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John Hill Burton and Fukuzawa Yukichi*

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What is the relationship between an author and his translator? Or between a translator and the work he is rendering? It depends. If an American is translating a French work on social science, the relationship is largely technical, for French and American culture are variants of the same tradition. The languages are related: even in their technical vocabularies, the two have much in common. So translation boils down to striking an appropriate balance between precision and stylistic ease. But between Fukuzawa and the authors he translated, the matter was wholly different. East Asian culture was the most isolated of the Eurasian "world civilizations." There was a "fairy tale" knowledge of Japan in the West and a low-level knowledge of Western science in Japan; but the fabrics of culture in the two areas could hardly have been more different. The differences

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began in the inchoate assumptions which underlay their respective worldviews and extended to permeate every sphere of social and political life. Thus translation from English to Japanese was not just technical; rather, it involved a fundamental grappling with those characteristics that all human societies have in common by dint of being human and an analysis of the common functions which all societies must perform if they are to survive. Translation at this level was at once arduous and creative.

It is well known that Fukuzawa began his career as a translator. He worked first for the shogunate. Then he worked for himself, often publishing his own translations. All of his early writings prior to *An Invitation to Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*) were translations of English language works. The most famous of his translations, and justly so, was *Conditions in the West* (*Seiyō jijō*).¹

A few of the texts translated by Fukuzawa have been identified; most have not. Of the three volumes of *Conditions in the West*, the second (*gaihen*) was certainly the most important.² It contained a general overview of Western society, politics, and economics. It laid

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1. That the *Seiyō jijō* was predominantly a translation is worth stressing. It is sometimes described almost as if it had been written by Fukuzawa. It is true that a small part of the first section of the first volume contains observations by Fukuzawa about what he saw during his travels in the West. But even this section is mainly translation. And all of the other sections of the first volume, and the entirety of the other two volumes are translations, or an interweave of translations. I would emphasize that to acknowledge translations as translations does not in the least detract from the magnitude of Fukuzawa's achievement. And it helps in the understanding of Fukuzawa, for the early translations were the matrix out of which his later thought emerged.

out for Japanese readers some of the dominant themes in the world-view of the West during the mid-nineteenth century. The foreword to the volume identified the *Economics* (*Keizaisho*) of Chambers as one of its sources. Scholars have long known that this referred to *Political Economy, for Use in Schools, and for Private Instruction*, published in 1852 by William and Robert Chambers in Edinburgh, Scotland. But the author of the book has remained unknown. The publisher's notice at the start of the book simply states: "We have, with the assistance of a writer every way competent for the task, prepared the present treatise on the subject."

Whoever the author of the Chambers' text was, there is no doubt that he played a critical role in shaping Fukuzawa's early thought and through him, that of early Meiji Japan. Since identifying the author would help in interpreting Fukuzawa's work, I set out to track him down.

I began by looking through general works on economics in the foreign language section of the Keio University Library. The librarians were most helpful, but I found nothing. I next looked at works in several university libraries in the United States. I looked particu-

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2. The three volumes of *Conditions in the West* are *Shohen*, *Gaihen*, and *Nihen*, literally, Volume One, the Outside Volume, and Volume Two. This is misleading since the "Outside Volume" is really the second volume and "Volume Two" is the third. The Outside Volume was given that designation since its content fell outside of the original plan of the book as enunciated at the start of Volume One. The second volume, or "Outside Volume", with which this paper is concerned, was actually based on the writings of seven different authors; but by far the greater and more important part is a translation of the early chapters of the "Chambers" *Political Economy*.

larly for other titles published by the Chambers brothers. The most likely candidate was *Political and Social Economy : Its Practical Applications*, which I found in Harvard's Widener Library. It was written by John Hill Burton and published by William and Robert Chambers in 1849, three years prior to the *Political Economy* used by Fukuzawa.

Burton's *Political and Social Economy* (hereafter *PSE*) was a longer book than the *Political Economy* (hereafter *PE*) volume in Chambers' "Educational Course" but much narrower in scope. In fact, each book had the title that better fit the contents of the other. *PSE* dealt primarily with economics as it was understood in the mid-nineteenth century ; whereas the first third of *PE* touched on topics that today would be called political science, sociology, or international relations. Of the 17 chapters of *PE* translated by Fukuzawa, only four dealt with economics in the narrow sense of the term.

