

CIVILISATION DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGION IN MODERN JAPAN

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Abstract: When considering the issue of equal and high-quality education for people, it is important to consider the quality of the knowledge propagated. 19th century Japan can be said to be a representative example of the diffusion of education and enlightened knowledge, improving people's quality of life. At that time, Japanese Enlightenment intellectuals argued about what knowledge would help individual happiness and the country's development. In particular, the debate over the relationship between religion and enlightenment knowledge was fierce. Some tried to use religion as a tool for accepting civilisation, while others argued that it was necessary to understand religion correctly for the development of civilisation. Representatively, Nishi Amane argued that correct knowledge could be established by separating and coexisting the area of knowledge and religion. He argued using traditional East Asian terms, and this case illustrates the activities of enlightenment intellectuals who pursued the policy of religion for civilisation development.

Keywords: Kashiwabara Takaaki, Meirokusha, Meiroku, Mori Arinori, Nakamura Masanao, Nishi Amane, Religion in Modern Nation Building, Tsuda Mamichi.

1. Introduction

The idea of providing people with the opportunity to improve their quality of life by ensuring an inclusive, equitable, and quality education for more people is not very long in global human history. Since the 18th century, when the majority of the people or communities who have been 'enlightened' in the West began to

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prove their civilised superiority, this trend has spread around the world, and people have learned to take responsibility for their own lives. This idea is still important and is continuously working today. However, as much as the problem of quantitative expansion of education, the awareness of the quality of the knowledge delivered needs to be raised continuously. This is because the goal of education must not only improve the quality of life of individuals but also keep in mind the healthy and sustainable development of the community. The propagation of knowledge, which was not concerned with qualitative content, sometimes caused problems such as intense competition, selfishness, and the rapid destruction of the community.

Japan after the 19th century can be said to be a representative example of the diffusion of enlightened knowledge and education dramatically improving people's quality of life. At that time, Japanese Enlightenment intellectuals argued about what knowledge to propagate that could help promote individual happiness and the country's development, all of which were converging under the slogan *Bunmei-Kaika*. *Bunmei* is a Japanese word meaning civilisation, referring to the western culture; *Kaika* means opening a door. The words epitomise the goal of the Japanese Enlightenment thinkers in earlier times to introduce western culture to Japan, which they believed would cause the nation to flourish.

At the same time, the Japanese Enlightenment thinkers who wanted to reform the old system by introducing the modern culture and system from the West faced tough challenges. Western ideas were too different from those of Japan for people to understand. Members of Meirokusha, a scholarly society in the early Meiji era (1873~1890), made various efforts to achieve this goal. Nishi Amane (1829-1897) said in the first article of the first *Meiroku Journal* that the foremost duty of powerful officials was to give people enough time to understand and accept the new knowledge in steps, rather than trying to change them overnight. He suggested the radical idea of replacing all Japanese characters with the alphabet to accelerate the dissemination of Enlightenment knowledge ("Argument for Writing Japanese," 2-21).

Religion was one of the most discussed topics in the Enlightenment movement. Enlightenment thinkers in the early Meiji era took it for granted that Christianity, the essence of western culture, was the base of the movement. They believed that well-educated westerners who were taught Christian doctrines and practices as children were the leading players in making western countries wealthy. However, one of the hardest parts of introducing the western culture was to make people accept the concept of *Shūkyō* (religion).

In order to use 'religion' for the enlightenment of the Japanese people at the time, there were two problems that had to be solved first. When Japan opened its doors to the West, it was very difficult to allow Western religions, especially Christianity. Because the prior 250 years, the Tokugawa shogunate defined Christianity as an evil religion that mesmerised people. Starting with the Meiji Restoration, Japan established a new relationship with countries from the West. In this process, Japanese officials and intellectuals had to support freedom of religion, and they could no longer resist Christianity. They had to help the public accept such a drastic social change by giving them political reasons and a theoretical basis for their decision.

Another problem is that in 19th century Japan, there was still no category for 'religion'. At that time, religion in Japan was closely related to people's lives based on their beliefs and beliefs, providing the basis for customs and etiquette, or even playing a part in knowledge or political roles. In contrast, religion already existed in the West at the time in a form that was separated from politics and knowledge and secured in their respective areas. In fact, the enlightenment that called for 'self-judgment' had to be separated from religion. Japanese people at the time had much difficulty understanding this concept of 'religion'. In that sense, setting and informing the limits and scope of religion was a task for Japanese enlightenment intellectuals at the time.

