

Double Bias in Adopting Burke's Aesthetics : The Meiji Constitution and its Influence¹⁾

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Introduction

There was a double bias among Japanese people in adopting Edmund Burke (1729-1797)'s aesthetics in the era of modernization. One bias was caused by the 'Germanization'³⁾ of Japanese institutions, the other was done by the underestimation of aesthetics in the Japanese historiography of 'philosophy'. This double bias should be seen as intricately and intrinsically related to the enactment of the *Meiji* Constitution (*Dai-nippon-teikoku Kempo*) at that time.

In drafting the Constitution, Kentaro KANEKO (1853-1942) introduced Burke as a western conservative thinker who was opposed to the radical Rousseauism. Burke's political thought was regarded as anti-liberal or anti-democratic. The Meiji Constitution was established based on the Prussian one, asserting the power of the Emperor (*Ten'no*). As a result, almost all the Meiji institutions were Prussianized, or 'Germanized'⁴⁾.

Many German specialists in various academic fields were invited to Japan, instead of English-speaking people from Britain or U.S.A. The British ethos, which had flourished since the arrival of *Kuro-fune* ('Black Ships' from the West), became but a 'sub-standard'⁵⁾. Philosophy was no exception. In this discipline in Japan, for example, I. Kant (1724-1804), G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) and A. Schopenhauer (1788-1860) were the principal persons of its historiography, and the Hegelian historicism was considerably outstanding in its influence. Consequently, Burke's aesthetics has ever since been taken as pre-Kantian, pre-systematized and immature.

In this essay, I will point out that the double bias has often interrupted an academically 'fair' reception of Burke's aesthetics, and that this bias against a study of Burke still remains in Japan today. A clear understanding of the bias against Burke's thought will allow us to reconsider and reconstruct a discipline dealing with the 'aesthetic'.

Study of Burke in Japan Today

In Japan today, particularly around the turn of this 21st century, several remarkable monographs on Burke and translations of his works have been published⁶⁾. Additionally, in March of 2000, a symposium entitled "Edmund Burke" was held by the Japanese Society for British Philosophy at Kwansei Gakuin University, Kobe⁷⁾. These facts suggest that the groundwork of a close scrutiny into Burke has only just been laid.

Why has the study of Burke often been underestimated or ignored until today? This negative attitude towards Burke, even in the political aspect probably derives from the overestimation of the 'liberal' or 'democratic' in postwar Japan, as Yoshiyuki NAKANO, focusing on the historiography of political thought in Japan, pointed out in his book of the 1970's⁸⁾. Burke has been excluded from the academic field, being regarded as a hard 'conservative' politician.

Most Japanese people recognize Yukichi FUKUZAWA (1834-1901) as the "father of Liberalism in Japan", and Chomin NAKAE (1847-1901) as the "Rousseau in the Orient", but do not know who introduced Burke, who was the "father of Conservatism in political thought", into Japan.

It is Kentaro KANEKO⁹⁾ who was the first Japanese exponent of Burke. When he discussed Burke's thought, he was concerned with drafting the Meiji Constitution, or the first Imperial Constitution in the modernizing Japan. The process of his introducing Burke's thought has put a negative impression on the Japanese people. The impression is that his thought was closely connected to a radical 'right-wing' ideology, which advocated the imperial militarism dominant in the *Meiji* period (1868-1912). In fact, Burke was exploited again during World War II by the advocates of the imperial state systems in the *Showa* period (1926-1989)¹⁰⁾.

This abuse of Burke's thought further spread the negative images about him, which derived from the Meiji period, and distorted his 'true' figure worse and worse. In consequence Burke has ever since been little appreciated until now.

Kentaro KANEKO's *Seiji-ron-ryaku* and its Problem : The First Bias

As we have seen above, the introduction of Burke into Japan was closely related to the process of drafting the Meiji Constitution. In the first modernizing days of Japan, an urgent business of the new government was to nullify an inequality existing in the commercial treaties with the great powers of the West. In its struggle to achieve this aim, the young government of Japan promulgated the Constitution of the Emperor, or the Meiji Constitution, in 1889, and, immediately after this, convened the first session of the Imperial Diet in 1890.