I compared the two books. Their styles were not dissimilar, though *PSE* was dryer, more fact-filled, and somewhat more difficult to read. Also, there was enough overlap in materials cited or examples given to suggest that Burton might be the author of both works.

But there were differences, too, especially philosophical ones, involving variant interpretations of the same materials. If Burton were the author of both, would such variations be likely, especially considering that one was published within three years of the other ?

Let us consider several examples of ways in which the two works differ. One is in the attitude toward barbarism and civilization. In the earlier *PSE* barbarism is seen as natural, whereas civilization is

seen as an artificial contrivance designed to counteract the tyranny of nature. Burton writes:

The natural impulse of man, individually powerful, is to oppress and crush his weak neighbour: it is by the progress of civilization that the weak unite their interests against the strong, and raise barriers which he cannot overcome.³

As an example of man's natural impulse, Burton relates:

It is within the memory of living travellers that if a Turkish slave happened, through trepidation or clumsiness, in passing a great man, to press against him, the offended dignitary seized the opportunity to show how expertly he could cut off a human head with his scimitar. The European aristocrat might wish to follow so fascinating an example, but the law is too strong for him.⁴

In other words, the civilized European is restrained only by the external force of law. Since the civilized man is a barbarian under the skin, the philosophical problem in *PSE* is how to prevent a reversion to barbarism, how to "remove...all inducements to lapse into the barbarous indolence which is the savage's natural condition." For "*the propensities of the original savage still exist, and will develop*

3. *PSE*, 72-73.

4. *PSE*, 73.

themselves if circumstances tend to nourish them."⁵ (Italicized in original text.)

In contrast to Burton's *PSE*, the later *PE* appears to have a higher appreciation for human nature. It agrees that barbarism in natural, but argues that civilization is just as natural. The one is in accord with man's base nature, the other with his higher nature. Moreover, according to *PE*, there is a natural propensity in man to progress from one stage of society to the other. "It might perhaps be shewn, that though a primitive barbarism is natural, to remain in it is not so, but can only be the result of some external interference."⁶ Thus in *PE*, more often than not, what is seen as external are not the constraints which constitute civilization, but the "interference" that impedes man's progress toward it.

To be sure, the contrast between the two books is not total. *PE* also talks of "the multitude of the weak" combining to form laws for the protection of individual rights. But the constraints which are external are described as "mild," and a much greater emphasis is placed on internalized controls:

In the state of civilization.....the evil passions are curbed, and the moral feelings developed : woman takes her right place ; the weak are protected ; institutions for the general benefit flourish.⁷

5. *PSE*, 300.

6. *PE*, 6-7.

7. *PE*, 6.

PE also cites the example of the Turkish pasha who, “were he offended by a slave, might cut him down at once with his sabre,” but the example is not used to illustrate the lingering barbarism within civilized man. Rather it is merely one example of how the strong tyrannize the weak in backward countries, and *PE* goes on to say that Europe was the same at an earlier stage of development.⁸

The difference between the two books in the appreciation of human nature is also clear on the question of human equality. *PSE* opens the chapter on “The Poor and the Rich” with the words:

In the many fallacies embodied in party cries, there is not a more false or foolish saying than the often-repeated one, that in a state of nature all men are equal. On the contrary, in a state of nature all men are frightfully and calamitously unequal.⁹

The differences between individuals are explained in terms of “the vast inequality in the endowments, both mental and physical, of mankind.” “As human beings increase in years, the contrasts would become the greater, were it not for the levelling checks of a sound civilization.”¹⁰

PE does not disagree with *PSE* on the matter of endowments. Yet it adds to this the notion, almost wholly lacking in *PSE*, of an equality based on natural rights.

8. *PE*, 21.

9. *PSE*, 72.

10. *PSE*, 72.

Every human being, of whatever colour or country, has, by a law of nature, the property of his own person. He belongs to himself. In ordinary language, *man is born free*.¹¹

All men are also entitled to freedom of personal movement, to freedom in the choice of an occupation, to freedom in the choice of amusement. That self-respect or self-love with which all for wise purposes are inspired, is likewise to be protected equally in all men. These rights proceed upon an idea which instinctively rises within us, that we are all in one respect equal.¹²

Thus in *PSE* men are simply unequal except for the meliorative constraints imposed by external laws. But in *PE* the harsh inequality of endowments is softened by natural rights. And the laws found in the advanced state of "civilization" are not wholly external since they embody these natural rights.