Many Enlightenment intellectuals stressed that religion is a tool of enlightenment and a shortcut to civilisation. It also seems that utilitarianism, which was a popular idea in western countries at that time, influenced the Japanese Enlightenment intellectuals to

look at religion as a tool. Echoing J. S. Mill, they thought of religions as something that could be utilised for certain purposes (Kim 19). They thought that religion should be used as a tool to teach people morals and manners and that knowledge should be thoroughly separated from religion as it was based on materialism. Meanwhile, some argued that religion was not just a tool but that knowledge and civilisation could be developed by making people understand the meaning of the relationship between knowledge and religion.

This study aims to confirm the argument that knowledge can be developed and enlightened through the coexistence of religion and knowledge that appeared among Meirokusa members. To this end, we will first look at the various arguments about the religion of the Meirokusa members, and among them, we will check in more detail the arguments of Nishi Amane, who was particularly interested in the relationship and coexistence between religion and knowledge. Through this case, I would like to examine what role religion played in the enlightenment knowledge to pursue the development of civilisation in modern Japan and think about the meaning of religion in the relationship between the development and knowledge we are currently pursuing.

2. Remarks on Religion among Meirokusha Members

Discussion of religion is one of the most prominent topics in Meiroku Journal articles. Sugi Kōji (1828-1917) wrote *Russian Emperor Peter's Will*, a collection of stories describing how Russia used various tricks and scams to gain supremacy in Europe and the world, in the *Meiroku Journal* No 3. The work consists of 14 chapters, and Chapter 12 describes Russia's plan to take away the sovereignty of Hungary and Poland by exploiting the Greek Orthodox churches in the two countries. Sugi wrote a particular comment on Chapter 12, noting that Russia had attempted to use the Greek Orthodox Church as a weapon to invade territories and that while it may not be an immediate threat to Japan, it could undoubtedly threaten Japan's security in the future. He argued that the Japanese people should be open-minded and choose a decent religion widely recognised throughout the world to avoid "old

nasty religions" such as the Greek Orthodox Church, which he believed could facilitate a Russian invasion (*"Gakoku Pyotoru daitei no ikun"* 9-15). Sugi paid attention to the role of religion as a political means. This shows that Japan felt a deep fear of having to allow freedom of religion and its consequences. At that time, Japan thought that allowing freedom of faith (especially Christianity) would undermine Japan's identity and be used as a tool for Western invasion, but eventually yielded to the powerful Western power and allowed freedom of faith in Japan.

Tsuda Mamichi (1829-1903) found a means to measure the level of civilisation based on religion and studying. He argued that though education was generally the most needed to develop civilisation, Japan in the Meiji era was far behind Europe at the time and needed religion to speed up its process of civilisation. Historically, writing and education spread rapidly in Japan while accepting Confucianism and Buddhism. When talking about Japan's religion, Tsuda held Christianity superior to Japan's traditional religions, Shintoism and Buddhism. In his view, Protestantism was the best among Christian beliefs, and newer churches were more civilised, even within Protestantism. This demonstrates the author's utilitarian perspectives on religion. He concluded that beliefs that were widespread at the time across Japan—such as Heaven and hell, karma, horoscope, and destiny—were absolute foolishness and that Japan should therefore use the newest, most virtuous, and most civilised religion to civilise and enlighten the people (18).

Kato Hiroyuki (1836-1916) translated American pastor J. P. Thompson's *Church and State in America* into Japanese for the first time in *Meiroku Journal* No 5, 6, and 13. Kato explained why America separated religion from politics and kept the government and churches mutually independent bodies (*"Beikoku Seikyō"* No 5: 22). He said that Japan must also separate church and state to enlighten the nation and ensure national security. The right to freely make a faith decision based on one's conscience and freely worship a god is the freedom given by Heaven, and the government is neither supposed to give the right of religion to people nor take it away from them. Therefore, freedom of religion

should be allowed. Kato's intentions were clear, though his work was a translation. He believed that only countries with complete separation of politics and religion could achieve national security as well as civilisation and enlightenment.

