologies for political and social changes. Not only would the state organise an educational system to provide appropriate levels of education to all, but also – and precisely to this end – education would be bent on the statist necessity.

A wide array of perspectives on education spawned in the following years. For all their differences, the teleology of *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei* and the teleology of the individual and the collective was the recurring trope in those discursive enunciations of education. For example, in 1869, Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), then the Governor of the newly established Hyōgo prefecture, together with Nakajima Nobuyuki (1846-1899), Tanaka Mitsuaki (1843-1939), Ga Noriyuki (1840-1923), and Mutsu Munemitsu (1844-1898), submitted a petition to the Meiji Government. The petition, entitled ‘*Kokuze-kōmoku*’ (国是綱目: Political Orientations, 1869), also known as ‘*Hyōgo-ron*’ (兵庫論: A Proposal from Hyōgo), reiterated the notion of *bunmei-kaika* as a means to an end for socio-political transformation, the goal of which was epitomised by the notion of *fukoku kyōhei*, to make Japan on par with the civilised, that is ‘the West’.⁴² And on

⁴¹ In full, the third article states that “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” and the second article specifies that “上下心ヲ一ニシテ盛ニ経綸ヲ行フヘシ”. See *ibid.*

⁴² The original text of ‘*Kokuze-kōmoku*’ was included in Baba Tsunego, *Itō Hirobumi*, Tokyo: Chōbunkaku, 1942: 104-108. On this equation of civilisation with Westernisation, Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote in 1875 that “今世界の文明を論ずるに欧羅巴諸国並に亜米利加の合衆国を以て最上の文明国と為し[...]” (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,

the basis of this teleology of *bunmei-kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei*, the petition proposed a range of necessary policies, including the politico-social reorganisation based on the legitimacy of the unbroken line of sovereigns, the reconfiguration of the relationship between the people and the sovereign 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. The petition, then, recuperated the spirit of the Charter Oath, insisting on the importance of ‘acquiring knowledges of the world’ and ‘providing mass education’ for successfully implementing those proposed policies.

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。今ヤ我皇國數百年繼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リ

(We must encourage the people of our nation to learn about the world and expand their knowledge about nature. [...] Now, the power balance of the world is shifting, exchanges and interactions between nations are increasing, and people are competing to broaden their knowledge, which initially began as an individual effort but now results in the cultivation of the entire population of a nation. This is precisely why and how we shall become a civilised nation and enter the ranks of those European nations. Now we have an unwonted opportunity to get rid of the adverse effect of the past few hundred years and open the nation to the world.)⁴³

[...].) See 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 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]: 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.

⁴³ Itō Hirobumi, “Kokuze-kōmoku,” 106.

Though implicit in this passage, two kinds of knowledge are juxtaposed here. On the one hand, the petition calls for learning various scholarships hence various knowledges of the world (“世界萬國ノ學術”) and simultaneously urges the people to attain knowledge of nature (“天然ノ知識”), which together designate, judging from the context of this proposal, Western and scientific knowledge. On the other hand, by necessitating the acquisition of Western and scientific knowledge, this petition presupposes a kind of knowledge hitherto available and prevalent in Japan, which, in the eyes of the signatories of the petition, has long been the very source of various disruptive politico-social practices that plague the country (“數百年継受ノ弊害”). Upon discursively enacting this juxtaposition, the petition insists on establishing a modern centralised educational system structured with an ascending hierarchy.

是時ニ臨ミ、速ニ人々ヲシテ弘ク世界有用ノ学業ヲ受ケシメズンバ、終ニ人々ヲシテ耳目無キノ末俗ニ陥ラシム可シ。故ニ此回新ニ大学校ヲ設ケ、旧来ノ学風ヲ一變セザル可ラズ。乃チ大学校ハ東西兩京ニ營シ、府藩縣ヨリ郡村ニイタル迄小学校ヲ設ケ、各大学校ノ規則ヲ奉ジ、都城渡僻ニ論ナク、人々ヲシテ智識明亮タラシム可シ

(If at this moment, people will not promptly receive an education that is on par with other nations of the world, they will remain uncultured and philistine. Therefore, we must establish the university and completely wipe out the old mode of learning and scholarship. More specifically, two universities shall be established in the East and the West [Tokyo and Kyoto], and elementary schools in all prefectures, counties, and villages, which follow the general scholarly directions and rules set out by the university. These institutions are the fundamental requirement for enlightening the people.)⁴⁴

By linking an educational system – hierarchically structured with *daigakukō* (大学校: university) in Tokyo and Kyoto, and *shōgakkō* (小学校: elementary school) in every prefecture, county, town,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 106-107.

and village – with the enlightenment of the people (“人々ヲシテ智識明亮タラシム”), the petition envisaged, as it seems to me, knowledge not merely as specific contents (what one knows) but also as a mode of thinking and reasoning of the enlightened (how one knows). And for effectively inculcating a specific way of thinking and reasoning in the minds of the people and for systematically organising and distributing knowledge, the petition argued for the establishment of institutions of knowledge – universities and elementary schools – hierarchically structured and heteronomously authorised by the state.

While also arguing for the two kinds of teleology that Charter Oath put forward and speaking for mass education as a field of statist activities, Kido Takayoshi (1833-1877), then an imperial advisor, had a slightly different concern – namely, what kinds of knowledge should be authorised for the curriculum at educational institutions.⁴⁵ His 1871 letter to Sugiyama Takatoshi, a bureaucrat of the newly established Ministry of Education, written before sailing to San Francisco as a member of the Iwakura Mission, was an emblematic example here. In the letter, Kido cast – though implicitly – his doubt about the then-popularised phrase of ‘*wakon yōsai*’ (和魂洋才: Japanese spirit, Western technique), which designated both as a means and end for modernisation

⁴⁵ Kido discussed the necessity of more financial investment in state-led mass education in, among other writings, his 1874 petition to oppose Japan’s punitive expedition to Taiwan. He wrote, “文部教育ノ事目今ノ急務之ニ過ルナシ、政府嘗テ旨ヲ伝へ、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、然ルニ従前藩治ノ時、国内学ニ就クモノ専ラ士人ノミニ在リテ、而シテ概費三百万ヲ超ユ、今ヤ人民貴賤ノ別ナク、悉ク之ヲ教育スルヲ主トシテ而シテ概費纔ニ三十万ヲ出デズ、今昔ノ勢顛倒甚シト云フベシ” (Education is now a matter of the utmost urgency. The government has a conviction that the basis for interacting with other countries is to educate the uneducated, to expand their knowledge, and to clarify their duties. However, in the past, during the reign of the feudal lords, education was provided exclusively to those in the ranks of samurai, with an estimated cost of more than three million yen. Today, educational opportunities should be provided for all, yet only 300,000 yen are to be allocated for this purpose.)” As this petition was written after the Iwakura Mission, we see a sense of disillusionment in Kido’s writing, in that there was much more progress to be made internally before acting upon any colonial desire to be on par with the West in its expansionism. See Kido Takayoshi, “Shuppei hantai kengi” (出兵反対建議: Opposing the Expedition to Taiwan), in Kido-kō denki hensanjo (ed.), *Shoukiku Kido-kō den, Vol.2* (Biography of Kido Takayoshi, Vol.2), Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1927 [1874]: 1697-1698.

while resisting Westernisation, or else for becoming modern yet different.⁴⁶ For Kido, what was characterised as material manifestations of ‘civilisation and enlightenment’ in Japan were not at all signs of genuine progress. So much so that their adverse effects would be palpable in the years to come. To mitigate such effects, Kido spoke for the importance of *kyōiku*, not necessarily as a means of attaining Western knowledge, but as a means of inculcating in the minds of the people a sense of national pride (“国光”) sustained by the Confucian morality and ethics (“忠義仁礼之風”). Then, Kido argued for the establishment of what he called ‘*shin-gakkō*’ (真学校: ‘real’ schools) to cultivate talents necessary and instrumental for the state and simultaneously to provide mass education based on the ‘traditional’ Confucian pedagogy of *tokuiku* (徳育: moral education).

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決而今日之人米欧州之人と異なる事なし只学不学に在る而已

(Our civilisation today is not a true civilisation. Our enlightenment today is not true enlightenment. The only way to prevent the disease [of fallacious civilisation and enlightenment] in the years to come is to create real schools. Even though a wise man comes into the world once in a while to govern the nation, the stability and prosperity of the country are sustained by loyalty, righteousness, benevolence, and courtesy prevailing among the people. Even if it takes a thousand years to achieve national glory, we must recognise the importance of cultivating individuals who are the only bearer of that glory. And it is through education that we strive to cultivate

⁴⁶ As Hirakawa Sukehiro points out, the genealogy of the phrase 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 reflects a ‘Japanese’ consciousness of acquiring some aspects of advanced civilisation while maintaining a sense of self distinct from the civilisation. See Hirakawa Sukehiro, *Wakon yōsai no keifu* (The Genealogy of Japanese Spirit, Western Technique), Tokyo: Kwade shobō shinsho, 1987. For the notion of ‘*wakon*’, 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.

individuals. The people of Japan are not so different from those of the United States or Europe; the difference is merely in the lack of proper learning.)⁴⁷

What is especially compelling about Kido's argument is not the seeming disparity between his endorsement of Confucian education and his political agendas, which historians often consider reflexive of modern political principles. Just as Fukuzawa Yukichi argued earlier that "the external forms of civilization" of the West, such as schools, industries, and military, were undoubtedly sustained by "a spiritual component", or else "the spirit of civilization,"⁴⁸ Kido also recognised, in his enunciation, that 'Western technique' meant more than mere science and technology, but a kind of 'spirit' that guaranteed the development of such technique. While Fukuzawa saw the internalisation of the spirit of 'Western' civilisation as the necessary condition for its effective material manifestation, for Kido, such internalisation of the spirit of 'Western' civilisation would undermine – or else was already undermining – that which was deemed to be at the very heart of 'Japanese' identity. As I read it, this scepticism towards the efficacy of *wakon yōsai* was an implicit proposition to disassociate modernisation from blatant Westernisation and to reposition education as the very means of such disassociation.

At this juncture emerges a twofold quandary. As the above quote indicates, Kido envisions education with two specific functions. One is to cultivate talents necessary for the state – a function of education that revolves around the idea that education is to produce those individuals instrumental for governing the modern state. The other is to provide mass education based on a specific pedagogical design derived from the Confucian teachings to inculcate within the people a

⁴⁷ 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* (Documents of Kido Takayoshi), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppan'kai, 1930 [1872]: 320-321.

⁴⁸ Fukuzawa, *Encouragement of Learning*, 136, 134. See also Fukuzawa, *An Outline of the Theory of Civilization*.

particular moral and ethical predilection – a function to connect the individual to the nation-state. These two functions ascribed to education, however, seem to manifest a sense of dilemma, if not opposition, in two specific ways. The first quandary is about the possible ways of dialectically connecting the necessity of ‘becoming modern’ and the desire to ‘be different.’ How can one dialectically resolve this quandary in the realm of education to connect: on the one hand, the idea of education catered for cultivating necessary talents, which seemingly required the acquisition of modern and Western knowledge as the basis for a socio-political reorganisation of ‘Japan’; and on the other hand, the idea of education organised with a specific purpose to instil in the minds of people a distinctive sentiment of the ‘Japanese’ collective? This quandary then engenders the second conundrum, which is about the role of the government in linking ‘modern’ and ‘national.’ How could one legitimate the implementation of secular political principles that foreground the political life of the modern and simultaneously the imposition of specific dicta of moral and ethical principles?

To this end, Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883) spoke perhaps for many when he declared earlier that Confucian moral education was a necessary backdrop against which the people would understand modern and Western knowledge in its utility and instrumentality. In his 1867 proposal to the Imperial Court, Iwakura criticised the seemingly uncontrolled and unmediated acquisition of Western knowledge, which, for him, would do nothing but harm the enhancement of national strength. Before embarking on the acquisition of Western knowledge, as he went on to argue, individuals ought to be moulded into those who embodied Japanese moral principles and virtues, that is, Japan’s brand of Confucianism. In other words, this collective embodiment of specific moral and ethical principles was the very foundation for individuals to ‘aptly’ attain and utilise Western knowledge when and if required. As Iwakura explains,

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従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因テ七道ノ觀察使府ニ命シテ管轄内ニ数百箇所ノ小学校ヲ設ケテ幼童ニ五倫ノ道ヲ教諭スルコトヲ努メシム可シ幼童ニシテ習熟涵養スルトキハ少壮ニ至リ營利ノ道ニ走ルモ奪ハスンハ飽カスト云フカ如キノ甚キニハ至ラサルナリ

(When the Imperial Court insists on taking the path of enriching the country, it may be inevitable to follow the principle of utility, expanding the horizon of Western scholarships. But if this is to be done without considering gains and losses, without remembering the actual reason [enriching the country], how much harm can be done? This [Westernisation] should not be taken too far. We should order the seven provinces to establish hundreds of elementary schools within their jurisdiction to teach the five moral principles to young children, so that they may learn and actively inculcate these principles within their minds. Even if they pursue careers to make profits, they will not be deprived of these principles.)⁴⁹

To mould individuals into the embodiment of specific moral and ethical principles, Iwakura necessitated the establishment of primary schools – a few hundred of them across the country – and emphasised the importance of pedagogical design based on Confucian moral education. Later in his 1870 essay entitled ‘*Kenkokusaku*’ (建国策: Policies for Founding a Nation-State, 1867), Iwakura expanded further on his proposal for primary schools, proposing to structure various educational institutions into a centralised and ascending system comprised of, at the lower level, primary schools and secondary schools, and at the higher level, universities. His proposal went even further, positing that universities should be authorised by the state as the supervisory body to guide and determine the orientations of lower schools.

⁴⁹ 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*, Vol. 2 (A True Account of Iwakura Tomomi, Vol.2), Tokyo: Kōgōgūshiki, 1906 [1867]: 31-32.

天下ニ中小学校ヲ設置シテ大学ニ隸属セシム可キ事。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。速ニ学制ヲ府藩県ニ頒布シテ各之ヲ施設セシメテ大学ノ監督ニ属セシムヘシ。

(We must establish middle and elementary schools, which shall be placed under the guidance of the university, so that there will be no uneducated people in our nation. [...] To become a civilised nation-state with wealth and strength, it is, of course, necessary to expand our people's knowledge and educate the uneducated. But this is not something that can be achieved overnight. We would repent if we missed this opportunity to establish these schools. The Fundamental Code of Education should be promptly distributed to all prefectures, urging them to establish these schools under the supervision of the university.)⁵⁰

If Iwakura envisioned that the Confucian moral and ethical principles were the medium for connecting mass education and tertiary education, or else the ‘national’ and the ‘modern’, Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830-1878), then an associate counsellor in the Imperial Court, emphasised *kokutai* (国体: national polity) as the overarching ideology for an educational system. In his 1869 exposition of how the state ought to be instituted, which was addressed to Iwakura, Ōkubo went so far as to define education as the primary means of constituting a nation based on the *kokutai* ideology. Upon observing how each nation of Euro-America established its own polity reflexive of its historical and social context, Ōkubo argued that imitating any of these Western models would not work in the context of Japan and that,

⁵⁰ Iwakura Tomomi, “Kenkokusaku,” in *ibid.*, 835. Again, I shall emphasise here that such a proposal for providing mass education (“天下ニ不教ノ人民ナカラシムルニハ”) is not necessarily a new political orientation of the Meiji period. We may find similar arguments made by the officials of *han* domains to provide commoners with basic skills of writing, reading, and arithmetic. Of course, here, “天下” designated not the modern nation-state but one’s own domain.

我国ノ土地風俗人情時勢ニ随テ我ガ政体ヲ立ツル宜シク定律国法以テ之ガ
目的ヲ定ムベキナリ [...] 要務先ツ我ガ国体ヲ議スルヨリ大且ツ急ナルハナ
シ

(We must establish a polity reflexive of our own land, customs, characters, and
historical context, the purpose of which shall be specified in laws and constitution.
[...] Nothing is more urgent than determining the contour of our national polity).⁵¹

Here, *kokutai* has a double-function. On the one hand, it is the guiding ideological principle for politico-social transformation. On the other hand, it is a source of national sentiment to be instilled in the minds of the people. In his effort to dialectically link these two functions of *kokutai*, Ōkubo argued that to inculcate the *kokutai* ideology in the people was indeed to cultivate talents for modernisation of the state, that those who internalised a sense of ‘national’ was the primary bearer of ‘modern’.⁵² In this instance of dialectic conversion of ‘national’ and ‘modern’, Ōkubo defined the central role of the government as to ‘protect’ its citizens. More specifically, this notion of ‘protection’ encompassed the state’s activities to guide the illiterate people, who remained trapped in the feudal mode of thinking and being, towards civilisation and enlightenment through education.⁵³

What we see in these discursive enunciations on education is a certain consensus that education was a political problem and that education was indeed a field of statist activities. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the considerable differences in their intention and reasoning. Like any other political problem, a general consensus on what constitutes a problem does not necessarily mean that there is no contestation over a possible solution. And to specify further, the contestation here was less about whether education was indeed a field of statist activities or about whether time

⁵¹ Ōkubo Toshimichi, “Seitai no taisei ni kansuru kengensho” (政体ノ体制ニ関スル建言書: Proposal on the form of Polity), 1873. The original text is accessible at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/3860362> (10.08.2022).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

and space of learning must be reorganised to reflect the interests of a new power and a new economy; the contestation was more about what kinds of education would be appropriate for reorganised time and space of learning, for the service of the state, hence for actualising, or else dialectically resolving, the necessity of becoming modern and the desire for being different.

More specifically, the contestation revolved, as I read it, around three quandaries. More specifically, the contestation, as I read it, revolved around three quandaries. The first is the extent and scope of statist intervention in education. While the general consensus designates education as a field of statist activities, such a consensus does not tell us much about the ‘appropriate’ extent of statist intervention nor the ‘appropriate’ contents of education. What may be ‘appropriate’ here depends entirely on how one would define the political – the question of how the state is instituted – under the unfolding condition of modernity. How can the state instrumentalise education to become modern while safeguarding a sense of distinctive collective identity? How can secular political principles be negotiated with a specific moral and ethical predilection, or with the mythical discourse of *kokutai*, as the basis for the collective community? How can the imposition of a particular collective sentiment – be it through the Confucian teachings, or through the ideology of *kokutai* – be justifiable, when new political principles demanded the idea of autonomous individuals? It is in this instance of contemplation that the second quandary emerges – the quandary about the positionality of the government and about a justifiable mode of authorising the realm of education. In other words, this is a quandary about the degree to which the government can intervene into and curtail natural rights – indeed a very ‘modern’ foundation of politico-social life – that emphasise the privilege of individuals to pursue their own good and to fulfil their own purposes in life. To what extent can government legitimately intervene into the lives of individuals and determine what ways of being would be desirable for them? How can the government exert

itself in the realm of education, which, on the one hand, is seen to be instrumental for the state, but which, on the other hand, is sought to be integral for individuals to fulfil their purposes? How can the government maintain the pretence of neutrality in matters of learning, while at the same time etatizing the realm of education? How can one negotiate the seeming disparity between, on the one hand, the hitherto prevalent mode of education primarily based on the Confucian dicta of morality and ethics and, on the other hand, the now-available mode of education based on the attainment and dissemination of utilitarian and instrumental knowledge of the West, especially within the structured educational system? Importantly, in these discursive enunciations I have discussed above, the negotiation between these two modes of education was framed less as a dichotomy between the premodern and the modern, but more as a question of what modernisation and Westernisation actually entailed and how a sense of Self – both individual and collective – might be (re)articulated through the process of socio-economic transformation.

The Controversy over the Imperial Thoughts on Education

Many texts were written, speeches were given, and debates were organised on these quandaries. In seeking to identify a mode of discursive resolution articulated for these quandaries, I propose to re-read here the controversy over ‘*Kyōgaku-seishi*’ (教学聖旨: Imperial Thoughts on Education) as an emblematic instance in which a political solution began to emerge.

In August 1879, only a few weeks before the promulgation of *Kyōiku-rei* (教育令: the Education Order), which aimed at reversing certain effects of the highly centralised educational system set out by the 1872 Fundamental Code of Education by granting a discretionary power to

prefectures and local municipalities, a text entitled ‘*Kyōgaku-seishi*’ (the Imperial Thoughts on Education) was handed to the government officials under the name of the emperor. The purpose of the text addressed specifically to Itō Hirobumi, then the Prime Minister, and Terashima Munenori (1832-1893), then the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was twofold.⁵⁴ First, it was to curb their purportedly ‘modernist’ enthusiasm for education based on the acquisition and dissemination of Western knowledge. And second, the purpose was also to facilitate some last-minute changes to the decentralised, ‘liberal’ Education Order. Of course, as we know today, the ‘Imperial Thoughts 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.

Given this background of the text, it is perhaps tempting to read the ensuing controversy, as the advocates of modernising theory may read, as a mere dispute between ‘the traditional’ and ‘the progressive’, between Confucian education and Western education, between the ‘national’ and the ‘modern.’ It is perhaps also tempting to read it, as today’s historical scholarship on education does, merely as the genesis of 1890 *Kyōiku chokugo* (教育勅語: Imperial Rescript on Education), which is said to have paved the way for “the ideology of imperial divinity” and for the later “indoctrination, repression, and militarism, culminating in the Pacific War.”⁵⁵ However, as I seek to demonstrate in the following, the significance of the controversy lies not necessarily in its

⁵⁴ At the time of the publication of ‘Imperial Thoughts on Education,’ Terashima was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, soon after the promulgation of the Education Order in September 1879 and with his disillusionment towards the rectification of ‘unequal’ treaties, he resigned from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and took the post of the Minister of Education. For Terashima’s biography, see Inutsuka Takaaki, *Terashima Munenori*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkann, 1990.

⁵⁵ Sharon H. Nolte, “National Morality and Universal Ethics: Ōnishi Hajime and the Imperial Rescript on Education,” *Momunenta Nipponica*, 38:3, 1983: 284 [283-294]. On the genealogy of the Imperial Rescript on Education, see Bennjamin 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* (The Road to The Imperial Rescript on Education), Tokyo: Sangensha, 2011. For the lasting legacy of the Rescript, see, for example, Yoshimitsu Khan, *Japanese Moral Education: Past and Present*, London: Associated University Press, 1997.

manifestation of purported oppositionalities nor in its posterior consequence marked by ‘liberalist’s concession’. The controversy was significant because it shaped an unstated yet fundamental presupposition that the structured educational system was, and must be, composed of two intertwined yet distinctive realms – the realm of *kyōiku* and the realm of *gakumon*. As it becomes more evident as my argument develops, this separation had effectively forged a space for dialectically connecting ‘the traditional’ with ‘the progressive’ in the realm of *kyōiku* as a mode of ‘national’ education, while granting certain autonomy to the realm of *gakumon* both as a locus for production and dissemination of – predominantly – Western knowledge and as a locus for the individual pursuit of this knowledge. It was this presupposed distinction between *kyōiku* and *gakumon* that emerged in the controversy – and, of course, in other debates on education – that, as I argue, articulated an enabling condition for discursively and institutionally resolving those quandaries I have discussed earlier. In essence, the controversy was crucial for encoding new meanings in the idea of *gakumon* that marked a disjuncture from its hitherto prevalent semantics.

The controversy began with Motoda’s critique, expressed in the ‘Imperial Thoughts on Education’, of the policies articulated in the Fundamental Code of Education and the ensuing debates over the soon-to-be promulgated Education Order. Motoda argued that these policies were impetuously inclined to *chiiku* (知育: knowledge education) based on the acquisition and dissemination of Western knowledge, which, in his view, completely lacked any concern for loyalty and filial piety that traditionally foregrounded the question of the political, that is, the relationship between the sovereign and the people. Because knowledge education was deprived of any notion of moral conduct, it had adversely encouraged unsupervised, unruly behaviours of the people.

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、然ル所以ノ者ハ、維新ノ始首トシテ陋習ヲ破リ、知識ヲ世界ニ広ムルノ卓見ヲ以テ、一時西洋ノ所長ヲ取り、日新ノ効ヲ奏スト雖トモ、其流弊仁義忠孝ヲ後ニシ、徒ニ洋風是競フニ於テハ、将来ノ恐ル、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、[...] (However, in recent years, many people have been preoccupied with attaining knowledge and artistic talents, breaking the rules of conduct and damaging customs in the name of civilisation and enlightenment. Those who, the bearer of the Meiji Restoration, broke away with the past tradition [of limiting one's access to foreign knowledge] and sought knowledge around the world. This may be temporarily beneficial, but in so doing, they have disavowed the principle of benevolence, justice, loyalty and filial piety, simply following the Western way. I fear this will result in neglecting the moral and ethical fundamentals that define the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects.)⁵⁶

If knowledge education was the cause of socio-political instability, then, moral education would be the solution. What Motoda thought instrumental for transforming individuals into national subjects of an imperial nation was a mode of education, which, through the Confucian teachings of benevolence, justice, loyalty and filial piety, sought to instil in the minds of the people a modality of social identification revolved around the notion of *kokutai*. As he went on to argue, once individuals cultivated moral and ethical principles through moral education, and once they – in his terms – came to intuitively embody those principles (“脳髓ニ感覺セシメ”), they would come to a sense of the futility of empty abstractions (“高尚の空論”), which Motoda, of course, implied Western knowledge.⁵⁷ In turn, people would begin to attend to more situated knowledge,

⁵⁶ Motoda Nagazane, “Kyōgaku-seishi” (教学聖旨: Imperial Thoughts on Education), in Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyū-jo (ed.), *Kyōikuchokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryōshū, Vol.1* (Documents on the Promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, Vol.1), Tokyo: Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyū-jo, 1938: 3-4.

⁵⁷ Although Motoda is not clear what exactly he means by ‘empty theories,’ given that he criticises those who seek to become competent in the Western languages but fail to translate and explain Western theories, concepts, and ideas in the Japanese language for practical usage, I read ‘empty theories’ as theories of the West.

or what he called *jitsugaku* (実学: practical learning), which he considered fundamental for individual prosperity.

仁義忠孝ノ心ハ人皆之有リ、然トモ其幼少ノ始ニ、其脳髓ニ感覺セシメテ培養スルニ非レハ、他ノ物事已ニ耳ニ入り、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覺セシメンコトヲ要ス [...] 親シク生徒ノ芸業ヲ験スルニ、或ハ農商ノ子弟ニシテ其説ク所多クハ高尚ノ空論ノミ、甚キニ至テハ善ク洋語ヲ言フト雖トモ、之ヲ邦語ニ訳スルコト能ハス [...]、是皆教学ノ其道ヲ得サルノ弊害ナリ、故ニ農商ニハ農商ノ学科ヲ設ケ、高尚ニ馳セス、実地ニ基ツキ、他日学成ル時ハ、其本業ニ歸リテ、益々其業ヲ盛大ニスルノ教則アランコトヲ欲ス

(The principle of benevolence, justice, loyalty and filial piety is in the mind of every person. However, unless one is taught this principle from a young age, unless one is taught to cultivate and embody it, and if one's mind is preoccupied with other things, it will be difficult to inculcate this principle in their mind. [...] My aim here is to explain how to educate the people so that they come to embody the principle of benevolence, justice, loyalty and filial piety. [...] What is taught today as vocational training for the students or children of farmers and merchants are empty abstractions. In some extreme cases, they may become competent in foreign languages but have no linguistic competency to translate what they learn into the Japanese language [...]. This is the adverse effect of not attaining the Way [Confucian morality and ethics]. Therefore, it is necessary to establish specialised education catering to teaching situated knowledge rather than empty theories of agriculture and commerce, which, if successful, would benefit those students to succeed in their chosen occupation.)⁵⁸

This enunciation is interesting for two reasons. First, through his juxtaposition of ‘empty abstraction’ (“高尚ノ空論”) to ‘situated knowledge’ (“実地ニ基ツキ”), that is to say ‘the impractical’ to ‘the practical’, Motoda implies here that the value and function of knowledge ought to be judged on the basis of its practicality. And yet, in Motoda’s enunciation, the very idea of

⁵⁸ Ibid., 4.

‘practical’ is *a priori* determined by the political, that is, by a vision of polity grounded on the specific entanglement of Confucianism and the absolute position of the sovereign, the emperor. Then, Motoda tautologically reasoned that the internalisation of this particular vision of polity through moral education was the precondition for making knowledge ‘practical’. Second, for such internalisation of a vision of polity, Motoda repeatedly used the phrase ‘intuitive embodiment / intuitively embody’ (“脳髓ニ感覚セシメ”), qualifying the human body as a site where power and regimes of discourse would inscribe themselves. This (re)positioning of the human body as a site of imposing specific disciplines can be read, as I read it here, as an attempt to etatize *a body* and transform it into *the body*, that is to say, into which moral and ethical principles are to be lodged, and through which these principles are to be manifested. The body becomes a statist medium of activity, and education becomes a statist instrument for transfiguring the human body into the site where the individual and the national are to be connected to one another.⁵⁹ What is especially noteworthy here is, therefore, not his insistence on the Confucian moral and ethical education, but his revelation, whether intentional or otherwise, that for the teleology of *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei* and the teleology of the individual and the collective to be more than mere hypothetical optimum, for these teleologies to become a reality, the contents and mode of education must be deliberately determined by the state and imposed upon individuals. To this end, the etatization of the body meant, for Motoda, the etatization of education.

⁵⁹ The notion that the body as the site of inscribing a sense of ‘national’ also foregrounds Mori Arinori’s educational theory. See Mori Arinori, “Kyōiku-ron: 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, Vol. 1* (Complete Works of Mori Arinori Vol.1). Tokyo: Senbundō shoten, 1972 [1879]: 325-329. Though this is outside the scope of my inquiry here, this Foucauldian reading of the body and power brings to the fore an interesting philosophical question. Is there *a body* that is there, existentially available to become *the body*, the site of its own construction? Judith Butler’s short essay on this Foucauldian dilemma offers a point of departure to think about this question. See Butler, “Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, 86:11, 1989: 601-607.

This modality of etatization is especially evident in the concept of *kyōgaku* (教学) Motoda refers to in the text, as well as in his other writings. According to him, *kyōgaku* is a mode of teaching and learning, which encompasses moral indoctrination of certain behavioural principles based on the authority and influence of teachers, texts, and cultural imposition grounded on a specific understanding of purported characteristics of ‘Japan’.⁶⁰ What Motoda envisioned here, with his reference to *kyōgaku* as the guiding concept for the etatization of education, was a kind of educational and politico-ideological techniques and strategies by which individuals came to embody the national polity and, therefore, by which society became rendered governable within the parameter determined by the idea of the national polity. So understood, I argue that, by equating Western knowledge to ‘empty abstraction’, Motoda did not necessarily mean that Western knowledge was in and of itself ‘empty’ and hence impractical. Western knowledge could be, in fact, practical if individuals would cultivate their capacity through moral education to ‘aptly’ utilise it for practical purposes, that is to say, through a kind of education regulated by the notion of *kyōgaku*. Western knowledge without such mediation was simply inadequate.

The ‘Imperial Thoughts on Education’ – its discursive justification of the etatization of education based on *kyōgaku* – prompted a swift response in the form of ‘*Kyōiku-gi*’ (教育議: On Education, 1879), drafted by Inoue Kowashi (1844-1895), then the great secretary of the Grand

⁶⁰ On Motoda’s conceptualisation of *kyōgaku*, see Morikawa Terumichi, “Motoda Nagazane to *kyōgaku*-ron” (Motoda Nagazane and the Concept of *Kyōgaku*), *Saitama daigaku kiyō*, 59:1, 2010: 133-154. Morikawa has also sought to re-evaluate Motoda’s ideology and its intellectual and sociological legacy in his work, *Kyōiku chokugo e no michi*. One of the earlier critical reflections on *kyōgaku* was offered by Tosaka Jun, who asserted that *kyōgaku* was an ideo-political project to (re)establish and maintain the feudal nexus between ‘*shūsin*’ (修身: morality, ethics), ‘*keikoku*’ (経国: government), and ‘*chikoku-hei-tenka*’ (治国平天下: peace of the land). See Tosaka, “Ninshikiron towa nani ka” (What is Epistemology?), in *Tosaka Jun zenshū, Vol.3* (Complete Works of Tosaka Jun, Vol.3), Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1937: 465. As much as Tosaka’s reflection came from his own idiosyncratic ideo-political interest, the post-war engagement with *kyōgaku* and Motoda’s ideology was foregrounded by a general tendency to criticise and overcome ‘the premodern qualities of the Japanese ‘modern’ educational system. This is especially evident, for example, in Tsuchiya Tadao’s historical analysis of educational policies. See Tsuchiya Tadao, *Meiji zenki kyōiku-seisaku-shi no kenkyū* (A Historical Analysis of Educational Policies during the First Half of the Meiji Period), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1962.

Council of the State, and submitted to the emperor – thus, technically to Motoda – by Itō Hirobumi.⁶¹ ‘On Education’ begins with a rebuttal by pointing to Motoda’s misapprehension of the contemporary condition and his reasoning of the (in)adequacy of Western knowledge. First, the political and social instability of the late Edo and early Meiji period was understood by Itō and Inoue as having little to do with education. Rather, it was attributed to the socio-political transformations brought by the end of the seclusion policy and the introduction of new governing principles that had replaced the feudal political hierarchy. Put otherwise, Itō and Inoue understood that the instability was an inevitable phase of transformative political and social processes. As the text reads,

維新ノ際、古今非常ノ変革ヲ行フテ、風俗ノ変亦之ニ従フ、是勢ノ已ムヲ得サル者ナリ、何トナレハ第一鎖国ノ制ヲ改メテ交際ノ自由ヲ許シ、第二封建ヲ廢シテ武門ノ紀律ヲ解ク、[...] 世道一変シ、廟堂深ク宇内ノ大勢ヲ察シ、斷シテ之ヲ行ヒ、尽ク鎖国封建ノ旧ヲ改ム、是ニ於テ我人民始メテ意ノ向フ所ニ従ヒ、尋常例格ノ外ニ馳驟シ、云為自由ナルヲ得、然而一時勢ノ激スル所、淳風美俗其中ニ在ル者モ、亦從テ俱ニ亡ヒタリ[...]

(At the time of the Meiji Restoration, the country underwent a significant change. The customs of the people were no exception. The pace of change remains fast. First, the system of national seclusion was abolished, and the interaction with foreign countries is now untethered. Second, the feudal system was abolished, and the hierarchical order was replaced [...]. Social morality has changed. We must observe the trends of the world carefully, and break away from the old order of seclusion and feudalism with conviction. This shall be the basis for our people to follow their own will, to go beyond what was hitherto considered ordinary, and to be free. When these changes come suddenly, as they came in Japan, it is natural that the ideal social norms and customs of the past will also be lost.)⁶²

⁶¹ Itō Hirobumi, “Kyōiku-gi” (教育議: On Education), in Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyū-jo (ed.), *Kyōikuchokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryōshū, Vol.1*(Documents on the Promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, Vol.1), Tokyo: Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyū-jo, 1938: 5-9.

⁶² Ibid.

Second, the fact that many people were indulging themselves in polemical debates by often referring to or utilising Western theories and concepts, such as ‘liberty,’ ‘self-help,’ and ‘right,’ had nothing to do with the nature of Western knowledge. It was merely reflexive of the ways in which disillusioned individuals resorted to Western political thoughts to justify and advance their own idiosyncratic agendas without any ‘proper’ understanding of these thoughts.⁶³ If anything, these disillusioned individuals – whom Itō and Inoue described rather derogatively as ‘*seidan no to*’ (“政談ノ徒”), which translates as ‘people who indulge in political debates’ – were educated in the *Kangaku* tradition, which, according to Itō and Inoue, hindered those individuals from appropriately comprehending the utility of Western knowledge. Just as Motoda argued, the inadequacy was not in Western knowledge *per se*, but in those who failed to understand its utility and yet arbitrarily used – or else, misused and even abused – it nonetheless.

言論ノ敗レニ至テハ、更ニ又諸般ノ原因アリ、[...] 政談ノ徒過多ナルハ、国民ノ幸福ニ非ス、今ノ勢ニ因ルトキハ、士人年少稍ヤ才気アル者ハ、相競フテ政談ノ徒トナラントス、蓋シ現今ノ書生ハ、大抵漢学生徒ノ種子ニ出ツ、漢学生徒往々口ヲ開ケハ輒チ政理ヲ説キ、臂ヲ攘ケテ天下ノ事ヲ論ス、故ニ其軫シテ洋書ヲ読ムニ及テ、亦静心研磨、節ヲ屈シテ百科ニ従事スルコト能ハス、却テ欧州政学ノ余流ニ投シ、軫タ空論ヲ喜ヒ、滔々風ヲ成シ、政談ノ徒都鄙ニ充ルニ至ル

(There are many reasons for the current oversaturation of polemics. [...] But such oversaturation is counterproductive for the happiness of the nation and that of the

⁶³ Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891) translated and published Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help* (1859) under the title *Seigoku risshihen* (西国立志編) and John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859) under the title *Jiyū no ri* (自由之理) in 1870. With one million copies sold by the end of 1911 in a country of 30 million, the former is considered the best-seller of the Meiji, along with Fukuzawa’s *Encouragement of Education*. However, today’s scholarly engagement with Nakamura’s translation of *Self-Help* focuses primarily on the linguistic equivalence between the original text and Nakamura’s use of *kango* (漢語). Among a few works discussing the circulation of the book, Mikawa Tomohisa offers a brief, comprehensive analysis. See Mikawa Tomohisa, “Seigoku risshihen wa donoyō ni shite meiji-shoki no syakai ni hirogatta noka” (How Did ‘Seigoku Risshihen’ Become Popular in Early Meiji Society?), *Human and Socio-Environmental Studies*, 17, 2009: 69-81. On Nakamura’s translation of *On Liberty*, Douglas Howland provides an absorbing analysis from the perspective that refutes semiotic transparency by comparing the Japanese translation of Mill’s *magnum opus* to the Chinese translation. See Howland, *Personal Liberty and Public Good: The Introduction of John Stuart Mill to Japan and China*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

citizens. In the current climate, those young people with little talent are eager to engage in political debate. Perhaps, many of them are students of Chinese studies. If you are educated in this tradition, you develop a predilection toward expounding on political theories and discussing world affairs. When these students turn to read Western texts, they cannot seek to expand their knowledge with a collected mind, but instead indulge themselves in unconventional Western theories of politics and are relished in empty theories without any direction. That is the reason why we see the oversaturation of polemics.)⁶⁴

In this context marked by instability, disillusionment, and polemical debates, just as Motoda's 'Imperial Thoughts on Education' did, 'On Education' understood the historio-cultural specificities of 'Japan' as the fundamental basis of national polity. Against Motoda's claim for moral indoctrination and cultural imposition, 'On Education' argued that the role of the government was not necessarily to promote a specific interpretation of Japanese history, literature, customs, and languages, nor to establish a state religion. But the role was to consider the greater good and welfare of the people, which the text defined as 'the happiness of the nation, that of the citizens' ("国民の幸福").

Upon arguing thus, 'On Education' saw education as absolutely instrumental for calibrating the effect of instability, disillusionment, and polemical debates and, therefore, for providing an essential condition under which individuals could pursue their own happiness. What is particularly of interest here is the scope and function of education that Itō and Inoue specified in the text. While Motoda's reflection revolved specifically around the education of children as the subject of moral indoctrination and cultural imposition, the scope of Itō and Inoue's deliberation concerned instead with what they called '*kōtō-no-gaku* (高等の学)', that is to say, a realm of post-elementary

⁶⁴ Itō Hirobumi, "Kyōiku-gi," 5, 9.

education.⁶⁵ In reiterating the term *'jitsugaku'*, which Motoda also used to designate a mode of learning reflexive of historico-cultural specificities of Japan and the everyday life of the individual, 'On Education' effectively encoded an alternative meaning to the term by emphasising the utility and practicality of scientific and technological knowledge of the West (labelled as “工芸技術百科ノ術,” literary translates 'a hundred means of crafts and technologies'). In this instance, modern and Western knowledge was discursively and conceptually reduced to a mere object, disassociated completely from what Fukuzawa and Kido respectively considered earlier as the spirit of Western civilisation that was thought to have sustained its knowledge. Thus, when Itō and Inoue argued for the realm of post-primary education as a locus for practical learning (“高等ノ学ニ就カント欲スル者ハ、専ラ实用ヲ期シ[...]”),⁶⁶ their enunciation was, as it seems, primarily informed by a functional approach to modern knowledge and post-primary education. In other words, knowledge to be disseminated at secondary and tertiary educational institutions, Western knowledge, was reduced to its operational function for modernisation. At the same time, they also seem to reposition secondary and tertiary education as an antidote, rather than an immediate solution, for the instability, disillusionment, and polemical debates that signalled the contemporaneity of socio-political transformation. The process of acquiring Western knowledge, that is to say, practical learning, was to mitigate the detrimental effects of the socio-political change.

⁶⁵ It is rather challenging to determine whether this specific scope of their discussion was deliberate or otherwise. Though it remains a mere speculation, I read this as a reflection of Itō's pragmatism, which effectively marked an area of later concession – in this specific case, the contents of primary education – in order to advance his interests and political agendas without necessarily antagonising ideological oppositions.

⁶⁶ Itō Hirobumi, “Kyōiku-gi,” 9.

Now the question was when and how to prescribe this antidote. And by asking this almost rhetorical question, Itō and Inoue sought to (re)establish the role of government as to ‘guide’ individuals and ‘encourage’ them to acquire scientific – equated here to ‘practical’ – knowledge.

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 integrating the past into the present – reading and understanding the scriptures, establishing them as the ground for the nation, and conducting political matters on that basis. [...] That is not the role of this government. Instead, the government should be mindful of the following: history, literature, customs, and languages are the basic elements to organise and sustain the national polity, hence should be protected and never be slighted; for education at tertiary institutions, the government must encourage the student to pursue scientific knowledge but never let them indulge in political debates [which would lead to the negation of those basic elements for the national polity]. Science is the antidote for polemics.)⁶⁷

With this articulation of the role of the government, Itō and Inoue’s enunciation effectively established a discursive and hermeneutic relationship between education and the government and between scientific knowledge and socio-political stability. To this end, despite the differences that marked Itō and Inoue’s ideo-political position vis-à-vis Motoda’s, their enunciation also expressed the notion that education was indeed a field of statist activities, and the process of establishing an educational system was the process of etatizing the realm of education.

The consensus forged among Motoda, Itō, and Inoue is that the concern about ‘appropriate’ education was a political concern. It is politics that must determine what ‘appropriate’ education

⁶⁷ Ibid., 8-9.

entails and how the field of education can be compartmentalised into various levels of learning to reflect the diverse necessity of individuals – and the state – to cultivate themselves. Importantly, this consensus seems to reflect the general shift in the discursive space of the 1870s. As I have explained earlier, at the onset of modernisation in and of Japan, the jingle of *bunmei kaik* and *fukoku kyōhei* were dialectically linked through the conviction in the pre-established teleological integrity between the individual and the nation-state. The integrity was pre-established in that enlightenment and cultivation of individuals would *inevitably and directly* contribute to enhancing national political and economic strength. However, with the reality of instability and disillusionment becoming increasingly obvious and with the extension of polemical debates beginning to interfere with the realm of politics, inversely, this pre-established integrity of the individual and the nation-state began to be deprived of its discursive purchase. The increasing sense of instability, disillusionment, and polemical debates were seen as an attestation that, in fact, enlightenment and cultivation of individuals did not automatically guarantee the strengthening of the nation-state. Instead, for this teleological integrity to be actualised, it would require an intervention by the state to prefigure what constituted an ‘appropriate’ orientation of enlightenment and cultivation. I shall even go so far as to suggest that this consensus enabled discursive difference between the Imperial Thoughts on Education and the On Education in the first place – the consensus that education was a political problem, and that the field of education must be divided into different levels. Because of this consensus, Motoda could argue for moral education at the level of primary education. And in a similar vein, because of this consensus, Itō and Inoue could reiterate practical learning of Western scientific knowledge at the level of post-primary education. Then, in this specific reading of the controversy over the Imperial Thoughts on Education, the

discursive difference between Motoda, on the one hand, and Itō and Inoue, on the other hand, or else between one politico-ideological predilection and another, becomes almost incidental.⁶⁸

Resolving the Quandaries

I have earlier specified three quandaries that marked education as a field of statist activities: about the extent and scope of statist intervention into education; about the positionality of government and a mode of authorising the realm of education; and about the negotiation between moral education and knowledge education within a structured hierarchical educational system. I have also identified, in the previous section, a certain consensus that designated the discursive space of the controversy over Imperial thoughts of Education. This consensus – that appropriate education was a field of statist activities structured with an ascending hierarchy – was, of course, marked by many ambiguities and internal tensions. But, as I seek to argue here, it was through this consensus that a general direction for resolving those quandaries emerged.

That the realm of education was designated as a field of statist activities, as a field to ‘forge’ the teleology of *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei* and the teleology of the individual and the collective, became the very ground for statist intervention. This statist desire to ‘forge’ those teleologies became increasingly apparent both legislatively and discursively in the 1880s. In

⁶⁸ In fact, Motoda responded to ‘On Education’ by publishing “*Kyōiku-gi-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, “*Kyōiku-gi-fugi*,” in Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyū-jo (ed.), *Kyōikuchokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryōshū, Vol.1* (Documents on the Promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, Vol.1), Tokyo: Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyū-jo, 1938: 11-14.

legislative terms, for example, the revision of the Education Order in 1880 nullified the earlier ‘liberal’ tendency, strengthening the authority of the education minister.⁶⁹ The revised Education Order also extended its scope to control the contents of education by defining the standards of pedagogy and learning for educational institutions, especially at the primary level. Particularly interesting here is one of the compulsory subjects urged to be taught at primary schools, that is *shūshin* (修身: morality, ethics). In the previous version of the Education Order of 1879, *shūshin* was listed as the last of what were considered ‘basic’ subjects, along with reading, writing, maths, geography, and history. However, in the revised Education Order of 1880, *shūshin* entered the list as the first ‘basic’ subject to be taught. This change, though ostensibly insignificant, not only signalled the continuing influence of the idea of *kyōgaku*. It also signalled the efficacy of internal differentiation of the structured educational system – primary, secondary, and tertiary – and the government’s willingness to concede, to a certain extent, to incorporate forms of education that did not necessarily align well with its general orientation towards knowledge education generally and Western scientific knowledge more specifically.⁷⁰

Discursively, two speeches that Itō Hirobumi gave a few days after the proclamation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (the Meiji Constitution) in 1889 are emblematic examples of the rhetorical manoeuvre to justify the statist intervention into education. One speech, dated the 15th of February, was addressed to the chairs of prefectural assemblies, explaining the notion of *kokutai* defined in the Constitution, the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects, and the responsibility of the government and the individuals. Most significantly, the speech argued for

⁶⁹ The original text of the revised Education Order is available at the National Archives of Japan (Document ID: 公02665100) and online at: http://www.archives.go.jp/exhibition/digital/meiji/contents2_02/ (Accessed 12/02/2021).

⁷⁰ 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.

the necessary transformation of ‘*jinmin*’ (人民: the people) into ‘*kokumin*’ (国民: the nation) through education.⁷¹ The other speech, dated the 27th of February, was to the peers descended from court nobles and aristocrats. The central purpose of this speech was to offer reassurance to those nobles and aristocrats of their status within a newly formed polity under the Constitution. While this speech may be read as appeasement, it is important for my consideration here as it also explains that the foundation of the nation-state should be grounded on transforming *kokumin* into ‘*shinmin*’ (臣民: the Emperor’s subject) through education.⁷² In these speeches, Itō, once again, endorsed education as a crucial medium to forge the teleology of *bunmei-kaika* and *fukoku-kyōhei* and the teleology of the individual and the collective. In so doing, Itō sought to justify the process of not only the etatization but now also the nationalisation of education, which Itō considered fundamental for transforming the new ‘modern’ polity into a specifically ‘Japanese’ and hence ‘national’ polity in order to actualise the mantra of ‘becoming modern yet being different,’ thus for delinking modernisation from Westernisation. More specifically, he explicated that although cultivating the academic abilities of the people through the acquisition and dissemination of Western knowledge was fundamental for the wealth and strength of the nation-state, the more they learned, the more vocal they would become on the current political condition and indulge themselves in polemical political debates. Thus, control – Itō here used the term ‘*shihai*’ (支配) – of education by the political centres was indispensable. Such control, according to Itō, should be

⁷¹ Itō Hirobumi, “Fuken-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* (Collection of Itō Hirobumi’s Speeches), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2011 [1889].

⁷² 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 *ibid.*

based on deliberations on what would qualify as an appropriate mode of ‘cultivating talents’ (“人材の陶冶”) for the state and for the form of national polity defined by the Constitution.

These changes in both legislative and discursive space indicate that, while encouraging learning, the government effectively expropriated the individual of much of what and how they could learn. However, it is important to recognise here that this propensity towards statist intervention was marked by ‘nesting’ control – gradation of the degree of statist control at various levels of education, which was enabled precisely by the internal differentiation of the educational system into the primary, secondary, and tertiary level. Put otherwise, the internal differentiation within the educational system enabled the articulation of two conceptually and institutionally distinctive realms within the system. One was the realm of *kyōiku*, whereby subjects – be they ‘basic subjects’ at the elementary level or ‘specialised subjects’ at the post-elementary level – were *taught* by the teacher with specific pedagogical designs *to guide and instruct* the student to acquire moral principles and factual understandings of the natural and human world. The other was the realm of *gakumon*, in which the individual, upon completing elementary and secondary education and basic training at the tertiary level, would pursue ‘specialised knowledge’ in principle *independently and autonomously* at the university. To be sure, with the clarity of hindsight, we know that the independent and autonomous pursuit of knowledge at the university was a qualified one. Recall here the first article of the Imperial University Decree of 1886, which clearly defined the purpose of the university as to expand the horizon of knowledge in arts and sciences that would meet the needs of the nation-state.⁷³ Nonetheless, as it seems to me, this conceptual and institutional

⁷³ Itō Hirobumi discussed this separation in his proposal for establishing institutions for secondary education (what we today call high schools), which was understood here as a transitional phase from the primary to the tertiary, or as a preparatory period for the tertiary. Itō, “Kanritsu hensoku chūgakkō shinsetsu ni kansuru kengi” (県立変則中学校に関する建議: Proposal for Establishing Governmental Middle Schools), in Komatsu Midori (ed.), *Itō-kō zenshū, Vol. 1* (Works of Itō Hirobumi), Tokyo: Itō-kō zenshū kankō-kai, 1927 [1882]: 178.

separation of *gakumon* from *kyōiku* effectively reconfigured a discursive space to justify the varying degrees of statist intervention into various educational institutions and simultaneously to argue all at once for the necessity of both moral education and knowledge education.

More specifically, the realm of *kyōiku* came to occupy the intersection of nation, politics, and pedagogy, as a space for dialectically reconfiguring the conundrum between, on the one hand, knowledge education that prefigured a necessary condition for the modern, and on the other hand, moral education that sought to reiterate national difference. Just as the example of *shūshin* in the revised Education Order illustrates, the realm of *kyōiku* had become a locus wherein some political concessions were to be made to integrate elements of moral education into knowledge education. Even in ‘On Education,’ the authors attempted to dialectically converge these two modes of education, demonstrating their willingness to accept some of Motoda’s claims at least ‘within the existing legislative framework’ (“其教則ハ略ホ現行ノ法ニ依”).⁷⁴ Of course, the debate on what kinds of moral education would be appropriate had never arrived at a concrete consensus. It resulted in the so-called ‘*tokuiku ronsō*’ (德育論争: the controversy over moral education).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Itō Hirobumi, “Kyōiku-gi.” We see here the influence of Lorenz von Stein and his theory of the state and education. Of course, Itō did not meet Stein in person until 1884, and the oldest recorded correspondence of Stein with the Japanese was the exchange between Fukuzawa Yukichi and Stein in 1882. However, Takii Kazuhiro’s detailed archival work at Lorenz-von-Stein-Institut für Verwaltungswissenschaften at Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel indicates that a certain connection between the Japanese and Stein was already established prior to Fukuzawa’s correspondence. Much earlier, Shimizu Shin made a similar observation that Stein had an immense influence on Itō’s political thought even prior to his trip to Europe. See Takii Kazuhiro, “Nihon ni okeru shutain mondai eno apurōchi” (An Approach to ‘Stein’s Problem’ in Japan), *Jinbungakuhō*, 77, 1996: 27-62; Shimizu Shin, *Doku-ō ni okeru Itō Hirobumi no kenpō torishirabe to Nihon kenpō* (Itō Hirobumi’s Constitutional Research in Germany and Austria and the Constitution of the Empire of Japan), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939: 332.

⁷⁵ For example, Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) attempted to integrate some western thoughts on morality and ethics into the Confucius moral teachings in his *Shōgaku shūshin-kun* (小学修身訓: The Principles of Elementary Moral Education) published in 1880, while Motoda Nagazane reiterated the Confucian moral and ethical principles in his *Yōgaku kōyō* (幼学綱要: Outline of Elementary Education) and *Kokkyō-ron* (国教論: Theory of State Religion) both published in 1882. Fukuzawa Yukichi, as an avid advocate of westernisation, wrote *Tokuiku ika* (德育如何: What is Moral Education?) in 1882, calling for replacing old moral teachings based on Confucianism with a new set of morality and ethics appropriate for the new ear. Katō Hiroyuki’s (1836-1916) proposal in his 1887 *Tokuiku hōhōron* (德育方法論: Methods of Moral Education) was controversial, in that it argued for moral education grounded on religiosity,

Nevertheless, the idea of education, especially at the primary and secondary levels, as the realm of dialectic conversion of knowledge education with moral education was materialised into various legislation in 1881, including *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-kokoro* (小学校教員心得: Guideline for Primary School Teachers), and *Shōgakkō-kyōin-hinkō-kentei-kisoku* (小学校教員品行検定規則: Regulation for Examining the Conduct of Primary School Teachers). And these legislations eventually paved the way for the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890. As Morikawa Terumichi observes, throughout the controversy over the Imperial Thoughts on Education and later collaboration between Motoda and Inoue Kowashi on the former's *Yōgaku kōyō* (幼学綱要: Outline of Elementary Education), *kyōiku* came to increasingly exhibit a tendency towards *kyōgaku*, a mode of teaching and learning based on moral indoctrination and cultural imposition.⁷⁶ And by the 1930s, *kyōgaku* was revived as the central principle of education at the primary and secondary levels and also notably at the tertiary level. For example, in 1935, the *Kyōgaku sasshin hyōgi-kai* (教学刷新評議会: the Bureau for Reforming Kyōgaku), the advisory body for the education minister, was established with the aim not only to transform primary and secondary education into the realm of moral and physical training for the war effort, but also to reposition higher education, especially

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* (德育鎮定論: Suppressing Controversy over Moral Education) in 1890.

⁷⁶ Morikawa, *Kyōiku chokugo e no michi*, 191-207.

the university, as the institution that embodied *kokutai* – and its specific moral doctrine and cultural presumptions – in its research and pedagogy.⁷⁷

In comparison to the realm of *kyōiku*, that of *gakumon* was designated as a locus whereby one would pursue, at their discretion, ‘specialised knowledge’ in their chosen field. At the onset, the realm of *gakumon* appears to be relatively autonomous, and the state seems to remain only functional in establishing and authorising the institutions of higher education. For instance, both the Education Order of 1879 and its revised version of 1880 merely defined the university as an

⁷⁷ A white paper published by the Bureau in 1936 argued that “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、教養アル指導的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タラシムベシ。[...] 前項ノ趣旨ヲ達成センガタメ、文科系統ノ学部ニ於テハ、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ク[...] 而シテコレガタメ必要ニ応ジ、各大学ニ於ケル学部・学科・講座・学科目等ニ互ツテ新設改廢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, the education of the student, and the institutional administration of the university must, therefore, conform to the spirit of *kokutai*. [...] In order to fulfil this purpose, those faculties in 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 kyōiku-seido-shi hen’san iin-kai (ed.), *Kindai nihon kyōiku-seido shiryō*, Vol. 14 (Historical Materials of Modern Japanese Education System, Vol. 14), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1964: 439-440. Subsequently, the first Konoe Cabinet (from 4th June 1937 to 5th January 1939) and the succeeding Hiranuma Cabinet (from 5th January 1939 to 30th August 1939) proposed the establishment of what they called ‘*nihon-gaku* (日本学)’ on the basis of this recommendation by the Bureau. Here, *nihon-gaku* should not be confused with ‘Japanese studies’, a post-war institutional category of fields of knowledge and multi-disciplinary enterprise predicated on Japan’s supposed cultural, historical, and linguistic coherence. Rather, *nihon-gaku* in the 1930s denotes the field of knowledge whose knowledge production is based on the instrumentalisation of ‘Western’ knowledge within the frame of reference predetermined by the ‘traditional Japanese culture,’ and whose knowledge would directly contribute to the materialisation of the political ideology of *Tōa shin-chitsujo* (東亜新秩序: the new order in East Asia). This blatant political encroachment led to the establishment of new chairs at imperial universities, including the chair in *nihon shisō-shi* (日本思想史講座: history of Japanese thought) at the Faculty of Letters, Tokyo Imperial University, *tōyō seiji-shisō-shi* (東洋政治史講座: history of East Asian political thought) in the Faculty of Law at Tokyo Imperial University, the chair in *nihon seishin-shi* (日本精神史講座: history of Japanese spirit) at the Faculty of Letters, Kyoto Imperial University, and the chair in *tōa keizai seiji* (東亜經濟政治講座: East Asian Economy) and the chair in *nihon keizai-gaku* (日本經濟学: Japanese Economy) in the Faculty of Economics at Kyoto Imperial University. For some retrospective accounts of those taught and studied in one of these chairs, see Maruyama Masao and Fukuda Kanichi (eds.), *Kikigaki: Nanbara Shigeru kaiko-roku* (Interviews with Nanbara Shigeru), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppan-kai, 1989: 236-258; Maruyama Masao, *Maruyama Masao shū*, Vol. 11 (Works of Maruyama Masao, Vol. 11), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996:158-169; Hiraishi Naoaki, “Seiji shisō” (Political Thought), in Karube Tadashi, Kuruzumi Makoto, Satō Hiroo, Sueki Fumihiko, and Tajiri Yūichi (eds.), *Nihon shisō-shi kōza Vol. 5: Hōhō* (History of Japanese Intellectual Thought, Vol.5: Methodology), Tokyo: Perikansha, 2015: 465-468.

institution for ‘specialised subjects’ (‘専門諸科’), including law, natural sciences, medicine, and literature, and so-called *senmon gakkō* (専門学校: special school for vocational and technical training) as an institution to teach ‘one specialised subject’ (‘専門一科’).⁷⁸ During the 1870s and early 1880s, these educational institutions seemed to have enjoyed a relative degree of autonomy in deciding what subjects to be taught and how they might be taught. As a result, a bricolage of subjects, ranging from French Law to Chinese classics, from various foreign languages and translations to German medicine, from American agricultural studies to economic theories and commerce, were brought together under the unifying term ‘specialised subjects.’ But, of course, as I have indicated elsewhere, this autonomy was qualified one. As an institution of the state, those educational institutions and their autonomy were *a priori* curtailed by specific socio-political demands of modernisation. The political centres had a particular understanding of what constituted ‘specialised subjects,’ as manifested, for instance, in the controversy over the Imperial Thoughts on Education I have previously discussed. Recall here Itō and Inoue’s emphasis on the utility and practicality of scientific and technological knowledge of the West. For them, and also for many others at the political centres, the acquisition and dissemination of Western knowledge were not merely for individuals to pursue their own interests and to succeed in their lives within a form of polity organised on the basis of modern constitutionalism. The political centres saw the learning

⁷⁸ Throughout the pre-war period, the university retained its prestige over other educational institutions. However, special schools for vocational and technical training, often private, constituted the central realm of higher education, effectively responding to the increasing demand for post-compulsory education. By 1945, the realm of higher education encompassed 56 normal schools, four higher normal schools, 33 high schools/preparatory schools for the university, 1,743 special schools, and 309 public vocational schools. And in the same year, the number of students at special schools amassed 845,000, with one-fourth of them being female. The number is staggering if we are to compare it to the number of students admitted to universities in 1945, which reached a little over 98,000. For details, see the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)’s education-related statistics since 1873 in the MEXT, *Gakusei hyakunen-shi: Shiryō-hen* (The Hundred Years of the Japanese Education System: Documents), Tokyo: Teikoku chihō gyōsei gakkai, 1981. The statistics were also available online at: https://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/others/detail/1318190.htm (Accessed 02/06/2021). Thus, Amano Ikuo aptly argues that these special schools were, in fact, the primary bearer of disseminating modern and Western knowledge. See Amano, *Daigaku no tanjō*, Vol.1, 246.

of Western scientific and technological knowledge as ultimately for individuals to understand their being and responsibility within the parameter of the nation-state, and to utilise this knowledge to contribute to the wealth and strength of the nation-state.⁷⁹ Thus, what qualified as a ‘specialised subject’ was *a priori* determined by the political centres: as a kind of subject, a kind of knowledge that would effectively materialise the teleology of *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku-kyōhei* and the teleology of the individual and the collective into a reality. Therefore, this emphasis on ‘specialised subjects’ was, in a sense, a discursive means through which the state intervened – albeit tacitly – into the realm of *gakumon*. In a similar vein, the idea of *gakumon* as ‘pursuing knowledge at one’s own discretion’ had a discursive function to conceal the statist imposition of the idea of ‘serious’ knowledge that corresponded to the necessity of the state. To this end, the ostensible autonomy of the realm of *gakumon* was, in fact, authorised autonomy. The etatization and nationalisation of education, as well as the discursive, conceptual, and institutional separation of the realm of *gakumon* from the realm of *kyōiku*, were precisely why Itō Hirobumi could speak of the government ‘control’ of education and simultaneously encourage individuals to follow their aspirations through the acquisition of knowledge. This is also why Mori Arinori could argue for education as a means of creating national subjects while simultaneously emphasising an individual’s free will to pursue knowledge of a given specialised subject.

⁷⁹ This point was further expanded, for instance, in the directive for the legislation of vocational schools drafted and published by Inoue Kowashi in 1893 and in Itō Hirobumi’s speech in Yukuhashi, Fukuoka prefecture, in 1899. See Inoue Kowashi, “Jitigyō hoshū gakkō kitei kōhu no kunrei” (実用補習学校規定の訓令: Directive for the Legislation of Vocational Schools), in Kyōiku-shi hensan-kai (ed.), *Meiji ikō kyōiku-seido hattatsu-shi [History of the Development of Education System Since Meiji]*, Tokyo: Ryūginsha, 1938: 684; Itō Hirobumi, “Yukuhashi kangeikai ni oite” (行橋歓迎会に於いて: At the Reception in Yukuhashi), in *Itō-kō enzetsu-shū, Vol.2* (Speeches of Itō Hirobumi, Vol.2), Tokyo: Nippōsha, 1899: 149-164.

3.3. The Idea of the University: An Institutionalised Form of *Gakumon*

If the conundrum of ‘becoming modern yet being different’ manifested itself in the realm of *kyōiku* as a tension between knowledge education and moral education, which was subsequently resolved through political discourses, this conundrum revealed itself in the realm of *gakumon* as a tension between, on the one hand, the imitation and appropriation of modern and Western knowledge and, on the other hand, the assertion of and desire to exert national difference in knowledge, which the political centres sought to resolve at the institution of *gakumon*, the university. Even before the establishment of the University of Tokyo in 1877 as the first ‘official’ institution of higher education, the trope of ‘*shin-no daigakkō*’ (真ノ大学校: the ‘real’ university) seems to have dominated political discussions – a trope that designated the university neither as a mere imitation of institutional model of universities in Euro-America nor as an institution that would simply appropriate and disseminate Western knowledge. For instance, Tanaka Fujumaro (1845-1909), then a high-ranking official at the Ministry of Education, spoke for the idea of ‘*shin-no daigakkō*’ when he proposed that the future orientation of the university should be something reflexive of quintessentially ‘Japanese’ characters.⁸⁰ Katō Hiroyuki, the first president of the University of Tokyo, was concerned with defending the university, against the political assessment that the institution was a mere mimicry of Western universities, as an institution of knowledge that embodied ‘Japanese’ characters.⁸¹ How can one equip oneself with Western knowledge without

⁸⁰ Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tūshi, Vol.1* (One Hundred Years of Tokyo University, General History, Vol.1), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku, 1987: 387-398.

⁸¹ See, for example, Katō Hiroyuki, “Gakuijuyo-shiki shukuji” (学位授与式祝辞: Commencement Speech), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikai, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1882]: 196-198. I will expand further on this idea of a ‘Japanese’ university in conjunction with the increasing prevalence towards the ‘national’ language in Chapter 7, pp. 536-547.

becoming the mere mimicry of the West? How can one preserve one's historical and cultural specificities – assuming, of course, that there is something to 'preserve' – when Western knowledge seems to negate the very foundation of such specificities? How can one alter pejorative images of Self that are imposed by the West – one that is almost the same but not quite, whose difference is the sign of inadequacy and inability – and become on par with the West in knowledge production?⁸² Is it really possible to treat Western knowledge as a mere object, an 'external form of civilisation,' and acquire it without necessarily internalising a 'spiritual component' that guarantees this knowledge? The inherent tension that marked modern knowledge formation in the realm of *gakumon* was, therefore, reflexive not merely of issues arising from the encounter between different epistemic traditions but also of the broader socio-political condition of the late 19th century – the complex entanglements of synchronic vision of modernity with diachronicity of histories. As we shall see in the following, Japan's attempt to institutionalise the realm of *gakumon* was, indeed, part and parcel of the broader project of 'becoming modern yet simultaneously different.' And through this attempt emerged a new meaning – or meanings – of *gakumon*, which, in turn, regulated the orientation of how one may understand the idea of the university, the idea of being a scholar, and the idea of learning and knowing.

⁸² This image of Japan as 'almost the same but not quite' was prevalent in some quarters of the European intellectual community during the 19th century. Basil Hall Chamberlain is an emblematic example here. He noted in 1890, "no efforts [...] can make the Europeanization [of Japan] complete [...] All the nations of the West have, broadly speaking, a common past, a common fund of ideas, from which everything that they have and everything that they are springs naturally, as part of a correlated whole. [...] Japan stands beyond this pale, because her past has been lived through under conditions altogether different." See Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Things Japanese: Being Notes on Various Subjects Connected with Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 [1890]. Chamberlain offered a similar judgement in his letter to Lafcadio Hearn in 1891. "I have myself gone through many phases of opinion [of the intellectual and moral worth of the Japanese], but the net result is that they appear to be far inferior to the European race – at once less tender, and less imaginative. Much of what strikes one as originality at first is only, so to say, a relative originality as compared with Europe; after a time one finds out either that the thing, whatever it may be, was borrowed from China, or else perhaps that, thought superficially pretty, it is not really worth so much as the corresponding thing in the West. See Chamberlain, *Letters from Basil Hall Chamberlain to Lafcadio Hearn*, Koizumi Kazuo (ed.), Tokyo: Hakuseidō, 1936 [1891]: 157. For such European Orientalist perception on Japan, see for example, Richard H. Minear, "Orientalism and the Study of Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 39:3, 1980: 507-571.

Central Questions for the Institutionalisation of the University

A plan to establish highly specialised institutions of knowledge, which conceptually encompassed both *kyōiku* and *gakumon* and institutionally separated from the primary and secondary educational institutions, preceded the promulgation of the Fundamental Code of Education in 1872, which for the first time defined the university as the locus of ‘lofty subjects’ (“高尚の諸学”). Already in 1868, an intention was formed among those in the new Meiji government to establish *daigakkō* (大学校). Though the name approximately means ‘the university,’ the intent of establishing *daigakkō* had little to do with the idea of the modern – and indeed Western – university. Instead, the plan was to revive, against the backdrop of *ōsei-fukko* (王政復古: the restoration of imperial rule), the ancient institution of *Daigaku-ryō* (大学寮) that was organised around curricula to teach the art of governing, hence that would be directly pressed into the service of the state by educating and producing government officials and civil servants.⁸³ While the pedagogy of this ancient institution was structured around the *Ritsuryō* system of ancient China and the Confucian tradition of learning and teaching, such pedagogy was no longer seen as adequate for the politico-social condition of the Meiji period. Therefore, for its proposed revival at the onset of the Meiji period,

⁸³ Though I have briefly discussed earlier the establishment of *daigaku-ryō* in the 7th century as a locus of a specific form of *gakumon*, for further reading on this ancient institution and its legacy, see, for example, 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.

the question was recentred around what qualified as appropriate contents of teaching and learning, which resulted in the fierce dispute between the tradition of *Kangaku* and that of *Kokugaku*.⁸⁴

By the following year, this plan to establish the university was significantly reshaped and reoriented towards that which we now call the university – an institution structured with various fields of knowledge. The proposed plan was to integrate three existing institutions into an all-embracing, comprehensive higher education institution. *Shōheizaka-gakumonjo* (昌平坂学問所), established by the Edo shogunate as its central institution for Confucian learning and *kyōgaku* education in 1790, was now restructured as *Daigaku-honkō* (大学本校) specialised in teaching and learning of *Kangaku* and *Kokugaku*. *Kaisei-gakkō* (開成学校), initially established in 1811 as *Bansho wage goyō* (蕃書和解御用), an official institution of the shogunate for translation and philological studies of Western texts, was renamed as *Daigaku-minamikō* (大学南校). And *Seiyō igakusho* (西洋医学所), established in 1859 also by the shogunate as a specialised institution for Western medicine, was renamed as *Daigaku-higashikō* (大学東校) and repositioned as a part of the proposed highly specialised educational institution.⁸⁵ Take, for instance, the notion of *kōshin* (貢進), which literary means ‘paying tribute’. This notion was endorsed in the 1860s both as a process of admission by recommendation and as a fundamental aim of education to cultivate and train individuals for the purpose of the state, which, in turn, marked a certain continuity of the Edo

⁸⁴ Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Nihon no daigaku* (The University in Japan), Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1943. To speculate, this exclusion of the Confucius tradition reflected the political concern for the secularisation of education. But, of course, teaching and learning at the ancient institution of *Daigaku-ryō* was heavily influenced by the Confucius tradition. For the influence of Confucianism on *daigaku-ryō*, see Hisaki Yukio, *Daigaku-ryō to kodai jukyō: Nihon Kodai kyōiku kenkyū* (Daigaku-ryō and Ancient Confucianism: Research on Ancient Japanese Education), Tokyo: Saimaru shuppankai, 1968.

⁸⁵ For a further exposition of these institutions, see Chapter 6, pp.456-459.

tributary politico-economic-social system into the Meiji educational system.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, by integrating different traditions of knowledge, including *Kangaku*, *Kokugaku*, and Western knowledge, into an all-embracing institution of knowledge, this institutional restructuring effectively articulated an idea of the university as that which reflected two competing political ideologies: on the one hand, the restoration of imperial rule, which foregrounded a desire to excavate ancient ‘traditions’ of political machination; and, on the other hand, civilisation and enlightenment, which necessitated the transformation of education into a field of statist exercise.

1870 marked another step towards the further specification of the idea of an institutionalised form of *gakumon*, the university, when the government forced the closure of *Daigaku-honkō*, the institutional locus for *Kangaku* and *Kokugaku*. The closure was, however, not necessarily because what was taught there came to be regarded as regressive or inadequate vis-à-vis Western knowledge taught at *Daigaku-minamikō* and *Daigaku-higashikō*. Instead, the decision was made primarily out of frustration on the part of the government at the never-ceasing intellectual dispute between scholars of *Kangaku* and those of *Kokugaku* within *Daigaku-honkō*.⁸⁷ This decision by the government, however impetuous it may seem, had some far-reaching consequences. Most notably, the institutionalisation of the university now revolved specifically around the concern for how to (re)structure what had been taught at *Daigaku-minamikō* and *Daigaku-higashikō* into formalised modes of inquiries, that is to say, into various scholarships of Western knowledge. As I read it, it was precisely in this instance that the institutionalisation of the university came to amount to the institutionalisation of Western knowledge. It was also precisely in this instance that

⁸⁶ Students for *Daigaku-honkō*, *Daigaku-minamikō*, and *Daigaku-higashikō* were selected and recommended by each *han* domain, and the number of students admitted to each of these institutions was determined on the basis of a quota system that reflected the varying sizes of *han* domains’ fief. See Amano, *Daigaku no tanjō*, Vol. 1, 20-21. On the continuing legacy of the Edo tributary system, see Karasawa Tomitarō, *Kōshin-sei: Bakumatu ishin-ki no erīto tachi, jinsei, unmei, shūkyō* (Recommended Students: The Elites of the Late Edo and Early Meiji, Their Lives, Destinies, and Religions), Tokyo: Gyōsei, 1990.

⁸⁷ Amano, *Daigaku no tanjō*, Vol. 1, 20-21.

imitation and appropriation of Western knowledge came to be understood as – at least for the time being – an obvious and necessary, if not desirable, mode of learning and teaching.

Further still, this political reorientation of the process of institutionalisation engendered a new mode of organising various fields of knowledge into institutional categories. Previously, boundaries were enacted on the basis of geographical categories: *Kangaku* for China, *Kokugaku* for the national, thus Japan, and Western learning for the West. These fields of knowledge were, therefore, divided and organised through area-oriented structuration. Now that, with the closure of *Daigaku-honkō*, *Kangaku* and *Kokugaku* had lost their footing in the process of institutionalisation of the university, and that the concern had been redirected towards the institutionalisation of Western knowledge, fields of knowledge came to be reorganised on the basis of that which we may loosely define ‘disciplines.’ At the time of 1870, five fields of knowledge with various sub-fields were proposed: *hōka* (法科: studies of constitutions, civil codes, criminal laws, commercial laws, international laws and treaties), *rika* (理科: studies of physics, astronomy, geology, mineralogy, zoology, biology, chemistry, mathematics, engineering); *ika* (医科: medicine); *bunka* (文科: studies of history, rhetoric and philology, metaphysics of Chinese philosophy); and *kyōka* (教科: studies of theology, morality and ethics).⁸⁸ These fields of knowledge, reorganised through the enactment of new boundaries of scholarships, were that which foregrounded what the Fundamental Code of Education later defined as ‘lofty subjects’ or the Education Order designated as ‘specialised subjects.’⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi hensyū-iinkai (ed.), *Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi: Tsūshi, Vol.*, 139-140.

⁸⁹ To reiterate my earlier observation here, the Fundamental Code of Education of 1872 stipulated the university as the institutional locus specifically for ‘lofty subjects’ including *rigaku* (理学: physics and/or philosophy), *kagaku* (科学: science), *hōgaku* (法学: law), *igaku* (医学: medicine), and *sūrigaku* (数理学: mathematics). These categories of

However, for the realm of *gakumon* with these specialised subjects to be instituted, for the university to be an institution of modern nation-state, further qualifications had to be entered. What was the appropriate function of the university under the condition of modernity dictated by the 19th-century nation-form? In what ways could the assertion of national difference be inserted in the institution of highly specialised learning to disseminate Western knowledge? How could these fields of knowledge be (re)positioned in relation to broader socio-political concerns of late 19th and early 20th century Japan? Or put it rather in abstract terms, how can what Derrida defined as ‘university authority in a situation of heteronomy’ be established in the context of Japan?⁹⁰ Indeed, these were the questions central not only for determining the purpose, function, and role of the university as an institution of the nation-state but also for encoding specific meanings to the idea of *gakumon* in its institutionalised form.

The Function of the University, the Scope of Knowledge

The discussion on the university ensued among Kawashima Atsushi (1847-1911), Katō Hiroyuki, Kuki Ryūichi (1852-1931), and Fukuoka Takachika (1835-1919) was perhaps the most emblematic discursive address of these questions. Kawashima, a diplomat by profession and a keen learner of Lorenz von Stein’s vision of political economy by circumstance,⁹¹ submitted a

knowledge were later revised in the Education Order of 1879, which listed *hōgaku*, *rigaku*, *igaku* and *bungaku* (文学: literature) as the main fields of knowledge at the university.

⁹⁰ Derrida, “Mochlos: Eyes of the University,” 85-86.

⁹¹ Kawashima encountered ‘Western’ theories of political economy as early as in 1871 when, after years of *Kangaku* learning at the school of Kawata Ōkō (1830-1896), he travelled to Europe and began his study under Stein. Upon completing his study in Europe, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1874 and in the same year was appointed to work at the Japanese Embassy in Germany. Subsequently, he was transferred to the embassy in Russia, then in Austria, before coming back to Japan in 1881. See Hate Ikuhiko, *Nihon kin-gendai jinbutsu rireki jiten* (Central Figures of Modern and Contemporary Japan), Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 2002.

proposal in January 1882, entitled ‘*Hyakuse no chi wa gakusei o kaisei shite ikkoku no shisō o hitotsu ni suruni shikasaru 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), to Fukuoka, then *monbukyō* (文部卿: the chief of the Ministry of Education).⁹²

Though the text is considered one of the first comprehensive articulations of the idea of the university with a profound implication for subsequent discussions, it is rather difficult to determine the actual intention of Kawashima and the purpose of the proposal.⁹³ At least, we can infer that the text is reflexive of two significant political events of the late 1870s and early 1880s, the period which Amano Ikuo characterises as “the season of politics.”⁹⁴ The first such event was, of course, *Jiyū minken undō* (自由民権運動: Liberty and Civil Rights Movement), which undoubtedly conditioned the socio-political climate of the period. What is worth noting here is the fact that the height of this movement witnessed the popularisation and oversaturation of private special schools that catered specifically for the widespread interest in French law and French enlightenment thinking, which advocated many classically liberal reforms and which, therefore, was considered reflexive of the general demands of the Liberty and Civil Rights Movement. This interest in French law, in fact, marked a stark contrast to the then Anglo-American-oriented curriculum at the University of Tokyo, the only ‘official’ university at that time authorised by the state as an institution of *gakumon*. To this end, the recognition of this disparity between, on the one hand, the

⁹² The original document with comments by Katō, Kuki and 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.

⁹³ Terasaki Masao emphasises the significance of the text in Terasaki Masao, “Teikoku daigaku keisei-ki no daigaku-kan” (Perceptions on the University during the Formative Period of Imperial Universities), in Terasaki Masao, Satō Hideo, Matsuno Kenji, Miyazawa Yasuto, Yamauchi Tarō, *Gakkō-kan no shiteki kenkyū* (Historical Study of Perceptions on Educational Institutions), Tokyo: Noma kyōiku kenkyūjo, 1972: 190 [184-265].

⁹⁴ Amano, *Daigaku no tanjō*, Vol. 1, 78.

societal interests and demands and, on the other hand, what was taught at the university urged those at the political centres, including Kawashima, to reconsider the role and function of the university as an authorised institution of the state. The second significant event was the political crisis of 1881, known as ‘*Meiji jūyonen no seihen*’ (明治十四年の政変).). This political crisis had two contradictory consequences. On the one hand, it resulted in Itō Hirobumi consolidating his political power as a leading figure of political modernisation. Since, at the time of Kawashima’s proposal, Itō was planning his European tour as part of the preparation for drafting the Meiji Constitution, and since Kawashima was to accompany Itō to Europe, there was probably a particular personal interest on the part of Kawashima to instil in the mind of Itō a kind of teleology of the state and the university that Stein envisioned. On the other hand, however, the political crisis also saw, as its consequence, a new challenge to the primacy of the University of Tokyo and its curriculum. Ōkuma Shigenobu, who was expelled from the Diet as a result of the crisis, established *Tōkyō senmon gakkō* (東京専門学校), which later became Waseda University. Although Ōkuma’s venture was officially recognised at that time as a private law school, that is, *hōritsu senmon gakkō* (法律専門学校), his intention was, in fact, to offer students opportunities to study political and economic theories along with law, and to “eventually turn [the school] into a university, and to establish a truly independent ‘*gakumon*’ specific to Japan.”⁹⁵ Woven into the broader socio-political climate of the Liberty and Civil Rights Movement, an attempt such as Ōkuma’s constituted a direct challenge to the *raison d’être* of the University of Tokyo as the

⁹⁵ This intention was expressed at the inauguration ceremony by Ono Azusa, with whom Ōkuma planned and established *Tōkyō senmon gakkō*. See Waseda daigaku daigaku-shi hensyūjo (ed.), *Waseda daigaku hyakunen-shi, Vol.1* (Waseda University 100 Year Chronicle, Vol.1), Tokyo: Waseda daigaku daigaku-shi hensyūjo, 1982: 462. Further still, Ōkuma successfully convinced seven graduates of the University of Tokyo, including Takata Sanae (1860-1938) and Amano Tameyuki (1861-1938), to teach at *Tōkyō senmon gakkō*, which was considered by the political centres explicitly ‘anti-government’.

‘official,’ state institution of knowledge to engage with matters of *gakumon*, at least in theory, independently and autonomously.

Thus, as I read it, the significance of Kawashima’s proposal lies in the fact that it was not merely one of the earliest enunciations of the idea of the university; but also, and more importantly, it was one of the first explicit enunciations to bind the institutionalised locus of *gakumon* with the state. Central to Kawashima’s concern was to transform the university, which he thought had been a mere site of imitating and appropriating Western knowledge, into something that would reflect the history and a form of polity unique to Japan. Although responses from Katō, Kuki, and Fukuoka discredited some of the observations Kawashima made, a general consensus was formed through their exchanges that the university had to be instituted as an intermediate institution that embodied the modern and sovereign character of the state and, simultaneously, the purported historical and cultural unity of the nation.

More to the point, Kawashima began his observation by reiterating the German idealist’s hermeneutic of the nation and the university with Stein’s view of the state. As Kawashima argued, the progress of the nation-state was dependent upon its educational system. All advanced and stable countries of the West, as he observed, had developed and instituted the university as the apex of their educational system and as a locus of *Bildung* – a developmental process through which individuals were transformed into national subjects.⁹⁶ Thus, he wrote, “any country concerned with its long-term stability must establish the university and reform its educational system, so as to consolidate a sense of nation and to inculcate within the people such a sense of

⁹⁶ For the German idealist’s discourse of *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung*, see my discussion in Chapter 2, pp.125-129.

the collective.”⁹⁷ For Kawashima, the university ought to be the site that would produce not only servants of the state but also subjects of the nation-state who embodied the purported historical and cultural unity of the collective community. And the knowledge acquisition and dissemination at the university had to be that which would not only identify and affirm such unity but also give that unity an organic life. In other words, the purported historical and cultural uniqueness of Japan should not be abandoned vis-à-vis predilection towards things Western. Nor could such historical and cultural unity be imposed upon a void. Rather, it had to be consciously recuperated, preserved, internalised, and embodied by the people. Thus, Kawashima bemoaned the changes brought by modernisation to the realm of *gakumon*, stating that,

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
[...] 中学以上ハ專ラ英仏ノ語学ト其学課ヲ教授スルモノニシテ大学ノ専門
学科ハ一モ自国ノ学科無ク文学政治經濟法律等ノ如キ都テ英仏ノ両学ヲ以
テ課目ヲ定メ教員ハ英仏人多キニ居レリ

(Now the old customs have been wiped out, and in their stead emerged a predilection towards treating the Western system, things, and scholarships as the desirable model. [...] Tertiary education primarily focuses on learning English and French languages, as well as on acquiring knowledge about these nations. There are no specialised courses at the university that teach about our country; literature, political science, economics, laws – all these subjects are in essence equated to English and French studies taught by instructors from England and France.)⁹⁸

In his view, nothing taught at the university reflected Japan's historical and cultural processes. And fields of knowledge, such as literature, political economy, and law, were mere imitations and

⁹⁷ My translation. The original text reads, “百世ノ治安ヲ慮ル国ハ必ス大学ヲ興シ学制ヲ改正シ以テ一國子弟ノ思想ヲ一ニス。” See Kawashima, “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。”

⁹⁸ Ibid.

appropriations of knowledge reflexive of the specificities of English and French histories and cultures.

