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The Study of Political Economy in the Earliest Days
of Meiji Era and Yukichi Fukuzawa

by Kanae Iida

Yukichi Fukuzawa is the most prominent and distinguished figure in the modern history of Japan. Above all, he was a introducer of western civilization, and the founder of Keio-Gijuku, one of the most famous universities, but it is well known that he played a great part in transplanting western political economy in the soils of Japan. The chance of studying European social sciences was given to Fukuzawa, when he visited United States of America in 1860, as the servant of the friendly mission to America, that its captain was Kimura-Settsunokami. Fukuzawa was very astonished at seeing the prosperity and splendour of the American society, the usefulness of American institutions and the development of its civilization, and irritated, disheartened and being angry at the backwardness of his motherland, Japan.

He was so interested in both social and natural sciences, that he endeavoured to import many books on sciences, but on his first going abroad to America, he had not enough money to buy these books. On the second visiting to America, he equipped himself for a journey with the great sum of money, and could obtain many valuable books on social and natural sciences. Among the many books imported from U.S.A. by Fukuzawa, there was a text on political economy, 'The Elements of Political Economy' by Francis Wayland, 1866. The writer of this book, Wayland, is a popularizer of orthodoxical political economy in America and his textbook was welcomed to the beginners of political economy, and by accident, Fukuzawa came across F. Wayland's book. He lectured Wayland's political economy as the textbook at Keio-Gijuku and wrote a great many of essays, gaining various hints from this book, so his writing gave the public of Japan many lessons and knowledge. In this sense, the meaning of importation of political economy of Wayland by Fukuzawa is very significant in the study of social sciences in Japan.

This essay contains the following:

- 1) Introduction—The pre-requisite and method of history of Political Economy in Japan
- 2) From Hollandish language to English.
- 3) Fukuzawa and Wayland's Political Economy
- 4) The enlightenment activity of the earlier stage and political Economy.

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