In those days the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (*Jiyu-minken Undo*) was prevailing in Japan. At the early stage of drafting the 'modern' Constitution, therefore, various kinds of liberal and democratic plans were made by a lot of private political groups¹¹⁾. Most of them were planned in the manner of the Natural Rights theory from France, or the Party Cabinet System theory from Britain. Indeed KANEKO, the first Japanese exponent of Burke's thought, had also been involved in the People's Rights Movement, making free use of a great deal of knowledge about British and North American laws, which he acquired at Harvard University in his youth.

The Meiji Emperor (1852-1912), or rather, his governmental aides, were concerned about radicalization of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. At that very mo-

ment, the pendulum in planning the Constitution swayed to the opposite side. The Party Cabinet Plan (*OKUMA-sangi Kokkai-kaisetsu-sogi*), submitted by Shigenobu OKUMA (1838-1922) and Ryukei YANO (1850-1931), was rejected, and the Anti-OKUMA Creed (*IWAKURA Kempo-dai-koryo*) was declared by Tomomi IWAKURA (1825-1883) and Kowashi INOUE (1844-1895). This Creed was presented in consultation with a German jurist H. Roesler (1834-1894), who was invited to Japan as a foreign employee (*O-yatoi*) in 1878.

In these circumstances KANEKO was appointed as an officer of the Meiji government, which forced him to change his political attitude from the people-oriented to the emperor-oriented. The following episode shows us one process in the introduction of Burke's thought in detail.

One day Takayuki SASAKI (1830-1910), one of the imperial aides, asked KANEKO whether there was any 'conservative' thought in the West or not. KANEKO took this opportunity to name Burke in public. KANEKO reportedly identified Burke as an anti-Rousseauist politician. A short time later, KANEKO was ordered to translate the main concepts of Burke's thought¹²⁾, and soon he published *Seiji-ron-ryaku* (*The Abridgement of Political Thought*) in November of 1881, which preceded the time when *Min'yaku-yakuge*, a Japanese translation of Rousseau's writing, was published in 1882. The *Seiji-ron-ryaku* was, however, only 'abridged' and put excessive accent on the authority of the Emperor. This fact suggests that KANEKO's translation was an ideologically modified interpretation of Burke's thought.

The establishment of modern institutions was inevitably connected with protecting the authority of the Emperor¹³⁾. It was necessary to remove any taint of the Natural Rights theory encouraged in the French Enlightenment and of the Party Cabinet System theory developed in the British one. These circumstances resulted in employing the Prussian model as a paradigm of the national fundamental laws, which gave supreme reign to the Emperor. Then, in addition to Roesler, another German jurist A. Mosse (1846-1925) was invited as an *O-yatoi* in 1886.

In this way the adoption of western thought into Japan was inclined towards the promotion and development of the Prussian or 'German' thought at that time. Although some aspects of Burke's thought may have concurred with the Party Cabinet System theory and thus British liberalism, it was in reality adopted only as 'conservative' and emperor-oriented. The ethos of the Britain in which Burke lived and developed his political theory was replaced with that of the Bismarckean Germany in the late 19th century¹⁴⁾.

Underestimation of Burke's Aesthetics : The Second Bias

As we have seen above, the image of Burke formed in the Meiji period distorted the 'true' picture of Burke's thought¹⁵⁾. What is worse, a second bias blurred our eyes in defining Burke as an 'aesthetician'. Looking over Burke's career, we can recognize the

young Burke, before living his life as an actual politician, to be a literary critic or aesthetian. Through his whole life, he wrote just one aesthetical book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757 (2nd ed. published in 1759, with a long introduction entitled "Of Taste"). According to the Japanese historiography of western aesthetics in general, Burke's treatise on the sublime was well interpreted and imported by M. Mendelssohn (1729-1786) into the German academic world, and afterwards further analyzed and systematized by Kant. In this sort of historiography, Burke's aesthetics may be defined as immature and 'inferior' to Kant's.

Almost all the Meiji institutions were Prussianized, or 'Germanized'¹⁶. Many German specialists were also invited to Japan even in the field of philosophy. Aesthetics, which can be regarded as a branch of philosophy, is no exception. For example, Dr. Raphael von Koeber (1848-1923)¹⁷, a German philosopher, came to Japan in 1893 soon after the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution. In adopting 'western philosophy' (including aesthetics) in the broad sense of the word, there seemed to exist the firm foundation of its reception, which was supported by the ethos of the 'German'. As a result, Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer have frequently been promoted in this discipline ever since¹⁸.