To illustrate further the futility of imitation and appropriation, Kawashima then referred to his correspondence with Stein, in which Stein emphasised the importance of national particularities while refuting a sense of universality manifested by French enlightenment thinking. According to Kawashima, Stein described Japan as a country that had discarded, with blind enthusiasm, its historically specific customs in favour of socio-political reorganisation of the country based on things Western, but that had not yet succeeded in such an endeavour.⁹⁹ Accordingly, Japan was at a critical juncture, such that, as Stein admonished, a careful reconsideration and reorientation of its future progress was absolutely necessary. Stein even went so far as to argue that the proliferation of ‘foreign’ notions, especially those of French civil rights, which were, in fact, particular historical and cultural products but promoted in the fold of universality, would be ruinous, just as providing children, who did not know how to use weapons, with guns would lead to dire consequences.¹⁰⁰ To be sure, Stein’s reference to and his judgement on the French notion of civil rights was in and of itself a historical product. In general terms, it reflected, first of all, the shift in German intellectual discourse from the initial qualified approval of the French Revolution to the eventual condemnation. Second, it also reflected the German humanist scholarship exemplified by Fichte’s culturalist tradition that emphasised the linguistic-cultural nexus for grounding the German nation. At the same time, Stein’s reference to and judgement on the French civil rights was also reflexive of his own desire to legitimate the German ethnic (national) state as a political manifestation of

⁹⁹ Ibid. The original text reads “貴国ハ歴世固有習慣ヲ捨テ新タニ換フルニ他邦ノ制度文物ヲ以テシ一国之規矩ヲ立テント欲シ未タ成シ得サル者。”

¹⁰⁰ According to Kawashima, Stein wrote “自国ノ史書典故ニ疎ニシテ他国ノ典章文学ヲ研究スルトキハ事ヲ實際ノ邦政ニ求メス反テ空理ニ感触シ嘗テ仏国ニ於ル如キ激烈ナル民権ヲ主張シ宛モ兒童ニ銃器ヲ授ルト同シ。” See *ibid.*

ethnic unity vis-à-vis post-revolutionary French republican state that was organised around the notion of universal humanity that cut across national – that is, ethnically defined national – boundaries.¹⁰¹ Despite the historicity encoded in Stein’s observation, Kawashima saw it applicable to the contemporary condition of Japanese politics and society. Hence his emphasis that impetuous and uncritical imitation and appropriation of Western knowledge at the Japanese university would do more harm than good to the progress and strength of Japan, a modern yet historico-culturally specific nation-state.

Such critique of imitation and appropriation reminds us of Motoda Nagazane’s assessment, through which he necessitated moral education based on the ideo-political project of *kyōgaku*. And perhaps, the temptation is to read Kawashima’s observation as an attempt to transgress, if you like, the conceptual boundaries between *kyōiku* and *gakumon* by appropriating the dialectic of moral education and knowledge education at the level of primary and secondary education to the level of higher education. However, Kawashima was acutely aware that the question ought not to be articulated in terms of ‘either/or’: either the traditional or the Western, either moral education or knowledge education, either the national or the foreign. Rather, the question was of the ways in which the national might be integrated into the fields of scientific knowledge by establishing the synthesis of the individual and the state institution, teaching and research, process and product of knowledge production. Put otherwise, the question was of how to recuperate and preserve the

¹⁰¹ For the shift in German intellectual discourse, see T.C.W. Blanning, “The French Revolution and the Modernization of Germany,” *Central European History*, 22:2, 1989:109-129; 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. On Fichte’s culturalist tradition, see, for instance, Anthony J. La Vopa, “The Revolutionary Moment: Fichte and the French Revolution,” *Central European History*, 22:2, 1989: 130-159; David James, *Fichte’s Republic: Idealism, History and Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. For Stein’s politico-social theory and its broader implications, see 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.

historical and cultural uniqueness of Japan – assuming that such existed – within the epistemic frame of modern knowledge.

Material evidence is scarce to determine the extent of circulation of this Kawashima’s proposal. At least, given the commentaries written in the margin of the original document, we can reasonably assume that Fukuoka took the proposal seriously enough to ask Katō, then the first president of the University of Tokyo, and Kuki, then the undersecretary at the Ministry of Education, for their opinion. However, the response from Katō and Kuki was somewhat limited. It merely negated Kawashima’s observation that the university – the University of Tokyo, more precisely – did not reflect the historical and cultural processes of Japan, by pointing to the existence of *Wakan bungaku-ka* (和漢文学科: Department of Japanese and Chinese Literature), which was established in April 1877 as an institutional locus within the university for the studies of Japanese and Chinese literature, when *Tōkyō kaisei gakkō* (東京開成学校: formerly *Daigaku-minamikō*) and *Tōkyō igaku gakkō* (東京医学学校: formerly *Daigaku-higashikō*) were restructured as the University of Tokyo.¹⁰² And, indeed, at the time of its inauguration, there was also a plan to subsequently expand *Wakan bungaku-ka* with sub-fields of *Koten kōshū-ka* (古典講習科) specialised in ‘national’ classic literature (*kokubun*: 国文) and *Koten kōshū-ka otsu-bu* (古典講習科乙部) dedicated to the studies of Chinese classic literature.¹⁰³

Though the scope of Katō and Kuki’s response was limited, their intention can be specified, as I will specify here, by probing the purpose of establishing such an institutional category as ‘*Wakan*

¹⁰² Erwin von Bälz famously wrote on the establishment of the University of Tokyo in 1877, stating that “nothing has changed except the name.” See Erwin von Bälz, *Berutsu no nikki Vol. 1* (Diary of Erwin von Bälz, Vol.1), Toku Bälz (ed.), Suganuma Ryūtarō (trans.), Tokyo: Iwanami bunko, 1979: 68.

¹⁰³ This plan was materialised first in 1882 with the establishment of *Koten kōshū-ka* and in 1883 with the establishment of *Koten kōshū-ka otsu-bu*. See Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi hensyū-iinkai (ed.), *Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi: Tsūshi, Vol.1*, 452.

bungaku-ka.' A few months after its inauguration in 1877, Katō wrote to the Ministry of Education, explaining the purpose and scope of this new institutionalised field of knowledge.

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蓼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

(*Wakan bungaku-ka* established at the Faculty of Letters is like a star at dawn, as it focuses on that in which people are losing their interest. It must be a permanent feature of the university. Not only that, if those self-proclaimed 'Japanese' scholars are only informed in English literature and have little knowledge about national literature, how can they call themselves specialists in literature? Of course, one cannot become a valuable individual for the nation-state if he studies only Japanese and Chinese literature, and the students at *Wakan bungaku-ka* must also learn English literature, philosophy, and European history.)¹⁰⁴

Here, we see that Katō envisioned a twofold purpose of establishing *Wakan bungaku-ka*. The first was to cultivate 'Japanese' scholars who were competent in reading and understanding Japanese and Chinese literature – the purported repository of the historical and cultural uniqueness of Japan – which, of course, could not be achieved through the curriculum focused on Western literature and taught in Western languages. Those who equipped themselves only with Western knowledge could not be regarded as 'Japanese' scholars. However, Katō also understood that the kind of talent (人材: *jinzai*) necessary for the state was those who equipped themselves with holistic knowledge, encompassing not only 'national' but also Western literature, philosophy, and histories. Thus, the second purpose of establishing *Wakan bungaku-ka* was to demonstrate that the university as a state

¹⁰⁴ Tōkyō teikoku daigaku (ed.), *Tōkyō teikoku daigaku gojū-nen-shi, Vol.1* (Fifty Years of Tokyo Imperial University, Vol.1), Tokyo: Tōkyō teikoku daigaku, 1932: 686-687.

institution of knowledge was not a locus for mere imitation and appropriation of Western knowledge; rather, the scope of ‘appropriate’ university education must encompass, as it came to encompass with *Wakan bungaku-ka*, both the learning of historical and cultural specificities of Japan and the learning of Western knowledge.

Understandably, it is tempting to read the first purpose of establishing *Wakan bungaku-ka* as being reflexive of traditionalist and nationalist political ideologies. And yet, Katō’s concern for cultivating ‘Japanese’ scholars well exceeded the narrow confines of such ideologies. In his inquiry to the Ministry of Education written in 1881, he justified the necessity of establishing *Koten kōshū-ka*, arguing that it was absolutely essential to preserve the scholarly tradition of Japanese classics by promoting it to the rank of an institutional category of knowledge and by educating the next generations of scholars; otherwise, the entire body of knowledge on Japanese classics would be lost.¹⁰⁵ As I read it, such enunciation expresses a broader concern about another critical role of the university. As I have discussed elsewhere in this chapter, those at the political and intellectual centres saw the university as the locus to produce those individuals necessary for the state. Still, at the same time, as Katō suggested here, the university was also to (re)produce the producer of a specific body of knowledge.

Konakamura Kiyonori (1822-1895), then a professor of *Wakan bungaku-ka*, later recalled this concern of Katō in his speech at the inauguration ceremony of *Koten kōshū-ka* in 1882.

此れ（古典講習科）は前総理加藤君の発意で、現今国学者は先輩の者が多く若い人は之を学ぶ者もありませぬから今の内其学者を仕立てて置かぬと終には種切れになるだらうとの趣意からして建てられました者で [...]

(The establishment of *Koten kōshū-ka* was initiated by the former president of the university, Prof. Katō Hiroyuki. He was concerned with the fact that only a few students would pursue education and training in the *Kokugaku* tradition and that

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 731.

without cultivating a new generation of *Kokugaku* scholars, this body of knowledge would eventually be lost [...])¹⁰⁶

Then, the establishment of *Wakan bungaku-ka* was, in part, an attempt to preserve a body of knowledge on Japanese classics, when other fields of knowledge had been established and institutionalised as loci for appropriating Western knowledge and were becoming increasingly prevalent. In other words, Katō recognised here the necessity of reorganising fields of knowledge, both what was considered ‘traditional’ and ‘Western’, within an institutional space, as institutional categories. In this instance, we begin to see an idea of the university not merely as an ideological arm of the state that would produce and disseminate scientific and technological knowledge of the West considered necessary for modernising changes; but also as a site of research and education that encompassed various fields of knowledge, as a site to preserve bodies of knowledge by reproducing the producer of knowledge.

Then, Katō and Kuki’s response to Kawashima – their emphasis on *Wakan bungaku-ka* – can be read, as I read it here, as an enunciation of what they considered the appropriate scope of knowledge production and dissemination at the university. Insofar as the modernising changes of the late 19th century were notated by the concern of ‘becoming modern and yet being different,’ the ‘appropriate’ scope of knowledge must also reflect such concern. For Katō and Kuki, what qualified as ‘appropriate’ encompassed not only those knowledges that were said to have long sustained the ‘civilisations’ of the West, but also those knowledges that addressed the historically and culturally specific characters of Japan. To this end, their response was not necessarily a repudiation of Kawashima’s claim for the national. But it was a specification of what it actually meant to be modern and simultaneously different in the field of knowledge, that is to say, what it

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 732.

actually meant for the university to be an institution reflexive of the synchronicity and diachronicity of modernising changes. This point was expressed and reiterated more explicitly by Fukuoka's comment on Kawashima's proposal. Fukuoka noted,

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压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

(The necessary qualities of research and education at the university are as follows: separate the subject from the object; clarify the cause and effect; never fall into the pitfall of empty theories. If it is not a rarefied scholarly pursuit of the truth based on exhaustive research, how can this be a university education? How can this be the apex of education? University education is different from universal education. Some critics propose, just like the Tokugawa clan did, to follow the political strategy derived from the Ming dynasty and to revive Neo-Confucianism as the ground to structure and oversee the university. However, I wonder about the efficacy of such a proposal. I wonder if the Neo-Confucian tradition, in fact, reflects the necessary qualities of research and education at the university. [...] I believe Prof. Stein has succinctly made the point, which I wholeheartedly admire.)¹⁰⁷

By reiterating the distinction between, on the one hand, research and education at the university and, on the other hand, universal, mass education, Fukuoka clearly expresses what he, as a government official, expects of the university. The university shall not be an institutional locus to reintroduce the Neo-Confucian political ideology, and its mode of learning revolves around the attainment of moral and ethical conclusions. Research and education at the university must be

¹⁰⁷ Kawashima, “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.”

regulated, instead, by a set of premises that grounds knowledge: the separation of the subject and the object, identification of causes and effects, and empirically grounded research. Therefore, the fundamental purpose of the university is to pursue truth based on those premises.

From Institutional Concerns to Epistemic Concerns

The significance of this discussion on Kawashima's proposal lies in its efficacy to offer some answers, if not solutions, to the fundamental questions about the institutionalised form of *gakumon*: its function under the condition of modernity dictated by the 19th-century nation-form; ways of asserting national difference in knowledge; and, modes of reorganising various fields of knowledge. Put plainly, Kawashima's proposal had foregrounded a basic presumption for subsequent discussions on the university – that learning and teaching at the university, the apex of the modern educational system, must be grounded on the historical, cultural, and intellectual landscape of the nation-state. And it was upon this presumption that the university, as an institution of the nation-state, became a locus of research and learning to acquire and disseminate knowledge instrumental for the temporal process of becoming and being, that is to say, the progressive process of the specifically 'Japanese' nation-state.

So understood, it is not at all surprising that the Imperial University Order of 1886 blatantly rendered the university an arm of the state, by stating in its first clause that the purpose of the imperial university was to satisfy the needs of the state.¹⁰⁸ And this legislative grammar was

¹⁰⁸ The original text of the clause reads, “帝国大学ハ国家ノ須要ニ応スル學術技芸ヲ教授シ及其蘊奥ヲ攷究スルヲ以テ目的トス。” The full text of the order is available on the website of the MEXT. https://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/others/detail/1318050.htm (Accessed 11/10/2020).

reiterated most demonstratively by Mori Arinori during his tenure as the education minister. For example, as recounted by Kimura Tadashi, Mori claimed that “when teaching at the imperial university, and if one has to choose between one’s academic interests and the needs of the state, no doubt, the latter should be the priority.”¹⁰⁹ In a similar vein, *Yūbinhōchi* newspaper reported, on 8th February 1889, a speech Mori spontaneously gave in front of the students of the imperial university in Tokyo.

文部省では大学を非常に貴んで居る[...]文部省は決して大学を子児視しては居らん。此より政府が何が故に大学を置くかと云ふ事を一言申そう [...] 政府は国家の公利の為に大学を置くのじや、其職員や学生一個人の為に置かん [...] 故に大学で学問の教へ様も又学び様も共に国家の為めと云ふ事を忘るる如き事があらば即ち日本政府の希望に反するものである。
(The Ministry of Education very much values the university. [...] The Ministry does not regard the university with hostility at all. Let me tell you why the government has decided to establish the university. [...] It is for the public good. It is not for individual members of the staff and the student. [...] What we, the government, wish is that you will never forget that *gakumon*, both teaching and learning, is for the state.)¹¹⁰

In reiterating the purpose of the imperial university defined in the Imperial University Order, Mori reportedly emphasised that learning and teaching were not for individual intellectual satisfaction but ultimately for the state. Then, he even went so far as to claim that to forget this primary function of learning and teaching at the university was to oppose the aspiration of the government, hence that of the state.¹¹¹ Of course, within the political centres, there were much more nuanced opinions

¹⁰⁹ Kimura Tadashi, *Mori sensei den* (Biography of Mori Arinori), Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1932: 142-143.

¹¹⁰ *Yūbinhōchi*, 8th February, 1889, evening edition.

¹¹¹ This seems to contradict, to a certain extent, how he described the realm of *gakumon* in his 1887 speech I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter, whereby he emphasised the individual will to pursue knowledge of specialised subjects. Today’s historical scholarship on education tends to interpret this difference as a manifestation of Mori’s ideological shift from liberalism to nationalism. Sonoda Hidehiro problematises such juxtaposition by recounting how these two opposing ideologies co-existed in Mori’s thoughts as the education minister. See Sonoda, *Seiyō-ka no kōzō*:

about the university expressed, for example, by Inoue Kowashi.¹¹² Nevertheless, the presumption that emerged through the discussion on Kawashima's proposal in 1882 seems to have a lasting influence on the realm of *gakumon* in its institutional manifestation.

As I sought to demonstrate throughout this chapter, modernising changes in the realm of education were both synchronic and diachronic. In synchronic terms, the realm of education was increasingly bent towards the nation-state and became a field of statist activities. More specifically, education was repositioned as an indispensable locus for actualising two guiding teleologies of the Meiji state: the teleology of *bunmei kaika* and *hukoku-kyōhei*, and the teleology of the individual and the collective. And yet, in diachronic terms, the concern for how these teleologies may be actualised in the realm of education was marked by the tension between the propensity towards Western knowledge and the assertion of national difference in knowledge. To this end, the conceptual and institutional separation of the realm of *gakumon* and the realm of *kyōiku* was a crucial discursive manoeuvre for dialectically resolving the tension between 'becoming modern' and 'being different.' In the realm of *kyōiku*, the tension was transubstantiated into and subsequently resolved by the synthesis of moral education and knowledge education. In the realm of *gakumon*, the tension was reconfigured as an oscillation between Western knowledge and the bodies of knowledge that specifically represented Japan's historical and cultural particularities, which later resolved by establishing institutional categories at the university that encompassed both Western scholarships and scholarships focused on things 'Japanese.'

Korofune, bushi, kokka (The Structure of Westernisation: Black Ships, Samurai Warriors, the Nation State), Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 1995: 213-326.

¹¹² Inoue proposed to expand the scope of educational institutions to be qualified as 'universities' and to include some private schools as tertiary institutions qualified as universities, suggesting that the university of the state (imperial universities) were not the only institutions at the apex of the educational system. Inoue Kowashi, "Daigakuron," quoted in Terasaki, "Teikoku daigaku keisei-ki no daigaku-kan," 205, 206.

And yet, precisely because of their focus on the ‘institutionalised’ form of *gakumon* and the etatization as well as the nationalisation of the realm of knowledge acquisition, production, and dissemination, a few things were left unsaid during the discussion on Kawashima’s proposal specifically, and in political discourses of the early years of Meiji more generally. Put simply, the discussion on Kawashima’s proposal had brought to the fore much more fundamental, epistemological – and therefore, by extension, methodological – questions. Take, for instance, Fukuoka’s reference to ‘truth’ (真理). What exactly does he mean by ‘truth’? How is this truth that Fukuoka enunciates be verified as such? How can one have recourse to such truth?

Though Fukuoka did not offer any specific answers to these questions, enunciation, we may be able to draw some inferences here vis-à-vis the context of his enunciation. The notion of truth, and the notion that the pursuit of knowledge equates to the pursuit of truth, were, in fact, also central to what Fukuoka despised as ‘the traditional,’ that is, the Confucian tradition of learning – and, for that matter, to many other ‘old’ traditions that offered the multitude of worldviews including Buddhism and Christianity. Within the Confucian tradition, the ontological truth about things, that is, the foundation of each and every thing, was understood as *a priori* determined by what was called ‘*ri*’ (理: principle). And to learn through textual engagement was equated to pursuing *ri*, hence *kyūri* (窮理: the pursuit of principle), which was said to manifest itself in the words of the Sages. The entanglement of truth and knowledge – or, *ri* and knowledge – that Fukuoka spoke of was not at all a novel discursive frame for verifying the seriousness of knowledge. While Fukuoka was quite sceptical of instituting the university on the basis of the Confucian tradition, questioning the adequacy, especially of Neo-Confucianism and its mode of learning, on a fundamental level, his enunciation of *gakumon* and the (Neo-)Confucian framing of learning share a similar discursive

structure to legitimise practices and products of a knowledge tradition as ‘serious’ and ‘valid.’¹¹³

In the next chapter, I seek to address this prevailing discursive structure – the entanglement of truth and knowledge, *ri* and knowledge – to validate a knowledge tradition and consider the ways in which this *ri*-knowledge structuration was instrumentalised both by the Confucian scholars of Meiji such as Nakamura Masanao and Sakatani Rouro, and by the advocate of Western knowledge including Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nishi Amane, to validate Western knowledge and to determine a specific location of this knowledge within the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape.

¹¹³ At this juncture, I venture to suggest that the (Neo-)Confucian enunciation of the relation of knowledge to truth is, on a somewhat fundamental level, not so different from European idealist philosophy, such as the Kantian relationship of Reason to the truth. In both cases, the absolute truth inherent in nature is postulated, and human reason is presumed as the method to arrive at the truth. Modern knowledge of the 19th century deviates from these tenets, first by claiming that there may not always be fixed truth and that pure reason alone cannot enable us to arrive at the truth, and second by grounding the validity of knowledge tradition, not on the entanglement of truth and knowledge, but on the a priori determined disenchanted position of the knower, the subject, that is set up against the world of objects. The following chapters will expand further on these points.

Chapter 4.

A Liminal Semantic Space: Translating ‘*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 vassal, it will fall under the jurisdiction of our thinking faculties and, thereby, ultimately function as the utility of our thinking faculties.

Nishi Amane²

From the onset of their encounter with the West, the Japanese were keenly aware of the exoticism of Western knowledge. Yet, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this knowledge became, by the end of the 19th century, *the* knowledge that underpinned and enabled – or, at least, thought as

¹ The original Japanese 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), *Meiroku zasshi*, 3, 1874: 13 [13-16]. The original text is available online at: <https://dglb01.ninjal.ac.jp/ninjaldb/bunken.php?title=meirokuzasshi> (20.01.2022).

² The original Japanese 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*, Vol. 34: Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki (Japanese Classics, Vol. 34: Nishi Amane and Katō Hiroyuki), Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1984 [1874]: 201.

such – effective social reorganisation, statecraft, as well as sophisticated technologies of the modern. Its parochialism was somehow erased. And its self-proclaimed superiority and purported universality were reified by that erasure. In general, I agree with the claim that the Japanese elites accepted and embraced a knowledge tradition that was hitherto foreign. But my agreement is a qualified one. Those Japanese elites did not seek to turn Japan into a mirror image of the West. Nor did they accept the European claim of its superiority in all areas of political, economic, social, and intellectual life. In a similar vein, they did not impose Western knowledge in a vacuum. Nor did they assert at once Western knowledge as the universal grammar of thinking and reasoning. As we have seen in the previous chapter, some Japanese elites were clearly aware that transposing Western knowledge would require the reconfiguration of epistemic ground to qualify this knowledge as ‘serious’ and ‘valid’. Recall here, for instance, Kido Takayoshi’s scepticism towards the notion of ‘*wakon yōsai*’ (和魂洋才: Japanese spirit, Western technique); or Fukuzawa Yukichi’s distinction between ‘external forms of a civilisation’ and a specific ‘spiritual component’ that underpinned that civilisation; or Fukuoka Takachika’s conviction that the (Neo-)Confucian tradition could not constitute an adequate backdrop for the institutionalisation and formalisation of knowledge at the apex of ‘modern’ educational system, that is, the university.³ These moments of enunciation express the anticipation for epistemic reconfiguration, for necessary (re)consideration of what knowledge actually is and how it can be grounded as ‘serious’ and ‘valid’. In other words, modern knowledge formation in Japan was not only, and obviously, a history of transposition of modern and Western ideas, theories, and technologies often notated by political concerns but also, and more importantly, a genealogy of epistemic reconfiguration.

³ For my discussion on these claims, see Chapter 3.

Taking a cue from Fukuoka's reference to truth (“真理”) and his claim for ‘lofty subject’ as the locus of pursuing truth (“高尚ニ進メ真理ノ精妙ヲ究メシムル”),⁴ this chapter seeks to demonstrate the ways in which Meiji intellectuals resorted to the familiar isomorphism of the idea of truth and knowledge, or else *ri* (理) and knowledge – what I shall call here the *ri*-knowledge structuration, which had long been the primary qualifier of ‘serious’ knowledge for many existing knowledge traditions – to validate Western knowledge and determine its appropriate location within the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape of 19th-century Japan. In so doing, the chapter addresses some fundamental epistemic questions. What differences were arbitrarily forged between Western knowledge and the existing traditions of knowledge, such as (Neo-)Confucianism and *Kangaku*, less in terms of ‘content’ but more at the level of the condition of possibility that made thinking and reasoning possible? How were such differences negotiated by those whose intellectual affinity was at odds with one another? In what ways was Western knowledge integrated into the existing intellectual landscape? How did such negotiation and integration reconfigure, as a result, the condition of the possibility of knowledge? How, in essence, was the hitherto foreign and exotic knowledge tradition validated as ‘serious’ knowledge?

For such transformation of the foreign and exotic into a ‘serious’ knowledge tradition, the *ri*-knowledge structuration became a crucial discursive device. As it becomes more apparent as the chapter develops, the idea of *ri* became, in the late 19th century, the central locus of contestation to (re)constitute a specific epistemic frame of thinking, reasoning, and institutional practices. Some

⁴ Fukuoka's claim can be found in the margin of Kawashima Atsushi's proposal entitled “Restructuring the educational system and unifying national ideology for stable governing” (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). The original document with the comment 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. For my discussion on this proposal, see Chapter 3, pp. 155-167.

attempted to encode new meanings in the idea of *ri* in order to articulate a field of scientificity and validate Western knowledge as ‘serious.’ Others tried to reassert the (Neo-)Confucian meaning of the term by integrating Western knowledge into the (Neo-)Confucian regime of truth. Whatever idiosyncratic judgements Japanese intellectuals of the early Meiji period made on Western knowledge, it was through their translational practices to reconstitute the idea of *ri*, and by extension, to reconfigure the relationship between *ri* and knowledge, that Western knowledge was validated as a ‘serious’ mode of thinking, reasoning, and institutional practices.

I am, therefore, concerned here with various modes of epistemic reconfiguration marked by the valorisation of the *ri*-knowledge structuration. And, to be concerned with such a matter is – obviously – not tantamount to being concerned with, for example, a biographical account of an individual author or the geology of a specific field of knowledge. For this reason, the texts I seek to engage with in this chapter are manifold in their scope and their ideological and intellectual affinity, including but not limited to the writings of Nishi Amane, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakamura Masanao, and Sakatani Rouro. At the same time, my discussion also refers to some of the seminal texts of Chinese and Japanese Confucian scholars, such as Zhu Xi, Chen Beixi (1159-1223), Hayashi Razan, Itō Jinsai, and Ogyū Sorai, to demonstrate that the idea of *ri* and its entanglement with knowledge had, in fact, been the primary frame for validating the seriousness of a knowledge tradition.⁵

By recounting various translational practices of encoding new meanings to *ri* and, by extension, translational practices of reconfiguring the entanglement of *ri* and knowledge, I seek to pursue

⁵ The idea of *ri* was not the exclusive property of Confucianism. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, many intellectual traditions developed during the Edo period resorted to the idea of *ri* to explain the fundamental principle that structured the world and, hence, that structured their knowledge tradition. My discussion here is deliberately limited to the Confucian tradition, because those advocates of Western knowledge, who sought to explain the structure and nature of this knowledge based on the *ri*-knowledge structuration, often utilised Confucianism as their foil.

three lines of argument in this chapter. First, for such translational practices, the idea of *ri* became a liminal semantic space for (re)constituting a specific regime of truth. More specifically, *ri* became a semantic space of transformative threshold between distinct modes of thinking and reasoning, which, first of all, enabled the enunciation of epistemic differences between Western knowledge and the other existing intellectual traditions. Once the differences were enunciated, this semantic space became a site for negotiating those differences, rather than merely replacing one epistemic tradition with another. And through this negotiation emerged a new understanding of how various fields of knowledge, or even various traditions of knowledge, can be and ought to be structured with a sense of unity under the familiar *ri*-knowledge structuration. Second, I also seek to argue, it was through this process of enunciation, negotiation, and reconfiguration – hence, a process of translating Western knowledge within the familiar frame of *ri*-knowledge – that Western knowledge became something comprehensible with the familiar, existing intellectual lexicons. Translation was the very means by which Western knowledge was to be mapped on the existing epistemic landscape. However, precisely because this translational nature of epistemic reconfiguration, those expositions on Western knowledge were replete with the semantics of other knowledge traditions in which the idea of *ri* had long constituted itself as the primary qualifier of the ‘seriousness’ of these traditions. This certain semantic continuum between the expositions on Western knowledge and other knowledge traditions, in turn, brings to the fore a sense of disparity, or else incommensurability, between the object of translation (Western knowledge) and the outcome of translation (specific understandings of Western knowledge articulated in the Japanese language). That the process of comprehending and validating Western knowledge through translation and through the valorisation of the *ri*-knowledge structuration was, in a sense, epistemic transvaluation and marked by the consequent *différance*, is the third argument I seek to pursue in

this chapter. Through transitional practices dictated by the specific Japanese intellectual semantics influenced profoundly by the Chinese intellectual traditions, both the (Neo-)Confucian meanings of *ri* (i.e., the transcendental absolute or the ground for thinking and judgement) and the Western notion of *truth* (i.e., laws of nature, scientific law, or Reason) were *deferred* and *suspended*. Thus, the epistemic ground of Western knowledge understood through such translational practices embodied, not in signifiers but in significations, traces of discursive difference.

4.1. The Structure of Western Knowledge

My task here is to ask questions of ‘how’. How exactly was such a liminal space forged? How did this liminal space foster the reconfiguration of the epistemic landscape for modern knowledge formation? The most obvious enunciative strategy to forge such a space was to address purported epistemic differences between Western knowledge and other existing traditions of knowledge by observing how the former was structured in comparison to the latter. Needless to say, such observation required much more than translation as a linguistic exercise between European languages and the Japanese language; it required translation of the ‘contingent silence,’ hence, translation as an epistemic exercise to specify an often-unstated yet fundamental set of presumptions that was thought sustaining Western knowledge by encoding new meanings to existing intellectual vernaculars.

Central for such translational practices was the term *ri*, which had long been the lexical nucleus for many intellectual traditions to designate the fundamental principle that structured the world as it was and, therefore, the fundamental principle that structured their intellectual exercises. In

seeking to establish the primacy of Western knowledge, the Meiji advocates of this knowledge also resorted to the term, *ri*, not merely to explain the nature and the structure of Western knowledge with the familiar lexicon but also to validate this knowledge as a ‘serious’ intellectual endeavour to attain the facts about, hence *ri* of, the world. In other words, translational practices during the early years of the Meiji period effectively repositioned the idea of *ri* as the fundamental, unifying principle of Western knowledge. This repositioning, in turn, articulated an enabling condition, first, to argue for the difference between Western knowledge and other existing knowledge traditions, and second, to relegate the latter to the realm of the inadequate. For the advocates of Western knowledge, *ri* constituted itself as a liminal semantic space for reconfiguring the existing epistemic landscape while maintaining a sense of semantic continuum to qualify a knowledge tradition as ‘valid’ and ‘serious.’

Unified and Dispersed: Translating Western Knowledge

Nishi Amane, who is considered by many today as the founding father of Western philosophical scholarship in Japan,⁶ famously proposed in his *Chisetsu* (知説: On Knowledge) three kinds of knowledge distinguishable from one another in terms of their scope and structure: *shōchi* (“小知”: ‘small’ knowledge), which he defined as a common (“尋常”) and banal (“凡庸”) knowledge with

⁶ 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* (The Development of Philosophy in Nishi Amane’s Thought: Étude for Jurisprudence in Modern Japan), Kobe: Kōbe daigaku kenkyū sōsho kankōkai, 1987.

little societal utility; *daichi* (“大知”: ‘big’ knowledge), which he claimed penetrating (“貫徹”) into or having recourse to the essence of certain things, and thus had a certain degree of utility in society, but whose efficacy could not transcend the boundary of the society within which it was 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 were grounded on the common foundation (“基礎”) and structured (“結構する”) with a sense of totality (“組織”).⁷ For Nishi, it was this ‘well-structured’ knowledge that had the transcendental explanatory power over anything and everything.

Yet, as Nishi went on to argue, only Europeans had thus far managed to attain this ‘well-structured’ knowledge. This achievement of Europeans was, as he claimed, neither the product of the intellectual exercises of one particular person nor the result of the knowledge production of one specific period in history. This achievement was, instead, the result of culminative processes that stretched both geographically and temporally, which, for him, marked a stark contrast to the Confucian tradition that relied exclusively on the teachings of a handful of the Sages.

この地球上、振古（大昔）よりして今のヨーロッパ諸国文明の民ひとりこの知を有することを得。かの一時偶然一世に著われ、一地方に興るの比にあらざるなり。これけだし人文鬱然、衆知叢生、合してもって一となるものにして、かの一人よく衆知を結合するの比にあらざるなり。ここをもって今欧州文明のごとき、アレキサンダー、カエサル、ナポレオン、その人相つぎて起こるにあらず。しかして国家の隆盛をいたす、前古に超越し、アリストテレス、プラトーン、ガリレオ、ニュートンその人、相つぎて生まるるにあらず。しかし學術の精緻をきわむる、曠古を圧倒す。これあに一聖賢・一豪傑の得てよくするところならんや。

⁷ Nishi Amane, *Chisetsu*, 203-205.

(There is no one but Europeans today who have attained this well-structured knowledge. This knowledge is not historically specific nor geographically limited. This knowledge combines all the available human knowledge of the past and present, such that it is not knowledge possessed by an individual. Today's European civilisation is not credited to individuals such as Alexander the Great, Caesar, and Napoleon. Today's prosperity of European nations cannot be separated from Aristotle, Plato, Galileo, and Newton. But its knowledge today is so precise that nothing in the past is comparable. This is not the achievement of one sage or one great man.)⁸

Clearly, Nishi reiterates here the self-proclaimed historical emergence of Western knowledge. He narrates its genealogy as a temporally very thick, accumulative process, with its lineage having begun with Greek philosophers and being culminated with the early modern European scientists.⁹ To be sure, knowledge production had never been an exclusively European affair, and Nishi was undoubtedly aware of that. In China, studies of medicine, astronomy, geography, politics, and criminal law, for instance, respectively had a long-established scholarly tradition. Chaldea developed its distinctive scholarship on astronomy. Those in the rank of Brahmin in ancient India established a tradition of logic prior to Aristotle. In Goshen emerged the practice of legislation. And Babylonians developed a positional number system.¹⁰ As Nishi acknowledged, each of these fields of knowledge may be characterised as a mode of pursuing truth based on its own presumptions that grounded claims for and of truth. And yet, it was in Europe, according to Nishi,

⁸ Ibid., 204. As Nishi often used the term 'gaku' (学) to denote sciences or basic research and 'jutsu' (術) as arts or applied science, which for Nishi together determined the scope of Western knowledge, I translate the term 'gaku-jutsu' (學術) here as 'knowledge.'

⁹ Of course, this story of continuous, linear intellectual progress has been challenged by many. In addition to those I have already mentioned, such as Skinner, Dunn, Bachelard, and Kuhn, see also 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.

¹⁰ These are Nishi's observations; therefore, their descriptive and historical accuracy may be contested. See *Chisetus*, 206.

that the multitude of dispersed fields of knowledge had been structured and integrated into a tradition of knowledge that could claim transcendence and totality.

いわゆる学術なるもの、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学術に比するに、あにただ霄壤のみならんや。けだしそのいわゆる学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。

(So-called science and arts have already existed across the four great provinces of the world since ancient times. However, there is a world of difference between today's knowledge in Europe and these ancient knowledges. Intellectual prosperity is not merely the result of the elaboration and mastery of a single field of sciences or arts. It depends on organising, integrating, and perfecting various fields of sciences and arts together.)¹¹

Of course, we must approach Nishi's characterisation of Western knowledge with caution. As a characterisation made by one deeply enchanted by that which identified itself as *the* knowledge of the disenchanted world of objects, Nishi's characterisation cannot escape a sense of exaggeration. We cannot use his claims as a license to treat Western knowledge as inherently better and superior. Nor can we resort to a kind of fatalism to explain the decline of the other existing intellectual traditions in Japan vis-à-vis Western knowledge. It would be, in other words, naïve to reiterate, based on Nishi's characterisation, the narrative of linear universal intellectual progress for our understanding of modern knowledge formation in Japan. What is, however, interesting and indeed stellar about Nishi's work is his sustained inquiry into the structure of Western knowledge and his aptitude to ask difficult yet fundamental questions. On what ground are various dispersed fields of knowledge structured into a tradition of knowledge? Or, to use Nishi's own terms, what is "*tōitsu-*

¹¹ Ibid.

no-kan” (統一の観: the principle of unity) that sustains Western knowledge with a sense of transcendence and totality?¹² As I will delve further in the following, his observation on ‘the principle of unity’ of ‘well-structured’ knowledge – Western knowledge – encompasses two orientations: the attempt to identify the principle of unity in abstract terms; and the attempt to comprehend the principle in its institutionalised forms.

In abstract terms, Nishi maintains that the structured totality of Western knowledge derives from *ri* – the fundamental and transcendental ground for one’s thinking and reasoning, which is independent of historical, cultural, and social particularities.¹³ This seemingly simple equation of *ri* with the principle of unity of Western knowledge, however, involves a twofold translational practice. First, and most obviously, *ri* here in Nishi’s enunciation is a borrowed term – borrowed from the Neo-Confucius tradition, in which *ri* is designated, to put it schematically for now, as the basic pattern or order of *tian* (天: Heaven) that dictates why things are what they are and how things ought to be in their ideal.¹⁴ By using *ri* as a vehicle to explain the fundamental, transcendental principle of *scientia* that foregrounds Western knowledge, Nishi effectively expands the semantic space of *ri* to engage with the hitherto foreign and alien mode of knowledge with a certain sense of linguistic familiarity.

¹² Nishi Amane, “Shōhaku sakki” (尚白箚記: Reading Notes of an Unaccomplished Man), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū, Vol. 1* (Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960: 165 [165-172].

¹³ *Ibid.*, 168-169. Fukuzawa Yukichi also makes a similar observation in his address at the Literary Society, established in 1883 by the students of Keiō Gijyū. See Fukuzawa, “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 taikei, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1883]: 205 [205-210]. To note, however, there is a certain discrepancy between Nishi’s exposition of *ri* and Fukuzawa’s definition thereof. I will discuss this discrepancy further later in this chapter.

¹⁴ Again, the term *ri* was utilised for many other intellectual traditions. I am simply reiterating Nishi’s specific argument in ‘*Ri no ji no setsu*’ (理の字の説: A Theory of the Term ‘*Ri*’) that the term *ri* was derived from the Neo-Confucian tradition. See Nishi Amane, “*Ri no ji no setsu*,” in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū, Vol. 1* (Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960: 598-602. I will come back to this text later in this chapter.

Yet, here lies a conundrum. This transposition of *ri* as the unifying principle of Western knowledge does not tell us much about what the unifying principle of this knowledge actually is. As Nishi himself admits, the unifying principle that is thought to ground Western knowledge is so abstract and even evasive that it cannot be grasped in its entirety. He writes,

吾人固より理の一端を知れとも其全體を知る事能はさる事有り [...] 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 only know *ri* partially; its entirety is out of our reach. [...] We can only comprehend partially that *ri* is of the essence; understanding it in its totality is difficult to achieve.)¹⁵

In his attempt to overcome this conundrum, Nishi resorts to the second translational strategy to establish a certain semantic equivalence between *ri* and other existing Japanese terms. As he argues, *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 capacity to separate the whole into parts, hence to understand simultaneously the entirety of the world and specificities of things that make up the world; *kotowari* (言分), a capacity to appreciate what has been said, hence to understand not only a full statement but also the essence of the statement; and, *hazu* (筈), what a thing ‘ought to be’ rather than simple ‘be,’ hence natural culmination of reasoning.¹⁶

As innovative as these semantic equations may be, this attempt to establish semantic equilibrium between *ri*, *kotowari*, and *hazu* is precisely where we see the quandary of translation, which, in Derridean terminology, is called ‘deferral’.¹⁷ To specify further, the equation between

¹⁵ Nishi, “Shōhaku sakki,” 171-172.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 3-28.

the first two terms (事分 and 言分) and *ri* is based on phonic translation. Indeed, the Chinese character 理 reads in Japanese as both *ri* and *kotowari*. In claiming that *ri* is synonymous with *kotowari* (事分 and 言分), Nishi is effectively transcribing *ri*, in two different ways, as specific thinking faculties. And he reiterates this understanding of *ri* as thinking faculties, for instance, in his reading of Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* (1870-1872), in which Spencer defines – and Nishi translates – the nucleus of Western knowledge in comparison to what Spencer sees as the limited faculties of the uncivilised.¹⁸ In Spencer's text – and in Nishi's translation – the thinking faculties of Europeans are said to be marked by the following characteristics: being proficient in using one's own thinking faculties (“思慮ノ能力ヲ熟練スルコト”); having a cognitive power of combination and concentration (“結合カト団聚力”); being able to connect words with corresponding ideas (“觀念ヲ以テ結合スルコト”); and, having the aptitude for discoveries (“発明ノ才能”) and capacity of generalisation (“概括ノ觀念”).¹⁹ If Nishi seeks to establish the equivalence between *ri* and *kotowari* (事分 and 言分) through phonic translation, his translational strategy to establish the equivalence between *ri* and *hazu* (筈) is grounded on semantic translation. In this semantic equation, *ri* comes to be understood as something that *a priori* determines an appropriate mode of thinking and reasoning and, by extension, something that designates one's ability to reason beyond a certain degree of abstruseness (“精緻ナル理ヲ穿

¹⁸ Spencer described Sandwich islander, Australians, Africans, New Zealanders as the uncivilised, “the small-brained savage” in comparison to “the large-brained European.” A part of this Spencer's text is included in in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikai, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988: 33-35.

¹⁹ Nishi Amane, “Gakumon wa engen o hukaku suru ni aru no ron” (学問ハ淵源ヲ深クスルニ在ルノ論: The Purpose of Learning as Having Recourse to the Origin of Things), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikai, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1877]: 29-30 [29-35].

鑿スル論弁”)²⁰ Through this phonic and semantic translation, Nishi ultimately claims that *ri*, as the principle of unity that grounds Western knowledge, designates simultaneously one’s thinking faculties (*kotowari*) and the eternal regularities or laws of the world, which prefigure the ways of having recourse to such regularities and laws (*hazu*). It is, however, important to note that his attempt at simultaneous phonic and semantic translation suggests the impossibility of fully summoning the meaning of the ‘fundamental and transcendental ground’ of Western knowledge; it can only be defined, as Nishi defines it, through an appeal to other words from which it differs. Therefore, in Nishi’s translation, the meaning of ‘unifying principle’ is deferred and suspended – as Derrida would call ‘deferral’ – with an endless chain of signifiers.

Nevertheless, upon anchoring *ri* into the semantic field of *kotowari* and that of *hazu* through phonic and semantic translation, Nishi further specifies that *ri* manifests itself differently in the human world and the natural world.

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

(The recent European tradition divide ‘principle’ into two. To use English words here, one is called ‘Reason’ or ‘law of nature’ [...]. For the general purpose, I translate Reason into *dōri* [道理], and for the specific purpose, *risei* [理性]. *Risei* is the fundamental basis for man to know. [...] On the other hand, I translated natural law as *rihō* [理法], which designates regularities of the natural world. [...] Although both Reason and natural law are conceptual inventions of man, the former is a postulation, and the latter belongs to the realm of the objective.)²¹

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Nishi, “Shōhaku sakki,” 169. One caution must be entered here on his use of the term ‘natural law’ and ‘law of nature.’ In the English language, ‘natural law’ is understood as being concerned primarily with issues of ethics and morality, whereas ‘law of nature’ is understood as what science aims to describe. However, in Nishi’s exposition here,

What emerges through this enunciation is the figure of Nishi as an avid learner of Western knowledge. Nishi follows here, without necessarily mentioning, the Cartesian dualism that asserts the human and natural world as being fundamentally distinctive from one another. As he observes by reiterating the Cartesian division between the social and the physical, *ri* can be divided into two distinctive manifestations. One is the *a posteriori* principle of the human world, what he calls Reason (“レーズン”) and the law of nature (“ラウ・オフ・ネチュール”), translated as *dōri* (道理) or *risei* (理性). The other is the *a priori* principle of the natural world, or what he calls natural law (“ネチュール・ラウ”), understood in Japanese as *rihō* (理法) or *tennen-hōritsu* (天然法律). Whether one understands *ri* as the principle of the human world or that of the natural world, it is this *ri* that each field of knowledge seeks to reveal in its own realm of investigation (*kotowari*). Simultaneously, it is also this *ri* that dictates all fields of knowledge (*hazu*).

One inference I shall draw from Nishi’s observation above is that *ri* structures, or at least is understood as structuring, knowledge as something that is all at once unified and dispersed. And this unified yet dispersed nature of knowledge functions as the primary referent for establishing institutional categories of knowledge. As Nishi explicates,

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 the oppositions and making them into one [is at the core of Western knowledge]. On the one hand, *ri* is the unifying principle; on the other hand, *ri*

these two concepts were reversed in their usage, with ‘natural law’ designating that which science aims to describe and ‘law of nature’ encompassing that which controls human minds and human relationships.

foregrounds various dispersed fields of pursuing principles. Without those dispersed fields, the unifying principle lacks spirit. Without the unifying principle, those dispersed fields remain hollow).²²

To clarify Nishi's exposition further, let us take a short detour into the writings of later decades that, in a much clearer manner, explain how this understanding of *ri* both as the unifying principle and as the object of knowledge for various dispersed fields foregrounds formalised and institutionalised categories of philosophy and science. One of the most illustrative examples that speaks for the unifying principle is Nakae Chōmin's (1848-1901) *Rigaku kōgen* (理学鉤玄: The Nature of Philosophy, 1886), which specifies the nature and role of philosophy as to pursue the unifying principle. In comparison, Kikuchi Dairoku (1855-1917) directly addresses, in his "Rigaku no setsu" (理学の説: On Sciences, 1884), the idea of *ri* as the object of inquiries within the dispersed fields of science. Both texts sought to define what *rigaku* (理学: studies of *ri*) ought to do as a field of knowledge. However, while Nakae emphasises the unifying nature of knowledge, hence philosophy that pursues the transcendental principle of all things, Kikuchi argues for the dispersed nature of knowledge, thus fields of sciences that seek to understand not the fixed and absolute principle, but principles of the natural worlds, that is, the principle in its heterogeneous manifestation.

Nakae asserts that *ri*, the primary object of investigation for *rigaku*, underpins all kinds of scholarships and, thus, unifies them as a coherent whole.

²² Nishi Amane, "Seisei hatsun," (生性發蘊: The Relationship between the Physical and the Spiritual), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū, Vol. 1* (Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960 [1871-1873]: 46 [29-129].

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 (The primary purpose of *rigaku* [here understood as philosophy] is to investigate the source of all things [...] It is to examine the fundamental principle that mediates all fields of knowledge so that one can penetrate to the most fundamental kernel of all things [...] Therefore, *rigaku* is the most extensive and most abstract field of knowledge.)²³

In contrast, Kikuchi explains that Western knowledge is structured with specifically demarcated, specialised fields of knowledge and that each field pursues, within its own remit, regularities and laws of the natural world, hence seeks to understand *ri* in its specific and varying manifestations. And the term *rigaku* encompasses those fields of knowledge that we may now call natural science.²⁴

抑理学トハ何ゾヤ、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「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 [...]

(What is *rigaku* [here understood as science]? *Rigaku* is the highest degree of human knowledge. At first, human knowledge is vague, uncertain, and narrow, but as it progresses, it becomes precise, certain, and far-reaching. When knowledge becomes precise, certain, and far-reaching, we call it *rigaku*. [...] Concrete knowledge of how many feet a stone falls in a second, with what velocity etc., is

²³ Nakae Chōmin, *Rigaku kōgen* (理学鉤玄: The Nature of Rigaku), Tokyo: Shūseisha, 1886: 1, 3-4.

²⁴ As I will specify in Chapter 7, the term *kagaku* (科学: science) is a neologism of the Meiji period, articulated initially to designate ‘one field of knowledge’ (一科の学). By the time of Kikuchi’s writing, *kagaku* came to denote specifically what the English term ‘science’ means, or in Inoue Tetsujirō words ‘scientific culture.’ Inoue Tetsujirō, “Tōkyō Keizai zasshi ni kotau” (答東京経済雑誌: My Response to the Tokyo Journal of Economics), *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 6, 1882: 111 [110-115]. A digitised version of the original text is available online at: <https://dglb01.ninjal.ac.jp/ninjaldb/bunken.php?title=toyogakuge> (31.08.2022).

part of *rigaku*. By expanding this knowledge, we finally discover the law of gravity. Utilising this knowledge, we can deduce the position of Neptune and even speculate the constellation of those stars that we have not yet seen. This is the highest level of *rigaku* that one can achieve. [...] The aim of the scientist is to discover the truth about everything in the universe.)²⁵

To put it in general terms, Nakae's exposition follows Nishi's understanding of *ri* as 'tōitsu-no-kan' (統一の観: the unifying principle). This understanding of *ri* foregrounds *rigaku* as the institutional category of philosophy, for which *ri*, the principle of unity for all knowledge, constitutes the primary object of inquiry. In contrast, Kikuchi's definition of *rigaku* follows Nishi's understanding of *ri* as various principles of things, or regularities of the natural world, that scientific fields of knowledge seek to discover. Therefore, *rigaku* is envisaged as dispersed fields of science, each of which seeks to reveal, in its remit, each and every principle that dictates things that make up the natural world.²⁶

When Nishi spoke of Western knowledge as simultaneously unified and dispersed, he also indicated, albeit implicitly, how this unified and dispersed nature of knowledge informed institutional categories of knowledge, which, as we have just seen, Nakae and Kikuchi respectively expanded subsequently. As Nishi maintained,

百科の學術に於いて統一の観を立て、各自に其精微の極に臻る事より始まるなり、是学者分上の事業なり、[...] 然るに此学者分上の事業の中にも、

²⁵ Kikuchi Dairoku, "Rigaku no setsu," (理学の説: On Rigaku), *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 33, 1884: 76-77. 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雜することなく、各の学に於いて其経界を觀察して、正しく區別するを要せざるべからず。" See Nishi, *Hyakugaku renakan*, in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū, Vol. 4* (Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 4), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960 [1870]: 46.

²⁶ This distinction between philosophy and various fields of science indeed parallels Immanuel Kant's exposition and distinction between 'lower faculty' (philosophy) and 'higher faculties' (theology, law, and medicine). See Kant, *The Conflict of The Faculties*. See also my earlier discussion on the idea of the university in Chapter 2, p.123.

統一の観を立つると學術の精微を究むるとは、亦分業の方二區の観にて、一人の能く兼ね得る所に非らず、故に統一の観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 establishing the unifying principle of the hundred branches of knowledge and refining one's investigation within each field. This requires a division of labour [...] between those who seek to establish the unifying principle and those who seek to conduct inquiries with precision in a given field. No one can do both. The former is the responsibility of the philosopher, and the latter is of those specialised in various fields.)²⁷

By expanding the semantic space of *ri* and by projecting the *ri*-knowledge structuration onto Western knowledge, Nishi's exposition articulated an enabling condition for comprehending the nature, structure, scope, and institutional categories of Western knowledge with the familiar Japanese intellectual vernaculars, and in so doing, promoted Western knowledge as that which could be considered 'valid' and 'serious.'

The Infringement of the Principle

It is important to recognise here that scholars such as Nishi, Nakae, and Kikuchi do not articulate these observations of Western knowledge in a vacuum. Their projection of the *ri*-knowledge structuration onto Western knowledge, its structure, its unifying principle, and its institutional manifestations – irrespective of their accuracy and variegated emphasis – participate, or I shall even go so far as to say, is built upon, a relatively long genealogy of sustained attack on the (Neo-)Confucian idea of *ri*. For instance, one cannot but recognise a certain parallel between, on the one hand, Nishi's exposition of *ri* as something that regulates both the human and natural world,

²⁷ Nishi, "Shōhaku sakki," 165, 166.

but that manifests itself in these two worlds differently and, on the other hand, Sakuma Shōzan's (1811-1864) distinction between *ri* as the analytical concern of science (Western knowledge) and that as the concern of ethics (the Confucius tradition).²⁸ In a similar vein, Ogyū Sorai's (1666-1728) direct attack on the Neo-Confucian idea of *ri* effectively separates laws of nature from moral laws, hence the natural world from the human world, seriously undermining the Neo-Confucian continuative mode of thinking.²⁹ Though not as explicit as Sorai's scepticism towards the Neo-Confucian tradition, Miura Baien's (1723-1789) inspection of various ways in which *ri* folds and unfolds in both the natural and human world can also be understood here as a mode of rendering the world that is somewhat incommensurable with the Neo-Confucian idea of *ri*.³⁰ The seeming novelty of Nishi's exposition of *ri* as the principle of unity of Western knowledge, as well as Nakae's and Kikuchi's observation of the unified yet dispersed nature of Western knowledge, lose their currency, to a certain extent, when contextualised in a temporally broader intellectual landscape. Simply put, their expositions and observations embed within themselves traces of those earlier challenges to the (Neo-)Confucius tradition. It is those earlier works, which have, consciously or otherwise, attempted to dismantle the (Neo-)Confucius idea of *ri*, hence the

²⁸ Albert Craig makes this rendering of Shōzan's work. 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: 153 [133-160]. However, Harry Harootunian claims that Shōzan "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 Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1970: 144.

²⁹ 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 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 Sorai's thoughts and implications. See Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, Mikiso Hane (trans.), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974.

³⁰ For Baien'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.

structure of (Neo-)Confucius regime of truth, that foreground an intellectual space for Nishi and others to mount an attack on the existing traditions of knowledge by juxtaposing them to Western knowledge.³¹

For example, against the Neo-Confucius claim that the Europeans have not attained and will never attain an appropriate understanding of the fundamental principle of all things, Nishi argues the following.

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。
(Do Europeans really not know the principle? What is called principle is, in fact, multitude, and the European understanding of it is, in fact, very precise. In contrast, Neo-Confucianism postulates the absolute principle of all things, from things of the natural world to moral and ethical conclusions for man. If something does not conform to this absolute principle, Neo-Confucians claim it is the infringement of the principle, which I argue is simply a poor judgement.)³²

The problem of the Neo-Confucian tradition that Nishi finds lies in its postulate of *ri* as the absolute, transcendental principle manifesting itself as such. While Western knowledge, as he explains in many of his writings, is grounded on *ri*, which manifests itself variously, the Neo-Confucian tradition simply lumps both the *a priori* principles of the natural world and the *a posteriori* principle of the human world altogether. Of course, such critique is possible precisely because Nishi positions himself in a knowledge tradition that sustains and is sustained by a worldview different from that he criticises. Nevertheless, Nishi goes on to argue that the tendency of the Neo-

³¹ This heterogenisation of the idea of *ri* and the subsequent suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* (窮理) will be the central tropes of my discussion in Chapter 6.

³² Nishi, “Shōhaku sakki,” 170.

Confucian tradition to relegate things which cannot be explained by its own understanding of *ri* to the realm of ‘the infringement of the principle’ (“天理に背く”) is, for him, nothing but the infringement of the human desire for total knowledge (“措大の見に過ぎたり”).³³

Weaving together the critique of the limited nature of (Neo-)Confucianism and its postulate of the absolute and transcendental principle and the emphasis on the purportedly total and precise nature – or else, unified and dispersed nature – of Western knowledge, some of the Meiji intellectuals began to treat Western knowledge as an all-encompassing knowledge tradition, which could accommodate some of the ‘old’ traditions of knowledge, such as *Kangaku* and *Kokugaku*, as constitutive fields of total knowledge. Katō Hiroyuki’s defence of the establishment of *Wakan bungaku-ka* at the University of Tokyo in 1881, which I have discussed earlier in the previous chapter, is an emblematic example here. For Katō, the establishment of *Wakan bungaku-ka* was less about reflecting on the traditionalist and nationalist political ideology nor about instituting the university based on the epistemic ground that had long sustained *Kangaku* and *Kokugaku*. Rather, the establishment was to preserve these intellectual traditions among many other scholarly fields.³⁴ Katō’s earlier work, *Kokutai shinron* (国体新論: A New Theory on National Polity, 1874), acknowledges *Kokugaku*’s achievement to reorient its focus specifically around ‘Japanese’ historical and cultural specificities and to redefine the relationship between the sovereign and its subjects within the frame of *kokutai*. But, in the same breadth, Katō also problematises *Kokugaku*’s mode of reasoning, suggesting that in order to establish a more precise and ‘modern’ account of *kokutai*, one must ground it on the Western political theories (“今欧州の開明論によりて、[...]”

³³ See also Nishi, *Chisetsu*, 201.

³⁴ See Chapter 3, pp. 218-221, for my analysis of Katō’s justification of the establishment of *Wakan bungaku-ka*.

国家・君民の真理を概論し[...]”³⁵ To put it simply, Katō argues here for the possibility – and indeed the necessity – to integrate the ‘traditional’ into the epistemic frame that is said to sustain Western knowledge. In a similar vein, Kikuchi Dairoku also suggests that *Kangaku* for Japanese is what the studies of Latin and Greek are for Europeans, such that while it does not have any privileged status in and of itself, it still has particular importance.

今私ノ漢学ヲ廃スルト云ヘルハ決シテ漢学ヲ日本ヨリ逐攘フト云フニ非ラス漢学ハ貴重ナル学科ナリ西洋諸国ノ羅匈希臘ニ於ル如ク一ノ専門トシテ存シ置ク可シ

(When I say we must abolish Chinese studies, I do not mean it must be abandoned entirely. Chinese studies for Japanese is what Latin and Greek studies are for Europeans. It should be taught as one of those specialised subjects.)³⁶

Ōtori Keisuke (1833-1911), following a similar strategy of enunciation, even goes so far as to argue that *Kangaku* and *Kokugaku* have to be resuscitated by applying methods of Western scholarships, more precisely by seeking to understand what the world actually is (“世界ハ如何ナルモノカト云フコトヲ研究シ”) and by using verifiable facts as proof (“事実ヲ挙ゲテ証拠トナシ”).³⁷ If *Kangaku* and *Kokugaku* are to be reoriented towards factual verification, these traditions would be able to offer ‘real’ historical accounts (“真ノ歴史”) and ‘precise’ topological details (“精細ノ地誌”) of Japan.³⁸

³⁵ Katō Hiroyuki, *Kokutai shinron*, in Uete Michiari (ed.), *Nihon no meicho, Vol.34: Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki* (Japanese Canons, Vol.34: Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki), Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1984 [1874]: 385 [383-407].

³⁶ Kikuchi, “Rigaku no setsu,” 97.

³⁷ Ōtori Keisuke, “Gakumon ben” (学問弁: On Scholarship), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikai, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin [Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals]*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1886]: 91 [86-93].

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

These enunciations are interesting not simply for the obvious – those advocates of Western knowledge are not categorically negating existing knowledge traditions. What underlies their claims for resuscitating ‘old’ traditions, that is to say, what is much more fundamental, is the discursive strategy that enables such repositioning of the ‘old’ traditions as part and parcel of knowledge marked by its unity and totality. First and most obviously, those advocates of Western knowledge extract the discursive frame of *ri*-knowledge – the ground for validity claims of knowledge – from the ‘old’ traditions and project this frame onto Western knowledge by expanding the semantic space of *ri*, that is to say, by encoding new meanings to *ri*. This is not a mere act of reshaping the relationship between the lexical and the grammatical. Not only does this projection of the *ri*-knowledge structuration enable the advocates of Western knowledge to validate what they seek to validate, but it also enables them to reinterpret the *ri*-knowledge structuration of the ‘old’ traditions under the regime of truth – signified here also with *ri* – that sustains Western knowledge. This, in turn, prefigures a possibility to anchor those ‘old’ traditions into the scope of Western knowledge. However, to legitimise such an act of anchoring, that is to say, to effectively integrate the ‘old’ traditions into the scope of Western knowledge, those advocates of Western knowledge seem to resort to an entirely different criterion of judgement. Their discursive enunciations seem to presume that the ‘old’ traditions can be integrated into the regime of truth that sustains Western knowledge, so long as they are reorganised on the basis of the specific methodological predilection of Western knowledge, that is, the predilection towards scientificity. To this end, I argue that within the liminal semantic space of *ri* exist two modes of validating a knowledge tradition: the *ri*-knowledge structuration; and scientificity. Therefore, translational practices to encode new meanings to *ri* are marked by both a sense of continuity

sustained by the *ri*-knowledge structuration and a sense of discontinuity, or transvaluation, enabled by a new predilection towards scientificity.

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

While I relegate the discussion on science and scientificity to a later chapter (Chapter 7), let me expand here further on the *ri*-knowledge structuration. The identification of *ri* as the most basic proposition, which grounds and unifies Western knowledge, suggests a certain inversion of the semantic relationship between signifier and signification: the semantic inversion from the *ri*-knowledge structuration of that which the advocates of Western knowledge utilised as their foil, that is, (Neo-)Confucianism. Recognising this, I seek to address here two specific questions. How was *ri* articulated within the (Neo-)Confucian tradition both in China and Japan? And in what ways did the Japanese (Neo-)Confucian scholars of the late 19th century seek to resuscitate the *ri*-knowledge structuration in response to the increasing prevalence of Western knowledge?

The (Neo-)Confucian Dialectic

Within the Chinese Confucian tradition, the Neo-Confucian discursive addresses of *ri* (in Chinese *li*) during the Song dynasty marked a pivotal instance. It was these claims of the concept of ‘propensity of principle’ (*li shi*: 理勢) as the fundamental principle of *tian* and, by extension, as the guiding moral and ethical concept for the exercise of power, that effectively dislodged the then-

prevalent Confucian concept of ‘propensity of times’ (*shi shi*: 時勢) from its dominant position as the nucleus of Confucian teachings.

In the earlier Chinese Confucian tradition, the ‘propensity of times’ was the primary proposition to understand the (in)adequacy of variegated events, behaviours, and decisions in terms of their ‘timeliness,’ because every event, behaviour, or decision, as it was presumed, had its proper time to occur, to be taken, and to be made. Mencius (372-389 BCE), for instance, described Confucius as the “sage of timeliness” when commenting on *I Ching* (易經: The Book of Changes), which claimed that

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.)³⁹

By describing the central edifice of *I Ching* in terms of ‘propensity of times,’ Mencius effectively positioned historical changes and forces of such changes – that is, what accelerate and regulate historical changes – as the primary concern for Confucian thought. Further still, as Wang Hui observes, taking this view of the world notated by the ‘propensity of times’ as the point of departure, “Confucius thinking established an inherent link between the propensity of times and moral action, emphasizing that moral action (*dexing*) is quickened by the propensity of the times.”⁴⁰ It was

³⁹ The original text is accessible at: <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/gen> (10.09.2022). The English translation was borrowed from Mencius, *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, Bryan W. Van Norden (ed. and trans.), Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2008: 132. See also, *I Ching*, Richard Wilhelm and Cary Byrnes (trans.), Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950: 200.

⁴⁰ Wang Hui, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, Michael Gibbs Hill (trans.), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2014: 74.

through this discursive establishment of the inherent link that the concept of ‘propensity of times’ came to represent, for instance, in *Zhan guo ce* (戰國策: Records of the Warring States), the primary principle for the exercise of power.

[...] 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.⁴¹

However, this predilection towards the concept of ‘propensity of times’ was dislodged from its dominant place within the Confucian teaching by a new predisposition towards the concept of ‘propensity of principle’ articulated in the writings of the Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty. For instance, Zhu Xi, while referring to both the ‘propensity of times’ and ‘propensity 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

⁴¹ For this translation, see *Records of the Warring State*, Bramwell Seaton Bonsall (trans.), Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Libraries, 2005: 87. The digitised version of Bonsall’s translation of *Records of the Warring State* is available online at: <https://digitalrepository.lib.hku.hk/catalog/jq085n414#?c=&m=&s=&cv=86&xywh=-811%2C2750%2C3920%2C2086> (14.02.2022).

must rely on assistance from others. This is the inevitable result of the propensity of principle (*lishi*.)⁴²

If, in the earlier Chinese Confucian tradition, the ‘propensity of times’ was the primary proposition to understand the (in)adequacy of variegated events, behaviours, and decisions in terms of their ‘timeliness,’ the ‘propensity of principle’ for the Song Confucianism was a cognitive device to delineate and demonstrate a sense of continuity in the midst of historical changes, ruptures, and discontinuities. It was a cognitive device for continuity, because it presumed the existence of the constant, absolute, and transcendental Heavenly principle, underlying the changes, ruptures, and discontinuities in the realm under the heaven. In an instance of historical change wherein continuity could not be clearly delineated, the ‘propensity of principle’ became “a kind of internal, essential process and state” for and of the lifeworld.⁴³

To be sure, the (Neo-)Confucian thought and its idea of *ri* (*li*) had subsequently spawned a wide array of intellectual engagements and interpretations. And, it is beyond my present means to offer any sustained reading of the vast amount of available literature. At least, for my concern here for the *ri*-knowledge structuration, I shall point to two specific implications of this new predilection towards the ‘propensity of principle.’ First, this predilection foregrounds the notable dualism of Neo-Confucian thought: the dualism between *ri* and *ki* (氣: material force, *qi* in Chinese). 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 every thing as *ki* (what a thing *is*). Furthermore, because it is the ultimate cause of creation and change, *ri* is understood also as the kernel (体) of

⁴² The original text is accessible at: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=659337> (10.09.2022). The English translation is borrowed from Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 75.

⁴³ Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 76.

a thing, representing the Way (道) of the thing (what a thing *must be*). It is precisely to this end that, in the Neo-Confucian tradition, *ri* is intimately intertwined with moral virtues and an ideal way of being and becoming (what man *must be and do*), underpinning the archetypal mode of social existence and governing. In contrast, *ki*, the phenomenological manifestation of *ri*, is understood as a tangible effect (用) of the kernel and, therefore, a device (器) for *ri* to manifest itself. *Xi ci I* (繫辭上: The Great Treatise I) summarises this dualism between *ri* and *ki* as follows: what is above (*ri*) is called the Way, and what is below (*ki*) is called a device.⁴⁴

Second, it was through this new predilection towards the ‘propensity of principle’ that the pursuit of *ri* became, from the period of the Song dynasty onwards, such a crucial intellectual exploration for the Neo-Confucian scholars. In the original thought of Zhu Xi, for instance, the pursuit of the principle was understood as the primary purpose of learning, which was to be conducted through inquiries into individual functions of things, *ki*, and hence individual manifestations of *ri*.⁴⁵ Think, for example, phrases such as ‘*ju jing qiong li*’ (居敬窮理: to attain the ideal Way of being), ‘*gewu qiong li*’ (格物窮理: to have recourse to the principle of things), and ‘*gewu zhizhi*’ (格物致知: to investigate things and to extend knowledge) – all of which declare the centrality of *ri* and illustrate the vested value and interest in the search for the fundamental principle through the investigation into things. In essence, with the predilection towards the ‘propensity of principle,’ knowledge is equated to the comprehension of *ri*, and to attain

⁴⁴ 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 Yuasa Yasuo, *Overcoming Modernity: Synchronicity and Image-Thinking*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008: 51-53.

⁴⁵ I will come back to this idea of the pursuit of principle (*kyūri*) in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

knowledge is understood as expanding one's grasp of *ri* through inquiries into its various manifestations observable as specific functions of things, *ki*.

The retrospective accounts of the unfolding of the Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan often emphasise its symbiotic relation to the politico-social dispositive of the Edo period and describe, as those of accounts of Inoue Tetsujirō did, as the dialectical development and relationship among three major schools: *Shushigaku* (朱子学: Zhu Xi's school), *Yōmeigaku* (陽明学: Wang Yangming School), and *Kogaku* (古学: ancient learning).⁴⁶ It is, however, important to point out here that the neat division of *Shushigaku*, *Yōmeigaku*, and *Kogaku* is not sustained by the philological archive of the Edo period. For instance, Hayashi Razan's school of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy was far more eclectic than Inoue and Maruyama – as well as many post-war Western scholars who endorsed Inoue and Maruyama's scholarships – have led us to believe. To this end, even the purported difference between Confucian scholarships and 'modern' scholarships developed as the result of modern knowledge formation functions, more than anything, as a discursive disjuncture.⁴⁷ While acknowledging the intellectual purchase of Inoue's monumental work and his interpretative schema revolving around a reading of differences among these schools of Confucianism, I shall put forward a slightly different reading of the Japanese (Neo-)Confucian tradition. My focus here is not on the manifold nature and internal disparities of that which we conveniently and collectively call the (Neo-)Confucian tradition. Instead, what I seek to put

⁴⁶ Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nippon Kogakuha no tetsugaku* (Philosophy of the Ancient Studies in Japan), Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1902; Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nippon Shushigakuha no tetsugaku* (Philosophy of the Zhu Xi School Confucianism in Japan), Tokyo: Huzanbō, 1905.

⁴⁷ If our interpretation foregrounds the difference between knowledge traditions, then, the reverse should also be the case: our interpretation foreground rather surprising similarity between, for example, Neo-Confucianism and knowledge tradition designated as *scientia*. Suppose *ri* and *ki* are metaphysical principles. Suppose *ki* provides the principle of, for instance, motion of matter, and *ri* gives it directionality and foregrounds its tendency to form patterns of motion. Then, *ri* can be easily understood here in terms of the regularities of nature that European empiricists, such as Galileo and Newton, conceived in mathematical terms. My understanding of the dictate of *our own* interpretation here owes much to Federico Marcon's suggestion.

forward is a reading of what enables us to coalesce these different schools as one knowledge tradition – a reading of its general discursive tendency, which defines knowledge on the basis of the structuration of *ri* and *ki*, and which derives primarily from the (Neo-)Confucian concern for the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth.

Indeed, in their attempt to challenge the Buddhist’s insistence on words as inherently empty, a number of prominent (Neo-)Confucian scholars from different schools emphasise the importance of the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth. For instance, Hayashi Razan wrote, in 1659, in the preface to his rendition of Chen Beixi’s *Xingli ziyi* (性理字義: The Meanings of Neo-Confucius Terms) that “the minds 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?”⁴⁸ Upon posing this rhetorical question, Razan suggested that only through a thorough emersion in the writings of the sages could one achieve an enlightened status of being.

日橫看豎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! Analyze them and synthesize them until you thoroughly penetrate them from beginning until end. Ultimately, you will understand that everything in the sages’ writings culminates in a unified grasp of ‘principle.’ When you realize a mystical unity with the sage’s writings, one in which the self and those texts are nondual, you will have read them well!)⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Hayashi Razan, *Seiri jigi genkkai Vol.1* (性理字義諺解: Vernacular Explanation of the Meaning of Neo-Confucius Terms, Vol.1), Kyoto: Arakawa Shirōzaemon, 1659: 1-2. 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拵而示之.” The text is accessible online at <https://www.iiif.ku-orcas.kansai-u.ac.jp/books/210178019> (14.02.2022). 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.

⁴⁹ Hayashi Razan, *Seiri jigi genkkai Vol.1*, 14. The English translation is borrowed from Heisig et al., *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 305-306.

Razan was hardly alone in challenging the nominalist insistence of Buddhists on the semantic emptiness of words and, by extension, their claim about the insignificance of meaning and truth. In his comprehensive text entitled *Gomō jigi* (語孟字義: The Meanings of Terms in the Analects and Mencius, 1705), Itō Jinsai argued for the meaningfulness of words, offering, in his search for ‘correct meanings,’ a systematic analysis of the meanings of some of the terms central for the Confucian tradition, including the term ‘*ri*,’ ‘*michi*’ (道: Way), ‘*sei*’ (性: quality/nature), and ‘*gaku*’ (学: learning).⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Ogyū Sorai also defended, in his *Benmei* (弁名: Clarification of Confucian Concepts, 1789), the ability of language to refer to realities, demonstrating that terms articulated by the sages were precisely for people to comprehend the immanent workings of the world and to instruct themselves to attain the ideal mode of being *a priori* determined by *ri*.⁵¹

Not surprisingly, in their emphasis on the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth, many Confucian writings produced during the Edo period treat *ri* as the primary lexical and conceptual device for their respective scholarships.⁵² But it was those Neo-Confucian scholars who appropriated the understanding of *ri* as the absolute, transcendental principle of all things. Take for instance Razan’s *Seiri jigi genkkai* (性理字義諺解: Vernacular Explanation of the Meaning of Neo-Confucius Terms, 1659). In his attempt to have recourse to the ‘correct meaning’ of *ri*, Razan reiterated above all Zhu Xi’s exposition, maintaining that,

⁵⁰ Itō Jinsai, *Gomō jigi* (The Meanings of Terms in the Analects and Mencius), 1705. The original text is available at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ro12/ro12_00693/index.html (14.02.2022).

⁵¹ Ogyū Sorai, *Benmei* (Clarification of Confucian Concepts), 1789. A version of the manuscript is available online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ro13/ro13_01375/index.html (14.02.2022).

⁵² Chapter 6 discusses how these traditions defines *ri* differently from one another, and how such variegated definitions of *ri* enabled the dislodging of Neo-Confucianism from its privileged place.

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ソ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 term ‘Way’ and ‘principle’ are one. But why are there two words that designate the same thing? ‘Way’ embeds within itself a movement of man [man’s development towards what he must be as a moral and ethical being]. While ‘Way’ is broad, ‘principle’ is solid and unchanging. What connects the past and the present is the ‘Way.’ What remains throughout time is ‘principle,’ which is intangible and only perceptible by understanding why and how things are what they are.)⁵³

While reiterating Zhu Xi’s claim that *ri* simultaneously represents the Way, Razan argues here that *ri* refers to the immanent and permanent order of things, which determines and regulates all particularities of what they are in actuality (*is*) and, therefore, by extension, what things can potentially be in their ideal (*must be*). Furthermore, Razan also rehearses Zhu Xi’s synthesis of *ri* and *ki*, arguing that *ri* and *ki* are not merely co-constitutive, but one and the same thing as *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眞実ハ理ハ
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 with ‘principle’ and the other with ‘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 it dictates how material force manifests itself [...])⁵⁴

⁵³ Hayashi Razan, *Seiri jigi genkkai Vol.5* (性理字義諺解: Vernacular Explanation of the Meaning of Neo-Confucius Terms, Vol.5), Kyoto: Arakawa Shirōzaemon, 1659: 43. The original text is accessible at: <https://www.iiiif.ku-orcas.kansai-u.ac.jp/books/210178027> (14/02/2022).

⁵⁴ Hayashi, *Seiri jigi genkkai Vol.1*, 31.

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

As we see in Razan's exposition above, Neo-Confucian scholarship in Japan generally follows Zhu Xi's synthesis of *ri* and *ki* that argues for their co-constitutive nature.⁵⁵ And yet, one cannot but notice a certain temptation encoded in these Neo-Confucian writings: a temptation to identify which of the two, *ri* or *ki*, takes – or should take – precedence over the other. And undoubtedly, there are some instances of equivocation in their writings when they emphasise, as Zu Xi himself does, *ri* as representative of the immanent principle of man's nature and of all things, and *ki* as ontological manifestations of *ri* and thus as something that comes second, if not being secondary. Of course, no sooner is this prioritisation broached in their writings, it is also negated with the recurring insistence that *ri* cannot exist without *ki* and vice versa. But such instances of equivocation constituted, for later critics, the opportunity to articulate lengthy critiques of Neo-Confucian postulates. For example, Jinsai argued for an ostensible monism of *ki*, whereby *ri* merely dwells within *ki*. Sorai rejected Zhu Xi's essentially ethical notion of the 'propensity of principle' and even went so far as to challenge, along with Jinsai, the purported Confucian origin of *ri* by pointing to the influence of Daoist and Buddhist discourses in the articulation of the term.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ To be sure, this does not mean that the Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan was a faithful appropriation of Zhu Xi's thought. As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, Razan expressed certain scepticism toward the viability of Zhu Xi's synthesis of *ri* and *ki* in some of his writings, including "*Hono ikazuchi ōkami ben*" (火雷神弁: On the Gods of Thunder, 1602), "*Tagen kore ni yosu*" (寄田玄之: Questions about Classics of Confucianism, 1604), and "*Zuihitsu yon*" (隨筆四: Essay, No.4, 1621). In a similar vein, Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714) expressed his scepticism towards Zhu Xi's thought, especially towards the end of his life, which is evident in his *Daigiroku* (大疑録: Grave Doubts, 1713).

⁵⁶ For Jinsai's and Sorai's critique, see, for example, Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*; John Allen Tucker, "Chen Beixi, Lu Xiangshan, and Early Tokugawa (1600-1867) Philosophical Lexicography," *Philosophy East and West*, 43: 4, 1993; 683-713; John Allen Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomō Jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1998.

While acknowledging these internal contestations, I shall argue here that the contestations nevertheless fall into the common rubric of the Confucian concern – the concern over the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth. Put otherwise, the unfolding of the Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan revolved largely around the question of ‘correct meanings’ of the words of the sages, and those contestations were discursive exercises within the tradition of knowledge marked by their shared concern for the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth. Jinsai’s and Sorai’s critiques do not necessarily destabilise the idea that the words of the sages are the expression of truth and, thus, knowledge to be pursued. To this end, we can reasonably conclude that, the *ri*-knowledge structuration and the concern for the relation between *ri* and *ki* – or else, the concern for the relation between the transcendental and the immanent – are two basic standards to qualify knowledge, here Confucian knowledge, as ‘valid’ and ‘serious.’

(Neo-)Confucian Restructuration of Knowledge

For (Neo-)Confucian scholars of the late Edo period, the *ri*-knowledge structuration and the concern for the relation between *ri* and *ki* together foregrounded the crucial backdrop for determining the location of Western knowledge within the Confucian regime of truth and, by extension, for attempting to reiterate the predominance of (Neo-)Confucian tradition vis-à-vis the increasing prevalence of Western knowledge. In this regard, particularly emblematic discursive addresses can be found in Nakamura Masanao’s “*Yōgaku-ron*” (洋学論: On Western Knowledge, 1866) and Sakatani Rouro’s “*Kajukusei ni shimesu kokoroesho*” (家塾生ニ示ス心得書: Instructions for My Students, 1862).

Generally speaking, in their attempts to understand Western knowledge and integrate it into the existing structure of the Confucian regime of truth, both Nakamura and Sakatani resort to the structural distinction articulated in *Xi ci I* (繫辭上: The Great Treatise I) I have mentioned earlier – that is to say, the distinction between *ri* defined as ‘what is above’ (形而上) and *ki* relegated to the realm of ‘what is below’ (形而下). To quote from *Xi ci I*,

乾坤其易之緼邪？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.)⁵⁷

Based on this 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,’ both Nakamura and Sakatani understand Western knowledge as knowledge of and about ‘definite things,’ occupying the realm of ‘what is below’ rather than the realm of ‘what is above.’ Western knowledge is, for them, not the knowledge of and about the immanent and permanent principle of all things. While, for both of them, this structuration of ‘what is above’ and ‘what is below’ offer the ground for recuperating the pre-eminence of their own knowledge tradition vis-à-vis Western

⁵⁷ 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.

knowledge, their utilisation of this structuration derives, as it seems, also from their idiosyncratic intellectual curiosity towards Western knowledge, which they had cultivated, among other things, through their discussions with members of *Meirokeisha* (明六社: Meiji Six Society). Or put it differently, precisely because of their sustained interactions with the advocates of Western knowledge, they were able to move beyond the polemical opposition between Western knowledge and Confucianism and to seek an alternative way of mapping the former within the established epistemic frame of the latter.

More specifically, Nakamura, for instance, defines Western knowledge as essentially technical and artistic (“技芸”). However, as he maintains, such knowledge of practical utility should not be considered irrelevant for man to arrive at moral and ethical conclusions, thus to attain the absolute, transcendental principle of all things. Practical knowledge can be instrumental for the much more significant purpose of life, that is to say, the pursuit of the ideal being, the pursuit of the Way.

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 the acquisition of technical and artistic knowledge. It is similar to when man cultivates fields. It has some utility, but it is something that the sages have relegated to the outside of their concern. To say that things manifest the Way is to say that the soil contains water. [...] Practical skills and expertise are part and parcel of my way of life.)⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Nakamura Masanao, “Yōgaku-ron” (On Western Knowledge), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taikēi, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1866]: 3 [3-6].

Here, Nakamura suggests that Western knowledge is analogous to the necessary and practical knowledge for cultivating fields (“稼圃を治むる”), indicating that to acquire Western knowledge is to make a conscious choice on what is useful for one’s way of life (“吾が道の中の一物”). Then, he goes on to define six specific fields of practical knowledge developed in the West that one may find useful: namely, astronomy, geography, mathematics, engineering, navigation, and medicine.⁵⁹ Central to this Nakamura’s enunciation is the idea that Western knowledge is, essentially, knowledge about *ki*, which concerns not what *ri*, the fundamental principle of all and every thing, actually is, but how the fundamental principle manifests itself as specific materiality of a thing. He declares that “to learn Western knowledge does not necessarily mean to stray from the path of the sages,”⁶⁰ insofar as the way of the sages, the Confucian moral and ethical teachings, transcends spatial and temporal boundaries that otherwise mark particularities of culture, custom, and social existence.

天地ノ覆載スル所、人物ノ蕃生スル所、邦各俗有り、民各風ヲ成ス、百爾ノ制度、同ジカラザル者有り、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 with specific customs and systems. No nations are the same. But the moral and ethical virtues, which define the relationship between the father and the son, between the sovereign and the subject, between the husband and the wife, between brothers, and between friends, are universal.)⁶¹

⁵⁹ He writes, “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。” Nakamura, “Yōgaku-ron,” 3.

⁶⁰ The original text reads, “洋学なる者、吾が道の外す能はざる所なり。” Ibid.

⁶¹ Nakamura Masanao, “穆理宋韻府鈔叙,” in Nakamura Masanao, *Ukei Bunshū*, Vol.2 (Writings of Nakamura Ukei, Vol. 2), Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1903: 82 [82-84].

Practical knowledge – Western knowledge – is, essentially, knowledge about *ki*, about variegated manifestations of the absolute, transcendental principle of all things, the existence of which is, for Nakamura, evident in the fact that moral and ethical virtues do not know the temporal and spatial boundaries. To this end, Western knowledge does not constitute an infringement of the Confucian Way of being. Furthermore, this practical knowledge may be selectively acquired and appropriated as a means of pursuing the Confucian moral and ethical conclusions, as a means of having recourse to *ri*.

Clearly, this premise of selective acquisition of Western knowledge contradicts the concern shared among the likes of Kido, Fukuzawa, and Fukuoka, who suspected that the acquisition of Western knowledge necessarily involved the internalisation of its form or its ‘spirit.’ Then, on what ground did Nakamura think it possible to make use of the contents of Western knowledge without internalising its form? His justification here is twofold. First, he asserted that the contents of a given knowledge tradition were not commodities exclusive to the spatio-temporally specific location from which the knowledge tradition had emerged. The contents of a given knowledge tradition were transferable and, for Nakamura, history was the very proof of this assertion. More specifically, he observed the development of some notable knowledge traditions, arguing that a knowledge tradition was the result of a historical process of integrating various discoveries and knowledge claims produced elsewhere into a body of knowledge – which, we may recall, is exactly the same discursive strategy that Nishi employed in differentiating Western knowledge from other knowledge traditions as that which was all at once unified and dispersed. According to Nakamura, the genealogy of Western knowledge spanned across spatial and temporal boundaries and, therefore, was an accumulative process of appropriating contents of other knowledge traditions,

such as the astronomy of ancient Egypt and the teleological mode of justification of Judaism.⁶² The sustained success of the Qin dynasty was derived from its disposition to willingly acquire practical and technological knowledge of Yan, Zhao, Han, and Wei. Even those Westerners who were keen to learn Chinese classics today were, as Nakamura suggested, the evidence that one could indeed learn the contents of a knowledge tradition without necessarily internalising its fundamental epistemic ground.⁶³ Second, Nakamura reasoned that, given the ever-shifting international political condition, the situation required treating the West more seriously, hence understanding the essential nature of Western knowledge. This point is expressed in his complaint, in “*Shingaku seisaku*” (振学政策: On Promoting Education, 1854), about the contemporary state of Neo-Confucian scholarship vis-à-vis Western knowledge.

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濠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

(The students of Confucianism today underestimate the ability of barbarians and relegate it to the outside of their concern. It is as if fog covers the trenches. When they meet those who read Western texts, they angrily condemn those well-informed

⁶² Nakamura, “Yōgaku-ron,” 4. This reference to the Judeo-Christian mode of teleological reasoning is exceedingly interesting. While Nakamura, in this text, indicates that Western knowledge lacks consideration of the fundamental principle, this reference seems to suggest that Western knowledge is, in fact, structured on the basis of a certain ‘spirit,’ or else, a ‘form’ of thinking and reasoning. Further still, through his translation of Samuel Smiles’s *Self Help* and J.S. Mill’s *On Liberty*, and by his decision to become a Christian in 1874, Nakamura seems to understand the spiritual and moral underpinnings of the West generally and Western knowledge more specifically. It is to this end that, against the observations of Ōkubo Toshiaki and Matsumoto Sannosuke, I am rather hesitant to classify Nakamura’s thought as one that participates in the discursive strategy of “*Tōyō dōtoku, seiyō geijutsu*” (東洋道德、西洋芸術: Eastern morality, Western arts). See Ōkubo, “Nakamura Keiu no shoki yōgaku-shisō to ‘Seigoku risshi-hen’ no yakujutsu oyobi kankō ni tsuite: jakkan no shin-shiryō no shōkai to sono kenshō” (Nakamura Keiu’s Western Learning and His Translation and Publication of ‘Self Help’), *Shien* 26:2-3, 1966: 67-92; Matsumoto, “Atarashii gakumon no keisei to chishikijin: Sakatani Shiroshi, Nakamura Ukei, Fukuzawa Yukichi o chūshin ni” (Development of a New Scholarship and Intellectuals: Sakatani Shiroshi, Nakamura Ukei, and Fukuzawa Yukichi), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taikai, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988: 424-464.