Mori Arinori (1847-1889) translated the Swiss international law scholar Emer de Vattel's *Droit des gens* (1758), who argued that the government is responsible for protecting only people's bodies and their right to own property ("Shūkyō" 13-21). In other words, the government's responsibilities and rights are limited to people's safety and property. When it comes to religion, people have the freedom to practice religion in general, but if that freedom causes any harm to the community, the government should set laws to control the situation. As such, any regulation on religion is confined to cases in which religions infringe on others' freedom or rights. Mori also argued that the best way to prevent conflicts caused due to differences in religious beliefs was to allow all religions as long as they were not conflicting from an ethical or national administrative point of view. He stressed that people should not discriminate or punish others because they have a different religion and that people need tolerance for new religions.

However, at the same time, there are religions that respect the authority of a foreign government (e.g., the Pope), and the priests and believers need to follow a foreign authority. He stated that this could violate a nation's rights and be against the nation's laws and morality. Therefore, if the top leader in a religious group is a foreigner, it should be possible legally to expel that leader to keep order in the nation. He also added that if a country fails to secure the right to intervene in religious affairs, that country is not an independent body. It must be noted that Mori's argument is about cracking down specifically on harmful religious groups, not all religions themselves (Mori 13). While studying abroad in England and the United States, Mori had been paying attention to the edification function of Christianity for the people from an early age. To that extent, the state is taking a position that it should not actively intervene in the people's beliefs, even if it conflicts with the religious identity of the Meiji monarch. However, it can be said that the condition of not harming others or publicly propagating it

reflects the atmosphere of Japanese society at the time, which was still conservative and cautious about religion.

Among the other Meirokusha members, many recognised the value of religion from a humanitarian point of view and argued that a religion from the West itself would be helpful for the enlightenment movement. For example, in "*Sanseiron*," Tsuda Mamichi stated that the three saints taught common humanitarian roots and sources (9-11). He mentioned that the key teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity were to guide people on the path they should take as human beings. From this point of view, Tsuda believed that Christianity could be accepted as a national religion if doing so was necessary for civilisation and enlightenment.

Another Meirokusha member, Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891), also had very positive attitudes toward religion. He argued that even those who worship stones, trees, or therianthropy are good, as these are all religious beliefs. Regardless of the level of civilisation, humans are inclined to depend on a supernatural being or a god. Nakamura says that while certain objects worshipped by people might be thought of as something to be laughed at, such people can be truly religious if they are taught about the almighty God.

The barbarians do not understand what courtesy is. But they also make statues and erect shrines and worship. They worship trees and stones as gods, and statues of half-human, half-beast creatures. Their forms are incomparably bizarre. Seeing this, some people scoff at their delusion and stupidity. But I think that this behaviour is what makes savages different from fowls and beasts. As savages are also human beings, God's nature indwells as part of their nature. Because their knowledge has not yet been opened up, however, their reverential hearts have not found a place to worship, and so they wander about. No matter how much they try to imagine, they cannot find the real thing, so they try to obtain various images of God. If they could realise the real, formless God, there is no doubt that they would be delighted and would dance and worship him (Nakamura 2).

According to Tsuda and Nakamura, it is not important what kind of object or god people worship. Religion is just a guide for a

person to develop morality and humanity by exploring the unknown spiritual world through faith. It does not matter which guide is used if the guide helps one achieve their goal.

Kashiwabara Takaaki (1835-1910) has different opinions about this. He does not accept the argument of Nakamura and Tsuda that all religions and the objects of worship share a single and universal ultimate goal with minor differences. According to Kashiwabara, religion can be classified into official creeds, endorsed by the state, and private faith. As Japan was a nation of private faith for a long time, he argued that the government should not let people choose religion as they wished. He believed that from the historical tradition of Japan, there are good religions and evil religions. In this sense, Kashiwabara argued that the government should lead the teaching of an official religious creed. This reflects the idea that political stability or law and order can only be achieved with the right guidance and education for the public implemented by the government (Kashiwabara 15). What Kashiwabara said was in line with the thoughts of Scholar Mito in the late Edo era as well as Confucian scholars, who were against the separation of politics and religion (Yonehara 207), given that not all religious creeds were right. This is different from the idea of Tsuda and Nakamura, who claims that the object of worship in religion is a private matter for people. All these scholars expressed various opinions about the concept of western religion, but none of them mentioned spiritual relief or the Heavenly world. They commonly saw religion as an effective tool to reach civilisation and enlightenment while only talking about the merits of religion.