In almost all the general or 'common' historiography of western aesthetics in Japan, Burke's aesthetics has often been isolated and overshadowed, being regarded as pre-Kantian, pre-systematized and immature. This tendency may be true of other British aesthetical thinkers, such as A. A. C. Shaftesbury (1671-1713), F. Hutcheson (1696-1782) and D. Hume (1711-1776) as well.

In another discipline, 'English Literature' (*Ei-bungaku*) which found favor particularly with the Japanese men of letters in the Meiji period, we can discover some endeavors to adopt W. Shakespeare (1564-1616), J. Dryden (1631-1700) and W. Wordsworth (1770-1850)¹⁹, but we can, as far as I can see, find very little interest in Burke's treatise on the sublime in this field. We can point out that there was a symptomatic disconnection between some disciplines: between 'literature' and 'politics', or 'literature' and 'philosophy'. These disciplines should be closely associated with each other and should not be divided, and the same is true for Burke's thought.

Among Japanese men of letters in the Meiji period, only Soseki NATSUME (1867-1916) as a student of English Literature had some interest in Burke's aesthetics²⁰. He was struggling with the difficult problem of what defines the idea of 'literature' in general. On coming back from London where Soseki had studied as one of the first official overseas students, he immediately gave a series of lectures²¹ entitled "A General History of English Literature" and "English Literature in the 18th Century" at the Imperial University of Tokyo. Besides, he wrote some novels in the manner of the English ones of the 18th century. These lectures and novels show us that Soseki considered 'literature' to be a pretty inclusive genre, which includes journals, political pamphlets, philosophical essays, speeches and dramatic plays.

But even Soseki could not understand the whole picture of Burke's aesthetics. No copy of Burke's philosophical book on the sublime is to be found in Soseki's shelves

today. Examining notes and memoranda²²⁾ of Soseki himself which are held in the "Soseki Collection" at Tohoku University Library, we can, however, guess that Soseki took Burke's aesthetical theory not as a theory of the sublime, but as a theory of parallelism between poetry and painting, which was to be made more sophisticated by G. E. Lessing (1729-1781) in his book *Laokoon* in 1766.

In my view, Soseki learned about Burke's aesthetics through two secondary sources written in English : *A History of Aesthetics*, published in 1892 and written by B. Bosanquet (1848-1923); and *The Analytic Psychology*, published in 1896 by G. F. Stout (1860-1944). In effect, we can say that Soseki's understanding of Burke's aesthetics is limited to a commonplace interpretation.

Conclusion

Burke as an aesthetician has been overshadowed by Lessing in the Japanese history of western aesthetics, as can be seen in Soseki's literary criticism. And besides, he has been overshadowed by Kant in terms of the theory of the sublime. In addition to these circumstances, his most famous political book, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, written in older age by Burke, in 1790, was labeled unfairly as a 'hard' conservative manifesto in Japan. This was because it took a critical attitude towards the French Revolution, which was regarded as an embodiment of modern Enlightenment thought. This fact was a crucial and disappointing blow to the study of Burke, which now became associated with the radical 'right-wing'. The investigation into Burke has ever since been suffering from the double bias that we have seen above.

I am afraid that this bias against any scrutiny into Burke's thought is still to be found in Japan today, and probably prevailing in the global academic world of aesthetics. This is not a superficial and 'competitive' problem of which country or which language holds the ruling power in the field of aesthetics, but an essential problem of the extent to which a discipline of 'aesthetics' can be applied. The idea of 'taste' in the young Burke's treatise on the sublime should indeed be associated with the significant ideas presented in his later political work about the French Revolution, such as 'tradition', 'history', 'custom and manners', 'prejudice', 'prudence' and 'moral imagination'.

To investigate the notions mentioned in his political essay while paying attention to 'aesthetical' implications in his terminology, we are able to redefine the idea of 'conservatism' not only in politics, but also in aesthetics. I am sure that the careful examination into Burke's thought will reconstruct a discipline of the 'aesthetic', and provide us with another history of aesthetics²³⁾.