⁶³ Nakamura, “Yōgaku-ron,” 4-5.

about the West as admirers of the barbarians. Such an attitude is an attestation that they, in fact, do not understand the essence of Confucianism, which is to expand one's knowledge about affairs and characters of the foreign land.)⁶⁴

The condescending attitude towards Western knowledge shared among the students of Confucianism is, for Nakamura, problematic as it often results in the underestimation of Western power and the fallacious grasp of the immanent reality marked by Western imperialist and colonialist tendencies. Thus, he laments that his contemporaries are all concerned merely with having recourse to the 'correct meanings' of the words of the sages and, in so doing, have failed to reflect on what the situation required.⁶⁵ Here, being perhaps true to the earlier Confucian predilection towards the 'propensity of times,' Nakamura suggests that the situation requires articulating an accurate understanding of the West and its practical and technological knowledge that seem to have underpinned its power.

The efficacy of Nakamura's enunciation lies in its articulation of the relationship between the (Neo-)Confucian tradition and Western knowledge, not in terms of incommensurability, but as something being integral to one another – relationship that is enabled by the familiar Neo-Confucian structuration of the world and, by extension, its understanding of knowledge based on the dualism of *ri* and *ki*. This discursive manoeuvre is, first and foremost, an apparent response to the sustained attack on (Neo-)Confucianism orchestrated by those scholars of *Rangaku* (蘭学: Dutch studies) and *Yōgaku* (洋学: Western learning) for over a century. Earlier in 1776, for

⁶⁴ Nakamura Masanao, "Shingaku seisaku." Quoted in Matsumoto, "Atarashii gakumon no keisei to chishikijin," 438.

⁶⁵ This complaint is also evident in his text written sometime between 1854 and 1859, entitled "Rongaku heiso" (論学弊疏: On the Limitation of Our Tradition), in *Keiu Bunshū Vol. 1* (Works of Nakamura Keiu, Vol.1), Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1903: 4 [1-7].

instance, Sugita Genpaku (1733-1817) criticised the (Neo-)Confucian tradition as lacking consideration of laws and regularities of the world.⁶⁶ In a similar vein, Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757-1827) argued in 1816 that, in comparison to Western Knowledge, the (Neo-)Confucian tradition was preoccupied with the transcendental, but the exposition of which was sloppy at best.⁶⁷ In these critiques, the (Neo-)Confucian tradition is often characterised as being unable to explain, precisely because of its attention to the transcendental, the actual workings of the world and variegated principles of each and every thing. Nakamura, by resorting to the Neo-Confucian dualism of *ri* and *ki*, and by reiterating Zhu Xi's original thought on the pursuit of the principle (*ri*) through inquiries into individual functions of things (*ki*), effectively reverses the discursive structure of these critiques, and re-establishes the earlier Neo-Confucian view of knowledge that predates these critiques. Western knowledge as inquiries into manifold functions of things, as knowledge of *ki*, is for Nakamura co-constitutive of the Neo-Confucian tradition, to the extent that this knowledge of *ki* would provide a kind of teleological justification of the purported transcendental nature of *ri* as Neo-Confucians understand it.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The original text reads “支那の書は方ありて法なきなり。法なきにあらざるも、法となす所以のもの明らかならず。” 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*, Vol.64 (Japanese Intellectual Thoughts, Vol.64), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1976 [1776]: 234.

⁶⁷ As the original text reads, “人々其漢土ノ方法ニテ練磨円熟ノ業ヲナスモノアリトイヘドモ、彼ノ医流ハ診脈ト見証トヲ主トシテ、基本ヲ究ル所ニ至リテハ甚疎漏ナリヤト云フ事ヲ、彼西洋実測ノ説ニ徴シテ知り得タル所アレバ、コレヲ学ンデ其足ラザル所ヲ補ヒ、[...]” Ōtsuki Gentaku, *Ranyaku teikō* (蘭訳梯航: In Pursuit of Western Knowledge), 1816: 3. The original text is accessible online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko08/bunko08_a0032/ (13.02.2022)

⁶⁸ As I read it, at the personal level, Nakamura's exposition of Western knowledge as a mode of investigating *ki* also reflects his idiosyncratic interest in Western knowledge and, therefore, a sense of necessity to negotiate his intellectual affinity to the (Neo-)Confucian tradition with his enchantment with Western knowledge. While devoting himself to the study of (Neo-)Confucian thought, he also encountered *Rangaku* at an early age through Katsuragawa Kunioki (1826-1881) and Western knowledge later in 1866 when he volunteered himself to accompany as a supervisor of a group of *Bakufu*-sponsored students to the U.K. See Nakamura Masanao, “Ryūgaku negai tatematsuri sōrō zonji-yoru kakitsuke” (留学奉願候存寄書付: Letter of Application to Study Abroad), in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Meiji bungaku zenshū*, Vol. 3: *Meiji keimō shisō-shū* (Complete Works of Meiji Literature, Vol.3: Enlightenment Thoughts), Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1967: 279.

Nakamura was hardly alone in reiterating the Neo-Confucian dualism of *ri* and *ki* in an attempt to integrate Western knowledge into the existing Neo-Confucian regime of truth. Sakatani Rouro's text, '*Kajukusei ni shimesu kokoroesho*' (家塾生ニ示ス心得書: Instructions for My Students, 1862), also offers a similar exposition of Western knowledge with an even more blatant reference to and affirmation of the duality of *ri* and *ki*. At the beginning of the text, Sakatani reiterates not only the quintessentially Neo-Confucian claim of dualism but also its tendency to argue for 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。[...] 理ノ教ヲ礎ニ立テネ
 バナラヌ也

(Between Heaven and the Earth are the principle and material force. The principle dictates material force, and material force as being subjected to the principle carries the principle. The principle becomes teaching, regulating the Way of man. Material force becomes a tangible effect, notating the function of the Way. The principle is one, but the material force is manifold [...] and not stable as the principle. [...] We must attain the correct meaning of the principle.)⁶⁹

Following the long line of Neo-Confucian scholars, including Zhu Xi himself, Sakatani affirms here the duality of *ri* and *ki*, adding that the two are co-constitutive and absolutely inseparable: *ri* grounds *ki* and enables *ki* to manifest itself; *ki* assists *ri* in its manifold manifestations. By arguing, however, that *ri* is the stable principle (“定リシモノ”), which threads the universe with a certain sense of totality, Sakatani emphasises, just as many other Neo-Confucian scholars do, the primacy

⁶⁹ Sakatani Rouro, “*Kajukusei ni shimesu kokoroesho*,” in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikēi, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1862]: 7 [7-13].

of *ri* over *ki*. Thus, the primary concern for the Neo-Confucian scholarship, as he sees it, must revolve around *ri*, so that one can attain the correct meaning of the immanent principle of our being (“理ノ教ヲ髓ニ立テネバナラス”).

This reiteration of the duality of *ri* and *ki* with primacy ascribed to the former enabled Sakatani not only to articulate, as Nakamura did, a discursive space to integrate Western knowledge into the Confucian structure of knowledge; but also to re-assert the purported supremacy of (Neo-)Confucianism as the locus of attaining *ri*. Thus, on Western knowledge, Sakatani had this to say.

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, to investigate *ki* (material force). Insofar as the function of *ki* is to assist *ri* (the principle) to manifest itself in all things, the sovereign has authorised Western learning as an instrument for actualising its Way of being [as the governing].)⁷⁰

Here, just as Nakamura does, Sakatani describes Western knowledge as a scholarship that occupies the realm of ‘what is below,’ investigating *ki* as the manifold manifestations of *ri*. But this does not mean that Western knowledge is in any way inferior or irrelevant. Insofar as *ri* and *ki* are co-constitutive, different but one, the investigation of *ki* is, for Sakatani, an essential means of, or instrument (“道具”) for, expanding one’s understanding of the working of *ri*. The investigation of *ki*, Western knowledge, ultimately serves to confirm the immanent effect of *ri*. And this is why, in the eyes of Sakatani, the political authority has long authorised the acquisition of Western knowledge.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Further still, Sakatani tautologically argues that the increasing currency of Western knowledge, knowledge of *ki*, is the very evidence that there already exists a well-established scholarship on *ri*, the Neo-Confucian tradition, which provides the ground for the investigation into *ki*, Western knowledge.⁷¹ This tautological argument, irrespective of its validity, is, indeed, a recurring discursive strategy in Sakatani's corpus. For instance, in his congratulatory address to Egi Takatō, who was appointed as a secretary at the Japanese Embassy in Washington D.C., Sakatani even went so far as to argue that the Westerners themselves were relying, in their investigations into *ki*, on Confucius' exposition of *ri*.

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
(Confucius' learning and virtues were derived from an uncivilised world of China. However, the impartiality of Westerners [towards the Confucian thought] is not to be underestimated. Most of the Confucian canon was translated into their languages. Once they recognise that knowledge of things was, in fact, brought to life through the unbiased learning and virtues of Confucius, they praise Confucianism and treat it as that which provides the principle that sustains their knowledge of things. Confucius and the Western Sages are different. The ancient and the contemporary are different in letters, in language, and in customs. But, in essence, are we so different? All of us are human, all pursuing the Way. [...] How can the principle be different?)⁷²

⁷¹ The original text reads, “理ガナクテ、気学ガ立モノデナシ。今太平ノ沢ニ浴シ、ワルク云ナガラモ、洋学ノデキルハ、我国ノ理立ラルユヘナリ” Ibid., 8.

⁷² Sakatani Rouro, “Egi Takatō-shi beikoku-iki 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.

Whenever one reads Confucius' works, as Sakatani maintains, one cannot but admire his unbiased scholarship (“孔夫子ノ公平ナル学 [...] 賛嘆シテ”), realising that, through Confucius' method of learning, one may be able to have recourse to the truth (“開物成務ノ真理ヲ得フモノト”). The Confucian tradition and Western knowledge may differ. But the Western admiration of the works of Confucius tautologically proves, for Sakatani, that the Westerners, too, are seeking to attain the absolute principle as Confucius defines it, and that sustains their own knowledge about things. Hence, there is no other than the – Confucian – transcendental principle (“豈又異ナルベキノ理アランヤ”). Further still, Sakatani argues that while Western knowledge may lack a profound consideration of the fundamental principle, the knowledge tradition that emerged in China may be limited in their understanding of the manifold manifestations of that very principle. Therefore, these two kinds of knowledge tradition, when and if combined under the Neo-Confucian regime of truth based on the dualism of *ri* and *ki*, can effectively expand the horizon of one's knowledge about the universe.⁷³

⁷³ He writes, “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” Sakatani, “Kajukusei ni shimesu kokoroesho,” 9. In this moment of enunciation, Sakatani's argument turns exceedingly political and ideological. By emphasising the ability of the Neo-Confucius tradition, and especially that of Japanese neo-Confucius scholars, to integrate Western knowledge into its own mode of thought and to offer a purportedly much more profound understanding of the fundamental principle, Sakatani then concludes that both *Kangaku* and *Yōgaku*, if they are done by the Japanese, are essentially *Nihon-gaku* (日本学: scholarship of Japan) – or in his own words, “漢学モ洋学モ、日本ノ者ガスレバ皆日本学ナリ.” (Ibid., 10). Recognising this discursive strategy to argue for the particular ability of the Japanese to have recourse to the universal, one cannot but draw a certain parallel between Sakatani's mode of justification and, for instance, Fukuzawa's insistence on historical progress and Japan's ability to internalise the Western civilisation to 'leave' Asia. See Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (文明論の概略: An Outline of a Theory of Civilization), 1875. The original text is accessible online at: <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/ja/fukuzawa/a23/77> (13.02.2022). For English translation, see David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst III (trans.), New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008 [1875]. See also, Fukuzawa, “Datsua-ron” (脱亜論: Good-bye Asia), *Jiji-shinpō*, 16th March 1885. Lee Saebom offers us a comprehensive survey of the politico-ideological elements of Sakatani's thought. See Lee, “Shushi-gakusha Sakatani Shiroshi ni okeru 'ri' to tennō” (The Concept of Ri and the Emperor in Sakatani Shiroshi's Neo-Confucius Thought), *Japanese Journal of Political Thought*, 10, 2010: 458-489.

Of course, the primary purpose of those enunciations of Nakamura and Sakatani was, first and foremost, to defend their own knowledge tradition vis-à-vis increasingly intellectual and political predilection towards things Western. It is also equally plausible with the clarity of hindsight that their attempts to restructure knowledge through the Neo-Confucian dualism of *ri* and *ki* do not necessarily address what Fukuzawa called the ‘spirit of civilisation’ that was said to underpin Western knowledge. However, in a general sense, Nakamura’s and Sakatani’s enunciations participate, as it seems, the general discursive space of the late 19th century, whereby various oppositions (things Japanese / things Western, the familiar / the foreign, the traditional / the modern, the ethical / the practical) were sought to be integrated into the whole. Recall, for instance, my discussion on the discursive separation of *gakumon* from *kyōiku* in the previous chapter, through which both the (Neo-)Confucius teaching of ethics and morality and Western knowledge as ‘lofty subjects’ came to co-exist within the structured system of education. This general discursive space of the late 19th century was, indeed, reflexive of the sense of necessity to incorporate things Western without negating the purported historical and cultural specificities of Japan, that is to say, to become modern and yet to remain different.

Here, translation became the very means of maintaining a certain equilibrium between the desire to be on par with the West and the assertion of national difference, precisely because translation was an act that embodied the creative capacity, desires, dreams, and aspirations of the translating.⁷⁴ To this end, Nakamura’s and Sakatani’s enunciations were also reflexive of the general tendency to dialectically resolve the opposition, here the opposition between

⁷⁴ As Naoki Sakai writes, “translation contains a doubled sense of meaning. Translation is the work or process of re-writing and re-stating, but at the same time is the text which emerges as a result of passing through this work or process. To speak of the translation of Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* on the one hand signifies the task of repeating the original text in another medium, and at the same time, it also connotes the new text that is born as a result of this task.” See 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/> (10.02.2022).

(Neo-)Confucianism and Western knowledge. For them, translation – translating Western knowledge as knowledge of *ki* – was the very means of dialectically resolving the opposition. Their attempts to restructure knowledge by reiterating the *ri*-knowledge structuration were to tacitly approve the integration of Western knowledge into the existing epistemic landscape by expanding the semantic scope of the existing lexicons. In other words, it is not that the advocates of Western knowledge, such as Nishi, Nakae and Kikuchi, arbitrarily abstracted vernaculars from the ‘old’ traditions in their attempts to understand the nature, scope, and structure of Western knowledge; the works of (Neo-)Confucian scholars including Nakamura’s and Sakatani’s were crucial to the extent that these works expanded the boundaries of (Neo-)Confucian categories, such as *ri* and *ki*, in their response to the increasing prevalence of Western knowledge. This means that the contestation between the (Neo-)Confucian scholars and the advocates of Western knowledge was not simply a contestation between two epistemic traditions. Nor was it merely a contestation between two epistemic traditions within a shared semantic space of *ri*. Though paradoxical as it may sound, the contestation was, as it seems, also marked by a sense of the symbiotic discursive relationship between the (Neo-)Confucian restructuring of knowledge and the intellectual effort of grasping the unified and dispersed nature of Western knowledge, hence by the symbiotic discursive relationship enabled by the very sharedness of the semantic space of *ri*. Importantly, contestations within a shared semantic space of *ri* had long been the fixture of the intellectual life in the Japanese archipelago. As we shall see in the following chapters, the intellectual development of various knowledge traditions, such as *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku*, were foregrounded by the transvaluation of *ri* and the restructuring of knowledge through such transvaluation. To this end, the contestation between (Neo-)Confucianism and Western knowledge at the onset of Meiji modernisation – the contestation that both the advocates and dissents of Western knowledge

overemphasised for self-serving purposes – participated in a familiar intellectual schema of epistemic reconfiguration.

4.3. Signifier, Signification, and Discursive Inversion

The identification of *ri* as the most basic proposition that grounds and unifies all Western knowledge suggests a certain inversion of the semantic relationship between signifier and signification – or what Hans Erich Bödeker understands as the relationship between “lexical organization” and “social communicative references,” or Valentin N. Voloshinov between meaning and theme.⁷⁵ The signifier ‘*ri*’, which, for instance, designated the absolute, transcendental principle for (Neo-)Confucians, came to mark the unifying principle of Western knowledge by transvaluation through translational practices of, for example, Nishi Amane. This inversion of the relationship between signifier and signification, however, does not mean the complete erasure of the ‘old’ significations. As Douglas Howland posits in his analysis of Japan’s attempt to translate Western political concepts, the materiality of signifier governs “the capacity of language users to create new concepts or expand existing concepts in a new direction.”⁷⁶ Expanding on Howland’s claim, I argue here that a new signification (for instance, *ri* as the unifying principle that grounds all Western knowledge) always has the imprint of traces of other hitherto prevalent significations (for example, the Confucian understanding of *ri* as the absolute

⁷⁵ See 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]; Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (trans.), New York, NY: Academic Press, 1973: 99-106.

⁷⁶ Douglas R. Howland, *Translating the West: Language and Political Reason in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002: 27.

and transcendental). Such traces, in turn, suggest that the product of translational practices (here *ri* as the unifying principle of Western knowledge) inevitably embeds within itself traces of *différance* – that is to say, latent incommensurability between what is translated (in this case, the Western concept of ‘reason,’ ‘law of nature,’ or ‘natural law’) and its translated meaning (‘*ri*’ as the unifying principle of Western knowledge). That translational practices and the consequent inversion of the relationship between signifier and signification together leave certain traces of discursive difference between, on the one hand, ‘reason,’ ‘law of nature,’ ‘natural law’ and, on the other hand, ‘*ri*’, is the argument I seek to pursue here.

In seeking to explain the inversion of signifier and signification within the shared semantic space of *ri*, as well as the consequent *différance*, I shall expand further here on my earlier discussion on Nishi’s attempt of anchoring *ri* into the semantic field of *kotowari / hazu*, and discuss in detail some discursive strategy for the semantic inversion. How did the signifier *ri*, which hitherto designated a specific mode of structuration of the lifeworld in the semantic of, for instance, the Neo-Confucian tradition, come to signify *ri* of Western knowledge? How was the inversion of the semantic relationship between the signifier and its signification forged and justified? How did the signification of *ri* come to represent an instance of semantic and, by extension, epistemic rupture while the very signifier *ri* continued to emanate a sense of continuity?⁷⁷

As I will argue in the following, for their attempts to translate Western knowledge within the semantic space of *ri*, Meiji intellectuals resorted to two specific strategies: the strategy of conscious rupture; and the strategy that simultaneously provokes consciousness of rupture and consciousness of continuity. More specifically, the first strategy is that of – often polemical and even crude –

⁷⁷ Interestingly, Wang Hui describes the Chinese Neo-Confucian discourse of dislodging the concept of ‘propensity of times’ from its privileged place with the new predilection towards the concept of ‘propensity of principle’ as something that was also “produced under conditions of historical rupture or disconnection from orthodoxy.” See Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 76.

comparison between Western knowledge and the existing traditions of knowledge, through which *ri* as the signifier is wholly removed from the existing intellectual traditions and relocated within the discursive field of Western knowledge, as a lexical and conceptual commodity exclusive to Western knowledge. Here, ‘old’ significations of *ri* are entirely negated as irrelevant or wrong. To this end, this strategy participates, to borrow from Skinner, the “acts of commending (and expressing and soliciting approval)” of Western knowledge and simultaneously the acts of “condemning (and expressing and soliciting disapproval)” of the existing traditions of knowledge.⁷⁸ The other strategy is that of historicisation and transvaluation. Upon recognising the historical emergence of *ri* within the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, this strategy resorts to a kind of Copernican Revolution, first, within the epistemic space of (Neo-)Confucianism in order to offer an alternative reading of the (Neo-)Confucian dualism of *ri* and *ki*. But to provide a discursive justification to this alternative reading, this strategy postulates a new ground for enunciation and validation – a ground that is markedly Cartesian. To this end, this strategy expands the semantic space of *ri* to encompass all at once the (Neo-)Confucian signification of *ri* (consciousness of continuity) and *ri* as the unifying principle of Western knowledge (consciousness of rupture).

The First Strategy: Conscious Rapture

For its simplicity and polemical efficacy, the first comparative strategy was much more pervasive than the second strategy of historicisation and transvaluation. For instance, Tsuda Mamichi (1829-

⁷⁸ Quentin Skinner, “Rhetoric and Conceptual Change,” *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, 3:1, 1999: 61 [60-73].

1903) wrote that, while Western knowledge was a knowledge of utility (実学: *jitsugaku*) grounded on the certainty of *ri* (“確実ノ理”), the existing traditions of knowledge such as Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism, and *Yōmeigaku*, produced nothing but hollow knowledge (虚学: *kyogaku*), and thus remained in the realm of vain speculation.⁷⁹ Taguchi Ukichi (1855-1905) argued that the central purpose of Western scholarships was to validate empirically rather than speculatively (“実験に基づく”) the principle that truly exists in and, by extension, regulates the workings of the universe (“其実際は必ず宇宙空間に存する”). In comparison, what had been long recognised as *gakumon* in Japan, specifically *Kangaku* and *Kogaku*, was mere textual interpretations of the opinions of the past. Such interpretative exercises were for intellectual pastimes, only serving the purpose of relieving oneself from boredom (“全く消日の一戯具”).⁸⁰ Ōtori Keisuke, while reiterating the distinction similar to that which Tsuda made between *jitsugaku* and *kyogaku*, maintained that *Kokugaku* and *Kangaku* failed to verify, in their canon, the purported truth that was said to dictate the workings of the universe. Then, he went on to argue that scholars of these existing traditions would immensely benefit from engaging with the mode of reasoning and thinking that sustained Western knowledge (“一通り西洋学問ノ道筋ダケハ心得居ラネバナ

⁷⁹ The original text reads “蓋学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。” Tsuda, “Kaika o susumeru hōhō o ronzu,” 13. To note, the term ‘*kyogaku*’ was used for a certain period of time after the Second World War to designate humanities in opposition to pure science. However, in this context, the term encompasses the existing traditions of knowledge already prevalent at the onset of the systematic introduction of Western knowledge.

⁸⁰ Taguchi wrote, “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。” Taguchi Ukichi, *Nippon kaika no seishitsu* (日本開化ノ性質: The Nature of Japanese Modernisation), Tokyo: Aoki sūzandō, 1886: 50-53.

ラヌ”), because doing so would allow them to truly comprehend the actual principle of things (“実理”), without which one cannot separate useful knowledge from useless knowledge (“要用” and “無用”).⁸¹

Such a comparative strategy to argue for the inadequacy and irrelevance of the existing knowledge traditions was indeed prolific among many advocates of Western knowledge, just as those examples above demonstrate. But it was Fukuzawa Yukichi who provided a comprehensive, comparative rendering of the difference between Western knowledge and existing knowledge traditions by attributing *ri* exclusively to the former. Of course, for Fukuzawa, a comparison served, more than anything, as a teleological point of departure to justify his own intellectual propensity towards Western knowledge. And his account invariably embedded within itself a polemical undertone. Yet, in this rather combative pattern of his discursive address, we can begin to see not only what Fukuzawa perceived as the central edifice of Western knowledge, that is to say, its principle of unity but also, and more importantly, certain traces of the existing knowledge traditions in his discursive enunciations, which he vehemently sought to negate.

In a series of articles entitled ‘*Kyokugai ukami*’ (局外窺見: An Observation on the Opposition, 1882) published in *Jiji shinpō* newspaper between 19th and 29th July 1882, Fukuzawa remarked that, when comparing Japanese morals, customs, as well as arts and crafts to the European equivalents, there were, in fact, more similarities than one might initially surmise. However,

⁸¹ Ōtori described *Kokugaku* and *Kangaku* as something that “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” and that “支那学ヲ専門ニ修ムル人アルニモセヨ、一通り西洋学問ノ道筋ダケハ心得居ラネバナラスナリ。否ラザレバ、此点ハ要用、彼件ハ無用ナリトノ取舍分別ヲ決スルコト難シ。[...] 空文浮辞ニ陥ラズ実理ヲ研究シ [...]” Ōtori Keisuke, “Gakumon-ben” (学問弁: On *Gakumon*), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikai, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1886]: 88, 89, 93 [86-93].

concerning the state of knowledge, its production and dissemination, Japan and Europe were incomparable to one another.

独り智学ノ一段ニ至テハ大同小異ニ非ズ、否ナ小同大異ニモ非ズ、殆ト我固有ノ文明ニ於テハ智学ノ形跡ナシト云フモ可ナリ。我国ノ文事ハ[...]苟モ実物ノ理ヲ推究スルニ非ズ。

(Concerning knowledge, there are neither many similarities nor minor differences between Japan and Europe. There are not even little similarities or significant differences. Our tradition does not even have any traces of proper knowledge. There is no predilection in our scholarships to seek the principle of things.)⁸²

It was, according to Fukuzawa, not that there existed differences between Japan and Europe with regards to how knowledge was produced and disseminated; the juxtaposition was untenable in the first place because, in Japan, what he considered ‘proper knowledge,’ the pursuit of the principle of things (“実物ノ理ヲ推究”), did not even exist.

What, then, is ‘proper knowledge’? How does he define ‘*jitsubutsu-no-ri*’ (実物の理: the principle of things)? Fukuzawa’s distinction – and his desire to make a distinction – between Western knowledge and the existing knowledge traditions is undoubtedly perspicuous, if not entirely warranted. Yet, his exposition of ‘proper knowledge’ and ‘the principle of things’ remains rather ambiguous. As I see it, the ambiguity derives from his discursive focus, which is not on the question of what the principle actually is, but on the question of how one may have recourse to the

⁸² Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Kyokugai ukami” (An Observation of the Opposition), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taikēi, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988 [1882]: 48 [36-59]. This series of articles was written as a critical response to 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 the education policy 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.), *Kyōiku chokugo kanpatsu shiryō-shū, Vol.1* (Documents on Imperial Rescripts on Education, Vol.1), Tokyo: Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyūjo, 1938: 22-24.

principle. In other words, his concern was less about metaphysical postulates but more about the guiding propositions of scientific inquiries – what he describes as ‘*butsuri no gensoku*’ (物理の原則: laws of nature / scientific laws). The problem with his discursive address is that, in seeking to justify his focus on scientific inquiries, Fukuzawa *a priori* presumes – or more precisely put, has to *a priori* presume – without any specification, the existence of *ri* as the unifying principle of all (Western) knowledge, of all laws of nature. What he characterises variously as ‘*shizen no gensoku*’ (自然の原則: the principle of nature), ‘*tennen no gensoku*’ (天然ノ原則: the natural principle), ‘*jitsubutu no ri*’ (実物ノ理: the principle of things), or ‘*banko fueki no gensoku*’ (万古不易ノ原則: the eternal principle), are never clearly explained in his enunciations.

More to the point, on the idea of ‘proper knowledge,’ Fukuzawa writes as follows.

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 scholarships in Japan], Western knowledge is grounded on the principle of nature, which determines the shape, quantity, and temporal movement of things that make up the world [...] Central for intellectual inquiries [...] is the investigation of laws of nature. We must recognise that Western knowledge is indeed dictated by that principle of nature.)⁸³

Here, Fukuzawa argues that knowledge is grounded on ‘*shizen no gensoku*’ (“自然ノ原則”: the principle of nature), which *a priori* determines the shape, number, and temporal movement of a thing. What one must investigate, according to Fukuzawa, is not necessarily the principle of nature

⁸³ Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Kyokugai ukami,” 49.

itself that predetermines the physicality of a thing, but *'butsuri no gensoku'* (“物理の原則”: laws of nature / scientific laws), which can be understood here as specific manifestations of the principle. This general predilection towards the question of ‘how’ (how the principle of nature manifests itself) rather than that of ‘what’ (what the principle of nature actually is) is, indeed, a recurring trope of Fukuzawa’s writings. For instance, in *'Butsuri-gaku no yōyō'* (物理学の要論: The Significance of Science, 1882),⁸⁴ he writes,

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, there is something unchanging. Western boils at 212 degrees, which was true for the age of the Gods and is still true today. Vapour expansion rate is the same across the world. 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.)⁸⁵

What Fukuzawa describes as *'butsuri no gensoku'* (物理の原則: laws of nature / scientific laws) is that which remains unaffected by temporal and spatial qualifications that otherwise mark a specific context in which a given phenomenon – a manifestation of the principle of nature – is observed. For Fukuzawa, Western knowledge is proper knowledge insofar as it engages with and investigates such laws of nature, which exist in their eternal present and therefore are free from

⁸⁴ Of course, under the schema of translation today, *'butsuri-gaku'* must be translated into ‘physics.’ However, I am reluctant to use the term ‘physics’ here as the semantic equivalence to *'butsuri-gaku'* because Fukuzawa’s description of *'butsuri-gaku'* encompasses not merely the contemporary sense of physics but also what we consider today as chemistry, engineering, and even some areas of mathematics.

⁸⁵ Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Butsuri-gaku no yōyō” (The Significance of Science), in *Jiji shinpō*, 22nd March 1882.

gross cultural and historical particularities, and which are the manifests of the fundamental principle immanent in all things.

In comparison, as Fukuzawa maintains, the existing traditions of knowledge in Japan lack any consideration of laws of nature.⁸⁶ For Fukuzawa, this inadequacy derives not from the purported deficiency of their methods of learning, which many scholars of Meiji variously characterise as interpretative and speculative. Instead, the inadequacy derives from the fact that what is considered the fundamental principle, *ri*, in these existing traditions is, in fact, not the fundamental principle that regulates the working of the universe. Fukuzawa specified this point, for instance, in his article ‘*Bungaku-kaiin ni tsugu*’ (文学会員に告ぐ: To the Members of the Literary Society, 1882). He criticised the existing traditions of knowledge as being entirely dependent on the notion of the *yin* and *yang* and the five elements (陰陽五行) of Chinese cosmology, which, for him, were mere mythical speculations. For this reason, these traditions had failed to ground their knowledge on the fundamental and eternal principle (“*万古不易ノ原則: banko fueki no gensoku*”), which was thought to dictate the workings of the universe and hence verifying the truth, and which, simultaneously, was thought to *a priori* determine appropriate modes of intellectual inquiries into laws of nature. Of course, in hindsight, we see in his reasoning here an inevitable sense of anachronism – to judge the (in)adequacy of the existing traditions’ regime of truth by imposing the regime of truth that is formed and justified in a completely different spatio-cultural context. Nevertheless, this anachronism was precisely what enabled Fukuzawa to argue that there was nothing remarkable about the mode of reasoning (“*根拠*”), writing (“*文章*”), and comprehension

⁸⁶ The original text reads, “[...] 日本固有ノ文明ハ全ク物理ノ原則ヲ欠クモノト云フ可シ。” Ibid.

(“義解”) of the existing traditions.⁸⁷ To this end, as he concluded, the intellectual landscape in Japan was rather dreary, pervaded with the language of morality that few would, in fact, attentively listen to.⁸⁸

Upon establishing that the existing traditions of knowledge were not ‘proper knowledge,’ Fukuzawa devoted himself to explain the primacy of what he variously called *butsurei-gaku* (物理学: science) or *jitsugaku* (実学: science), that is to say, fields of knowledge that purported to reveal laws of nature within their own remits.⁸⁹ His discursive strategy here is exceeding simple and blatant: to argue for the primacy of science, he equates scientific progress to civilisational progress.

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。

⁸⁷ The original text reads, “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。” Fukuzawa, “Bungakukaiin ni tsugu,” 208.

⁸⁸ Fukuzawa writes, “我国儒仏流ノ眼ヲ以テ見レバ、此原則ナルモノハ徳義ノ事ニモ非ズ風流ノ談ニモ非ズシテ、甚ダ殺風景ニ思ハレ、之ニ説クニ其道理ノミヲ以テスルモ耳ヲ傾ル者少ナクシテ、 [...]” Fukuzawa, “Kyokugai ukami,” 49.

⁸⁹ In the original text, Fukuzawa adds phonetic characters ‘サイエンス’ (science) next to the term ‘実学’ (*jitsugaku*). See Fukuzawa, “Bungakukaiin ni tsugu,” 205. This idea of *butsurei-gaku* (science) can be approximated to, for example, what 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) that I have discussed earlier in this chapter. It must be noted, however, that Fukuzawa’s use of the term ‘*jitsugaku*’ is never fixed. In a broader sense, he defines the term as “人間普通日用に近き実学” while, in a narrower sense, as “文明の実学誠に実なりと云ふも唯事物の真理原則を明にして其応用の法を説くのみ。” See the first chapter of Fukuzawa, *Gakumon no susume* (学問のすすめ: An Encouragement of Learning), 1872: 6. The original text is available online at: <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/en/fukuzawa/a15/42> (13/02/2022). See also Fukuzawa, “Jitsugaku no hitsuyō” (実学の必要: The Necessity of Science), in *Fukuō hyakuwa* (A Hundred Stories of Fukuzawa Yukichi), Tokyo: Jiji shinpō, 1897: 114 [113-116]. The original text is available at: <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/ja/fukuzawa/a49/113> (13/02/2022).

(Civilisational progress means the gradual expansion of the realm of natural law. Arts and science may differ from one another. Still, there were those who participated in the realm of arts who discovered natural law and integrated such discoveries into the realm of sciences – that is called civilisational progress.)⁹⁰

For Fukuzawa, civilisational progress is sustained by the gradual expansion of the horizon of our understanding of what he characterises as ‘natural law’ (“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”), which is, as I read it, equated in his corpus to laws of nature. Furthermore, as he specifies, the expansion of our understanding of laws of nature is notated by discoveries. This specification implies not only a specific methodological attitude to attain knowledge, but also that knowledge acquisition is an accumulative process and that the time of learning is linear rather than cyclical. Thus, on the question of what *butsuri-gaku*, science, ought to do, Fukuzawa explains that,

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 to reveal, based on the principle of nature, the quality and primary function of a thing, and to use such knowledge of a thing for a practical purpose [...] Science must be grounded on the principle of nature. There is nothing that exists outside this principle. If there is that which seems to defy the principle, it simply means that our investigation is insufficient.)⁹¹

⁹⁰ Fukuzawa, “Bungakukaiin ni tsugu,” 205. Earlier, I have pointed out the discrepancy in Nishi Amane’s use of ‘laws of nature’ and ‘natural laws’ (see Footnote 21 of this chapter, p.241). We notice again here in Fukuzawa’s enunciation a certain discrepancy between, on the one hand, his use of the term 原則 (ナチュラルロー), which literally translates as ‘natural laws,’ and, on the other hand, the signification of ‘natural law’ in English as a system of law based on natural rights conferred by God, nature, or reason, rather than by legislation. What Fukuzawa describes here as 原則 (ナチュラルロー) is not the theories of ethics, politics, and moralities, as the English term defines it, but the fundamental principle that regulates all and everything.

⁹¹ Fukuzawa, “Butsuri-gaku no yōyō.”

Nothing in the lifeworld escapes the dictate of the fundamental principle (“人間万事この理に洩るるものある可らず”). Even what he calls “技術 (アート)” – which encompasses applied sciences, technologies, and arts as a wide range of human practices of creative expression – embodies and simultaneously is dictated by the fundamental principle and, thus, participates in the realm of *jitsugaku* (science) (“其「サイエンス」ニ属ス可キハ勉メテ之ニ編入スル”). In essence, Fukuzawa suggests that one can have recourse to the principle through scientific explorations and discoveries of various laws of nature.

Fukuzawa’s intention here is exceedingly obvious. For him, these comparative enunciations enable insistences to point to the inadequacy of the existing traditions of knowledge. However, it is crucial to recognise here that the purported difference between Western knowledge and the existing traditions that Fukuzawa relies on for his enunciation is not *a priori* out there to be revealed; the difference is out there because it is forged as such through the act of translating *ri* as the unifying principle of Western knowledge. In other words, only when *ri* is expatriated from the existing traditions of knowledge and repositioned as something exclusive to Western knowledge can the differences be forged as such. The difference – and, by extension, the inadequacy of the existing traditions – does not exist before translation.

Obviously, for such repositioning, the historicity of *ri* as a lexical and conceptual device developed and utilised within the existing knowledge traditions must be negated entirely. And it is in this instance that we see the irony of Fukuzawa’s discursive strategy. Through his rendering of the primacy of science, of *butsuri-gaku*, he endorses a scientific approach based on the inductive mode of reasoning and investigation into laws of nature, which he understands as the variegated manifestations of the fundamental principle. However, his articulation of the relationship between

laws of nature and the fundamental principle relies, in fact, on the deductive reasoning that *a priori* presumes the existence of such principle: for something to have certain regularities (laws of nature), there must be some kind of transcendental force (the fundamental principle) that determines the regularities. Precisely because of this deductive reasoning, precisely because he fails to specify what the fundamental principle of Western knowledge actually is, Fukuzawa's exposition, as it seems to me, inadvertently affirms Nakamura and Sakatani's claim that Western knowledge is, indeed, a mode of investigating 'what is below.' To put it otherwise, Fukuzawa's exposition did not go beyond the dualism – 'what is above' and 'what is below,' or *ri* as the realm of deductive reasoning and *ki* as the realm of inductive reasoning – that had long notated the understanding of the structure of knowledge in Japan. Therefore, the only plausible way for Fukuzawa to justify his own predilection towards Western knowledge was to blatantly claim the following.

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, and thus, it is not the property of Confucian scholars.)⁹²

To justify his predilection towards Western knowledge, to justify his discursive manoeuvre to expatriate *ri* from the existing traditions of knowledge, Fukuzawa made – had to make – a leap of faith, so to say, and negated completely both the historicity of *ri* as something derived from other knowledge traditions and the (Neo-)Confucian usage of *ri*.

⁹² Fukuzawa, "Bungaku-kaiin ni tsugu," 206. In the original text, Fukuzawa gestured to the loanword 'プリンシパル' (principle) as the original term of the Chinese character '主義'. To put this into a broader semantic landscape of the 1880s, *Tetsugaku Jii* (哲学字彙: Dictionary of Philosophical Terms, 1881) defines the English term 'principle' as 'michi (道), gennri (原理), and shugi (主義),' and James Curtis Hepburn's Japanese-English dictionary of 1886 defines the term as 'ri, dōri, kotowari, michi, moto, kizashi, riai.'

As blatant and contentious as this reasoning may be, it is worth emphasising a certain efficacy of this discursive schema of repositioning *ri* as the exclusive property of Western knowledge. By claiming that Confucian scholars cannot possess *ri*, Fukuzawa negates the epistemic ground of the Confucian tradition and effectively retrieves *ri* as the signifier from the existing traditions of knowledge. This retrieval is a strategy of disruption and erasure in writing. His enunciation is, first of all, a conscious disruption of the temporality of *ri* as the signifier. In his argument that the existing traditions fail to offer any consideration of the fundamental principle and that they do not possess *ri*, the past (*ri* articulated as the signifier for the existing knowledge traditions) is disconnected from the present (*ri* as the signifier of the fundamental principle of Western knowledge). This temporal disruption enables a conscious erasure of the past signification (for instance, *ri* as the absolute, transcendental principle of (Neo-)Confucian cosmology), that is to say, the expunging of any significations that the existing traditions variously encoded to the idea of *ri*. This lexical manoeuvre, in turn, creates a new possibility for Fukuzawa to address the present signification (*ri* as the unifying principle of Western knowledge). Here, *ri*, as the principle that governs Western knowledge, comes to represent not the expansion of existing significations in a new direction but as a new linguistic contrivance to understand the epistemic frame of Western knowledge.

The Second Strategy: Consciousness of Rapture and Consciousness of Continuity

In contrast to the comparative strategy of conscious rupture, the second strategy for reconfiguring the semantic relationship between the signifier and signification revolves all at once around the

consciousness of rupture and the consciousness of continuity. Here, Nishi Amane's attempt to understand what *ri* actually is offers an illustrative example.

I have already pointed out in the chapter Nishi's admission, in his 1872 '*Shōhaku sakki*,' of the difficulty of understanding the fundamental, unifying principle of Western knowledge. I have also explained that, upon recognising this difficulty, Nishi resorted to a double-bind translational strategy: first, to equate the unifying principle of Western knowledge to *ri*, a lexical and conceptual device that had long sustained various knowledge traditions in Japan; and second, to equate *ri* to the existing Japanese terms, *kotowari* (事分 / 言分) and *hazu* (筈).⁹³ In a text entitled '*Ri no ji no setsu*' (理の字の説: A Theory of the Term '*Ri*,' 1889), Nishi offers us a rendering of *ri* with a more comprehensive strategy, which involves both the technique of historicisation and transvaluation.⁹⁴

Nishi's exposition begins with a rather banal observation of the historical emergence of the idea of *ri*. In '*Ri no ji no setsu*,' he attributes its origin to Neo-Confucianism, specifying that *ri* was established as the unifying principle by the Confucian scholars of the Song and Ming dynasties through their critique of the Buddhist concept of 'emptiness' (空 *sūnyatā*: *kū* in Japanese, *kong* in Chinese).⁹⁵ *Ri* as the unifying principle, accordingly to Nishi's reading of the (Neo-)Confucius

⁹³ See my discussion in pp. 239-241.

⁹⁴ Nishi Amane, "Ri no ji no setsu," in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū, Vol. 1* (Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960: 598-602. It is, in fact, unknown when exactly Nishi wrote this text. However, it was based on Nishi's 1889 lecture given at the gathering of *Kōdōkai* (弘道会), which was initially established in 1876 by Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) and had since become the primary private organisation to promote *shūshin*. The *Kōdōkai* was especially prolific in promoting *Kyōiku chokugo* (Imperial Rescript on Education) and its ideology that revolved around the imperial family as the absolute sovereign of the Japanese nation. This background of the text is especially interesting given Nishi's purported intellectual standing as the father of modern (Western) philosophy in Japan.

⁹⁵ For example, Chen Beixi argues in his *Zingli xiyi* (性理字義: The Meanings of Neo-Confucius Terms) 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 blessing 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 goes on to maintain, "Buddhists

canon, is that which dictates both the inherent nature of human being and the ontological being of all things – or else, what he calls ‘*sei*’ (性: quality or nature) – and which manifests itself through *ki*.

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 [*xing ji ri*: 性即理]. Yin-Yang and five elements dictate all things, and *ki* determines the shape of all things. The principle is also immanent. In this way, man attains five virtues by the immanence of the principle in us all – this is the nature of things.)⁹⁶

There is nothing remarkable about this observation of the historical emergence of the Neo-Confucian notion of *ri*. If anything, this enunciation reflects Nishi’s proficiency in reading Chinese classics and, perhaps, also his sense of indebtedness to the (Neo-)Confucius tradition for his intellectual itinerary.

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 A. 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 publication 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 Vol.21* (Early Modern Chinese Classics: Intellectual Thought, Vol.21), Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1972: 46b-47a, 51a.

⁹⁶ Nishi, “*Ri no ji no setsu*,” 599. His reference to the term 性 here indeed reflects the core concepts of the *xing-li xue* (性理学) school of Zhu Xi: namely, 性即理 and 性即善. For a comprehensive survey of the development of the *xing-li xue* specifically and the Neo-Confucian tradition in China more generally, see Shimada Kenji, *Shushi-gaku to yōmei-gaku* (Zhu Xi School and Yangmingism), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967. I find Huang Yushun’s comparative rendering of Confucianism and phenomenology helpful in comprehending these different traditions of philosophy in parallel. See Huang, “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.

However, what follows is of my particular interest. In this instance of understanding the historical emergence of *ri*, Nishi inserts an ostensibly perverse claim. He argues that it is not *ri* that transcends *ki*, as Neo-Confucian scholars may assert, but it is *ki* that precedes *ri*, insofar as any material formation of a thing 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 [against the Neo-Confucian claim that material force (*ki*) is a variegated manifestation of the principle (*ri*)], material force is, in fact, stable. This stable material force determines the nature and function of a thing. No principle exists outside this material force. The principle ought not to exist outside this material force.)⁹⁷

It is a claim that is ‘ostensibly’ perverse. It is so, because such discursive strategy to reconfigure the fundamental premise of a knowledge tradition is not unique to Nishi. The internal debate of the Confucian tradition was, indeed, replete with this kind of epistemic ruptures. As Wang points out, the very idea of *ri* in the Neo-Confucian tradition of China was established as a result of such rupture, whereby the hitherto prevalent predilection towards the ‘propensity of times’ was dislodged from its privileged place in the Neo-Confucian teachings.⁹⁸ We may also recall here Itō Jinsai’s claim for an ostensible monism of *ki*, whereby *ri* was understood as merely dwelling within *ki*.⁹⁹ Just as these discursive manoeuvres internal to the (Neo-)Confucian tradition did, Nishi’s discursive enunciation here reverses the relationship between *ri* and *ki* within the (Neo-)Confucian

⁹⁷ Nishi, “*Ri no ji no setsu*,” 600.

⁹⁸ Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 76.

⁹⁹ Itō, *Gomō jigi*, Vol.1. See my earlier discussion in this chapter, p. 261. I will expand further on the variegated meaning of *ri* articulated within the (Neo-)Confucian tradition in Chapter 6.

semantic field, promoting *ki*, rather than *ri*, to the rank of the primary category that regulates the working of the universe.

What differentiates Nishi's enunciation from those internal to the (Neo-)Confucian tradition is, I argue, the mode of justification that Nishi offers for this reversed dynamics between *ri* and *ki*. If the material force of a thing, rather than the principle of all things, determines what the thing is, how can one grasp the principle, assuming that there, indeed, exists some kind of principle? What is *ri*? In seeking to answer these questions, Nishi continues to resort to Confucian semantics and proposes an alternative understanding of *ri*.

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應ず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觀る可き者とす、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、仮令へは火の水に對し、木の金に對し、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
(The principle itself is incorporeal. The principle is a relationship that emerges when a thing with constant and invariable material force interacts with another thing. It is grasped only when such a relationship is observed. Every relation forged, every interaction of things, engenders the principle – when water interacts with fire, when wood interacts with metal, in a relationship between a child and father, in a relationship between wife and husband, there is always a relation, hence principle.)¹⁰⁰

Nishi maintains, just as any Confucius scholar would, that *ri* is not in and of itself perceptible. But unlike, for instance, Jinsai, who claims that *ri* merely dwells in *ki*, Nishi argues here that *ri* emerges in the relationship between two kinds of material force (*ki*), that is to say, in an instance in which two things interact with one another.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The point I shall emphasise of this enunciation is threefold. First, as Nishi explains, the material force of a thing, which is constant and invariable (“其気稟性質の一定する”), manifests itself in its relation to other things. It is in this relationship, or else in an instance in which two things interact with one another, that *ri* emerges (“其事物に応ずる際に現はるる所の関係”). This means that *ri* is in and of itself manifold, contingent upon which of two specific things are interacting. Think, for instance, the interaction between water and fire, fire and wood, or wood and blade. Each of these things – water, fire, wood, and sword (be it copper, bronze, or iron) – has a certain quality that is constant and invariable. Yet, when one of these things interacts with another thing, a specific effect of such interaction becomes visible to us. It is this effect that Nishi understands here as the manifestation of *ri*. Importantly, he argues that such manifestation of *ri* in an instance of interaction between two things is observable not only in the natural world but also in the human world. *Ri* also lies, to put it otherwise, in relational attributes of human beings, such as father, child, husband, and wife (“其中間に必ず一定の理即ち関係の存せさること”).¹⁰¹ So understood, Nishi’s earlier equation of *ri* to *hazu* (筈: eternal regularity, laws of the world, the natural culmination of reasoning) can be further specified here as follows.¹⁰² In this semantic equation, he is claiming not for a theological force that is universal and transcendent of human capacities; instead, he is arguing for regularities of the natural and human worlds, which emerge in those instances of interaction, and which are observable for the observing.

¹⁰¹ Here, Nishi reiterates his earlier observation in other texts on the separation between the *a priori* principle and the *a posteriori* principle. While *ri* of the natural world, which Nishi calls ‘*butsuri*’ (物理: *ri* of things), is uniform, constant, and universal (“火水金木の如きは所謂物理にして古今易らず東西其揆を一にする者”), the latter, which he labels ‘*rinri*’ (倫理: *ri* of minds) is dependent on the floating minds of human beings and, thus, not uniform, nor constant (“父子夫婦の若きは所謂倫理にして、其間に種々の性質また他の関係ある者 [...] 其必然を保し難き者”). Ibid., 600-601.

¹⁰² See my earlier discussion in pp.239-241

The second point to be stressed here is this emphasis on the power of the observing. As Nishi writes, *ri* is in and of itself incorporeal (“虚体”), having no recognisable putative optimal form. Only when a relationship between things or between human beings is observed by the human mind (“唯人心の其關係を察するものに於てのみ”), *ri* becomes perceptible (“観る可き者”). This emphasis on the power of the observing mind indeed parallels Nishi’s earlier exposition of *ri* based on the semantic equation of *ri* to *kotowari* (specific thinking faculties) predicated on his reading of Herbert Spencer’s *Principles of Psychology*.¹⁰³ As I read it, for Nishi, *ri* is not simply in the instance of interaction between things; it is, in fact, in the act of comprehending various relationships between things and between human beings. Put otherwise, it is the observing mind that recognises, or even establishes, *ri* as such. And at this instance of re-enacting *ri* as thinking faculties, Nishi’s discursive strategy beings to exit the (Neo-)Confucian semantic field.

And third, it is precisely to this end that Nishi’s exposition here is no longer confined within the (Neo-)Confucian tradition but re-enacts itself from within the epistemic frame of Western knowledge. Undoubtedly, Nishi’s exposition embeds within itself traces of the Cartesian spirit both in its understanding of *ri* as being incorporeal and in its emphasis on the capacity of the human mind.¹⁰⁴ The edifice of Descartes’ radical shift from ontology to epistemology – from Aristotelian speculative philosophy to what Descartes himself called ‘practical philosophy’ of utility – is the

¹⁰³ See my earlier discussion in p.230. I will also expand on Nishi’s exposition of the capacity of human mind and consciousness in Chapter 7, pp.507-517.

¹⁰⁴ As many scholars have pointed out, Nishi’s thought is clearly inspired by Auguste Comte’s positivism in his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-1842) and J.S. Mill’s logic and methodology in his *A System of Logic* (1843). See, for instance, 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. But both Comte and Mill identify their tendency for empiricism in, among others, the works of Descartes. For a brief exposition of the relationship between Comte’s thought and Descartes’, see Eric W. Smitbner, “Descartes and Auguste Comte,” *The French Review*, 41:5, 1968: 629-640. F.E.L. Priestley contextualises Mill’s thought in a broader philosophical landscape of 18th and 19th-century Europe. See Priestley, “Introduction,” in John Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Vol. X: Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, John M. Robson (ed.), Oxford and New York, NY: Routledge, 1996: vii-lxii.

presumption that to know is, essentially, to have recourse to the workings of nature and human behaviours for the purpose of ‘mastering’ the world external to the mind.¹⁰⁵ Naturally, one may wonder: how can one know, or else ‘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 exteriority can be grappled as *res extensa*, as a corporeal substance, which remains constant, and through which the exteriority is rendered accessible to the universalising power of the observing and controlling mind. Now that the proper domain of knowledge is defined as the realm of ‘mastering’ rather than contemplation, Descartes argues, “to be possessed of a vigorous mind is not enough: the prime requisite is rightly to apply it.”¹⁰⁶ 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 objects. Not to mention Nishi’s notion of *ri* as being incorporeal can be read here as analogous to the Cartesian notion of *res extensa*, his emphasis on the power of the observing mind, of thinking faculties, infers the Cartesian dualism of the knowing subject and the object known. To this end, I argue that Nishi’s enunciation moves from the (Neo-)Confucius semantic field to the epistemic ground of Western knowledge. While Nishi’s claim for the reversed dynamics between *ri* and *ki* is a

¹⁰⁵ 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” Library of the Liberal Arts, 1985: 45.

¹⁰⁶ 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.

transvaluation within the semantic field of the (Neo-)Confucius tradition, his justification for such transvaluation and his specification of *ri* – both as being incorporeal and as thinking faculties – undoubtedly follows the discursive and textual strategy that sustains and is sustained by the epistemic frame of Western knowledge.¹⁰⁷

This translational practice based on historicisation and transvaluation revolves around that which is different from the first translational strategy of conscious rapture. Unlike Fukuzawa, Nishi does not expatriate *ri* from its context of historical emergence. As such, his use of *ri* as the signifier, as a vehicle for understanding the unifying principle of Western knowledge, exhibits the consciousness of continuity, as much as his signification of *ri* expresses the consciousness of rupture. Put otherwise, the consciousness of continuity derives from the lingering historicity of *ri* as the signifier, which simultaneously encompasses a nomic and monological dimension. Earlier, in my analysis of Hayashi Razan’s exposition of *ri*, I have argued that Razan understands *ri* both as that which regulates the quality of a thing in actuality (*is*) and that which determines what a thing can and should be in its ideal (*must be*).¹⁰⁸ Nishi’s exposition of *ri* also embeds within itself this nomic and monological dimension. For Nishi, *ri* manifests itself in an instance of interaction and, therefore, is observable (*is*). At the same time, *ri* is constant to the extent that its manifestation is *a priori* determined by the stable quality of two things that are interacting (*must be*). To be sure,

¹⁰⁷ 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. Although Nishi’s thought and its genealogy are often attributed to August Comte, there is a reason to assert his interest in Descartes. His 1862 letter to Prof. Hoffmann, written while Nishi was on a ship, Ternate, to the Netherlands, indicates his general interests in modern Western philosophy, including the Cartesian tradition. As Nishi wrote, “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、これらも学たいと思う” (I would also like to study the field of knowledge called philosophy. I believe that religious philosophy banned in our countries differs from the thought of Descartes, Locke, Hegel, and Kant. I want to learn their ideas.) Nishi Amane, quoted in Ōkubo Toshimichi, “Commentary,” in *Nishi Amane zenshū, Vol.2* (Complete Works of Nishi Amane), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1966: 701-702 [683-770].

¹⁰⁸ See my earlier discussion on Razan’s work in pp.259-260.

to claim for the consciousness of continuity is not tantamount to argue for the similarity between *ri* as the unifying principle of Western knowledge and *ri* as the absolute, transcendental principle of (Neo-)Confucianism. Rather, the consciousness of continuity is a consequence of understanding Western knowledge (its unifying principle) by anchoring this hitherto unfamiliar knowledge tradition into the familiar semantic space. Translation within the shared semantic space of *ri* may be the necessary means to establish the difference between two epistemic traditions (the consciousness of rupture); yet, this sharedness of semantic space for translation is precisely why the historicity of *ri* as the signifier lingers (the consciousness of continuity). In other words, the capacity of language users to encode new meanings to the existing term *ri* is, as I argue, already curtailed precisely because of the usage of the existing term, of the sharedness of the semantic space.

Différance and Its Implications

The early Meiji intellectual attempts to understand the nature, scope and structure of Western knowledge and their discursive strategies to validate the seriousness of Western knowledge were foregrounded by the specific entanglement of *ri* and knowledge, or else, what I have been calling the *ri*-knowledge structuration. As delineated earlier, this *ri*-knowledge structuration was not a novel invention of Meiji intellectuals. Rather, it had long sustained the existing knowledge traditions in Japan, constituting itself as the primary schema for structuring knowledge and for qualifying a knowledge tradition as ‘valid’ and ‘serious.’ And throughout my discussion in this chapter, I sought to illustrate the significance of this *ri*-knowledge structuration and that of

translational practices to encode alternative meanings to the idea of *ri* for repositioning Western knowledge within the semantic and epistemic space of Japanese intellectual life. The manifold translational practices I have discussed in this chapter collectively demonstrate how *ri* had become a liminal semantic space for reconfiguring an epistemic ground for knowledge, both for the advocates of Western knowledge and those of the existing traditions of knowledge. My discussion in this chapter also sought to demonstrate how the very act of translation within this shared semantic space had become an instance of *différance*, wherein the meaning of Reason or law of nature and the meaning of Neo-Confucian transcendental principle were deferred and suspended. I sought to argue, in other words, that translational practices to encode new meanings to *ri* was a conscious labour through which differences were enunciated and through which such differences were sought to be resolved within the shared semantic field of *ri*, so that a certain sense of continuity was reified at the point of ostensible disruption.

My claim for *différance* and for a sense of continuity is indeed a double-bind critique here. I am effectively pointing to a certain hypocrisy evident in the writings of, for instance, Fukuzawa, in which he declared that “we can only enter into the world of natural science (*kyūri*: 窮理) by completely doing away with blind credulity towards the outdated theory of yin-yang and the five elements.”¹⁰⁹ I am also challenging the modernist’s assessment of modern knowledge formation in Japan, epitomised by Marumaya’s claim that “a modern approach to the investigation of principle could not be developed without first eliminating the nonmodern approach.”¹¹⁰ Against the temptation of characterising modern knowledge formation in Japan with a sense of complete

¹⁰⁹ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of Civilization*, David A. Dilworth & G. Cameron Hurst III (trans.), New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008 [1875]: 37.

¹¹⁰ Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 182.

disjuncture, I am arguing for a sense of continuity that was sustained by the language of textuality, discourse, and *différance*.

However, it is precisely in this instance that a new conundrum emerges. If *ri* as the unifying principle of Western knowledge embodies traces of the other existing knowledge traditions, the purported oppositionality between, on the one hand, a knowledge tradition emerged through translational practices of Nishi, Fukuzawa, and their contemporaries and, on the other hand, the existing traditions such as (Neo-)Confucianism, no longer seems a viable proposition. In a similar vein, the purported equilibrium between Western knowledge and a knowledge tradition envisaged through translational practices no longer seems an adequate assertion. At this juncture emerges a possibility that a knowledge tradition formed as ‘modern’ knowledge in Japan is not a mere imitation and appropriation of Western knowledge.

At the same time, the sense of continuity reified at the point of ostensible disruption necessitates a further investigation into the very epistemic condition that enabled Nishi, Fukuzawa, and others to resort to the existing lexical and conceptual device to validate Western knowledge, that is to say, the epistemic condition that enabled to treat *ri* as an empty vessel and to translate *ri* as one saw fit. The next chapter seeks to trace a mode of projecting the *ri*-knowledge structuration onto Western knowledge in the development of the *Rangaku* tradition of the Edo period, by focusing specifically on Rangaku scholars’ translational practices to encode new meanings to the idea of *kyūri*, and by accounting for both a broader political and intellectual condition that foregrounded such projection and, therefore, the expansion of the semantic space of *ri*.

Chapter 5.

Semantics, Scepticism, and the Reconfiguration of Epistemic Space

Students must first of all know how to doubt.

Cheng Yi¹

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 Kant²

Any knowledge tradition bears a specific relationship between the knower and the known. In a tradition of knowledge that emerged in early modern Europe, the knower came to occupy the position of the subject. The knowing subject was *a priori* set up against the world of objects, having recourse to universal laws and regularities that remained constant and true over time and space. In other words, this subject was marked by its presumed position characterised as a ‘view from

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 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 663.

nowhere,³ or else, by a discursive postulate of temporal symmetry between past, present, and future that effectively mitigated the constraint of time and, therefore, by its capacity to attain certitudes about the world. Knowledge no longer resonated with human purposes and aspirations. The world no longer had meanings in and of itself.⁴ Meanings were wholly evacuated from the world and repositioned within this subject, such that knowledge that this subject produced came to be considered as accurate representations of discrete realities of the world.⁵ The subject position that sustained the knowledge tradition that emerged in early modern Europe was grounded on a specific order of discourse and, therefore, not at all value-free.

Further still, this (Western) subject was not autochthonous in Japan. And the transposition of Western knowledge necessarily involved translating the discourse that sustained the (Western) subject specifically and Western knowledge more generally. To suggest so is, of course, not to say that the (Western) subject simply came to fill the void. In knowledge traditions hitherto prevalent

³ Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*.

⁴ I have already discussed in the previous chapter Descartes' claim for a body of knowledge that he called 'practical philosophy.' See Chapter 4, pp. 295-296 In a similar vein, Thomas Hobbes wrote that the purpose of pursuing knowledge is "that we may make use to our benefit of effects formerly seen; or that, by application of bodies to one another, we may produce the like effects of those we conceive in our mind, as far forth as matter, strength, and industry will permit, for the commodity of human life. For the inward glory and triumph of mind that a man may have for the mastering of some difficult and doubtful matter, or for the discovery of some hidden truth, is not worth [...] The end of knowledge is power; and the use of theorems [...] is for the construction of problems; and, lastly, the scope of all speculation is the performing of some action, or thing to be done." Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy*, in William Molesworth (ed.), *English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, Vol.1*, London: John Bohn, 1839:7. Robert Boyle also argued for knowledge not as intellectual habit or virtue of individual mind based on Aristotelian and scholastic teleology but as a systematic entity formalised through the observing mind. As he wrote, Aristotelian knowledge "hitherto taught in most schools hath been so litigious in its theory, and so barren as to its productions, yet it hath found numbers of zealous and learned cultivators, whom sure nothing but men's inbred fondness for the object it converses with, and the end it pretends to, could so passionately devote to it. [...] The bare prospect of this magnificent fabric of the universe, furnished and adorned with such strange variety of curious and useful creatures, would suffice to transport us both with wonder and joy if their commonness did not hinder their operations. Of which truth Mr. Stepkins, [...], did not long since supply us with a memorable instance; for [...] a maid of about eighteen years of age, having by a couple of cataracts that she brought with her into the world. Lived absolutely blind from the moment of her birth, being brought to the free use of her eyes, was so ravished at the surprising spectacle of so many and various objects as presented themselves to her unacquainted sight, that almost everthing she saw transported her with such admiration and delight that she was in danger to lose the eyes of her mind by those of her body, and expound that mystical Arabic proverb which advises to shut the windows that the house may be light." Robert Boyle, "The Value of Natural Philosophy," in Henry Craik (ed.), *English Prose, Vol.3*, London: The Macmillan Company, 1906: 67-68 [66-69].

⁵ See my discussion on Chapter 2, pp.104-117.

in Japan, the relationship between the knower and the known was variously defined, being grounded on the order of discourse specific to a given tradition of knowledge, be it Buddhism, (Neo-)Confucianism, *Kogaku*, or *Kokugaku*. To transpose Western knowledge, this subject that sustained this knowledge had to be forged in an epistemic landscape carved out by other knowledge traditions through discursive addresses reflexive of certain diachronicities of Japan's intellectual developments.

As it will become clearer as the chapter develops, translation was – yet again – a crucial strategy for forging this subject. More specifically, the term *kyūri* (窮理), which had its origin in the Chinese Neo-Confucian tradition, had become both the operative word and semantic space for grappling with the specific order of discourse that foregrounded the (Western) subject and for developing a new orientation to understand the relationship between the knower and the known, which ultimately paved the way for establishing a quasi-theological position of the knower as to ‘view’ rather than to ‘inhabit’ the world and for reconceiving knowledge as a subject-object relation. By the end of the 19th century, the idea of *kyūri* had become a lexical and conceptual device for the advocates of Western knowledge to articulate an enabling condition for transforming this knowledge into knowledge of the modern.

To take but one example here, Fukuzawa Yukichi's enunciation in his *Bunmei-ron no gairyaku* (文明論之概略: An Outline of a Theory of Civilisation, 1875) points to a specific attitude, more than mere methodological and technical postulates, encoded to that which has taken the name of *scientia* – that is to say, an attitude to know the world by developing “systematic, secular knowledge about reality that is somehow validated empirically.”⁶ In his dialectic of national strength and learning, Fukuzawa positioned the idea of *kyūri* as an antidote to the lingering

⁶ Wallerstein, *Open the Social Sciences*, 2.

obsession with old customs and traditions that were grounded on the theory of Chinese cosmology of *yin* and *yang* and five elements (陰陽五行), maintaining that,

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.)⁷

Kyūri for Fukuzawa represented a mode of knowledge production based on a particular set of presumptions fundamentally different from Chinese cosmology.

However, I shall emphasise here that the oppositionality Fukuzawa evoked in this enunciation between his idea of *kyūri* and Chinese cosmology was, in fact, a conscious construct forged through a transvaluation of the term *kyūri* itself. Just as the term *ri* (理: principle) was not the neologism invented by the advocates of Western knowledge in the early years of Meiji, *kyūri* was neither an invention of the late 19th century nor a conceptual commodity exclusive to Fukuzawa and his contemporaries. It was once a term that specifically designated the method of

⁷ 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 *butsuri-gaku* (物理学: physics). But this affinity does not necessarily mean that *kyūri* for Fukuzawa is a narrowly defined, disciplinarianised, and professionalised field of physics. As suggested earlier (See Footnote 84 in Chapter 4, p.283), Fukuzawa’s idea of *butsuri-gaku* encompasses various fields of knowledge sustained by scientificity rather than a specific field of science.

(Neo-)Confucian scholarly learning, constituting the bastion, along with the notion of *kyokei* (居敬: the method of moral learning), of the (Neo-)Confucian faith in the betterment of human condition. 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).)⁸

Acknowledging the lexical origin of *kyūri*, I seek to address the following questions in this chapter. How did it become possible for Fukuzawa and others to enunciate *kyūri* as an antidote to Chinese cosmology? How was the meaning of *kyūri* transubstantiated into that which signalled the arrival of *scientia*? How did *kyūri* become a mode of producing knowledge grounded on a specific relation between the knower and the known, which we have subsequently come to recognise as a subject-object relation? In essence, the inversion of the signification of *kyūri* that we see in Fukuzawa's enunciation signals an instance in which the knower was moulded into that who views, rather than inhabits, the world as the object of knowledge.

Perhaps, one of the entrenched expectations of today's historical scholarship is to treat intellectual developments of the Meiji period as the catalyst for the subject formation. However, the transvaluation of *kyūri*, which Fukuzawa signalled, was not an instantaneous Copernican turn engineered solely under the intellectual climate of the late 19th century. Historical narratives that disproportionately emphasise the significance of Meiji and, hence, the purported disjuncture between the premodern and the modern are somewhat misleading if we are to trace a process, not

⁸ This translation is borrowed from James Legge's work, which is available on: <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/shuo-gua> (21.04.2022).

the outcome, of the subject formation. The remaining chapters of the dissertation explore how the knower had come to be forged as the subject and how knowledge was reconceived as a subject-object relation through a centuries-long translational process of (re)configuring the order of discourse to foreground the subject within the epistemic landscape marked by various knowledge traditions. More to the point, this chapter seeks to offer an understanding of the ‘before-ness’ of the subject formation by focusing specifically on the semantic transvaluation of *kyūri* forged within the *Rangaku* tradition and through the political authorisation of this tradition. Chapter 6, in contrast, addresses semantic negotiation over *kyūri* and, by extension, over the idea of *ri* outside the confines of *Rangaku*, that is to say, in other existing traditions of knowledge, including *Kogaku*, *Kokugaku*, *Jōriigaku*, and *Koihō*. And the final chapter of the dissertation, Chapter 7, recentres our attention to the early years of the Meiji period and examines the ways in which the idea of *kagaku* (科学: science), a neologism of Meiji, had eventually replaced the idea of *kyūri* and, in turn, foregrounded the formation of the knowing subject that was tied to a spatially bounded, localised configuration of ‘Japan.’ In essence, what I seek to do in the remaining chapters is to offer a reading of how an enabling condition – both epistemic and political – of the subject formation was articulated through a long historical process of semantic transvaluation through translation.

By recounting translational practices to encode new meanings to *kyūri* within the *Rangaku* tradition, especially of the Edo period, and by contextualising those translational practices within a broader epistemic and political condition, I pursue the following line of argument in this chapter. The idea of *kyūri*, once designated the (Neo-)Confucian mode of scholarly learning, had come to encompass within the *Rangaku* tradition a mode of pursuing knowledge about that which was outside the remits of the (Neo-)Confucian tradition – that is to say, a mode of pursuing knowledge about the nature that was discursively distinguished from the realm of moral and ethical

considerations. This expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri* was possible, not because knowledge conceived as a subject-object relation to ‘view’ the world – Western knowledge – came to be seen at once as inherently better and superior. The expansion of the semantic space was possible partly because the political condition, particularly the Tokugawa attitude towards Christianity that sought to disassociate Western knowledge from European political and religious desires, curtailed a general perception of Western knowledge as knowledge of utility and instrumentality. It was possible also partly because the intellectual condition marked by scepticism as a method inherent in the Neo-Confucian tradition provided, albeit concomitantly, a possibility to map Western knowledge onto the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape. The orientation towards Western knowledge formed under such political and intellectual conditions suggests that Western knowledge was seen as a supplement, rather than a replacement, for dialectically resolving the metaphysical conundrum of existing knowledge traditions derived from the dualism of *ri* and *ki*. In other words, the acquisition of Western knowledge through the development of the *Rangaku* tradition in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the effort of *Rangaku* scholars to grapple with the nature and structure of Western knowledge, were by no means archetypal moments that marked “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity.”⁹ Instead, *Rangaku* offered a practical solution for mitigating the (Neo-)Confucian metaphysical oscillation between monism (the doctrine of *xing ji li* 性即理: human nature is the principle) and dualism (the observation that occurrences including human emotions do not necessarily conform to the doctrine of *xing ji li*).

Further still, I seek also to argue that precisely because of this specific orientation towards Western knowledge, the subsequent formation of the subject through transvaluation of *kyūri* cannot be grappled by simply reiterating the familiar historical narrative of the (Western) subject.

⁹ Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,” 58.

The subject formation in Japan embeds within itself certain diachronicities. This, in turn, suggests a possibility that the category of knower that we have come to recognise as the subject embeds within itself traces of *différance* – a latent incommensurability in the order of discourse between the subject emerged in the modern European intellectual tradition and the subject forged in Japan through translational practices.

5.1. *Kyūri* and a New Ontology of the Knower

Intellectual debates in the Meiji period are misleadingly momentous when interpreted with the entrenched expectation of historical narratives that seeks to identify historical disjuncture between the premodern and the modern. An enunciation that announced the arrival of a new tradition of knowledge, such as Fukuzawa's, was a culmination of intellectual exercises that spanned centuries. The formation of *Rangaku* was especially significant, less for its scholarly function to introduce the contents of Western knowledge to Japan, but more for its discursive attempt to locate Western knowledge within the semantic space of *kyūri*, which was hitherto occupied predominantly by the (Neo-)Confucian tradition. A new possibility of ontologising the knower disengaged from moral and ethical considerations and, thus, a new possibility of (re)configuring the relation between the knower and the known, had emerged through translational practices of *Rangaku* scholars which sought to encode a new meaning to *kyūri* through their reading of some of the canonical texts produced by early modern European scientists.¹⁰

¹⁰ To note, Christian missionary-sponsored translational activities preceded the works of *Rangaku* scholars, laying the foundation for translation practices in the *Rangaku* tradition. Rebekah Clements estimates that those missionary-sponsored translations number in thousands. See Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan*, 142. For missionary-sponsored translation, see Johannes Laures, *Kirishitan Bunko: A Manual of Books and*

Translation for the *Rangaku* tradition encompassed both linguistic exercise and epistemic exercise. On the one hand, and most obviously, the development of *Rangaku* as a tradition of knowledge revolved around translation as a linguistic exercise, which constituted the strategy of communicating the meaning of source-language texts produced in Western scholarships, be it in Dutch, German, French, or English, by interpreting the meaning into the target language, that is, into Japanese. Indeed, the quantity of Western texts translated into the Japanese language and circulated mostly among *Rangaku* scholars but also among scholars of other knowledge traditions is surprisingly large. For instance, the catalogue of translational works compiled by Yoshida Jibei entitled *Waran honyaku-sho mokuroku* (和蘭翻譯書目録: A Catalogue of Dutch-Japanese Translated Works, 1841) lists 103 Western texts translated and circulated in Japan.¹¹ Hotei Omobito's catalogue produced a decade later, *Seiyōgakka yakujutsu mokuroku* (西洋学家訳述目録: Catalogue of Translations with Elaboration by Scholars of Western Studies, 1852), lists, along with 117 names of *Rangaku* scholars, staggering 503 Western texts reproduced in the Japanese language.¹²

On the other hand, these translated texts were also the product of translation as an epistemic exercise, which relied on the strategy of elaboration on a specific order of discourse that sustained

Documents on the Early Christian Mission in Japan with Special Reference to the Principal Libraries in Japan and More Particularly to the Collection at Sophia University, Tokyo: Sophia University, 1957. For a general historical study of Japan's absorption and internalisation of 'other cultures,' see Ienaga Saburō, *Gairai bunka sesshushi-ron: Kindai seiyō bunka sesshu no shisō-shi teki kōsatsu* (History of the Absorption of Other Cultures: An Analysis of the Introduction of Western Culture through a Perspective of Intellectual History), Tokyo: Iwasaki shoten, 1948.

¹¹ 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> (15.05.2022).

¹² 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> (15.05.2022). There are some useful post-war compilations of *Rangaku* texts. For a bibliographic list of pre-Meiji translational works of Western history and geography, see Kaikoku hyakunen kinen bunka jigyōkai (ed.), *Sakoku-jidai nihonjin no kaigai-chishiki*. For other lists of pre-Meiji translated works, see, for instance, Miyashita, "A Bibliography of the Dutch Medical Books Translated into Japanese," 8-72; Horiuchi, "Kinsei nihon shisō-shi ni okeru honyaku no yakuwari," 271-294.

the validity of a source text, hence the validity of Western knowledge. Maeno Ryōtaku's (1723-1803) *Shichiyō chokujitsu kō* (七曜直日考: Investigation of Star-gazing, 1792), one of the first comprehensive translations of calendrical science that introduced a new temporal concept to Japan, is one of the emblematic examples of how Western texts were translated through the strategy of elaboration. This text was primarily based on Ryōtaku's reading of Egbert Buys' *Nieuw en Volkomen Woordenboek van Konsten en Weetenschappen, Vol. X* (1778). However, in his effort to grapple with the new temporal concept, Ryōtaku also resorted to a comparative method, elucidating the extent to which this new temporal concept might be comparable to the Japanese and Chinese calendrical traditions. He clarified this method in the introductory part of the text, maintaining that it was written by "extracting the gist of the sourcebook, translating it, and elaborating upon it with my own limited knowledge."¹³ Yoshida Chōshuku (1779-1824) expanded further on the idea of translation as elaboration in his *Taisei netsubyō-ron* (泰西熱病論: On Fever

¹³ The original text reads, “其要領ヲ抄シテコレヲ訳シ且淺知識ヲ述テ。” A digitised version of *Shichiyō chokujitsu kō* is accessible online at: https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ni05/ni05_02382/ (19.04.2022). While the actual date of its publication is unknown, this introduction was written in 1792. Ryōtaku left his mark on the intellectual landscape of the Edo period as an avid learner of various Western languages, as a medical practitioner, and as one of the translators 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). Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), though he was not a *Rangaku* scholar in a strict sense, also resorted to this method of elaboration in his *Sairan igen* (采覧異言: Various Sights and Strange Words, 1713). First of all, *Sairan igen* was based on not one specific source text but a variety of Western sources, including; Matteo Ricci's (1552-1610) world map, *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; and Hakuseki's own conversations with an Italian missionary Giovanni Battista Sidotti (1668-1714). In his attempt to attain Western geographical knowledge and, therefore, to grasp what presumptions sustained the production of such knowledge, Hakuseki referred to various sources and elaborated on those sources. A digital version of *Sairan igen* is accessible online at: https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ru02/ru02_00959/ (19.04.2022). Hakuseki was first employed as a Confucian scholar by Tokugawa Ienobu (1662-1712) when he was still a daimyo of the Kōfu Domain. When Ienobu became the 6th Shogun of the Edo Bakufu, Hakuseki was promoted to the rank of counsel. His *Seiyō kibun* (西洋紀聞: A Study of the Occident, 1709) was written as part of his work as the counsel of the Shogunate, which paved the way for the formation of *Rangaku* and subsequently for the development of *Yōgaku*. A digitised copy of *Seiyō kibun* is accessible at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1173162> (12.04.2022).

Diseases, 1814), specifying various methods of translational practices that he borrowed 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経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 the method of ‘*taiyaku*’ and the method of ‘*iyaku*’. The former is to translate the original text word-by-word to establish semantic equivalence. It means direct translation. But there may be a possibility of semantic inversion with this method. The latter method, ‘*iyaku*,’ is to paraphrase and elaborate on the gist of the original text but not necessarily be a literal translation. If something is unnecessary, you delete it. If something is missing, you supplement it. Therefore, a text translated with the method of paraphrasing and elaboration is different from that with the method of direct translation. And a text reproduced through direct translation is, in comparison to paraphrasing and elaboration, far removed from the original text. Previously, I did not know how effective paraphrasing and elaboration could be. But the translation of ‘*Juāndú Devaśāntika*’ in the Buddhist scripture was established 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 exactly the same as the original, but the meaning of the original can be aptly extracted and presented. This is why I prefer this method of paraphrasing and elaboration.)¹⁴

As it will become clearer as the chapter develops, in their translational practices – translation of Western texts and, by extension, translation of the epistemic frame that sustained Western knowledge – scholars of *Rangaku* often resorted to this method of paraphrasing and elaboration that Chōshuku explained in the above text. *Rangaku* and its translational practices are interesting and, indeed, significant, less for the question about which Western texts were translated and

¹⁴ Yoshida Chōshuku, *Taisei netsubyō-ron*, Tokyo: Tōto shorin, 1814. The original text is accessible online at: <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00003970> (12.09.2022).

circulated in Japan, but more as earlier instances of scholarly attempts to grapple with the form of Western knowledge. Translation in the *Rangaku* tradition was not a mere linguistic exercise but an epistemic exercise through which Western knowledge was to be anchored into familiar semantics and juxtaposed to other traditions of knowledge (i.e., the Japanese and Chinese calendrical traditions) within the existing epistemic landscape. And for such translation as epistemic exercise, *kyūri* had become the operative word to justify both the purported seriousness of Western knowledge and its methods of investigation.

In the following, I seek to account for various discursive enunciations of *Rangaku* scholars to locate Western knowledge within the semantic space of *kyūri*. To read these enunciations, however, one must be cautious about their polemical nature. *Rangaku* scholars' discursive enunciations often utilised (Neo-)Confucianism as their negative foil in order to validate their intellectual affinity to Western knowledge, such that their portrayal of the (Neo-)Confucian tradition did not necessarily do justice to that tradition. Nevertheless, the polemical undertone of *Rangaku* scholars' enunciations was itself a discursive strategy of transcoding new meanings to *kyūri*, which, as I see it, paved the way for the almost crude comparison between Western knowledge and the 'old' knowledge traditions that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, some of the early Meiji intellectuals resorted to.

Internality and Externality: The Horizon of Western Knowledge

In his *Kizan-roku* (帰山録: Returning to My Fane, 1776), Miura Baien stipulated that *kyūri* was no longer a term exclusive to the (Neo-)Confucian tradition. *Kyūri* now also encompassed Western

knowledge undergirded by a very different settlement on how knowledge must be pursued.¹⁵ By recalling his conversation with a Dutch translator named here simply as ‘Matsumura,’ Baien wrote,

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, the study of principles [*kyūri*]. It is about knowing the nature of things and knowing that the nature of things makes them what they are. Even though the characters 理 (*ri*) and 性 (*sei*) are not what Confucian Scholars of Song would mean, Western scholarship, like Confucianism, is about reaching various principles [*ri*] of things and understanding the nature of things. In order not to narrow your view but rather to accept things as they are and to look at the world as it is, then, you must understand the absolute principle [*jōri*: 条理] of the universe and earth, divide the right and wrong into equal parts, and accept each favour and disfavour as if the sea accepts everything, thus making the universe and earth your teacher.)¹⁶

Matsumura told Baien that Western scholarship was, in essence, scholarship of *kyūri* (“西洋の学畢竟窮理の学也”), thoroughly investigating a specific principle (*ri*) and certain quality or nature (*sei*) of each and every thing that made up of the universe and earth (“天地”).

¹⁵ Miura Baien, *Kizan-roku*, in *Baien zensyū*, Vol.1 (Complete Works of Baien, Vol.1), Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1912 [1776]: 1057-1104. Accessible online at <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/949194> (10.09.2021). I will come back to Baien’s own designation of *kyūri* within the scope of his *Jōrigaku* (条理学: Rationalist studies) in Chapter 6, pp.422-430.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1103-1104. I have here translated *ri* as various principles of things and *jōri* as the absolute principle of all things, as Baien elucidated in his *Gengo* (玄語: Deep Words, 1755). I will expand further on this distinction between *ri* and *jōri* in my discussion on Baien’s work in Chapter 6. The translator named ‘Matsumura’ is probably Matsumura Mototsuna, born in Nagasaki and later, in the 1770s, worked for Shimazu Shigehide (1745-1833) of Satsuma-han. Matsumura eventually became a prolific writer of Western astronomy, geography, and botanical categorisation. For a brief biography of Matsumura, see Kanbashi Norimasa, “Shimazu Shigehide ni tsukaeta oranda-tūshi Matsumura Mototsuna” (A Dutch Translator Matsumura Mototsuna Who Served Shimazu Shigehide), *Kadai Shigaku*, 24, 1976: 1-13.

Of course, the terms *kyūri*, *ri*, and *sei* were deeply ingrained in the thought of Song Confucianism. Recall, here, Zhu Xi's thesis of '*xing ji ri*' (性即理: nature is the principle). The Neo-Confucian concept of *sei* designates the expression of the moral nature of human beings that is transcendently anchored by *tian* (天: Heaven), hence *ri*. Thus, Zhu Xi wrote,

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).¹⁷

For Neo-Confucianism, human nature (*sei*) is part and partial of that which constitutes *tianxia* (the realm under Heaven: 天下), as everything under Heaven is dictated by the a priori postulated absolute principle, *ri*. Human nature – and, by extension, human beings – is integral to the world that is ostensibly external to itself. To this end, '*xing ji li*': human nature is the principle. Insofar as the realm of Self, marked by moral and ethical virtues, is intimately intertwined with knowledge of the world, moral and ethical conclusions are integral to that which is attained through 'investigation of things' (*gewu*: 格物) and 'perfection of knowledge' (*zhizhi*: 致知), that is to say, knowledge of variegated manifestations of *ri*. Thus, under this Neo-Confucian doctrine of *xing ji li*, the pursuit of principle, *kyūri*, through *gewu zhizhi* is marked by a sense of inwardness to the

¹⁷ See Zhu Xi, *Mengzi jizhu: Wanzhang zhangju 6.1*. (孟子集注: 万章章句: Commentary on Wan Zhang I). The text is accessible online at: <https://ctext.org/si-shu-zhang-ju-ji-zhu/wan-zhang-zhang-ju-shang/ens> (18.04.2022). Federico Picerni helped me translation the original Chinese text into English.

extent that knowledge of things external to humans is ultimately arriving back to and interlinked to the concern for Self, hence to moral and ethical conclusions.

But Matsumura's – and, by extension, Baien's – usage of the terms *kyūri*, *ri*, and *sei* here is registered with different meanings. *Ri* represents here not the absolute principle but various principles – or, we may call them, regularities and laws of nature – of things that make up the world. *Sei* designates a specific quality or physical property of a thing rather than human nature or a moral and ethical quality of human beings. In this semantic, the purpose of *kyūri* is to pursue knowledge about various principles of things or the multitude of properties that make up the world external to humans (“物を天地の如く容れ” and “海の如く容る”), which eventually leads to an adequate understanding of the absolute principle (*jōri*) of the universe and earth (“天地の条理”). And the method of *kyūri* to attain such knowledge is defined as an investigation not directly into the absolute principle but into various principles of things (“ものの理”) manifesting themselves as certain qualities of things. Hence, treating the universe and earth as one's teacher, as the source of knowledge (“是乃天地を師とする也”). At the onset, it appears to be little discursive difference between, on the one hand, Matsumura's and Baien's understanding of Western knowledge, its purpose, and its method and, on the other hand, Zhu Xi's notion of knowledge and learning epitomised by ‘*gewu zhizhi*.’ To put it schematically, the difference implied in Matsumura's and Baien's enunciation is twofold. First, they see in Western knowledge that, against the (Neo-)Confucian claim, not all knowledge is and should be reduced to moral and ethical conclusions for being and becoming. Second, they understand that, for Western knowledge, the source of knowledge is not the canonical texts of the past but the universe and earth that are ‘out

there,' so to speak, external to human beings. And this twofold difference is sustained discursively by the very meaning that Matsumura and Baien encode into the terms *kyūri*, *ri*, and *sei*.