3. Religion and Enlightenment of Knowledge

The early Enlightenment thinkers in the Meiji era treated religion from the West as an instrument for civilisation and enlightenment, although some differences existed. On the other hand, some other Meirokusha members argued that achieving a deeper understanding of religions could upgrade civilisation. Nishi Amane discussed religion in the *Meiroku Journal* in six articles titled "*Kyōbunron*," in which readers could understand his ideas on religion. He endorsed the separation of politics and religion and

argued that the individual freedom of faith is fundamental and should not be regulated by government powers (*"Kyōbunron"* 1: 13). However, like Mori, he said that the government had the right to punish any indecent or harmful religious individual or group if they were against Japanese law and order (*"Kyōbunron"* 2: 8). Nishi stated that it does not matter what kind of faith people have because religious beliefs could evolve as people develop their knowledge. In his words, there is no fundamental difference between having faith in Heaven and an animal like a fox.

Religion stands on faith. Faith comes from a place beyond the reach of knowledge. If a person comes to know something, that Principle immediately becomes his possession. But if he does not understand something well, he only believes what he does not understand by inferring it from what he does understand. Therefore, that Principle also does not become the person's possession. So, in other words, an ordinary person's belief in trees, stones, insects and beasts as gods, and a learned person's belief in the Heavens, reason and the Supreme Being, are all beliefs in the unknowable. Although there are differences here, the way of believing is the same (*"Kyōbunron"* 1: 11-12)

But at the same time, Nishi believed that the more knowledge one has, the more noble beliefs one would have. He argued that because faith comes from ignorance, the development of knowledge emphasises the enlightenment of faith and religious contributions to civilisation, leading the faithful to civilised faith. And when people move towards a civilised faith, religion will no longer disturb the security of the state. He wrote:

All scholarship opens up man's knowledge. Religion emanates from faith, based on what man's knowledge cannot reach. Therefore, scholarship and religion are fundamentally different. However, as scholarship progresses, so does the level of belief. For example, if a person who believes in foxes and snakes studies the science of animals, he will soon realise the emptiness of such beliefs. If a person who believes in a god of thunder and rain informs the science of electricity and weather, his suspicions will be lifted. ... By opening up people's knowledge and eliminating crude beliefs, their beliefs will become genuine and concise, and

they will naturally not be in conflict with the government's security ("Kyōbunron" 3: 4-5).

However, what is interesting about Nishi's statement is that it is not just about the utility of religion but that it leads us to a more philosophical consideration. The following is an excerpt from his article "Kyōbunron 5" (N=Nishi and I= Interlocutor).

I) Do you have criteria for choosing a religion?

N) Yes, I do. I want to have faith in something good. If I cannot discern between truth and lies, I try to pick the better one.

[...]

I) How can I practice it in my conscience?

N) Have you ever done good because you knew it was good in your conscience and have you ever done evil although you knew it was evil in your conscience?

I) Yes, I have.

N) What was it like to do good things?

I) I felt terrific.

N) Then, what was it like to do bad things?

I) I felt remorse and a sense of guilt.

N) Who would know your own joy or suffering? One says that a lord is Heaven of his retainers. But, does your lord know your feelings? One says that a father is Heaven of his sons. But does your father know your feelings?

I) No, neither.

N) If either your lord or your father does not know about your joy after doing good and your suffering after doing evil, how do you feel joy or guilty? What do you feel such emotions for? This is absolutely about oneself and your own nature, not about anyone else's judgement (5: 9-10).

Nishi argues that one should choose truth when selecting a religion, but that if one cannot discern between truth and lies, one should try to choose something closer to the truth. The decision of whether something is closer to the truth or closer to a lie depends fully on oneself, and one can make that decision if they have a conscience and follow human nature. Naturally, there is no right answer for judgments about whether something is good or bad, because this issue is not an area of objective knowledge. In that sense,

individual human beings can be the sole judge. If human beings learn more and develop their knowledge, they may choose a better option in selecting a faith. Still, there is no practical way to prove that one's selection is closer to the truth at the time of selection (and possibly ever). Nishi did not explain nature itself. He only made it clear that nature was not raised by either a father or a lord but bestowed by Heaven.

This leads to a question: If an individual only deserves to judge good or bad for himself in terms of selecting their faith, and if human nature deserves to be confident in judgements, is not there good or evil in human nature? What if a human with such a sacred nature willingly commits theft or murder? Where should one find grounds for judgment of that behaviour? To answer these questions, Nishi changes his point a bit here. Not only is human nature given by Heaven, but so are the human will and disposition.