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Notes

- 1) This article is based on my presentation on the 29th August, 2001 at the 15th International Congress of Aesthetics, 2001, in Japan (Makuhari, in the region of Tokyo, 27-31 August, 2001). My research related to Edmund Burke is partially supported by the JSPS Research Fellowships for Young Scientists. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the JSPS for their aid.
- 2) JSPS Fellow (the fiscal year 2001-) at Graduate School of Letters, Osaka University.
- 3) In this essay, the word 'Germanization' means absorption into the ethos of the Bismarckean German Empire. More precisely speaking, this idealized picture of the German Empire was just 'imagined' among Japanese people at that time.
- 4) This tendency was mainly related to the general stream of the legal systems founded by the Meiji government. There were some exceptions, such as education systems in the North American fashion at some missionary schools.
- 5) At the earlier time of the Civilization and Enlightenment in the late *Edo* period (1603-1867), Dutch was the most learned foreign language, but for Chinese. After the arrival of the *Kuro-fune*, Dutch gave way to English.
- 6) For example, Hiroshi KISHIMOTO, *Burke Seiji-shiso no Tenkai*, Ocha-no-mizu shobo, 2000. Yoshiyuki NAKANO (trans. and ed.), *Burke -seiji-keizai-ronshu : Hoshu-shugi no Seishin*, Hosei University Press, 2000. Yatsuhiko NAKAGAWA, *Seito no Kempo : Burke no Tetsugaku*, Chuo-koron-shinsha, 2001.
- 7) This symposium, held on the 26th March, was included in the 24th Annual Congress of the Japanese Society for British Philosophy. The commentators were Yoshiyuki NAKANO and Hiroshi KISHIMOTO, and the presentators were Masami MAJIMA (majoring in politics), Nobuhiko NAKAZAWA (economics) and Hideki KUWAJIMA (aesthetics).
- 8) See Yoshiyuki NAKANO, *Hyoden Burke : America Dokuritsu-senso no Jidai*, Misuzu shobo, 1977, pp. 3-6.
- 9) KANEKO was born in Fukuoka as a son of a *Samurai* warrior who belonged to the Fukuoka feudal clan; he went abroad to study at Harvard University, economically supported by the feudal clan. Afterwards he became the first principal of *Nihon Horitsu Gakko* (at present Nihon University, Tokyo) in 1890.
- 10) A typical study of this sort is Mataji UEDA, *Edmund Burke-kenkyu* (with introduction by Kiyoshi HIRAIZUMI), Shibun-do, 1937. HIRAIZUMI was an acute advocate of imperialistic historiography.
- 11) These plans were: Genro-in plan (1876-80), Kyozon-doshu plan (c. 1879), Omei-sha plan (c. 1879-80), Kojun-sha plan (1881), Emori UEKI plan (1881), Rissi-sha pan (1881), Azusa ONO plan (1883). KANEKO was said to have taken part in the Kyozon-doshu and the Omei-sha.
- 12) KANEKO explained Burke's thought, referring to the following two writings: *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), which were both very 'conservative' works written in older age by Burke. KANEKO is said to have learned the Burke's political thought in his grammar school days before entering Harvard. See Juh'ichi