As this exchange between Baien and Matsumura suggests, already by the mid-18th century, about a century before Fukuzawa's enunciation, the semantic space of *kyūri* had been expanded to encompass two different modes of attaining knowledge, hence two different knowledge traditions. Then, the question I shall address here is twofold. First, how did *Rangaku* scholars, in their writings, dislodge *kyūri* from the Neo-Confucian thought in their efforts to expand its semantic scope? And second, what were the implications of such semantic expansion for the notion of what knowledge ought to be and how it might be pursued? By problematising *Rangaku* as a locus of enunciation, I propose to read, in the following, the writings of *Rangaku* scholars not as expressions of their intellectual curiosity and affinity but as enunciations of semantic transvaluation to articulate a new possibility of knowledge.

Maeno Ryōtaku's works constitute an appropriate point of departure for addressing these questions. At the beginning of *Kanrei higen* (管蠡秘言: Secret Words about Narrow Views, 1777), Ryōtaku summarises the nature of knowledge production in the West as follows.

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 a pipe. Measure the sea with shells. And use your mind to look at how things could be. He who knows does not say. He who speaks does not know. What is to be said is not a secret, but what is unknown is outside of what is said.)¹⁸

¹⁸ Maeno Ryōtaku, *Kanrei higen*, 1777. The text is archived at Waseda University Library (ID-No. 文庫 08C0295). A digitised version accessible at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko08/bunko08_c0295/index.html (13.09.2021). The text is also found in Numata Jirō, Matsumura Akira, and Satō Shōsuke (eds.), *Nihon shisō taikai, Vol.64* (Japanese Intellectual Thoughts, Vol.64), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1976: 127-180. My reference to this text thereafter is from the version archived at Waseda University Library. Ryōtaku's text is dotted with references to ancient Chinese expressions and phrases. Not to mention “知者不言言者不知” is from Laozi, Ryōtaku's reference “以管窺天以蠡測海” is taken from *Dong Zhongshu*, the volume 65 of the *Book of Han*, which, in the original enunciation, metaphorically suggests that observation and understanding is very narrow and one-sided. Ryōtaku here

For *Rangaku* scholars like Ryōtaku, the intricacy of the universe must be grappled through discoveries of permanent principles, the secular guarantees of why things are what they are, which offer – are thought to offer – a better bet than the increasingly dubious guarantees of Heaven. We examine, writes Ryōtaku, the workings of *ten* (“天”) – not *tian* as Confucian scholars would define it, but ‘the universe’ devoid of divine intentions – by observing it with a pipe. We measure the vastness of oceans by scoops made of shells. Something that is ostensibly beyond our comprehension can be comprehended by synthesising various observations of each and every thing that makes up the world (“用心窺測不知其道”). By emphasising the key function of the observing mind and the power of synthesis, Ryōtaku reiterates the ancient Chinese expression attributed to Laozi, a contemporary of Confucius – ‘he who knows does not say, he who speaks does not know’ (“知者不言言者不知”) – not to advocate but to criticise the state of (Neo-)Confucian learning. More specifically, Ryōtaku, with this expression, seems to implicitly criticise the contemporary (Neo-)Confucian polemical debates on how to interpret texts, hence the obsession with the integrity of language, meanings, and discursive truth, because of which (Neo-)Confucians scholars overlook what he considers the guiding principle of learning: that is, those who know do not speak and those who speak do not know because the secret of the world – here, the world external to humans – lies outside words.¹⁹

inverses the meaning of the saying to claim that to understand the workings of the world, one must start with small steps, observing various aspects of nature and synthesising them.

¹⁹ For my discussion on the (Neo-)Confucian concern for the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth, see Chapter 4, pp.258-259.

In his emphasis on the mind that observes and synthesises, we see a purportedly new ontology of the knower as one to ‘view’ the external world. It is ‘purportedly’ new because Neo-Confucian scholars, such as Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714), earlier argued for the importance of engaging with the world through subjects such as botany, agriculture, taxonomy, and mathematics, which were, essentially, for practical learning for the betterment not of individual virtue but of societal condition, and which had little direct implication for moral and ethical conclusions.²⁰ What, however, differentiates Ryōtaku’s ontology of the knower from Ekken’s is the former’s postulate on disenchanted character ascribed to the knower. In *Daigiroku* (大疑録: Grave Doubt, 1714), Ekken reminds us 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学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.)²¹

In contrast, nowhere in Ryōtaku’s text can we find any exposition on the embeddedness of the knower. The figure of the knower engendered in his text is that of the disenchanted, having direct recourse to the external world. And, as I read it, this difference – imposed arbitrarily or otherwise – enables Ryōtaku to lodge a sustained challenge to Neo-Confucianism. Ryōtaku’s emphasis on the capacity of the human mind and his designation of the universe external to the mind as the

²⁰ The development of *Honzōgaku* (本草学) is the emblematic example here. See Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan*.

²¹ Kaibara Ekken, *Daigiroku*, Osaka: Aburaya Jinshichi, 1767 [1714]: 8. The 1767 publication of the text is available online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ro13/ro13_00070/index.html (03.09.2022). The English translation is borrowed from Heisig et al. (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 361.

locus of knowledge together indicate his understanding that, in a knowledge tradition called Western knowledge, the principle and the human mind are not one and the same. The principle – what is to be known – exists external to the mind. But it is this mind that has a direct recourse, through observation and synthesis, to the principle manifesting itself variously. In this enunciation, not only is the knower positioned outside the known, the knower no longer ‘inhabits’ the world but ‘views’ it as the object of knowledge. For Ryōtaku, the embeddedness of one’s being that Ekken spoke of does not at all dictate the act of knowing.

To be sure, this problematisation of Neo-Confucianism cannot be taken as that which corroborates the purported primacy of Western knowledge; if anything, the problematisation signals an instance of what Wittgenstein would call ‘where two principles really do meet.’²² However, in this instance where two principles – or else, two knowledge traditions really do meet – this presumption of the externality of the principle and the conviction in the knower’s capacity to have recourse to that principle through observations and syntheses foregrounds Ryōtaku’s and his contemporaries’ sustained critique of the Neo-Confucian order of discourse. From their point of view, the plight of the Neo-Confucian tradition arises from its equivocation of internality with externality – its worldview and order of discourse that make it impermissible to draw a distinction between matters of the mind and matters external to the mind, between moral and ethical conclusions and facts about nature – which argues for *ri* to be found within the human mind.

One of the most emblematic Neo-Confucian renderings of the internality of *ri* can be found in the works of Hayashi Razan. Being true to Zhu Xi’s proposition of ‘*xing ji ri*,’ Razan argues in *Santokushō* (三徳抄: Extract of Three Primary Virtues) that *ri*, the principle immanent in all things, is ultimately internal to man and, thus, can be found in the human mind.

²² Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, OC612 [81]. See, also, my discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 114-115.

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.)²³

Against this Neo-Confucian claim for the internality of the principle, such as Razan's above, Ryōtaku maintains that the dictate of moral and ethical conclusions has nothing to do with how and why things are what they are in the world external to the mind.

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

²³ Hayashi Razan, *Santokushō*, in Katō Totsudō (ed.), *Kokumin shisō sōsho: Jukyō-hen* (Japanese National Thoughts: Confucianism), Tokyo: Kokumin shisō sōsho kankō-kai, 1929 [Year unknown]: 34-35 [33-47]. The translation is borrowed from Heisig et al. (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 306-307.

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, 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?)²⁴

A tree is nothing but a tree, and so too is metal, argues Ryōtaku. Water and fire cannot be treated as an indication of human prosperity. Physical properties that make up the world do not possess human purposes and aspirations. Nor do they represent moral and ethical principles of a distinctively human process of being and becoming. Of course, for Ryōtaku, this comparison and juxtaposition are, more than anything, a self-serving discursive strategy to promote Western knowledge while discrediting the Neo-Confucian tradition. By describing this equivocation as no more than a wrong thesis (“謬説”), nonsense (“戯言”), and irresponsible remark (“放言”), Ryōtaku concludes that the (Neo-)Confucian thought exhibits a lack of understanding about essential qualities of things that make up the world, and therefore is a delusional desire to use knowledge of physical properties of the world for the exercise of power.²⁵

Though polemical Ryōtaku's discursive address may be, the efficacy of his comparison and juxtaposition goes beyond the mere idiosyncratic legitimation of his intellectual affinity to Western knowledge. By presupposing Western knowledge and Neo-Confucianism as being quite different and even antagonistic ways of knowing, Ryōtaku's writing effectively enacts three insistences that he considers crucial for separating one knowledge tradition from another: the structuration of the world or worldview; the position of the knower vis-à-vis the known; and, the mode of intervention

²⁴ Maeno, *Kanrei higen*.

²⁵ The original text read, “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。” Ibid.

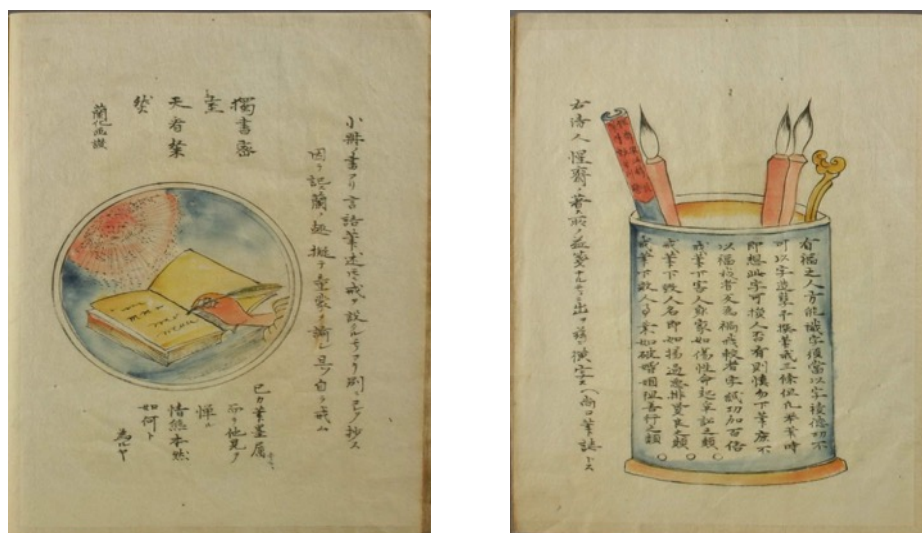


Figure 5-1: Two Knowledge Cultures, from Maeno Ryōtaku, *Kanrei higen* (1777)

into the known or, in terms familiar to us today, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. To elucidate his claim for these insistences that enact boundaries between two knowledge traditions and to visualise the difference, Ryōtaku provides us with comparative illustrations (Figure 5-1).

In the (Neo-)Confucian tradition (depicted in the illustration on the right side), everything in the realm under Heaven (*tianxia*) – both human and non-human – is informed by the same and only one principle, *ri*. The knower, whose ultimate purpose is to grapple with the absolute and transcendental principle of all things, inhabits the realm under Heaven and is dictated by that principle, such that the knower is simultaneously the known. Hence, the (Neo-)Confucian pursuit of the principle, *kyūri*, ultimately comes down to the introspection of one's mind. But this introspection, the pursuit of moral and ethical knowledge, is not an exercise without benchmarks and parameters. As the (Neo-)Confucian tradition presupposes, and as this illustration of Ryōtaku seeks to demonstrate, the principle has already been specified in the writings of the sages because everything in their writings culminates to the grasp of this principle. This is why textual immersion

is considered the appropriate mode of attaining, rather than producing, knowledge. This is also why the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth is the primary concern for textual immersion. Razan, if we may recall here, succinctly summarises this point when he explains that “the self and those texts [of the Sages] are nondual.”²⁶ As Ryōtaku suggests through this illustration, *Kyūri* under the (Neo-)Confucian order of discourse is to engage with texts, not as the author, but as one that inhabits the world-as-text, and to establish, in one’s reading, the integrity of language, meaning, and discursive truth of the sages’ writings so that one may attain the principle expressed by those words of the sages.

In contrast, Ryōtaku’s depiction of Western knowledge (the illustration on the left side) undoubtedly reiterates a distinction that we have come to associate with the Cartesian dualism between humans and nature, between the knower and the known, through which humans (the knower) becomes the master and possessor of nature (the known). To be sure, it was not until the 1830s that Descartes’ name began to appear in the works of *Rangaku* scholars.²⁷ However, given that many Western texts *Rangaku* scholars translated and circulated among them and beyond were

²⁶ See my discussion in Chapter 4, p.190. Hayashi Razan, *Seiri jigi genkai Vol.1*. The translation is borrowed from Heisig, et al. (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 306.

²⁷ One of the first mentions of Descartes can be found, for instance, in the work of Takano Chōei (1804-1850) entitled *Bunken manroku* (聞見漫録: Stray Notes on Things Heard and Seen, 1836). See Takano Chōei, *Bunken manroku*, in Satō Shōsuke, Uete Michiari, and Yamaguchi Muneyuki (eds.), *Nihon shisō taimei, Vol.55: Watanabe Kazan, Takano Chōei, Sakuma Shōzan, Yokoi Shōnan, Hashimoto Sanai* (Japanese Intellectual Thought, Vol.55), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971 [1836]: 204-210. Through my archival research, I have found one earlier mention of Descartes in Yoshio Shunzō’s (1787-1847) *Seisetsu kanshō-kyō* (西説觀象經: Western Doctrines for Observation). However, the version of Yoshio’s text available today is one reprinted in 1822. As such, it is rather challenging to determine when exactly the text was written. At least, my speculation is that the original must have been written earlier, sometime at the beginning of the 19th century. In the text, the name of Descartes (得私加而的私 / テスカルテス) appears in a brief description of the genealogy of modern Western science. As the term 經 in the title indicates, this text follows the structure of *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra* or *Amida-kyō* (阿弥陀經): 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. The reprinted 1822 version of *Seisetsu kanshō-kyō* is available online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko08/bunko08_c0319/index.html (02.05.2022)

those that were influenced, in one way or another, by Cartesian philosophy,²⁸ and also given the established connection between Descartes and the Dutch academy of 17th century and the interaction maintained between Japan and the Netherlands,²⁹ it is not so far-fetched to argue here for some traces of Cartesian thinking in those translated works of *Rangaku* scholars, including Ryōtaku's. By structuring the world in the realm of nature and the realm of humans, and by positioning humans as the knower external to nature to be known, casting a 'view from nowhere in particular,' the illustration clearly shows that the knower no longer inhabits the world to be known. Knowledge is something to be produced, rather than attained, by exercising the capacity of the observing mind. Thus, the knower becomes the author of a text rather than one that merely inhabits the world-as-text.

²⁸ For example, *Introduction to the True Physics and True Astronomy* (1725), one of the major works of John Keill (1671-1721), who was known for his scientific engagement with and eventual challenge he lodged against Descartes, was first translated into Dutch by Johan Lulofs (1711-68) under the title of *Introduction to the True Natural Astronomy* (1741), which Shizuki Tadao (1760-1806) translated into Japanese and published with his own commentaries under the titled of *Rekishō shinsho* (曆象新書: New Writings on Calendrical Phenomena, 1798-1802). In a similar vein, Udagawa Yōan's *Seimi kaiso* (舎密開宗: Principles of Chemistry) drew 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 Cartesian analysis.

²⁹ Descartes spent an extended period between the 1620s and the early 1640s in various Dutch cities, including Franeker, Leiden, Amsterdam, Deventer, and Utrecht. His satisfaction with his time in the Netherlands was expressed, for instance, in his letter to Balzac dated 5th May 1631: "You must also excuse my enthusiasm if I invite you to choose Amsterdam for your retreat, and to prefer it not only to the monasteries of the Franciscans and the Carthusians, to which many good folks retire, but also, let me say, to the finest abodes in France and Italy, and even to the famous Hermitage where you spent the past year. No matter how perfect a country house may be, it always lacks numerous conveniences which are to be found only in towns, and even the solitude which one hopes to find there turns out never to be quite perfect. There, I agree, you will find a stream that would make the greatest talkers fall into reveries, and a valley so secluded that it could transport them into ecstasies; but, as can easily happen, you will also have some neighbours who will bother you at times, and their visits will be even more bothersome than the ones you receive in Paris. In this large town [Amsterdam] where I live, by contrast, everyone but myself is engaged in trade, and hence is so attentive to his own profit that I could live here all my life without ever being noticed by a soul. I take a walk each day amid the bustle of the crowd with as much freedom and repose as you could obtain in your leafy groves, and I pay no more attention to the people I meet than I would to the trees in your woods of the animals that browse there." See Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. 3: The Correspondence*, John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugland Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991: 31. For Descartes' biography, see Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

In his attempt to redefine *kyūri* as the exercises of the observing mind, as the pursuit of knowledge about the world external to humans, Ryōtaku then translates the Dutch term ‘*natuurkunde*’ (science broadly and physics more specifically) into ‘*honnen-gaku*’ (本然学), equating the pursuit of knowledge with the scientific endeavour, which he claims is institutionalised in the Netherlands as ‘*kyūri gakkō*’ (窮理学校).

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日本然学也

(There are many schools in the Netherlands, one of which is called the school of *kyūri*. It is a school that teaches fundamental principles inherent in thirty million things. This school is also called the school of nature.)³⁰

The purpose of *kyūri* is redefined here in this enunciation as to reveal discrete principles (“本原固有之理”) of thirty million things (“三寸萬物”) through scientific inquiries. Then, he goes on to state that what he calls “*kyūri honnen no gaku*” (窮理本然ノ学) is much more than a specific means necessary and useful for one’s occupation, or else, what we may call practical and technical skills grounded on scientific knowledge. Instead, ‘*kyūri honnen no gaku*’ is useful and practical because it seeks to pursue the truth about nature within the formalised inquiry of astronomy, geography, calendrical science, and mathematics.³¹

Ryōtaku’s addresses are interesting less for their polemical effect to legitimise the purported primacy of Western knowledge but more for their discursive strategy of semantic transvaluation. In his addresses, the idea of *kyūri* was recentred around *scientia* that is undergirded, not by the

³⁰ Maeno, *Kanrei higen*.

³¹ 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 [...]” Ibid.

divine intention of Heaven, but by the secular guarantee of the forged position of the knower as to ‘view’ the world – the position that is *a priori* set up against the world of objects. And this new ontology of the knower symbolically indicates the possibility of other worldviews and other modalities of knowing the world, alternative to what has long been the dominant mode of thinking, reasoning, and institutional practices.

Scientia and Science

Ryōtaku’s definition of *natuurkunde* as *kyūri* obviously encompasses both a particular knowledge settlement for pursuing knowledge (*scientia*) and specific fields for pursuing knowledge (science). On the one hand, *kyūri* designates a set of ontological, epistemological and methodological premises regulating scholarly endeavour in which no human purposes or aspirations yield knowledge of the disenchanting world. On the other hand, *kyūri* also designates formalised fields of inquiry marked by established conventions of scientific observations and experiments. What we see here is an oscillation in translation as epistemic exercise – whether to understand Western knowledge as a unified epistemic tradition or to understand it as being dispersed into various fields.³² Some use the term *kyūri* to designate a set of premises that unifies and grounds Western knowledge. Others have in mind a much more specific meaning of *kyūri*, attributing it to a specific field of natural science.

³² I have already discussed in Chapter 4 how this unified yet dispersed nature of Western knowledge had constituted a certain problem for translation for Meiji intellectuals. While the likes of Nishi Amane and Nakae Chōmin argued for the unified nature of Western knowledge, scholars such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Kikuchi Dairoku tended to grasp this knowledge in its dispersed nature. One inference to be drawn here is that this oscillation between the unified and the dispersed, between the philosophical and the scientific, had, in fact, been one of the central tropes for the unfolding of *Rangaku* and, by extension, for the formation of modern knowledge in Japan.

Take for example the works of Motoki Yoshinaga (1735-1794). When translating a Dutch version of George Adams's (1709-1773) *A Treatise Describing and Explaining the Construction and Use of New Celestial and Terrestrial Globes* (1766), Yoshinaga defined *natuurkunde* as 'seiri-gaku' (性理学: *xing-li xue* in Chinese).³³ Needless to say, his usage of the term 'seiri-gaku' as an epithet for scientific knowledge of the West is a palpable refutation of Neo-Confucianism for which the very term constitutes the central trope of its learning.³⁴ By relocating the term from the Neo-Confucian fold to the semantic territory of Rangaku as an epithet for Western scientific knowledge, Yoshinaga here clearly transubstantiates the meaning of 'sei' and 'ri.' For him, 'sei' in question is not the quality of human nature, and 'ri' is not the absolute transcendence that dictates both humans and non-humans, which can be found within the human mind. 'Sei' that Yoshinaga speaks of is the manifold quality of things that make up the natural world, and 'ri' is that which determines that quality. To this end, *seiri-gaku* (or *natuurkunde*) for Yoshinaga constitutes the pursuit of principles that dictates the workings of the world external to the human mind. As he suggests, the quintessential example of *seiri-gaku* is the Copernican heliocentrism based on meticulous observations of celestial and terrestrial principles, which embodies the ethos of what *kyūri* ought to be (see Figure 5-2). On the achievement of Copernicus, Yoshinaga has this to say.

³³ 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 Treatise Describing and Explaining the Construction and Use of New Celestial and Terrestrial Globes, 1791). The original seven-volume text is archived at Waseda University Library (id-no.: 二 05_02335). Its digitised version is accessible online at https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ni05/ni05_02335/ (22.09.2021). 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. The text is available online at http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=6863 (22.09.2021)

³⁴ My brief discussion on the Neo-Confucian usage of 'seiri-gaku' (性理学: *xing-li xue*) can be found in Footnote 96 of Chapter 4, p.291.

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

(Pursuing the principle [...] is, in essence, understanding various phenomena you see with your naked eyes. This is the foundation of learning.)³⁵

The efficacy of Copernicus, as Yoshinaga seems to suggest here, is not limited to his contribution within a specific field of science, that is to say, his model of the universe that places the sun, instead of the earth, at its centre. The efficacy lies in the fact that the Copernican model of the universe has effectively triggered the development of a new scholarship, a paradigm shift, that is undergirded by a certain attitude towards knowledge, which Yoshinaga describes as the will to comprehend phenomena visible to the naked eyes (“裸眼ニ視ル諸象ハ如何アリ”), hence phenomena external to the observing mind. As I read it, *kyūri* here means much more than a given

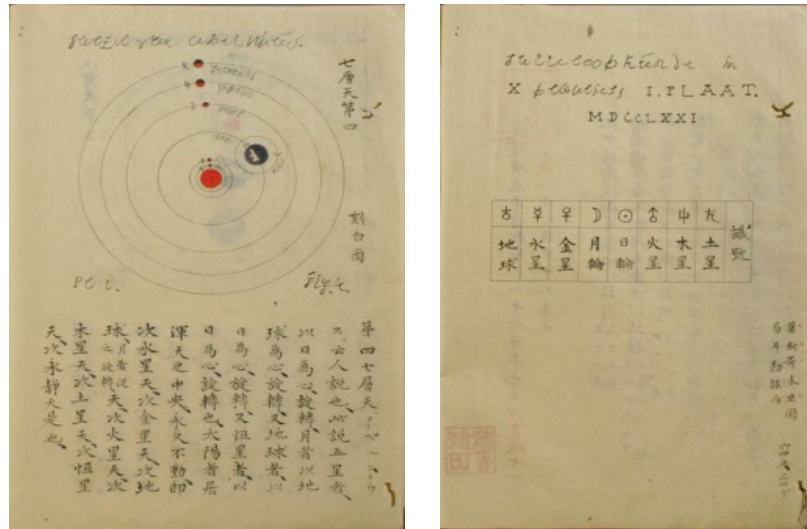


Figure 5-2. Copernican heliocentrism, Motoki Yoshinaga, *Seijutsu hongten taiyō kyūri ryōkai shinsei tenchi nikyū yōhō-ki* (1791)

³⁵ Motoki, *Seijutsu hongten taiyō kyūri ryōkai shinsei tenchi nikyū yōhō-ki*.

field of science, but a general attitude towards knowledge: to view the external world of objects and to accurately represent principles of the universe manifesting itself as specific visible phenomena.

This understanding of *kyūri* as a general attitude toward knowledge, as *scientia*, was reinforced later, for instance, by Takano Chōei in his essay entitled ‘*Seiyō gakushi no setsu*’ (西洋学師ノ説: Doctrines of Western Philosophers, 1835) included in *Bunken manroku* (聞見漫録: Stray Notes on Things Heard and Seen, 1835). His comment on Descartes’ achievement in the history of Western science is especially illustrative here.

「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 entered into the realm of ‘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: “The universe is not empty at all. The sun is the fixed star, around which planets orbit.” But he also writes: “The relationship between the star and planets is regulated by gravity, and this gravity determines the motion of the star and planets.” The latter claim remains in the fold of the old paradigm.)³⁶

³⁶ Takano Chōei, *Bunken manroku*, 208.

While acknowledging that the Cartesian theories have not been fully validated (“其論、真偽相半バスト雖モ”) and that some of his claims remain within the remit of the ‘old’ paradigm, Chōei nevertheless insists on the intellectual strength of Descartes, which, as Chōei argues, has effectively determined the orientation of Western scholarship in the subsequent decades. For Chōei, Cartesian theories are effective in discrediting the hitherto tacitly accepted conventions of scholarly enterprises (“世人千古ノ学風”) and in establishing an attitude of what he describes as *jitsugaku* (“実学”) that brings the humankind to the truth (“真理ニ入ル”). Descartes’ attitude to question the entrenched habits of thinking and reasoning vis-à-vis verifiable facts attained through observations, to accumulate facts and, hence, knowledge about nature is, for Chōei, the very ethos of *kyūri*.

Further still, the term ‘*jitsugaku*’ here should not be equated to Fukuzawa’s famous endorsement of ‘practical learning.’ Fukuzawa’s notion of ‘*jitsugaku*’ may be characterised as technical thoughts or skills which he considers fundamental for people to achieve self-improvement, independence of mind, and individualism under the unfolding condition of modernity, and which are dialectically linked, in Fukuzawa’s writings, to the strength of the nation-state.³⁷ In comparison, ‘*jitsugaku*’ exemplified by the body of knowledge called *scientia* means, for Chōei, ‘real’ scholarship devoid of baseless speculations and without the guarantee of divine intention. Western knowledge is ‘real’ scholarship to the extent that it seeks to understand the workings of the world with a specific attitude, scientificity, that grounds the method of (実測), that is to say, measurements or experimental science. This is not to say that the proposition of absolute transcendence is wholly evacuated from, for instance, Descartes’ intellectual life. For

³⁷ Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*.

example, in “The Third Mediation” in *The Discourse on Method* (1641), Descartes expands on the fact that he indeed has an idea of the infinite, that is, God, maintaining 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.”³⁸ Then, Chōei’s insistence – and for that matter, many other Rangaku scholars’ insistence – that Western knowledge was without any a priori postulate of divine intension is reflexive, perhaps, less of the Cartesian thought itself but more of Chōei’s own desire to differentiate Western knowledge from the (Neo-)Confucian tradition. Nevertheless, for Chōei, ‘*jitsugaku*’ encompasses all the fields of knowledge grounded on the scientific attitude, including optics, chemistry, hydrography, and mechanics. And these fields are the constituencies of what he calls ‘*kakubutsu kyūri-gaku*’ (“格物窮理学”).³⁹

Suppose Yoshinaga’s and Chōei’s enunciation of *kyūri* seek to designate a broader, general attitude towards knowledge marked by scientificity, hence by a concern for what makes knowledge scientific. In contrast, Udagawa Yōan’s (1798-1846) use of the term *kyūri* denotes a much more specific field of knowledge. In *Shokugaku keigen* (植學啓原: Principles of Botany, 1833), Yōan states that knowledge production about ten-thousand things that make up the world (“万物の学”) is marked by a hierarchised division of labour, with each division being founded on a set of specific approaches to and postulates about – that is to say, secular guarantees to know – the world of objects.⁴⁰

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ Takano Chōei, *Bunken manroku*, 210.

⁴⁰ Udagawa Yōan, *Shokugaku keigen*, 1833. A digitised version of the text is accessible online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ni14/ni14_00796/index.html (22.09.2021).

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墻舍密者理之堂奧

(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.)⁴¹

Under this schema of categorising various fields of knowledge, the most elementary of all is history (“斐斯多里ヒストリ”), which Yōan specifically means natural history or what is later called ‘*hakubutsu-gaku*’ (博物学),⁴² and which involves the practice of systematic categorisation – of plants, animals, and minerals – based on observational methods. This field of knowledge, therefore, emphasises the cognitive ability of the observing mind to distinguish one thing from another as the most basic function for the practice of knowing. At the other end of the spectrum is chemistry (“舍密加セミカ”), which Yōan perceives as the most intricate form of knowledge production

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² History as a study of the human past conducted through whatever philosophy of history one chooses was developed in Japan much later. The most significant development of historiographical methods in 17th- and 18th-century Europe, which subsequently had an immense influence on historical scholarship in Japan, may be attributed, among others, to Herbert Spencer, Henry Thomas Buckle, and Leopold von Ranke. For example, Spencer’s notion of ‘rich ore’ – scientific theory of history – foregrounded Nishi Amane’s notion of scientificity and Katō Hiroyuki’s evolutionary perspective on national emergence. Buckle’s historical perspective on civilisation inspired Taguchi Ukichi’s rendering of Japanese history as a civilisational history. And Ranke’s historical methods revolved around the notion of ‘what really happened’ became the central referent for institutionalisation and disciplinisation of history at the University of Tokyo. I will address this issue of temporalisation in conjunction with the subject formation in Chapter 7, pp.534-537. For an analysis of the relation between historical scholarship and science in modern Europe, see Isaiah Berlin, “History and Theory: The Concept of Scientific History,” *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 5-3. Scientific Approaches, Udagawa Yōan, *Shokugaku keigen* (1833) and *Seimi kaisō* (1837-1847)

through the method of scientific experiments. For this reason, chemistry represents, in Yōan’s scheme of categorisation, a field of knowledge that engages with the most fundamental principles of all things (“理之堂奥”). In between history and chemistry lies the field of physics (“費西加ヒシカ”). this field is, according to Yōan, a scholarship that seeks to understand the existence of things, that is to say, principles of how and why things exist in specific ways, through the method of observation and measurement. And it is this field of physics that Yōan specifically labels as *kyūri-gaku* (窮理学) or *ri-gaku* (理学: a shortened version of *kyūri-gaku*). Therefore, in this semantic of Yōan, *kyūri* designates not necessarily a general attitude towards knowledge as Yoshinaga and Chōei would claim, but a specific field of science that aims at discovering, through formalised methods of observation and measurement, laws and regularities of how and why things exist as they do (see Figure 5-3).

Kawamoto Kōmin (1810-1871) echoes Yōan in his understanding of *kyūri*. Almost two decades after Yōan’s *Shokugaku keigen*, Kōmin wrote, in 1851, in the introduction to the revised translation

of Johannes Buijs' *Natuurkundig Schoolboek* (1809-1812) that the term '*fysica*' was equivalent to *natuurkunde*, a field of knowledge which his predecessors had translated as *ri-gaku*.

「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 in the term of my predecessors is '*rigaku*'. It is the study of the principle of each and every thing – all things from the sun, moon and stars above us to the plants, animals, and stones below us. *Fysica* leaves nothing out and is the source of all crafts and arts, suggesting that all things, even if they sometimes escape our cognition, are regulated by their principles.)⁴³

By defining physics as the field of knowledge pursuing the principle of each and every thing that makes up the universe and the earth (“天地萬物ノ理ヲ窮ムルノ学”), Kōmin understands *kyūri* as an exercising of grasping the essential quality of a thing and the fundamental principle that determines that quality (“性理ヲ論辯”). Indeed, both of these phrases – “天地萬物ノ理ヲ窮ムルノ学” and “性理ヲ論辯” – sound as if directly taken from Neo-Confucian writings. As I read it, Kōmin is glossing over here, as many other *Rangaku* scholars do, the existing semantics of Neo-Confucianism to validate Western knowledge. Just as we have seen in Baien's comment and Yoshinaga's address, we see in Kōmin's enunciation a blatant refutation of Neo-Confucianism

⁴³ Kawamoto Kōmin, *Kikai kanran kōgi, Vol.1* (気海観瀾廣義: Revised Introduction to Physics), 1851. The original text composed of 13 volumes is archived as Waseda University Library (Id-no.:ニ_0301391) and a digitised version is accessible at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ni03/ni03_01391/index.html (22/09/2021). This text of Kōmin is based on Aochi Rinsō's (1775-1833) rendering of Buijs' *Natuurkundig Schoolboek*. Rinsō initially translated the entire book of Buijs with the title *Kakubutsu sōhan* (格物綜凡: An Overview of Physics), but later picked chapters on meteorology and publishes them under the title of *Kikai kanran* (気海観瀾: On Physics) in 1827. Kōmin expanded Rinsō's publication by translating other chapters from Buijs' original text.

expressed by his signification of the term ‘*sei*’ as the quality of an object rather than as human nature, and the term ‘*ri*’ as principles of the natural world rather than as the absolute transcendence immanent in both humans and non-humans. This discursive transvaluation of ‘*sei*’ and ‘*ri*,’ in turn, enables Kōmin, just as it does Baien and Yoshinaga, to reconfigure the very idea of *kyūri* as the pursuit of principles of the natural world external to humans. Yet unlike Baien and Yoshinaga, who understand *kyūri* as a general attitude towards knowledge, Kōmin equates *kyūri* to the specific field of physics formalised with a set of established methodological conventions to intervene in the world of objects.

Kōmin’s text also offers a general understanding of what he considers the world external to the knower and, in turn, what he thinks constitutes the knower who views the external world. Kōmin, as a physician and avid learner of *Ranpō* (蘭方: Dutch medicine), renders the human body as part and parcel of that which is external to the observing mind and, thus, the body as the object of knowledge. Undoubtedly, such rendering embeds within itself a trace of the Cartesian conception, whereby the body is distinguished from the mind. In *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), Descartes ontologically distinguishes the body, which he describes perceptible as *res extensa* (the thing that exists and is visible), from the mind, which is characterised as *res cogitans* (a thinking thing that is invisible), arguing that,

the faculties of willing, feeling, conceiving, etc. cannot be properly speaking said to be [the body’s] parts, 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.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy In Which the Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body Are Demonstrated*, Donald A. Cress (trans.), Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993 [1641]: 56.

By reiterating, whether implicitly or otherwise and whether consciously or otherwise, this Cartesian distinction between the body and the mind, Kōmin argues that the field of knowledge called physiology (“ヒシヨロギー”), which is concerned primarily with the principle of human bodies, is a mere branch of physic, the locus of *kyūri*.

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「ヒシヨロギー」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に彼ノ「ヒシヨロギー」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 functions by external stimulus, such that, when discussing the function of the body, one must explain it in conjunction with other things outside the body. The field of knowledge that seeks to understand the principles of the function of the body is called physiology, which is part and parcel of physics. [...] Therefore, the first step of learning is to study physics and know the principles of all things. Then, one can study physiology, which allows one to engage in pathological studies of diseases. [...] Physics is the study of the principles of all things. And a ‘thing’ here refers to that which has ontological properties.)⁴⁵

Physiology is part and parcel of physics (“「ヒシカ」ノ一派”), insofar as the function of the body (“生機”) is determined by external stimuli (“體外ノ諸物ニ感シテ”). Here, the body is treated as tangible physical property, an extension of the physical world external to the thinking faculty of the knower. By specifying human bodies as the object of knowledge and by locating physiology as a branch of physics, Kōmin goes on to specify that *kyūri*, physics, is essentially the

⁴⁵ Kawamoto Kōmin, *Kikai kanran kōgi*, Vol. I.

pursuit of knowledge about things (“費西加者窮理物理之学”) and that a thing is defined as that which exists materially with ontological properties (“體アル者”).

In the Western philosophical tradition, this Cartesian dualism of the mind and the body is often understood as the problem of interactionism – how the mind, in and of itself immaterial, can cause anything in the body that is material, and vice versa. The Cartesian dualism has, therefore, opened a new realm of scepticism and philosophical contemplation. However, notably, Kōmin’s observation never enters such a realm of contemplation. As I speculate, it is partly because Kōmin, as a practitioner of Western medicine, was interested less in engaging with the doctrines of Western science philosophically but more in specifying appropriate ways of understanding human bodies as the object of his own scholarship. It is also partly because of his proclivity to render Western knowledge as something being dispersed, because of his attention to elaborate on a field of science rather than scientificity, that there seems to be little room for scepticism towards what has been said in source texts. The point I shall emphasise here is that the absence of philosophical contemplation is not evidence of failure on Kōmin’s part. Rather, it suggests a possible instance of refraction in translational practice. It is certainly plausible to argue that, in Europe during the time of Descartes, philosophy and science were not clearly delineated as distinctive fields of knowledge production and dissemination. It was, therefore, reasonable for Descartes and his followers to be concerned with both the philosophical and scientific implications of, for instance, the dualism of the mind and the body. However, Western physics that Kōmin sought to elaborate on had come to Japan in the form of specific texts, such that it was, as I speculate, deliberately limited and partial. Furthermore, since the very onset of Japan’s encounter with Western knowledge, the political authority forged a tendency to perceive this knowledge in its utility and instrumentality, which, as it seems to me, also regulated the intellectual attitude to seek utilitarian

efficiency of this knowledge.⁴⁶ In a sense, Kōmin's rendering of Western knowledge exists somewhat independently of the very knowledge he purports to render, even though they are still intimately linked to one another. Kōmin's rendering of Western knowledge, especially of physics, as *kyūri* indicates a possibility that the very meaning of science, of *natuurkunde*, may be suspended and deferred in his translational practice as an epistemic exercise.

Semantic Settlements and Semantic Scope: Translational Practices of Rangaku

The *Rangaku* scholars' rendering of the idea of *kyūri* may not have been fully settled, oscillating between or encompassing both *scientia* and science. At the same time, their enunciations are often woven with a polemical undertone, glossing over the familiar (Neo-)Confucian semantics for the purpose of legitimising Western knowledge and their affinity to this knowledge. Nevertheless, I shall emphasise here that those enunciations of *Rangaku* scholars are much more than mere (re)signification of the familiar signifier. Whether one understands *kyūri* as a general attitude towards knowledge or as a specific field of science, a certain semantic settlement, or else, a semantic scope of *kyūri*, had emerged by the mid-19th century.

First, and most obviously, *Rangaku* scholars understand Western knowledge with a double meaning: knowledge as what one knows (contents) and knowledge as the state of knowing (form). Thus, their translational practices encompassed both linguistic exercises and epistemic exercises. This is evident in their translational strategy that revolves around 'elaboration,' through which the

⁴⁶ I will expand further on this point later in this chapter. While Kōmin and his contemporaries had demonstrated little interest in the concept of the mind distinguished from the body, it was this concept of the mind that became, in the late 19th century, an important conceptual device to establish the subject position, which will be the central trope of Chapter 7.

canonised works of Western scholars are reproduced, not word by word, but as excerpts rearranged in a way that appeals to a given audience and that enables the reader to grasp the hitherto unfamiliar knowledge tradition with familiar lexicons. To this end, this strategy of elaboration foregrounds a new possibility of ‘viewing’ rather than ‘inhabiting’ the world and, hence, a new possibility of knowledge. However, to say so does not necessarily mean that Western knowledge, more specifically, the order of discourse that sustains this knowledge, is wholly emulated when translated into the Japanese language. *Rangaku* scholars’ works also signal the moment of refractions prescribed in translational practices. Refraction occurs because the strategy of elaboration is dependent on translation, whereby epistemic sustenance of a reproduced text is drawn not from the semantics of the source text but from the semantics of the Japanese language, which is not entirely independent from the other traditions of knowledge. Western knowledge as *kyūri* does not transparently inform, for instance, the Western notion of scientificity or that of physics. Certain interpretative imaginations of the translator, of *Rangaku* scholars, about what Western knowledge must be, insert themselves in their translational practices. What arises in this instance of refraction, in the liminal semantic space marked by transformative thresholds, is a rather sobering possibility: a possibility of incommensurability between, on the one hand, the order of discourse that informs Western knowledge and, on the other hand, the order of discourse that enables a knowledge tradition begins to be articulated in Japan through a series of translation as epistemic exercises – a possibility of ‘discursive difference’ embedded within a knowledge tradition that we have come to regard as ‘modern’ knowledge.⁴⁷

Despite the inevitable refraction and possible incommensurability and despite – or, perhaps, precisely because of – the polemical undertone encoded in its discursive addresses, the *Rangaku*

⁴⁷ I will expand further on this possibility of ‘discursive difference’ in Chapter 7 in conjunction with the subject formation within the semantic and intellectual space of the early Meiji period.

tradition and its contemplation on a new possibility of knowledge had specific implications. First, with the polemical grammar that denounces the inadequacy of the ‘old’ knowledge tradition, which, of course, served as a self-fulfilling prophecy, a certain consensus began to emerge through the writings of *Rangaku* scholars: that Western knowledge was much more than a mere epistemological object freely transferred from one location to another without any mediation; it was a worldview, a specific mode of thinking and reasoning, or to borrow Fukuzawa’s term here, ‘the spirit of civilisation,’ which was different – was thought different – from the existing knowledge traditions. To be sure, as I have suggested elsewhere, any act of differentiation is intimately intertwined with inhibition, interests, and desires, such that the purported difference between Western knowledge and the ‘old’ knowledge traditions that the *Rangaku* scholars argued for is an arbitrary discursive disjuncture. There are more similarities between Western knowledge and the ‘old’ knowledge traditions than we initially surmise or than the *Rangaku* tradition compels us to believe. And yet, this difference, which was once arbitrary, became, in writing and in discourse, the very essence of differentiation.⁴⁸ The consensus that emerged from the writings of *Rangaku* scholars – that Western knowledge is a whole different worldview – came to foreground the central trope of political and intellectual discussions during the early years of Meiji, marked by the oscillation between ‘becoming modern’ and ‘being different.’

⁴⁸ This is what Nietzsche observes when concerning the ways in which arbitrary systems of categorisation become autonomous. He writes, “The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for – originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to the nature and even to their skin – all this grows from generation unto generation, ... until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974: 121-2. Following Nietzsche, Mary Douglas argues that a constructive bias is always built into a system of categorisation. “It gives us confidence. At any time we may have to modify our structure of assumptions to accommodate new experience, but the more consistent the experience is with the past, the more confidence we can have in our assumptions.” See Mary Douglas, “Secular Defilement,” in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003: 37 [30-41].

Second, translational practices and discursive addresses of *Rangaku* scholars effectively expanded the semantic scope of *kyūri*. ‘Expansion’ is the key term here. Those enunciations of *Rangaku* scholars did not replace the hitherto prevalent signification of *kyūri* derived from the Neo-Confucian tradition. At least by the mid-19th century, the idea of *kyūri* and its semantic scope came to encompass not only the act of pursuing the principle (*ri*) under the Neo-Confucian regime of truth but also the act of scientifically pursuing variegated principles (*ri*) of the natural world devoid of any human purposes and aspiration.⁴⁹ As I am acutely aware, such a claim may sound rather banal. However, recognising this extended semantic scope of *kyūri* is important, as it enables us to specify the locus of further problematisation for understanding the historical, translational, and discursive process through which ‘Western’ knowledge had become ‘modern’ knowledge and even *the* knowledge, and how and why this process was marked by ‘discursive difference.’

To clarify further, the extended semantic scope of *kyūri* is fraught with a fourfold tension. The first is the tension over worldview, between one that sees the world as the repository of human purposes and aspirations and the other that perceives the world as what mechanical philosophy would perceive it, as being composed of mechanical principles such as the motion and collision of matters that constitute specific laws and regularities. This foregrounds both the second tension over the nature of knowledge and the third tension over the position of the knower. Suppose the world is the repository of human purposes and aspirations. In that case, knowledge is essentially ethical and moral, and the knower as one that conducts oneself in pursuit of or in accordance with such purposes and aspirations inhabits the very world it seeks to understand. In contradistinction, suppose the world is constituted as what it is by mechanical principles and devoid of any moral and ethical meanings. In that case, knowledge of such a world is purportedly factual, if not

⁴⁹ As I shall expand in Chapter 6, the development of other knowledge traditions, such as *Kogaku*, *Kokugaku*, and *Jōrigaku*, was also a crucial instance for expanding the semantic scope of *kyūri*.

secular,⁵⁰ and the knower stands outside those principles as a disenchanted observer. Furthermore, these tensions over worldview, nature of knowledge, and position of the knower necessarily inform methodological attitudes. One advocates cyclical time learning, whereby words of the past are treated as the repository of universally applicable moral and ethical conclusions. Thus, textual immersion with attention to linguistic, signifiatory, and discursive integrity is considered the methodologically appropriate mode of learning. The other advocates linear time of learning, whereby the method grounded on scientificity, including categorisation, measurement, observation, and experiment, is designed in such a way that learning will eventually lead to factual accumulation and discovery of laws and regularities of the world external to the knower. These varying methodological attitudes are the fourth tension prevailing in the semantic space of *kyūri*.

The question that arises at this juncture is deceptively simple. What enabled the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri* and turned it into the locus of epistemic tension? Of course, as I have discussed above, the translational practices of *Rangaku* scholars were the catalyst for glossing over the Neo-Confucian semantics while introducing and disseminating Western knowledge in Japan. And I have a certain sympathy with an argument that the *Rangaku* tradition had paved the way for ‘embracing the West and forsaking the East’ in its semantics and that the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri* was both necessary and inevitable course of historical progress for which the *Rangaku* tradition was the primary bearer. However, such justification is not only tautological but

⁵⁰ As I have 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, 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.

also overestimates, in hindsight, the achievement of the *Rangaku* tradition, which remained relatively marginal in terms of its influence in the broader population and its institutional make-up vis-à-vis other knowledge traditions such as (Neo-)Confucianism and *Kangaku*. What I am effectively suggesting here – and what I seek to discuss in the following section – is to take the broader condition that provided heteronomous authorisation of Western knowledge, perhaps, not as *the* knowledge but, at least, as one constitutive element, among many others, of the intellectual and epistemic landscape of early modern Japan. Whether as *scientia*, that is, a general attitude towards knowledge, or as a specific field of science with established and formalised conventions of inquiry, the new meaning of *kyūri* was articulated not in a vacuum. Western knowledge did not have an overwhelming intellectual purchase to be accepted all at once as the alternative knowledge tradition. Instead, it was a latent politico-intellectual backdrop that authorised the effects of this knowledge and, in turn, enabled those *Rangaku* scholars to locate this knowledge within the semantic space of *kyūri*.

5.2. Enabling Conditions for Semantic Transvaluation

What enabled the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri*? What did authorise and sanction Western knowledge to be mapped onto the existing epistemic and intellectual landscape? The remainder of this chapter seeks to contextualise the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri*, the process of such expansion, and ultimately the (re)configuration of the epistemic and intellectual landscape in broader political and intellectual conditions: more specifically, the political condition marked by the shifting Tokugawa attitude towards Christianity that forged the separation of the

realm of Western knowledge from the realm of morality and ethics; and the intellectual condition whereby scepticism towards the authoritative voice, which was, in fact, inherent in the Neo-Confucian tradition, was considered *laissez-faire* or even imperative for scholarly operations. Woven together, these conditions foregrounded a specific itinerary of Western knowledge travelling from one spatio-temporally specific location to another and a distinct way in which this knowledge was integrated into the semantic space of *kyūri*, hence into the existing epistemic and intellectual landscape.

Missionaries, Politics of Knowledge, and the Location of Western Knowledge

The political condition – part and parcel of that which constituted the latent backdrop of the semantic expansion of *kyūri* – I am referring to may be characterised here as ‘politics of knowledge’: the ways in which power had inserted itself in the itinerary of Western knowledge travelling from Europe to Japan, and the ways in which power had authorised who could be the intermediary of Western knowledge in Japan, how one could engage with this knowledge, and what position this knowledge ought to assume in its relation to other knowledge traditions.

As the story goes, Japan’s encounter with Western knowledge began with the arrival of Portuguese trade ships in the 1540s, which was followed by the advent of Catholic missionaries.⁵¹

What is of particular interest for my analysis here is not necessarily the question of which theories

⁵¹ On this period dubbed as ‘Christian Century’ in Japan, see Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951. For my interest in translation generally and in dissemination of knowledge through missionary specifically, I find the following works especially interesting. Diego Pacheco, “Diogo de Mesquita, S.J. and the Jesuit Mission Press,” *Momumenta Nipponica*, 26:3/4, 1971: 431-443; Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*; 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.

and intellectual doctrines were brought to Japan by those missionaries, but the question of how those missionaries treated science and scientific knowledge, such as the Copernican heliocentric model, in relation to their religious doctrine specifically and to their idea of religious life more broadly. In a general sense, the relationship between Catholicism and scientific knowledge during the 15th and 16th centuries was marked by a sense of commensurability.⁵² Religion and science were commensurable to the extent that both religious practices and scientific operations were considered individual virtues or habits of mind rather than distinctive bodies or entities with formalised ways of thinking and reasoning. Peter Harrison suggests, with the example of Thomas Aquinas, that while religion was seen as “a virtue – not, incidentally, one of the preeminent theological virtues, but nonetheless an important moral virtue related to justice,” science was thought as “a habit of mind or an ‘intellectual virtue’.”⁵³ To this end, religion and science that we now consider distinctive “systems of beliefs and practices” were once conceived primarily as “personal qualities.”⁵⁴ Hence, commensurable. Under the general orientation that negated the separation of the realm of faith from all the other realms of human life, including the realm of scientific endeavour, there was, as we have seen with the case of Descartes earlier, no discrepancy between faith and reason, between religion and science. It is, therefore, not so surprising that, for instance, the Society of Jesus (Jesuit Order), whose missions began to arrive in Asia in the 16th

⁵² So too was the relationship between Protestantism and science, according to G.B. Deason. He points out, Protestantism contributed at least indirectly, if not directly, to the rise of mechanical philosophy and the development of the field of science more generally as a realm of secular knowledge. G.B. Deason, “Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 38:2, 1985: 226-227 [221-240]. Of course, such generalisation enters a dangerous ground. For instance, there were obvious divisions among what Max Weber described as ‘ascetic’ Protestantism, each of which was marked by a differing degree of proclivity towards 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. For a general consideration of the territorialisation of the realm of religion and that of science, see Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*.

⁵³ Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 7, 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

century, had nurtured scientific learning within the order. As Jonathan Wright observes, by the 18th century,

[The Jesuits] contributed to the development of pendulum clocks, pantographs, barometers, reflecting telescopes, and microscopes, to scientific fields as various as magnetism, optics, and electricity. They observed, in some cases before anyone else, the coloured bands on Jupiter's surface, the Andromeda nebula, and Saturn's rings. They theorized about the circulation of the blood, the theoretical possibility of flight, the way the moon affected the tides, and the wavelight nature of light.⁵⁵

Jesuits' ease in engaging with scientific matters was indeed sustained by the fact that both religion and science were inner dispositions, or habits of mind, rather than systematised worldviews.

However, it is important to acknowledge here that the commensurability between faith and science does not necessarily mean that, at least for those Christian devotees, the realm of faith and that of science existed autonomously from one another. The Catholic's rhetoric of all-encompassing power of the faith meant not only that the realm of faith and other realms of human life were one and whole; but also that the lifeworld was structured in such a way that faith was, to put it blatantly, the dictate of human life including learning. It is also equally important to recognise here that Catholic missions of the 16th century travelled to Japan were organised as part and parcel of the Counter-Reformation following the Council of Trent (1545-1563), and that those missionaries were authorised also by the political power of Portugal which saw those missions as an effective religious arm of its colonial desire. This, in turn, means that science and scientific knowledge –Western knowledge broadly – came to Japan not necessarily as an autonomous pursuit of the facts about the world but as something integral – or at least thought to be integral – to the

⁵⁵ Johnathan Wright, *The Jesuits: Missions, Myths, and Histories*, New York, NY: Harpar Collins, 2004: 189.

religious life and, by extension, as something intimately intertwined with the concerns of European political power.

Jesuit missionaries blatantly instrumentalised scientific knowledge for their strategy of religious conversion of the Japanese.⁵⁶ For instance, in his *Histoire de l'Église du Japon* (1679), Jean Crasset (1618-1692) referred to a letter of Francis Xavier (1506-1552) sent from Japan to Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), in which Xavier specified the necessary qualities 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.⁵⁷

A similar description of the missionaries resorting to science and scientific knowledge to impress and eventually to capture the heart of the Japanese for religious conversion can be found in *Historia de Japam* (1597) of Luís Fróis (1532-1597).

[H]um dos maiores astrologos que havia em Japão, que era Cunque, pessoa muito nobre, por nome Aquimasadono; o qual, por ouvir do Padre [Gaspar Vilela] os eclipses do sol e da lua, e alguma couza dos movimentos dos ceos, criou isto nelle

⁵⁶ Also widely known is the fact that the Jesuits utilised the humanist canon as well, such as the works of the saints, Cinderella, and Aesop, in their attempt to mould the natives into one embodying Western and Christian worldview. 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.

⁵⁷ Jean Crasset, *Histoire de l'Église du Japon*, 1679. This English translation is borrowed from the 1705 translation version. See Crasset, *The History of the Church in Japan*, N.N. (trans.), London, 1705: 77. Crasset's work was translated in 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). A digitised version of the Japanese publication is available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/971162> (02.05.2022).

tamanho conceito, que foi dos primeiros que no Miaco se fizeram christãos com sua mulher, filhos e família, e chamava-se Aquimasa Manoel. [E]ra douto na sciencia dos chinas.

(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, having heard from Father [Gaspar Vilela] about the eclipses of the sun and the moon, and some theories about movements of the heavens, was so impressed that he converted into Christianity with his wife, children and family, and was called Aquimasa Manoel. He learnt [before learning Western astronomy] the science of China.)⁵⁸

These stories, told from the perspective of the missionaries, depict Japan's encounter with Western science as an instance filled with enchantment, amazement, and appreciation that this knowledge tradition could offer an explanation of that which the existing traditions did not adequately elucidate. Of course, as a history of Jesuit missionaries written by the missionaries themselves, these stories reflect, more than anything, their invested interest in depicting their works in Japan rather in a self-serving manner and, thus, cannot be taken for its historical accuracy and neutrality, assuming, of course, that such accuracy and neutrality are possible to achieve in writing. At least, the inference I shall draw here is the following. Even supposing that the Japanese indeed saw in Western science a glimpse of other knowledge traditions that could potentially fill the void left unattended by the existing knowledge traditions, Western knowledge nonetheless came to Japan as that which was intimately intertwined with power – here, the religious power of Catholicism,

⁵⁸ Luís Fróis, *História de Japam, Vol.1*, José Wicki S.J. (ed.), Lisbon: Impensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 1976: 193. Ismael Abder-Rahman Gil helped me to translation the Portuguese text into English. The original text has been translated into both Japanese and German. See Luís Fróis, *Die Geschichte Japans (1549-1578)*, Georg Schurhammer and Ernst Arthur Voretzsch (trans.), Leipzig: Verlag der Asia major, 1926; a 12-volume publication of Luís Fróis, *Kanyaku: Furoisu nihon-shi* (完訳フロイス日本史: Complete Translation: Fróis' History of Japan), Matsuda Kiichi and Kawasaki Momota (trans.), Tokyo: Chūkō bunko, 2000. For historical contexts of Fróis' stay in Japan and his intellectual predilection, annotations offered by Richard K. Danford, Robin D. Gill, and Daniel T. Reff for Fróis' another major work, *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*, a comparative observation between the West and Japan, offer us some great insights. See Danford, Gill, and 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" (Manuel Aquimasa and Kamo Zaishō), *Shien*, 25:3, 1965: 37-45.

which of course was also inseparable from the political power of the commercial and maritime empire of Portugal.⁵⁹

So understood, the itinerary of Western knowledge in Japan in the following centuries can be described, as I shall describe here, as a process of conscious disassociation of science and scientific knowledge from European religious and political power – as a process of repositioning Western knowledge away from the dictate of non-intellectual instances, which involved, as paradoxical as it may sound, authorisation of Western knowledge by a power within Japan.

The initial Japanese political attitude towards Catholic missionaries was marked by a sense of acceptance, be it with reluctance or with eagerness.⁶⁰ However, the attitude had been shifted by the end of the 16th century and the early 17th century, with the negation of Catholic syncretism of power and faith epitomised by Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1537-1598) 1587 Edicts against Christianity, as well as by a series of systematic prosecutions of missionaries and Japanese converts under the reign of the Tokugawa shogunate.⁶¹ Today's scholarship on Christianity in Japan is in general agreement that this shift in political attitude was derived predominantly from the concern for governing: a desire to maintain a sense of territorial integrity of the Japanese

⁵⁹ 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, Accommodatio 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.

⁶⁰ Stories of religious conversion of some feudal lords, such as Ōmura Sumitada (1533–1587), Ōtomo Sōrin (1530–1587), and Arima Harunobu (1567–1612), who became so-called 'kirishitan-daimyō' (キリシタン大名: Christian feudal lords), and their support for organising and sponsoring a Japanese emissary, *Tenshō keno shōnen shisetsu-dan* (天正遣欧少年使節団), are good examples of eagerness to embrace Christianity. See Boxer, *The Christian Century*; Donald F. Lach, *Asian in the Making of Europe, Vol. 1: The Century of Discovery*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1965: 688-701.

⁶¹ 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.

archipelago; a fear of non-obedience of the peasant population and lower ranking samurais who converted into Christianity; and a sustained interest in the West and a continuing necessity of trade. For instance, Hideyoshi's decision to expel Jesuit fathers is said to be implemented upon his learning about the territorial rather than mere religious ambition of the Portuguese, which for Hideyoshi seemed to instrumentalise the Jesuit missionaries as 'a religious arm' of its colonial endeavour.⁶² Tokugawa Iemitsu's (1604-1651) interrogation and prosecution of missionaries and apostates is understood as being partly based on his perplexity towards those converts who staunchly remained disobedient towards the authority.⁶³ At the same time, the sustained interest in learning about the West and the necessity to maintain relationships with Western countries through trade required power to perform a political balancing act, expressed by Hideyoshi's insistence on the separation of trade and religion. This interest and necessity justified the non-participation of Catholic religious orders in trade, which began to materialise later with the arrival of traders of non-Catholic nations, especially the Dutch and the English, in the 17th century.⁶⁴

The result of these political concerns and subsequent implementations of policies was what we know today as 'sakoku' (鎖国) – not as a complete closure of the country, but as a strategic approach to foreign affairs that enabled Europeans to still participate in the trade as long as their activities would not destabilise the politico-social structure of the archipelago.⁶⁵ Here, Fróis

⁶² Yamanaka Yoshitomo, "Jukyō rangaku no dentō to kindai no rinri ni suite no shiron" (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.

⁶³ 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.

⁶⁴ Andrea Boscaro, "Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the 1587 Edicts Against Christianity," *Oriens Extremus*, 20:2, 1973: 219-241.

⁶⁵ Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 193.

himself translated Hideyoshi's Edict in five points sent to Catholic fathers and traders, acknowledging the shift in political attitude with anticipation of what was to come.

[...] da qui por diante, não somente mercadores, mas quaesquer outras pessoas que vierem da índia, & não forem impedimento as leis dos Càmis & Fotoquas, podem vir liuremente, & assi o saibão. Aos quinze annos da era de Tenxon, aos dezanoue dias da sexta lua.

(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. On the nineteenth day of the sixth month of the fifteenth year of Tensho.)⁶⁶

This politically informed negation of Catholic syncretism of faith and power, and the political insistence on the separation of trade and religion that Hideyoshi first spoke for, obviously foregrounded the subsequent trading relationships with non-Catholic nations of Europe. However, as I read it, the shifting political attitude had a much more significant implication. The negation of Catholic syncretism and the insistence on separating trade and religion signalled an emerging new political condition under which Western knowledge came to be treated as areligious and apolitical.

More to the point, the negation of Catholic syncretism of faith and power, as paradoxical as it may sound, reconfigured a kind of religious syncretism within Japan, whereby power arbitrarily instrumentalised certain moral and ethical teachings as they saw for its convenience. More to the point, the negation of Catholic syncretism of faith and power, as paradoxical as it may sound, reconfigured a kind of religious syncretism within Japan, whereby power arbitrarily instrumentalised certain moral and ethical teachings as they saw for its convenience. To borrow

⁶⁶ Luís Fróis, *História de Japam*. This English translation is borrowed from Boxer, *The Christian Century*, 148, and slightly modified in accordance with the original notes in Japanese. The original text of the edict is archived at Matsuura Historical Museum. For the transcript of the original text, see the database of National Museum of Japanese History: https://khirin-ld.rekihaku.ac.jp/rdf/nmjh_kaken_medInterNationalExchange/E7973 (02.05.2022).

from Andrea Boscaro, “Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism [were] seen as different aspects of a sole reality [of Japan] and praised for their functions as warrenters [sic] of social order and peace,” that is to say, the “order and peace that the ‘heresies’ (obviously Christianity in particular) could endanger.”⁶⁷ This discursive affirmation of the linkage between politics and moral and ethical teachings provided by those existing traditions was much more than an expression of suspicion towards Catholicism. The affirmation also meant that Catholic missionaries, as the initial intermediary of Western knowledge to Japan, had no longer been authorised as the bearer of this knowledge. The expulsion and persecution of Catholic missionaries were, in a sense, a negation of the Catholic vision undergirded by its monistic order of discourse that connected the religious to the scientific, and hence a negation of its treatment of science and scientific knowledge as a sustenance, an instrument, for the moral and ethical predilection of religious life. At this juncture, Western knowledge in Japan was no longer regarded as a habit of mind, inner disposition, or personal quality that was intimately tied to individual virtue. It was now considered – and it became possible to consider Western knowledge as – a system of thinking and practice, the efficacy of which was to be measured in its utility and instrumentality. To this end, I argue that the political condition marked by the shift in the attitude toward Catholicism effectively prepared the demarcation of the realm of science and scientific knowledge from the realm of morality and ethics. Two kinds of knowledge that *Rangaku* scholars juxtaposed in their attempt to validate Western knowledge as a serious endeavour of *kyūri*, that is to say, the arbitrary distinction between Western scientific knowledge and moral and ethical knowledge epitomised by Neo-Confucianism, was not a mere discursive construct attributed solely to the *Rangaku* tradition. Such a distinction was reflexive of, or even enabled by, the political concern for European encroachment and internal

⁶⁷ Boscaro, “Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the 1587 Edicts Against Christianity,” 219.

governing. It was the political power that prepared and authorised a location of Western knowledge as areligious and apolitical, as utilitarian and instrumental, being autonomous from the dictate of the moral and the ethical.

The implication is twofold. First, the location of Western knowledge within the epistemic landscape of the early modern period in Japan and the intellectual attitude towards this knowledge were already predicated by the interest of power, insofar as the political power relegated this knowledge to the rank of the areligious and the apolitical. Second, the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri* and the fourfold tension within that space that I have specified earlier should be read, as I will read them here, as much more than a mere indication that (Neo-)Confucianism and Western knowledge were, through translational practices of *Rangaku* scholars, discursively positioned as oppositions. The difference, hence the tension, was authorised as such by a non-intellectual instance, by the specific way in which power had inserted itself in the itinerary of Western knowledge, and by the particular way in which power had *a priori* determined the appropriate location of this knowledge within the existing intellectual landscape. Of course, to say so does not mean to depreciate the works of Ryōtaku, Yoshinaga, Chōei, Yōan, Kōmin, and many other *Rangaku* scholars. However, the following must also be underlined: it was not that their intellectual curiosity and their readings of Western texts singlehandedly determined how Western knowledge ought to be treated, engaged, and juxtaposed to other traditions of knowledge; the political condition became an enabling intellectual condition for fostering their curiosity and for sustaining their reading of Western knowledge as distinctively different and as being set apart from the realm of moral and ethical conclusions. Knowledge settlements of Western knowledge – on the structuration of the world, the nature of knowledge, the position of the knower, and the methods of intervening in the world – may be treated as absolute and unconditional in *Rangaku* scholars'

translational practices. But the potential political effect of this knowledge was already curtailed heteronomously by the political power when this power sanctioned how this knowledge must be imported and authorised how this knowledge must be positioned vis-à-vis other knowledge traditions. Recall here the way in which the historical emergence of modern Western knowledge and its relationship to power was often discussed, especially from Kant onward, in conjunction with the question of how to resolve the aporia of autonomy of knowledge and authority of knowledge, with the question of how to establish a hermeneutic circle of knowledge power.⁶⁸ In contrast, as I argue, modern knowledge formation in Japan was, from the onset of Japan's encounter with Western knowledge, marked by a symbiotic relationship between this power and knowledge, and even by a sense of hermeneutic circle between this knowledge and power.⁶⁹

Neo-Confucian Scepticism

The political condition was crucial for the semantic transvaluation of *kyūri* within the *Rangaku* tradition and, by extension, for expanding its semantic scope. What was equally instrumental for

⁶⁸ See my earlier discussion on this hypothesis of 'resolving' the aporia of autonomy and authority of knowledge in Chapter 1, pp.66-68, and Chapter 2, pp. 131-132.

⁶⁹ This entanglement of knowledge and power manifested itself, for instance, in the subsequent shift within the *Rangaku* tradition. Toward the end of the Edo period, there was a shift from the predilection towards *scientia* / science to the predilection towards what may be characterised as 'technical thoughts,' especially in the field of defence and military capability. With the news of the decisive British defeat of Qing (the first Opium War, 1839-1842) reaching Japan through the annual Dutch reports, and with *Bansha no goku* (蛮社の獄: the Incident of the Society for Barbarian Study, 1839) which resulted in the deposition of hitherto prominent *Rangaku* scholars, such as Takano Chōei and Watanabe Kazan (1798-1841), scholarly interests of *Rangaku* began to be recentred, reflexive of the interest of power, around military and navel technologies, governing mechanisms including constitutions and other legislations, and diplomacy. This shift eventually culminated in the establishment of the government-sponsored institution in 1855, *Yōgakusho* (洋学所: the Office for Western Studies), which later renamed as *Bansho-shirabesho* (蕃書調所: Institute for the Study of Barbarian Books), the predecessor institution to form University of Tokyo in 1877. For a further discussion on the institutionalisation of Western knowledge, see Chapter 6, pp. 456-459.

such semantic transvaluation and semantic expansion was scepticism towards the authoritative voice inherent in the Neo-Confucian tradition, which constituted one of the edifices of its learning method. As I shall expand further in the following, scepticism as a method effectively foregrounded an epistemic space to treat Western knowledge not as a replacement but as a supplement to compensate epistemological limits of Neo-Confucianism itself.

As a point of departure, let me reiterate my earlier observation. Schematically speaking, the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, from which the idea of *kyūri* was derived, is marked by a twofold basic presumption. First, with the *a priori* postulate of the absolute transcendence (*ri*) that dictates everything in the realm under Heaven, this tradition understands the human mind as being integral to the world external to the mind and, vice versa, the external world as being part of the human mind. To this end, the realm of Self, marked by moral and ethical virtue, is intimately intertwined with knowledge of the world. In other words, knowledge of things attained through ‘investigation of things’ (*gewu*: 格物) and ‘perfection of knowledge’ (*zhizhi*: 致知) constitutes a crucial part of the conditioning process of Self, or else cultivation of Self.⁷⁰ To reiterate Daniel Gardner’s observation here, cultivation of Self is recognised as the principal means “by which the individual can refine his psychophysical being, thereby enabling the goodness that is his human nature to become manifest,”⁷¹ and ultimately to arrive at the utmost principle (*ri*) of all affairs and all phenomena of the realm under Heaven. Second, the (Neo-)Confucian tradition also understands knowledge as being ultimately pressed into the service of governing. Precisely because of the first

⁷⁰ Therefore, it is not so far-fetched to argue, as I shall argue here, that there is a certain parallel between, on the one hand, the (Neo-)Confucian isomorphism of knowledge with moral and ethical conclusions and, on the other hand, the commensurability of faith and reason observable in the intellectual tradition of early modern Europe. To put it schematically, both (Neo-)Confucianism and the early modern European intellectual tradition treat knowledge as an inner disposition or individual quality that is intimately tied to the question of virtue.

⁷¹ 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].

presumption that argues for the entanglement of moral and ethical virtue with knowledge of the world, this tradition locates knowledge and its pursuit at the centre of, or as the fundamental strategy for, questions about the order and stability of the realm under Heaven.

This twofold basic presumption is easily discernible in one of the Confucian classics on learning, *Daxue* (大学: Great Learning), and in Zhu Xi's rendering of this classic, *Da-xue zhang-ju* (大学章句: Commentary on Great Learning). The primary significance of the *Great Learning* lies in the fact that the text effectively established two central tropes of Confucian learning – the idea of ‘investigation of things’ and ‘perfection of knowledge’ – which together enabled and concretised the predilection towards the concept of ‘propensity of principle’ (*li shi*: 理勢).⁷²

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.)⁷³

⁷² For the concept of ‘propensity of principle,’ see my discussion in Chapter 4, pp. 252-255.

⁷³ *Daxue* (大学: the Great Learning). <https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue/zhs> (12.09.2022). Translation is borrowed from James Legge's work with slight modifications. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.1: Confucian Analects, the Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893: 357-359.

And Zhu Xi's subsequent commentary on the *Great Learning*, which has been regarded even as a supplementary chapter of the classic, as a constitutive part of the body of the *Great Learning*, specifies further what it means by 'perfection of knowledge lies in the investigation of things' (致知在格物), and why it is integral to the conditioning process of 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 [the *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 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.)⁷⁴

By defining the investigation of things as the perfection of what one knows and by linking the act of perfecting one's knowledge to the act of grasping one's mind, the *Great Learning* and Zhu Xi's

⁷⁴ Zhu Xi, *Daxue zhang-ju* (大学章句: Commentary on the Great Learning). <https://ctext.org/si-shu-zhang-ju-ji-zhu/da-xue-zhang-ju-xu/zhs> (12.09.2022). The translation is borrowed from Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 1:365-366*.

commentary together locate intellectual learning, that is, *kyūri*, on the nexus between things-knowledge-mind, proposing that learning through investigation of things and perfection of knowledge is the most appropriate mode of cultivating Self.

Today's scholarship on this Confucian classic and Zhu Xi's interpretation is manifold in both quantity and quality.⁷⁵ However, for my present purpose here – to specify the intellectual condition under which *Rangaku* scholars had extended the semantic space of *kyūri* – let me enter three conjunctures.

The first and the most obvious conjuncture is the dialectic convergence of concerns for knowledge with concerns for governing. As the above quotes clearly express, the (Neo-)Confucian understanding of *kyūri* sustains and is sustained by the discursive integrity between the realm of morality and ethics and the realm of knowledge. The *Great Learning* and Zhu Xi's commentaries together submit a view that all investigations of things and perfection of one's knowledge serve for and eventuate the grasp of the principle of Heaven, the principle fundamental for peace and stability of the realm under Heaven. Thus, the idea is that politics must be guided by learning and that the authority over this learning process belongs to those who correctly grasp how to learn.

Second, while the authority of (Neo-)Confucian learning and knowledge derives partly from its order of discourse that directly addresses the concerns for governing, the authority is also and simultaneously in a situation of heteronomy: its political effects are authorised by a non-scholarly instance, by the political, hence by the will and desire for governing. That is to say, *kyūri*

⁷⁵ For a brief yet comprehensive survey on the *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 the *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.

designated as ‘致知在格物’ – extension of knowledge through perfection of things – is intimately intertwined with the concern for governing, not merely in principle as those passages above suggest, but also in reality through the institutionalisation of the (Neo-)Confucian mode of *kyūri*. By the early 14th century, in China, the *Great Learning* and other treatises of the *Four Books* (*shisho*: 四書) had come to be treated as the core curriculum for learning, not only for those hoping to make their names in scholarship but also for those eyeing on a position in the imperial bureaucracy.⁷⁶ The institutional autonomy of knowledge that we, the modern, aspire for and that often constitutes a locus of tension between knowledge and power today does not necessarily resonate here. However, this is not to argue that the (Neo-)Confucian entanglement, both discursive and institutional, with the political is erroneous. I am simply suggesting here a possible inadequacy of our own standards of knowledge and standards of judgement, which presuppose that one can in all rigour distinguish – that one must distinguish – knowledge from politics.

The third conjuncture, which is especially of my interest here, is the role of scepticism in Zhu Xi’s treatment of the ‘perfection of knowledge through investigation of things.’ As I have already discussed elsewhere in this dissertation, for (Neo-)Confucian learning, textual immersion is considered the primary method of learning, *the* mode of *kyūri* to investigate things and to extend knowledge, because everything that must be known is already in the text, in the words of the sages. Thus, Zhu Xi himself asserts that one must “read the book to observe the meaning of the sages so that the principle naturally becomes obvious to one.”⁷⁷ But the practice of reading, of textual

⁷⁶ Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008: 115-193.

⁷⁷ The original text in the fourth section entitled ‘学四: 読書法上’ (Learning, 4: Method of Reading 1) 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, Vol. 5* (朱子語類: Classified Conversations of Master Zhu), Ugai Sekisai and Yasui Sanesuke (eds.), Kyoto: Hūgetsudō, 1791. The text, along with all 46 volumes, is archived at Waseda University Library. A Digitised version is available at: [https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ro13/ro13_02939/\(02.05.2022\)](https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ro13/ro13_02939/(02.05.2022)).

immersion, must be grounded on a certain strategy. And for Zhu Xi, to read is to follow Cheng Yi's (1033-1107) teaching that encourages students to know how to doubt.⁷⁸ To read, put it simply, is to systematically deploy one's faculty of questioning, 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.)⁷⁹

Further still, Zhu Xi goes so far as to argue that scepticism is reserved not exclusively to one's practices of reading canonical texts. It must also be applied to one's own view on those texts, as a mode of self-doubt. Thus, he maintains that,

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

⁷⁸ 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.

⁷⁹ This passage can be found in the section entitled '学五: 讀書法下' (Learning, 5: Method of Reading 2) of *Shushi gorui*, Vol. 5. The English translation is borrowed from Tucker, "Skepticism and the Neo-Confucian Canon," 13.

resolve them completely. Only when students have reached this point will they have made progress.)⁸⁰

For some scholars of (Neo-)Confucianism today, Zhu Xi's warrant of scepticism is nothing but the infringement of "the dictum of 'transmitting but not innovating' in China's tradition of learning."⁸¹ And Zhu Xi's attempt to seek a correct meaning of 'investigation of things' and 'perfection of knowledge' is rather a "subjective and arbitrary approach."⁸² However, as I read it, it is this idea of scepticism as a method that had a profound effect on the unfolding of the Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan and, more importantly, on the reconfiguration of the idea of *kyūri* and, thus, the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri*.

The unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan from the late 16th century onward generally followed Zhu Xi's dialectic of knowledge and governing, as well as his emphasis on the *Four Books* as the primary sources of truth, of the principle of all things.⁸³ And yet, as Maruyama Masao and others have aptly suggested, the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism was also marked by internal intellectual challenges lodged against the canonical reading of their canon, resulting in the subsequent diffusion – or else, implosion – of Neo-Confucianism both as an ideology and as a

⁸⁰ Ri Jinde, *Shushi gorui*, Vol. 5. For the English translation, see Tucker, "Skepticism and the Neo-Confucian Canon," 13.

⁸¹ Mu, "Historical Perspective in Chu Hsi's Learning," 39. Ch'ien 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.

⁸² 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].

⁸³ Evidently, Honda Tadakatsu (1548-1610) reported that Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), in endorsing Neo-Confucianism as the primary educational apparatus, noted "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、もし全部する事叶はずば、よくよく孟子の一書を味ひ知るべきなり." See Honda Tadakatsu, "Honda Heihachirō Tadakatsu kikigaki" (本多平八郎忠勝聞書: A Verbatim Account of Honda Tadakatsu), 1793. A digitised version of the original text is accessible at: <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100233301/> (02.05.2022).

knowledge tradition.⁸⁴ I am in sympathy with Maruyama's reading that the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism itself engendered an intellectual space to cultivate the possibility of developing other knowledge traditions. However, I do not necessarily endorse his argument here that "Tokugawa ideas, if one looked at the 'deep currents,' could be seen as developing unceasingly toward modernity."⁸⁵ An argument such as this one, which argues for traces of the modern inherent in the pre-modern, reiterates rather problematically a sense of inevitability of modernity in Japan and, by extension, encodes a sense of universality to modernity without recognising the often-coercive nature of its unfolding. As I read it, the diffusion of Neo-Confucianism was not because this tradition of knowledge, and 'Tokugawa ideas' more generally, embedded within itself an inevitable predilection towards modernity; but it was because the Neo-Confucian proclivity towards scepticism as a method had created, though perhaps unwittingly, a space within the existing epistemic landscape for Western knowledge to be integrated, not as a replacement of Neo-Confucianism but rather as a supplement.

Scepticism is perceptible, for instance, in the writings of Hayashi Razan.⁸⁶ To be sure, Razan was a scholar beholden to the Tokugawa authority and, therefore, is considered in today's historical scholarship one of the primary bearers for promoting Neo-Confucianism both as the principal ideology for governing and as a serious scholarship.⁸⁷ However, it is important to recognise here that Razan's works are also marked by his grasp of theoretical flaws of Zhu Xi's

⁸⁴ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 3-68.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸⁶ It is also the case of Kaibara Ekken, especially his later works such as *Daigiroku*. Acknowledging this, however, I shall focus here on Razan, whose proximity to the Tokugawa shogunate was often treated as the marker of complicity between his thought and the Tokugawa political system. He may be the founder of the 'hegemonic' mode of learning that sustained the Tokugawa political system. But as we shall see, his intellectual sensitivity, especially his scepticism towards Zhu Xi, makes him much more than a mere supporter of power.

⁸⁷ Wim J. Boot, *The Adoption and Adaptation of Neo-Confucianism in Japan: The Role of Fujiwara Seika and Hayashi Razan*, Leiden: Lectura, 1982; Kiri N. Paramore, "The Nationalization of Confucianism: Academism, Examinations and Bureaucratic governance in the Late Tokugawa State," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 38:1, 2012: 25-53.

cosmology – a worldview based on a monistic vision of Mencius’ notion of human nature as having incipient but innate predilections towards good (characterised as benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, and propriety) and as being equated to the principle, hence a worldview revolved around the doctrine of *xing ji li* (性即理: human nature is the principle). On this fundamental doctrine of Neo-Confucianism, Razan expresses nothing but a sense of oscillation. On the one hand, we see in his writings his intellectual affinity to Zhu Xi and his desire to validate Zhu Xi’s thought and the doctrine of *xing ji li*. And yet, on the other hand, Razan’s writings also manifest his intellectual sensitivity that does not allow such validation.

In his rendering of the Confucian canon, entitled “*Tagen kore ni yosu*” (寄田玄之: Questions about Classics of Confucianism, 1604), Razan first aligns himself and his thought with Zhu Xi’s strand of Confucianism.

其夫子の道は六経にあり、経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。

(The Way of Confucius is in Six Classics [Book of Songs, Book of Documents, Book of Rites, Classic of Music, Book of Changes, and Spring and Autumn Annals]. No one has ever offered an understanding of these classics better than Zhu Xi [紫陽氏]. Not following Zhu Xi is like getting lost in all the things observable to man.)⁸⁸

Razan declares that no one can exceed the intellectual brilliance of Zhu Xi, so much so that if one were to negate Zhu Xi’s thoughts, it would put oneself in a state of confusion. His intellectual affinity is such that, naturally, Razan expresses his preference for Zhu Xi’s understanding of *kyūri*

⁸⁸ Hayashi Razan, “*Tagen kore ni yosu*,” 14.

– investigation of things and perfection of knowledge – over other accounts, such as Yangming’s. As Razan writes in another essay entitled “*Hono ikazuchi ōkami ben*” (火雷神弁: On the Gods of Thunder, 1602),

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。
(When seeking to understand why the world is what it is without knowing the fundamental principle, one will surely become delusional and never reveal what one sets out to reveal. This is why the sages sought to pursue the fundamental principle.)⁸⁹

For Razan, just as for Zhu Xi himself, the fundamental principle of all things, *ri*, can be found not merely in the mind as Wang Yangming (1472-1529) would claim in his doctrine of *xin ji li* (心即理: the mind is the principle), but also in tangible things that were ontologically and phenomenologically observable to man (“区々たる象山”).

So far, so predictable. However, in this instance in which Razan juxtaposes Zhu Xi’s thought to other strands of Confucianism, we begin to see clearly Razan’s scepticism towards what he seeks to validate. In the same text that he declares his intellectual affinity to Zhu Xi, *Tagen kore ni yosu*, Razan also ponders,

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、是を以て或は理気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を言ふ。

⁸⁹ Hayashi Razan, “Hono ikazuchi ōkami ben,” in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū, Vol.1* (Essays of Hayashi Razan, Vol.1), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918 [1602]: 297 [296-297].

(*Ri* is the source and union, and *ki* is *yin-yang*. There is *yin-yang* in the supreme source and union, and yet there is no supreme source and union in *yin-yang*. The five cardinal Confucian virtues are *ri*, and the five elements are *ki*. This is why some people argue that *ri* and *ki* are inseparable. Even if I know that all interpretations would converge into Zhu Xi's understanding, I am still urged to point to this possibility of inseparability.)⁹⁰

What is evident here is Razan's intellectual oscillation between Zhu Xi's and Wang Yangming's school of Confucianism: between, on the one hand, an understanding of *ri* as ultimately autonomous from *ki* even though two constitutes the whole and, on the other hand, an understanding of *ri* as being merely the reason for why *ki* is what it is. A similar pondering can be found in an essay, “*Zuihitsu yon*” (随筆 四: Essay No.4, 1621), in which Razan reflects on the plausibility of Wang Yangming's claim, hence the plausibility of an idea that *ri* is inseparable, rather than autonomous, from *ki*.

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

(Chengzi says that it does not suffice only to discuss human nature, nor does it suffice only to discuss material forces. If one separates human nature from material forces, everything remains unclear. There have been many discussions about human nature and material forces, but no one has gone beyond what Wang Yangming claims – *ri* and *qi* are one.)⁹¹

⁹⁰ Hayashi Razan, “Tagen kore ni yosu,” 18. This passage was originally written in a letter to Yoshida Genshi, in which Razan, then 22 years old, asked for a meeting with Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619) in the hope of becoming his disciple. This suggests that, on the one hand, Razan's attitude towards Neo-Confucianism was marked by scepticism throughout his intellectual life, and yet, on the other hand, such scepticism also signalled the fact that he was an avid learner of Zhu Xi's thought, which was in and of itself a fruit of scepticism.

⁹¹ Hayashi Razan, “*Zuihitsu yon*” (随筆四: Essay, No.4), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū, Vol.2* (Essays of Hayashi Razan, Vol.2), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918 [1621]: 408 [394-410].

Further still, Razan seems to entertain an idea that the ontological foundation of the realm under Heaven may be found not only in *ri*, as Zhu Xi would claim but also, if not entirely, in *ki*.

儒先為らく以て、主宰を以てこれを帝と謂い、形体を以てこれを天地と謂い、性情を以てこれを乾坤と謂い、気を以てこれを陰陽と謂う。凡そ両間に主たるもの、此れより出でざることなし。

(Confucian scholars explain the emperor by his dominating character, the world by shapes, the Heaven and Earth by human disposition, and *yin-yang* by material forces. The two are not separated from each other in any way.)⁹²

As I read it, the problem for Razan is the discursive inconsistency in Zhu Xi's thought. On the one hand, the Neo-Confucian cosmology is, as Zhu Xi himself defines it and as I have discussed elsewhere, monistic to the extent that it presumes everything as one. It is structured on the basis of its vision of human nature that is inherently good and that it is, precisely because of its inherently good nature, a manifestation of the fundamental principle of all things, *ri*. On the other hand, Neo-Confucianism also argues for the autonomous existence of that very principle, which, as it is maintained, can be found not only in the human mind but also in each and every thing that makes up the world. This presumption about *ri* as autonomous from *ki*, in turn, justifies the mode of intervention – investigation of things and perfection of knowledge – that seeks not only to understand the human mind as the ultimate locus to find *ri* but also to grapple with tangible things ontologically and phenomenologically observable to man as *ki*. In essence, while the Neo-Confucian cosmology is monistic in its discursive address, its explanation of *ri*, that is to say, its discursive strategy to designate what *ri* is, resorts to – or else has to resort to – the order of discourse that sustains and is sustained by a sense of dualism between *ri* and *ki*.