N) Human nature is not given by a father or a lord but by Heaven. This is almost certainly true. You know that your nature is from Heaven and untouchable by the lord or father. Do not you think that the body is born from the father and raised by the lord?

I) Yes, I do. The father gives birth, and the lord raises.

N) In your words, only human nature is yours, and your body is owned by your father and the lord. Then, why is your father not able to judge good or bad? Why is the lord not able to determine your environment, poor or rich, while raising you up? The body is also given by Heaven. If either your disposition or body is from Heaven, then your nature is from Heaven. Thus, however, the value of the father and the lord is so great it cannot be compared to that of Heaven. In this regard, Heaven is invincible, isn't it?

I) Yes, it is. I do not know much about Heaven but it seems unbeatable and indispensable (5: 12).

If the body came from Heaven, then Heaven is much greater than parents or lords. Nishi says that the word 'Heaven' used in this context is not simply the opposite of the word 'Earth'. Nor does it mean the sky of water or the universe; it is that embraces providence. If Heaven is simply a thing, it cannot provide the good

of human nature by which humans feel anger at injustice or feel guilt after doing bad.

Then, Nishi's interlocutor tries to refute Nishi's statement based on the neo-Confucian argument that Heaven (the Chinese character 'tiān') and Principle (the Chinese character 'lǐ') are one thing, and Nishi refutes it again.

- I) Heaven is the one and only Principle. According to this fact, things take shape. How could there be another meaning of Principle?
- N) This is one of the greatest mazes made by Neo-Confucianism from which you will never escape. If you call Principle as Heaven, does evil turn up from Principle because Principle brings about evil in this world? Then, does the Principle you talk about control both good and evil?

[...]

- I) Principle here refers only to the good things, which means Principle comes from Heaven.
- N) Okay. You are saying that Heaven equals Principle. What does that mean? Do you mean that Heaven is Principle and vice versa?
- I) Yes.
- N) Then, are you saying that Heaven equals Principle? But I see that Principle is something coming from Heaven; therefore, the two are not in equal status. Figuratively, Heaven is an emperor and Principle is the Emperor's rule. It is ridiculous to say that the rule equals the Emperor, isn't it? (5: 13-14).

Nishi distinguishes Heaven from Principle. This dialogue demonstrates a type of logic led by Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) in which Nishi is immersed, wherein Neo-Confucianism is harshly criticised. Nishi regards Principle as an area of knowledge. In that sense, Neo-Confucianism's argument that 'Heaven equals Principle' does not make sense.

Nishi continues.

- N) In my opinion, Heaven holds a higher position than people. It is supernatural and indispensable. In Asia, the word government means a town of an emperor and people refer to the Emperor as

Your Highness with respect. The attitude towards Heaven is similar to that towards the Emperor. The government refers to a body and the emperorship is a lofty authority. The virtue of the Emperor or mysterious power refers to Heaven. The Principle of Heaven indicates the providence of Heaven. In this sense, the human spirit and body are bestowed by Heaven and the Emperor's document and words must be engraved in mind. If you follow what the Emperor stated and wrote, everything goes well in happiness but if you behave against them, you will be in suffering and agony, not only in this world but also after death (5: 14-15).

While Heaven is unknown, its existence is at least something people can be aware of. At the same time, Heaven gives both human nature and the body, which means that it is the greatest and noblest being. Knowing this fact itself or having faith in Heaven is the highest level of religion, according to Nishi.

Although Nishi uses the word Heaven in a Confucian manner, it seems that he recognises it as a being. Still, it is wrong to say he sees Heaven as God. Nishi's awareness about Heaven mentioned in *Kyōbunron* remains insignificant, and there is not yet enough knowledge about this subject. But, if you were to ask Nishi, "Do you think the area of religion would move into the area of knowledge if knowledge develops further?" he would say "yes." That is because he keeps saying that knowledge upgrades the level of religion. Then, will religions disappear sometime in the future? Are religions destined to go extinct in the end if human knowledge continues developing and ultimately transforms religion into knowledge? It is necessary to further examine Nishi's thoughts on the relationship between knowledge and religion. Nishi didn't think so at all. This is because the "enlightenment knowledge" he tried to propagate to Japan at the time of the 19th century was not materialistic knowledge that could fully explain even religion. Rather, he believed that an intellectual system in which the area of knowledge and the area of religion could coexist while being separated was what should be accepted for the "enlightenment" of the Japanese people. And to explain to people this intellectual system that includes this separation of knowledge and religion

using more familiar terms, he attempted to explain using the traditional East Asian terms Heaven and Principle.