Given these differences, is it likely that *PSE* and *PE* were written by a single author? Literary evidence alone seemed inconclusive, so seeking a firmer answer, in February 1980 I visited the publishing house of W. and R. Chambers, Ltd. in Edinburgh. Mr. A. S. Chambers kindly gave me access to the company archives, where I found a record titled "Receipts for Literary Labours." This contained a receipt dated January 12, 1849 and signed by J. H. Burton: "Received from Messrs. William and Robert Chambers the sum of one hundred

11. *PE*, 3.

12. *PE*, 4.

pounds as the agreed on price of the copyright of a work called "Social and Political Economy" written by me..." In the same record I also discovered a November 7, 1851 receipt with the same signature: "Received from William and Robert Chambers the sum of fifty pounds sterling, being payment in full for writing for their Educational Course a book on the Elements of Political and Social Economy, the copyright of which belongs to them..."¹³

Faced, then, with incontrovertible evidence that the author of *PE* that Fukuzawa had translated was also the author of *PSE*, the question of how to account for the interpretive differences in the two works became even more pressing. One possibility was that a third party made changes in *PE*, adding, for instance, a gloss of natural rights doctrine. This possibility was raised by the following document that I found among the records at W. and R. Chambers, Ltd.:

1851
Agreement With
Mr. Burton
about
Political Economy
for
Educ. Course

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13. Both receipts are confusing. The book mentioned in the 1849 receipt as "Social and Political Economy" was published in the same year as *Political and Social Economy (PSE)*. The book mentioned in the 1851 receipt as "Elements of Political and Social Economy" was published in 1852 as *Political Economy (PE)*. As a double check on this information, I also looked at the "Publication Ledgers" of W. and R. Chambers, which are at the National Library of Scotland. Information in Ledger ✓

Inside the Agreement was a second heading: "Notes of Agreement between Messrs. William and Robert Chambers and John Hill Burton." Its text read:

Mr. Burton to prepare in short simple propositions resembling those in the "Laws of Matter and Motion" a book on the elements of Political and Social Economy adapted to Chambers Educational course. The extent to be between 160 and 180 pages. . . . Mr. Burton engages by revision or otherwise to make any alterations of style and arrangement that may be indicated as necessary to adapt the book to the character of the educational course and Messrs. Chambers are to be entitled to make any alterations they may in the end deem suitable. Mr. Burton is to revise the proofs. The remuneration payable to Mr. Burton on final revisal to be fifty pounds.

The "Agreement" makes it clear that the Chambers brothers were entitled to make changes in the text. But did they do so? Trying to find an answer, I looked next at the "Correspondence Ledger" of W. and R. Chambers, Ltd. and at the "J. H. Burton Papers," both at the National Library of Scotland. The two sources contain some corre-

✓ No. 2 corroborated the information on the receipts. It also indicated that in all 5391 copies of *PSE* were printed in 1849; over half were sold in that year and the rest by 1866. Of the smaller *PE*, 3297 copies were printed, 65 were used as presentation copies, 3157 were sold between 1852 and 1862.

spondence between Burton and his publishers, but none relevant to *PE*. I also looked at Burton's diaries, which were extremely difficult to decipher. I hoped to find a passage such as: "Ah, what have those rascals at Chambers done to my *PE* manuscript." But I found none. There is still room for further research, but I would guess that there is nothing to be found.

On the balance I would judge that few if any editorial changes were made in Burton's manuscript. The style of *PE* appears to be the same throughout. The ideas that are at odds with *PSE* do not appear to have been added by an editor. Those on natural law and man's nature, for example, are consistent throughout the book.

A further consideration is that during the mid-nineteenth century the publishing house of the Chambers brothers was a very busy enterprise. They put out an encyclopedia and a variety of books. Their educational course alone, a bread and butter item and the least prestigious part of their list, contained over 150 titles, ranging from history to gardening to political economy. Would William or Robert Chambers, prominent authors in their own right, have been that concerned with Burton's work of popularization? It seems more likely that the entitlement in the "Agreement" was a publisher's device to ensure that the author would write the kind of book they wanted. It was included, routinely, to encourage the author to write at an elementary level, and with no expectation that the publishers or their assistants would actually engage in revision.