⁹² Hayashi Razan, “Saimei kōkai” (西銘講解: On Zhang Zai's Western Inscription), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū, Vol. 1* (Essays of Hayashi Razan, Vol. 1), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918: 335 [335-337].

In Razan's writings, this sobering recognition of Neo-Confucian discursive inconsistency manifests itself as a form of a rhetorical question: if *sei* is *ri*, that is to say, if human nature is equated to the principle, how could there exist iniquity, or else in Razan's word *aku* (悪: evil)? As Razan contemplates,

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。是に由て之を言えば則ち善のみ。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. The Song Confucians explain that human nature is the principle. This means that the ultimate good is the principle, and the ultimate principle is goodness. This is why it is said that there is nothing outside the principle in the realm under Heaven. There is, in principle, no evil. But if there is evil, then, we cannot surmise that human nature is inherently good. If there is nothing outside the principle, and the principle is good, where does evil come from? Within the principle? Or from outside the principle?)⁹³

First, Razan follows here the claim of Mencius and Zhu Xi. Human nature is defined as inherently good and equated to the principle, and human emotion, 情 (*qing*), formed as a product of circumstances is understood as affecting human nature. If human nature is good, and if human emotion dictates human nature, there exists, in principle, no evil. Iniquity cannot have a place in the realm under Heaven. But the reality of the human world tells Razan otherwise. Does it mean that something – here, immoral conduct and unethical behaviour – exists outside the principle?

⁹³ Hayashi Razan "Montai yon" (問對四: Questions and Answers, No.4), in Kyōto shiseki-kai (ed.), *Razan sensei bunshū*, Vol.1 (Essays of Hayashi Razan, Vol.1), Kyoto: Heian kōko gakkai, 1918: 387 [374-388].

Then, how can one claim that the principle is all-encompassing, that it is the fundamental dictate of each and every thing? How can one converge monism for one's cosmological concern about being and becoming with dualism for one's concern about occurrences, including human emotions?

This rhetorical question of Razan foregrounded the central trope for the subsequent unfolding of the Confucian tradition in Japan. And a possible answer to this question, a possible solution to overcome this discursive inconsistency of Neo-Confucianism, is twofold. One is to recentre the dialectic of *sei* and *ri* primarily around the concerns for ethics and morality, rather than around the cosmological concerns for being and becoming, or else concerns for metaphysics, and to establish a doctrine for practical ethics. This solution was especially evident in Wang Yangming's method for making moral judgement and for attaining moral knowledge (致良知: *zhi liang zhi*), which, in Japan, unfolded with the teachings of, for instance, Nakae Tōju (1608-1648) and Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691).⁹⁴ If this solution locates concern about the world external to the mind outside its scholarly concern, the second possible solution acknowledges both the concerns for morality and ethics (mind) and the concerns for the external world of objects (nature), seeking to develop two distinctive ways of engaging with both realms by *a priori* presuming the separation between the mind and nature. The development of *Kogaku* (古学: ancient studies) by Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685), Itō Jinsai (1627-1705), and Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) revolved precisely around the pursuit of this solution.⁹⁵ The significance of *Kogaku* is not limited to its perspective that clearly

⁹⁴ For the development of Yangming school of Confucianism in Japan, see Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nippon Yōmeigakuha no tetsugaku* (Philosophy of the Yangming School in Japan), Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1900; Andō Hideo, *Nihon ni okeru yōmei-gaku no keifu* (A Genealogy of Yangming School in Japan), Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1971; Yoshida Kōhei, *Nihon no yōmei-gaku* (Yangmingism in Japan), Tokyo: Perikansha, 1999.

⁹⁵ Sorai wrote, “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。蓋し先王聡明叡智の徳を以って、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って務となす。是を以って其の心力を尽し、其の知巧を極め、是の道を作爲し、天下後世の人をして、是に由って之れを行はしむ。豈に

demarcates the human mind from what it calls ‘*tenchi-shizen*’ (天地自然: nature). The significance also lies in the fact that this dualism between mind and nature foregrounds, on the one hand, the removal of the speculative nature of Neo-Confucian moral and ethical teachings derived from its cosmology. This removal, in turn, justifies *Kogaku*’s pragmatic attitude to ethical and moral knowledge, which, as scholars of *Kogaku* see it, can be located in documented human experiences, in history, rather than outside it or in the transcendental absolute. On the other hand, this dualism also foregrounds a *laissez-aller* exploration of nature as a distinctive realm of knowledge by liberating, so to speak, nature from the dictate of moral and ethical concerns. Nature is conceptualised, to borrow from Najita, “as the ultimate field of knowledge [that] should engage scholarly attention, differing fundamentally in this regard from the historicist position that had placed primary focus on historical experience and hence on language rather than on nature.”⁹⁶

Kogaku’s corpus on nature is perhaps relatively limited compared to its expounding on historical human experiences, that is to say, on ethical and moral knowledge. But its restructuration of the realm under Heaven into two distinct spheres of concern, mind and nature, undoubtedly necessitated further expounding on the latter. I shall even go so far as to argue that, precisely because of the limited scope of its knowledge of nature, *Kogaku* had effectively prepared – whether intentionally or otherwise – a *sine qua non* for integrating knowledge of nature from elsewhere. *Kogaku*, developed as a reaction to the Neo-Confucian conundrum, had prepared a condition for integrating Western scientific knowledge, such as astronomy, calendrical studies, agricultural

天地自然に之れ有らんや。” See Ogyū Sorai, “Bendō” (弁道: Distinguishing the Way), in Yoshikawa Kōjirō, Maruyama Masao, Nishida Taichirō, Tsuji Tatsuya (eds.), *Nihon shisō taikēi 36: Ogyū Sorai (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.

⁹⁶ 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].

techniques, medicine, and geography, into the existing intellectual landscape. In essence, I suggest that it was the Neo-Confucian proclivity towards scepticism as a method that created a new possibility, and even a necessity, for Western knowledge not necessarily as a replacement of the existing knowledge traditions but rather as a supplement to explain that which the existing traditions came insufficient in their rendering.

Historical contingencies played a crucial role in the itinerary of Western knowledge unfolding itself as a ‘serious’ knowledge in Japan. The intellectual curiosity and affinity of *Rangaku* scholars may be the vehicle for translating Western canonical texts. However, the rationale behind authorising Western knowledge as a ‘serious’ tradition of knowledge, among others, lies beyond the narrow confines of *Rangaku*. The intellectual developments within the Neo-Confucian tradition in Japan, and the political authorisation of Western knowledge as areligious and apolitical, being detached from European religious and political powers, together constituted a pivotal condition for the initial impulse for and orientation of modern knowledge formation in Japan. Not only did such historical contingencies necessitate the development of *Rangaku* as a new knowledge tradition, such contingencies effectively determined the appropriate location of Western knowledge in its relation to other existing knowledge traditions and dictated a certain attitude towards Western knowledge as a practical solution for attaining knowledge of nature vis-à-vis moral and ethical knowledge. The advocates and dissents of Western knowledge – and for that matter, any knowledge tradition – never emerge in a vacuum.

A Perspective for the Subject Formation

In 1824, Satō Issai (1772-1859), a prominent scholar at *Shōheizaka gakumon-jo* (昌平坂学問所), contemplated that if one were to understand *kyūri* as the pursuit of knowledge about the world external to the human mind, the Western intellectual tradition was much more reliable than the (Neo-)Confucian tradition.

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。

(The pursuit of principle, as a Confucian, is to understand righteousness, which is in me. Thus, the pursuit of principle is introspective. If I were to pursue knowledge about things outside of myself, perhaps, I must admit that Europeans are wiser than Confucians.)⁹⁷

The temptation is to read this enunciation, as Yamamuro Shinichi reads it, as an expression of a sense of concession shared among (Neo-)Confucian scholars of the mid-19th century.⁹⁸ However, as I have elucidated above with my discussion on the political attitude towards Christian missionaries and the Neo-Confucian scepticism as a method, enunciations such as this one must be read as a reiteration of the emerging consensus, among (Neo-)Confucian scholars, on the possible inadequacy of their own tradition. Acknowledging the inadequacy of their own tradition does not necessarily mean concession here. Western knowledge was not considered inherently better; it simply offered another understanding of *ri* – here, the principle of the world external to the mind, of nature – and another vision of knowledge notated by metaphysical presumptions that

⁹⁷ Satō Issai, “Genshi-roku” (言志録: Things I Think), in *Genshi shi-roku* (言志四録: Four Notes on Things I Think), Tokyo: Matuyamadō, 1907 [1824]: 1-42. A digitised version of the text can be accessible at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/756221> (16.03.2022).

⁹⁸ For Yamamuro’s comment on this specific passage from Issai, see Yamamuro Shinichi, “Nihon gakumon no jizoku to tenkai” (Continuities and Changes in Japanese Scholarships), in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kindai shisō taikai Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Modern Japanese Thought, Vol.10: Scholarship and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988: 474 [465-498].

were different from the (Neo-)Confucian cosmology. Western knowledge was thought to offer an understanding of that which is beyond the concern of the other existing traditions of knowledge. To put it otherwise, the expansion of the semantic space of *kyūri* I have discussed earlier in this chapter is not – and cannot be treated as being – in and of itself a proof of the primacy and purported universality of Western knowledge. The expansion of the semantic space is a consequence of historical contingencies, of the politico-intellectual condition under which an appropriate location of Western knowledge within the existing epistemic and intellectual landscape was already prefigured as areligious and apolitical, as a supplement to, rather than replacement of, the existing traditions of knowledge.

So understood, I shall draw two inferences from the above discussion to conclude this chapter and specify some remaining questions for the subsequent chapters. The first inference is with regard to what Maruyama called “deep currents.”⁹⁹ For Maruyama, the ‘deep currents’ were that which converged various orientations towards knowledge into the modern way of thinking and reasoning. I, too, recognise the sense of continuity between discursive spaces of ‘modern’ and ‘premodern,’ the disjuncture between which is, more than anything, an arbitrary logic of demarcation within our historical scholarship to reveal historical shifts and changes. My problem with Maruyama’s observation is his usage of the term ‘currents.’ The notion of ‘deep currents’ infers that various intellectual orientations of the Edo period were indeed flowing towards a designated destination, in Maruyama’s case, towards modernity. Therefore, the semantics of ‘current’ reiterates, intentionally or otherwise, the idea of modernity as the predetermined ideal end of teleological progress and the idea of historical time as the predestined linear progression.

⁹⁹ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 32.

Instead, I argue for ‘deep undertones’ to suggest that what we consider ‘modern’ is neither that which is confined within a specific temporal space of history nor that which neatly follows a predetermined pattern of linear temporal progression. Think, for instance, the Neo-Confucian scepticism as a method and compares it to the symbiotic relationship between scepticism and epistemology forged through the development of modern Western philosophy. Think also the way in which Western knowledge came to be treated by *Rangaku* scholars and the Tokugawa shogunate as a system of beliefs and practices rather than the inner disposition of the individual, and compares it to the emergence of modern scientific knowledge in Europe whereby knowledge was transformed from the habit of mind tied to individual virtue to a systematic entity. As these examples illustrate, what we regard as ‘modern’ was *already there* as ‘deep undertones’ in those instances that we otherwise tend to consider ‘premodern.’

Second, the genesis of the Meiji conundrum of ‘becoming modern, being different’ and a possible orientation to resolve this conundrum was *also already there* in the Tokugawa intellectual debates and subsequent settlements. As I sought to demonstrate in this chapter, the semantic expansion of *kyūri* and reconfiguration of the epistemic and intellectual landscape prior to the modernising socio-political changes of the Meiji period had articulated an enabling condition to accommodate two distinctive realms within the field of knowledge, that is to say, the realm of moral and ethical conclusions and the realm of facts about nature. Despite the polemics, the general intellectual climate was such that both the pursuit of moral and ethical knowledge of individual virtue and the pursuit of scientific knowledge about nature came to occupy the rank of ‘serious’ scholarship and that two kinds of knowledge came to co-exist within the shared semantic and intellectual space.

Then, recall here my discussion on *kyōiku* and *gakumon* in Chapter 3. I have argued that the political debates over education during the early Meiji period had resolved into a certain consensus that education was a field of statist activities of the modern nation-state and that the national educational system was to be structured with an ascending hierarchy of various institutions of knowledge. I have also argued that, through those political debates, the realm of *kyōiku* was designated as the realm of, often but not exclusively, moral and ethical education based on the pedagogy of guidance and instruction. In contrast, the realm of *gakumon* was designated as the locus for ‘lofty subjects’ to pursue truths about the world based on established and formalised methods of scientific inquiry. Through this separation between *kyōiku* and *gakumon*, the overall educational system came to reflect and to materialise the albeit ostensibly paradoxical trope of ‘becoming modern, being different.’ Of course, such discursive and institutional separation of *kyōiku* and *gakumon*, as well as the hierarchisation of these two realms within the overall modern educational system, were political and discursive processes specifically of the early Meiji period. However, I argue that the enabling condition for those political debates, for such separation between *kyōiku* and *gakumon*, between the realm of moral and ethical and the realm of the scientific and objective, was articulated much earlier when the idea of *kyūri* came to encompass, in its semantic, two distinctive traditions of knowledge: a tradition of knowledge that purports to attain moral and ethical knowledge, and a tradition of knowledge that pursues knowledge in the external world of objects through the mediation of the observing mind. The discursive and institutional separation of *kyōiku* and *gakumon* that we see in the Meiji period can be read, as I will read it here, as the culmination of both intellectual and political processes, which spanned over centuries and which reshaped the epistemic landscape of what one could know and how one could know it. The Meiji period was significant only in so far as that it was during this period that

various traditions of knowledge, whose relationship to one another was hitherto marked by a horizontal line of mutual exclusion – tensions – within the semantic space of *kyūri*, were converted into a hierarchised system of institutions of knowledge.

While recognising these continuities, I must also admit that there is a certain disjuncture. The idea of *kyūri* I have discussed in this chapter is markedly different from the idea of *kyūri* that Fukuzawa Yukichi spoke of, or the idea of *kyūri* encoded in the pursuit of truths in the realm of *gakumon* during the Meiji period. The disparity lies in that, while the former is marked by its extended semantic scope encompassing various knowledge traditions, the latter is marked, in reverse, by the narrowly defined semantic scope that only encompasses Western (modern) knowledge. In other words, the intellectual climate of the pre-Meiji period was such that various traditions of knowledge were treated as a ‘serious’ scholarship for pursuing the principle, be it of the human mind or of nature external to the mind. Because what was considered the principle could be varied – and was seen as being varied – from one tradition to another, there existed a multitude of traditions of ‘serious’ knowledge. And yet, by the time of Fukuzawa’s enunciation, by the time when *gakumon*, the realm of ‘lofty subjects,’ was marked as the locus of pursuing truths, Western knowledge – not necessarily its contents, but its ontological, epistemological, and methodological postulates – had been promoted, as it seems to me, to the rank of ‘only serious’ tradition of knowledge.

Naturally, this semantic disjuncture of *kyūri*, this shift in the treatment of Western knowledge from ‘one among many’ to ‘only’ appropriate mode of knowledge production, raises some fundamental questions. First and most obviously, how did this shift occur? How had Western knowledge come to be considered *the* mode of pursuing knowledge? And how, in contrast, had the pursuit of moral and ethical knowledge lost its privileged status as a ‘serious’ scholarship?

These are the questions that concern the shifting meaning of *kyūri*. More specifically, these questions require us to engage with twofold intellectual negotiations over the semantics of *kyūri*: first, negotiations to relegate traditions of knowledge centred around moral and ethical concerns outside the semantic space of *kyūri*; and second, negotiations to recentre the idea of knowledge around a settlement other than the *ri*-knowledge structuration, so that a claim to *ri* would no longer be the primary qualifier of ‘serious’ knowledge. It was through these negotiations that the idea of the subject began to emerge, and knowledge came to be reconceived as a subject-object relation.

Second, if, as discussed in this chapter, Japan’s encounter with Western knowledge had been, from the onset, marked by the ways in which power inserted itself in knowledge, by the ways in which authority of knowledge and autonomy of knowledge were entangled, it is of utmost importance to understand the semantic shift of *kyūri* and the subject formation in conjunction with power. How did power insert itself in authorising the semantic shift? How was the relationship between knowledge and power (re)configured so as to promote Western knowledge to the rank of the only appropriate tradition of knowledge? What role did power assume in a process whereby a tradition of knowledge once characterised by a geo-cultural marker of ‘Western’ was transubstantiated into a tradition of knowledge no longer parochial but modern? For these questions about knowledge and power, it is crucial to locate the institution of knowledge, such as the university, as the central medium through which power inserts itself into knowledge. Just as the political effect of the (Neo-)Confucian worldview was sustained through institutions, including various *hankō* (藩校) and the Shogunate-sponsored institutions such as *Shōheizaka gakumon-jo*, the political effect of Western knowledge – its worldview, its understanding of the nature of knowledge, the position of the knower, and methods of intervention – was authorised through

institutional relations, so that the institution of this knowledge, and this knowledge itself, could assume a hegemonic status.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation seek to engage with those questions and examine the shift in the qualification of knowledge – from the *ri*-knowledge structuration to a subject-object relation – and the ways in which power sanctioned and authorised such a shift. More specifically, Chapter 6 offers a reading of changes within the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape during the early modern period that were foregrounded by the specific way in which the Neo-Confucian tradition and its dissents unfolded in Japan through translational practices to reconfigure the semantic space of *ri* and *kyūri*. Focusing on how the idea of *ri* and *kyūri* were discussed and reconfigured in *Kogaku*, *Kokugaku*, *Jōrigaku*, and *Koihō*, the chapter seeks to locate the efficacy of these intellectual traditions in their discursive heterogenisation of the idea of *ri* and, by extension, discursive suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri*. Chapter 7, in turn, focuses on a shift in validating criteria of ‘serious’ knowledge, that is to say, a shift from the idea of knowledge grounded on the *ri*-knowledge structuration to the idea of knowledge conceived as a subject-object relation, by accounting for the development of neologism *kagaku* (科学: science), which eventually replaced the idea of *kyūri* and which, at the same time, necessitated the semantic and conceptual reorganisation of the (Western) subject into *shukan* (主観: subject / subjective) in conjunction with the (Neo-)Confucian idea of ‘*shendu*’ (慎独: conscience). And in the final analysis, the chapter also discusses the ways in which the idea of *shukan*, articulated in a liminal semantic space of the Western associationist psychological notion of consciousness and the Neo-Confucian notion of conscience, was anchored into a spatially bounded, localised configuration of ‘Japan’ by discursive mediations through social Darwinism and through the proclivity towards ‘national’ language.

Chapter 6.

Heterogenising *Ri*, Suspending Neo-Confucian *Kyūri*

For the pre-scientific mind, unity is a principle that is always desired and always cheap to achieve. Only one capital letter is needed for this to happen. The different natural activities thus become the varied manifestations of one and the same Nature. Experience cannot be conceived as self-contradictory or as compartmentalised. What is true of something large must be true of something small and vice versa. Error is suspected whenever there is the slightest duality. This need for unity poses a multitude of false problems. [...] the scientific mind overcomes the different epistemological obstacles and constitutes itself as rectified errors. However, these scattered statements are doubtless far from providing a complete theory of the objective attitude. And a set of truths that have been won by defeating disparate errors may not seem to offer the kind of very smooth and homogenous domain of truth that gives scientists the joy of possessing something tangible and sure. Scientists are in fact increasingly less eager for these all-embracing joys. [...] The fact is though that scientists come to wish for and to seek synthesis because of their speciality. They cannot regard as objective any thought that they themselves have not objectified.

Gaston Bachelard¹

By the end of the 18th century, Western knowledge had come to occupy a specific location within the epistemic and intellectual landscape that encompassed various knowledge traditions, as a knowledge that primarily sought to understand the workings of the world external to man, of the world that had little to do with a conditioning process of Self through moral and ethical learning.

¹ Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, 94, 237.

However, as I have argued in the previous chapter, this does not mean that Western knowledge had come to assume, at this point, the hegemonic status as *the* knowledge. Western knowledge was a supplement, rather than a replacement, to explain things outside the remit of (Neo-)Confucianism. Furthermore, as I have also argued, the integration of Western knowledge into the existing intellectual and epistemic landscape cannot simply be attributed to the development of the *Rangaku* tradition and the diverse array of translational practices that *Rangaku* scholars engaged in. The interest of political authorities and a broader intellectual climate were crucial in articulating an enabling condition to perceive this knowledge in its utility and instrumentality. *Rangaku* scholars could expand the semantic scope of *kyūri*, not because Western knowledge was a kind of knowledge not tethered by time and space – the self-representation this knowledge sought to impose – but because the existing intellectual condition authorised by power was such that it was possible to treat this foreign knowledge, with the projection of the *ri*-knowledge structuration, as a ‘serious’ knowledge tradition.

This chapter seeks to offer a more nuanced and detailed reading of changes within the existing intellectual condition, which enabled the integration of Western knowledge into the intellectual landscape and, by extension, the semantic expansion of *kyūri* in the first place. More specifically, the chapter explores the ways in which the idea of *ri* and *kyūri* were discussed and reconfigured in *Kogaku* (古学: Ancient Learning), *Kokugaku* (国学: Nativist Learning), *Jōrigaku* (条理学: Rationalist Studies), and *Koihō* (古医方: Ancient Medicine) respectively.

As it will become clearer as my argument develops, the primary efficacy of the intellectual developments of these scholarly fields is threefold.² First, these fields, independently or

² To be sure, the boundaries between these scholarly fields were rather ambiguous and often transgressed. For example, Motoori Norinaga, a proponent of *Kokugaku*, drew much of his intellectual inspiration from Ogyū Sorai’s works in *Kogaku* and from works of *Koihō*, such as Kagawa Shūan’s (1683-1755) and Yoshimasu Tōdō’s (1702-

collectively, reconfigure the idea of *ri*, not as the one and only absolute transcendental principle as Neo-Confucians would define it, but in its heterogeneity. And those discursive acts of heterogenising *ri* effectively suspend the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri*. Here, I use the term ‘suspension’ with a two-fold meaning. First of all, I use this term to indicate that, through those intellectual developments but especially of *Koihō* that sought to understand the facts about the human body, the idea of *ri*, or else an a priori presumed principle of the world, no longer constituted the fundamental ground for knowledge and knowledge production. Hence, the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* became an obsolete conceptual device to designate an appropriate mode of learning. At the same time, I also use the term ‘suspension’ in a much broader sense, in a way that Derrida uses the word ‘deferral’ for his deconstruction.³ Here, by ‘suspension,’ I mean to suggest that, with the heterogenisation of *ri*, the word *kyūri* that was first articulated in the Neo-Confucian tradition no longer fully summon forth what it meant but came to be defined variously through appeal to additional signifiers and significations. The meaning of *kyūri* that Neo-Confucians encoded to the signifier is deferred, hence suspended, through chains of signifiers and significations.

Second, through the heterogenisation of *ri* and suspension of Neo-Confucian *kyūri* emerges an idea of knowledge marked by a sense of compartmentalisation or specialisation. Now that *ri* was defined variously and that a mode of learning, *kyūri*, was heterogenised – because what *kyūri* ought

1773), introduced by his mentor, Hori Keizan (1688-1757). Miura Baien, who developed *Jōrigaku*, spent his formative years under the instruction of Fujita Keijo (1698-1776), who studied under Itō Tōgai (1670-1736) and became a prominent scholar of *Kogigaku* (古義学: the study of ancient meanings), a strand of *Kogaku*. And scholars of *Koihō*, such as Yamawaki Tōyō (1705-1762), Nagatomi Dokushōan (1732-1766), and Koishi Genshun (1743-1809), were profoundly influenced by the works of Rangaku scholars, such as Sugita Genpaku, Maeno Ryōtaku, and Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757-1828). Furthermore, a neat categorisation of Tokugawa intellectual history into distinctive schools of thought was largely a creation of Meiji and Shōwa historians. While acknowledging the ambiguity, I use these labels not only for the sake of brevity but also, and more importantly, to designate certain differences that those Tokugawa intellectuals sought to establish from one another and, thus, to signal that there were some degrees of consciousness of proto-school of thought.

³ Derrida, “Différance.”

to do depended on how *ri* would be defined – knowledge came to be compartmentalised into various distinctive fields. Here, *ri* was the primary device for compartmentalisation and specialisation. That is to say, how one would define *ri* specified the horizon of one’s scholarly practices and, therefore, forged discursive territorialisation of a field – or proto-field – of knowledge. Through the heterogenisation of *ri* and suspension of Neo-Confucian *kyūri*, boundaries among these fields became ever more discernible.

And third, through these changes within the existing intellectual landscape emerges the contour of the knower with specific enunciative power and thinking faculties. Think, for instance, Motoori Norinaga’s attention to the ancient ‘Japanese’ language, which is said to constitute a locus for authentically ‘Japanese’ enunciation, hence a locus for the figuration of the enunciating subject. Think, also, Miura Baien’s reconfiguration of a worldview as something simultaneously dispersed and unified, whereby the knower, while inhabiting the world, also begins to view the world to accumulate knowledge of *ri* that is distinctive to each and every thing that makes up the world, and to arrive at, through such an accumulative process, the dictating principle of the universe, that is, *jōri*. Furthermore, *Koihō*’s insistence on empiricism and verifiability of facts effectively repositions the knower as one to ‘view’ rather than ‘inhabit’ the world of objects. Here, meanings are wholly evacuated from the natural world and firmly relocated to the observing knower. And therefore, knowledge is retrieved from the realm of speculation and contemplation and repositioned in the realm of observation and factual accumulation. As these examples demonstrate, through the heterogenisation of *ri* and suspension of Neo-Confucian *kyūri* emerged new orientations to reconfigure the idea of the knower and the known. On the one hand, discursive enunciations of, for instance, Itō Jinsai, Ogyū Sorai, and Motoori Norinaga articulated a figure of the knower grounded on the predisposition towards knowledge as *thing-for-itself*. On the other

hand, through the discursive enunciation of Miura Baien and scholars of *Koihō* emerged a figure of the known sustained by the propensity towards knowledge as *thing-in-itself*.

6.1. Chronotope of Neo-Confucianism and New Discursive Orientations

The Neo-Confucian predilection towards scepticism as a method I have discussed in the previous chapter is sanctioned by the chronotope of the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan. At the same time, the chronotope also has significant implications for concretising the standard view to treat the idea of *ri* in its heterogeneity. As I define it, chronotope here means 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 in Japan.⁴ As indicated in the previous chapter, Neo-Confucianism in Japan was never fully materialised in its ‘original’ form that Zhu Xi developed, not because the Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars failed to aptly appropriate Zhu Xi’s thought, but because scepticism as a method inherent

⁴ The concept of chronotope was initially developed by Mikhail Bakhtin as the central premise of his theory of language and literature. By juxtaposing his rendering of space-time, chronotope, against the Kantian transcendental understanding, Bakhtin wrote, “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]. While Bakhtin’s conceptualisation offers me a general basis for perceiving space-time as a content-dependent and qualitative variable, my usage of the term chronotope here is based on the understanding of the term developed within the field of 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 Jann Blommaert, *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

in that very tradition enabled them to question Zhu Xi's own enunciations.⁵ Building upon this reading, I seek to argue here that the spatio-temporal reality of Neo-Confucian unfolding in Japan was what capacitated, on the one hand, the emergence of proficient critiques within the Neo-Confucian tradition we see in the works of Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken and, on the other hand, the development of Confucian scholarships, such as *Yōmeigaku* (陽明学: Yangming School) and *Kogaku*, which effectively articulated new discursive orientations to redefine what it meant to learn and know.

Spatio-Temporal Distance and Spatio-Temporal Proximity

The unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan is marked by a spatio-temporal distance. Zhu Xi's initial rendering of the Confucian cannon in the 11th century did not establish an immediate foothold in Japan. It was centuries later, in the 17th century, that what was now regarded as Neo-Confucianism began to unfold in Japan under the Tokugawa regime.

Maruyama Masao characterises this period as “the golden age of Confucianism in Japan”⁶ and attributes this rapid development of (Neo-)Confucianism to three factors. The first is the possibility

⁵ That Neo-Confucianism in Japan must be treated as being different from Zhu Xi's ‘original’ thought, is an argument also put forward by Tahara Tsuguo. However, Tahara finds the point of differentiation not necessarily deriving from scepticism inherent in Neo-Confucianism, but 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 certain sense of universality. I find this justification rather problematic. First, such an emphasis on ‘national’ reduces differences in metaphysical enunciations into mere cultural differences, lodging claims for a new kind of relativism in an effort to negate foundationalist epistemologies. 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. Tahara Tsuguo, “Ogyū Sorai ni okeru Shushigaku no rikai to hihan” (Ogyū Sorai's Understanding and Critique of Neo-Confucianism), *Shigaku zasshi*, 68:11, 1959: 48-75; Tahara, “Itō Jinsai ni okeru shushigaku hihan no imi” (The Meaning of Itō Jinsai's Critique of Neo-Confucianism), *Nihonshi kenkyū*, 72, 1964: 64-74.

⁶ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 7.

of universality embodied by (Neo-)Confucianism. “All modes of thought,” writes Maruyama, “that are more than guides or programs for action in specific situations contain within them the possibility of universality.” So does Confucianism, and “this is why it was accepted in Japan.”⁷ Of course, any knowledge tradition is marked by the specific condition of a society that produces that tradition. When a knowledge tradition is transposed to another location characterised by distinctive historical and social markers, the tendency is that the tradition in question becomes highly abstract. But in the case of (Neo-)Confucianism in Japan, as Maruyama suggests, the transposition was without much abstraction. The second factor of ‘the golden age of Confucianism’ is “the social and political structure of Tokugawa feudal society,” which, according to Maruyama, “were comparable with those on which Confucianism was based in the Chinese empire.”⁸ Further still, as the third factor, the complicity between power and knowledge was such that “Confucianism underwent radical changes during the early Tokugawa period” to reflect specific political and social concerns of power.⁹

Though I am in disagreement with Maruyama’s tendency, especially in his earlier works, to treat Neo-Confucianism as a rigid, unchanging, and homogenous tradition, I follow him here in two insistences.¹⁰ First, the hegemonic status of a given tradition of knowledge – be it Neo-Confucianism during the Edo period or Western (modern) knowledge in the Meiji period – cannot be fully grasped without accounting for the ways in which power inserts itself in knowledge to authorise a given tradition as the legitimate mode of thinking and reasoning. Second, precisely because the authorisation of a knowledge tradition is in a situation of heteronomy, it reflects not

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁰ For my problematisation of Maruyama’s characterisation of Neo-Confucianism, see Chapter 1, pp.84-85. And for my rendering of Neo-Confucianism, see Chapter 5, pp. 355-369, and Chapter 6, pp.381-387.

verifying criteria that ground and regulate knowledge – think, for instance, scientificity or objectivity of Western (modern) knowledge – but rather qualifying variables of socio-political structures, standards of governing, and categories of being, all of which are specific to a given spatio-temporal location. However, the spatio-temporal distance I am concerned with here is not a mere signpost for the ‘cultural’ or ‘national’ difference. The spatio-temporal distance between 11th-century China and 17th-century Japan, between Zhu Xi’s ‘original’ enunciation and the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan, was the very dictate, as it seems, of how Neo-Confucianism was to be established in Japan as a scholarly tradition. In other words, it was this spatio-temporal distance that determined what the issues were for intellectual exercises and how they might be addressed. It was, therefore, this spatio-temporal distance that effectively conditioned the itinerary of Neo-Confucian development in Japan, the scope and mode of its appropriation, and even the orientation of its critique.¹¹

The unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan was not a mere process of appropriating Zhu Xi’s thought in a context markedly different from that in which Zhu Xi himself was embedded. Precisely because of the spatio-temporal distance, the appropriation coincided with the introduction of various interpretations and critiques of Zhu Xi’s works. It also brought renewed opportunities to engage with the Confucian canon produced before Zhu Xi’s time. In turn, this means that the transposition of Neo-Confucianism from China to Japan constituted, just as the transposition of Western knowledge to Japan did, an instance of *problématique* in which translation – both as a linguistic exercise and an epistemic exercise – became a crucial means for reconfiguring the Confucian thought, now, especially in line with Zhu Xi’s rendering. Zhu Xi’s

¹¹ Tahara Tsuguo and Tsuji Tetsuo point out this spatio-temporal distance. However, neither clearly spell out the implication of this distance to the overall (re)configuration of the epistemic landscape. See Tahara, “Yamaga Sokō ni okeru shisō no kōsei nit tsuite,” 41-121; Tsuji Tetsuo, *Nihon no kagaku shisō: Sono jiritsu eno mosaku* (Scientific Thought in Japan: The Search for Autonomy), Tokyo: Kobushi shobō, 2013: 87.

thought was read not necessarily in accordance with his unadulterated, so to say, enunciations – assuming, of course, such reading is indeed possible – but constantly re-examined with reference either to someone else’s interpretations and critiques or to scholarly renderings of the Confucian canon prevalent in other strands of Confucianism. Therefore, as the works of, for example, Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken epitomise, the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan is underscored by a sense of oscillation between scholars’ own intellectual affinity to Zhu Xi’s thought and their intellectual sensitivity that questions the very thought they seek to verify.¹²

At the same time, this spatio-temporal distance that dictates the unfolding of Neo-Confucianism also manifests itself as spatio-temporal proximity, that is to say, the contemporaneity of advocates and dissents. That Neo-Confucianism came to Japan with diverse interpretations and critiques and renewed opportunities to re-read the Confucian canon – indeed, it was in and of itself an enabling condition for developing some critical perspectives, such as *Yōmeigaku* and *Kogaku*, to lodge dissenting claims against the Neo-Confucian mode of thinking and reasoning. The very way in which Neo-Confucian thought was introduced to Japan prevented itself from being authorised through continuous appreciation by succeeding generations as the timeless reading of the Confucian canon. The contemporaneity of advocates and dissents prevented Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism from becoming a canonical rendering of the Confucian canon.

Scholars of *Yōmeigaku* recognise the limitation of Neo-Confucianism, especially its dialectic of *ri* and *sei* (性: human nature) and its mode of learning that revolves around ‘investigation of

¹² This is not to say that scholars such as Hayashi Razan and Kaibara Ekken sought to disavow Zhu Xi’s thought. Rather, their scepticism was a means of establishing Neo-Confucian thought reflexive of their own ethical and empirical concerns. Mary Tucker succinctly summarises the point when analysing Ekken’s later works, maintaining that “Ekken was not intent on disavowing Chu Hsi, but rather was eager to reclaim and develop anew some of Chu’s essentially vitalistic concerns as a framework for his own ethical and empirical thought. Thus, far from breaking up the continuity of Chu’s thought, Ekken further developed it for his own time, place, and circumstances.” Tucker, *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism*, 68.

things’ (*gewu*: 格物) and ‘perfection of knowledge’ (*zhizhi*: 致知), which for them offers little guiding principle for morally and ethically informed actions. Their call for ‘*chikō gōitsu*’ or ‘*zhixing be yi*’ (知行合一: knowledge and action are a unity) is essentially a reversal of the Neo-Confucian dialectic that prioritises knowing the principle over acting upon the principle, suggesting that one can know the principle only through the struggle to make moral and ethical decisions in concrete situations.¹³ Scholars of *Kogaku* fathom that Neo-Confucianism in Japan is essentially a translation of a translation, an interpretation of an interpretation, a refraction of a refraction. For them, Zhu Xi’s thought is problematic, not because it is in and of itself wrong, but because it is based on ‘incorrect’ interpretations of the Confucian canon. Neo-Confucianism in Japan is futile because it is essentially a translation of ‘incorrect’ interpretations. Hence, *Kogaku*, as the name itself suggests, calls for returning to the original, ancient Confucian texts and for establishing a new way of reading and, thus, ‘translating’ these texts.¹⁴

¹³ 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 points out 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 Nakae Tōju (1608-1648), Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691), and Wang Yangming’s thought, and goes so far as to argue that Chinese Confucianism was unsuited for Japanese society. Harry Harootunian argues that it is hard to identify the predilection towards *Yōmeigaku* in the writings of Yoshida Shōin (1830-1859) and Saigō Takamori (1827-1877). See Bitō, *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū*; Harootunian, *Toward Restoration*, 139-41.

¹⁴ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 76-102; Katō, “Meiji-shoki no honyaku,” 351. Just as *Yōmeigaku* was not a homogenous scholarship enterprise, so too was *Kogaku*. Inoue Tetsujirō was the first to discuss 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) together under the epithet of ‘*Kogaku-ha*’ (古学派: School of ancient studies). Therefore, the term ‘*Kogaku*’ must be treated, as I treat it here, as an epithet rather than a unified field of knowledge within the Confucian tradition, as a collective name for those strands of Confucian thought that challenged, in one way or another, neo-Confucian mode of thinking and reasoning. See Inoue, *Nippon Kogakuha no tetsugaku*. The historical significance of *Kogaku* remains to be a contested matter. The likes of Maruyama Masao read the diachronic unfolding of *Kogaku* within a synchronic moment of modernity, suggesting that this tradition 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 *Kogaku* as a manifestation of intellectual creativity, specifically of the Japanese, as a reflection of a quintessentially ‘Japanese’ modality of thinking. See, for example,

While I will expand further on the development of *Yōmeigaku* and *Kogaku* in a moment, the point to be emphasised here is the following. The unfolding of Neo-Confucianism in Japan is marked as much by the spatio-temporal proximity between advocates and dissents as by the spatio-temporal distance between Zhu Xi's enunciation and its appropriation in Japan. As paradoxical as it may sound, precisely because of the spatio-temporal distance, precisely because of the itinerary of Neo-Confucianism moving across space and time – from 11th-century China to 17th-century Japan – with its own critiques, Zhu Xi's texts could never fully summon forth the absolute command over the intellectual space of Tokugawa Japan.¹⁵

Redefining the Idea of Learning and Its Method

Let me expand further here on how *Yōmeigaku* and *Kogaku* respectively curved out new discursive orientations to redefine what learning ought to be and how one might attain knowledge.

Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Jinsai, Sorai, Norinaga*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975; Takeuchi Seiichi, Kubota Takaaki, and Nishimura Michikazu (eds.), *“Kogaku” no shisō: Nihon shisō-shi josetsu, Vol.4* (Intellectual Thought of Ancient Studies: History of Japanese Thought, Vol.4), Tokyo: Perikansha, 1994.

¹⁵ My observation here intersects with a concern about canon and canonisation. As this concern, though extremely interesting, is beyond the scope of my present inquiry, let me reiterate 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.

In its emphasis on action, *Yōmeigaku* declares the futility of engaging with cosmological contemplations about *tian* (天: Heaven) and *tianxia* (天下: the realm under Heaven) as well as ontological speculations about a proper way of being and becoming. Instead, *Yōmeigaku* recentres its intellectual exercises around the concern for establishing practical methods for making moral and ethical judgements. To justify its emphasis on action and practical methods and to turn one's attention to oneself, *Yōmeigaku* encourages treating the human mind (心) as “indwelling divine illumination equivalent to the ultimate source of both human life and the natural world.”¹⁶ As Nakae Tōju (1608-1648) writes in *Okina mondō* (翁問答: Dialogue with An Old Man, 1640-1641),

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らかなるものなり、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。
(Everything in Heaven and on Earth exists within the indwelling divine illumination. Therefore, if we elucidate the inner dispositions of our mind, we will be conversant with the indwelling divinity and understand everything within that divinity. The most important thing in life is to know the supreme virtue and the essential Way in our mind and to bring ourselves into the understanding of everything in Heaven and on Earth.)¹⁷

In so claiming, Tōju specifies that the appropriate mode of learning (*gakumon*: 学問) is to keep the Way of the sages in one's mind to practice it with one's body, rather than merely to listen to one's teacher and to engage with polemical debates, so that the mind of the sages and one's mind would become one.

¹⁶ Ogyū, “The Construction of ‘Modern Yōmeigaku’,” 87.

¹⁷ Nakae Tōju, *Okina mondō*, Inoue Tetsujirō (ed.), Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1910 [1640-1641]: 14.

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。

(The popular mode of Confucian learning tells you to read Confucian texts, memorise exhortations, and recite verses and texts. It tells you to listen to and repeat what is said. But such a mode of learning never allows you to know the virtue nor to practice the Way. [...] The true learning is [...] to polish the pearls of virtue, to practice the five virtues of filial piety and the five virtues of the Way, [...] to improve one's own body and one's human nature, and to follow the teachings of Confucius and Mencius in one's life.)¹⁸

With this attention to action and practice as the primary mode of active learning, *Yōmeigaku* seeks to offer a concrete basis upon which action and practice must and can take place.

More specifically, its discursive strategy is to juxtapose the Way (transcendence) to socio-political standards (immanence) – or else what Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691) designates as ‘*hō*’ (法: law) – maintaining that action and practice must be grounded on the Way that is constant and transcendental, rather than on the law that is anomalous and subjected to specificities of time and space, hence to changes. Banzan specifies this difference between the Way and the law in *Shūgi gaisho* (集疑外書: Unofficial Writings on the Accumulation Righteousness, 1686).

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て共亡ることなし。況後世をや。

(The Way and the law are two different things, but many people make the mistake of thinking of the law as the Way. Though the law was settled by the sages, it

¹⁸ Ibid., 36-38.

changed from generation to generation. So much so that there are many difficulties in transferring the law to Japan. The Way is three fundamental bonds and five constant virtues, flowing into man and into five elements. Even when there were no virtues and no teachings of the sages, the Way was already practised. When humans were not yet born, it was still practised in Heaven and Earth. When Heaven and Earth were not yet separated, it was still practised in emptiness. Even if humans become extinct and Heaven and Earth come to nothingness, the Way remains.)¹⁹

While Banzan understands the Way as having *a priori* existence, he sees the law essentially as historical entities instituted by the sages to reflect the circumstances of the time that they were instituted. And precisely because of such historicity, the law is subjected to historical changes. For Banzan, as well as for Tōju, Confucian learning must be grounded on the timeless essence of the Way, and the process of learning must be the continuous endeavour to embrace and embody the Way in one's mind, not through textual engagement, nor through polemical debates, but through the act and practice of governing, of conducting businesses, and of respecting one's parents. 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 spatio-temporal location.

I shall draw here two inferences from Tōju's and Banzan's discursive addresses. First and most obviously, their effort to redefine what learning ought to do lodges a direct challenge to the Neo-Confucian propensity towards *ri*, which sees "material relations or relationships of interest as a moral relation," or else material relations as a relation of *ri*, and which therefore urges one to inquire into the material, things, to address *ri* (epitomised by the notion of 'investigation of things' and 'perfection of knowledge').²⁰ For Tōju and Banzan, moral and ethical knowledge has nothing to do with the material. This knowledge becomes attainable only through a continuous process of

¹⁹ Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi gaisho*, in Satō Yōichi and Tomoeda Ryūtarō (eds.), *Nihon shisōshi taikai, Vol.30: Kumazawa Banzan* (An Outline of Japanese Intellectual History, Vol.30: Kumazawa Banzan), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971 [1686]: 380.

²⁰ Wang, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, 66.

struggling to embrace and embody the Way, the transcendental, in one's mind – a process of acting and practising one's conduct virtuously. Second, in this distinction between the Way and the law, transcendence and immanence, we begin to see an advent of historical consciousness. Of course, by 'historical consciousness,' I am not suggesting the familiar Hegelian evolutionary time, whereby space, be it 'Europe' or 'Asia,' is organised as time, or else space is treated as time. Instead, by 'historical consciousness,' I mean to suggest a predilection to perceive the immanent, the law, and the socio-political standards, norms, and expectations, as being subjected to temporal changes, as something falling into the category of time.

For Yōmeigaku, the question about the immanent, about all that which exists in the realm of temporal changes, is relegated to the margin of or even outside its primary concern. However, as I read it, this 'historical consciousness' is especially significant for *Kogaku*. It is because this 'historical consciousness' is that which anchors its variegated attempts to understand, not necessarily how to embody the Way, but what the Way actually means in the Confucian canon. To understand the unfolding of this historical consciousness, let us first turn to Itō Jinsai (1627-1795) and his problematisation of the state of Confucian learning. In *Gomō jigi* (語孟字義: The Meanings of Terms in the Analects and Mencius, 1683), Jinsai lodges a claim against the Neo-Confucian idea of *sei* (性: human nature) as the manifestation of *ri*. By distinguishing *sei* from moral principles of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, Jinsai maintains as follows.

仁義礼智の四者は、みな道德の名にして、性の名にあらず。道德とは、偏く天下に達するを以て言ふ。一人の有するところにあらず。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 [Zhou Dunyi] 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 [Cheng Yi] 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。

(Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are all names of morality but not of human nature. Morality is said to reach all corners of the world. It is not possessed exclusively by one person. In contrast, human nature is said to be possessed solely by oneself. It is not something that dictates 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. Followers sought to understand these virtues but never applied them as their strength. Worse, to understand these virtues, they devised themselves with concepts such as *chi jing*, *zhu jing*, and *zhi liang zhi*, 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.)²¹

The point of Jinsai's contention is, of course, the Neo-Confucian doctrine of *xing ji li* (性即理: human nature is the principle), which, for Jinsai, has little to do with the original teachings of Confucius. As he laments, Confucianism since Chang Yi has problematically reduced the question of virtues to the question of the cultivation of the Self, hence to the question of being and becoming, by devising terms such as *chi jing* (持敬: a specific method of Neo-Confucian moral learning), *zhu jing* (主静: Cheng Yi's method of moral practices), *zhi liang zhi* (到良知: Wang Yangming's claim for attaining moral knowledge). But nowhere in the writings of Confucius and Mencius can one find any reference to these conceptual devices. Notwithstanding that these virtues –

²¹ Itō Jinsai, *Gomō jigi*, Vol.1, 1683. The quote is taken from the 1705 edition of the text, which is available at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ro12/ro12_00693/index.html (02.8.2022).

benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom – are the names of morality rather than the names of the principle, these virtues permeate each and everything in the realm under Heaven (“偏く天下に達する”) and, therefore, are not qualities exclusive of humans (“一人の有するところにあらず”).

According to Jinsai, this misunderstanding, or incorrect interpretation of the Confucian canon, has resulted in a mode of learning that is in and of itself futile. Thus, he writes in *Dōjimon* (童子問: Questions from a Child, 1707),

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 impossible to achieve its objective.)²²

By resorting to Mencius’ term ‘*kuochong*’ (拡充: enlarging, accumulating), Jinsai then reorients the purpose of learning to the effort of connecting the finite and limited Self to the infinite and unlimited Way. Here, as Jinsai understands it, the appropriate method is not the invention of conceptual devices for textual interpretation, such as *chi jing*, *zhu jing*, and *zhi liang zhi*, but the accumulation of knowledge about qualities (*sei*) of each and everything that makes up the world

²² Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon*, Vol.1, 1707. The quote is taken from a printed version published in 1904, available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/757852> (02.08.2022).

by directly engaging with the original teachings of Confucius and Mencius, since their writings have already clarified the specific quality of what makes a thing what it is. Thus, as the point of departure of this learning process, Jinsai calls for the return to the original enunciation of the Way found in ancient texts. In other words, what is paramount in learning that Jinsai proposes here is the proclivity to make clear distinctions among various Confucian discursive categories, such as *tendō* (天道: the Way of Heaven), *jindō* (人道: the Way of Man), *ri* (理: principle), and *sei* (性: the nature of things), so that one can attain a proper understanding of what these categories respectively mean and what kind of Way one must pursue.²³

What we see here is Jinsai's twofold conviction. The first is his conviction in the method of direct textual engagement with ancient texts to bypass various (mis)interpretations presented by Neo-Confucian and other Confucian scholars. The second and more important for our concern here is his conviction in the possibility of 'uncontaminated' reading of ancient texts. As I read it, this conviction in 'uncontaminated' reading presumes, first of all, that language is a neutral means with which teachings of Confucius and Mencius, that is to say, meanings in ancient texts, are transmitted transparently, and that coherent, univocal, and indeed authoritative reading of these texts is possible without any 'surplus of meaning.'²⁴ This conviction in 'uncontaminated' reading seems to presume a certain ability of the reader, or put it differently, a sense of neutrality of the reader when engaging with the texts far removed from their spatio-temporal location to make clear distinctions among discursive categories, extract the ahistorical essence of being and becoming enunciated in the texts, and, therefore, have recourse to invariant meanings transparently ascribed in texts. As I read it, this presumed neutrality is significant, for it engenders a sense of temporal

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

symmetry between the ancient texts and the reader, between ‘there’/‘then’ and ‘here’/‘now.’ To be sure, this temporal symmetry is sustained not by “eternal and necessary laws” that regulate the world of objects – the presumption which foregrounds Western knowledge.²⁵ Instead, in Jinsai’s enunciation, a sense of temporal symmetry is sustained by the conviction in ‘uncontaminated’ reading, or more precisely, by the idea that language and meaning exist transparently in the eternal present and can be recuperated by the reader. Then, I shall even go so far as to argue that the neutrality of the reader and the temporal symmetry established between the texts and the reader foreground certain power ascribed to the act of reading. The reader is not innocently reading; the reader, through the act of reading, recapitulates what is said in the ancient texts (contents of the texts), reifies the texts as the source for their own value, and thus establishes pre-emptive closure so that the boundary of ‘proper’ knowledge (contents of the texts) is articulated.

If Jinsai is seemingly oblivious to spatio-temporal specificities encoded to the relationship between signs and signification, between words and things, the spatio-temporality of language and meaning constitutes the primary concern for Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), as he sees the impossibility of having recourse to ‘there’/‘then’ by merely presuming the neutrality of the reader and the temporal asymmetry between the texts and the reader. While acknowledging Jinsai’s achievement in pointing to the problem of ‘incorrect’ interpretations and turning one’s attention to the original, ancient texts of Confucius and Mencius, Sorai has this to say.

世載言以遷。言載道以遷。道之不明。職是之由。

(The world changes, taking words [or language] with it. Words change, taking the Way with them. This is the main reason why the Way is not clear.)²⁶

²⁵ Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, 276. For my rendering of temporal symmetry that foregrounds Western knowledge, See my discussion in Chapter 2, pp.106-110.

²⁶ Ogyū Sorai, *Sorai-sensei gakusoku* (徂徠先生学則: Rules of Learning), in Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen*, Vol.6 (Japanese Ethics), Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901[1715]: 121 [120-145]. 1727 version of the

Language changes, according to Sorai, as the world changes. The mode of explaining the Way changes as the language changes. Even though the Way is, and is presumed to be, constant, how it is explained with language is inconsistent and changes *over time*.

As I read it, Sorai's dilemma here derives from the oscillation between two competing concepts of (non-)time. On the one hand, there is a 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."²⁷ In a similar vein, Mencius also maintained that "the superior man seeks simply to bring back the unchanging standard, and, that being correct, the masses are roused to virtue."²⁸ On the other hand, language, or more precisely put, specific relationships between signs and significations, between words and things, are ephemeral. Therefore, attempts to grasp timeless wisdom and truths through a spatio-temporally specific language of 'here'/'now' are always inadequate. Thus, Sorai writes,

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。
([Confucian scholars today] 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.)²⁹

text is available online at: <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100264776/> (02.08.2022). The English translation is by Mikiso Hane. See Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 76.

²⁷ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 1: The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, London: Clarendon Press, 1893: 95.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 501.

²⁹ Ogyū Sorai, *Benmei, Vol.2* (弁名: Clarification of Confucian Concepts), in Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen, Vol.6* (Japanese Ethics), Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901 [1717]: 110 [28-119]. The English translation is by Mikiso Hane. See Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 76.

If one seeks to understand the Way through one's own language, such an attempt is, for Sorai, always futile. It is because reading the Confucian canon with the semantics of the reader offers nothing but a subjective interpretation, a projection of contemporary meanings onto ancient texts far removed from the semantics of the reader.

We see here a sense of historical consciousness that Sorai equips himself with, in his understanding of language and meaning, that language falls into the category of time, being subjected to temporal changes. Essentially, to read ancient texts in one's own language is a form of simultaneous translation and interpretation – translating the language of ancient texts into the language of the reader and interpreting the meanings of those texts with the semantics of the reader. This method of reading, in turn, generates, *contra* Jinsai, surplus meanings and consequently mars the meanings that those texts seek to convey. The meaning of ancient texts can only be found by embracing the language of those texts. In practical terms, this indicates, and as Sorai suggested, that one must be proficient in the language of those texts in order to attend to the words (辭) that specify the Way and to the facts (事) that these words express.

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.)³⁰

Hence, in Sorai's view, learning is to attend to words and facts expressed in the *original* language rather than to refine the rhetoric of argumentation or to indulge oneself in polemical debates.

³⁰ Ogyū Sorai, *Sorai-sensei gakusoku* (Rules of Learning), 138. The English translation is by Mikiso Hane. See Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 77.

So understood, I shall point to three implications of Sorai's version of *Kogaku* and his methodological orientation to read ancient texts in their original language in order to overcome the problem of surplus meanings and, by extension, the problem of translation. First, his emphasis on the ephemeral nature of language must not be treated as an assertion of the impossibility of semantic transparency. Just as Jinsai argues, Sorai also presumes here that reading is for attaining the Confucian truth, for correctly understanding the original meanings of the words of the sages specified by Confucius and Mencius. Sorai is simply suspecting the impossibility of 'uncontaminated' reading of texts with one's own language. Given that language changes according to temporal changes, the language of 'here'/'now' is structured with the relationship between signs and significations markedly different from that of the language of 'there'/'then,' the ancient language. For this reason, Sorai's attention is recentred around the method of textual engagement termed here as *kobunjigaku* (古文辞学: Studies of ancient words and phrases), which urges the reader to be proficient in the original language of ancient texts, so that they can have recourse to the 'true' meanings enunciated in those texts. In this instance, we begin to see that, just as Jinsai does, Sorai also emphasises the ability of the reader to move across space and time in their practices of reading. However, there is a marked difference between their presumptions. For Jinsai, the ability of the reader lies in their intellectual faculty to make clear distinctions among various discursive categories, to extract the ahistorical essence of being and becoming enunciated in ancient texts, and to have recourse to the invariant meanings of ancient texts from their own spatio-temporal location. Temporal symmetry between 'there'/'then' and 'here'/'now' can be established precisely because of the reader's ability to have recourse to 'there'/'then' from the position of 'here'/'now'. In contrast, for Sorai, the ability of the reader lies in their faculty to use language as a vehicle so that they can remove themselves from 'here'/'now' and relocate

themselves to ‘there’/‘then.’ Temporal symmetry can be established, not because the reader can have recourse to invariant meanings of ancient texts from their own spatio-temporal location but because the reader can overcome the impediments of their spatio-temporal positionality and reposition themselves, through language, in other spatio-temporal locations.

Second, Sorai’s problematisation of ‘uncontaminated’ reading and his understanding of language as a vehicle to overcome spatio-temporal distance together engender a perception to view language with its purported unity. More specifically, his negation of ‘uncontaminated’ reading – hence ‘uncontaminated’ translation from the language of ancient texts to the language of the reader – as a means of recuperating invariant meanings of texts implies an understanding that the practice of translation presumes clear delineation of the linguistic unity of the original language from which one translates, from the linguistic unity of the target language into which one translates. In *Gakusoku* (学則: Rules of Learning, 1715), Sorai uses the term ‘*shuri gekigetsu*’ (侏離馱舌), which literary means Xirong’s language (侏離) and chirping sound of bull-headed shrike (馱舌), to describe the foreign-ness, unfamiliarity, and incomprehensiveness of the Chinese language. Then, he suggests that ancient words (“古言”) are also ‘*shuri gekigetsu*’ such that it is impossible to fully grasp the meanings of ancient words with today’s words (“今言”).³¹ Further still, in the third treatise of *Bunkai* (文戒: Warning against Writing, 1714), he admonishes that the then-received reading of Chinese texts is filled with ‘*washū*’ (和臭 or 和習) – the typical usage of the Chinese language by the Japanese, which is influenced by the ‘Japanese’ language, and which

³¹ Sorai wrote, “則其禍殆乎有甚於侏離馱舌者也哉。然則如之何可也。亦唯言語異宣。” Ogyū Sorai, *Sorai-sensei gakusoku* (Rules of Learning), 121. See also Sorai’s explication of the ‘Japanese’ language (和字) in the first treatise of his *Bunkai* (文戒: Warning against Writing), 1714. A digitised version of the texts is available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2537750> (02.08.2022).

constitutes the basis for ‘*wakun*’ (和訓, more widely known as ‘*kundoku*’ 訓讀) method to read a Chinese character with Japanese phonetics.³² Thus, Sorai maintains,

削去而字則字卻與華人酷肖大氏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, some less, and some 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.)³³

³² Ogyū Sorai, *Bunkai*. Of course, as Naoki Sakai aptly points out, what Sorai 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. I have already touched upon *wakun* in conjunction with discussions on translation in the secondary literature. See Chapter 1, pp.94-95. Rebekah Clements offers a concise description of *wakun* (*kundoku*) as a translational strategy. She writes, “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 enscripted (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.

³³ Ogyū Sorai, *Bunkai*.

For Sorai, the lucidity of meanings that *wakun* seeks to offer is illusory. *Washū*, which dictates the method of reading Chinese texts, that is to say, the method of *wakun*, problematically blurs the boundaries between the ancient Chinese language – a foreign language, a ‘*shuri gekigetsu*’ – and the Japanese language. It is this muddling of linguistic boundaries that, in the eyes of Sorai, causes incomplete or even incorrect understandings of the Confucian canon.

Not only does Sorai’s method of textual engagement presume the unity of language, and indeed the importance of maintaining such unity, but it also endorses, as I read it, an idea that the unity of language is that which guarantees the unity of knowledge. Yet, here lies a conundrum. Suppose here, as Sorai seems to suppose, that the unity of language is indeed the guarantor of the unity of knowledge. But recall here also that Sorai’s method, despite its significance attributed especially in hindsight, is not widely accepted by his contemporaries and that the *wakun* method, in fact, remains the primary means for textual engagement, for interpreting and translating other knowledge traditions. Then, the obvious temptation is to argue that intellectual developments in Japan, which often revolve around the transposition of foreign knowledge traditions through translation, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Western science, are replete with ‘incomplete’ and ‘wrong’ renderings of the original. The temptation is to argue that, precisely because of the translational nature of the unfolding of foreign knowledge traditions, knowledge transposed to the ‘Japanese’ intellectual landscape lacks a sense of unity. However, I argue that this conundrum should not be treated as a vindication of judgement that the formation of various knowledge traditions in Japan – often as a translation, as a refraction, or even as a translation of a translation, a refraction of a refraction – is always ‘incomplete’ and ‘wrong’. Instead, this conundrum should be treated, as I treat it here, as a moment of disclosure that the transposition of a knowledge

tradition, which inevitably involves translation, is always marked by discursive disruption and reconfiguration. For a knowledge tradition to become much more than a spatio-temporally specific, ephemeral mode of thinking and reasoning, for a knowledge tradition to become global, such disruption and reconfiguration are not merely inevitable consequences but also fundamental aspects of the very process of becoming. It is not that history is a temporal field in which the original – treated almost as an ideal type – is realised in other locations. Rather, the purported historical continuity of a given knowledge tradition is always disrupted when it is transposed from one location to another, when its parochiality that enables the original enunciation is erased, when its purported universal essence is extracted and, therefore, when it is reconfigured within the semantic space of a target language.³⁴

6.2. Heterogeneity of *Ri*

What are the implications of these reconfigurations of the idea of learning and its method, especially for the broader epistemic landscape of the 17th and 18th centuries? To put it schematically, today's scholarly evaluation veers between two poles: the one, epitomised by Maruyama Masao's analysis, emphasises 'deep currents' that prefigured a predilection towards the modern; and the other, exemplified by Naoki Sakai's observation, focuses on the sense of 'Japanese-ness' emerged out of these intellectual developments.

³⁴ There were two interesting subsequent developments on the issue of the unity of language and the unity of knowledge during the early Meiji period. One is Mori Arinori's (1847-1889) call for making English not merely intellectual lingua franca but also a 'national' language. The other is Katō Hiroyuki's (1836-1916) call for using the Japanese language for teaching and research at the university, where most of the subjects were taught by foreign instructors and in foreign languages. I will expand further on these proposals and discuss them in conjunction with the idea of equating the unity of language to the unity of knowledge in Chapter 7.

More to the point, Maruyama observes that,

Thus 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* [私智] (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.³⁵

Making much of Sorai's rendering of the idea of learning and the method of *kobunjigaku*, Maruyama suggests that in those intellectual developments during the late Edo period, we see a shift from subjectivity to objectivity, which foregrounded the subsequent process of reconfiguring knowledge as a subject-object relation. In contrast, Sakai points to the intellectual genealogy from *Kogaku* to *Kokugaku*, arguing that these scholarly fields, by presuming the unity of language and by treating texts not as the enunciated (what the writing says) but as the enunciating (what initiates and regulates what is said in the writing), effectively articulated an idea of the 'Japanese' language and 'Japanese' culture. This is not to say that scholars of *Kogaku* and *Kokugaku* already saw the 'Japanese' language and 'Japanese' culture with "unobjectionable certainties."³⁶ Establishing such certainties was the project of the Meiji period under the dictate of the newly formed idea of the nation-state.³⁷ And yet, as Sakai observes,

³⁵ Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 79.

³⁶ Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 336.

³⁷ For the Meiji project of developing the 'Japanese' language as *kokugo* (国語: national language), see Hirai, *Kokugo kokuzi mondai no rekishi*; Lee, *The Ideology of Kokugo*. The original text was published in Japanese under the title of '*Kokugo*' to *iu shisō: Kindai nihon no gengo ishiki* (The Ideology of Kokugo: Linguistic Consciousness of Modern Japan), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996.

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 utopian: it should be nowhere. In this sense, I claim that the Japanese language and its “culture” were born in the eighteenth century.³⁸

My reading of these intellectual developments during the late Edo period occupies a space between these two poles. On the one hand, in recognising the emerging sense of historical consciousness or temporal symmetry in the works of *Yōmeigaku* and *Kogaku*, I suggest that any neat distinctions between the pre-modern and the modern forms of knowledge, between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ mode of thinking and reasoning, do not seem appropriate. But to say so does not mean that ‘Japanese’ intellectual traditions were, during the 18th century, moving *towards* the modern, as if modern knowledge was *asteres aplanis*, a fixed point to be reached in temporal human progress. Instead, I, once again, reiterate my claim of ‘deep undertones’ that can be found in those knowledge traditions often characterised as premodern. And in claiming so, I am suggesting a possibility that what we consider ‘modern’ knowledge is not the product of imitating the European intellectual project of Enlightenment but aporetic in its nature to the extent that various knowledge traditions in different locations partake in its making.

On the other hand, I also argue that learning based on attention to language was not a mere discursive device for enacting the imaginary and ideological boundary of ‘Japan.’ The purported unity of language and, by extension, the unity of knowledge also forged a possibility to move away from the (Neo-)Confucian notion of *ri* to the extent that the idea of *ri* enunciated in the ancient Chinese language could neither be replicated in the 17th and 18th centuries Japanese language nor be reflexive of historical specificities of ‘Japan.’ Therefore, the attention to language and its unity

³⁸ Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, 335

significantly reshaped the field of ontology and epistemology and enabled those intellectuals to understand *ri* in its multitude, in its heterogeneous nature, which in turn foregrounded a diverse understanding of what *kyūri* ought to do and the subsequent suspension of Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri*.

To expand further, recall here Itō Jinsai's attempt to make clear distinctions among various Confucian discursive categories. This attempt is, I have already explained, an undertaking to overcome the contemplative and speculative nature of Neo-Confucianism and to emphasise instead the importance of retrieving original meanings enunciated in the Confucian canon. The expected consequence of such undertaking is the negation of Neo-Confucian cosmology, which views the abstract and the concrete, Heaven and under Heaven, transcendence and immanence, though conceptually – hence discursively – separated from the purpose of enunciation, as an indistinguishable whole. In *Gomō jigi*, Jinsai contends that,

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 the '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.)³⁹

Then, Jinsai articulates a dynamic image of the realm under Heaven, of nature, and of immanence by recentring his attention around *ki* (氣) rather than *ri*.

³⁹ Itō Jinsai, *Gomō jigi*, Vol.1.

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 the 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 induces, the other reacts. And this relationship never ceased to exist. This is the Way of Heaven, and this is the dynamics, *ki*, that spontaneously emerge.)⁴⁰

In this enunciation, *ki* is understood as amounting to the Way of Heaven. And the Way of Heaven is identified with the dynamics that spontaneously emerge to define and regulate the world.⁴¹ Such discursive inversion, no doubt, leads to negating the absolute primacy of *ri* accorded by Neo-Confucianism.

非有理而後生斯氣所謂理者反是氣中之条理

(It is wrong to think that *ri* exists first and *ki* emerges later. The so-called *ri* is the logical principle that is in *ki*.)⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Maruyama reads this as an instance in which Jinsai's thought – and by extension Sorai's thought that is based on Jinsai's – borders on a “*natural* philosophy in the true sense of the word” (本来の意味での自然哲学).” What I find problematic here is not the parallel between Jinsai's enunciation and natural philosophy that Maruyama's reading evokes – I, too, see that parallel. The problem is rather his emphasis on ‘in the true sense of the word.’ By comparing Jinsai's thought not merely to natural philosophy, but to natural philosophy ‘in the true sense of the word,’ Maruyama seems to envision an idealised field of inquiry that is devoid of contemplation and speculation but is centred around reasoning and explanation, a field that has prefigured modern (Western) science. And it is this ideal type into which ‘premodern’ thought in Japan, such as Jinsai's, would be eventually absorbed. To this end, Maruyama's reading tautologically reiterates the albeit spurious, purported universality of modern and, indeed, Western scientific knowledge. See Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 52. My discontent here may be best characterised by reiterating Federico Marcon's apposite problematisation of the belief in unmediated knowledge. Marcon notes, “the naïve belief in the possibility of unmediated knowledge [...] tends to reduce the history of science into a description of the slow path toward an increasingly refined approximation to a fixed and unchanging external reality. This approximation usually coincides, especially in Japanese historiography, with Western sciences and has the double effect of dogmatically dehistoricizing modern science and transforming its non-Western precursors either in immature forms of protoscientific knowledge or in irrationalistic forms of nationally or ethnically exclusive sensitivity toward the natural world.” See Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan*, 13-14.

⁴² Itō Jinsai, *Gomō jigū*, Vol.1.

By ascribing *ri* to *ki*, Jinsai expands further on what it actually means to investigate *ri*, hence what *kyūri* purports to do.

聖人曰天道曰人道而未嘗以理字命之易曰窮理盡性以至於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 spoke of both the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man, but they never said that it is *ri* that governs both of them. 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 explore material things, to study the nature of things is to examine man, and to ascertain that the Will is to know Heaven. There is a specific reason for the way these terms are used in such an order. That is to say, everything starts with material things, followed by Man, and then by Heaven. Notice here that the word *ri* is accorded to material things, but not to Heaven or Man.)⁴³

In this reconfiguration of the idea of *kyūri*, we see a dialectic convergence of two premises central to Jinsai's thought: the premise that the Way of Heaven consists of *yin* and *yang*, which are the manifestations of *ki* rather than *ri*; and another premise that *ri* is accorded to material things and is the logical principle that is in *ki*. Weaving together these two premises, Jinsai explains that *kyūri*, investigation of *ri*, is ultimately to examine material things.

It is important to remind ourselves here that Jinsai is not completely negating the Neo-Confucian proclamation of the one and only transcendental principle (*ri*). He is not negating the possibility of its existence. Instead, he is concerned if the 'investigation of things' and 'perfection of knowledge' (格物到知) can directly lead him to the understanding of transcendence. He is concerned if all inquiries must – and can – address transcendence.

⁴³ Ibid.

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

(When the sages spoke of the Way, they spoke of the Way of Man. Confucius rarely spoke of the Way of Heaven, and Duanmu Ci even suggested that the Way of Heaven is not a matter to be inquired into.)⁴⁴

For Jinsai, whose concern revolved not around metaphysics or cosmology but rather around the re-reading of ancient texts, of the Confucian canon, for their practico-ethical benefits, the adverse effect of Neo-Confucian pursuit of transcendence is what he describes as ‘*kyomu*’ (虛無: nothingness).⁴⁵ Therefore, as I read it, in redefining what *kyūri* ought to do, Jinsai effectively relegates the Way of Heaven, the one and only transcendental principle, which the Neo-Confucian mode *kyūri* seeks to attain, to the realm of imperceptible. In other words, by separating the Way of Man from the Way of Heaven, Jinsai indicates the rather agnostic nature of transcendence.

Ogyū Sorai further expands on this agnostic nature of transcendence. However, Sorai’s discursive enunciation, unlike Jinsai’s, is based on the reconfiguration of the idea of the Way rather than on the separation of the Way of Man from the Way of Heaven.

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,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ In *Dōjimon*, Jinsai argued that “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、之を理に帰せざる能はず。既に理に帰すれば自ら虚無に陥らざる能はず。” See, Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon*, Vol.2 (童子問: Questions from a Child), 1707. The quote is taken from Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen*, Vol.5 (Japanese Ethics), Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901: 131 [75-167].

come and go; hot and cold weather, night and day, recure 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, 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 Heave.’ The earth supports high mountains but does not feel their weight. It moves the rivers and seas about 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.’⁴⁶

For Sorai, the Way of Heaven and the Way of Earth are mere analogies of the Way of the sages, hence the Way of Man. To this end, neither Heaven nor Earth could be known in and of itself (“深玄也不可測。杳冥也不可度。[...] 旁礴不可窮。深厚不可盡”). While, as he admits, there seem to be certain regularities of the universe and there also seems to be an explanation for everything that exists on the earth, all one can know through textual engagement with the Confucian canon is the Way of sages – norms that are valid only for man, but not laws of nature that regulate the natural world.

This enunciation clearly expresses scepticism toward the one and only transcendental principle that dictates both the human world (the Way of Man) and the natural world (certain regularities of the universe) and, by extension, scepticism towards the possibility of attaining *ri* as Neo-Confucians would understand it. Not to mention such scepticism foregrounds the segmentation of knowledge into the knowledge of the human world and that of the natural world; it also indicates a possibility of – or even necessity to – understanding *ri* in its heterogeneous nature. To this end,

⁴⁶ Ogyū Sorai, *Benmei*, Vol.2, 110. The English translation is by Mikiso Hane. See Maruyama, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 79.

Sorai declares that *ri* cannot be the transcendental point of reference for everything because it is, in fact, humans who understand *ri* as they see fit.

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 desire 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.)⁴⁷

In this instance, we see an understanding of *ri* that is completely devoid of transcendence. *Ri* is the reason, according to Sorai, that grounds the human mind to think and to form logical judgements, the reason that enables one to understand why something must be done and why something must not be done. In turn, to pursue *ri* – *kyūri* – means to learn the words of the sages, the Way of Man, that defines *ri* – reason for thinking and judging – rather than to contemplate the cosmology of Heaven and under Heaven structured through the transcendental principle.⁴⁸ And knowledge acquired through *kyūri* is *thing-for-itself* (the status of the known as one sees it with representation and observation), rather than *thing-in-itself* (the status of the known as it is without representation and observation) because it is humans who define *ri* as they see fit.

With the clarity of hindsight, I argue that these intellectual developments within the Confucian tradition articulate a possibility of understanding the idea of *ri* with a sense of heterogeneity within this tradition: *ri* as the transcendental principle that dictates each and every thing as Neo-Confucians presume; *ri* as being accorded to material things, as the logical principle that is in *ki*,

⁴⁷ Sorai, *Benmei*, Vol.2, 97.

⁴⁸ He writes, “究理聖人之事。豈可望之學者哉。” See *ibid.*, 116.

as Jinsai claims, which can be understood as spontaneously emerging dynamics of the world; and, *ri* as the reason for thinking and judgment as Sorai postulates. The significance of this heterogenisation of *ri* is twofold: secularisation and specialisation of knowledge into various fields.

First, the heterogenisation effectively dislodges the received Neo-Confucian claim for the transcendental principle from its privileged place as the ground for knowledge. In turn, knowledge can no longer be grounded on that principle, which is for man agnostic and even mystic, hence transcendent rather than transcendental. And the pursuit of knowledge can no longer be organised around the pursuit of the agnostic and the mystic because it lies beyond that which humans can know. Therefore, by secularisation, I mean to suggest here that, in Jinsai's and Sorai's enunciations, knowledge and its pursuit now exclude what Descartes calls "the customary search for final causes"⁴⁹ – the transcendent or the teleological causal power that regulates the world as it is – not because it does not exist but because humans are fallible in penetrating to it. The negation of the Neo-Confucian idea of the one and only transcendental principle engenders, as it seems to me, a certain predilection towards the secularisation of knowledge, hence a new settlement of the boundary of knowledge, within the intellectual landscape in Japan.

Second, the heterogenisation of *ri* also engenders a predilection towards the specialisation of knowledge into various distinctive fields. The heterogeneity of *ri* – transcendence, spontaneously emerging dynamics, the reason for thinking and judgment – foregrounds new organising categories of intellectual labour: some may be concerned with metaphysics; some may explore dynamics of the world manifesting as variegated *ki*; and some may delve into the moral and ethical questions about how we think and judge. *Ri* can designate different things, such that the pursuit of *ri* – *kyūri*

⁴⁹ René Descartes, *Meditations*, in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoof, and Dugald Murdoch (eds.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol.2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984: 32. Pierre-Simon Laplace's proclamation, "*Je n'avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse-là!*" (I do not need that hypothesis), that I have mentioned in Chapter 3, p.158, falls into the same rubric.

– can be grounded on a distinctive set of presumptions and methods appropriate for whatever kind of *ri* one seeks to pursue. Whatever intellectual affinity one may have, and whichever understanding of *ri* one may endorse, the specialisation of knowledge based on the heterogenisation of *ri* provides scholars with the ground for the validity claim for their own chosen field. In other words, the specialisation of knowledge enables scholars to articulate a general idea of the units of knowledge, whereby coherent discursive addresses based on a specific set of methodologies become possible within a given unit of knowledge. Therefore, the heterogenisation of *ri* is a crucial discursive device, on the one hand, to prevent knowledge from being too abstract and, on the other hand, to determine what is permissible not to know and, by extension, to enact certain boundaries between various fields of knowledge. Knowledge begins to disperse within the Confucian tradition.

To this end, I argue that the intellectual developments during the late Edo period are important, not necessarily because these developments embed within themselves ‘deep currents’ towards modern and Western knowledge, nor because they pave the way for articulating an idea of ‘Japanese’; but because it dislodges the Neo-Confucian notion of transcendental principle from its privileged place and, in so doing, occasions an instance of reconfiguring the intellectual landscape into various distinctive fields of knowledge, each of which is organised around a specific conceptualisation of *ri*.

6.3. Suspending Neo-Confucian Idea of *Kyūri*

How does the heterogenisation of *ri* manifest itself in the developments of other scholarly fields outside *Kogaku* specifically and Confucianism more generally? In what ways is a sense of historical consciousness, formed variously by Kumazawa Banzan, Itō Jinsai, and Ogyū Sorai, further consolidated into a basic premise of knowing, hence moulded into that which the position of the knower could be (re)grounded? In what ways is a sense of temporal symmetry, the premise that the knower is endowed with the capacity to have recourse to the meaning in the eternal present, transubstantiated into specific methodological orientations? To put it more broadly, the questions I seek to address here are of metaphysics and methodology. The heterogenisation of *ri* is, in effect, the negation of the Neo-Confucian worldview that structures the world with the absolute and only transcendental principle. In turn, those Confucian challenges lodged against the Neo-Confucian worldview also indicate a possibility of knowing other than through the doctrine of ‘investigation of things’ and ‘perfection of knowledge.’ What kinds of alternative worldview, or else epistemic frame that grounds knowledge, is articulated? What methodological orientations emerge from the increasingly unsettled yet ingenious climate of intellectual life?

To address these questions, I shall discuss here three further intellectual developments during the 17th and 18th centuries, namely Motoori Norinaga’s undertaking of grasping *ri* that is specifically of ‘Japanese,’ Miura Baien’s effort to articulate a holistic approach to understanding the heterogeneity of *ri* of the world, and *Koihō* attempt to return to the ancient medical practices, each of which came to constitute itself as a distinctive field of scholarly inquiry. Of course, at the onset, these scholarly fields appear to have little to do with one another. The central purpose for Norinaga is, as Sey Nishimura summarises, “to extract from *Kojiki* [古事記: Records of Ancient Matters, 712] an understanding of the Way of the Gods as a set of principles governing the ancient

land of Japan.”⁵⁰ Baien, in the words of Rosemary Mercer, seeks “to make a philosophical analysis of the principles of nature, in which human affairs have a place as a small part of the whole scheme.”⁵¹ And *Koihō* is a revisionist development – so to speak – in the field of Chinese medicine which, as Masayoshi Sugimoto and David Swain put it, “call[s] for a return to the spirit and methods of the ancient medical classics.”⁵² However, as I seek to demonstrate in the following, these scholarly fields constitute significant loci for articulating alternative worldviews, thus grounds for knowledge, and for developing new methodological predilections. In so doing, these scholarly fields effectively suspend the Neo-Confucian mode of *kyūri*.⁵³

Absolute Transcendence and Cognitive Limit

In *Naobi no mitama* (直毘靈: The Rectifying Spirit, 1771), Motoori Norinaga expresses his concern over the indelibility of the Neo-Confucian claim for the principle of all things, which is said to manifest itself in the will of the sages. Lamenting the contemporary intellectual predilection that treats the words of the sages as the manifestation of the principle, Norinaga writes as follows.

⁵⁰ Sey Nishimura, “The Way of the Gods: Motoori Norinaga’s *Naobi no Mitama*,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 46:1, 1991: 22 [21-41].

⁵¹ 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].

⁵² Sugimoto et al., *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*, 280.

⁵³ To reiterate my earlier definition of the terms ‘suspend’ and ‘suspension’ (see p. 380), I use these terms with a two-fold meaning. First, I use the term ‘suspend’ or ‘suspension’ to suggest that, through the heterogenisation of *ri*, the search for the teleological causal power that regulates the world as it is no longer constitutes the fundamental ground for knowledge, such that the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* becomes an obsolete conceptual decide to determine an appropriate mode of learning. Second, I also sue the term ‘suspend’ and ‘suspension’ in a way that Derrida uses the word ‘deferral.’ With the heterogenisation of *ri*, the signifier *kyūri* can no longer fully summon forth its original meaning developed by Neo-Confucianism, but comes to be defined variously through appeal to additional signifiers and significations. Hence, the Neo-Confucian signification of *kyūri* is deferred and thus suspended.

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 encountering things unexplainable, the people who know things in this country [...] make false claims and fail to actually explain the unexplainable. Evidently, they are still entrapped in the folds of Neo-Confucianism, convinced that the words of the sages are the obvious manifestation of the absolute principle.)⁵⁴

For Norinaga, the problem is twofold. First, the words of the sages, irrespective of their accuracy and authority, are not only foreign thoughts but also, and ultimately, the words of men, reflexive of the specific spatio-temporal context in which the sages, men, are said to have enunciated those words. And second, the canonisation of men as the sages enables his contemporaries to assert rather problematically the pretension to know things that are, in fact, beyond the remit of human cognition.

On the first problem, Norinaga expands further and argues that,

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。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。
(All the people, both the wise and the foolish, are misled by foreign thoughts and do not understand why things are what they are in our country. How is it that those scholars of the land of the emperor, who are supposed to know what is supposed to be known through the reading of our ancient texts, do not know what they are supposed to know? They explain everything with foreign thoughts – with the Buddhist teaching of karma or with the Chinese teaching of the will of Heaven. They explain everything as the consequence of Heaven’s act. All of this is nothing but wrong.)⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Motoori Norinaga, *Naobi no mitama*, in Kobayashi Ichirō, *Kōkoku seishin kōza*, Vol. 12 (On Psychology of Imperial Kingdom), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1941-1943: 88 [15-107].

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45. Norinaga repeats the claim also in *ibid.*, 55-56, and 71.

Such enunciation is, in effect, an act of discursive spatial and temporal territorialisation of ‘Japan’ as a distinct historical entity. In reiterating the mythological origin of the Japanese archipelago narrated in *Kojiki*, Norinaga argues here that *kōkoku* (皇国: the imperial land) was established and has been ruled by the imperial descendants in order to realise the immanent intention of *kami* (神: heavenly deities). This specific historical emergence of ‘Japan’ is, for Norinaga, incommensurable to the Buddhist notion of *karma* that seeks to explain the workings of the world through actions driven by intention and their consequences or to the Confucian cosmological structuration of Heaven and under Heaven, which seeks to explain all occurrences as the will of Heaven. Given the specific historical emergence of ‘Japan,’ Norinaga maintains, those ‘foreign’ thoughts cannot adequately explain why things are what they are in the imperial land.

Upon arguing so, he lodges a direct attack against Neo-Confucianism. Precisely because of the specificity of the historical emergence of the imperial land, the transcendental principle that Neo-Confucians speak of cannot be taken as the *a priori* dictate of all things in ‘Japan.’ Given the historicity of ‘Japan,’ such a principle is an empty vernacular and does not exist at all (“ただ空き理のみにして、たしかに其物あるにあらず”).⁵⁶ Echoing Sorai here, Norinaga argues that the Way of Heaven, Earth, and Man is merely a creation of man whose being is embedded within a specific spatio-temporal context. But unlike Sorai, Norinaga goes on to suggest that, because of the historicity of the Confucian Way, it cannot be treated as the ultimate cornerstone of being and becoming for the subjects of the imperial land. To be sure, we must remind ourselves here that this negation of the Neo-Confucian idea of *ri* as ‘*karagokoro*’ (漢心: the Chinese mind) – more

⁵⁶ Ibid., 68.

precisely, the negation of its applicability to the imperial land – does not mean the complete repudiation of the existence of some transcendence. Though paradoxical it may sound, Norinaga is simply suggesting the spatio-temporal specificity of transcendence – what is transcendental in the imperial land is immanent only in that land. There is, and must have been, something transcendental that has long been dictating that which is specifically ‘Japanese.’

It is through this claim for the transcendental immanent in ‘Japan’ that Norinaga articulates an alternative worldview. The historical emergence of the imperial land and its genealogy is, for Norinaga, the work of the heavenly deities, which he describes as ‘*taenaru kotowari*’ (妙理). Unlike the Neo-Confucian idea of *ri*, which is thought attainable for man through the ‘investigation of things’ and ‘perfection of knowledge’ and is essentially an instrument for governing (“これはた世人をなづけ治めむためのたばかり事”),⁵⁷ ‘*taenaru kotowari*’ is beyond human cognition, something unintelligible and ineffable.