4. Heaven and Principle

Nishi says that Heaven does not equal Principle, thereby arguing against Neo-Confucianism's conventional ideology of Heaven=Human and Nature=Principle. As mentioned above, the Principle is not Heaven itself but a certain type of phenomenon. From the perspective of knowledge, Nishi saw the Principle as the innate component on which things in the world are based. In his 1874 book entitled *Hyakuichi Shinron* (The New Theory of the Hundred and One), he divided the world into physics and psychology, thus denying the Neo-Confucian monistic viewpoint that the universe is incorporated as Principle (Ōkubo 77). His idea has been praised as an innovative discovery which dismantled the system of thoughts suffering in a state of confusion between ethics and physics in early modern Japan. However, his classification still remains unclear.

There are two aspects in thoughts: One is psychological and the other is physical. The area of psychology is not clearly defined. It has thus far been called something mental, moral, spiritual, or meta-physical. [...] The borderline between and among the vocabularies is not clear-cut: regions other than physics are regarded as psychological. [...] Let's consider it is wartime. Discussing the war capacity and weapons to win is a matter of physics, while thinking about the winning strategy or tactics is one of psychology. [...] Analysing animals other than human beings use physics, but psychology is much more complicated and requires a higher level of intelligence. [...] In recent years, it seems that people in the West started believing that academia is centered around physics seeking materialism, as physics has come to be known better than before. This is quite narrow-minded and we should not simply follow it. If psychology disappears from this world, manners and ethics will be gone as well (*Hyakugakurenkan* 37).

Nishi says that psychology is much more complicated and requires a higher level of intelligence than physics. Further, he

argues that the studies on physics have had a one-sided viewpoint due to the rampant materialism in the West and that it is risky to conduct such studies without careful inspection. He adds that psychology is indispensable to maintaining ethics and manners as a human. In *Hyakuichi Shinron*, he stresses that physics, a natural Principle, is the starting point of the universe and controls all things ranging from tiny drops of water to plants or animals. Physics is a natural thing that is not designed to change. By contrast, psychology is something only for humans. Human beings break the rules by doing unexpected acts, but these acts cannot be defined. Psychology changes according to time, place, personality, and one's position, and it is, therefore, hard to quantify. One's psychological mindset is an acquired thing depending on personality (277-278).

Nishi understood that both physics and psychology come from Heaven but that their phenomena are different. It is true that the world can reach harmony during efforts to strike a balance between the two different ideas, which sometimes clash.

In his article, *Jinsesanbōsetsu* (Discussion of the Three Treasures of Life), he acknowledged the two types of Principles that were necessary for social development as follows: Heaven bestows natural laws. The human body is sustained by this Principle. Under this Principle, by its nature, strong people control weak people all the time, wise people control stupid people, and rich people control poor people. However, at the same time, humans can bring about unexpected results by acting as their mind dictates. According to their mindset, the law of the jungle can be paralysed. It is even overturned sometimes: Strong people are overwhelmed by weak people, smart people are overwhelmed by dumb people, and rich people are overwhelmed by poor people. Nishi says,

It is true that humans' mind has a power to strike a balance in society by making ethical decisions while not excluding the basic Principle: Strong people control weak people. Wise people control stupid people. Rich people control poor people. [...] Privileged people should help rather than govern their underprivileged counterpart. Well-informed people should share information with ill-advised people. Those who are rich

in money should give help to those who are in poverty. This is about following the providence of Heaven. It is necessary to use both opposite groups to achieve a harmonious society (*Jinsesanbōsetsu* 545-546).

Nishi thinks that psychology is necessary to confront the grim reality under natural law to bring about a harmonious and constructive society, and further, that intentionally using both physics and psychology matches the providence of Heaven. In this context, Heaven certainly does not equal Principle. Heaven is something that we never understand, and we can and should only think about the Principle coming from Heaven. However, the world governed only by natural law (physics) goes against the providence of Heaven in which sages feel (or realise) the world's wisdom in the religious realm. As the Neo-Confucians say, it may be impossible to draw some universal ethical Principles of human wisdom, which can be incorporated into knowledge or the system. However, at the same time, many people would lose the meaning of life in an unfair society that is far from balanced or harmonious if we are not aware of the providence of Heaven. Although we do not clearly understand the providence, we can feel it.