If Burton, then, was entirely responsible for the content of both books, and this seems most likely, how can their differences be explained? Before moving to specifics, it might be worthwhile to

consider the outline of Burton's life.¹⁴

John Hill Burton was born at Aberdeen in 1809. His father was an army lieutenant who died when Burton was ten. He "obtained a fair education" and went to the University of Aberdeen as a scholarship student. On graduation "he was articled to a writer," "found the confinement of an office intolerable," and went to Edinburgh "to qualify himself for the bar." He "became an advocate, but his practice was never large, and for a long time he found it necessary to earn his livelihood by literature."

He was an amazingly prolific writer. He "composed elementary histories under the name of White," wrote poetry and "blood and murder" short stories,¹⁵ helped edit the *Edinburgh Almanack*, contributed to the *Westminster Review* and the *Edinburgh* as well as the *Cyclopaedia of Universal Biography* and *Waterston's Cyclopaedia of Commerce*, prepared a *Manual of the Law of Scotland*, and edited the works of Bentham. In 1846 he "achieved solid literary distinction by his biography of Hume." The *Dictionary of National Biography* judgement is that while "Burton's deficiency in imagination impaired the vigour of his portrait of Hume as a man, he has shown an adequate comprehension of him as a thinker, and is entitled to

14. There is no full biography of Burton. The longest account is a posthumous sketch of Burton by his second wife; this is prefixed to the 1882 edition of *The Book Hunter* (Edinburgh and London), an 1860 work by Burton. The best short account is the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. If not otherwise noted, the passages I quote are from this source. A third biographical sketch of Burton is found in David Masson's *Edinburgh Sketches and Memories* (London and Edinburgh, 1892).

15. Masson, 376.

especial credit for his recognition of Hume's originality as an economist."

In 1849 Burton wrote *PSE* for Chambers along with a companion volume on emigration, then an important topic in Scotland. The *Dictionary of National Biography* describes these as "admirable works, containing within a narrow compass clear and intelligent expositions of the mutual relations and duties of property, labour, and government. In the same year the death of his wife prostrated him with grief, and although he to a great extent recovered the elasticity of his spirits, he was ever afterwards afflicted with an invincible aversion of society." He sought "relief in literary toil," producing a steady stream of books.

"In 1854 Burton obtained pecuniary independence by his appointment as secretary to the prison board." The following year he remarried. "Though no longer necessary to his support, his literary labours continued without remission." He contributed to the *Scotsman* and to *Blackwood's Magazine*, edited the *Scottish Registers*, and wrote books among which his *History of Scotland*, produced between 1853 and 1870, won him lasting fame for the accuracy of its research and its entertaining narrative. Burton died in 1881.

Are there, then, clues in his biography or in his various writings that would explain the differences between the 1849 *PSE* and the 1852 *PE*? I would tentatively suggest four minor contributing explanations and one major contextual explanation.

1. Burton was a writer, not a philosopher. Much of his early work was hack writing for money. When Burton achieved a reputation, it

was as an editor, biographer, and historian. It is not that he lacked intellectual positions, but as he moved from one subject to another, his perspective shifted. His second wife wrote: "Dr. Burton's whole resources at this time were derived from his pen...He rapidly acquired a power of mastering almost any subject on which he had to write..."¹⁶ Had Burton's writings not ranged so widely over different fields, he might have maintained a greater consistency.

2. There were differences of content in the two books. *PSE* was the more serious and substantial work, over twice the length of *PE*. It focussed narrowly on the standard topics of classical economics, with chapters on capital, labor, production, wealth and property, etc. It also included chapters which drew the practical lessons of economic science: "The Duties of Wealth," "The Duties of Landed Property," "The Working Classes and their Duties to Themselves," etc. The provision of practical illustrations was intended to confute the purveyors of "artificial systems." He wrote in the first-person plural: "We approach the doctrines of the Socialists and the Communists in that spirit of pure hostility in which those who are free to declare their own opinions...discuss whatever they consider to be fraught with evil."¹⁷ To make his case effectively he adopted a tough-minded approach, arguing empirically from a world in which rational self-interest was paramount.