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 work of imperial deities. But it is so mysterious and spiritual that limited knowledge of man cannot comprehend their work. Therefore, one must know that the transcendental is beyond our comprehension. We do not have recourse to the work of imperial deities.)⁵⁸

We see here a certain semantic inversion in this distinction of ‘*taenaru kotowari*’ (妙理) from the Neo-Confucian idea of *ri* (理). Of course, at the level of the signifier, *kotowari* (理) and *ri* (理)

⁵⁷ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

corresponds to one another: 理 can be read both as *kotowari* and *ri*. However, the fundamental difference is not one of phonetics but at the level of signification. If the Neo-Confucian *ri* (理) is both the determinant of how one inhabits the world and the object of one's knowledge, Norinaga sees *taenaru kotowari* (妙理) as being so inexplicable and ineffable – as wonder and mystery – that one can only accept and embrace it, rather than rationally speculate its transcendental meanings.⁵⁹

It is precisely for this reason that '*jinchi*' (人智: human knowledge) is marked by its limited nature. By reconfiguring a worldview with the ineffable, Norinaga is stipulating here, as I read it, the impossibility of having recourse to the world as it is, that is to say, the noumenal world that the heavenly deities have created. No matter how much effort one makes to know the world as *it-is-in-itself*, just as Neo-Confucianism encourages to do through 'investigation of things' and 'perfection of knowledge,' one can only observe the world *as it appears* to them. In Norinaga's enunciation, the very reason why the world is what it is, *kotowari / ri*, is extracted from man and repositioned in the hand of the heavenly deities, that is to say, in the realm of the absolute transcendental. To be sure, this is by no means an instance of the de-secularisation of knowledge. His reference to, or else, postulate about the heavenly deities, the transcendental immanent in the imperial land, is simply an acknowledgement of the exteriority of human cognition (*thing-in-itself*). It is an acknowledgement that what is considered knowledge is limited to the phenomenal world that man knows (*thing-for-itself*). Hence, to know is no longer to have – or seek to have – direct

⁵⁹ For Norinaga's idea of '*taenaru kotowari*' and his general discursive strategy to move away from the Neo-Confucian folds, see, for example, Shigeru Mastumoto, *Motoori Norinaga, 1730-1801*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970; Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 81-100; Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, see especially pp. 260-261; Mark McNally, *Proving the Way: Conflict and Practice in the History of Japanese Nativism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005, in particular pp.65-95 and pp.179-208.

recourse to the transcendent (*thing-in-itself*) but to inductively surmise the transcendent by its appearance in the phenomenal world (*thing-for-itself*).⁶⁰

Now that knowledge and the act of knowing are reconfigured as such, the obvious question for Norinaga is of methodology. If *taenaru kotowari* is beyond human cognition, how can one surmise it? How does it appear to man? What is learning, and how should it be organised? Norinaga maintains that the only thing that is available for humans, through which *taenaru kotowari* would appear in the phenomenal world that humans can know, is the ancient records of works of the heavenly deities (“もろもろの古書”), more specifically the ancient ‘Japanese’ texts.⁶¹

もししひて求むとならば、きたなきからふ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。

(If you seek to know the works of the gods that appear to yourself, you must discard the Chinese mind contaminated by transcendent meanings and study the classics with the purified mind of the imperial land. In doing so, you may know there is no path to follow [the Way the sages define]. To know that there is no path is to know the Way of the gods.)⁶²

In taking ineffability – what cannot be described, hence silence – as the ultimate question of knowledge, Norinaga argues for the mediating role of language, mediating between the ineffable

⁶⁰ We see here some parallels between Norinaga and Immanuel Kant. Norinaga’s suspicion towards the possibility of knowing the world as it is in itself is almost analogous to the Kantian critique of transcendence. Just as Norinaga redraws the boundary of knowledge by distinguishing the noumenal world (the work of gods) and the phenomenal world (that man knows), Kant also redraws the boundary of knowledge by acknowledging the noumenal world (nature) that is beyond the phenomenal world (that man knows). These parallels, as well as one I have suggested between *Kogaku*’s tendency towards the secularisation of knowledge and Descartes’ proclamation of the futility of the search for final causes, constitute an important instance to reconsider the language of imitation and appropriation that remains somewhat authoritative in the studies of modern knowledge formation in Japan, and to unlearn the received narrative of modern knowledge as simply a globalised version of Western knowledge. I will come back to this point in the conclusion of this dissertation.

⁶¹ Motoori Norinaga, *Naobi no mitama*, 71.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 104.

and the effable. As he suggests, when language is adequately connected to authentic experiences, in other words, experiences uncontaminated by *karagokoro*, texts become transparent, representing something outside itself, the ineffable, the silent, *taenaru kotowari*. To connect language (signs) to authentic experiences, ‘Japanese’ signs must be privileged over Chinese signs. And in offering a more practical method of reading texts, Norinaga refines Kamo no Chōmei’s (1155-1216) concept of language, prioritising sounds over written forms, that is, phonetics over ideographs.⁶³ In other words, Norinaga’s method is to recentre his linguistic attention around verbs and postpositions, the original functions of which, as the communicative mode of the heavenly deities, have been, according to Norinaga, completely erased by the servitude towards Chinese ideographs. Then, he identifies syntagmatic relations of the ancient ‘Japanese’ language as a specific space for action and performance, a space for *taenaru kotowari* to manifest itself, and thus a space for enunciating specifically ‘Japanese’ subject voice. Through this privileging of phonetics over ideographs, sound over writing, Norinaga attempts to surmise *taenaru kotowari*, to render the silent audible to humans. Therefore, through this privileging, Norinaga seeks to retrieve the lost sense of transcendental presence.

Norinaga’s attention to the ancient language (its phonetic and syntagmatic relations) is particularly interesting here, for it engenders a certain consciousness of time and a specific relation between the enunciating (the reader of ancient texts) and the enunciated (*taenaru kotowari* appears in ancient texts). Norinaga is obviously discrediting the idea that the meaning of a word is settled over time through a historical process. If *taenaru kotowari* is ahistorical and transcendental, having

⁶³ For Kamo no Chōmei’s concept of language, see Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 50-56. Norinaga 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). Six-volume text of *Kotoba no tamanoo* is accessible online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko30/bunko30_e0237/index.html (07.10.2022). *Kanji san-on kō* is available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/992657?contentNo=5> (07.08.2022).

been dictating the imperial land for centuries, and if phonetics and syntagmatic relations of the ancient 'Japanese' language are the loci for *taenaru kotowari* to manifest itself, then, language upheld as sound rather than written forms is in the realm of ahistorical. Here, the act of speaking – more precisely, the act of reading ancient texts with an emphasis on sound rather than ideographs – becomes an act of partaking in the ahistorical. In this sense, the linear time of history – a continued sequence of existence – is negated in place of the cyclical time of enunciation. Surmising *taenaru kotowari* becomes possible without resorting to any form of history. To this end, the act of speaking is premised, in Norinaga's rendering, as that which resorts to the purportedly original Japanese vocalisation, authentic 'Japanese' subject voice. For Norinaga, the emphasis on ideographs – signs that only resemble things they purport to signify – leaves no space for the agency of the reader of a text because knowledge attained through the emphasis on ideographs is merely a knowledge by emulation and imitation of the enunciated. In contrast, the emphasis on phonetics and syntagmatic relations brings forth a performative dimension: through the act of speaking, the speaker performs and embodies *taenaru kotowari*, becoming the enunciating, the speaking subject that elicits correct words without compromising the sentient nature of their authentic experiences. This, in turn, means that, in Norinaga's discursive address, language becomes a vehicle, or a medium, for people to transform themselves into the active subject who signifies the phenomenal world they inhabit and objects that appear in front of them, as manifestations of *taenaru kotowari*.

It is important to recognise here that this enunciating subject is not a settled position or premise. Instead, this subject is *in the act of* enunciation, through which the similitude between the ancient and the contemporary, hence a sense of temporal symmetry between the past and the present, is established and re-established. To this end, one can become the enunciating subject only in that

process of enunciation. Enunciating is becoming. However, here lies a paradox. In order to discount the historicity of language and meaning and identify, in the act of speaking, a space of authentic subject voice, Norinaga nonetheless articulates an idea of the speaking subject who sees language historically.⁶⁴ The ancient ‘Japanese’ language, as Norinaga presumes, was once a pure manifestation of the condition of human existence that the heavenly deities had created. Yet along the temporal passing, it was contaminated by *karagokoro*. The very purpose of subjective enunciation, the purpose of speaking the ancient ‘Japanese’ language, is, indeed, to retrieve that which has been lost in the past and to relocate it in the present, in the moment of enunciation. To define the purpose of enunciation as such requires temporal punctuations, or else, sequentialisation of events along a linear temporality. Hence a consciousness of temporal asymmetry. To this end, in Norinaga’s enunciation, the speaking subject is also in a position to produce history.

Seeing the Unity and Order of the Universe

⁶⁴ As I suggest here, this paradox is transubstantiated into an inevitable chasm between his abstraction and his actual philological method that sought to reconstruct the original meanings of ancient texts. Further still, this conviction in the authenticity of ancient texts, derived from the a priori postulate of the texts as the loci of authentic Japanese voice, mars the persuasive power of his philological analyses. As Sey Nishimura writes, “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 Sey Nishimura, “The Way of the Gods: Motoori Norinaga’s Naobi no Mitama,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 46:1, 1991: 21 [21-41].

In his 1778 letter to Taga Bokukei, a doctor in Bungo province in Kyūshū, Miura Baien specifies the purpose of writing *Gengo* (玄語: Deep Words, 1775) as follows.⁶⁵

夫人は天地を宅とし居るものに候へば天地は学者の最先講すべき事に御座候尤天文地理天行の進歩は西学入して段段精密にいたり候へ共それはそれ切にして天地の条理にいたりては今に徹底と存する人も不承候かく廣き世の中にかく悠久の年月をかさねかく敷限なき人の思慮を費して日夜に示して隠すことなき天地を何故に看得る人のなきとなれば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つ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

(As a man whose home is in this universe, this universe is the first thing that scholars should discuss. Although the progress of astronomy, geography, and celestial navigation has been made and become more and more precise, especially since the introduction of Western studies, no one has yet thoroughly understood the principle of the universe. If, in such a vast world, no one can aptly grasp the principle, which, in fact, has been revealing itself day and night through endless years of time and unlimited human thought, then, I must conclude that, from the time we were born without knowledge, we have formed a habit of simply accepting what we see and what we here. Such a habit is our own fault. We have yet to develop a suspicious mind to question what we see and what we hear.)⁶⁶

In this address, Baien is effectively suggesting the difference between, on the one hand, various laws and regularities that dictate individual things, which he clarifies in *Gengo* as *ri*, and, on the

⁶⁵ My engagement with Baien's work here is deliberately limited, as my concern is not necessarily to provide a detailed exposition of his rather intricate worldview and his theoretical perspective to engage with both the human and natural world but to specify the location and implication of Baien's work within a broader concern for the idea of *ri* and *kyūri*, and concern for semantic shifts within the semantic space of *ri* and *kyūri*. For more detailed accounts of Baien's corpus, see Saigusa Hiroto, *Miura Baien no tetsugaku* (Philosophy of Miura Baien), Tokyo: Daiichi shobō, 1941; Saigusa Hiroto, *Baien tetsugaku nyūmon* (Introduction to Baien's Philosophy), Tokyo: Daiichi shobō, 1943; Umemoto Katsumi, *Keijijōgaku no hihan to ninshikiron* (Critique of Metaphysics and Epistemology), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1969; Rosemary Mercer, "Picturing the Universe: Adventures with Miura Baien at the Borderland of Philosophy and Science," *Philosophy East and West*, 48: 3, 1998: 478-502; Takahashi Masakazu, *Miura Baien no shisō* (Thought of Miura Baien), Tokyo: Perikansha, 2006.

⁶⁶ Miura Baien, "Taga Bokukei ni Kotauru" (答多賀墨卿: Answering Taga Bokukei), in *Miura Baien zenshū, Vol.2* (Complete Works of Miura Baien), Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1914 [1778]: 83 [83-85]. Here, I translate '天地' (literary means heaven and earth) as 'universe', as Baien describes in *Gengo* "天地則一宇宙" (Heaven and earth is one universe). See Miura Baien, *Gengo* (玄語: Deep Words), in *Miura Baien zenshū, Vol.1* (Complete Works of Miura Baien), Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1914 [1775]: 3 [2-279].

other hand, the fundamental principle that structures those individual things in such a way as a whole that there exist various laws and regularities of the universe and that dictates the phenomenal world of both human and nature, which he defines as *jōri* (条理). In clarifying the distinction between *ri* and *jōri*, Baien writes,

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ぼざる迄も理はしき候て氣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氣の運ぶに成り候へば氣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候人身の脈といへるも即此理にして他物にはあらず理を以て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 heaven.’ ‘*Jō*’ originally meant a branch of a tree, and ‘*ri*’ referred to the grain of the wood. Take the example of a tree. A tree trunk has roots below and branches above. The roots gradually divide into more roots, and the branches into more branches. If you look closely at the points where they divide, you will find lines of the grain of the wood. What is the purpose of these lines? They are there for the *ki* that is conveyed along them, and the grain determines the pattern in which the *ki* is conveyed. [...] To see this, pick a green leaf and look at its veins. The larger *ri* divide into finer *ri*, and the *ri* continue thus until they are so fine they are no longer visible. The *ki* that is conveyed along these *ri* forms the different shapes of the leaves. These *ri* form the shapes of all things by conveying *ki*: from heaven and earth, seas and mountains, to all kinds of birds, fish, turtles, worms and fungi. There can be no *ri* that does not convey *ki*. Although the ‘*ri*’ of ‘*jōri*’ bears some relation to that word as it was used by the ancients, our usage here is as different from theirs as the living is from the dead. The arteries and veins of the human body are these *ri* and nothing else. Insofar as *ri* are found in things with shape, it is these *ri* which determine whether they be beautiful or ugly, long or short.)⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Miura Baien, “Taga Bokukei ni Kotauru,” 89-90. The translation is borrowed, with a slight modification, from Rosemary Mercer’s work. See 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.

Recall here the Neo-Confucian understanding of *ri* as the absolute transcendence, the one and only principle, which defies any spatial and temporal constraints, and according to which specifically human concerns for being and becoming would be addressed. Baien is obviously inflecting from such understanding here. He perceives *ri*, just as many *Rangaku* scholars do, as something heterogeneous (“大理小理”), manifesting its heterogeneity in various shapes of things.

At this juncture, however, Baien also inflects from the *Rangaku* tradition. He admits that Western knowledge has effectively expanded one’s understanding of heterogenous *ri* in astronomy, geography, and celestial navigations. And yet, he is not satisfied that those investigations into heterogenous *ri* do not necessarily offer a plausible explanation of why *ri* manifested themselves in specific ways.

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 the eyes that do not hear? What are the ears that do not see? One must explain the unexplained. I shall explain the unexplainable.)⁶⁸

Just as Jinsai, Sorai, and Norinaga take their intellectual dissatisfaction with the hitherto received knowledge as the point of departure for their intellectual endeavours, Baien begins his exploration with his discontent towards the state of knowledge. However, unlike Jinsai, Sorai, and Norinaga, who respectively articulate a specific realm of investigations by forging a semantic inversion to

⁶⁸ Miura Baien, *Gengo*, 7.

the Neo-Confucian idea of *ri*, Baien seeks to establish a unifying view of the universe that is structured and ordered in a specific way that appears to humans. For Baien, what structures the universe is not this heterogenous *ri*, but *jōri*, which he describes as “条理則天地之準也” (*Jōri* is the law of the universe).⁶⁹ By distancing himself from the idea of *ri* as the ancients would define it (“古人の説ける理”). By criticising the ancient idea of *ri* equated to *yin* and *yang*, Baien establishes the scope of his intellectual exploration, hence the scope of his theoretical rendering of the universe, with the term ‘*hankan gōitsu*’ (反觀合一: seeing unity in opposites).

条理者一一也。分而反焉。合而一焉。是以反觀合一。

(*Jōri* is composed of a pair. When separated, they appear oppositional. But when unified, it is one. This is to see unity in opposites.)⁷⁰

Though cryptic it may sound, what Baien is arguing for in this enunciation is rather straightforward. He is asserting the idea of *jōri* both as objective reality or a real structure of the universe and as a logical principle or a method of perceiving that reality (see Figure 6-1). For Baien, the universe is

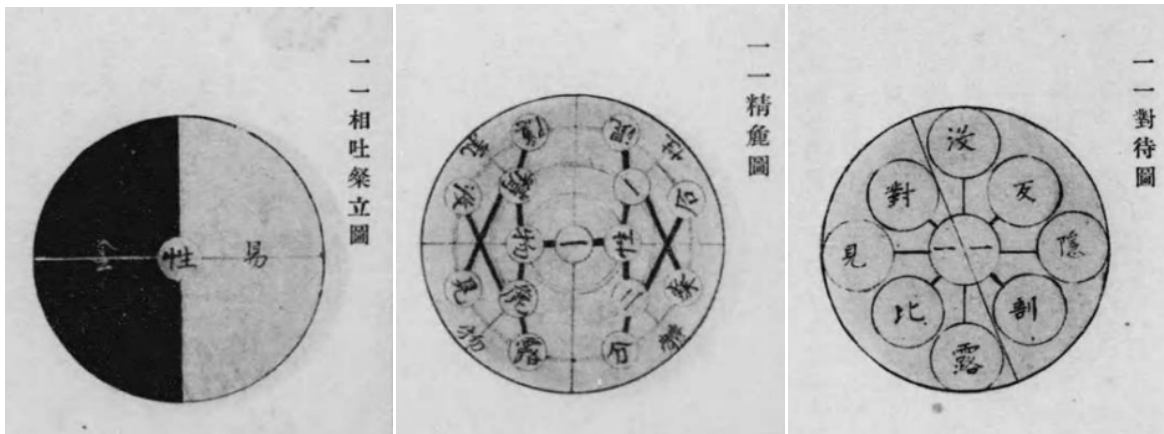


Figure 6-1. Unified and Dispersed, *Gengo* (1775) by Miura Baien

⁶⁹ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 7.

rational to the extent that immediate, concrete individual things (various *ri*) that make up the universe, which appear to be contradictory to one another, are, in fact, following an intricate pattern that seems to be *a priori* determined by the ultimate principle of all things, *jōri*. His concept of ‘*hankan gōitsu*’, on the one hand, emblematically represents a worldview, a perspective for the knower that is all at once unified and contradictory. Such worldview constitutes an alternative, for instance, to the Neo-Confucian worldview, in which nothing is contradictory, and everything must conform to the absolute, transcendental principle. On the other hand, the concept of ‘*hankan gōitsu*’ also represents an idea of knowledge that is simultaneously dispersed (inductive studies of *ri* in its heterogeneous nature, studies of the phenomenal world) and unified (deductive studies of *jōri* that structures the universe as a whole, studies of the noumenal world).

At this juncture, Baien clearly departs from the Neo-Confucian mode of pursuing knowledge, *kyūri*, which is centred ultimately around the attainment of ideal knowledge, or else, the will of the sages, for moral and ethical conclusions. At the same time, he also departs from the *Rangaku* tradition, which designates *kyūri* as the pursuit of principles, *ri*, that dictate the natural world. Baien’s enunciation of ‘*hankan gōitsu*’ has double metaphysical functions. First, as a worldview, ‘*hankan gōitsu*’ reiterates an understanding of the positionality of humans as part and parcel of the universe, as one inhabiting the universe dictated by *jōri*. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge cannot be separated into, on the one hand, the pursuit of facts about the natural world and, on the other hand, the pursuit of moral and ethical conclusions. Second, as a perspective that grounds the pursuit of knowledge, ‘*hankan gōitsu*’ articulates a specific methodological predilection. While humans inhabit the world dictated by *jōri*, they simultaneously view the universe and its manifold principles (*ri*) as manifestations of *jōri*. To this end, the universe and its principles become the object of knowledge. Thus, to attain knowledge is, in its practice, dispersed pursuits of various *ri*,

which are unrelated to moral and ethical concerns for being and becoming and represent discrete realities of the universe. Of course, as I have discussed elsewhere, Neo-Confucians also argue for the importance of ‘investigating things’ (格物) and ‘perfecting knowledge’ (致知). The difference, however, must be reiterated here. The Neo-Confucian category of things is intimately connected to moral and ethical conclusions through the absolute transcendental, Heavenly principle. To this end, *kyūri* is ultimately the path to attaining the ideal knowledge for self-cultivation. In contrast, Baien’s predilection towards understanding the manifold principle of the universe disavows this innate linkage between objects that constitute the universe and moral and ethical conclusions. The investigation of things and the perfection of knowledge do not amount to self-cultivation. In this sense, Baien’s intellectual exercise is incompatible with the hitherto received mode of learning, *kyūri*: Baien effectively suspends, through his intellectual exercise, the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri*.

While this suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* is a common trope we see also in the works of Jinsai, Sorai, and Norinaga, Baien’s proclamation that ‘条理則天地之準也’ (*Jōri* is the law of the universe) marks a stark difference also from the general attitude towards the transcendence we find in the works of his contemporaries. Recall, here, Jinsai’s view that the transcendental is essentially agnostic. Or Sorai’s declaration that *ri* is not the fixed standard (‘故理者無定準者也’). Or Norinaga’s claim for the transcendental immanent in the imperial land. In contrast to these enunciations, Baien, through his postulate of *jōri*, transubstantiates the transcendental, the ineffable, or the silent into an assumption of that which cuts across both the boundaries between the natural and human world and the boundaries of space and time. In Baien’s

enunciation, we see a clear presumption of the existence of something universal that regulates both the natural and human world across time and space.

Given this presumption specifically and his general interest in Western knowledge more generally, the temptation here is, perhaps, to argue for the similitude between Baien's idea of *jōri* and, for instance, Nishi Amane's notion of 'tōitsu-no-kan' (統一の觀: the principle of unity) that structures and unifies Western knowledge.⁷¹ The temptation is also to read Baien's idea of *jōri* as a dialectical method to understand essential qualities of things as being determined by the synthesis of opposites and, therefore, to see it as being analogous to Hegelian dialectic.⁷² However, analogies would only take us so far as to see some aspects of Baien's discursive address as, indeed, analogous to some aspects of Western knowledge. It is impetuous to suggest that, in Baien's thought, the 'Eastern' mode of thinking and reasoning moves increasingly towards the 'Western' mode of thinking and reasoning. Clearly, as his various illustrations in *Gengo* indicate, Baien's idea of *jōri* remains within the frame of *yin* and *yang* by treating *yin-yang* not as *ri* as the ancient did but as *jōri* that *a priori* regulates *ri*. His latent aim here is to recuperate and reconstitute the very frame of *yin-yang* by thoroughly following the methodological doctrine of “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) defined in *Xi Ci I* (繫辭上: The Great Treaties I).⁷³ Thus, it is not at all surprising that *Gengo* offers little reflection on the potential inadequacy of the frame of *yin* and *yang* itself – a reflection on whether this frame is indeed viable and universally applicable. To this end, Baien's reconfiguration of worldview and, by extension, his

⁷¹ See my discussion in Chapter 4, pp. 237-238. Baien's interest in Western knowledge was expressed, for example, in his conversation with a Dutch translator described in *Kizan-roku*. See my discussion in Chapter 5, p. 313.

⁷² Saigusa, *Miura Baien no tetsugaku*, 189; Umemoto, *Keijijōgaku no hihan to ninshikiron*, 98.

⁷³ For the *Great Treatise*, see <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/zh?en=on> (07.08.2022).

idea of knowledge grounded on the postulate of *jōri* remain within the remit of Chinese cosmological reasoning. So understood, the significance of Baien's work lies in the fact that it expands the scope of *kyūri* by retrieving it from the Neo-Confucian fold and relocating it within the much broader Chinese cosmological thought.

Empirical Methods and Verifiability of Facts

In the general field of intellectual history today, *Koihō*, a strand of *Kanpō* (漢方: Chinese medicine), is perhaps one of the under-discussed fields. Studies of the development and intellectual implications of *Koihō* often tend to veer between two poles. On the one hand, there are those who discuss this medical field within the narrow confines of the history of Chinese medicine that emerged during the Edo period as a reaction to the then-prevalent medical tradition of *Goseihō* (後世方: literary means a 'school of later age'), which was profoundly influenced by Zhu Xi's thought.⁷⁴ On the other hand, there are those who treat *Koihō* as an example to assess the – purportedly – far-reaching influence of *Kogaku* and its predilection towards ancient texts. Here,

⁷⁴ 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" (Classics of the Chinese Medicine and Their Acceptance and Succession in Japan), *Nihon tōyō igaku zasshi* (Japanese Journal of Oriental Medicine), 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" (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* (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.

Koihō is perceived as ‘*koō*’ (呼应: correspondence), ‘*heikō*’ (並行: parallel), or ‘*mohō*’ (模倣: imitation) of *Kogaku*.⁷⁵

However, for my concern for the semantic shift of *kyūri*, this medical field constitutes an important locus to consider how heterogenisation of *ri* foregrounded the development of new methodological orientations and, by extension, the segmentation, or else specialisation, of knowledge. Of course, to suggest so is not tantamount to claim that *Koihō* had moved itself entirely away from the Confucian fold. Just as *Kogaku* was an intellectual effort to recuperate the teachings of the ancient Confucian canon, *Koihō* was a field of intellectual exercises and medical practices to recover the simplicity of early Chinese medicine, especially of Zhang Zhongjing’s (150-219), from the corrupt of ‘modernist’ practices of *Goseihō*. To reiterate Masayoshi Sugimoto and David Swain’s observation here,

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).⁷⁶

⁷⁵ See respectively, Kosoto Hiroshi, *Kanpō no rekishi* (History of Chinese Medicine), Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1999; Ogawa Teizō, *Igaku no rekishi* (History of Medicine), Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1984; Kosoto, *Kanpō no rekishi*. 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.

⁷⁶ Masayoshi et al., Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*, 280-281.

To this end, *Koihō* was an attempt to overcome the purported problems of Neo-Confucianism in the field of medicine by returning to the original texts rather than by simply reproducing interpretations and refractions of the original. And yet, as it will become clearer as my argument develops, in its unfolding and in its attempt to return to ancient texts, *Koihō* also developed a new predilection towards knowledge and learning that inflect from the ancient Chinese medical theories and practices and paved the way for pursuing knowledge based on verifiable facts attained empirical methods.

The unfolding of *Koihō* begins with the rather familiar schema of oppositionality that we have already seen in the works of *Kogaku* scholars: transcendence and immanence, the unobservable and the observable, the abstract and the concrete. Take, for instance, the works of Nagoya Geni (1628-1696), the pioneer of the *Koihō* school. By advocating Yu Chang's (1585-1664) claim in his *Shuang han lun* (傷寒論: Treatise on Cold Damage, 1648) to return to the classics of Zhang Zhongjing, Geni castigates his contemporaries of *Goseihō*, who, from Geni's perspective, are problematically indulging themselves in theoretical and abstract matters and paying little attention actually to treat diseases. At the same time, however, the available medical practices in Japan developed independently of the Neo-Confucian cosmology are as much problematic for Geni as *Goseihō*, for those practices lack any philosophical or theoretical ground for treatment. In *Tansuishi* (丹水子: Memoir, 1688), Geni offers a brief historical account of medical practices in Japan, which began with a very limited scope of hands-on treatment, followed by the effort of, for instance, Manase Dōzan (1507-1594) and Manase Gensaku (1549-1632) to compile practical guidelines for medical treatment.⁷⁷ Then, Geni acknowledges the achievement of Manase Genyū

⁷⁷ Nagoya Geni, *Tansuishi*, 1688. A 2-volume digitised version is accessible online. For Volume 1 of the text, see <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/en/koisho/f-ta-27-1> (04.08.2022) and for Volume 2 of the text <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/en/koisho/f-ta-27-2> (04.08.2022). The title *Tansuishi* is also the pseudonym of Geni.

(-1644) that, with him, medical practitioners finally began to read some classics of Chinese medicine, such as *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). However, Geni is not satisfied with such developments, complaining in *Sangen hōkō* (纂言方考: Compendium of Dictionaries, 1679) that,

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、医道隠晦せることを

(In recent years, the medical school of Mananse Dōzan emerged from private practices and independently reviewed many books on medicine. However, they did not study Confucian medicine, nor did they teach the basics, but they merely collected what they had learned 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.)⁷⁸

Of course, the classics that Geni seeks to engage with at most attention are somewhat devoid of any theoretical basis. And Geni's corpus is, to say the least, not as coherent and systematic as he purports to present.⁷⁹ But it is through this schema of oppositions - transcendence and immanence, the unobservable and the observable, the abstract and the concrete – that Geni, and for that matter, other scholars of *Koihō*, “mythologized the past to create a new and more empirical approach.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Nagoya Geni, *Sangen hōkō*, 1679. Kitayama Juan compiled in 1732 *Sangen hōkō* and published with his own commentary under the title *Sangen hōkō hyōgi* (纂言方考評議: On the Compendium of Dictionaries). See <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00019942> (04.08.2022). My reference hereafter to Geni's *Sangen hōkō* is based on Kitayama's 1732 edition.

⁷⁹ Endō and Nakamura aptly point out certain inconsistencies in Geni's text. See Endō Jirō and Nakamura Teruko, “Nagoya Geni no igaku taikei: Gosei-ha kara kohō-ha eno tenkai,” 15-17.

⁸⁰ Sugimoto et al., *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*, 281.

In the introduction to *Honzō sangen* (本草纂言: On Materia Medica, 1682), Geni specifies five nuclei of medical practices to establish a ‘systematic’ approach to medical practice.

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、則ち信ぜざるの人莫く、癩えざるの理莫し。[...] 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日る。

(What are the requirements for medical practices? Know the way to cure. Be familiar with theories of diseases. Understand the best medical approach for each condition. Clarify the properties of medicine. And be consistent in your practice. When you satisfy these five requirements to treat people, everyone will believe in you, and there is nothing that cannot be cured. [...] Therefore, to know how 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 examine theories of the disease, I have consulted medical treatises and some commentaries and have written *Inquiries on Medical Methods*. To gain an understanding of the principles of medical practices, I have compiled *the Compendium of Dictionaries*. To clarify the properties of medicine, I have also compiled several volumes, which I now present as *On Materia Medica*.)⁸¹

What Geni proposes here is a systematic approach to medical practice – systematic in the sense that medical practice ought to encompass not only actual treatments of diseases but also a

⁸¹ Nagoya Geni, *Honzō sangen*, 1682. The original text is archived at *Kyōu shoan* (杏雨書庵) of the Takeda Science Foundation. Geni’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, 1684) and *Inyō ōshō dairon chūcho* (陰陽応象大論註疏: Notes of the Yin-Yang Correspondences, 1681). A 3-volume digitised version of *Nagyō chūcho* is accessible at: <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00004590> (04.08.2022). *Inyō ōshō dairon chūcho* is archived at Kyushu University Library, Ref. No.: DIG-KYUS-15-1. Geni’s *Ihō monyo* (医方問余: Inquiries on Medical Methods, 1679) is available in 5 volumes at: <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00001167> (04.08.2022).

theoretical and empirical foundation (“病論に精しく” and “薬性を明らかにして”) that guarantees the efficacy of treatments.

This specification of five nuclei of medical practices has a twofold function. First and most obviously, Geni understands that knowledge, medical knowledge more precisely, ought to be systematised and structured with an overall medical philosophy, medical theories, pathological knowledges, and practical methods of treatment catered for each and every disease. Just as Baien envisages knowledge as being simultaneously unified and dispersed, Geni also sees, as I read it, that medical knowledge must be a coherent whole composed of various sub-fields, or in terms familiar to us, sub-disciplines. Second, this understanding of knowledge prefigures what learning ought to be. Learning must be holistic. And yet the entirety of knowledge cannot be achieved all at once but only through a culminative process. According to Geni, this culminative process should begin with the reading of the ancient Confucian medical canon (medical philosophy), followed by the learning of various medical theories, developing pathological knowledges, acquiring a proper understanding of medicine through *Honzōgaku* (本草学: studies of the pharmacological properties of plants, minerals, and animals), and then, lastly, the study of practical methods of treatments.⁸² In essence, as Geni proposes, knowledge must be total, encompassing realms of the theoretical, the empirical, and the practical, and learning must be a culminative process that follows an established order of what to learn so as to connect the theoretical, the empirical, and the practical as a whole.

Such an idea of knowledge and learning effectively opened up a new intellectual space to explore the workings of the natural world, including the human body, causes of diseases, and

⁸² Geni specifies this step-by-step process of learning in *Tansui kakun* (丹水家訓: Rules of My Medical Practices) written in 1693. A digitised version of the text is available at: <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/file/1211856.html> (05.08.2022).

pharmacological properties of things that could be used for treatment. To be sure, this intellectual space is enabled by the overall intellectual predilection towards the heterogenisation of *ri*. But how scholars of *Koihō* understand *ri* is fundamentally different from the ways in which Neo-Confucians, scholars of *Kogaku*, and scholars of *Kokugaku* define it, to the extent that *ri* for *Koihō* had little to do with the concerns for being and becoming. Put otherwise, this intellectual space forged by Geni's idea of knowledge and learning represents a new possibility to engage with the natural world, clearly delineated from moral and ethical concerns, not necessarily outside the remit of Confucianism, that is to say, the realm occupied by *Rangaku* or Western medicine, but crucially within the Confucian tradition.

To understand *ri* of the natural world, the subsequent unfolding of *Koihō* comes to revolve largely around methodological questions of how to intervene in the natural world and to seek a kind of knowledge devoid of moral and ethical meanings. Especially interesting for my concern here, that is, concern for the semantic shift of *kyūri*, is the methodological attitude that emerged through Yamawaki Tōyō's (1705-1762) anatomical comparison between 'Eastern' medicine and 'Western' medicine and Yoshimasu Tōdō's (1702-1773) pathological perspective for diagnosis and treatment.⁸³

Being increasingly sceptical towards the hitherto received anatomical theory of five internal organs and six bowels (*gozō roppu*: 五臟六腑) based on *yin-yang* and five elements, Yamawaki

⁸³ 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 a prominent scholar of *Koihō*. See Ōtsuka Keisetsu and Yakazu Dōmei (eds.), *Kinsei kanpō igakusho shūsei, Vol.13: Gotō Konzan, Yamawaki Tōyō* (Collection of Early Modern Medical Texts: Gotō Konzan, Yamawaki Tōyō), Osaka: Meicho shuppan, 1979. Yoshimasu Tōdō independently learnt Geni's and Konzan's medical theories and sought to establish the guideline for medical treatment based on *the Treaties of Cold Damage*. After spending much of his life without professional success and in poverty, Tōdō acquainted with Tōyō and established himself as a prominent medical scholar and practitioner. See Terasawa, *Yoshimasu Tōdō no kenkyū*, 2012.

Tōyō carried out, in 1754, the first-ever official autopsy of a corpse.⁸⁴ His impulse was not necessarily to negate the Chinese medical tradition itself. Tōyō was motivated, first, to compare, on the basis of anatomical observation, the *gozō roppu* theory to a description of the human body with nine organs (*kyūzō*: 九藏), which he found in ancient Chinese medical texts.⁸⁵ And second, he was also motivated to compare, again, on the basis of anatomical observation, the accuracy of those ancient Chinese texts to Johannes Vesling's (1514-1564) illustrated textbook, *Syntagma Anatomicum* (1666), based on Vesling's own anatomical dissection (see Figure 6-2).⁸⁶ The result of Tōyō's autopsy was compiled into *Zōshi* (藏志: Record of the Viscera, 1759) with mimetic descriptions of a corpse rather than with the hitherto familiar schematic diagrams of the body's contents, offering an anatomical understanding of the human body based on observation rather than on theoretical postulates of *yin-yang* and five elements.⁸⁷

What becomes increasingly apparent in Tōyō's observation is a chasm between theories and facts. Theories and claims made in the Chinese medical texts that conformed to the Neo-Confucian cosmology, such as Zhang Jeibin's (1563-1640) *Lei jing* (類經: Classics in Categories), do not seem to correspond to the observable facts of the human body that Tōyō has accumulated during the autopsy. This chasm, in turn, constitutes a problem of semantics. The available medical

⁸⁴ Upon conducting an autopsy, Tōyō sought to obtain official permission from *Kyōto shoshidai* (京都所司代: the administrative office of the Tokugawa shogunate in Kyoto), which was granted in 1754.

⁸⁵ Maki Fukuoka, *The Premise of Fidelity: Science, Visuality, and Representing the Real in Tokugawa Japan*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012: 34-42.

⁸⁶ *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 Humanni* (1572), Ambroise Paré's (1510-1590) *Opera Ambrosii Parei Regis Rrimarii Et Parisiensis Chirurgi* (1582), Caspar Bartholin's (1585-1629) *Anatomicae Institutiones Corporis Humanni* (1611), Steven Blankaart's (1650-1704) *De Nieuw Hervormde Anatomia* (1678), and Vesling's *Syntagma Anatomicum*.

⁸⁷ Yamawaki Tōyō, *Zōshi* (藏志: Record of the Viscera), 1759. A digitised version of the text is available online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ya09/ya09_00053/index.html (05.08.2022).

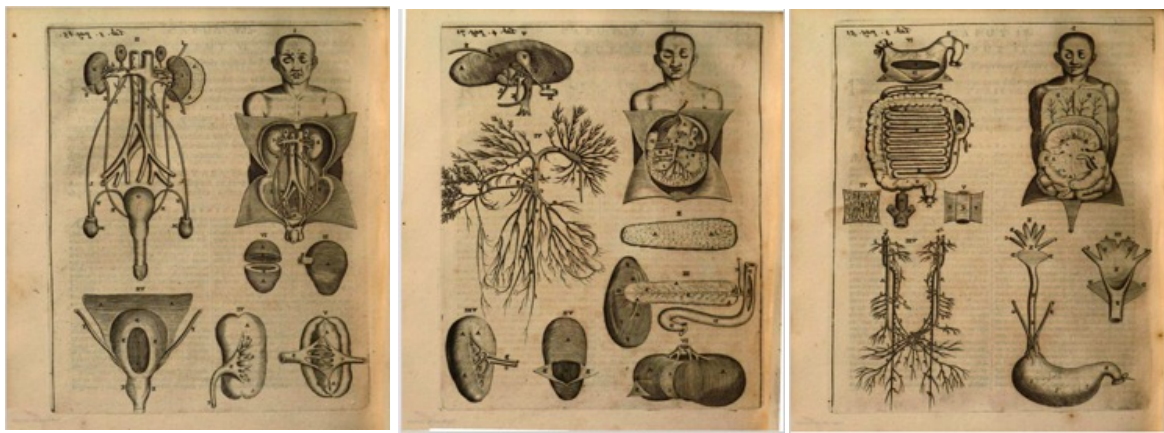


Figure 6-2. Human Anatomy, *Syntagma Anatomicum* by Johannes Vesling

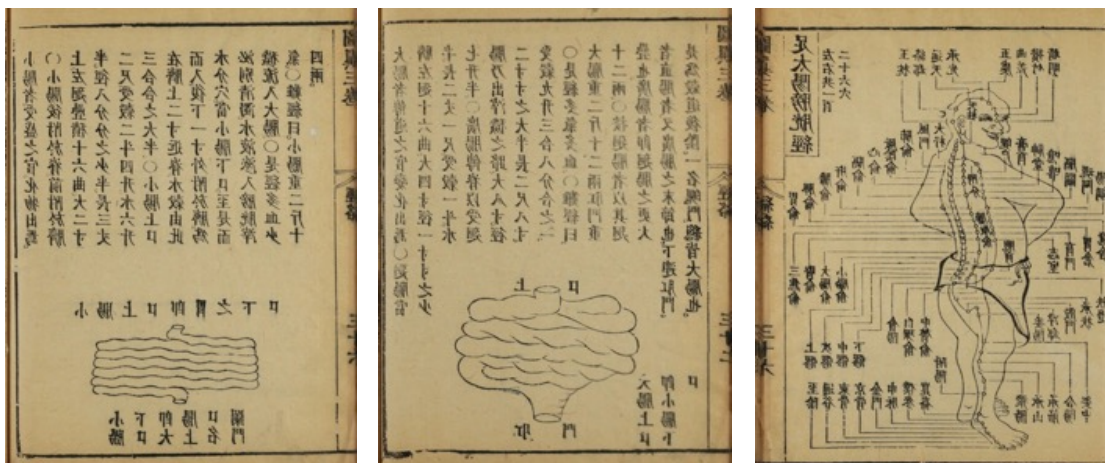


Figure 6-3. Two Intestines, *Leijing* by Zhang Jiebin

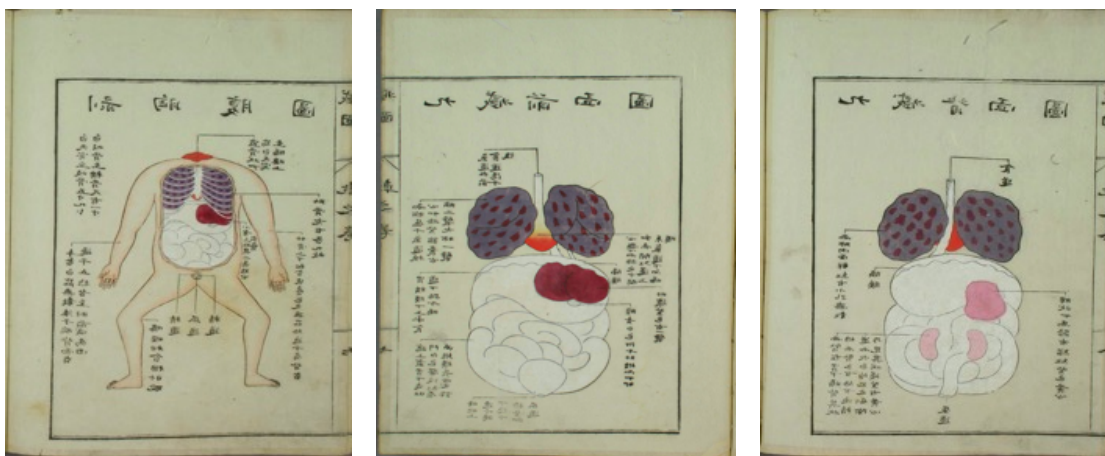


Figure 6-4. Intestine, *Zōshi* by Yamawaki Tōyō

vocabularies established by the Chinese medical texts do not have the semantic scope to describe the result of factual observation. For instance, while, in Zhang Jeibin’s text, the human body is said to contain two distinctive intestines, that is ‘small intestine’ (*shōchō*: 小腸) and ‘large intestine’ (*daichō*: 大腸), Tōyō sees in his observation a single ‘intestine’ (*chō*: 腸) (see Figure 6-3 and Figure 6-4). However, this chasm between Chinese medical theories and observation and the semantic limitation of the available theories are not evidence of Chinese medicine’s conceptual errors that distinguish two intestines. Nor do the chasm and the semantic limitation represent an observational error on Tōyō’s part. The chasm and the semantic limitation emerge at the level of perception and categorisation, that is to say, how to perceive and distinguish the anatomical structure of the body. Chinese medicine distinguishes these two intestines on the basis of their location: ‘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).⁸⁸ In contrast, as Tōyō observes, from the perspective of anatomical structure, these intestines are, in fact, connected, one single organ, which is in the coiled form and, therefore, difficult to distinguish the ‘large’ part from the ‘small’ part based on their purported location in the ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ part of the abdomen.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ 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” (Reconsidering ‘Large Intestine’ and ‘Small Intestine’ in Chinese Medicine), *Nihon igaku-shi zasshi*, 39:2, 1993: 158 [157-168].

⁸⁹ In a similar vein, Kawaguchi Shinnin (1736-1811), a prominent Dutch translator and *Rangaku* scholar, later admitted that, given the foiled forms 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. A digitised version of the text is available at: <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00001479> (05.08.2022)

Notably, the chasm between theory and observation and the semantic limitation of available medical vocabularies subsequently led to the further development of two distinct yet intimately intertwined intellectual orientations. One is the effort to assign new anatomical meanings to each and every organ that one observes through autopsy, hence the reconfiguration of semantics by re-establishing analytical and conceptual categories based not on theoretical speculations but factual observations. And the other is the development of practical methods to dislodge medical theories of *yin-yang* and five elements from their privileged place and to recentre the intellectual focus, not around the theoretical, but around the methodological.

The effort to assign new anatomical meanings, that is to say, the reconfiguration of semantics, took place in an intellectual space between Chinese medicine and Western medicine, or more precisely put, in a liminal semantic space between the Chinese medical vernaculars, the Japanese medical vocabularies, and the Western, especially Dutch, medical lexicons. An illustrative example can be found in the works of Suzuki Sōun, a medical practitioner from Suō (周防) province in Kyūshū. Decades after Tōyō's autopsy and the publication of *Zōshi*, Sōun sought to compile and publish Motoki Ryōi's (1628-1697) older manuscript, *Oranda keiraku kinmyaku zōfu zukai* (阿蘭陀經絡筋脈臟腑図解: Dutch Illustration of Human Anatomy), a translated version of Johannes Remmelin's *Pinax Microcosmographicus* (1615).⁹⁰ While preparing for the publication of Ryōi's manuscript, Sōun compared it to Tōyō's *Zōshi*, which, however, led him instead to a state of confusion. His puzzlement derives from the fact that there are apparent observational differences between these texts (see Figure 6-5). Especially problematic for Sōun is the fact that Ryōi's distinction – hence, Remmelin's distinction – between 'large intestine' and 'small intestine'

⁹⁰ Ryōi's manuscript was prepared around 1680 and published by Sōun under the title of *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. For a digitised version, see: <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00013566> (05.08.2022).

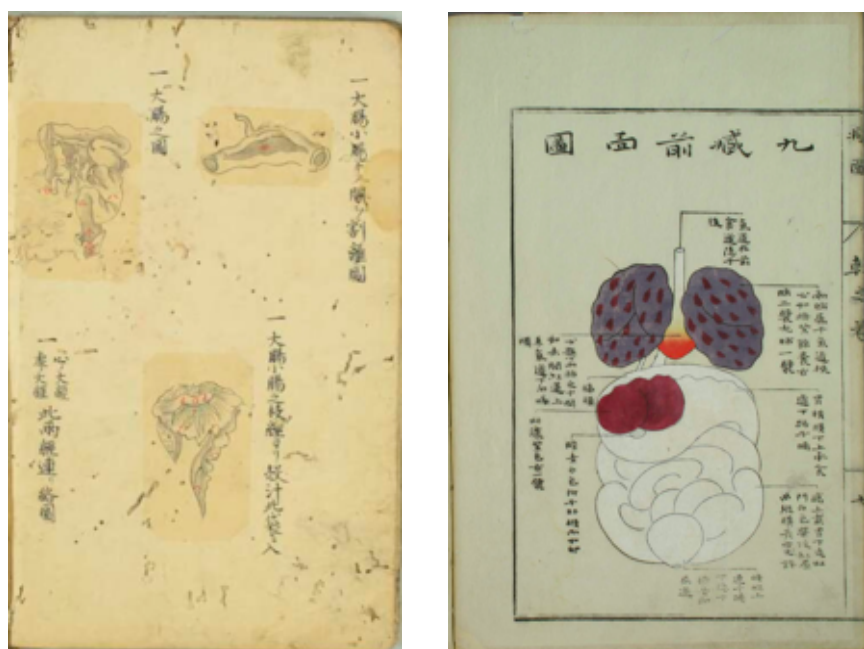


Figure 6-5, Motoki Ryōi's *Oranda zenku naigai bungō-zu* (left) and Yamawaki Tōyō's *Zōshi* (right)

did not correspond to Tōyō's observation that describes these intestines as one organ, which seems to have resulted in a certain semantic disparity between R Emmelin's explanation of the outcome of his observation— more precisely, Ryōi's translation of R Emmelin's text – and Tōyō's description of his observation.⁹¹ This semantic disparity, as Sōun ponders, seems to have derived from Ryōi's translation of 'large intestine' and 'small intestine', which reiterates the discredited Chinese medical vocabularies of *daichō* (大腸) and *shōchō* (小腸), and which Sōun finds rather incommensurable to R Emmelin's original description.

⁹¹ Kera Yoshinori and Sakai Shizu point to the incompleteness of Ryōi's translation by diligently listing all the Dutch terms that do not appear in the translated version. As they argue, one of the primary reasons for the incompleteness is derived from the fact that some medical categories, such as 'zenuw' (nerves), were differently categorised in the Chinese medical tradition and that Ryōi translated Dutch (Western) medical categories with available Chinese medical terms. See Kera Yoshinori and Sakai Shizu, "Oranda keiraku kinmyaku zōfu zukai' no hanyakusho to shite no hukanzensa: Yakushutsu sarenakatta go no siten kara" (Imperfections in "Oranda Keiraku Kinmyaku Zoufu Zukai" as a translation : From the Perspective of "Untranslated Terms"), *Nihon ishigaku zasshi*, 58:1, 2012: 3-14. The Japanese translation of 'zenuw' as 'shinkei' (神経: nerves) appears in *Kaitai shinsho*. See Takahashi Akira, "Zeniu' kara 'shinkei' e: Edo-jidai nihon shinkeigaku no akebono" (The Translation from Dutch 'Zenuw' into Japanese 'Shinkei': The Dawn of Japanese Neurology in the Edo Era), *Shinkei naika*, 46:3, 1997: 313-320.

Recognising these discrepancies, Sōun, in the hope of clarifying the matter, raises the issue to Yoshio Kōgyū (1724-1800), a Dutch translator and practitioner of *Ranpō* (蘭方: Dutch / Western medicine). Sōun summarises their exchange in his introduction to Ryōi's *Oranda zenku naigai bungō-zu* (和蘭全軀内外分合図: Dutch Flap-book of the Interior and Exterior of the Body, 1772) that he has prepared for publication.

問曰藏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 Tōyō's *Zōshi*, there is no distinction between the large and small intestines. But the difference was clearly stated in the ancient texts. Where does this descriptive difference come from? Mr Yoshio has told me that the so-called small intestine is called in the language of the foreigners '*dunne darm*,' translated as the place of softer bowel movements, like fermented rice. The so-called large intestine is called '*dikke darm*,' translated as the place of firmer bowel movements, like rice balls. These terms [*dunne darm* and *dikke darm*] do not mean 'large' and 'small': it is one organ that fulfils two distinctive functions.)⁹²

As I read it, Sōun's attempt to overcome the apparent chasm between Tōyō's observation and Ryōi's translation through semantic reconfiguration is not an instance of discrediting the former as being inaccurate. Nor is it an instance of refining *Koihō* specifically and the Chinese medical tradition by treating the Western medical tradition as a frame of reference. What this episode illustrates is something much more nuanced. Tōyō's curiosity that is notated by *Koihō*'s predilection towards systematic and total knowledge, encompassing the theoretical, the empirical, and the practical generally, and his observation of the human body more specifically, has effectively articulated a liminal space between Chinese medicine and Western medicine to

⁹² Motoki Ryōi / Suzuki Sōun, *Oranda zenku naigai bungō-zu*.

scrutinise categorical and semantic differences between those two medical traditions. In this liminal space, Sōun rearticulates new semantics of 大腸 and 小腸 – indeed, the familiar signifiers that have long been used by Neo-Confucian medical scholars, scholars of *Koihō*, and *Rangaku* translators – by projecting a different rule of categorisation, that is to say, categorisation based on the function rather than the location of intestines. Therefore, in this liminal space, it becomes possible to treat different understandings of the body – various medical traditions and, by extension, different traditions of knowledge – not with the language of error or transgression but with a sense of continuum sustained by the predilection towards observation. To this end, I shall even go so far as to argue that while *Koihō* was essentially an intellectual exercise to re-establish the primacy of ancient Chinese medical practices, its unfolding had resulted in the blurring boundary between Chinese medicine and Western medicine.⁹³

The chasm between theory and observation that concerned Tōyō had also led to the further development of practical methods of treatments, which subsequently resulted in the dislodging of medical theories of *yin-yang* and five elements from their privileged place and relegated them to the outside of the primary concern of scholars and practitioners of Chinese medicine.

⁹³ 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, Tanabe, and Orita, “Nihon kaibōgaku-teki bijutsu no hensen” (Changes in Japanese Anatomical Art), *Teikyō tanki daigaku kiyō*, 22, 2021: 167-174.

The chasm between theory and observation that concerns Tōyō has also led to the further development of practical methods of treatments and the subsequent dislodging of medical theories of *yin-yang* and five elements from their privileged place. If the effort of categorical reconfiguration of the human body through semantic reconfiguration does not necessarily negate the overall medical philosophy that has long sustained Chinese medicine, the emphasis on practical methods constitutes a direct challenge to the Neo-Confucian cosmology that grounds *Goseihō* and, therefore, discredits the Neo-Confucian mode of learning revolved around the pursuit of absolute transcendental principle. In essence, through the development of practical methods, *ri* comes to be relegated to the margin or even outside of the primary concern for scholars and practitioners of *Koihō*.

Especially important for such methodological development and discrediting of Neo-Confucianism is the work of Yoshimasu Tōdō. He declares at the beginning of *Ruijuhō* (類聚方: Classified Assemblage of Prescriptions, 1764) that the nucleus of medicine is in the method of practice and that nothing else matters (“医の学は方のみ也”).⁹⁴ Such declaration is, indeed, a succinct critique of his contemporaries, whom Tōdō rather derogatively characterised as ‘*yin-yang* doctors’ (陰陽医), and whose predilection towards aetiological and pathological discussions based on *yin-yang* and five elements results, according to Tōdō, in ineffective treatments of diseases. As Tōdō explained in *Iji wakumon* (医事或問: Medical Talks, 1769),

病に名をつけ、病因を論ずるは、もと憶見ゆへに、十日もその薬方の効なき時は、心に疑ひおこりて、方をかゆるなり。扁鵲のごとき疾医は、病毒を見て、此毒は此薬にて治するといふ事を心に決定するゆへ、たとひ薬の

⁹⁴ Yoshimasu Tōdō, *Ruijuhō*, 1764. A digitised version is available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2536826> (06.08.2022).

効なきとて、病の治するまでは、薬方をかへざるなり。其内に自然と病毒の動時あり。動ときは大に瞑眩して病治するものなり。病治したるあとにて見れば、其薬方かはりて治せぬ事知るなり。

(Naming a disease and discussing its aetiology – it is all speculative. If a medication does not work for ten days, doubt emerges in the mind, and the remedy is abandoned. But Bian Que [a Chinese physician during the period of Warring States] sees the cause of disease and decides that the cause can be cured with a specific medicine. He will not change the remedy until the disease is cured, even if the medication seems ineffective. There are times when the disease naturally disappears. It is just a temporary aggravation of the illness before improvement. If you see it with the clarity of hindsight, you will know that if the method of treatment were to be changed, the disease could not have been cured.)⁹⁵

For Tōdō, aetiological and pathological discussions without observation have no factual grounding. ‘*Yin-yang* doctors,’ because of their speculative tendency, often change the method of treatment if there is no immediate improvement. But such an attitude, as Tōdō maintains, prevents doctors from adequately understanding the efficacy of medication and treatment and, therefore, hampers their effort to establish appropriate methods for treating diseases. Put otherwise, Tōdō seeks to argue here in this enunciation that the kernel of medicine is in its practice based on factual observations and that the method of medical practice can be established only by accumulating proper knowledge through practice rather than speculation.

But Tōdō also reminds us that there is no shortcut to acquiring proper methods of medical practice.

夫医之為道也、治疾而已、治疾在方、其方尽伝、其得与不得、在其人、
[...] 雖欲極之、不可極也、故医者終身之術也

(The only way of medicine is to cure diseases. The cure for diseases lies in the method. When the method is transmitted to the fullest extent, the question of

⁹⁵ 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].

whether one can attain it depends entirely on the person. Even if you want to master the method, you cannot do it. Medicine is a lifelong art.)⁹⁶

Not to mention each disease requires a specific treatment, its symptoms may manifest differently from one individual to another. Medical practitioners must be open to the inadequacy of their knowledge and, thus, be able to correct their methods of treatment according to observation. To this end, medicine, for Tōdō, is a lifelong pursuit – indeed, the pursuit of the Way to realise one’s potential for attaining proper medical knowledge. Thus, Tōdō specifies,

又問曰先生常に二三子を教るに医の学は方のみといへり然れば方の外に道はなきはづなり然るに道を得ると得さるとのみと聞ときは方の外に道ありやいかん答曰夫医者は病を治するものなり病を治するは方なり故に医の学は方のみといふしかれとも道を得さる人の方を創るは死物になりて動かす方は道によりて活動するものなり故に道を得ると得さるとのみといふ夫道は行の名なり

(As the teacher always teaches, the only Way of medicine is in the method, and there is no Way of medicine outside the method. But if there is a difference between obtaining the Way and not obtaining the Way, is there a way outside the method? The physician is to cure diseases, and what cures a disease is the method. This is why the only Way of medicine is in the method. If one does not obtain the Way of medicine, he only creates death; one who maintains life works according to the Way. That is the difference. The Way is practice.)⁹⁷

Here, we see a syllogism to justify his discursive address that privileges practice over speculation: the Way of medicine is in the method; the method is obtained through continuous practices; hence,

⁹⁶ Yoshimasu Tōdō, “送南元珠還北奥青森序,” in Kure Shūzō and Fujikawa Yū (eds.), *Tōdō Zenshū* (Complete Works of Tōdō), Tokyo: Tohōdō shoten, 1918: 536 [535-536].

⁹⁷ Yoshimasu Tōdō, *Iji wakumon*, 33.

the Way of medicine is in practice. Then, Tōdō goes so far as to assert that “the Way of medicine is not easy to attain. Do not argue with language. Know it only in silence.”⁹⁸

What is especially interesting about Tōdō’s emphasis on practice rather than speculation is that it discredits the Neo-Confucian presumption, which argues that everything, including diseases and treatments, must conform to the *a priori* presumed *ri*, that is, the absolute and transcendental principle that dictates all things. And therefore, Tōdō’s emphasis clearly expresses the futility of pursuing, at least in the field of medicine, the *a priori* presumed *ri* and of explaining and treating a disease based on the worldview composed of *yin-yang* and five elements.

夫理無定準疾有定証證豈可以無定準之理臨有定證之疾哉

(*Ri* is not fixed, but the cause of a disease has definite proof. How can we treat a disease with a specific proven cause by projecting *ri* that has no evidence?)⁹⁹

Like Sorai, Tōdō also argues that *ri* is not at all fixed. But unlike Sorai, who seeks to redefine *ri* as the reason for thinking and judgement, Tōdō here entirely suspends any consideration of *ri* and instead brings to the fore the idea of ‘*teishō*’ (定証: definite, sustained proof), rather than ‘*teijun*’ (定準: categorical standard), as the foundation for medical practice and the accumulation of knowledge through practice.

This discursive suspension of *ri* is particularly important, for it enables Tōdō to reconfigure medicine as a field organised around a set of verifiable facts – verifiable to the extent that those

⁹⁸ The original text reads, “夫医道難獲也。不可以言語而論。有默而知之爾。(夫れ、医の道は獲難きなり。言語を以って論ずべからず。黙して之を知るにあるのみ。)” Yoshimasu Tōdō, “復宗梅諄書,” in Kure Shūzō and Fujikawa Yū (eds.), *Tōdō Zenshū* (Complete Works of Tōdō), Tokyo: Tohōdō shoten, 1918: 526.

⁹⁹ Yoshimasu Tōdō, *Idan* (医断: Lectures on Medicine), 1762. A digitised version is accessible online at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2536168> (06.08.2022).

facts are based on observation rather than speculation – to form empirically informed methods of treatment without resorting to abstraction and, more importantly, without attempting to unify facts with moral and ethical conclusions. To be sure, Tōdō’s intention here is not the absolute rejection of the existence of *ri*. As he maintains, *Ri* is not the one to be aggravated. The problem is its enchantment that captivates us (“蓋理本非可惡者也惡其鑿爲耳”).¹⁰⁰ There may be *ri* of all things, as Tōdō seems to imply here, but any medical argument grounded not on sustained proof but on presumption is nothing but contrived argumentation. As I read it here, the category of ‘fact’ functions to restructure the overall field of knowledge with the realm of what Descartes describes as the ‘final cause’ that is beyond human cognition and the realm of the observable on which any human effort to attain knowledge must concentrate. Hence, in Tōdō’s address, the category of ‘fact’ functions as a teleological device to designate the boundary of what humans can know while, at the same time, resolving the purported tension between being (his general predilection towards the Confucian worldview that presumes the transcendental) and knowing (his negation of speculation and abstraction). Put otherwise, in Tōdō’s address, the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* is suspended to the extent that the search for *ri* is beyond the intellectual capacity of humans and that being enchanted by *ri* hinders rather than enhances knowledge.

The point I shall emphasise here of *Koihō* is threefold. First, the suspension of *ri* and *kyūri* engenders a new idea of knowledge within the space of Confucianism. With the establishment of the medical field grounded on the predisposition towards empirical methods and verifiability of accumulative facts, there emerges a kind of knowledge that does not necessarily seek to unify the dictum of ‘investigation of things’ and ‘perfection of knowledge’ with moral and ethical practices. This knowledge marked by the category ‘fact’ is, in a sense, a utility to underpin the human

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

condition with its practical efficacy, which sustains and is sustained by a methodological proclivity to treat, not the words of the sages in the ancient texts, but nature as the source of knowledge to be observed and verified as facts. The paradox, so to say, of *Koihō* is that, with its call for returning to the ancient medical texts and practices, its discursive enunciations foreground a new methodological orientation that moves away from textual engagement and that suspends *ri* and *kyūri*. At this juncture, the familiar schema of validating knowledge on the basis of the *ri*-knowledge structuration begins to seem increasingly inadequate.

Second, the suspension of *ri* and *kyūri* and the consequent reconfiguration of the idea of knowledge engenders a new positionality of the knower vis-à-vis the known. In *Koihō*'s discursive addresses, the knower begins to see its purpose not as to pursue the transcendental principle – or the ‘final cause’ – that dictates its being and becoming so that it can inhabit the world in a way that it is supposed to inhabit, but as to observe what is the observable and what has much utility and practical efficacy for the human condition. With this renewed purpose, the knowledge comes to ‘view’ as much as it ‘inhabits’ the world – here, in the case of *Koihō*, the human body, diseases, and pharmacological properties – as the repository of knowledge. In turn, the known – human body, diseases, pharmacological properties – become, almost like the Cartesian ethos, to be mastered as the object of knowledge that would be of much utility for improving the human condition. The knower may not have recourse to the transcendental. But it does have recourse to that which is observable and objectifiable. What sustains this positionality of the knowledge vis-à-vis the observable and the objectifiable is not the quasi-theological presumption of the ‘view from nowhere’ but the very category of ‘fact’ that determines what humans can indeed know.

Third, if we are to locate the development of *Koihō*, not as an episode within the field of Chinese medicine, nor as a mere sub-field derived from *Kogaku*, but as that which partakes in a much

broader process of intellectual and epistemic changes, we can begin to see the inadequacy of our categories of ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ that have long informed our historical scholarship. To be sure, *Koihō* was a field of medical discourses and practices within Confucianism that sought to return to ancient Chinese medicine. And yet, with the clarity of hindsight, we see that, throughout its development, the development of *Koihō* had effectively blurred the purported boundaries between Chinese medicine and Western medicine. This was especially discernible in the case of Sōun’s semantic reconfiguration to overcome the semantic and categorical chasm among various medical traditions, including early modern Western medicine, ancient Chinese medicine, Neo-Confucian medical theories, and the *Ranpō* tradition within *Rangaku*. To reiterate my earlier observation here, the purpose of semantic reconfiguration was not necessarily to elevate one specific medical tradition to the rank of the truth. Rather, it was to mitigate the inadequacy of available theories, categories, and lexicons by verifying them with observational facts. What emerged from this semantic reconfiguration was a sense of continuum rather than disjuncture among various medical traditions generally, and a sense of methodological commensurability between *Koihō* and *Ranpō* (and more broadly, *Rangaku*) more specifically. Of course, as I have argued earlier, the polemical undertone of *Rangaku* scholars’ writings was such that (Neo-)Confucianism was often constituted as a negative foil to be negated and overcome. *Rangaku* scholars’ intellectual investment was such that their discursive strategies were often for distinguishing Western knowledge from other knowledge traditions. And yet, the development of *Koihō* suggests, as I read it here, that the difference among various knowledge traditions is not in the oppositionality of truth and non-truth, for which the *ri*-knowledge structuration functions as a qualifying marker; the difference is, instead, in language, discourse, and textuality. This, in turn,

seems to once again indicate the possible inadequacy of the *ri*-knowledge structuration as the qualifier of ‘serious’ knowledge.

6.4. Topographies of *Ri* and the Reconfiguration of Epistemic Ground

In fine, let me enter two further observations: one addresses the nexus between knowledge and power, and the other concerns the subject position. In what ways did power – here, the Tokugawa shogunate – insert itself in knowledge to authorise and sanction these intellectual and epistemic changes I have discussed above? And, if any knowledge tradition bears a specific relationship between the knower and the known, how and to what extent did these intellectual and epistemic changes reconfigure the relation between the knower and the known?

Heteronomous Authorisation of Fields of Knowledge

First, the predilection to understand *ri* in its heterogeneity and the predisposition towards the segmentation and specialisation of knowledge into distinctive fields with a set of specific epistemological, ontological, and methodological presumptions – both of which emerged from a wide range of dispersed intellectual exercises – were consolidated, or I shall even go so far as to say ‘authorised’ by power. The institutionalisation of various fields of knowledge, which we see especially towards the end of the Edo period, was, indeed, an instance in which power inserted itself in knowledge and provided heteronomous sustenance for those fields of knowledge.

Of course, the Tokugawa shogunate's interest in establishing various institutions of knowledge was notated less by a concern for knowledge *per se* but rather by a concern for governing, more precisely, that is, a concern for how the realm of knowledge might be pressed into the service of governing. This is especially evident in the case of *Shōheizaka gakumonjo* (昌平坂学問所). In general terms, the institutionalisation of Neo-Confucianism as *Shōheizaka gakumonjo* was a reactionary policy to mitigate the effect of two purported problems for governing. One was the socio-political condition destabilised by the famine and plague of 1783-1784 and the consequent rise of food prices, as well as a series of rice riots organised by those demoralised farmers, townsfolks, and samurais. For Mastudaira Sadanobu (1759-1828), a newly appointed chief councillor, educational reform was one of the key pillars for the *Kansei Reforms* (寛政の改革, 1787-1793) to restore economic stability and civic morality. However, in this instance lies the second problem. During the late 18th century, the realm of education and scholarship was marked by elements of heterodoxy. Newly emerged fields of scholarships within Confucianism, including *Yōmeigaku*, *Kogaku*, and *Koihō*, as well as those intellectual developments outside the Confucian tradition, such as *Kokugaku* and *Jōrigaku*, collectively constituted an imminent threat – whether imagined or otherwise – to Neo-Confucianism, which the shogunate had long considered as the basis for its feudal *kyōgaku* (教学: education and scholarship) system. It was against this backdrop that *Kansei igaku no kin* (寛政異学の禁: the edict to ban unorthodox schools of thought) was implemented in 1790 in order to enforce the teaching of Neo-Confucianism as the official strand of Confucianism in Japan and as the foundation for rebuilding the feudal *kyōgaku* system and for consolidating the governing power of the shogunate. Under the edict, *Shōheizaka gakumonjo*, established initially by Hayashi Razan in 1630 as his private school, *Kōbunkan* (弘文館), was

repositioned as the primary ‘official’ institution for reviving Neo-Confucianism both as a scholarly and political doctrine and, therefore, subsumed under the direct control of the shogunate.¹⁰¹

If the story ends here, we may simply conclude that the heterogenisation of *ri* and suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* vis-à-vis the emergence of distinctive fields of knowledge were mere intellectual phenomena, having little significance outside the realm of knowledge. However, ascertainable facts suggest otherwise. The shogunate had either directly controlled or authorised the establishment of various other institutions of knowledge, recognising them as ‘official’ institutions and, therefore, inadvertently sanctioning various fields of knowledge, each of which was grounded on a specific understanding – or at times, negation – of *ri*.

For instance, in the realm of medicine, *Igakukan* (医学館), initially established as *Seijukan* (躋寿館) by Taki Mototaka (1695-1766) as a private institution for medical learning, was, in 1791, subsumed under the shogunate’s control. The institutional purpose of *Igakukan* was to expand the learning and practice of Chinese medicine based on *yin-yang* and five elements in areas under the direct control of the shogunate in Edo to compete against the increasingly prevalent scholarship of *Koihō* promoted by the imperial court in Kyoto. However, if we are to delve further into its curriculum, *Igakukan* emphasised, just as the *Koihō* tradition did, both the philological engagement with ancient Chinese texts and the expansion of practical methods for treating diseases.¹⁰² Not to mention such emphasis contradicted and even defied the shogunate’s prohibition of heterodoxy, it

¹⁰¹ See Ishikawa Ken, “Shōheizaka gakumonjo no hattatsu katei to sono yōshiki” (The Process of Establishing Shōheizaka gakumonjo), *Ochanomizu University Studies in Arts and Culture*, 7, 1955: 1-46; Wajima Yoshio, *Shōheikō to hangaku* (Shōheikō and Learning in Provinces), Tokyo: Shibundō, 1962; Makabe Jin, *Edo-kōki no gakumon to seiji: Shōheizaka gakumonjo jusha to bakumatu gaikō henyō* (Scholarship and Politics in the Late Edo Period: Confucian Scholars of Shōheizaka Gakumonjo and Changes in Foreign Policies), Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2007.

¹⁰² Machi Senjirō, “Edo-kōki no igaku no baai: Bakufu igakukan no gakuseki o chūshin ni” (A Case of Medicine in the Late Edo Period: Scholarly Contributions of Igakukan), *Nihon shisōshigaku*, 35, 2003: 33 [30-36].

marked a stark contrast to another ‘official’ Confucian institution, *Shōheizaka gakumonjo*, which centred its learning and scholarship primarily around Neo-Confucian texts.

In 1793, the shogunate also authorised Hanawa Hokiichi (1746-1821) to establish *Wagaku kōdansho* (和学講談所) as a shogunate-affiliated institution for *Wagaku* (和学), a strand of *Kokugaku*.¹⁰³ Through its educational and scholarly projects, *Wagaku kōdansho* sought to provide specifically ‘Japanese’ accounts of history by focusing particularly on re-reading ancient ‘Japanese’ texts, such as *Kojiki*, *Rikkokushi* (六国史: Six National Histories) and *Genji monogatari*, compiling ‘historical’ materials, especially diaries and personal correspondences of court officials (*kugyō*: 公卿) served to the emperor under the *Ritsuryō* system, and publishing the shogunate-commissioned ‘historiographical’ accounts including *Gunsho ruijū* (群書類従: a collection of old Japanese books and Japanese literature), a reconstructed version of *Nihon kōki* (日本後紀: a ‘historical’ text initially completed in 840), a recompiled version of *Ryō no gige* (令義解: an explanatory text of *Ritsuryō* system compiled initially in 833), and *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).¹⁰⁴ As I read it, the official sanction of this institution seems to suggest that the shogunate saw these archival projects and (re)formulation of the past into a history not only and obviously as a mode of connecting the

¹⁰³ In 1869, Meiji government turned *Wagaku kōdansho* into an official institution for ‘national’ history and remained it as *Shiryō henshū kokushi kōsei-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 the Office was officially integrated into the University of Tokyo as Historiographical Institute.

¹⁰⁴ Yamashita Takeshi, “Wagaku kōdansho no jittai” (The Reality of Wagaku Kōdansho), *Nihon no kyōikushigaku*, 4, 1961: 62-87; Sakamoto Tarō, “Wagaku kōdansho ni okeru henshū shuppan jigyō” (Editing and Publishing Projects at Wagaku Kōdansho), *Nihon rekishi*, 194, 1664: 3-14; Ōta Yoshimaro, *Hanawa Hokiichi*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1966: 140-141; Saitō Masao, “Edo bakufu to wagaku kōdansho: Wagaku-goyō o megutte” (Edo Shogunate and Wagaku Kōdansho: On ‘Official’ Studies of Japan), *Onko sōshi*, 54, 2000: 43-49.

present with the old but also as a way of legitimating power with a spatially-bounded, localised configuration of ‘Japan.’¹⁰⁵

In the realm of Western knowledge, the institutionalisation of fields of knowledge by the shogunate began in 1811, when *Bansho wage goyō* (蕃書和解御用: Shogunal Office for Translating Barbarian Texts) was established within the existing institutional framework of *Tenmonkata* (天文方: Astronomical Bureau) as an institution dedicated especially to the translation of 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 enjoyed an almost near-monopoly on the shogunate-sponsored translational projects.¹⁰⁶ Of course, at this stage, the goal of the institution was primarily utilitarian. And, at least, at the institutional level, there was little interest in non-scientific, non-utilitarian knowledge. However, with the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853, there was an increasing necessity to translate a wide array of diplomatic documents, as well as increasing demand in learning and circulating, rather than simply translating, Western texts, especially those on Western military science for coastal defence.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, the shogunate expanded *Bansho wage goyō* as *Yōgakusho* (洋学所: Institute for Western Learning) in

¹⁰⁵ 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 Maiguashca, 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 the Fantasy of Empire*, London and New York, NY: Verso, 1993: II.

¹⁰⁶ 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].

¹⁰⁷ Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tūshi, Vol.1* (One Hundred Years of Tokyo University, General History, Vol.1), Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku, 1987: 7-8.

1855 as an institution independent of *Tenmonkata* and then renamed it as *Bansho shirabesho* (蕃書調所: Institute for the Study of Barbarian Books) in 1857. This became the primary shogunate-sponsored, ‘official’ institution for Western learning and the centralised locus for translational projects, being the incubator for producing generations of scholars, including Mitsukuri Genpo (1799-1863), Kawamoto Kōmin (1810-1871), Nishi Amane (1829-1897), Tsuda Mamichi (1829-1903), Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891), and Katō Hiroyuki (1836-1916). Further still, in 1862, *Bansho shirabesho* was renamed yet again as *Yōsho shirabesho* (洋書調所: Institute for the Study of Western Books), and simultaneously elevated, as part and parcel of the *Bunikyū* Reforms (文久の改革), to the rank of ‘national’ institution along with *Shōheizaka gakumonjo*, becoming one of the twin-apex of the late Tokugawa educational system.¹⁰⁸ To be sure, the intention of the shogunate was not necessary to authorise Western knowledge as *the* mode of thinking and reasoning. The 1854’s proposal for establishing *Bansho shirabesho* clearly expressed the fear towards the possible proliferation of ‘barbaric’ (夷狄) thought and the expansion of Christian influence. Therefore, the proposal clarified that those who did not yet have appropriate education must begin their learning in *Kangaku* (漢学: Chinese studies) and that those who engaged with ‘barbaric’ texts must strictly observe the anti-Christian policies set out by the shogunate. Simultaneously, the proposal perspicuously defined the purpose of *Bansho shirabesho* to collect “information about enemies (敵情),” in particular maps, political systems and religious beliefs,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 7-28.

customs, social conditions, military technologies and shipbuilding techniques, arts, and other industrial products.¹⁰⁹

The 1860s also saw a separate development in the realm of Western medicine. In 1860, the shogunate repositioned *Shutōsho* (種痘所: Institute for Smallpox) as the ‘official’ institution for Dutch and, by extension, Western medicine, which was originally established in 1858 by a group of *Ranpō* scholars and practitioners to organise their vaccination effort for tackling the smallpox epidemic. While the rationale behind the shogunate’s decision to officially authorise the institution is unclear, at least with it, Dutch (Western) medicine had effectively gained the official status equal to Chinese medicine taught at *Igakukan*. In the following year, the institute was renamed as *Seiyō igakusho* (西洋医学所: Institute for Western Medicine) and underwent a significant restructuring with the establishment of three sections dedicated respectively to vaccination efforts for the smallpox epidemic, anatomy, and medical pedagogy, becoming an all-encompassing institution for Western medical practices, research, and education.¹¹⁰ And by the end of 1862, the shogunate, with its appointive power, made various ranks at *Seiyō igakusho* comparable to those at *Igakukan*, which further confirmed the increasing prevalence of Western medicine. Even some shogunate officials urged the practitioners of Chinese medicine to learn

¹⁰⁹ The proposal, entitled ‘蕃書翻譯御用被仰出候ニ付諸事取斗方奉伺候書付’, specified in the introductory section that “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回右学筋之奇特を申唱候者も多々有之候折柄、公辺ニ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ニ相立、本国より仕出候事ニ付、土俗之信徒ニ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。” The proposal was compiled with other documents in Edo Kyūji Saihō-kai, “Oda Matazō bansho honiyaku goyō ni kansuru shorui” (Oda Matazō’s Documents on Office for Translating Barbarian’s Texts), *Edo*, 33, 1919: 9-20.

¹¹⁰ Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tūshi, Vol.1*, 58.

Western medicine and to become competent in both Chinese and Western medical practices.¹¹¹ As Yamazaki Tasuku speculates, one rationale to elevate the institutional status of *Seiyō igakusho* equal to *Igakukan*, and to appoint Ogata Kōan (1810-1863), who had been practising and teaching Western medicine in Osaka in the orbit of the Imperial court, as the head of the shogunal institution, was indeed political. Under the broader political orientation of the shogunate designated as *Kōbu gattai* (公武合体: the union of the imperial court and the shogunate) and with the prospect of marriage between Shogun Tokugawa Iemochi (1846-1866) and Princess Kazunomiya (1846-1877), the younger sister of the emperor, the Edo officials saw a necessity to satisfy the imperial court's expectations of the shogunate to provide appropriate medical treatment for Kazunomiya. And given the relative prevalence of *Ranpō* in the Kansai area, in comparison to that in Edo, the shogunate, perhaps, saw an opportunity to gain certain political leverage vis-à-vis the imperial court by elevating the status of *Seiyō igakusho* and appointing Kōan, a doctor from the Kansai area, as the head of the institution.¹¹²

Undoubtedly, the institutionalisation of knowledge led by the shogunate was a political project. These cases discussed above are the instances in which various traditions of knowledge, each of which claimed for its validity derived from a specific epistemic frame, came to be authorised by a non-intellectual instance or agency, here by the shogunate. These are the instances in which the fields of knowledge came to be controlled, measured, and overseen by power with specific political interests. However, as I read it, the shogunate's various political interests and institutionalisation

¹¹¹ As Ogata Kōan, who became the head of *Seiyō igakusho* in 1862, recorded in his diary a comment of Ogasawara Hironari, a Bakufu official who was in charge of overseeing medical practices provided by those at *Igakukan*, writing that “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、蘭科迪も漢科相学候儀不苦旨、去西年 [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* (Biography of Ogata Kōan), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1963: 395.

¹¹² Yamazaki Tasuku, “Otamagaike Shutōsho, Vol.4” (Institute for Smallpox in Otamagaike), *Nihon igakushi zasshi*, 1332, 1944: 235 [234-241].

of fields of knowledge as part and parcel of a broader politico-ideological project, though perhaps inadvertently, authorised the intellectual discursive addresses of *ri* in its heterogeneity and the segmentation and specialisation of knowledge. It is to this end that the ways in which power inserted itself in knowledge, in fact, consolidated the intellectual predilection towards the reconfiguration of the epistemic landscape.

On the Relationship between the Knower and the Known

As the last observation in this chapter, I shall consider the relationship between the knower and the known, more specifically, the emerging sense of the knower that views the world historically and the objectification of the world as ‘things’ observable to the knower. What I sought to suggest through my reading of the heterogenisation of *ri* and the suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* vis-à-vis the unfolding of various scholarly traditions is that, in these intellectual developments, we begin to see the onset of re-conceiving knowledge not on the basis of the familiar *ri*-knowledge structuration but through a certain capacity ascribed to the knower as one moving across time and space (recall Jinsai’s and Sorai’s postulate of temporal symmetry), or as the enunciating (think Norinaga’s concept of authentic ‘Japanese’ voice), or as the observing (think Koihō’s category of ‘fact’). However, it is important to recognise here certain discursive differences embedded in the idea of the knower as the subject of knowledge (with whatever capacity one may ascribe to it) that began to emerge through these intellectual developments, in comparison to the idea of the subject vis-à-vis the object that (re)articulated and (re)established in the realm of Western philosophy.

Take, for instance, Leibniz's concept of 'monad.' By expanding the Greek-Roman concept of '*subiectum*' – linguistically means the subject, and ontologically means an individual being – Leibniz understands the knower, the subject (*subiectum*), as the individual with a physical body who perceives the physical world from its own point of view.¹¹³ This subject, existing individually and independently from one another and from the physical world, is what he called 'monad.' For this individual, for this subject, there is no outside, and there is no means to position oneself outside the foil of this physical body. In turn, this means that what one sees – what one knows – is a mere mirror image of the physical world, '*realitas obiectiva*,' reflected through the subject's senses.

By expanding further on the notion of cognitive limit, that is, what Leibniz sees as the human sense through which the physical world is to be known, Kant understands the subject essentially as self-consciousness. For Kant, there are three kinds of self-consciousness: transcendental, empirical, and supposed self-consciousness. But none of them gives rise to authentic knowledge, knowledge as a *thing-in-itself* (or, to reiterate my earlier definition, the status of the known as it is without representation and observation), precisely because of the cognitive limit that Leibniz describes as '*realitas obiectiva*.' To this end, the subject, an embedded individual being, can only observe the physical world as it appears to them, as a thing-for-itself (or, to repeat my earlier definition, the status of the known as one sees it with representation and observation). In turn, this

¹¹³ The point of departure for Leibniz was to view an individual as the embodiment of all their achievements, attributes, and relationality to others. With an example of Caesar, Leibniz wrote, "For if some were able to carry out the whole demonstration by virtue of which he could prove this connection between the subject, Caesar, and the predicate, his successful undertaking, he would in fact be showing that Caesar's future dictatorship is grounded in his notion or nature, that there is a reason why he crossed the Rubicon rather than stopped at it and why he won rather than lost at Pharsalus and that it was reasonable, and consequently certain, that this should happen." Of course, at this juncture, one may wonder, if there is no outside for the subject, how one could assume that every one of the subjects, us, are reflecting through our senses the same physical world. Here, Leibniz's reasoning turned to theodicy. He continued, "But this [the explanation above] would not show that it was necessary in itself nor that the contrary implies a contradiction. It is reasonable and certain in almost the same way that God will always do the best, even though what is less perfect does not imply a contradiction." Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Discourse on Metaphysics," in Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (eds. and trans.), *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, Indianapolis, IND and Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1989: 45-46 [35-68].

means that the basic assumption of knowledge is not that we must conform our knowledge to the way objects are (*thing-in-itself*) but rather that the way objects are must conform to our perception (*thing-for-itself*). The realm of metaphysics can only be presumed.¹¹⁴

If Leibniz's and Kant's conception presumes the individual as the ontological locus through which the physical world is rendered with meanings, but which, precisely because of the embeddedness of individual being, cannot have recourse to the *thing-in-itself*, Hegel seeks to liberate, so to say, this individual from its embeddedness by introducing the concept of the absolute. What enables an individual to objectify the physical world is, for Hegel, a collective community, wherein the individual cultivates their self-consciousness in their relation to the other. It is this collective community that enables us to conceive knowledge as a subject-object relation, as the absolute. Here, the absolute means reality as a whole, or the universe as a whole.¹¹⁵ This is not to say that the absolute is, as Spinoza would say, an infinite substance; rather, the absolute is an infinite substance *as well as* the subject. For Hegel, the subject is that which views not only the physical world of objects but also itself as an object. Hence, the subject is a self-conscious, self-thinking subject.¹¹⁶

These discursive enunciations within the confines of Western philosophy suggest a specific relationship between the knower and the known, conceived as the relationship between the subject and the object. It is not merely that the subject is set up against the object. But it is also, and

¹¹⁴ See for example, Tamar Japaridze, *The Kantian Subject: Sensus Communis, Mimesis, Work of Mourning*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000: 1-40; Luca Forgone, "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; Baggini, *How the World Thinks*, 33-37.

¹¹⁵ Of course, with the clarity of hindsight, the absolute is nothing but the parochial embedding within itself a reality or a universe presumed and shared within a community.

¹¹⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, A.V. Miller (trans.), Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1969: 408-478; 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.

importantly, that the object exists as such because the subject renders it as such. The object is, in a sense, in the cognition of the subject.