- YAMASHITA, "Burke no Hongo-shoyaku : KANEKO Kentaro-yaku *Seiji-ron-ryaku* ni-tsuite", *Kokugakuin-hogaku*, Vol. 18, Kokugakuin University, 1980. Akiko MURAKATA (ed.) "KANEKO Kentaro no *Beikoku-ryugaku-kaikyū-roku*", *Jinbun*, Vol. 39, Kyoto University, 1993. Nobuhiko TAKASE, "*Seiji-ron-ryaku-ko* : KANEKO Kentaro-kenkyū", *Hogaku-kiyo*, Vol. 26 (1985), Vol. 27 (1986), Vol. 29 (1988), Vol. 30 (1989), Vol. 35 (1994), Nihon University.
- 13) A high exaltation of the Meiji Emperor around the 1880's is also marked by 'Go-shin'ei' (The Portrait of the Emperor) as a ideal image of the monarch made in 1888. This 'Go-shin'ei' was originally drawn by an Italian *O-yatoi* painter, Edoardo Chiossone (1832-1898), who was invited in 1875 as a designer of the new governmental banknotes. Concerning the history of the portrait of the Emperor, see Koji TAGI, *Ten'no no Shozo*, Iwanami shoten (Gendai-bunko), 2002.
 - 14) I try to show that Burke's 'conservatism' was distorted in its adoption. This first bias has long caused the underestimation and ignorance of Burke.
 - 15) There may be another bias in this expression "the 'true' picture of Burke's thought". This keen criticism to my paper was derived from Mr. Masahiro HAMASHITA. I would like readers to understand that the word 'true' in this phrase means 'fair' and 'revised'.
 - 16) This kind of 'Germanization' continued through the *Taisho* period (1912-1926) at least to the early *Showa* period. Concerning the ethos related to the 'German' in academic fields at that time, especially the ethos among the 'cultured' elite-students in the *Taisho* period, see Rieko TAKADA, *Bungaku-bu wo-meguru Yamai*, Shorai-sha, 2001.
 - 17) Dr. Koeber was a Russian-German and studied the idea of the 'Erloesung' in Schopenhauer's philosophy. The attitude towards Schopenhauer was formed in virtue of the trend of 'philosophy' at the Russian academy in Koeber's days. See the following paper printed recently : Fuminori AKIBA, "«Bigaku»no Teichaku to Seido-ka", *Geijutsu / Katto no Genba : Kindai Nippon Geijutsu-shiso no Context*, Ken'ichi IWAKI (ed.), Koyo shobo, 2002, pp. 49-66.
 - 18) Karl Robert Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) as a descendant of German Idealism, especially of F. W. J. Schelling (1775-1854), was also widely accepted in the Meiji period. The adoption of Hartmann's philosophy and aesthetics into Japan was promoted by Ogai MORI (1862-1922). See Tsunemichi KAMBAYASHI, "Schelling, Ogai and Aesthetics" (Special Lecture), *Schelling Nempo '99*, Vol. 7, Koyo shobo, 1999, pp. 4-19.
 - 19) I can point out some examples of vigorous adoption of Shakespeare and Dryden in Shoyo Tsubo-uchi (1859-1935), and Wordsworth in Doppo KUNIKIDA (1871-1908) and Shigeharu Tanabe (1884-1972). Concerning Shoyo's struggle in adopting some dramatic theories in the West, see Uichi MORITANI, "Tsubo-uchi Shoyo no Bungaku / Engeki-ron : Hamlet ni-site Don Quixote taru-koto", *Nippon no Geijutsu-ron : Dento to Kindai*, Tsunemichi KAMBAYASHI (ed.), Minerva shobo, 2000, pp. 242-264; and Isao SATO, *Tsubo-uchi Shoyo ni-okeru Dryden Juyo no Kenkyu*, Hokuseido shoten, 1981.
 - 20) See Hideki KUWAJIMA, "Soseki Kusa-makura ni-miru Seiyo-bigaku no Juyo to Hon'an : Gako no E ni-nara-nai Haiku-teki-na Tabi", *Bigaku-kenkyu*, Vol. 1, Osaka University, 2001, pp. 15-24.
 - 21) These lectures were soon compiled and published under the following titles : *Bungaku-ron* (Okura shoten, 1907) and *Bungaku-hyoron* (Shun'yo-do, 1909).
 - 22) See *Soseki-zenshu* (28 vols.), Vol. 21, 27, Iwanami shoten, 1993-1999.
 - 23) At the first oral presentation of this article in Makuhari (the 15th International Congress of Aesthetics, 2001, in Japan) Dr. Wolfgang Welsch agreed with my argument and made its point clearer by asking some questions, and brought it into broader and more interdisciplinary contexts of the 'aesthetic'. In this paper I try to show new concepts to reconstruct and refine this discipline. More specifically speaking, they are notions of the 'aesthetic-affective dynamics' and 'moral-aesthetical judgement', as S. K. White employs in his book, discussing a connection between politics and aesthetics in Burke's thought. See Stephen K. White, *Edmund Burke : Modernity, Politics, and*

Aesthetics, Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi : SAGE Publications, 1994, p. 35, 40.

* This is a revised English version of my paper in Japanese, which was recently printed in Osaka University Bigaku-kenkyu-kai(ed.), *Bi to Geijutsu no Symposium*, Keiso shobo, 2002, pp. 94-104.