Influenced by Auguste Comte's positivism Nishi started formulating the concept of the providence of Heaven in the context of physics. Nishi reveals the idea in his translation as follows:

Theories on material evolved from physics and chemistry to biology, thus enabling people to see matters in a more concrete way and understand the nature of life. With the aid of physics and chemistry, the study of human life aimed to find the answer to deep questions about human nature. Therefore, it might be said that a study examining the life sciences is nothing less than exploring matters not only about living things but also human nature altogether (*Seiseihatsuon* 64).

He thinks that the deeply mysterious human nature may be understood by applying some of the great results obtained in natural sciences, such as physics and chemistry, to the area of anatomy and physiology. His idea is similar to modern neuroscience, which aims to explain the human mind based on neurons and electric signals. Nishi translated excerpts of the book

by George Henry Lewes, English positivist philosopher, in *Biographical History of Philosophy*. The translation work on the 1st edition began around 1870 or 1871 and ended in 1873, but it was not published for certain reasons. The 2nd edition was partially done, and Nishi was trying to find a potential way to formulate a theory integrating physics with psychology from Comte's largely popular positivism or materialism (physics-based) but again failed to do so. Because he believed that there was an unknown area beyond knowledge called Heaven, which was an object of fear and respect that served as the basis of Principle, he did not turn to materialism.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen through the examples of some enlightenment intellectuals, in 19th century Japan, the attitude to understand and accept Western 'religion' as a tool for 'civilisation' was dominant. However, this instrumental approach of religion for enlightenment is soon replaced by scientific positivism and materialism, and religion is reduced to a kind of Western-style of life. In other words, 'religion' is no longer an instrument or value that helps enlighten people, and 'morality,' which is considered necessary to create a civilised society, has been replaced with the contents of Confucianism or Shintoism that supports the Emperor's system. However, it is noteworthy that a person like Nishi Amane considered religion to still play an important role in the enlightenment based on the Western intellectual system. It is clear that Nishi looked at religion as an effective tool to enlighten people, just as the other thinkers did. However, he was different from others in that he understood that an awareness of the nature of religion could encourage social development and civilisation, not to mention the expansion of knowledge. Although some parts of religion may be identified to some extent as human knowledge, not all religious myths can be explained, no matter how the knowledge develops. Aside from the human effort to discover truths as hard as possible, there are always unsolved mysteries in terms of religion, and social progress is made based on this acknowledgement, according to him.

He thought that religion, as in the past, is impossible to provide the basis for everything to the standards of knowledge and human judgment, but at least humans can pursue happiness when there is an indivisible area and the attitude to live conscious of it is maintained. It was believed that the “separation” of knowledge and religion did not necessarily mean the abolition of religion but that ‘enlightenment’ would be possible through the work of setting their own limits and separating areas. He thought that not giving up his efforts to know the realm of the transcendent is the advancement of knowledge. The enlightenment he had learned in the West was not just to educate and train people but to renew the limits of his knowledge and expand the basis for his judgment through such an intellectual attitude. In this respect, it would not be wrong to say that Nishi perceived religion as not merely a tool of enlightenment but as the essential element of enlightenment itself. And the direction of enlightenment was not just for humans to take control of the world by expanding their knowledge indefinitely but for the intellectual pursuit of harmony and balance in a civilised world where humans can coexist while continuing to be conscious of the limits of human knowledge and development.

Knowledge in pursuit of only ‘development’ is currently facing great challenges. Changes in the natural environment, such as climate change and infectious diseases, show well what crisis human ‘development without limitation’ puts humans and the planet. Can human knowledge set limits on its own and control the pace of development? Looking at the phenomenon of the world in front of us, it is hard to be sure that the future is necessarily bright. It is clear that the expansion of enlightenment using knowledge is essential to escape poverty and expand opportunities. However, at the same time, education that considers self-sacrifice and coexistence while realising the limitations of human knowledge for genuinely sustainable development cannot be neglected. In this regard, the discussions of the modern Japanese Enlightenment intellectuals, which seriously considered the realm and role of religion in the knowledge that enabled civilisation, cast many implications.

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