I argue that the contour of the knower and the known that emerged from intellectual developments towards the end of the Edo period, and that we may be tempted to characterise as the subject and the object, is grounded on a different order of discourses. If in Leibniz's, Kant's and Hegel's conceptualisation, the knowing subject and the object known are enacted *in their relation* to one another (the object existing in the cognition of the subject), the contour of the knower and that of the known is articulated *separately* from one another through the intellectual developments towards the late Edo period. More specifically, while the contour of the known was engendered through ontological presumption to see the world as observable 'things' external to moral and ethical concerns for being and becoming, the contour of the knower was articulated through the attention to language both as means to have recourse to the past and as a means for subjective enunciation.¹¹⁷

On the known, recall here Miura Baien's predilection towards understanding 'things' independently from moral and ethical standards, hence his negation of the innate linkage between 'things' and self-cultivation established by Neo-Confucianism. Recall also Yamawaki Tōyō's and Yoshimasu Tōdō's emphasis on observational facts, rather than theoretical or speculative knowledge of the human body, for developing appropriate methods and accumulating verifiable facts for medical practice. These examples express a certain recognition that there indeed exist things external to the human mind – a recognition that it is, in fact, possible to separate 'facts' of nature from ethical and moral conclusions. To put it otherwise, through their intellectual exercises,

¹¹⁷ I should also add here, the term 'the subject' (*shukan* : 主観) did not even exist at this point. This is precisely why I have been using terms such as 'the idea of the subject' or 'contour of the subject'. It was Nishi Amane that first translated 'subject' into '*shukan*' in his translation of Joseph Haven's *Mental Philosophy* (1857) in 1878.

the world – or ‘things’ – was reconstituted as the object completely external to the knower, or to reiterate Motoki Yoshinaga’s words here, as “phenomena that one sees with naked eyes (裸眼ニ視る諸象).”¹¹⁸ This, in turn, means, as the case of Tōyō’s anatomical observation and subsequent reconfiguration of conceptual language suggests, that knowledge must conform to the way things are, to the *thing-in-itself*. Obviously, in this idea of the known, we cannot find any traces of transcendental idealism, whereby the way the known is must conform to the way the knower views it, to the *thing-for-itself*. In other words, the idea of the object known emerged from Baien’s, Tōyō’s, and Tōdō’s intellectual exercises is completely detached from the knower, ascertained as something stable and permanent – or at least, presumed as if there was something stable and permanent in it. And in turn, the knower is repositioned to view those things, to have direct recourse to the *thing-in-itself*.

In contrast, in Itō Jinsai’s, Ogyū Sorai’s, and Motoori Norinaga’s attention to language, we begin to see the formation of a specific idea of the knower and, by extension, the idea of knowledge as a *thing-for-itself*. As I have discussed earlier, their works effectively recentred the intellectual attention around the relationship of language to the world and around the question of what would make enunciation (language) adequate to the world that it referred to. Whether one privileges the ancient Chinese language or the ancient ‘Japanese’ language, whether one privileges written forms or vocal forms of language, what emerged from their writings was an idea that to possess a language was, indeed, to possess subjectivity – a capacity to signify, to render things with meanings, and, importantly, to delimit what meanings were available for signifying practices. In their enunciations, language became a means of subjective enunciation and, therefore, the very position of the knower. However, this knower is limited in two insistences. First, precisely because

¹¹⁸ See my discussion in Chapter 5, p. 328.

it is this enunciating subject that renders the world with meanings through the act of enunciation, knowledge of the world that emerges from enunciation (language) is always delimited to what enunciation (language) defines as adequate. Knowledge is always a *thing-for-itself*. And, in turn, there is always a possibility of the ineffable. Second, the knower that emerges from the attention to language is spatially and temporally limited. The intellectual attention to language endorses, especially in the case of Norinaga, the idea that a language is marked by its unity. This, in turn, means, as I read it, that each language embeds within itself a potentiality of new discourse, a potentiality of an alternative form of knowing, which produces a new subject position. In other words, to perceive language in its unity and to treat language as a means and locus for subjective enunciation is to presume that the enunciating, the signifying, the knower, is firmly grounded on a given linguistic community. It is to presume that the positionality of the knower grounded on language is in and of itself spatially and temporally limited. Therefore, the idea of the knower that emerges from the attention to language does not encode in itself any propensity towards the universal; in fact, such a propensity is contradictory and even threatening to the very boundary that enacts this knower.

Here lies a disparity, a contradiction, between the idea of the object (propensity towards knowledge as *thing-in-itself*) and the subject (predisposition towards knowledge as *thing-for-itself*). While the heterogenisation of *ri* and the suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* effectively articulated an epistemic space for enacting a specific idea of the known and that of the knower, these ideas were by no means integrated into a specific relation, a subject-object relation. To be sure, these intellectual traditions I have discussed in this chapter embed within themselves ‘deep undertones’ that we now recognise as ‘modern.’ Yet, importantly, these are not ‘deep currents’ as Maruyama may describe, which are moving towards the ‘modern’ as an idealised end

of teleological progress. This disparity is, therefore, not a marker of inadequacy – the inadequacy of, for instance, Japanese to fully appropriate the idea of known conceived in the cognition of the knower. The disparity, instead, signals that modern knowledge is indeed marked by ‘discursive differences’ and that such differences lie in language, discourse, and textuality.

As I shall expand further in the following chapter, this disparity came to constitute a primary locus for epistemic negotiation in the subsequent decades, during the early years of the Meiji period. But here is a twist. Epistemic negotiation during that period was not simply about mitigating the disparity between *thing-in-itself* and *thing-for-itself*, between, on the one hand, stable and permanent things completely external to the human mind and, on the other hand, a spatio-temporally specific position of subjective enunciation. It was also about (re)enacting the ‘Japanese’ subject position, as such epistemic negotiation coincided with the introduction of the idea of the (Western) subject to the semantic space of the Japanese language as ‘*shukan*’ (主観) and with the historical moment in which this ‘foreign’ subject position became, through West’s imposition of its hegemonic status and through the politico-ideological discourse of Meiji, synonymous to the notion of ‘becoming modern.’

Chapter 7.

‘Becoming Modern, Being Different’: Science, Language, and the Subject Position

So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government, and so little dependence have they on the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may sometimes be deduced from them, as any which the mathematical science affords us.

David Hume¹

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. Huxley²

In the Neo-Confucian semantics, the idea of *kyūri* designated the pursuit of *ri*, the transcendental principle, that dictates everything in the realm under Heaven, through the dictum of the

¹ David Hume, “That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science,” in Joyce Appleby, Elizabeth Covington, David Hoyt, Michael Latham, and Allison Sneider (eds.), *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*, New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1996 [1752]: 75 [74-77].

² Thomas H. Huxley, *Lessons in Elementary Physiology*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1866: 193.

‘investigation of things’ and ‘perfection knowledge’ which eventually leads – or is presumed to lead – to the attainment of moral and ethical conclusions about being and becoming. However, as I have discussed in the previous chapters, the intellectual developments of new fields of knowledge and the heteronomous authorisation of such developments through institutionalisation towards the end of the Edo period effectively normalised a perception to view *ri* in its heterogeneity, or even an empty signifier. Not only did such normalisation offer a discursive ground to justify various knowledge traditions, including Western knowledge, as ‘valid’ and ‘serious,’ it also occasioned the suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri*. To be sure, towards the end of the Edo period, the Neo-Confucian tradition had become the ideological and intellectual sustenance to consolidate the power of Tokugawa authority. However, as I sought to argue in the previous chapter, its genealogy as a scholarly tradition was undoubtedly marked by a sense of diffusion. With the development of various intellectual traditions, the Neo-Confucian idea of learning and knowledge no longer held a stable structure for intellectual exercises. This, in turn, indicates that the familiar imbrication of *ri* and knowledge, that is, the *ri*-knowledge structuration, was no longer the adequate qualifying standard of knowledge to legitimise the seriousness of a given specific knowledge tradition – be it (Neo-)Confucianism or Western knowledge – and to promote it to the rank of *the* knowledge vis-à-vis other knowledge traditions. Any knowledge tradition was considered, at least, in principle and in its own light, a ‘serious’ tradition because it sought to address *ri*, however one may define it.

This chapter seeks to identify a certain epistemic shift in the idea of knowledge: from knowledge grounded on the *ri*-knowledge structuration to knowledge conceived as a subject-object relation. Hence, a shift in the fundamental presumptions of what makes knowledge ‘valid’ and ‘serious’: from the familiar imbrication of *ri* and knowledge to a specific positionality of the

knower as the knowing subject who possesses thinking faculties to render the world knowable. Central to such a shift is the notion of ‘consciousness’ as it foregrounds the thinking faculties and, thus, the privileged position of the knowing subject. Here, ‘consciousness’ has a double meaning. It designates a kind of consciousness that one knows the world external to them, which bears the production of objective knowledge. It also signifies a kind of consciousness that one knows that indeed one knows, which underpins self-knowledge. This notion of consciousness emerged in the Japanese semantic field as ‘*shukan*’ (主観: subject / subjective) during the early Meiji period, through translational practices to grasp the Western associationist psychological concept of self-consciousness as ‘*jishiki*’ (自識) with the familiar (Neo-)Confucian notion of ‘*shendu*’ (慎独: conscience). In this liminal semantic space between (Western) consciousness and (Confucian) conscience, the idea of *shukan* was established both as the medium through which the world was to be objectified and as that which embodied, in its practices of knowing, the ethos of *scientia*, that is to say, scientificity. To this end, the articulation of the idea of *shukan* was intimately intertwined with the development of the idea of *kagaku*’ (科学: science) in the Japanese semantic space.

My method here is to focus on the genealogy of this conceptual duplet, *shukan* and *kagaku*, to reveal the temporality of epistemic changes foregrounded by these concepts. In so doing, I address two specific intellectual and institutional developments through which the knowing subject, articulated in the liminal semantic space between (Western) consciousness and (Neo-Confucian) conscience, came to operate in knowledge production as the subject with a spatially-bounded and localised configuration of ‘Japan’: the appropriation of evolutionary temporality encoded to social Darwinism; and the increasing propensity towards a ‘national’ language as both the locus and means for specifically ‘Japanese’ subjective enunciation. Through my reading of the idea of *shukan* and *kagaku* in conjunction with these intellectual and institutional developments, I seek to

pursue two lines of argument. First, if the order of discourses that sustained the (Western) subject was, as Takeuchi Yoshimi describes, “possible only in this history [of Europe],”³ the order of discourse that established and sustained the idea of ‘*shukan*’ was, I argue, possible only in the history of a spatio-temporally bounded, conceptual space of ‘Japan.’ Then, a knowledge tradition grounded on ‘*shukan*’ – a tradition that Meiji elites considered ‘modern’ and that we, too, have come to recognise as ‘modern’ – was marked by certain discursive differences from the knowledge tradition that I have been calling ‘Western’ knowledge. Second, I also seek to argue that, throughout the process of modern knowledge formation in Japan, language, especially the idea of a ‘national’ language, had come to constitute itself as a liminal space, not merely for reconfiguring the epistemic ground of knowledge through translational practices, but also and importantly for articulating a spatially bounded and localised configuration of ‘I’ – the conscious, enunciating, and knowing subject. In other words, language became a liminal space in which ‘Japan’ transubstantiated itself from the translator of ‘Western’ knowledge to the producer of ‘modern’ knowledge.

7.1. From *Kyūri* to *Kagaku*

During the earlier years of Meiji, political and intellectual discourses began to refer to the term *kyūri* much less frequently. 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.⁴ For

³ Takeuchi, “What is Modernity,” 54.

⁴ Tanomura Tadanori offers a comprehensive list of texts published between 1821 and 1974 that used the term ‘*kagaku*’ or that invented new terms by combing ‘*kagaku*’ with other terms, such as ‘*kagaku-shugi*’ (科学主義:

instance, Nishi Amane, in *Chisetsu* (知説: On Knowledge, 1874), equates the pursuit of knowledge, which he argues is consisted of ‘*gaku*’ (学: science, pure knowledge) and ‘*jutsu*’ (術: art, applied knowledge), to “what people would call ‘*kagaku*’ (いわゆる科学)”.⁵ To be sure, as the adnominal adjective ‘いわゆる’ (so-called) indicates, Nishi does not seem to be fully convinced by the term ‘*kagaku*.’⁶ And yet, paradoxically, this adnominal adjective also indicates the increasingly popularised usage of the term itself. Thus, Nakayama Shigeru later observes that, against the backdrop of increasing recognition that “Western learning [had] an array of fields – chemistry, natural history, physics, etc. [...] the current Japanese term for science, *kagaku* (literary ‘classified learning’), gained currency.”⁷ Indeed, as I will discuss shortly, the early years of Meiji were

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 hokyū no yōsō” (The Etymology of ‘Kagaku’: Its Gradual and Phased Changes and Its Popularisation), *Osaka daigaku daigakuin bungaku-kenkyūka kiyō*, 2016: 152-156 [123-181].

⁵ Nishi Amane, *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 investigation. 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.

⁶ 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, the term ‘*kagaku*’ did not offer any clear distinction between pure and applied knowledge, which, for Nishi, 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.

⁷ Nakayama, *Academic and Scientific Traditions in China, Japan, and the West*, 208.

marked by the lexical and, by extension, conceptual replacement of *kyūri* with *kagaku*. However, as I will also discuss, this lexical and conceptual replacement was a gradual process involving various semantic negotiations and changes, methodological reorientations, and political authorisation. How did this lexical and conceptual replacement of *kyūri* with *kagaku* occur? And more importantly, what were the implications of such replacement for modern knowledge formation? These are the questions I seek to address here.

A Field of Utilitarian Knowledge

The term ‘*kagaku*’ (科学) emerged in the Japanese semantic space during the latter half of the 19th century as a so-called ‘*wasei kango*’ (和製漢語: Japanese word invented by combining two or more Chinese characters). In our semantics today, the term has a double meaning: one as ‘science’ in the broadest sense, as a specific attitude towards knowledge, as a mode of thinking and reasoning about both the natural and human world based on the established ‘scientific’ methods, the validity of which is sustained by the positionality of the knower, the subject, *a priori* set up against the world of objects; the other in a narrower sense, as ‘natural sciences,’ composed of various fields of knowledge production specifically about the natural world, divisions of which are implemented as disciplinary and institutional categories of knowledge.⁸ Of course, as we have seen in Chapter

⁸ Itakura Kiyonobu, *Kagaku-teki towa dōiu kotoka* (What Does ‘Scientific’ Mean), Tokyo: Kasettsusha, 1977; Asō Yoshiharu, *Kinsei nihon tetsugakushi: Bakumatsu kara meiji ishin no keimō-shisō* (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 becoming increasingly a contested matter today, with emerging discourses put forward especially by Chinese scholars of intellectual and conceptual history, which argue that the term ‘*kagaku*’ was used in ancient China to designate ‘*kakyo-no-gaku*’ (科举の学: Learning for imperial examination). See Tanomura, “Kagaku no goshi, 152-156.

5, *Rangaku* scholars also grasped, in their translational practices, Western knowledge as both a specific attitude towards knowledge and disciplinary and institutional categories of natural sciences. However, the very term ‘*kagaku*’ that we today associate with such attitude and specific fields of knowledge did not exist in the Japanese semantic space until the end of the 19th century.

What we see in the writings of *Rangaku* scholars is, instead, the term ‘一科学,’ which, in their semantics, designates, not ‘*ichi-kagaku*’ (one science) as we might presume, but ‘*ichika-gaku*’ (one field of knowledge) to pursue principles, *kyūri*. One of the first usages of ‘*ichika-gaku*’ can be found, for instance, in the introductory part of Takano Chōei’s *Igenn sūyō* (医原枢要: Fundamentals of Western Medicine, 1832). When explaining the importance of physiology, which is described as ‘*jinshin kyūri*’ (人身窮理: the pursuit of principles about the human body), Chōei 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 a field of knowledge within medicine, is so complex to understand that it is difficult to translate [Western texts on physiology] into Japanese.)⁹

In a similar vein, Udagawa Yōan uses the term ‘*sanka-no-gaku*’ (三科之学: three fields of knowledge) in his *Shokugaku keigen* (植學啓原: Principles of Botany, 1833), to explain that

⁹ Takano Chōei, *Igenn sūyō*, 1832. A digitised version of the original text can be accessible online at: <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00003733> (31.08.2022).

Western knowledge about the natural world is divided into three specific fields, ‘*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參天地而統紀萬物是乃人道也西聖立三科之學曰辨物也曰究理也曰舍密也以綜錯萬物

(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.)¹⁰

In these enunciations, 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.’ As I read it, this signification of the signifier ‘*kagaku*’ (科学) is reflexive, first of all, of *Rangaku* scholars’ effort to understand Western knowledge as simultaneously unified and dispersed, hence as a unified knowledge with various fields of investigation.¹¹ Furthermore, this signification is also reflexive of the broader intellectual predilection of the late Edo period to compartmentalise the pursuit of knowledge into distinctive fields based on the understanding of *ri* in its heterogeneity.¹²

This general usage of the signifier ‘*kagaku*’ (科学) as ‘one field of knowledge,’ as a locus, among many others, of *kyūri*, continued well into the Meiji period, especially in translated works of Western texts.¹³ At the same time, however, the late 1860s also saw the emergence of a slightly

¹⁰ Udagawa Yōan, *Shokugaku keigen*, 1833. A digitised version of the text is accessible online at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ni14/ni14_00796/index.html (22.09.2021).

¹¹ See my discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 325-337.

¹² See my discussion in Chapter 6, pp. 402-412.

¹³ 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. A digitised version of the text

more specific usage of the signifier ‘*kagaku*’ to denote ‘practical, utilitarian, and specialised knowledge.’ This new signification is undoubtedly reflexive of the guiding teleology of the early years of Meiji, *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei*, whereby Western knowledge – and its purported utilitarian and instrumental efficiency – is treated as the important backdrop or sustenance for modernising changes.

For instance, Hirosawa Yasutō (1830-1891), a feudal retainer of the Aizu domain, argues in the last chapter of *Shūchū hashu engi* (囚中八首衍義: On Eight Poems from the Prison, 1869) that the attainment of knowledge is dialectically connected to the strength of the nation-state. By using the term *kagaku* as ‘practical and utilitarian knowledge,’ he maintains as follows.

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学学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 [...]人生八歲入小学村落必設之十五寄宿大学大都会必設之十八大沙汰之撰其所能而就科学以專門除
(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 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

is available at: wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ni01/ni01_00901/index.html (31.08.2022). 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 study of military strategy. See Fukuzawa Yukichi, Obata Tokujirō, and Obata Jinzaburō, *Yōhei meikan* (洋兵明鑑: Outline of the Western Art of War), 1869. A digitised version is accessible at: <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/ja/fukuzawa/a09/24> (31.08.2022). Katō Hiroyuki also used the term ‘*kagaku*’ 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. The text is available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/788995> (31.08.2022).

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 discretion, and devote himself to acquiring specialised knowledge.)¹⁴

To be sure, there is no evidence to confirm that, in Hirosawa's enunciation, the signifier '*kagaku*' was equated to the English term 'science' or to any equivalents in other European languages. At least, recognising his emphasis or even conviction that knowledge must be practical and utilitarian, we can surmise here that Hirosawa, indeed, encodes a specific meaning to the signifier '*kagaku*'. More specifically, *kagaku* designates much more than a field of knowledge as the previous usage of '*ichika-gaku*' implies; *kagaku* now means a field of *practical* and *specialised* knowledge.

Hirosawa is hardly alone in his usage of the term *kagaku*. In the early 1870s, on the eve of the promulgation of *Gakusei* (学制: the Fundamental Code of Education, 1872), *kagaku* as a field of practical and specialised knowledge also 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* (大学南校: the South College of the University), writes in his '*Gakusei iken*' (学制意見: Opinion on the Fundamental Code of Education, 1871) that,

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。
[...] 三年書生成り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

¹⁴ Hirosawa Yasutō, *Shūchū hashu engi*, 1869. The original text is available online at: <https://school.nijl.ac.jp/kindai/KMBR/KMBR-00052.html> (31.08.2022).

is delusional. Once they are proficient in a Western language, their studies in their chosen specialised field should progress very well.)¹⁵

Here, Inoue envisions *kagaku* as specialised fields of knowledge which must be pursued after completing Western language learning. By treating the competency in Western languages as the basis for learning and acquiring specialised knowledge, not only did Inoue envision a hierarchised process of learning, but also, in his discursive address, equates *kagaku*, fields of specialised knowledge, to those various disciplines of Western knowledge. *Kagaku* is not merely those fields of practical and specialised knowledge. It is the epithet for those fields of knowledge that sustain – or, at least, are thought to sustain – Western ‘civilisations.’

This discursive emphasis on *kagaku* as the epithet for those specialised fields of Western knowledge indeed paralleled the institutional transformation of *Bansho shirabesho* (蕃書調所: Institute for the Study of Barbarian Books) into *Daigaku minamikō* (大学南校: South College of the University) in 1869, which eventually integrated into the University of Tokyo in 1877. This institutional transformation of 1869 amounted to much more than changes in institutional makeup, such as the official mandates, the expansion of school premises, and the increase in the number of departments. More importantly, the institutional transformation signalled a significant change in what was hitherto homogenously treated as *Yōgaku*. As the scope of this tradition of knowledge became more advanced and broader, there emerged a certain consensus among scholars of *Yōgaku*

¹⁵ Inoue Kowashi, “Gakusei iken,” in Inoue Kowashi denki hensan iinkai (ed.), *Inoue Kowashi den: Shiryō-hen, Vol.1* (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* (Inoue Kowashi and Ideologies of Education), Kyoto: Kōyō shobō, 2020. Another point to emphasis 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. See, pp. 536-547.

that an individual scholar could not possibly attain encyclopaedic knowledge about and of all things Western. In other words, the consensus was that a division of labour was not only necessary but inevitable to grasp what Nishi Amane called ‘*kekō-soshiki-no-chi*’ (‘結構組織の知’: ‘well-structured’ knowledge).¹⁶ Accordingly, *Daigaku minamikō* was restructured with three distinctive institutions: *Kōshūjo* (講習所), which was further divided into four faculties and various departments, including the faculty of natural sciences (physics, engineering, astronomy, chemistry, zoology and botany, geometry, and geology), the faculty of law (jurisprudence, civil law, constitution, commercial law, criminal law, international law, and economics), the faculty of letters (history, literature, logic, geography, and philosophy), and the department of military studies; *Denshūjo* (伝習所), which was responsible for Western language education as the basic training for students to proceed to specialised learning at *Kōshūjo*; and *Sūgakujo* (数学所), which was specialised in mathematical research and education.¹⁷ This example of the establishment of disciplinary and institutional categories of knowledge at *Daigaku minamikō* clearly illustrates the intellectual predilection to understand the unified yet dispersed nature of Western knowledge through the semantics of *kagaku*. And as I read it, Inoue’s enunciation of *kagaku* on the eve of the promulgation of the Fundamental Code of Education succinctly reflects such intellectual predilection, seeking to offer the political authorisation to institutionalise the idea of *kagaku*, that is, to translate the idea of practical and specialised knowledge into specific institutional categories.

This new propensity towards *kagaku*, hence towards practical and specialised knowledge, permeated well beyond the political centres and beyond the institutional apex of Western learning,

¹⁶ Nishi Amane, *Chisetsu*, 203-205. For Nishi’s rendering of Western knowledge, see my discussion in Chapter 4, pp. 232-250.

¹⁷ Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tūshi, Vol.1*, 155-156.

that is, *Daigaku minamikō*. For instance, immediately after the promulgation of the Fundamental Code of Education, the officials of Sakai prefecture (a part of today's Osaka prefecture) published a short booklet entitled *Gakumon no kokoroe* (学問之心得: Rules for Learning, 1872), which sought to encourage pupils and students at elementary and middle schools to acquire the aptitude towards practical and specialised knowledge appropriate for one's occupation.¹⁸

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丈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べし。

(The primary purpose of schools today is to seek knowledge from around the world, to resuscitate the imperial authority, to altogether reject all misguided teachings of the previous decades, and to use knowledge for practical purposes, whether in agriculture or commerce, with the aim of achieving practical success. General education includes: learning the vernacular language for speaking and writing and basic mathematics; understanding the general principles of all things in the universe; attaining current knowledge about all countries; and knowing everything there is to know about the world through nativist learning, Chinese studies, and Western learning. Refrain from spending time reading, as you have done in the past. Among those students are some gifted and talented ones. They must enter higher school and university, engage with specialised fields of knowledge, and devote themselves to the state.)¹⁹

In this general guideline for learning at the elementary and middle schools, those officials of Sakai prefecture refer to the term '*kagaku*' with the adjective '*senmon*' (専門: specialised) with three

¹⁸ Sakai-ken Gakkō, *Gakumon no kokoroe*, 1872. A digitised version of the original text is accessible online at: <https://dc.lib.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/text/metadata/281> (31.08.2022).

¹⁹ Ibid.

discursive functions: first, to specify the locus of *kagaku*, specialised and practical knowledge, at the apex of the ascending hierarchy of the educational system that one may engage; second, to differentiate *kagaku* from what is taught as general education; and, third, to reiterate the familiar dialectic of (Western) knowledge and the national strength.

Kagaku as Science

From the mid-1870s, there emerged a new discursive orientation to equate the term ‘*kagaku*’ to the English word ‘science.’ Given that the appropriation of Western knowledge and institutionalisation of its various disciplines became one of the primary politico-ideological projects of the Meiji government, it is, perhaps, not so surprising that this discursive and semantic shift was initially forged through materials published by the Ministry of Education.

Take, for example, an article entitled ‘*Beikoku kyōiku shinbun: Kakkyōju-hō*’ (米国教育新聞活教授法: American Journal of Education, Active Teaching Method, 1875) published in *Monbushō zasshi* (文部省雑誌: Journal of the Ministry of Education). This article is a translated version of J.M. Long’s article, ‘Live Teaching’ (1874), initially published in the *American Journal of Education*, which advocates the pedagogy of spontaneous and active learning. The translated Japanese version of the article begins with the following sentences.

教育ハ学問ノ一科ト雖、其義ヲ積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、遂ニ兒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 are called the exact science. In the physical sciences and the mathematics 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 his methods soulless machines, which, instead of rousing the mind into life and activity, tend to deaden and stupefy it.)²⁰

In the original article, which I have also quoted above, Long uses the term ‘science’ in two distinctive ways: ‘a science’ and ‘the exact science.’ This distinction is to suggest that the field of education, which is the primary concern for Long, is as scientific as those fields of natural sciences, but that the result of the scientific approach to education does not always elicit the same outcome as it does in the fields of natural sciences. The idea of ‘science,’ in Long’s article, encompasses both the fields of natural sciences and those fields which are methodologically distinguishable from natural sciences, such as education. The Japanese translation of ‘a science’ and ‘the exact science,’ however, does not aptly communicate the idea of ‘science’ that Long expresses.²¹ In the

²⁰ The Ministry of Education, “*Beikoku kyōiku shinbun: Kakkyōju-hō*,” in the Ministry of Education (ed.), *Monbushō zasshi*, Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1876: 196-197 [196-200]. The article is accessible online at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/809319> (31.08.2022). The English translation is borrowed from Long’s original article. J.M. Long, “Live Teaching,” *American Journal of Education*, 7:12, 1874: 7. For a digitised version of the issue, see https://archive.org/details/sim_american-journal-of-education-1869_1874-12_7_12 (31.08.2022). While German influence on the educational system of Meiji Japan is widely-known – 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, Vol.1*, 424; Takahashi Miho, *Mieji-shoki nni okeru amerika kyōiku-jōhō juyō no kenkyū* (Information on American Education and Its Appropriation in the Early Meiji Period), Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1998.

²¹ As Peter Harrison explains, during the early 19th century, the English term “‘science’ was still used to refer simply to systematic knowledge in general. In 1828, for example, the most widely read literary magazine of the period, the *Athenaeum*, divided the sciences into ‘exact, experimental, speculative, and moral.’” Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 145. However, by the end of the 1860s, the term ‘science’ came to be used, in the English language, with a much more restricted sense. For instance, William George Ward wrote in 1867 that “we shall [...] use the word ‘science’ [...] as expressing physical and experimental science, to the exclusion of theological and

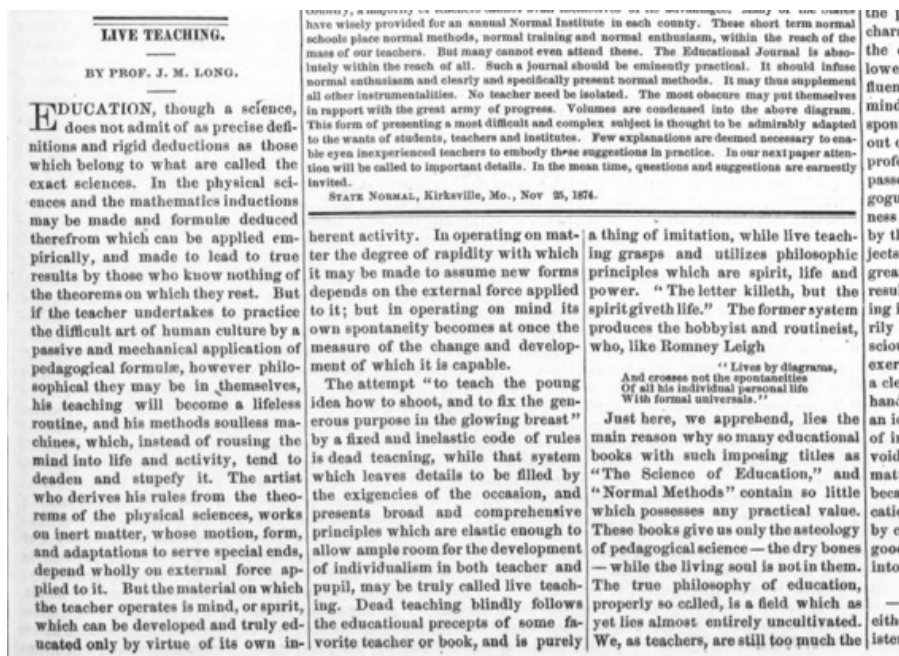
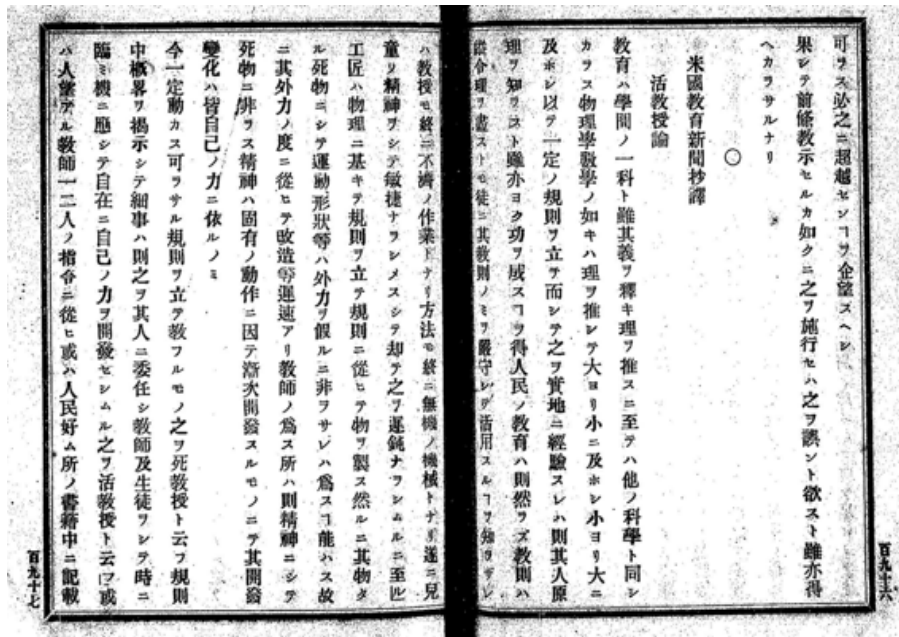


Figure 7-1. Science and *Kagaku*, 'Kakkyōju-ron' (1875) and 'Living Teaching' (1874)

metaphysical." See, William George Ward, "Science, Prayer, Free Will, and Miracles," *Dublin Review*, 8:16, 1867: 255 [255-298].

Japanese translation, ‘a science’ is translated as ‘*gakumon-no-ikka*’ (“*学問ノ一科*”), as a field of knowledge, equating, therefore, ‘science’ to ‘*gakumon*.’ In this instance, this translation reorients the very idea of *gakumon* around the search for systematic knowledge, *scientia*, devoid of human aspirations and desires. In contrast ‘the exact science,’ which Long equates to physics and mathematics, is translated as ‘*kagaku*’ (“*科学*”) to designate specifically those fields of natural sciences that are grounded on both inductive and deductive methods of rendering empirical realities of the natural world observable and representable. In this translation, the term ‘*kagaku*’ is used with a much-restricted meaning, specifically designating those fields of natural sciences marked by empirical certainty (see Figure 7-1).

At this juncture, we see a semantic shift in the idea of *kagaku* – from practical and utilitarian knowledge to knowledge with empirical certainty. And this semantic shift also foregrounds a conceptual shift in categorising knowledge. With *kagaku* equated to knowledge with empirical certainties such as physics and mathematics, other fields of inquiry are relegated to the realm outside the remit of *kagaku* but nonetheless constitute part and parcel of *gakumon*. In other words, *gakumon*, the realm of serious learning and scholarship, is now reorganised with those fields that pursue knowledge with empirical certainties and those that seek knowledge that is not necessarily grounded on empirical certainties.

To illustrate my point further, let me draw here a parallel between these semantic and conceptual shifts and the institutional reorganisation of *Kaisei gakkō* (開成学校: previously known as *Daigaku minamikō*) and explain how those shifts manifested themselves in the institution of knowledge. Previously, this institution was organised along the linguistic axis, in that students would freely choose a Western language for their basic training and then subsequently move on to specialised learning on the basis of that language training. With the 1873 amendments to the

學科	第一學年		第二學年		第三學年	
	第一期	第二期	第一期	第二期	第一期	第二期
學科						
語學	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時
理學	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時
數學	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時
科學	三時	三時	三時	三時	三時	三時
歷史	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時	六時
交際學						
佛語			三時		三時	
書學	三時	三時	三時	三時	三時	三時
唱歌						
体操						

Figure 7-2. Curriculum at Tokyo English School

Fundamental Code of Education, however, *Kaisei gakkō* was reorganised with a new institutional structure based on what we may now call disciplinary divisions. More specifically, the realm of specialised learning – hence, the realm of *gakumon* equated to science – was restructured into three major disciplinarily-divided departments (law, chemistry, and engineering) and two supplementary fields of knowledge (arts and mining science), with English as the institutional lingua franca.²² These new departments were all concerned with

empirical certainties and the applied nature of their knowledge, drawing sustenance from precedence in the empirical world or in the world of human affairs. Not to mention such concern was reflexive of the interests of power, the Meiji government, to attain practical and utilitarian knowledge for realising the teleology of *bunmei kaika* and *fukoku kyōhei*.²³ In short, the restructuration of *Kaisei gakkō* was, as I read it, an instance in which the guiding teleology of the

²² Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi hensyū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tūshi, Vol.1*, 286-288.

²³ To this end, 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.

early Meiji, the politics of knowledge to instrumentalise practical and utilitarian knowledge of the West, and the semantic and conceptual shift in the idea of *kagaku* collided with another and manifested themselves in the new institutional categories of knowledge.

The semantic of *kagaku* as natural sciences, as knowledge with empirical certainties, was then reflected in the curriculums of higher education institutions, such as that of *Tōkyō eigo gakkō* (東京英語学校: Tokyo English School).²⁴ Among those subjects taught at the institution, such as language, mathematics, and history, the curriculum listed ‘*kagaku*’ with rubies ‘サイエンス’ (science) (see Figure 7-2),²⁵ specifying further that *kagaku*/science included lessons on physical geography, introductory zoology, introductory botany, biology and physiology, physics (theories and experiments), and chemistry (theories and experiments).²⁶

Furthermore, the semantic of *kagaku* as fields of natural science was often reiterated by juxtaposing the term either to ‘*geijutsu*’ (芸術: arts), which signified other fields of knowledge that were not necessarily empirically grounded, or to ‘*gijutsu*’ (技術: arts), which designated the application of knowledge to practices.²⁷ For example, Takahashi Isō’s selected translation of an article on British education and teacher’s training published in *Monbushō zasshi* in 1876 juxtaposed *kagaku* (科学: science) to *geijutsu* (芸術: arts), arguing that proper learning must be

²⁴ *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), but subsequently separated as an independent institution in 1873, which the 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.

²⁵ *Tōkyō eigo gakkō*, “*Tōkyō eigo gakkō kyōsoku*” (Rules for Teaching at Tokyo English School), Tokyo: *Tōkyō eigo gakkō*, 1875: 22. The text is available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/813013> (29.08.2022)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23-24, 27, 29.

²⁷ ‘*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’ either into ‘*geijutsu*’ (芸術) or ‘*gijutsu*’ (技術).

organised around the established pedagogy of science and arts respectively.²⁸ What is implied here is that fields of *kagaku*/science and those of *geijutsu*/arts are markedly different, such that not only the pedagogy but also the required training for teaching staff must reflect the specificities of a given field of *kagaku*/science or of *geijutsu*/arts. While this article did not necessarily specify what the difference between *kagaku*/science and *geijutsu*/arts actually was, *Kakubutsu zensho* (格物全書: On Natural Philosophy, 1876), a Japanese translation of Richard Green Parker's *A School Compendium of Natural and Experimental Philosophy* (1856), explains the difference between science and art by juxtaposing *kagaku* to *gijutsu*.

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、フイロソフイ」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。

(The collection, combination, and proper arrangement of such general and particular laws, constitute what is called Science. Thus, we have the science of Chemistry, the science of Geometry, the science of Natural Philosophy, &c. The term art and science have not always been employed with proper discrimination. In general, an art is that which depends on practice or performance, while science is the examination of general laws, or of abstract and speculative principles.)²⁹

²⁸ 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), the Ministry of Education (ed.), *Monbushō zasshi*, Tokyo: the Ministry of Education, 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.

²⁹ Richard Green Parker, *Kakubutsu zensho*, Komiyama Hiromichi (trans.), Nagano: Chōyōsha, 1876: 11. This Japanese translation was in fact by Ōishi Michinao, who was asked by Komiyama to translate the introduction of Parker’s original text. The English translation is borrowed from Parker’s original text. See Richard Green Parker, *A School Compendium of Natural and Experimental Philosophy*, New York, NY: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1956: XV.

In translating Parker's texts, the translator, Ōishi Michinao, defines 'kagaku' as those fields of knowledge pursuing laws and regularities (“定則”) and juxtaposes it to *gijutsu* (art), which he describes as those fields of practical applications of scientific knowledge (“練習術業”).

What is especially noteworthy of this juxtaposition in *Kakubutsu zensho* is that, in tethering the term 'kagaku' to laws and regularities, it offers a much broader understanding of what can be qualified as 'science' than the rigidly defined natural sciences grounded on empirical certainties.

The paragraph quoted above is followed by these sentences.

例へ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」器械術ト云へ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 a rule of art.”)³⁰

³⁰ Parker / Komiyama, *Kakubutsu zensho*, 11-13. For English translation, see Parker, *A School Compendium of Natural and Experimental Philosophy*, XV-XVI.

What qualifies a field of knowledge as ‘science’ no longer depends on its immediate utility and practicality. Nor is it conditional to the *a priori* distinction between the natural and human worlds. Simply put, the idea of *kagaku*, in this enunciation, is not a commodity exclusive to natural sciences. As the example of music here indicates, things that make up the human world can, by principle and definition, be the object of scientific endeavour and, thus, the loci of science. What distinguishes science from art is its intellectual predication towards the abstract, the theoretical, and the general. In other words, the new conceptual boundary enacted between science and art, more precisely between *kagaku* and *gijutsu*, foregrounds a new categorical imperative to distinguish knowledge in its theoretical nature and knowledge in its applied nature. And this new

boundary was reiterated, for instance, by *Tetsugaku-jii* (哲学字彙: Dictionary of Philosophical Terms, 1881), one of the most circulated and influential dictionaries of academic and scientific vocabularies of the late 19th century. In the dictionary, the English term ‘science’ was defined as ‘*rigaku / kagaku*’ (理学 / 科学). Various fields of scholarly inquiries into the human world and the natural world were specified as fields of science with qualifiers, such as ethical science, immaterial science, material science, mental science, moral science, physical science, political science, social science, scientist, sciolism, sciolist, sciomachy, scope, scorn, scripture, scrutiny, search, seclusion

— 8 — 113

School	學派
Schopenhauerism	勺邊哈兒學派
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	世德學 社會學
Scientist	理學士
Sciolism	淺學
Sciolist	淺學士
Sciomachy	口論爭戰
Scope	範圍
Scorn	侮慢 鄙視 嘲笑
Scripture	經文
Scrutiny	究察 推究
Search	推察 尋蹤
Seclusion	隱遁 沈默 獨居 閉關 避世 住 山 石

Figure 7-3. Science, *Tetsugaku-jii*, 1881

science, and social science (See Figure 7-3).³¹ *Kagaku* was no longer a term that designated specifically fields of natural sciences. *Kagaku* was now a term that denoted a specific mode of thinking and reasoning – the predilection towards the abstract based on the collection, combination, and proper arrangement of general and particular laws and regularities – which could apply to inquiries into both the natural world and the human world.

In his article, ‘*Tōkyō Keizai zasshi ni kotau*’ (答東京経済雑誌: My Response to the Tokyo Journal of Economics, 1882), published in *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, Inoue Tetsujirō defines this mode of thinking and reasoning as “*kagaku-no-hō*” (科学の法) and equated it to “サイエンチフヒツク、コルチユール” (scientific culture).³² Then, in another article entitled ‘*Taisei-jin no kōshi o hyōsuru o hyōsuru*’ (泰西人ノ孔子ヲ評スルヲ評ス: Evaluating the European Evaluation of Confucius, 1882), Inoue goes on to compare validity claims of some of the widely-read European writings on ‘Eastern’ religion and philosophy and to explain how this notion of ‘*kagaku-no-hō*,’ or else scientific culture, grounds – and should be the ground for – knowledge. His primary aim in this article is to problematise the unconditional embrace of anything and everything Westerners have said of Japan and Asia and to provide a new ground for judging the validity of knowledge.

³¹ Inoue Tetsujirō and Ariga Nagao, *Tetsugaku-jii*, Tokyo: Tōyōkan, 1881: 113. The text is accessible online at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/994560> (31.08.2022).

³² Inoue Tetsujirō, “*Tōkyō Keizai zasshi ni kotau*” (答東京経済雑誌: My Response to the Tokyo Journal of Economics), *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 6, 1882: 111 [110-115]. A digitised version of the original text is available online at: <https://dglb01.ninjal.ac.jp/ninjaldb/bunken.php?title=toyogakuge> (31.08.2022). Chikami Kiyoomi, (1856-1916) also used the term ‘scientific culture’ in a similar vein as Inoue used it. Chikami wrote, “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、カルチユア)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, taking things at face value and making impetuous decision is clearly a fallacious thing to do. And yet, people never exercise the power of doubt. This is in and of itself an evidence that logical reasoning has not yet developed in Japan because there is no scientific culture.)” See Chikami Kiyoomi, “*Mikan kansatsu no kyobyū*” (未完観察ノ虚謬: Non-Observation Fallacy), *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 13, 1882: 318 [315-319]. A digitised version of the original text is available online at: <https://dglb01.ninjal.ac.jp/ninjaldb/bunken.php?title=toyogakuge> (31.08.2022).

And to do so, his discursive strategy is exceedingly simple. By pointing to the fact that the question of how to characterise Confucianism – as mythology, as theology, as religion, or as philosophical rendering – is not at all a settled matter even among Western scholars, Inoue specifies what he thinks is a ‘proper’ understanding of Confucianism and what grounds his scholarly judgement.

More to the point, by referring to Friedrich Ueberweg’s *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1863), Inoue argues for ‘*kagaku-no-hō*,’ scientific culture, both as the sustenance of ‘serious’ knowledge and as the analytical category for scholarly inquiries.

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。故ニ孔孟ノ理論ノ科学ニ合ハサルヲ惜ムナリ。

(In his *History of Philosophy*, Ueberweg argues that the theories of Confucius and Mencius are not in accord with scientific culture. I see this as a just argument. However, we shall not impetuously conclude that insofar as Confucianism is not scientific culture, it is a delusion. When I say Confucianism is not in accord with scientific culture, I mean that it is not firmly grounded on the rules of logic and reasoning. It is regrettable that the theories of Confucius and Mencius do not conform to scientific thought, but it is precisely why we should not believe them.)³³

Upon arguing so, Inoue seeks to specify the difference between scientific culture and Reason by assessing the viability of Samuel Johnson’s rendering of Confucianism in *Oriental Religions and*

³³ Inoue Tetsujirō, “*Taisei-jin no kōshi o hyōsuru o hyōsuru*,” *Tōyō gakugei zasshi*, 4, 1882: 55 [53-56]. A digitised version of text is available online at: <https://dglb01.ninjal.ac.jp/ninjaldb/bunken.php?title=toyogakuge> (31.08.2022). 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.

Their Relation to Universal Religion (1877), in which Johnson characterises Confucianism as an emblematic mode of philosophical thinking that addresses the question of Reason.

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、且ツ直覚主義ニ由ルナリ」ト。是レユーベルウエグ氏ノ論ト全ク相反ス。蓋シ謬見ヲ免レサル者ナリ。何トナレハ、孔子ノ学ハ何レノ方ヨリ見来ルモ、科学ノ法ニ合フ者ニアラス。思フニ、ジョ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。

(Johnson maintains that Confucius is a philosopher, as he appeals to Reason only, and that insofar as in the Confucian teaching human nature entails the Way of Heaven, it corresponds to scientific culture, specifically its branch of intuitionism. Obviously, such a claim is fallacious, contradicting Ueberweg's argument. Whatever perception one may have of Confucianism, it is by no means a scientific culture. As I read it, the problem of Johnson's claim lies in the fact that he perceives a scientific culture purely in terms of Reason. However, a scientific culture is much more than that – it encompasses a set of definitions, specific vocabulary, and the method of experiment. If we are to understand a scientific culture merely in terms of Reason, any theory, granted it does not consider Reason, would be irrelevant for that culture.)³⁴

Such a comparative rendering effectively endorses an idea of '*kagaku*' not merely as a mode of thinking and reasoning but as that which is regulated by an *a priori* established set of ontological,

³⁴ Inoue, "*Taisei-jin no kōshi o hyōsuru o hyōsuru*," 55-56. In the original texts, Johnson evaluated Confucianism 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 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.

epistemological and methodological presumptions. Inoue's concept of '*kagaku-no-hō*,' scientific culture, designates much more than the human faculties of drawing logical inferences. It also designates much more than mere contents of scientific knowledge, such as a specific theory of gravity or anatomical knowledge of the human body. '*Kagaku-no-hō*,' scientific culture, is a form of knowledge and, by extension, a mode of pursuing knowledge. The idea of *kagaku*, that is to say, the idea through that which knowledge is validated as 'serious,' is now grounded on the *a priori* established presumptions of scientific inquiries, including a set of definitions, specific vocabulary, and the method of experiment, which solidify the otherwise swampy nature of the ground of knowledge (“基本ヲ鞏固ニスル”).

The unfolding of the idea of *kagaku*, especially in the early years of Meiji, as a new vernacular of intellectual life may be a historical contingency. The political interest in and demand of acquiring practical and utilitarian knowledge of the West, the (re)institutionalisation of Western knowledge with a specific division of labour based on disciplinary rather than geographical categories, and the expanding scope of and specialisation among the scholars of Western knowledge – these political and intellectual dispositive together articulated an enabling condition for the idea of *kagaku* to unfold in a specific way it did. Contingent as this unfolding may be, the gradual ebbing of the term *kyūri* away from the intellectual and political semantic space and the popularisation of *kagaku*, in its stead, had far-reaching epistemic consequences.

The shift from *kyūri* to *kagaku* was not a mere lexical shift in the Japanese language. It signalled a shift towards a new mode of legitimating knowledge and, accordingly, towards a new way of pursuing knowledge. Recall here the idea of *kyūri* reconfigured towards the end of the Edo period. *Kyūri*, initially a Neo-Confucian concept that designated the pursuit of the transcendental principle, now came to characterise intellectual exercises within various knowledge traditions, hence various

modes of thinking and reasoning that sustained, for instance, *Kogaku*, *Kokugaku*, *Jōrigaku*, and importantly also *Rangaku* (Western knowledge). Any knowledge tradition that sought to understand *ri* – defined variously, as the absolute transcendence, as the reason for thinking and judgement, as the mythical and ineffable intention of the heavenly deities, as the universal law, or as laws of nature – was considered as partaking *kyūri*, as a ‘serious’ intellectual endeavour to understand the workings of the world. However, the unfolding of the idea of *kagaku* had engendered a new validity claim for legitimising a knowledge tradition as ‘proper’ and ‘serious’ – a validity claim grounded on the *a priori* established presumptions of scientific inquires. To this end, the idea of *kagaku* had become a lexical and conceptual foundation to promote and validate a specific mode of thinking and reasoning, *scientia*, not as a supplement to expand the scope of knowledge, nor as a mere practical and utilitarian knowledge for state-building, but as *the* mode of thinking and reasoning to arrive at truths about the natural and human world. Put otherwise, the unfolding of the idea of *kagaku* and its subsequent popularisation signalled an instance of reconfiguring the intellectual and epistemic landscape. The idea of *kagaku*, that is to say, the idea that the pursuit of knowledge must be grounded on ‘scientific culture,’ or else on a set of ontological, epistemological, and methodological presumptions, effectively enacted a new boundary between science and non-science, between knowledge and non-knowledge. The familiar imbrication of *ri* and knowledge – however one may define *ri* – was no longer the qualification of that which would make a knowledge tradition ‘serious’; ‘scientific culture’ was now the primary qualifier for knowledge to be recognised as ‘valid’ and ‘serious.’ Pursuing knowledge was now understood as to grasp *ri* of the natural and human world through applying scientific methods and principles, hence with the predilection towards scientificity.

7.2. At the Intersection of ‘Scientific Culture’ and the Knower

This shift from *kyūri* to *kagaku* does not necessarily mean that ‘scientific culture’ – its worldview and its idea of what knowledge ought to be – had immediately established itself as a benchmark, as a guiding principle of intellectual exercises. The idea that the pursuit of knowledge must be grounded on ‘scientific culture’ engendered a quandary, which participated in the broader paradox of becoming modern while simultaneously being different. More specifically, the quandary was between ‘ought’ and ‘be’: between, on the one hand, what knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge ought to be and, on the other hand, what – and what Meiji intellectuals thought – the state of knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge in Japan actually were. In other words, the idea of *kagaku* foregrounded a realisation – whether fitting or otherwise – that intellectual exercises in Japan were still replete with that which were seemingly incongruous with ‘scientific culture’ and that to reorient the mode of thinking and reasoning towards ‘scientific culture’ – in order not only to understand what scientific culture was but also to embody it in one’s intellectual exercises – it was necessary to specify what it meant to produce knowledge *scientifically*.

Importantly, this is not a mere question about scientificity, that is to say, a question about the application of scientific methods and principles. This is also a question about the knower who utilises and applies such methods and principles for thinking and reasoning. Suppose ‘scientific culture’ is, as Inoue explains, the process of knowing the world through logic and reasoning, through analytical categories and experiments, hence the process of establishing objective facts about the world. Then, ‘scientific culture’ also presumes a specific nature, aptitude and positionality of the knower as the primary bearer of that process of knowing. As I read it, it is

precisely for this reason that the unfolding of the idea of *kagaku* is followed by the unfolding of the idea of *shukan* in the 1880s and 1890s as the primary semantic and conceptual locus for the question about the knower, more precisely the question about the knowing Self – the ‘I’ that views the world objectively and that arrives at truths about the world scientifically.

A wide array of texts had spawned out of this concern of the knowing Self. In the following, I engage with some of the seminal texts written by Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902) and Nishi Amane and suggest how translation – once again – became the primary strategy to articulate the idea of *shukan*, the knowing Self, within the Japanese semantic space. As it will become clearer as my argument develops, in Nishimura’s and Nishi’s writings, the question of the knowing Self was discursively resolved by weaving together the Western associationist psychological notion of ‘consciousness’ of the knowing subject and the (Neo-)Confucian notion of ‘conscience.’ Through their discursive enunciations based on their translational practices emerged, as I seek to argue, the contour of the Self that knew the world (objective knowledge) and that simultaneously knew that it knew (self-knowledge).

On Consciousness, the Self, and Knowledge

One of the central issues for Nishimura Shigeki was the difference – imagined or otherwise – between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ forms of knowing, which Nishimura perceived as being perpetuated by the polemical debates that tended to overemphasise the difference. In ‘*Tōyō-gakkai no zento*’ (東洋学会の前途: The Future of the Association for Oriental Studies, 1888), Nishimura

directly addressed the issue and sought to establish an intellectual orientation to weave together these two forms of knowing, rather than to simply replace one with the other.³⁵

His discursive schema begins with categorising various fields of knowledge into three kinds of scholarship that he considers prevalent in the contemporary academy: those fields that engage with the human world, which combine ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ forms of knowing; those fields that seek to understand the natural world, resorting primarily to the ‘Western’ form of knowing to attain the facts about the natural world of the ‘East’; and those fields of self-knowledge, which primarily follow the ‘Eastern’ form of knowing.³⁶ As Nishimura elucidates, these categories of scholarship are not value-free. They have derived precisely from the specific relationship between the East and the West (“東洋西洋ノ關係上ヨリ觀ルニ”) that is marked by the political realities of the late 19th century and by the self-purported superiority of the West projected onto the East.

In expanding further on the first category, Nishimura endorses the perspective that the human world is manifestly heterogeneous. To know the truth about the heterogenous human world, one must pursue a holistic knowledge that encompasses both the East and the West.

政治、經濟、道德、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觀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觀セザレバ、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

³⁵ Nishimura Shigeaki, “Tōyō-gakkai no zento,” *Tōyō-gakkai zasshi*, 2:7, 1888: 1-6. My reference is based on Nishimura Shigeaki, “Tōyō-gakkai no zento,” in Matsumoto Sannosuke and Yamamuro Shinichi (eds.), *Nihon kinndai shisō taikai, Vol.10: Gakumon to chishikijin* (Japanese Modern Thought, Vol.10: Scholarships and Intellectuals), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988: 94-99. *Tōyō-gakkai* (The Association for Oriental Studies) was established in May 1886 by scholars such as 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.

³⁶ The original text reads, “東洋西洋ノ關係上ヨリ觀ルニ、学科ニ三種ノ別アリ。其一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、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。” Nishimura, “Tōyō-gakkai no zento,” 95.

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。

(The study of politics, economics, ethics, psychology, philosophy, and linguistics must be pursued by combining Western and Eastern scholarship. Subject matters of these studies are intangible, such that how they are perceived in the East is not the same as how they are perceived in the West and that some theorisations are precise, others inaccurate, some grand, and others narrow. If we do not have a clear comprehension of how the East and the West respectively perceive the world, we will not be able to attain the whole picture. If we judge the truth or falsehood of these theories based on a biased view, we will fall into the error of what Zen masters call “seeing only one aspect of a thing and not understanding the whole.” Therefore, to develop a theory of those matters in the East, we must equip ourselves with both Eastern and Western perspectives and avoid making impetuous judgements.)³⁷

For Nishimura, the scope of knowledge in those fields of politics, economics, ethics, psychology, philosophy, and linguistics should not be limited to one spatially bounded location, be it the East or the West. One must pursue the totality of knowledge by attaining an appropriate understanding of the multitude of theories and theses that explain why the human world is what it is. Yet, Nishimura cautions us that one theory cannot adequately explain every aspect of the lifeworld. All the more so if there is a multitude of lifeworlds, each of which is marked by its specificities.

As I read it, this acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of the human world – the object of knowledge of those scholarly fields – is especially interesting, as it conspicuously enables an argument that difference does not exist as such but becomes visible only in one’s relation to others. In other words, Nishimura seems to imply here that the East – Japan included – and its particularities become comprehensible when and only when juxtaposed to other bounded locations, such as the West, and that the Self – be it the Eastern or Japanese – can be recognised as such only in its relation to the non-Self, the Other. To this end, his claim for combining the ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ forms of knowing does not necessarily mean dialectically establishing a middle ground.

³⁷ Ibid.

Instead, it means understanding particularities of political, economic, and linguistic conditions as well as the ethical, psychological, and philosophical orientation of the East compared to the West, and vice versa. Through this discursive schema emerges a figure of the East, of Japan, of the Self as a spatially, historically, and culturally bounded entity and, hence, as the repository of specific historical and cultural knowledge.

On the second category, Nishimura elucidates in a similar vein and calls for establishing theories of the East which could be comparable to theories of the West. As he writes,

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 field of physics, chemistry, geography, geology, and natural history [here specifically zoology, botany, mineralogy and physiology] have been relying on Western scholarship to understand things Eastern. [...] The East has developed its own knowledge in those fields, and the classificatory schema of Western scholars is very different from that 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 the observable facts.)³⁸

To reiterate, Nishimura's emphasis here is not on emulating Western scholarship, its theories, and its classificatory schemas. The emphasis is rather on establishing a specifically Eastern perspective by comparing a mode of inquiry prevalent in the East to that of the West and by validating these theoretical and categorical schemas vis-à-vis facts about nature. And this emphasis on establishing an Eastern perspective is, yet again, rehearsed through Nishimura's rendering of the third category of scholarship that seeks to produce self-knowledge.

³⁸ Ibid., 95-96.

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 of the academic theories of this association are based on this. 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 when we appropriate Western scholarship to study our own country, we must aim not at emulating its theories but perfecting them.)³⁹

Upon dividing various fields of knowledge into the knowledge of the human world, of the natural world, and self-knowledge, Nishimura goes on to explain why he thinks it necessary to position Western knowledge as the point of reference for expanding the horizon of Eastern knowledge. If one wishes to expand the horizon of knowledge (here, Eastern knowledge), the question should not only be about the accumulation of more ‘contents’ of knowledge but also be about the very method of accumulating knowledge (“蓋シ時運ノ開クルニ従ヒ、学問ノ研究考察其法ヲ進ムルハ自然ノ理ナリ”).⁴⁰ It is because sophisticated methodologies are the foundation for the progress of *gakumon*. Furthermore, as Nishimura sees it, the strength and vigour

³⁹ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 94.

of Western knowledge lie in its methodology (“其研究考察ノ法”), such that Western knowledge offers ways to refine methodological orientations of Eastern knowledge.⁴¹ The point of this enunciation is not its discursive plausibility but its efficacy to recentre the concern about Western knowledge around *scientificity*, rather than around the accumulation of its contents, which Nishimura sees as a crucial exercise to establish methodologically sound perspectives and theories of the East, of ‘our own country,’ of the Self.

As I read it, articulating the Self has a double function here. First, it is through this Self that fields of knowledge are to be reconfigured and reorganised so that intellectual exercises will be a ‘production’ of knowledge rather than mere emulation of Western knowledge. Inasmuch as the purported oppositionality between the East and the West is a discursive device for the geo-cultural imagination of the Self, this Self is a cognitive device through which the human and natural worlds are rendered scientifically as the repository of knowledge. Second, it is also through this Self that fields of self-knowledge are to be reorientated away from China, which, for Nishimura, has long been treated as the source of the Japanese Self.

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、俱ニ其時代ノ实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 discuss the depth of scholarly tradition, scholarship in Japan can never be compared to that in China. This is why politicians and scholars alike have, since ancient times, promoted Chinese scholarly tradition as the mode of public learning and not regarded the Japanese scholarly practice with any significance [...] The

⁴¹ Ibid., 95.

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 Japanese scholarly practice has been limited to history writing. Of course, there are documents such as imperial edicts, laws, and writings, but they merely represent the practical necessity of a given period. Nothing embodies the entirety of what scholarship ought to be.)⁴²

What we see here in this enunciation is a twofold critique. One is a critique of how power has been authorising what constitutes ‘appropriate’ knowledge. Nishimura is obviously concerned with the fact that not only scholars but also the political authority has been treating the Chinese knowledge tradition as if it is ‘our’ own, conflating the Other with the Self.⁴³ The other critique is of the predilection to treat knowledge merely for its practicality and utility, the understanding of which is spatio-temporally specific because what is practical and useful depends on demands for knowledge that is context-specific and because such demands often treat knowledge not as a form of thinking and reasoning but as mere contents. For Nishimura, the question of how practical and useful some contents of knowledge can be cannot be the fundamental criteria for judging the adequacy of knowledge. The adequacy lies rather in its methods, in its form, which is sustained by a specific position of the knower to view the world objectively – the human world, the natural

⁴² Ibid., 97.

⁴³ In the same breath, Nishimura also criticises the Meiji government as having a similar tendency to treat the knowledge tradition of the Other, now the West, as knowledge to be appropriated and disseminated through a hierarchised modern educational system. As he wrote, “王政維新後、政府ニテ従来ノ儒学ヲ廢シ、西洋ノ学ヲ以テ之ニ代ヘ、其干渉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。(After the Meiji Restoration, the government abolished Confucianism and replaced it with Western learning as the sole source of education. Western learning has gained, therefore, the dominant status similar to Confucianism during the feudal period, while learning of Self has been relegated, just as it was during the feudal period, to the outside the scope of official education.)” See, *ibid.*, 96-97. Of course, such assessment serves a specific end, that is, to forge a space of self-knowledge. The problem here is that, at least in this text, Nishimura never clearly specifies what exactly he means by ‘learning of Self’ (“本邦ノ学”).

world, and also, importantly, the Self – and which foregrounds, or at least is thought to foreground, a possibility to attain proper knowledge in its entirety.

Of course, this idea 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 subject and the object of knowledge? What is the enabling condition for such recognition? In his *Shingaku kōgi* (心学講義: Lectures on Psychology, 1892), Nishimura addresses these questions by distinguishing what he calls ‘*jishiki*’ (自識: consciousness) as the most fundamental ground for or faculty of human cognition from the other functions of the human mind including ‘*shikisei*’ (識性: the faculty of thinking, judgement, reasoning, abstraction), ‘*kansei*’ (感性: the faculty of feeling, senses, desires), and ‘*isei*’ (意性: the faculty of instinct, intention).⁴⁴ The section on ‘*jishiki*’ in *Shingaku kōgi* begins as follows.

自識コンシュスネス

已ニ心ノ性相ヲ分ツテ三性ト為シタルトキハ、初メニ其第一性ナル識性ヲ論ズベキナレドモ、其第一性ヨリ猶先キニ論ゼザルベカラザル者アリ。自識是ナリ。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: Upon dividing the function of the human mind into three faculties, the first to be discussed is the faculty of thinking, judgement, reasoning, and abstraction. However, there is something I must specify, which is what I call ‘consciousness.’ Consciousness does not belong to any of the three faculties, but it is that which works through all three faculties. Consciousness is the prerequisite which enables us to understand all faculties, all the functions, of our mind. [...])

⁴⁴ Nishimura Shigeki, *Shingaku kōgi, Vol.1 and Vol.2*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa hanshichi, 1892. The text is available online. For the first volume, see <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/759681> (07.09.2022), and for the second volume, see <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/759682> (07.09.2022).

Consciousness is a form of knowledge that exists not outside but within the human mind. Therefore, when I say that I know the workings of my mind through consciousness, I mean that my mind is aware of its own phenomena.)⁴⁵

To put it simply, '*jishiki*' (consciousness) is the operative of three faculties of the human mind that variously mediate man's interaction with the external world – as the object of thinking, judgement, reasoning, and abstraction, or as the stimulus of feelings, senses, and desires, or as that which instinct and intention act upon. Then, Nishimura further specifies the relationship between '*jishiki*' (consciousness) and those three faculties of the human mind.

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 faculties of the mind [or else, the workings of the mind, psychological phenomena] are all but in one's mind. Consciousness is subjective, and faculties are objective. And knowing that consciousness is the subject and that those faculties are the object is also the work of that consciousness.)⁴⁶

Nishimura's use of the terms *shukan* (主観: subjective) and *kyakkan* (客観: objective) here may be slightly confusing, for it does not necessarily correspond to what these terms denote in today's semantics that equates the former to the knowing subject and the latter to the object known that is external to the subject.⁴⁷ Perhaps, the best way to understand Nishimura's enunciation here is to

⁴⁵ Nishimura, *Shingaku kōgi*, Vol. I, 94-96.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁷ Although Nishimura also explained the term '*shutai*' (主体) as the subject and '*kyakutai*' (客体) as the object, he simply suggested the former as the intangible, including the human mind, and the latter as the tangible. The original text read, “心既ニ無形ナルトキハ、有形物ト相反シ互ニ表裏ヲ為ス者ナリ。即チ無形物ハ主体サブゼクトト為リ、有形物ハ客体オブゼクトトナリ [...]” Ibid., 51. To note, the term '*kyakutai*' (客体) had been a prevalent word both in the Chinese and Japanese semantics, which originated in the Chinese language during the Zhou dynasty in China, and which initially designated 'the appearance of the visitor' or 'appropriate behaviours of the visitor.' What we see here in Nishimura's enunciation is the apparent semantic transvaluation of the term '*kyakutai*.'

recognise his conceptualisation of *shukan* and *kyakkan* as something akin, respectively, to the Latin terms *subiectum* (ontologically an individual entity and linguistically the subject of a sentence) and *obiectum* (representation of an external thing, hence that which mediates the relationship between the individual entity and the external worlds).⁴⁸ Then, as I understand it, consciousness, in Nishimura's enunciation, is the state of the Self to consciously experience – that is to say, know, sense, and project upon – the world. Consciousness is the very vehicle of such experiences, or else, the very reason why humans experience the world through the act of knowing, sensing, and projecting. Hence, consciousness is the ground for recognising the Self as the subject of such experiences.

At the onset, Nishimura's rendering of consciousness, the primary faculty of the human mind to transubstantiate the Self into a thinking entity, appears to be analogous to the Cartesian notion of *res cogitans* – a non-physical substance that composes of that which is often referred to as consciousness. As Descartes maintains,

There are other acts which we call 'acts of thought', such as understanding, willing, imagining, having sensory perceptions, and so on: these all fall under the common concept of thought or perception or consciousness, and we call the substance in which they inhere a 'thinking thing' or a 'mind'.⁴⁹

And he specifies further what he means by *pensée*, that is, 'thought' or a conscious cognitive process.

⁴⁸ More specifically, such usage of *subiectum* and *obiectum* derives respectively from Greek term 'ὑποκείμενον' (*hypokeimenon*) and 'αντικείμενο' (*antikeimeno*). See Harold P. Cook and Hugh Tredennick (eds. and trans.), *Aristotle: The Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962: 14-17.

⁴⁹ 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].

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.⁵⁰

It is important to recognise here, however, that there is an irrefutable difference between Nishimura’s enunciation of ‘*jishiki*’ (consciousness) and Descartes’ designation of consciousness. The difference is in the scope of that which consciousness acts upon. Nishimura clarifies this difference as the distinction between metaphysics and psychology. Since the time of Plato and Aristotle, as Nishimura maintains, the study of consciousness in the Western intellectual tradition has been constituted as a branch of philosophy called metaphysics.⁵¹ By using the familiar (Neo-)Confucian oppositions, such as between ‘what is above’ (形而上) and ‘what is below’ (形而下), between ‘the Way’ (道理) and ‘the constant’ (常理), Nishimura explains metaphysics as the philosophical exploration of comprehending not only the mind but also all the intangible, arguing that Descartes, along with Nicolas Malebranche, Leibnitz, and John Locke, sought to grasp consciousness as the metaphysical ground for all knowledge about the intangible.⁵² Nishimura,

⁵⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁵¹ Nishimura, *Shingaku kōgi*, Vol. I, 12-13.

⁵² Ibid., 13-15. He wrote, “「メタフィジックス」ノ語ハ、最初ハ形而後トカ形而上トカ云ヘル義ニシテ、専ラ心ヲ指スノ名称ニハ非ザリシ [...]。 ” 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 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.

then, refers to Rudolph Goclenius, who is often credited with coining the term ‘*Psychologie*,’ and Christian Wolff, who wrote extensively on empirical psychology, arguing that the historical development of the field of psychology as a distinctive scholarship separated from philosophy.⁵³ For Nishimura, concerns about consciousness, hence concerns about the Self and about the ground of thinking, should belong not to the realm of metaphysics but to the realm of psychology. Instead of pursuing an interest in the larger structure of human experiences of all the intangibles that make up the world, Nishimura urges the reader to pursue, within the narrowly defined field of psychology, the principles by which consciousness and faculties of the human mind interact with one another.⁵⁴

「サイコロジイ」ハ専ラ自験上ヨリ心ヲ論ズル者ニシテ、心ノ現象（喜怒哀樂ノ類）心ノ法則（快樂ヲ求メ苦痛ヲ避ルノ類）及ビ直接ノ原因[...]ヲ論ズルヲ以テ主トシ、総テ吾自識[...]ニ入ル所ヲ以テ限リトシ、自識ニ入ラザル所ノコトハ一切之ヲ論ゼズ [...]

(Psychology is the study of the human mind based on one’s own experiences and is concerned mainly with the phenomena of the human mind (emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure), the principles of the human mind (why people seek pleasure and avoid pain), and the direct causes of those phenomena or the principles – everything that falls into the realm of consciousness. Therefore, consciousness defines the horizon of psychology.)⁵⁵

⁵³ Nishimura, *Shingaku kōgi*, Vol.1, 15-16.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18-19. More specifically, Nishimura specified two methods of psychological intervention in the workings of consciousness. One is what he called “実験ノ「サイコロジイ」ハ又之ヲ後天ノ心学アポステリオリ”(experimental psychology, or a posteriori psychology), which seeks to observe what is experienced and how it is experienced. And the other is what he called “推理ノ「サイコロジイ」ハ又之ヲ先天ノ心学アプリオリ”(psychology of reasoning, or a priori psychology), which seeks to understand something unobservable, such as the nature of the mind or spirituality, by employing logical reasoning.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 17.

The scope of psychology that Nishimura understands is relatively limited compared to metaphysics, only concerning the realm of consciousness. But it is this consciousness (and the study thereof, hence psychology) that, as he argues, constitutes the ground for all 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 maintain peace – everything begins with the mind. Therefore, psychology constitutes the foundation for studying law, economics, ethics, and politics. Not only such scholarships on 'what is above,' but also those scholarships on 'what is below,' such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, natural history, and physiology, require one to know general ideas of psychology in order to attain adequate knowledge.)⁵⁶

Nishimura's enunciation of the Self and consciousness and his treatment of psychology as the scholarly locus for asking fundamental questions on faculties of thinking and reasoning may be objectionable. Nevertheless, there are two salient points we must – and I shall – consider and expand on further. One is the semantics of '*shukan*' (主観: the subject) that Nishimura equates to consciousness. Nishimura emphasises in *Shingaku kōgi* that the idea of consciousness is entirely a 'Western' idea and that scholarly traditions hitherto prevalent in Japan, such as (Neo-)Confucianism, equip themselves neither with the conceptual language nor intellectual predilection to ground knowledge in consciousness. However, if we are to trace the semantic genealogy of *shukan*, which begins with Nishi Amane coining this Japanese term and which I shall

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2-3.

discuss shortly in the following, we cannot but recognise the inadequacy of Nishimura's claim. We cannot but recognise that the idea of *shukan*, more specifically, the idea of consciousness that is said to sustain *shukan*, is, in fact, articulated at the liminal semantic and conceptual space between, on the one hand, the Western associationist psychological notion of 'consciousness' and, on the other hand, the (Neo-)Confucian notion of '*shendu*' (慎独: conscience) that constituted the nucleus of Zhu Xi's moral psychology. To this end, the semantics of *shukan* must be treated here as something that embeds within itself a possibility of discursive difference – a possibility that the discursive sustenance of *shukan* may be different from the discursive sustenance of the (Western) subject. The other point that requires further qualification is the ways in which the idea of consciousness, articulated in such a liminal space, determines the scope of the knowing subject and the scope of knowledge. To put it more precisely, if consciousness is the ground for thinking and reasoning, hence the ground for the knowing subject, but if consciousness is the state of the Self to experience the world consciously, therefore, to know the world consciously, every knowledge, in principle, will be mediated through the Self. At this juncture arises the question of how the Self was enacted under the specific political, social, and intellectual conditions of the early Meiji period. While a wide array of discussions among Meiji intellectuals had spawned out of this question, at least in the realm of *gakumon*, this question came to entail a concern about how to reposition Japan (the collective Self) within the complex entanglement of the West and the East, modern and non-modern, universal and particular, becoming and being.

In the Liminal Space between (Western) Consciousness and (Confucian) Conscience

Almost two decades before Nishimura's enunciation of 'shukan' (主観: the subject) and 'jishiki' (自識: consciousness), the term *shukan* first entered into the Japanese semantic space with Nishi Amane's translation of Joseph Haven's *Mental Philosophy* (1857), in which Haven explained, in conjunction with the history of Western philosophy, three aspects of the human mind – the intellect, the sensibility, and the will – as the primary faculties of self-reflection and of sociality.⁵⁷ As Nishi admits, the term *shukan* is an invented word, which designates the English adjective 'subjective' and which Haven defines as one of the central elements of the human mind to perceive objects.⁵⁸ More specifically, Nishi explains that,

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

⁵⁷ Joseph Haven, *Shinrigaku*, Nishi Amane (trans.), 1875. My reference hereafter to this text is based on the 1878 edition published by Meiji shobō.

⁵⁸ In the translator's preface, Nishi explains the difficulty of translating the Western philosophical and psychological lexicons and the necessity, therefore, to invent new Japanese terms by using Chinese characters as the standard vehicle. As Nishi writes, “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、覺性、悟性等ノ若キ、又致知家ノ述語、觀念、實在、主観、客観、帰納、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へ、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. There is no appropriate Japanese lexicon for translation. Nor Chinese Confucian theories are of much help, as these European texts use far more detailed categories to analyse human nature, and because these categories at times even have multiple meanings. Therefore, I had to choose what I thought were the appropriate Chinese characters and to invent new words. While 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), those terms such as reason (*risei* 理性), sensibility (*kansei* 感性), sense (*kakusei* 覺性), understanding (*gosei* 悟性), idea (*kannen* 觀念), being (*jitsuzai* 實在), 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), are my own inventions. Perhaps, some readers may find these terms difficult to comprehend. Therefore, [...] when necessary, I sought to provide the general meaning of the original texts, rather than word-by-word translation, so that the reader can surmise and ponder these terms in a specified context and thus can grasp the gist of the text.) See Nishi, *Shinrigaku*, 1-2.

ルニテ心自己、即チ此我ナル者ニ拘ハラス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 not-me – of ourselves as thinking and sentient beings, and of objects external to ourselves, and material, – 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 of an object capable of being perceived.)⁵⁹

Put schematically, *shukan* entails, in Nishi's translation, the consciousness of humans to perceive oneself as 'I,' as the Self, being independent of and autonomous from the external world (subjective consciousness), while *kyakkan*, a twin concept to *shukan*, is the consciousness to perceive things external to that 'I,' the Self (objective consciousness).⁶⁰ Importantly, as Haven argues, and as Nishi translates, consciousness – in Nishi's translation, '*ishiki*' (意識), whether subjective or objective, cannot be placed "among the faculties of the mind, as distinct from and

⁵⁹ 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.

⁶⁰ Here, we see the obvious parallel between Haven's definition of subjective and objective and Nishimura's articulation of '*jishiki*' (consciousness that is subjective) and three faculties of mind that know, sense, and project upon the external world (that is objective). See my discussion on Nishimura's works above.

coordinate with them,”⁶¹ because consciousness and the faculties of the mind manifesting themselves as specific acts of the mind (such as knowing, sensing, and intending) were “inseparable in time” and “incapable of being distinguished as distinct states of mind.”⁶² To this end, “all consciousness, properly so called, involves the idea of self, or the subjective element.”⁶³ And the possessor of such consciousness is defined as the subject, which Nishi translates here as ‘*shui*’ (主位).⁶⁴

The term *shukan*, as we have just seen, is invented through Nishi’s translational practices to designate not ‘the subject’ but ‘subjective’ – a form of consciousness that enables humans to know themselves. The temptation is, then, to bet on this semantic equilibrium between ‘*shukan*’ and ‘subjective’ that Nishi seeks to establish in his translation. However, as I argue, the idea of *shukan* cannot be treated as a mere translation of a Western psycho-philosophical vocabulary. Nor can we presume that the idea of ‘*shukan*’ transparently conveys the meaning of the English words ‘subjective consciousness.’ It is because, as I shall expand further shortly, the very idea of *ishiki* that encompasses ‘*shukan*’ and ‘*kyakkan*’ – the sustenance of the mind to know, sense, or intend – is, in its semantics, replete with the remnants of (Neo-)Confucian thought.

In his earlier work, ‘*Seisei-hatsuun*’ (生性發蘊: The Relationship between the Physical and the Spiritual, 1871-1873), Nishi expounds Johann Fichte’s idealism as that which revolved essentially

⁶¹ Haven, *Mental Philosophy*, 43. In Nishi’s translation, “意識ニ心ノ能力中ノ一座ヲ假シテ、諸能力ヨリ独立シテ同列タラシムルコトヲ難スルナリ。” See, Haven, *Shinrigaku*, 43.

⁶² 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.

⁶³ Haven, *Mental Philosophy*, 44. In Nishi’s translation, “意識ト名ツクル者ハ、凡チ自己ノ意ヲ含ム者ニテ主観（サブゼクチウ）ニ就キテ言フ者ナリ。” See Haven, *Shinrigaku*, 45.

⁶⁴ Haven, *Shinrigaku*, 269.

around the concerns for consciousness (*ishiki* 意識) and sensation (*kankaku* 感覺).⁶⁵ Then, in a footnote, he further specifies what he means by *ishiki*.

英コンシウスニッス、佛コンネサンス、日ベウウツトサイン、蘭ベウウツトヘイト。爰ニ意識ト訳ス。我カ感覺作用心裏ニ起ル時、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 ‘I’ know that I know, its subject of knowledge is called ‘*dokuchi*’ [独知: self-knowledge], and its action is called ‘*ishiki*.’)⁶⁶

On this double function of consciousness as the subject and as an action, Nishi elucidates further in his *Seisei-sakki* (生性筭記: Reading Notes on the Physical and the Spiritual, 1884).⁶⁷

心理メンタル之分解アナリシス首別三大部、智インテルレクト情イモーシウン意ウィル是也 [...] 夫意者爲君主、而君主之職任曰意識。英語孔修斯尼士コンシユースニス、是其所以親臨萬機也
(To analyse the human mind, I shall distinguish its function into three: intellect, emotion, and will. [...] The will is the sovereign, and the primary function of the sovereign is what is called in English ‘consciousness,’ which foregrounds the intellect and the emotion.)⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Nishi Amane, *Seisei-hatsuun*, 33. The original text reads, “非布埜ヒフテノ觀念学ハ、意識ヲ以テ、此我レナル者トシ、感覺ヲ以テ、此我レニ非サル者トス。”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 35. On ‘*kankaku*’ (感覺), Nishi wrote, “英センセーション、佛サンサーション、日エムプフィンヅング、蘭ケウアールウオルヂング。爰ニ感覺ト訳ス五官ノ能ナリ。(In English, sensation; in French, sensation; in German, *Empfindung*; in Dutch, *gewaarwording*. Here, translated as ‘*kankaku*’ [感覺], which means faculties of five senses.)” See *ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁷ Nishi Amane, *Seisei-sakki*, 130-164.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

Upon determining consciousness as the primary function of knowing and sensing, Nishi argues that it operates in two distinctive ways: to perceive things external to the mind (“吾知其物”) and to know that ‘I’ perceive things external to ‘I’ (“吾又知我知其物”).⁶⁹

To be sure, this understanding of consciousness in its double function is nothing new. Nishi makes, as we have just seen, a similar point in his translation of Haven’s *Mental Philosophy*. So too does Nishimura, albeit decades later, in his *Shingaku kōgi*, as we have also seen earlier. What is especially notable about Nishi’s rendering here is that, at this juncture of proposing consciousness as the state of knowing that ‘I’ know, Nishi resorts to the familiar discourses of moral and ethical conclusions of Confucianism as being analogous to the idea of consciousness, hence as something with an explanatory purchase to convey what he means by consciousness. More specifically, Nishi identifies the Confucian discourses of moral and ethical conclusions as the discourses of ‘conscience’ (“英語孔臆然斯コンサイイーシス”), which he understands as an awareness of whether one’s action is (im)moral and (un)ethical.⁷⁰ He elucidates the parallel between consciousness (the state of knowing that ‘I’ know) and conscience (the awareness of right and wrong) as follows.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 135. 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 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 [1817]: 256. See also Dean Moyar, *Hegel’s Conscience*, Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.

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、英語孔臆然斯コンサイイーシス、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、己独知之、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。⁷¹

(There is also a kind of mental technique that is connected to consciousness, [...] which assumes the pivotal position of the study of ethics and which has been taken up by both Eastern Confucians and Western philosophers. In English, this is called ‘conscience.’ The concept of *cheng yi* [誠意: sincerity] and the theory of *dokuchi* [独知: in the original Chinese text 慎独 *shendu*, which Nishi here interprets as 独知] in *Daxue* (the Great Learning) deal specifically with the concern for conscience. Humans are, to varying degrees, guided by knowledge and stirred by emotion. But the first sprout of the workings of our mind, consciousness, is the natural state of the mind as it is, which is called *dokuchi*. The subtlety of its development is such that it is known only to oneself without any specific appearance. We are to make an effort to grasp the mind as it is, to hold on to consciousness, to purify and scrutinise it, and to cultivate it with sincerity and integrity. When facing the external world, as you love the beauty, as you hate the stench, you will always be satisfied with your own satisfaction. This is what is called sincerity. At this very moment when this primary consciousness arises, if you do not have a firm grasp of it, if you neglect it or are lazy, then, you will become meritorious and calculative, being lost and confused. This sincerity is what distinguishes man from the brute, which forms the core of the teachings of Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi [關閔 here means Zhang Zai, who lived in 關中, today’s Shaanxi Province, and Zhu Xi, who lived in 閩中, today’s Fujian Province]. [...] Mencius discussed *liangzhi* (良知: the goodness in conscience) and *liangneng* (良能: the inborn ability to be good), and these are part and parcel of his theory of *si duan* (四端: four good sides of the human mind) [which include 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.)⁷²

⁷¹ Nishi, *Seisei-sakki*, 135.

⁷² *Ibid.*

If, as I have pointed out earlier, Nishimura Shigeki treats the idea of consciousness as a concern exclusive of Western scholarship of psychology, Nishi here identifies a certain parallel between the Western idea of consciousness and the Confucian predilection towards conscience.⁷³

As I read it, the implication of this discursive strategy to draw such a parallel is twofold. First and most obviously, drawing a parallel between, on the one hand, a new and foreign concept (consciousness) and, on the other hand, the already familiar Confucian concept (*dokuchi* or *shendu*) is the primary translational strategy here to anchor the novel and foreign into the existing semantic space and, thus, to comprehend the novel and foreign within the existing epistemic space of Meiji Japan. As we have already seen with the case of Nishi's translational practice to reorient the Confucian idea of *ri* (理) and to reiterate the *ri*-knowledge structuration as to validate Western knowledge,⁷⁴ one of the prevalent translational strategies to comprehend and validate a foreign knowledge tradition was to resort to the languages and lexicons of the existing knowledge traditions and to encode new meanings to them. Importantly, such a strategy was not merely for practicality to introduce a foreign knowledge tradition. It was also inevitable to the extent that many of the translators – here, Nishi – had been trained within those existing knowledge traditions and that the languages and lexicons of those traditions had indeed shaped the contour of how the translator thinks and reasons. Put more concretely, many of those *Rangaku* scholars of the late Edo period and those Meiji advocates of Western knowledge had indeed been trained within those

⁷³ What we also see here is Nishi's indebtedness to the Confucian tradition. In '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) written in 1848 when Nishi was 20 years old, he clarified his intellectual genealogy, which began with the study of neo-Confucianism, followed by reading of ancient Chinese texts which made him realised the incongruity between Zhu Xi's thought and ancient canon. This realisation, as Nishi proclaimed, was confirmed by his engagement with Sorai's writings, which Nishi initially despised with enmity and resentment. However, as we see the quote from *Seisei-sakki* above, Nishi's affinity to Sorai does not necessarily mean the complete negation of Zhu Xi and neo-Confucianism. See Nishi Amane, 'Soraigaku ni taisuru shikō o nobeta bun,' in Ōkubo Toshiaki (ed.), *Nishi Amane Zenshū, Vol. 1* (Complete Works of Nishi Amane, Vol. 1), Tokyo: Sōkō shobō, 1960 [1848]: 3-6.

⁷⁴ See my discussion in Chapter 4.

existing traditions, such as (Neo-)Confucianism, and their intellectual developments were, to a large degree, indebted to those traditions. Therefore, the transvaluation of, for instance, some of the Confucian concepts was, though paradoxical as it may sound, reflexive of those scholars' indebtedness to the Confucian tradition, which, at the onset, seemed to be replaced through the very act of semantic transvaluation with their affinity to Western knowledge.

As I read it, Nishi's idea of consciousness as '*dokuchi*' (独知: self-knowledge) that 'I' know that I know, is also one of these concepts, which undeniably embeds within itself some remnants of the Confucian mode of thinking and reasoning. As the above passage from Nishi's *Seisei-sakki* indicates, the figuration of '*dokuchi*' is indeed based on a passage from *Daxue* (大学: the Great Learning), which reads as follows.