PE shared some of these orientations. It had chapters on economics and its practical lessons. It was also hostile to socialism. A chapter

16. *The Book Hunter*, xlvi.

17. *PSE*, 222.

titled "Objections to the Competitive System Considered"—skipped over entirely by Fukuzawa in his translation—argued against "artificial systems"—in much the same vein as in *PSE*. But *PE* also had chapters on "Civilization," "Individual Rights and Duties," and the "Family Circle." In describing the relations between parents and children, Burton found it necessary to invoke altruism and "man's higher nature" as well as self-interest. This contributed to the different orientation of the latter work.

3. The audiences for the two books were also different. *PSE* was written as a popular book for the educated. Burton may have felt that this audience required a more rigorous approach. *PE* on the other hand aimed at "elementary education." It was not a children's book ; no child would have been able to understand it. It was written for adults who wished to improve themselves, but it was couched in ideas that had a greater popular appeal.

4. Still another explanation is that there may have been a change in Burton's life and thought between 1849 and 1852. In 1843 Burton brought out *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* and *Benthamiana*, a selection of Bentham's writings. The *Dictionary of National Biography* speaks of his ardent adoption of Bentham's philosophy. Whether Burton was ever that ardent a Benthamite can be questioned, even in his "advertisement" at the start of *The Works*, Burton indicated that some of Bentham's ideas coincided with his own but others did not.¹⁸ In any case, on no other subject did Bentham heap such ridicule as on the idea of natural law. If Burton were at the tail end of his

18. John Bowring (ed.), *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Edinburgh, 1843).

Benthamite phase in 1849, this would be consonant with his tough-minded approach in *PSE*. In 1849 Burton's wife died, causing him great anguish. If he were on the verge of leaving Benthamism and reverting to the more tender-minded Scottish school of philosophy, her death may have hastened the reversion.

There is also a larger intellectual context into which the above explanations must be fitted. Burton stood at the end of a tradition of great Scottish thinkers. It can be argued that Scotland in the eighteenth century was even more important than England in its contributions to thought. Among its leading lights were Adam Smith, Millar, and Ferguson in social and economic thought, and Hume, Reid, Steward, and Hamilton in philosophy. Hume was the greatest of the philosophers, but his skepticism was not typical. Most were characterized by a sympathy for religion. Reacting against the skepticism of Hume, they attempted to reconcile reason and religion.

Burton imbibed both the economics and the philosophy of this tradition as a youth at Aberdeen, and, even after moving to Edinburgh, he continued the study of philosophy with Hamilton, the last great figure in the Scottish school. According to the account of Burton's second wife :

He attended the course of the late Sir William Hamilton and gained some distinction in the study of moral philosophy and metaphysics, so much that his appointment as assistant and successor to Sir William was seriously considered by himself and others. . . . At that time of his life, great versatility, along with extraordinary diligence, was the chief characteristic of his

mind. In later years he did not pursue the study of mental science.¹⁹

Like other members of the Scottish school who taught philosophy or “mental science” during the week and went to church on Sunday, Burton was a practising Christian. His wife wrote: “Mr. Burton had been brought up an Episcopalian, and continued attached to the Moderate party in that Church through his life.”²⁰ There is a nice “fit,” one can argue, between Christian belief and the normative view of nature in the Scottish tradition. This normative view surfaced in *PE* with its emphasis on natural law.

Burton was not, however, simply an eighteenth century thinker. He was a man of his own century in stressing the importance of inventions and industrial progress. He saw society as developing through economic stages, a view that probably had its origin in Scotland. He may have seen God as the author of the laws found in nature, but he stressed over and over again that man knows these laws solely through empirical investigations. Burton, in short, had two overlapping sets of ideas. “Nature” was a pivot common to both. In *PSE* he turned toward a more modern view of it; in *PE* for the reasons discussed above, he swung back in the other direction.

Finally, we might ask, what was the significance of Burton for Fukuzawa? What did Fukuzawa find so important in Burton’s text that he was willing to disrupt his original plan for *Conditions in the West* and translate almost half of Burton as an “Outside Volume?” In part, the answer is simply that Burton provided a marvelous over-

19. *The Book Hunter*, xlii.