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 the 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.)⁷⁵

The meaning of this passage and its logical context is, perhaps, slightly arduous. Zhu Xi here offers an extended explanation in his commentary, *Daxue zhang-ju* (大学章句: Commentary on the Great Learning).

⁷⁵ The text of *Daxue* (the Great Learning) is available online at: <https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue/ens> (08.09.02022). 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.

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。獨者、人所不知而已所獨知之地也。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獨知之者、故必謹之於此以審其幾焉。

(‘Making the thought 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, ‘獨’ 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, you must avoid evil at any cost and attain good whatever it takes. In so doing, 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 ‘獨’]. Therefore, you must examine and know in this realm of ‘獨’ what distinguishes the true from the untrue.)⁷⁶

What Nishi calls ‘*dokuchi*’ (獨知) is explained here in Zhu Xi’s commentary as ‘to know that no one but oneself know,’ which parallels, as Nishi makes a parallel, the idea of ‘*shukan*’ (主觀) that Joseph Haven defines and Nishi translates as a form of consciousness that ‘I’ know that I know, hence, a form of consciousness that enables one to know oneself. This consciousness, if we recall here, is understood in the Western intellectual tradition as the ground for the mind to interact with the external world, hence as the ground for one to perceive and know the world as the knowing subject.⁷⁷ To put it simply, in Nishi’s enunciation, the meaning of consciousness articulated within

⁷⁶ The text of *Daxue zhang-ju* is available online at: <https://ctext.org/si-shu-zhang-ju-ji-zhu/da-xue-zhang-ju1/ens> (08.09.02022).

⁷⁷ To reiterate, this is not to say that the Western conceptualisation is homogenous. On the one hand, the Anglo-American enunciations of consciousness, such as by David Hume, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and Joseph Haven, generally fall into the rubric of associationist approach, which sought to understand the principles by which subjective consciousness and objective consciousness interact with one another. On the other hand, the understanding of consciousness within the continental philosophy of Kant, Hegel, and their successors, especially of the phenomenological tradition, such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, is concerned

the Western intellectual tradition is reconfigured through the Confucian semantic of ‘*dokuchi*’/ ‘*shendu*’ (conscience) into *shukan*.

Of course, this reconfiguration through translational practices was, first and foremost, to grasp the meaning of the foreign concept and make it easier for the Japanese reader to comprehend at least its contour. However, precisely because of such translational practices, the idea of consciousness in Japanese semantics, which was variously called ‘*jishiki*’ (自識), ‘*dokuchi*’ (独知), ‘*ishiki*’ (意識), or ‘*shukan*’ (主観), came to embody a web of language, or else 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.”⁷⁸ So understood, the second implication I shall draw here of Nishi’s discursive strategy to establish a parallel between the Western idea of consciousness and the Confucian notion of conscience is that the idea of *shukan* rearticulated in the Japanese semantic space must be designated as *différance*. More specifically, the semantic reconfiguration of consciousness as *shukan* to ground the Self as the primary bearer of ‘scientific culture’ was, I argue, a discursive manoeuvre. It was a discursive manoeuvre, according to which a chain of referrals to designate the Western concept of ‘consciousness’ in the Japanese language is constituted by weaving together various ideas (or words, or terms), each of which is marked by a

with a much broader structure of mental and intentional workings of the mind and how the experience of a conscious Self may be situated in the external world of objects. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, L. Selby-Bigge (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888 [1739]; James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1829; John Stuart Mill, *An Explanation of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy and Of the Principle Philosophical Questions Discussed in His Writings*, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*; Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, W. R. Boyce Gibson (trans.), New York, NY: MacMillan, 1931 [1913]; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (trans.), New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1962 [1927]; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith (trans.), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962 [1945].

⁷⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 3 [3-28].

specific signifier-signification relation.⁷⁹ To this end, the original meaning of ‘consciousness’ – however one may define it – in the Western intellectual tradition was deferred and suspended in the instance of its reconfiguring within the Japanese semantic field of the early Meiji period.

7.3. Evolutionary Temporality, Language, and the Boundary of the Subject

This instance at which the semantic and conceptual trajectory of Western ‘consciousness’ and that of Confucian ‘conscience’ intersect with one another was the significant juncture to transcribe the politico-ideological mantra of ‘becoming modern, being different’ into the epistemic frame of how to know and how to ground knowledge. As I shall expand further in the following, it was at this juncture within the Japanese semantic space that Western (modern) ‘I’ and Confucian ‘I’ were dialectically resolved into the modern Japanese Self as a possessor of consciousness to know the external world (objective) and to know that ‘I’ know (subjective), and as a possessor of conscience to cultivate the realm within one’s Self that none but only this very Self knows.

Of course, such an argument requires further qualifications. Not to mention the contour of the modern Japanese Self, which began to emerge in the writings of, for instance, Nishimura and Nishi, remains at the level of abstraction. Then, the question I seek to address in the final analysis of this dissertation is about the ways in which this Self – ‘I’ emerged at the intersection of the Western consciousness and the Confucian conscience – came to operate in knowledge as the subject of

⁷⁹ 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.

knowledge. In other words, the question is now about the ways in which the specific boundary of the abstract Self is enacted so that the positionality of this Self is reconfigured with some localised configurations and re-established in relation to the world external to it, to the non-Self, to the Other. Such questioning requires attention to the intersection between the realm of abstraction and the purported reality of the Self during the early years of Meiji, which was marked by the power dynamics of international relations epitomised, for example, by the unequal treaties and the subjugation of neighbouring countries in Asia, and which, in turn, foregrounded a sense of conundrum of becoming modern and yet being different.⁸⁰ As it will become clearer as my argument develops, those abstract enunciations of the Self, of *shukan*, I have discussed earlier, were contextualised in the politico-social realities of the late 19th century, and through such contextualisation, the very idea of the Self, of *shukan*, came to be specified with a spatially bounded, localised configuration of ‘Japan.’ How was the idea of Self, of *shukan*, discursively recentred around the notion of collective community, ‘Japan,’ through scholarly attempts to mould the abstract idea into a concrete locus of subjective enunciation? How, in response especially to political demands, did scholars of the early Meiji period discursively reposition ‘Japan’ (the Self) within this complex entanglement of geo-political imagery of the East and the West, of being (the reality of the Self) and becoming (desire to be on par with that which was presumed as the modern)?

⁸⁰ On the issues of unequal treaties, see, for example, Louis G. Perez, *Japan Comes of Age: Mutsu Munemitsu and the Revision of the Unequal Treaties*, London: Associated University Press, 1999; Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2004; Ozawa Ryūji, “Kiezaihō no seibi: Jōyaku kaisai no seiji-keizai-gaku” (Development of Economic Legislation: Political Economy of the Revision of Unequal Treaties), in Sugiyama Shinya (ed.), *‘Teikoku’ nihon no gakuchi, Vol.2: Teikoku no keizai-gaku* (Knowledge of the Japanese Empire: Economics), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006: 91-124. On the intersection between international relations and modernising changes within Japan, see Nagai Hideo, *Meiji-kokka keiseiki no gaikō to naisei* (Diplomacy and Domestic Politics during the Formative Years of the Meiji State), Sapporo: Hokkaidō-daigaku tosho kankōkai, 1990.

These questions to problematise the unfolding of the subject position not as an abstract but within a specific historical context is not necessarily new. For instance, Stefan Tanaka addresses similar questions when discussing the unfolding of a scholarly field called *tōyōshi* (東洋史: oriental history), whereby the idea of *tōyō* (東洋) came to function both as the ground for the Japanese Self and as an analytical imperative to render Asia as the object of knowledge. As Tanaka succinctly argues, *tōyō* was constructed as “the spatial and temporal object through which Japanese defined themselves” vis-à-vis the Western idea of the Orient.⁸¹ Asia (*tōyō* for Japan / Orient for the West) became the “common denominator” for historical scholarships both in Japan and in the West: Japanese historians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw Asia as Japan’s past, while the Western Orientalists saw it as the origin from which Europe had developed both in a literal and figurative sense. Thus, Tanaka writes,

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 word as part of their own national history.⁸²

And it is this modern scientific framework that provided Meiji scholars with “an authoritative, objectivistic language that proved the validity of the discourses” for “self-authorization.”⁸³

Taking a cue from this observation made by Tanaka, and in concerning especially how ‘I’ that emerged at the intersection of the Western idea of consciousness and the Confucian notion of

⁸¹ Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*, 77.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 80-81.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 109.

conscience came to operate in knowledge, I seek to account for the discursive ground that enabled ‘an authoritative, objectivistic language’ in the first place, not only for the narrow field of *tōyōshi* but also for other scholarly fields that sought to render the human world with meanings. More specifically, I shall discuss, in the following, two important scholarly and institutional developments in the early years of Meiji, which were, as I read them, crucial for articulating that discursive ground for self-authorisation.

One is the appropriation of evolutionary theories to the study of the human world, or more precisely put, appropriation of specific temporality encoded to evolutionary theories, which, I argue, came to undergird temporal symmetry and temporal asymmetry to ontologise Japan (the Self), Asia (the Other), and the West (the Other) both in a spatial and in a temporal sense. Epistemically speaking, Japan’s self-purported, tantalising ambiguity – which I have called earlier, ‘the purported reality of Self’ – was reconfigured through the mediation of the temporality of evolutionary theories into a specific spatio-temporal position of the Self who viewed it-Self vis-à-vis the Other historically and objectively. Politico-ideologically speaking, the evolutionary temporality constituted an enabling condition for claiming Japan’s entry into the ranks of the ‘civilised’ and for treating Asia as the representation of Japan’s foregone past.

However, at this juncture emerged another conundrum. How could one de-link modernisation from westernisation when modernisation increasingly seemed to be equated to westernisation? How could ‘Japan,’ the collective enunciating Self, maintain its difference vis-à-vis the ‘West’? And, how could one de-link the fundamental presumptions that sustained ‘modern’ knowledge from the West and its historical experiences so that one could partake in knowledge, rather than simply imitate and appropriate someone else’s knowledge? It was at this juncture that the idea of language, more specifically the idea of ‘national’ language, resurfaced. Here, the ‘national’

language was constituted as a means of and a discursive space for enunciating specifically ‘Japanese’ subject voice. And this idea of national language, in turn, foregrounded one of the important concerns for the institution of knowledge, the university, and became a call for ‘nationalising’ the lingua franca of research and education. This idea of ‘national’ language and nationalisation of the lingua franca at the university is the second scholarly and institutional development I shall discuss in this final analysis.

Boundaries of ‘I’ and Evolutionary Temporality

As it is widely acknowledged today, the appropriation of evolutionary theories for the studies of the human world – let us call these theories here for the sake of brevity ‘social Darwinism’ – was intimately connected to a mode of thinking about the Self and the other, as those theories offered a ‘scientific’ ground for justifying political projects of domination and subjugation and for provoking a sense of collective that was bent on the 19th-century idea of the nation-state.⁸⁴ In the Euro-American context, Thomas McCarthy observes that “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” to conceptualise groups of people “in explicitly evolutionary terms,” which “provided a particularly potent and protean version of the hierarchical scaling of difference.”⁸⁵ This general idea of social Darwinism as a categorical imperative of ‘the

⁸⁴ 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 borrowed from ancient Chinese texts or Buddhist teachings. See Suzuki Shūji, *Nihon kango to chūgoku* (Japanese Kango and China), Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1981.

⁸⁵ Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009: 69-70.

hierarchical scaling of difference’ also proliferated in Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, what the temporality encoded to evolutionary theories actually meant and represented and how it was interpreted in the Japanese intellectual and epistemic space is marked by diachronicities.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ To say so is by no means to suggest that the Euro-American understanding of social Darwinism and its application to political projects can be grappled with a sense of homogeneity. There were variations of intellectual rendering of Darwin’s idea as the basis for studying the human world. There were also gradations of its application to 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. Let me also specify the context of introducing and appropriating evolutionary theories to Japan. Rendering the world through the lens of evolutionary thinking was, in fact, not necessarily completely foreign to the Japanese. For example, in the early 19th century, 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), offered an evolutionary observation of plants and animals, which can be analogous to Darwin’s analysis in *Origin of the Species*. See Kamata Ryūō, *Shingaku oku no kakehashi* (心学奥の棧: The Fundamental Frame of Shingaku), Osaka: Kagaya Zenzō, 1822. A digitised version of the text is accessible at: <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100293115> (10.09.2022). But the introduction of Western evolutionary theories began in the early Meiji. One of the first mentions of the name of Darwin can be found in *Kitagō-dan* (北郷談: A Story of Going to the North), written in 1874 by Aoikawa Nobuchika, who, as a Shintō priest, sought to explain and ultimately criticise Christianity. Aoikawa mentioned Darwin as an English scholar of science (“英ノ理学家太爾文”). Around the same time, Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) mentioned in his note that 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 in his lecture theories of biological evolution. On these early instances of the introduction of Western theories of evolution, see Mizoguchi Hajime, “Nihon ni okeru Dāuin no juyō to eikyō (Introduction of Darwin’s Theory to Japan and Its Implications), *Gakujutsu no dōkō*, 3, 2010: 48-57. Despite these earlier instances, today’s scholarly analyses collectively suggest that it was through a series of public lectures by Edward Sylvester Morse (1838-1925) in 1877 that evolutionary theories began to take hold in the Japanese intellectual thinking. 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. Also important, as many scholars have pointed out, was Ernest Francisco Fenollosa’s (1853-1908) lectures between 1878 and 1886 at the University of Tokyo, in which he discussed evolutionary theories not only for natural sciences but also as a perspective for social sciences. Fenollosa’s lectures paralleled Toyama Masakazu’s (1848-1900) lectures on historiography, in which Toyama emphasised Spencer’s idea of social evolution as the primary theoretical perspective of historical analysis. See Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Bukyokushi, Vol.1*, 839-841. And 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 title of *Seibutsu genshi-ron* (生物原始論). Darwin’s seminal work was translated by Tachibana Senzaburō (1867-1901) and published in 1896 under the title of *Seibutsu shigen ichimeishugen-ron* (生物始源一名種源論), which was republished with Oka Sajirō’s (1868-1944) translation in 1903 under the title of *Shu no kigen* (種の起源). According to Suzuki Zenji, by 1910, twenty different translated versions of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* had been published in Japan, as well as a few explanatory texts on Darwin’s theory, such as 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). See Suzuki Zenji, *Nihon no yūsei-gaku* (Eugenics in Japan),

Broadly speaking, the political and intellectual purchase of social Darwinism in Japan, especially of Spencer's, was reflexive of the increasing realisation – by both political and intellectual elites – of a certain discrepancy between the ideal of *bunmei kaika* and its reality. By the end of the 1870s and during the 1880s, it became increasingly apparent that the mantra of *bunmei kaika* did not necessarily specify the appropriate sequence, hence temporal process, of modernising changes that were thought necessary for Japan to enter the ranks of the civilised. The question arose, as Douglas Howland points out, of whether the enlightenment of the individual should precede the political guaranteeing of individual rights and freedom or vice versa.⁸⁷ The question also arose of what role education should play for *bunmei kaika* – however one may define its sequential nature of progress – when, in reality, education seemed to have produced not only what the government and the educator saw as its intended effects but also what they perceived as adverse effects.⁸⁸ In this context, many intellectuals with a broad spectrum of political and ideological affinity sought a solution in social Darwinist thinking, especially in Spencer's theory, treating it as the 'scientific' ground for justifying whatever ideo-political structuration of the nation-state one sought to justify.

On the one hand, there were those involved in *Jiyū minken undō* (自由民権運動: Liberty and Civil Rights Movement), who understood the principle of equality and freedom as the primary

Tokyo: Sankyō kagaku sensho, 1983: 53-54. It is interesting to reiterate here the fact that, prior to the translation and publication of some Western canon on evolution such as Darwin's, there seem to have been a number of instances in which the Japanese encountered variations of evolutionary thinking. This, in turn, also suggests a possibility that, for instance, Darwin's theory introduced to Japan might be a refraction, or even a refraction of refraction, from the original text.

⁸⁷ 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].

⁸⁸ Ibid. We may also recall here the assessment of education made during the Controversy over the Imperial Thoughts on Education (教学聖旨論争), in which both Motoda Nagazane and Itō Hirobumi expressed their concern for the effect of education, more specifically the concern for the proliferation of 'empty theories' (in the case of Motoda), and the concern for the oversaturation of polemics (in the case of Itō). See my discussion on the issue in Chapter 3, pp.182-195.

goal of human aspiration and human development. In appropriating evolutionary theories, they, therefore, emphasised Spencer's *Social Statics* (1851), especially his rendering of moral sense, that is, the principle of the law of equal freedom, as the foundation for individual progress, which, according to Spencer's notion of the principle of adaptation to the social state, was thought to foreground societal progress.⁸⁹ In contrast, 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 – who saw the imperialist development based on the absolute power of the sovereign, the emperor, as the 'natural' evolutionary process of Japan. The tendency here is to read Spencer's *Principle of Sociology* (1876), especially his idea of the survival of the fittest, in conjunction, for instance, with Lorenz von Stein's and Johann Kasper Bluntschli's idea of '*Staatsrecht*,' arguing that the power and privilege of the sovereign, which those advocates understood as rights, was the necessary condition for the progress of the collective, here defined as the state.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ This reading of evolutionary theories can be found, for example, in the works of Matsushima Gō (1854-1950), Baba Tatsui (1850-1880), and Ueki Emori (1857-1892). See, for example, Matsushima's translation of Spencer's *Social Statics* as *Shakai byōken-ron* (社会平権論: Theory of Social Equality of Rights), Tokyo: Hōkokudō, 1884 [1881], <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/798571> (10.09.2022); Baba Tatsui, *Tenpu jinken-ron* (天賦人權論: Theory of Natural Rights), Tokyo: Baba Tatsui, 1883, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/798630> (10.09.2022); Ueki Emori, *Tenpu jinken-ben* (天賦人權弁: On Natural Rights), Tokyo: Kurita Shintarō, 1883, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/798629> (10.09.2022). On this reading of Spencer, Howland writes as follows. "It was Spencer's liberal defense of natural rights that initially interested Japanese readers in the 1870s. For Spencer's appearance coincided with a growing advocacy of 'people's rights' in Japan, as private citizens pressured the authoritarian oligarchy ruling Japan to grant them the rights to freedom of speech, press, and assembly, and to participation in governmental process through the institution of a national assembly." Howland, "Society Reified," 67.

⁹⁰ Such reading of evolutionary theories is evident, for example, in the works of Ariga Nagao (1860-1921), especially his so-called 'social Darwinist trilogy' including *Shakai shinka-ron* (社会進化論: Theory of Social Evolution, 1883), *Shūkyō shinka-ron* (宗教進化論: Theory of Religious Evolution, 1883), and *Zokusei shinka-ron* (族制進化論: Evolutionary Theory of Social Groups Organised on the Basis of Blood-Relations, 1884), and his rendering of '*Staatsrecht*' in *Kokka-gaku* (国家学: Study of the State, 1889). For these works, see Ariga Nagao, *Shakai shinka-ron*, Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1890 [1883], <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/798546> (10.09.2022); Ariga Nagao, *Shūkyō shinka-ron*, Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1888 [1883], <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/814871> (10.09.2022); Ariga Nagao, *Zokusei shinka-ron*, Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1890 [1883], <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/798615> (10.09.2022); Ariga Nagao, *Kokka-gaku*, Tokyo: Makono shobō, 1889, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/783093> (10.09.2022). Katō Hiroyuki was another important proponent of this reading of evolutionary theories. I will expand further on his writings, especially his *Jinken shin-setsu* (人權新説: A New Theory of Human Rights, 1882) shortly in the following.

Despite these opposing ideo-political views, each of which drew its sustenance from a selective reading of social Darwinism generally and Spencer's texts more specifically, those partisan positions shared a common thread. The individual was intimately connected, not to the idea of progress framed as enlightenment, but to the idea of progress anchored to a specific form of collective human agency, be it 'society' as the advocates of people's rights asserted or 'the state' as those privileged the sovereign's rights argued for. This discursive de-linking of the individual from the enlightenment model of progress and, crucially, re-linking of the individual to the collective effectively engendered a perspective to treat progress, not as a contingent process of the individual, but as "an evolving process immanent within the totality"⁹¹ whether of society or the state.

So understood, I argue that this discursive shift from the individual-enlightenment nexus to the individual-the collective nexus is especially a salient instance for determining the orientation of how 'I' – again, the contour of which emerged at the intersection of the Western notion of consciousness and the Confucian concept of '*shendu*' which Nishi equated to conscience – may operate in knowledge. This discursive shift, first of all, effectively provides a justification for enacting the boundary of the collective, be it society or the nation-state, as the boundary of 'I', hence the boundary of consciousness and conscience. It was, in other words, in this instance that 'Japanese' as the epithet for the collective was affixed to '*shukan*' as the distinctive marker of the knowing Self.⁹² The consciousness of the Self was transubstantiated into the consciousness of the

⁹¹ Howland, "Society Reified," 74.

⁹² Of course, I must add here, the boundary of 'Japan' and 'Japanese' was not at all fixed both in one's imagination and in reality. The idea of 'Japanese' – as well as a desire to fix the boundary of 'Japanese' – was already and constantly at odds with what I shall term here 'the grammar of *teikoku* (帝国)' that constituted the backdrop for Japan's colonial expansion. Thomas David DuBois states that even before the annexation of Ryūkyū in 1879, "when in 1868 Japan named itself an empire (even creating a new term in its own language for the occasion), it was clearly thinking of the image of contemporary Britain [...]." 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]. And in 1872, Mori Arinori, then the ambassador to the U.S., insisted on calling Japan

‘Japanese’ Self. This, in turn, articulates an enabling epistemic condition to view this ‘Japanese’ Self as the primary unit of historical and evolutionary progress. Therefore, the efficacy of the collective Self that is sustained by evolutionary temporality is twofold. First, through this collective Self, ‘Japan’/‘Japanese’ became simultaneously the collective locus of subjective enunciation and the object of knowledge. And second, this collective Self prefigured an epistemic

an ‘empire’ and the Japanese government ‘imperial government.’ See Kanda Takao, “Teikoku daigaku no shisō” (The Ideology of the Imperial University,” in Haga Tōru, Hirakawa Sukehiro, and Kamei Shunsuke (eds.), *Seiyō no shōgeki to nihon* (The Impact of the West and Japan), Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1973: 122. However, the term ‘teikoku’ (empire) was not a neologism of Meiji. It first appeared in Kutsuki Masatsuna’s (1750-1802) *Taisei yochi zusetsu* (泰西輿地図説: Illustrated Maps of the West, 1789) as a translation of the Dutch term ‘*Keijzerrijk*,’ a realm governed by *teishaku* (帝爵: king), the sovereign. Motoki Masahide’s (1767-1822) *Angeria gorin taisei* (譜厄利垂語林大成: English Dictionary, 1814) translated the English term ‘empire’ into ‘teikoku.’ However, Motoki’s translation was not a direct translation from English to Japanese, but mediated, since he specialised in French, through the French term ‘empire’, which effectively means ‘*domination d’un empereur*.’ For *Taisei yochi zusetsu*, see https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ru08/ru08_02859/index.html (25.08.2022). For *Angeria gorin taisei*, see http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/iview/Frame.jsp?DB_ID=G0003917KTM&C_CODE=0091-027502 (25.08.2022). As these examples suggest, the idea of ‘teikoku’ was developed as an isomorphism of *Keijzerrijk* (Dutch) and *empire* (French), designating something distinctively different from the 19th and 20th-century concept of empire that has been popularised through the conceptual and theoretical rendering of (European) empires in the works of John Hobson, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Schumpeter, and more recently Benjamin Cohen and Michael Doyle. For all their difference, these seminal works maintain that the expansionist tendency of the nation-state results not in the territorial 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. Within the couplet ‘nation-state’ that constitutes ‘mother country,’ it is the state, not the nation, that is expanding through imperialism, and empire denotes a realm of political power established through the imperial expansion of power outside the nation-state. To this end, the boundary between the coloniser and the colonised often remains intact. 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. In contrast, the idea of ‘teikoku’ designates the location of sovereign power and its specific relation to its subject within a demarcated territory. Then, the expansion of ‘teikoku’, if and when it happens, means the expansion of the realm of the sovereign, through the process of which other nations, the Other, are coerced into ‘teikoku,’ into the realm of the sovereign. Therefore, the expansion of ‘teikoku’ necessarily blurs the boundary between the inside (the coloniser, the nation, Japan, and Japanese) and outside (the colonised, the Other, such as Taiwanese and Koreans) within the bounded territory of ‘teikoku.’ During the late 19th and early 20th century, the conundrum between the idea of Japan and Japanese and the grammar of *teikoku* manifested itself as compelling problems in the realm of politics (i.e. the distinction between domestic politics and colonial governing, between ‘*naichi*’ (内地) and ‘*gaichi*’ (外地)), in the realm of the jurisdiction (i.e. how to standardise or how not to standardise criminal codes across the Japanese empire), in the realm of education (i.e. curriculum, admission to the imperial university), and in the realm of culture (i.e. whether a Taiwanese writer should be nominated for a prize for ‘national’ literature). The manifold manifestation of this chasm between, on the one hand, the desire for and the idea of ‘Japanese’ and, on the other hand, the reality of *teikoku*, are discussed in the following works. Yamamuro, *Shisō kadai to shite no ajia*; Yamamoto Takeshi et al., (eds.), ‘*Teikoku*’ *nihon no gakuchi*, Vol.1-8; Komagome Takeshi, *Sekai-shi no naka no Taiwan shokuminchi shihai* (Colonial Rule over Taiwan in Global History), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2015.

condition to objectify other societies and states and to render them as units of hierarchical scaling of difference.

Katō Hiroyuki's *Jinken shin-setsu* (人權新説: A New Theory of Human Rights, 1882) is one of the most illustrative examples to corroborate my rather theoretical rendering above.⁹³ Perhaps, the most commonly accepted way of reading this text today is to read it as the seminal text of 'kokken-ron,' as the pretext for Japan's authoritarian and subsequent fascist turn, and as the instance of Katō's ideological conversion to conservatism. While acknowledging certain adequacy of such reading, my aim is not necessarily to etch the contour of Katō's ideological predilection nor to censure his 'allegedly' empirical observations. What I seek to do here through my reading of *Jinken shin-setsu* is to point to the ways in which the idea of progress articulated on the nexus between the individual and the collective enabled him to appropriate the temporality of the evolutionary process and, thus, to view both the Self and the Other objectively and historically.

To be sure, *Jinken shin-setsu* is not the only text in which we see Katō's conviction in science. He expresses his propensity towards 'scientificity' – the application of scientific methods and principle – elsewhere in a number of essays on various topics, ranging from the cultivation of individuals to the necessity of sociology, from the role of philosophy to the scientific methods for the study of the human world.⁹⁴ For example, in '*Jinbutsu shūyō-jō no shizen kagaku no hitsuyō*'

⁹³ Katō Hiroyuki, *Jinken shin-setsu* in Uete Michiari (ed.), *Nihon no meicho, Vol. 34: Nishi Amane, Katō Hiroyuki* (Japanese Classics, Vol. 34: Nishi Amane and Katō Hiroyuki), Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1984 [1882]: 409-462.

⁹⁴ 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 exactly each of those texts was written or published, which makes it difficult to determine whether a given text was written prior to what Nagai Michio describes as Katō's conservative turn marked by the publication of *Jinken shin-setsu*. At least, as Katō's texts in these collections suggest, his intellectual exercise had long been notated around scientificity and, by extension, around temporality that sustained the scientific rendering of the world. At the same time, Katō's continuous proximity to the political centre since the eve of the Meiji Restoration already indicates his politico-ideological predilection. To this end, *Jinken shin-setsu* is not necessarily the instance of 'turn' as Nagai suggests, but the culmination of his intellectual and politico-ideological genealogy. See Katō Hiroyuki, *Tensoku hyakuwa*, Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1899. The text is available at:

(人物修養上自然科学の必要: The Necessity of Natural Sciences for the Cultivation of Individuals), Katō argues that natural sciences, its knowledge and its methods of attaining knowledge, embodies the factual truth (“真の事実”),⁹⁵ maintaining that

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。

(Failing to ground scholarships on natural sciences, that is, engaging solely in big debates without conducting concrete research, is never the way to build a ‘real’ person.)⁹⁶

Then, Katō declares that without natural science as the basis for cultivating individuals, one will never be truly human (“自然科学で素地を作っていかなければ、真の人間はできない”).⁹⁷

Not to mention, this enunciation expresses Katō’s propensity towards science and scientificity. It also indicates his understanding that for an individual to become a cultivated being is indeed to become a rational being. In turn, Katō suggests, in ‘*Jitsugaku kūri no ben*’ (実学空理の辨: On Practical Learning and Abstract Learning), that scholarships which he calls ‘the fields of the intangible’ (“無形の学問”), such as philosophy, psychology, and sociology, and which many of his contemporaries dismiss as mere ‘abstract learning’ without much utility for society (“空理空論を以て満足するもの”), are in fact constitutive of the foundation for the progress of

<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/898574> (11.09.2022); Katō Hiroyuki, *Shin-jōshikiron*, Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1914. The text is available at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/951489> (11/09/2022).

⁹⁵ Katō Hiroyuki, “Jinbutsu shūyō-jō no shizen kagaku no hitsuyō,” in *Shin-jōshikiron*, 5 [1-12].

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

society, if not offer immediate utility, when and only when these scholarships are grounded on scientific methods.⁹⁸

[...] 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。

(If we are to appropriate scientific methods for all scholarship, [...] the purported distinction between practical learning [such as engineering, physics and chemistry] and abstract learning [philosophy, psychology, and sociology] becomes irrelevant. [...] what those critics call ‘abstract learning, empty theories’ are, though their immediate utility may be limited, in fact, the crucial constituent of the foundation for social progress.)⁹⁹

To be sure, the primary concern for Katō in this specific text is to discredit the purported distinction between practical learning (fields of natural sciences) and abstract learning (fields that engage with the human world). Yet, also importantly, by treating science and scientific methods as the medium through which the natural and human worlds are to be connected and as the medium through which not only knowledge of the natural world but also that of the human are to be pressed into the service of social progress, Katō reiterates, as I read it, the necessity of scientifically perceiving the human world. For him, such scientific rendering of the human world is not merely for producing knowledge necessary for social progress. Doing so is also the very attestation that one has indeed come to equip oneself with the mode of thinking and reasoning of the progressed, that one has become a rational being.

⁹⁸ Katō Hiroyuki, “Jitsugaku kūrī no ben,” in *Tensoku hyakuwa*, 2 [1-3].

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

It is at this juncture that I propose to read *Jinken shin-setsu* as an attempt to expand on such understanding of scientificity and rational being, as an attempt to integrate this understanding into a broader theoretical and – albeit allegedly – empirical observation of the evolutionary process. Upon summarising some key theoretical developments on the evolutionary process made in the West,¹⁰⁰ Katō reiterates Bartholomäus Ritter von Carneri’s claim in *Sittlichkeit und Darwinismus* (1871) that, in the natural sequence – hence temporal process – of progress, the state (“邦国”) should precede individual rights because the state is the necessary condition for yielding individual rights.

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、けだしもっとも確実なる説と思われる。

(So-called rights arise when humans form a society with the firm ground, that is to say, when a society begins to be arranged in such a way as the state – that I believe is the most reliable theory.)¹⁰¹

Obviously, Katō is negating here the claim of those advocates of *Jiyū minken undo*, which teleologically connects the individual to society both as a means and end for human progress. For Katō, the state, rather than a society, is both the means and end for human progress and the necessary condition for the individual to attain and rights guaranteed and bestowed by the sovereign.¹⁰² And, therefore, the state is the most advanced form of a collective society. As Katō

¹⁰⁰ Katō, *Jinken shin-setsu*, 411-440.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 440.

¹⁰² As Katō explained later in the text, rights would be bestowed upon the people by the sovereign as a response to the social and individual desire for security. It is precisely to this end that the state (the power of the sovereign) must be instituted, that is to say the fittest must ensure its survival, first and foremost. 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。” See *ibid.*, 446.

goes on to specify with an analogy of the animal world, the state is, in a sense, a better structured and instituted form of corporative body that he designates as a society with the firm ground ("鞏固なる社会").

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もちろんなり。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。

(On observing how animals co-exist as a collective, we can conclude that their collective existence is never permanent. Besides the fact that they constantly gather together and disperse from each other, there is no distinction between the sovereign and subjects, nor a division of labour among them. No one possesses sovereignty vis-à-vis others. To this end, they have not formed a society, such that we cannot consider the way animals form (and deform) their collective existence as something akin to the state. The same goes for human beings. How most of the people live is, even today, not so different from how animals live. Only a few have instituted the state.)¹⁰³

The state, as Katō defines in the above enunciation, is not a mere collective of individuals. It is marked by the internal hierarchy (a clear distinction between the sovereign who governs and its subjects who are governed, and a division of labour) and the external sovereignty vis-à-vis others.¹⁰⁴ It is this state, this form of the human collective, that represents the last and highest stage of human progress.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 441.

¹⁰⁴ On the idea of sovereignty, R.B.J. Walker offers us an illuminating 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

Moreover, building upon Christian Radenhausen's theory of four-stage human progress in *Der Mensch und die Welt* (1870),¹⁰⁵ Katō observes that the contemporary international relations, dominated by Western states and a handful of non-Western states, including Japan, China, Turkey and Persia, is marked by equal rights and responsibilities among those states. For Katō, this condition of international relations is the very indication that those states have indeed survived competitions and conflicts and successfully established their own internal and external sovereignty.

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。

(While the states such as Japan, China, Turkey and Persia are marked by their differences from the Western states, in terms of race, religion, and customs, these [non-Western] states have come to interact with one another based on international law, exercising rights and taking responsibilities equal to those of the Western states.)¹⁰⁶

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." See Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ According to Katō's own reading of Radenhausen, the four-stage progress of human begins with the animal-like state of barbarism, which leads to the formation of a collective desire for and interest in security. The second stage, therefore, is a kind of community of shared interest in security. When these communities compete against and eventually recognise the autonomy of each other, that instance can be considered as the third stage of human progress. The final stage is when those autonomous communities, now recognised as the state, bestow certain rights upon the brute, the barbaric, and the backwards to maintain stability and security not only for themselves but also for international relations. See Katō, *Jinken shin-setsu*, 448-449. Interestingly, Darwin questioned the viability of Radenhausen's theory. Upon responding to an inquiry from Bruno Schreiber, who asked Darwin his opinion about Radenhausen, Darwin wrote, "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.

¹⁰⁶ Katō, *Jinken shin-setsu*, 449.

Then, he even goes so far as to characterise the imperial expansion of those states and the colonial subjugation of indigenous people as if such were part and parcel of the natural process of human development. He implies that imperialism and colonialism is 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 savages (in Americas), to satisfy their desire and need for security.¹⁰⁷ Of course, for today's intellectual sensibility, such characterisation and more importantly tacit approval of the domination and subjugation is exceedingly problematic, as it certainly constitutes a pretext for Japan's subsequent imperial and colonial expansion. And not surprisingly, this problematisation has been one of the primary tropes for accessing Katō's political ideology in general and *Jinken shin-seitsu* more specifically.¹⁰⁸ While acknowledging the *posterior* politico-ideological effects of his tacit approval of imperial expansion and colonial domination as the natural process of human progress, I shall reiterate the following point here. Katō's propensity towards scientificity and his emphasis on the necessity to apply scientific methods for analysing the human world obviously prefigures his emphatic and enthusiastic embrace of evolutionary theories and, more importantly, of the linear and progressive temporality encoded in those theories, which enables him to effectively temporalise various human developments. At the same time, his discursive address to treat progress – temporalised human developments – not as a contingent process of the individual but as an evolving process immanent within the totality of the state enables him to view the state

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 448-449.

¹⁰⁸ 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-seitsu igo no Katō Hiroyuki: Meiji-kokka no kakuritsu to 'kyōja no kenri'-ron no tenkai" (Katō Hiroyuki's Thought of the State after A New Theory of Human Rights: Theory of 'Recht des Stärkeren' in the Formative Period of the Meiji State), *En marge de l'histoire*, 64, 2012: 35-54.

as the highest stage of human progress and as the unit of such a temporal process, hence, as the object of – albeit purportedly – scientific inquiry.

Whether one may agree or otherwise with such a theoretical rendering of human developments, it effectively functions as a discursive ground for Katō to view ‘Japan’ – with its political system revolves around the sovereign power of the emperor and its relation to and interaction with other states being based on international law – both as the bearer of human progress and as the distinctive category of analysis.¹⁰⁹ Further still, I argue that it is this ‘Japan’ as a category that, for all its problematic nature, offers a spatially bounded and localised configuration of ‘I’ (consciousness and conscience). Put otherwise, this isomorphism of ‘Japan’ as a category and ‘I’ (consciousness and conscience) enacts the boundary of subjective enunciation (‘Japan’ as the knower) and the boundary of self-knowledge (‘Japan’ as the object known). As Katō maintains,

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もちろんなり。

(The Asian states are different from the European states in terms of their people’s psyche and customs. Therefore, laws and rights implemented and endowed by the European states to guarantee the happiness and security of their people are not necessarily appropriate for the Asian state. Scholars and critics should never treat this difference lightly.)¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ As Katō maintained, “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. But in reality, only Europeans and few nations of Asia, such as Japan and China, have progressed to the state of the civilised. Others, although they may have avoided the complete annihilation, remains to be inferior, such that their subjugation to the superior is, as I believe, the natural outcome of human development.)” Katō, *Jinken shin-setsu*, 454.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 455.

Thus, Katō repeatedly reminds the reader that being at the highest stage of progress does not mean that Japan and the Western states are the same and that what is considered adequate and appropriate for governing in the West is not necessarily adequate and appropriate for Japan. In claiming so, Katō effectively de-link – or at least seeks to de-link – the idea of progress and the state of the civilised from the West and its historical experiences.

'National' Language and the Subject Position

Discursively enacting a spatially bounded and localised configuration of 'I' (consciousness and conscience) is one thing. But producing knowledge that is mediated through this 'I' is another. At this juncture emerges a certain disparity. On the one hand, the idea of *shukan* and its mediation through evolutionary temporality has established a predilection towards 'Japan' as the locus of subjective enunciation and objectification of the world. And yet, on the other hand, the reality of knowledge production, especially at the institution of knowledge, the university, remains largely as the reproduction of Western theories, concepts, and ideas either in Western languages or through the translation of Western canonical texts. How can this 'I', the Japanese Self, actually speak? How can this 'I' really attain a subjective voice? And in so doing, how can modernisation be truly de-linked from Westernisation so that the modern 'Japanese' Self will not necessarily be "profoundly modular" in its character?¹¹¹ How can this collective 'Japanese' Self take control over knowledge so that 'Japan' becomes the subject rather than the consumer of knowledge?

¹¹¹ Anderson, *Imagined Community*, 135. I have expanded on the problem of Anderson's history writing in Footnote 4 of the introduction, pp.9-10.

As I read it, from the mid-1870s, these questions began to manifest themselves in the realm of *gakumon*, hence at the university, as a concern for appropriate language for research and pedagogy and, more specifically, as a call for the shift from English, then the lingua franca at the university, to what was called ‘*hōgo*’ (邦語: ‘national’ language).¹¹² In 1875, Tanaka Fujimaro (1845-1909), then a high-ranking official at the Ministry of Education, explained to the Council of State, *Daijōkan* (太政官), the necessity of establishing *Kokufudai daigakkō* (国府台大学校: a university proposed to be established in Kokufudai), into which then-already planned University of Tokyo would be subsequently integrated.¹¹³

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, [...] the currently planned university is just like *Kaisei gakkō* that teaches specialised subjects based on the basic training in foreign languages. [...] this is quite different from what the university should really be. *Kokufudai daigakkō* should be considered as the future plan for tertiary education, when elementary and middle schools are eventually fully equipped to produce those who proceed to university education [...]).¹¹⁴

¹¹² 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 as the term ‘*kokugo*’ (国語: often translated as national language) since the late Edo period, to denote the language used in a place called ‘Japan’. See Kyōgoku Okikazu, “‘Kokugo,’ ‘hōgo,’ ‘nihongo’ ni tsuite: Kinsei kara meiji-zenki ni itaru” (On ‘Kokugo,’ ‘Hōgo,’ and ‘Nihongo’: From the Edo Period to the First Half of the Meiji Period), *Kokugogaku*, 146, 1986: 1-12.

¹¹³ 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 explanation of the institutional development of these institutions, see Chapter 6, pp.456-459. See also Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tūshi, Vol.1*, 7-80.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 387-398.

While Tanaka envisions the university here as the apex of the educational system, he is concerned with the fact that the then-planned University of Tokyo would not be a ‘real’ university (“真ノ大学校”). By pointing to the emphasis placed on foreign language education at *Kaisei gakkō*, one of the existing institutions to be integrated into the University of Tokyo, Tanaka seems to suggest here learning through foreign languages does not equate to *gakumon* to be pursued at the university. More specifically, this enunciation of a ‘real’ university and the disregard of *Kaisei gakkō* seem to express an idea that the university, the realm of *gakumon*, of knowledge, is fundamentally linked to language, that is to say, the idea that learning Western theories, concepts, and ideas in European languages does not amount to producing knowledge.

This concern at the political centres seemed to have prevailed well after the establishment of the University of Tokyo, which led Katō Hiroyuki, then the President of the University of Tokyo, to defend the institution in 1880 as follows.

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
(The lingua France at the University of Tokyo at the moment is indeed English. However, this is not the real intent. [...] Once there are enough [Japanese] instructors and [Japanese] texts in the future, we intend to educate the student in a national language. [...] The rule at the three faculties [of Law, Letters, and Science] is to teach in English, but this does not mean that the university is a ‘Western’ school. While the university is still in the process of development, it has the character of a ‘Japanese’ university. That is the underlying truth.)¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Kawasumi Testuo (ed.), *Shiryō nihon eigaku-shi Vo.2: Eigo kyōiku ronsō-shi* (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* (Social History of Examination), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2009: 28. The ground for Katō’s justification that the university already embedded within itself ‘Japanese’ character was the existing *Wakan bungaku-ka* (和漢文学科), whose curriculum included Japanese and Chinese literature and ancient history. See my

Of course, the primary objective here for Katō is to defend the current stature of the university. But crucially, he is in agreement with the government officials that the institutional orientation of the university must be directed towards the gradual shift to the ‘nationalisation’ of the educational lingua franca (“邦語ヲ以テ教授スルノ目的”).

At the same time, Katō seems to imply that a ‘national’ language is not the only necessary condition for a university to be ‘Japanese.’ On the idea of what he terms as ‘*nihon daigaku*’ (“日本大学”), he expands further in his commencement speech in 1882. He distinguishes the process of institutional formation of the university in Japan – the authority of knowledge, to refer to the term I have used earlier in this dissertation – from the process of establishing the ground for knowledge production – the autonomy of knowledge –, arguing that

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。即チ今本学ニ教ル所ノモノハ、特リ外国ノ事ノミニアラズ。

(In the beginning, there was nothing that could be considered ‘serious’ knowledge in Japan. Thus, we dedicated ourselves to learning Western knowledge and sought to understand how this knowledge was sustained. Now that there are many distinguished scholars who are adept in this knowledge, we have reached the stage to apply methods of this knowledge to analyse our own country. To this end, what we teach at the university today is much more than things ‘foreign’.)¹¹⁶

discussion in Chapter 3, pp.218-221. *Shigaku-ka* (史学科: Department of History) during the 1870s and throughout the 1880s was primarily focused on Euro-American history. It was in 1889 that *Kokushi-ka* (国史科: Department of National History) was established as an independent scholarly and institutional locus for the study of ‘Japanese’ history, which was followed by the establishment of *Tōyōshi gakka* (東洋史学科: Department of Oriental History) in 1910. See Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daigaku hyakunen-shi, Bukyokushi, Vol.1*, 607-643.

¹¹⁶ Katō, “Gakuijuyo-shiki shukuji,” 197.

What Katō designates here by ‘methods of this knowledge’ (“其方法”) is, of course, scientific methods.¹¹⁷ For Katō, the university with a specifically ‘Japanese’ character connotes an institution of knowledge that produces self-knowledge with the conviction in scientificity (“其方法由テ我邦ノコトヲ研究シ得ルノ期”). As I read it, the act of producing scientific self-knowledge, the act of viewing the Self objectively and historically, is the instance not only in which the university becomes ‘Japanese’ – no longer a mere imitation of reproducing Western knowledge – but also in which the ‘Japanese’ attains subjective voice and becomes the knowing subject. Then, the shift towards a ‘national’ language for Katō constitutes, as it seems to me, a symbolical moment of that instance of becoming the enunciating, knowing subject.¹¹⁸

The following years saw the increasing political demand to shift the lingua francas at the university from English to a ‘national’ language.¹¹⁹ For example, in 1883, Fukuoka Takachika, then the Minister of Education, submitted a letter of application to Sanjō Sanetomi (1837-1891), then-the Chancellor (‘*Daijō-daijin*’ 太政大臣), to change the general orientation of the university:

¹¹⁷ See my early discussion on Katō’s predilection towards science in this chapter.

¹¹⁸ To note, the idea of ‘*nihon daigaku*’ (日本大学) was not necessarily an idiosyncratic proposal of Katō. 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* (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 the similar purpose.

¹¹⁹ Until the early 1880s, the lectures of the Faculty of Law, of Letters, and of Science at the University of Tokyo were offered primarily in English, which reflected the tradition of the predecessor institution, *Kaisei gakkō*. For example, 9 out of 11 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覽: Index of the Faculty of Law, Science, Letters at the University of Tokyo), Tokyo: Maruie Zenshichi, 1882: 2-10. The text is available online at: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/813151> (12.09.2022).

the abolition of English as the lingua franca at the university and the ‘Germanisation’ of various fields of social sciences.¹²⁰

英語ヲ用フル国即チ 英吉利及合衆国ニ於テハ政治ノ学問未タ進歩セス、
[...] 故ニ到底英語ヲ用ヒテ政治学ヲ教授セント欲スルモ完全ヲ期スヘカラ
ズ、且、政治学ノ如キハ最モ我国情ニ切ナルモノヲ択リテ教授セサレハ後
来国ノ安寧ヲ害スル恐レアリ [...] 先ツ法文ニ学部並ニ予備門ヨリ改良セン
トス、其理学部ノ如キモ固ヨリ改更ヲ要セサルヘカラサルハ勿論ナリト雖
モ、経費ノ不資ナルヨリ、不得已之ヲ第二ニ付セサルヲ得ス

(In those countries where English is the common language, that is, the United Kingdom and the United States, the study of politics has yet to progress. [...] Even if we wish to teach politics in English, there is only so much we can teach. Furthermore, when teaching politics, we must teach that which are the most appropriate to our own state. Otherwise, it may result in political dissents and instability in the future. [...] First, we propose to reform the Faculty of Law and of Letters, as well as their preparatory courses. Of course, our wish is also to reform the Faculty of Science. However, it is financially untenable at present.)¹²¹

Upon explaining so, Fukuoka specifies a few points of necessary reform, two of which clearly stated: to abolish English as the lingua franca (“従来教授上用フル所ノ英語ヲ廃スコト”); and to teach in a ‘national’ language (“邦語ヲ用ヒテ教授スルコト”).¹²² Following up on this Fukuoka’s proposal, Ōki Takatō (1832-1899), who replaced Fukuoka as the Minister of Education, sent an unofficial notice to the University of Tokyo in February 1884, urging the university to offer lectures not in English but in a ‘national’ language, while simultaneously guaranteeing that the

¹²⁰ The application is entitled “Tōkyō daigaku bō-gakka kyōju-jō ni mochiiru eigo o haishi hōgo o mochii 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). The original text is archived at Tōsho bunko, ID-No.110-87-1.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

ministry would initiate to compile dictionaries of ‘national’ language and scientific and academic vocabularies.¹²³

This political call for a ‘national’ language was replicated in scholarly circles. Following Fukuoka’s call for the shift towards a ‘national’ language, in June 1883, a group of scholars submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education, the signatory of which included the prominent Japanese professors at the Faculty of Law such as Hozumi Nobushige (1855-1926) and Hijikata Yasushi (1859-1938). The proposal argues that insofar as the study of law and medicine are intimately intertwined with the interest of society, these subjects must be taught in a ‘national’ language and that, as the first step, the lingua franca of all the preparatory courses called ‘*bekka*’ (別課), which the students must take before starting specialised education which was called ‘*honka*’ (本課) in their chosen fields, shall be changed from English to Japanese. This change, as the proposal goes on to claim, would be the stepping stone for implementing a similar change at the level of specialised education, ‘*honka*,’ in the future.¹²⁴

The scope of change may also be observed by looking into the number of Japanese professors appointed to replace foreign instructors, most of whom were from English-speaking countries. At the time of the inauguration of the University of Tokyo in 1877, a little over 70 % of all appointed professors were from Europe and the United States (23 foreign professors and 9 Japanese

¹²³ The original text reads, “其学教授上用語ノ儀、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筈ニ候事” This unofficial notice can be found in *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: Collection of Important Documents, from 1879 until 1891), archived at The University of Tokyo Archive, ID-No.S0014/SS2/01.

¹²⁴ The entire text of the proposal entitled “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: Proposal for Establishing Preparatory Courses at the Faculty of Law) can be found in *Tōkyō teikoku daigaku, Tōkyō teikoku daigaku gojū-nen-shi, Vol.1* (東京帝国大学五十年史: Fifty Years of the Tokyo Imperial University), Tokyo: Tōkyō teikoku daigaku, 1932: 595-601.

professors).¹²⁵ While the overall number of appointees changed in the following years, this ratio of foreign and Japanese professors remained the same up until 1880.¹²⁶ However, we see a dramatic shift in 1881, with foreign professors now taking up only slightly above 40% of all appointments (16 foreign professors and 21 Japanese professors).¹²⁷ And by 1884, the balance was further tilted, with 12 foreign professors and 40 Japanese professors.¹²⁸ Of course, these numbers alone cannot be treated as the direct evidence of the shift towards ‘nationalising’ the lingua franca at the university, and some Japanese professors, especially those who studied abroad, may have offered lectures in foreign languages. However, reading in conjunction with those political and intellectual interests in a ‘national’ language, the changes in the number of appointed foreign and Japanese professors can be read, as I read them here, as one of the consequences of ‘nationalising’ research and pedagogical language in order to orient the university towards what Katō earlier called ‘*nihon daigaku*’ (日本大学: characteristically ‘Japanese’ university.)

The point I shall emphasise here is that this political and institutional insistence on a ‘national’ language was not merely to satisfy the practical need of the students at the university, whose competency in foreign languages varied. Nor was it simply to meet the practical necessity of the state to mould individuals into those equipped with knowledge and language necessary for conducting the business of the state. The emphasis on a ‘national’ language was, also and

¹²⁵ The Ministry of Education, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō*, Vol.5 (The Annual Report of the Ministry of Education of Imperial Japan), Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1914. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/809149> (11.09.2022).

¹²⁶ The Ministry of Education, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō*, Vol.8, Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1914. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/809153> (11.09.2022).

¹²⁷ The Ministry of Education, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō*, Vol.9, Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1914. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/809154> (11.09.2022).

¹²⁸ The Ministry of Education, *Nihon teikoku monbushō nenpō*, Vol.12, Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1914. <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/809157> (11.09.2022).

importantly, intimately intertwined with the consciousness of the collective Self, with the question of subjective enunciation and the subject position of the Japanese as the knower.

Immediately conjured up in our mind when thinking about the relation between language and the collective Self, the nation-state, is Benedict Anderson's argument that a language, developed both as a "vernacular language-of-state" and as a "language of the population," facilitates the articulation of an imagined community, so much so that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" come to exist.¹²⁹ Language is indeed a means of constituting communion, even if only as a sense thereof. Thus, Anderson here presupposes that any given group of people owns a common language. While acknowledging the analytical efficiency of Anderson's presumption, the question I shall address here is how members of a group, here, the 'Japanese' – granted that we all agree on this loaded category – come to be aware of the commonality of their language in the first place and how they come to view their language with significant value as the ground of the collective Self.

In the most general sense, when one is speaking, writing, or reading in one's mother tongue,¹³⁰ they are not necessarily conscious about in what language they are speaking, writing, or reading, nor are they consciously referring to the established rules of the language as linguists and grammarians would do. To borrow from Lee Yeounsuk, even the idea and the recognition "that they are speaking a particular 'language' is itself alien" to them, such that the moment one becomes

¹²⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Community*, 78, 6.

¹³⁰ Anderson uses the adjective 'native' to describe those users of a language for whom the language is their mother tongue. However, the term has long been problematised as it enacts boundaries to marginalise certain segments of population and reproduces normative assumptions about behaviour, experiences, and identity that 'the native' is supposed to have. For a succinct problematisation of 'native,' see Laretta S.P. Cheng, Danielle Burgess, Natasha Vernooij, Cecilia Solis-Barroso, Ashley McDermott, and Savithry Namboodiripad, "The Problematic Concept of Native Speaker in psycholinguistics: Replacing Vague and Harmful Terminology with Inclusive and Accurate Measures," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 30:12, 2021: 715-843.

aware that they are indeed “speaking a certain kind of language or a national language” is the very instance in which “a new history of [the] language beings.”¹³¹ So understood, those enunciations of ‘*hōgo*’ (邦語: national language) are, as I read them, the instances in which a language transcends immanent experiences of one’s speaking, writing, and reading and becomes a product of conscious framing to view this language historically, as something that has long existed in a place called ‘Japan’ and, at the same time, to view this language in its purported unity, as something that all those who live in a place called ‘Japan’ use as a mode of communication. Viewed historically and in its unity, this language becomes a particular that is and can be juxtaposed to other languages – in the case that I am concerned here, Western languages – and, therefore, becomes objectified. And such juxtaposition, in turn, sanctions an idea to treat ‘*hōgo*’, a ‘national’ language, as if it is an autonomous entity that precedes and regulates the act of speaking, writing, and reading. It is not that such an act creates a ‘national’ language; it is that a certain language with its presumed historicity and unity becomes the foundation of the act of enunciation and cognition and, therefore, becomes that which foregrounds the act of enunciation and cognition of the ‘national’ community, of the collective Self.¹³²

With the clarity of hindsight, the problem, of course, is that the idea of ‘*hōgo*,’ a ‘national’ language in the late 19th century, was not guaranteed by any specific linguistic standards. Nor, for

¹³¹ Yeounsuk, *Kokugo to iu shisō*. Hereafter, my reference to this book is based on English-language edition published in 2010. Lee Yeounsuk, *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan*, Maki Hirano Hubbard (trans.), Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010: 1.

¹³² At this juncture, where the concern for subjective enunciation intersects with the concern for language, the unfolding of modern knowledge coincides with the unfolding of the ideological development of ‘*kokugo*’ (国語: national language). The problem of *kokugo* has long been one of the important tropes for scholarly discussion. Apart from the works I have already cited in this chapter, the following analyses offer some interesting elucidations. Hirai, *Kokugo kokuji mondai no rekishi*; Naoki Sakai, *Shizan sareru nihongo nihonjin: ‘Nihon’ no rekishi, chisei-teki haichi* (The Stillborn Japanese Language and Japanese: History of ‘Japan’ and Its Geo-political Location), Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1996; Yasuda Toshiaki, *‘Kokugo’ no kindai-shi: Teikoku nihon to kokugo-gakusha tachi* (Modern History of Kokugo: The Japanese Empire and Scholars of Kokugo), Tokyo: Chūō shinsho, 2006; Mizumura Minae, *Nihongo ga horobiru toki* (When ‘Nihongo’ Dies), Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 2015.

that matter, was there any established understanding of what ‘*nihongo*’ (日本語: the Japanese language) actually meant. We may recall here Motoori Norinaga’s claim that the ancient Japanese language was the repository of Japanese consciousness and, therefore, the medium of subjective enunciation. We may also recall here Naoki Sakai’s reading of Norinaga’s work, in which Sakai suggests that through Norinaga’s rendering of the ancient language emerged a sense of ‘Japanese.’¹³³ Yet, undoubtedly, there is an undeniable chasm between the ancient language and the language prevalent during the late Edo period. This ambiguity of *nihongo* has led Kamei Takeshi to declare that there is no obvious answer to the question of what *nihongo*, the Japanese language, actually is and that no language can exist in its unity without abstraction.¹³⁴

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みちびかれてきているとすれば、このばあいはそれはすくなくとも直接には純粹な意味での言語学の影響によるものではなく、ある固定した觀念の独断である。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。

(If we are taught to treat both the language in *Manyōshū* and that of the twentieth century as a form of “Japanese language,” despite their substantial differences, we are taught to do so because of specific and arbitrary decisions, not because of the genuine study of these languages provides evidence of similarity. And such decisions are derived from the ideology that presumes, just as myth does, the existence of the metaphysical absolute.)¹³⁵

¹³³ See my discussion in Chapter 6, pp.307-313.

¹³⁴ Kamei Takashi, “Kokugo towa ikanaru kotoba nariya” (What Kind of Language Is *Kokugo*?), in *Kamei Takashi ronbun shū, Vol.1: Nihongo no tame ni* (Collection of Kame Takashi’s Essays: For the Japanese Language), Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1971: 229, 232.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 232.

The idea of *'hōgo'* spawned out of political and intellectual discussions of the early Meiji period is no exception. The idea of *'hōgo'*, a 'national' language, was articulated through specific and arbitrary decisions – and perhaps, even desires – to reposition the collective (defined here as the nation-state) as a bounded space of subjective enunciation marked by the purported historicity and unity of the language. In other words, this repositioning of the collective through language – through the idea of 'national' language – has a double purpose: to solidify the ground for the subjective voice while simultaneously enacting the boundary of the enunciating Self. To this end, I argue that, throughout the unfolding of modern knowledge in Japan, language was a liminal space, not merely for reconfiguring the epistemic ground of knowledge through translational practices, but also and more importantly, for articulating a spatially bounded and localised configuration of 'I,' the enunciating and knowing subject. Language, therefore, became a liminal space in which 'Japan' transubstantiated itself from the translator of 'Western' knowledge to the producer of 'modern' knowledge.

Conclusion

A knowledge tradition that emerged in early modern Europe and eventually took the name of *scientia* was distinctive in that it viewed the world not as a repository of human purposes and aspirations but as a repository of objective knowledge. This view was sustained by the premise to *a priori* position the knowing subject vis-à-vis the world of objects so that the subject can have recourse to the realities of objects and produce secular and objective knowledge about the world. Of course, as a knowledge tradition emerged in a specific spatio-temporal context, such a view of the world was nothing but parochial, and such a presumption to conceive knowledge as a subject-object relation was nothing but emic. To bend Takeuchi Yoshimi here, this knowledge was the product of history that was “possible only in Europe.”¹ And yet, this knowledge has been globalised and has become *the* knowledge, *our* knowledge. In this process of becoming, the spatio-temporally specific worldview and premise were, to borrow from Sanjay Seth, “hardened into unquestioned axioms and came to be seen not as the presuppositions of a particular conception and practice of knowledge, but as the premises of knowledge tout court.”²

Japan also participated in this process of becoming. Since its arrival to the Japanese archipelago in the 16th century, this knowledge had long fascinated political authorities and intellectual elites and had been embraced sometimes with enthusiasm and other time with reluctance. Some saw in

¹ Takeuchi, “What is Modernity,” 54.

² Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 207.

this knowledge certain utility for explaining things that lay outside the remits of the existing knowledge traditions. Some treated it as an epistemological instrument for agricultural production and coastal defence. Others who feared Western encroachment learnt this knowledge that was thought to sustain Western dominance to grasp the nature of those barbarians. Whatever intellectual affinities they might have, those political and intellectual elites saw this knowledge as a supplement rather than a replacement for expanding the scope of the existing field of knowledge. And yet, by the end of the 19th century, this knowledge became integral to the reorganisation of ‘Japan’ as a modern nation-state, to a new economic life based on capital, and to the social dispositive of the individual free from the feudal hereditary system. This knowledge came to be treated as *the* knowledge to be taught, disseminated, and produced.

This dissertation sought to add some contours to this deceptively simple story of modern knowledge formation by re-reading its unfolding in Japan, not as a history of acquisition, imitation, and appropriation of new ideas, theories, and technologies from the ‘West,’ but as a genealogy of temporality of epistemic changes occurred through translational practices to reconstitute some of the central ideas undergirding the field of knowledge, including *gakumon* (学問), *ri* (理), *kyūri* (窮理), *kagaku* (科学), and *shukan* (主観). As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, translation was not an exercise exclusive of the advocates of *Rangaku* or *Yōgaku* tradition, nor was it limited to the few decades of the late 19th century. Precisely because the premises that sustained *scientia* had to be translated with the existing lexicons and intellectual vernaculars, the unfolding of modern knowledge was also a genealogy of epistemic reconfiguration that took place in a liminal semantic and epistemic space among various knowledge traditions. And for this reason, the epistemic reconfiguration was replete with conflicts, contradictions, and negotiations: some of which directly addressed the concern for how to map ‘Western’ knowledge onto the existing

epistemic landscape by translating the fundamental presumptions that undergirded ‘Western’ knowledge; some indirectly and perhaps even inadvertently foregrounded an enabling epistemic condition for integrating ‘Western’ knowledge into the epistemic landscape; and some sought to specify how those core premises of Western knowledge could be – and must be – understood within the semantic space of a language that we may call ‘Japanese.’

The idea of *gakumon*, as discussed in Chapter 3, was a crucial conceptual device, especially for the Meiji politicians and intellectuals, to legitimise ‘Western’ knowledge as a ‘serious’ knowledge that was integral for politico-social reorganisation. In those discursive enunciations, the realm of *gakumon* was marked as the realm of Western knowledge and distinguished from the realm of *kyōiku* organised around the pedagogy of guidance and instruction not only to teach the basic subjects such as writing and arithmetics but also to inculcate in the minds of the people a certain moral and ethical predilection based on the discourse of national polity, ‘*kokutai*’. With this distinction, the university, a newly established institution of knowledge that occupied the apex of the centralised and hierarchised educational system, was designated specially as the locus to conduct *gakumon*, to pursue the truth about the world.

Of course, this discursive strategy to weave ‘serious’ knowledge with the notion of truth, otherwise defined as *ri*, was not an invention of Meiji political discourses. The discursive imbrication of knowledge and truth had long been the primary sustenance for many existing knowledge traditions. In other words, the *ri*-knowledge structuration had long been the primary qualifier of ‘serious’ knowledge. For example, for the (Neo-)Confucian tradition, to know is to grasp *ri*, the ordering of the universe, that dictates everything in *tianxia* (天下: the realm under Heaven). For Motoori Norinaga, to know is to embrace *taenaru kotowari* (妙理), the ineffable intention of heavenly deities that created the imperial land of Japan. Thus, in Chapter 4, I discussed

the ways in which the Meiji intellectuals, be they the advocate of ‘Western’ knowledge or the dissent, sought to legitimise the seriousness of ‘Western’ knowledge and to articulate its location in the existing intellectual landscape by rendering this knowledge with the familiar discursive frame of *ri*-knowledge and by encoding new meanings to the idea of *ri*.

This discursive transvaluation of *ri* during the Meiji period was, however, the culmination of a centuries-long process of epistemic negotiation. In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I engaged with this process and sought to demonstrate the ways in which various knowledge traditions developed during the Edo period promoted the idea of *ri* in its heterogeneity and consequently suspended the idea of *kyūri* that connected the ‘investigation of things’ and ‘perfection of knowledge’ ultimately to moral and ethical conclusions. This heterogenisation of *ri* and suspension of the Neo-Confucian notion of *kyūri* had two specific implications. First, it constituted an enabling condition to map ‘Western’ knowledge onto the existing epistemic landscape as a knowledge tradition that sought to understand *ri* of the natural world devoid of human purposes and aspirations, which lay outside the remit of the other existing knowledge traditions. Second, through the heterogenisation of *ri* and suspension of *kyūri* emerged new orientations to reconfigure the idea of the knower and the known. On the one hand, discursive enunciations of, for instance, Itō Jinsai, Ogyū Sorai, and Motoori Norinaga articulated a figure of the knower grounded on the predisposition towards knowledge as *thing-for-itself*. On the other hand, through the discursive enunciation of Miura Baien and scholars of *Koihō* emerged a figure of the known sustained by the propensity towards knowledge as *thing-in-itself*.

Crucially, however, these ideas of the knower and the known were by no means integrated into a specific relation, such as a subject-object relation. As discussed in Chapter 7, it was through the development of the ideas of *shukan* and *kagaku* in the early years of Meiji that knowledge was

reconceived as a subject-object relation and that the primary qualification of knowledge was transformed from the-knowledge structuration to the *a priori* established position of the subject. However, I shall reiterate that the subject position – ‘I’ that knows that I know – was sustained by a specific order of discourse established in a liminal semantic space between the Western associationist psychological notion of ‘consciousness’ and the (Neo-)Confucian notion of ‘conscience.’ Furthermore, this subject position was reconfigured into the collective ‘Japanese’ Self through the appropriation of evolutionary temporality and through the idea of a ‘national’ language that was thought to transcend immanent individual experiences and to precede and regulate the act of collective enunciation and cognition. In other words, this specific order of discourse sustained the subject positions not only as the collective, enunciating, knowing ‘I’ but also as that which was modern and yet unquestionably different from the (Western) subject.

Modern knowledge formation in Japan is synchronic to the extent that, through the process of epistemic reconfiguration, knowledge has come to draw its sustenance from a specific position of the subject that objectively and historically views the world and that consciously knows itself. However, modern knowledge formation in Japan is simultaneously diachronic because the order of discourse that sustains this position of the subject – articulated through specific significations of the idea of *gakumon*, *ri*, *kyūri*, *kagaku*, and *shukan* – embeds within itself the semantics of the hitherto prevalent intellectual traditions, contingent historical experiences of ‘Western’ knowledge, and specific political desires to insert itself in knowledge. Precisely because of such diachronicities, we cannot assume that those ideas (re)articulated in Japan as part and parcel of epistemic reconfiguration are equivalent to, for example, the modern European idea of ‘scholarship,’ ‘reason,’ ‘the pursuit of reason,’ ‘science,’ and ‘the subject.’ Modern knowledge formation in Japan was, therefore, an instance in which certain incommensurability, discursive differences, emerged within

the knowledge tradition that we have come to recognise as ‘modern’ knowledge. In other words, when thinking about the global unfolding of ‘Western’ knowledge and its transubstantiation into ‘modern’ knowledge, we cannot assume, to bend Talal Asad for my purpose here, “structures of meaning, structures which are at once the collective forms of experiences” remain the same across time and space.³ We cannot assume structures of meaning as universal. The hitherto parochial idea of knowledge conceived as a subject-object relation has indeed been globalised. But how it was hardened into axioms, how it became the contingent silence for knowledge tout court, cannot be grasped with the language of imitation and appropriation. Discursive articulation of the subject position within the intellectual landscape of Japan was, precisely because of its discursive nature, by no means ‘modular’ in its character and its discursive sustenance.

This, in turn, means that ‘Japan’ as the subject position established in conjunctural moments of modernity is essentially a discourse, or else, as Stuart Hall puts it, a system of representation “which provides a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment.”⁴ This subject position, ‘Japan,’ does not have a timeless vacuum in and of itself. It cannot deliver knowledge to objective reality without inhibitions, interests, and desires that mark a particular historical moment. And therefore, the subject position, ‘Japan,’ is an ongoing project to constantly define, enact, and stabilise the boundary of the Self vis-à-vis the Other (objective knowledge) and the modality of speaking about the Self (self-knowledge). Those writings and speeches I have discussed throughout this

³ Talal Asad, “Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology,” *Man (New Series)*, 14:4, 1979: 612 [607-627].

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].

dissertation are, to this end, not the revelation of the fundamental stability of a thing, a meaning, or an object, but rather the very act of stabilisation.⁵

To suggest so is not merely to argue that the very condition of knowledge production is context-dependent. It is also to challenge the claim that still seeks to argue for some transcendental features of modern knowledge in the Hegelian sense, whereby transcendence, something universal about modern knowledge, is ontologically correlated to a spatially bounded location. In other words, I am rejecting the claim that, even if knowledge is contextual, its condition of production – transcendental features – have nonetheless derived from the European intellectual tradition, such that “a claim to universality” is legitimately connected to “our Occidental understanding of the world.”⁶ By tracing discursive differences encoded to the ideas central to grounding knowledge, I sought to demonstrate that the unfolding of modern knowledge in Japan was not the process of recognising, incorporating, and formalising ‘Western’ knowledge. It was, instead, the process of reconfiguring the epistemic ground so that transcendental features, the universal, were expatriated from the spatially-bounded location (the ‘West’), so that ‘Japan’ came to *partake* in the making of modern knowledge rather than simply accepting and appropriating what is made available by the ‘West.’ In other words, a reading I sought to offer of modern knowledge formation in Japan is that it was the process of ‘de-Westernisation’ to question and challenge the control over knowledge, or

⁵ As Nietzsche once suggested, “the reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for – originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to the nature and even to their skin – all this grows from generation unto generations, [...] until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such.” The purported timelessness of ‘Japan’ as the subject position, in turn, becomes “a constructive bias,” to ben Mary Douglas for my purpose here, which “gives us confidence. At any time we may have to modify our structure of assumptions to accommodate new experience, but the more consistent the experience is with the past, the more confidence we can have in our assumptions.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974: 121-2; Mary Douglas, “Secular Defilement,” in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1984: 37-38 [30-41].

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Thomas McCarthy (trans.), Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984: 44.

more precisely put, to question and challenge the complicity between the West – whether imagined or real – and the core premises of knowledge.⁷

To this end, the moment of partaking is by no means the moment of “epistemological decolonization”⁸ to achieve “global cognitive justice,”⁹ although I see the temptation to claim otherwise. Through epistemic reconfiguration, through the process of partaking, not only the epistemic ground but also the relationship between power and knowledge was reconfigured so as to connect the core premises of knowledge with the subject articulated as a spatially bounded and localised configuration, ‘Japan.’ The moment of partaking was, therefore, simply a moment in which the spatio-temporal location called ‘Japan’ came to establish itself as one that set the parameter of knowledge and knowledge production. Then, one of the remaining tasks here is to engage in “a painstaking anatomization”¹⁰ of how this moment of ‘de-Westernisation’ unfolded in the following decades, that is to say, the *posterior* condition of this subject position that was articulated as a spatially bounded, localised configuration. How did this ‘Japan’ as the subject position for enunciation and cognition unfold in the following decades? What was the

⁷ My notion of ‘de-Westernisation’ here follows Walter D. Mignolo’s definition, which he juxtaposes to the notion of decoloniality that questions not only the control over knowledge but also the nature of how the world is politically and economically structured vis-à-vis knowledge. See Walter D. Mignolo, “Decolonizing Western Epistemology / Building Decolonial Epistemologies,” in Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (eds.), *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2012: 19-43. In this text, Mignolo describes Japan’s modernisation as a case of ‘de-Westernisation.’

⁸ Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 2007: 177 [168-178].

⁹ Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 78. Admittedly, I have shared many of the intellectual and political impulses of the decolonial tradition. However, I follow Sanjay Seth’s problematisation of this tradition and share his 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. As Seth points out, “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.

¹⁰ Seth, *Beyond Reason*, 210.

“consequence in the path dependence of institutions and ideas”¹¹ that were imbricated and undergirded by this subject position?

In his attempt to replace the idea of ‘*shukan*’ (主観) with the idea of ‘*shutai*’ (主体), Miki Kiyoshi (1897-1945) argued in one of his seminal works, *Rekishi Tetsugaku* (歴史哲学: Philosophy of History, 1932), that the subject/subjective must be understood not as the *function* of consciousness as Nishimura Shigeki and Nishi Amane earlier sought to understand, but as the *act* of consciousness.¹² In other words, the emphasis must be placed not on the notion of ‘I know that I know’ but rather on how ‘I’ would and could render realities with meanings. This enunciation engendered a shift from the observing subject to the acting subject. And the implication of such a shift was perhaps most evident in the field of philosophy, especially in the works of, for instance, Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960), and Tosaka Jun (1900-1945), which have been variously discussed in today’s historical and philosophical scholarships.¹³ However, little explored is the question of how this semantic and conceptual shift from ‘*shukan*’ to ‘*shutai*,’ from the observing subject to the acting subject, manifested itself in the operation of knowledge, and how this predilection towards the acting subject regulated the production of knowledge.

One of the most important loci to address these questions is the intersection between this acting subject and what Yamamuro Shinichi calls ‘*kokumin teikoku*’ (国民帝国: national empire).¹⁴ How was the boundary of this acting subject (re)enacted in the context of Japan’s imperial and colonial expansion? How did this idea of the acting subject construct the Other to be governed and

¹¹ Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere,” 681.

¹² The original text reads, “我々は事実の観念によって主観性を指すのではなく、却て主体的なもの、行為するものを理解するのである。” Miki Kiyoshi, *Rekishi Tetsugaku* (Philosophy of History), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1932: 264.

¹³ See for example, Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, especially Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

¹⁴ Yamamuro, *Shisō kadai to shite no ajia*. See also my brief discussion on what I call ‘the grammar of *teikoku*’ in Footnote 92 of Chapter 7, pp. 527-258.

subjugated? How was this subject formalised into institutional and analytical categories of knowledge production? What kinds of knowledge did this subject produce? One promising case to be explored in this instance of questionings is the politico-intellectual project of *nihon-gaku* (日本学: studies of Japan) in the 1930s.¹⁵ The establishment of *nihon-gaku* was initially proposed, upon the recommendation of *Kyōgaku-kyoku* (教学局: the Bureau for Kyōgaku) of the Ministry of Education, by the first Konoe cabinet and the succeeding Hiranuma cabinet to reposition the university as the institution that embodied *kokutai* (国体: national polity) in its research and education.¹⁶ This political initiative eventually materialised, throughout the latter half of the 1930s, into scholarly and institutional developments. For instance, new chairs of *nihon-gaku* were established at imperial universities, such as *Nihon seishin-shi kōza* (日本精神史講座: Chair of the History of Japanese Psychohistory) at Kyoto Imperial University and *Nihon shisō-shi kōza* (日本思想史講座: Chair of the History of Japanese Through) at Tokyo Imperial University, to advance ‘objective’ and ‘scientific’ research on Japan.¹⁷ A new advisory body, the Committee for the Promotion of Japanese Scholarships, was formed to oversee the works of various academic

¹⁵ The current state of research on *nihon-gaku* is rather dispersed in its scope and relatively limited in its quantity. For instance, while there are some retrospective accounts of those chairs established at imperial universities as part and parcel of *nihon-gaku* and analyses on the political process of institutionalising *nihon-gaku* under the *kyōgaku* ideology initiated by *Kyōgaku-kyoku* (教学局: the Bureau for Kyōgaku) of the Ministry of Education, the works of *Nihon shogaku shinkō iinkai* (日本諸学振興委員会: Committee for the Promotion of Japanese Scholarships) established as the promotional body of *nihon-gaku* have only recently gained attention by the publication of its comprehensive survey. So too have the series of lectures organised under the epithet *nihon bunka kōgi* (日本文化講義: Lectures of Japanese Culture) specifically catered for the ‘Japanese’ students at the university. See my brief explanation of *nihon-gaku* in Footnote 77 or Chapter 3 (p. 202). I have specified some of the existing works on *nihon-gaku* in the following footnotes.

¹⁶ *Kyōgaku sasshin hyōgikai* (Council for Educational Reform), *Kyōgaku sasshin hyōgikai shiryō Vol.1 and Vol.2* (Record of Proceedings at Council for Educational Reform), Tokyo: Fuyō shobō, 2006.

¹⁷ *Kyōto-daigaku hyakunenshi hensyū-iinkai* (ed.), *Kyōto-daigaku hyakunenshi, bukyoku-hen 1* (100 Years of Kyoto University, Faculties 1), Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1997:47, 50; *Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi hensyū-iinkai* (ed.), *Tōkyō-daigaku hyakunenshi, tsū-shi 2* (100 Years of Tokyo University, General History 2), Tokyo: Tokyo University, 1987: 777-784

associations (organised in the field of education, philosophy, linguistics and literature, history, economics, arts, law, geography, and natural sciences) and to orient their research and educational activities towards the ethos of *kyōgaku*.¹⁸ And new curricula structured around the lectures of ‘Japanese’ culture were implemented at various imperial universities and private universities upon a request from the Ministry of Education to provide at the university some subjective, spiritual, and moral training to turn the student into the subject of the nation.¹⁹ These research and educational projects organised under the epithet of *nihon-gaku* were, as it seems to me, reflexive of the sustained desire for the ontological enclosure of ‘Japan’ as the locus of subjective enunciation and ‘Japanese’ as the enunciating subject, especially in the context of ‘national empire’ whereby the boundary of the nation, ‘Japan,’ was constantly in the state of flux.²⁰ Then, in what ways did the idea of the acting subject rather than the observing subject articulate an enabling condition for these research and educational projects? And vice versa, in what ways did the practices of knowledge production and dissemination under the epithet of *nihon-gaku* seek to stabilise the very condition of knowledge production and dissemination, that is, the idea of the acting subject?

Further still, the idea of the acting subject, ‘*shutai*’, had also dominated the post-war intellectual debates, symbolically representing a certain continuity of history that is otherwise regarded with a sense of disjuncture. For instance, Mashita Shinichi, while acknowledging the multitude of meanings encoded in the idea, sought to recuperate the idea of acting subject from what Oguma

¹⁸ Komagome Takeshi, Kawamura Hajime, and Nasu Keiko (eds.), *Senji-ka gakumon no tōsei to dōin: Nihon shogaku shinkō iinkai no kenkyū* (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.

¹⁹ Kamikubo Satoshi, “Senji-ki no shiritsu-daigaku ni miru ‘Nihon bunka kōza eno taiō: Tōkyōken no shiritsu-daigaku o chūshin ni’” (Responses to ‘Lectures on Japanese Culture’ at Private Universities in the Tokyo Region during the War), *Memoirs of Osaka Institute of Technology*, 64:1, 2019:1-34.

²⁰ On the fluctuating boundary of the Japanese empire, see my brief discussion in Footnote 92 of Chapter 7, pp. 527-258.

Eiji later described as the device of “bourgeoisie’s political evasion” and to reconfigure it as the agent of social practices by discursively linking it to Marxist materialism.²¹ At the other end of the intellectual spectrum, Maruyama Masao also found, in the idea of ‘*shutai*,’ a new possibility to dismantle the Japanese psyche that had long revolved around *kokutai* and the absolute status of the emperor.²² Of course, the central purpose of these post-war Marxist and Liberalist discourses on *shutai* was to encode new meanings to the idea in their efforts to disassociate their intellectual exercises and new political and social orientations of post-war Japan from the previous decades. The question that arises at this juncture is of (dis)continuity. Is the post-war idea of the acting subject fundamentally different from the pre-war idea both in its semantics and in its operation as the silent sustenance of knowledge and knowledge production? And more importantly, even assuming that the subject is an ongoing project, why was there such a heightened interest in – or even an obsession with – articulating and specifying what the (Japanese) subject ought to be? Does it inform the sense of abjection that overcast the post-war collective Japanese psyche? Does it also inform, as the pendulum swings back, the subsequent emergence of politico-ideological as well as popular discourses of, for instance, *nihonjinron* (日本人論: Theories of Japanese)?

In insisting on the necessity of anatomising modern knowledge formation in Japan and its *posterior* consequences, I am effectively reiterating David Kolb’s suggestion that to engage with modern knowledge is not only to understand it as “just another in a sequence of historic

²¹ Oguma Eiji, ‘*Minshu*’ to ‘*Aikoku*’: *Sengo nihon no nashonarizumu to kōkyō-sei* (Democracy and Patriotism: Nationalism and the Public Share in Postwar Japan), Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2002: 209; Mashita Shinichi, *Gakumon to Jinsei* (Scholarship and Life), Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1971.

²² Maruyama Masao, “Chō-kokkashugi no ronri to shinri” (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, Vol.1: Jujutsu tanjō* (Book of Okamoto Tarō: The Birth of Magic), Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 1998: 44.

constructions” but also to unveil “what has been at the root of these constructions.”²³ My methodological orientation – turning to the language of textuality, discourse, and *différance* to account for traces of difference within the tradition of knowledge that we call ‘modern’ knowledge, and treating the subject of knowledge, the silent sustenance of this knowledge, as an ongoing project – is to do precisely that. At the same time, this methodological orientation also opens up a possibility to read Japan’s experiences of modern knowledge (“the root of these constructions”) in comparative terms.

More to the point, given the ostensible muddiness of Japan’s historical positionality, oscillating between one that was subjected to the imperatives of Western modernity and one that instrumentalised such imperatives for its own politico-ideological ends, it is tempting to suggest, as Gayatri Spivak suggests in an otherwise illuminating essay, that ‘Japan’ is an absurdity that occupies the Eastern end of ‘Asia’ as both geographical, historical, and conceptual category.²⁴ I understand her intention of recuperating ‘Asia’ “through a pedagogy of genealogical deconstruction reterritorializing the abstractions of an anti-ethnicist regionalism”²⁵ – an intention to deconstruct the purported homogeneity of ‘Asia’ projected by the West while reshaping it as a conceptual category. And yet, such a suggestion of Japan as an absurdity enacts a new schema of inclusion and exclusion. The problem is not this categorical schema itself – categorisation is one of the fundamental strategies through which modern knowledge, our knowledge, renders the world knowable.²⁶ The problem is rather in the innocuous ignorance towards some broader implications of such arbitrary categorisation. For one, such a suggestion of Japan as an absurdity, though

²³ Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity*, 9-10.

²⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Other Asias*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008: 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 283.

²⁶ *Rangaku* scholars rendering of Western knowledge succinctly suggests this point. See my discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 331-333.

inadvertently, feeds back into those familiar discourses of Japanese uniqueness. For another, such an idea of 'Asia' embeds within itself a tendency to gloss over heterogeneous historical experiences of that which compose 'Asia.' Turning our attention to discursive differences encoded to modern knowledge and the historicity of the subject position offers us an instance to investigate how a knowledge tradition conceived as a subject-object relation has unfolded, for example, in China, India, and elsewhere with differing discursive enunciations and with distinctive consequences, and how all those locations have come to partake in the making of 'modern' knowledge. Such a comparative perspective also allows us to re-tell the story of "epistemological colonisation" not in terms of the sweeping and polemical opposition between the West and the rest, between the imposition of "provincialism as universalism"²⁷ and "pure" local knowledge uncontaminated by the hegemonic modern Western knowledge²⁸; but as a complex web of domination and subjugation that cuts across geo-cultural boundaries and boundaries of knowledge traditions.

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 specifically 'Japanese' capacity to appropriate and instrumentalise someone else's knowledge for self-serving purposes. Modern knowledge formation in Japan is interesting because it points to the general conclusion that a knowledge tradition, if and when it becomes global, is subjected to the uncertainties that derive from all considerations of language and semantics.

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no

²⁷ Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity / Rationality," 31.

²⁸ Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, 11.

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 a center 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.²⁹

‘De-Westernisation,’ that is, epistemic reconfiguration through translational practices to assume control over knowledge, reveals that what we have regarded as given, such as the subject and the object, are, in fact, ‘swampy’ in their nature. This realisation of the very limit of modern knowledge that we have become accustomed to as our knowledge, in turn, constitutes a reflexive moment to examine the possible inadequacy of some of our own conceptual vocabulary. What does it mean to evaluate, for instance, Katō Hiroyuki’s ‘scientific’ claims about Japan’s historical positionality as the modern through our own category of ‘scientific’? It is, indeed, tempting to disregard Katō’s claims with the adverb ‘purportedly’ or ‘quasi-.’ It is tempting to read Katō’s text simply as a mere ideological enunciation with no factual basis and no scientific value. However, what I sought to do throughout my analysis in this dissertation is to suggest that our own judgement on the validity of knowledge claims made by scholars and intellectuals, who wrote in a time and place far removed from our own, may also be tainted by our own socialisation into ‘modern’ knowledge. Our analysis may also be tainted by a specific order of discourse that sustains our own idea of, for instance, ‘science / scientific.’ Modern knowledge is undoubtedly global, and convincing accounts of the alternative possibility of knowledge are indeed difficult to find. But it is precisely for this reason that knowing its limits and possibilities, hence knowing the root of its construction, is all the more important.

²⁹ Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” 351-370.

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