20. *The Book Hunter*, ci.

view of cultural assumptions widely held in Great Britain and the United States at the time. Burton furnished a key to social institutions and history as well as to politics and economics.

A second reason, possibly, is that Fukuzawa found in Burton's philosophy some features that were compatible with his own, features which provided a bridge from Japanese to Western thought. But can this be? The usual interpretation of Fukuzawa is that he was already a scientific thinker at the time of the Restoration. This is the view conveyed in Fukuzawa's autobiography in which he depicts himself as the advocate of "number and reason," single-handedly facing "the Chinese scholars of the country as a whole."²¹

Now there is no doubt about Fukuzawa being a proponent of Western science. He had become familiar with science at the school of Ogata Kōan. But this did not automatically make him a scientific thinker : understanding chemistry, for example, does not invariably lead to a scientific view of society. Despite his diatribes against reactionary Confucianists, when it came to questions of ethics or human nature, Fukuzawa during the 1860's had no ground to stand on other than Confucianism. Confucianism was the most rational philosophy available in Tokugawa Japan. It was the doctrine in which Fukuzawa had received his early education. It had only partly been superseded by Dutch studies. Perhaps Fukuzawa's thought in the mid-1860's might best be viewed as an amalgam of Confucianism and Dutch Studies. A few of the assumptions of his Dutch Studies-Confucianism were :

21. *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, (translated by Eiichi Kiyooka), Columbia University Press (1966), 216.

a) The notion of an ultimate force or order which he expressed with the idea of Heaven (*ten*). Whether this order was natural or metaphysical can be debated. Within the spectrum of Confucian philosophers, Fukuzawa's notion of Heaven was more naturalistic than most. But it was also metaphysical in that Heaven had a plan, intentions, and was not amoral.

b) The ultimate order (*ten*) had heavenly or natural principles (*tenri* or *tensoku*) which he equated with the laws of science.

c) Man's ethical nature (*tensei*) participates in the heavenly principles. Ethics is thus objective and natural and is subject to empirical study.

d) Man's higher nature (*tensei*) can be realized through study and self-cultivation. This is not just an intellectual process, but involves bringing baser emotions and drives under control.

e) The ideal social order is one that conforms to man's higher nature. That is to say, its members are ethically advanced and its institutions are appropriate to ethical principles.

Comparing these notions to those in Burton's Scottish philosophy, we note certain parallels:

a) The idea of a deity.

b) Laws of nature ordained by the deity.

c) Man has an ethical nature, implanted in him by the deity.

d) Man's higher ethical nature can only be realized by arduous efforts.

e) As society advances toward the ideal of civilization, humans move closer to the realization of their higher ethical nature.

The correspondence between Fukuzawa's concepts and those of Burton obviously was far from exact. The terms they used had emerged from different cultural matrices. If examined carefully, the parallels break down. Yet the parallelism was not wholly accidental. Both in Dutch studies circles in Japan and in the eighteenth century West there was an attempt to reconcile an existing tradition of "natural philosophy" with science. In the West, where Newton was understood, this led to the thorough rethinking of tradition called the Enlightenment. In Japan, where the impact of science was lighter, the rethinking focussed more narrowly on the cognitive question of the relation between the laws of science and "nature." Questions pertaining to ethics or society were only infrequently raised.

A new chapter in Japanese intellectual history began during the mid-1860's when Fukuzawa set about to translate Western works on history, economics, politics, and society. In so doing he encountered the solutions arrived at by the eighteenth century Enlightenment and by nineteenth century thinkers like Burton who can be seen as extending eighteenth century thought. Fukuzawa's problem was how to use the existing Sino-Japanese philosophical vocabulary to render

these ideas. In some measure what he did was to extend the “fit” between science and nature that had already been worked out in the Dutch studies school. But since the scope of Dutch studies was narrow, Fukuzawa also had to wrestle with a range of new problems. He had to adapt an old vocabulary, implement a new one, and devise a set of equations between the two philosophical traditions. In these equations, so essential to the Civilization and Enlightenment Movement of the 1870's the concept of nature was no less pivotal for Fukuzawa than it had been for Burton.