

Global Spencerism

*The Communication and Appropriation
of a British Evolutionist*

Edited by

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BRILL

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Spencerism in Japan: Boom and Bust of a Theory

G. Clinton Godart

It is well known that Herbert Spencer was widely read in Japan, especially during the “Spencer boom” in the early Meiji period (1870s and 1880s). But it is still not entirely clear what the actual scale and the long-term effects of Spencer’s thought upon Japan were. In this chapter, I will introduce the usages of Spencer in Japan and attempt to provide a way to rethink the role of Spencer in Japan. One problem is that the appropriation of Spencer’s ideas in Japan has been simultaneously over- and underestimated. Overestimated, because many historians of Japan have assumed the existence of a ubiquitous Spencerian “Social Darwinism” supposedly leading to Japan’s colonial adventures, this despite Spencer’s own pacifism and anti-imperialism, and little evidence to support such a wide-ranging influence beyond the mid-Meiji period.¹ On the other hand, most actual research on Spencer in Japan has focused on how Spencer’s thought was used in political debates among a limited group of thinkers and activists during a very restricted time period, the Spencer Boom of the 1870s and 1880s.² Studies have rarely looked into the many Japanese criticisms of Spencer’s thought, and the reasons for the surprisingly quick decline of his popularity (in Japan and elsewhere) has gone largely unquestioned. On the other hand, the emphasis on the political dimension has left other elements of Spencer’s thought that interested Japanese, such as biology, religion, and education, to large part unexamined. I will thus argue that Spencer’s role in modern

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- 1 To give just one example: “These ideas [of Social Darwinism], made popular in Japan in the translations of the European philosopher Herbert Spencer, suggested that just as Charles Darwin’s theory of “natural selection” taught that only the stronger, more “evolved” species triumphed over weaker and less-well-adapted species, similar natural laws governed human civilization. Japan wanted to survive and to triumph; the natural way to do this was to prey on the weak.” In Louis G. Perez, *The History of Japan* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 116.
 - 2 Important studies on Herbert Spencer in Japan are the seminal work by Yamashita Shigekazu, *Supensā to nihon kindai* (Ocha no suishobo, 1983); and in English Nagai Michio, “Herbert Spencer in Meiji Japan,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, 1 (1954): 55–64; Julia Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); David Howell, “Society Reified: Herbert Spencer and Political Theory in Early Meiji Japan,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, 1 (2000), 67–86.

Japanese thought has been on the one hand more *limited* than has been assumed, but on the other hand much more *diverse* in its effects.

In this chapter, I do not intend to answer the question of Spencer's appropriation in Japan comprehensively. Instead, I will introduce the story of Spencer in the 1870s and 1880s (of which some will be familiar to the intellectual historians of modern Japan), while zooming in on one popular liberal champion of Spencer in Japan to illustrate the reasons for the appeal of Spencer in the early Meiji period. I will also make two new contributions: Firstly, in contrast to the political emphasis, I want to draw attention to how Spencer was appropriated in other areas, beyond the immediately political: in religion, education, and the organization of knowledge itself, hence emphasizing a multi-dimensional picture of Spencer in Japan.

A second objective of this essay is to draw attention to the limits of Spencer's popularity in Japan and especially its swift decline around the turn of the century. I will argue that while there might have been a "Spencer boom," the scale of it should be put in perspective. And importantly, for all the talk about the "Spencer boom" in Japan, few have talked about what we might call the "Spencer bust." While the reasons why Spencer was much read in Japan do actually not require that much explanation – Great Britain was the world's most powerful nation and Spencer one of her most respected philosophers – the reasons why Spencer's philosophy went from such great heights of popularity to declining so quickly (and worldwide) are less clear, but I think that understanding the Spencer bust is crucial to a full understanding of the phenomenon of Global Spencerism. Why was such a widely read and discussed system of thought, with such an overarching theoretical scope, dropped in a relatively short time, by a large majority of intelligentsia? Taking this into consideration, how profound was, really, the appropriation of Spencer's philosophy in Japan?

The "Spencer Boom"

In a period of three decades around thirty translations of Spencer's works appeared in Japanese (see table 3.1). But the bulk of these appeared during one decade, between 1877 and 1886, hence the "Spencer boom." The reasons for the transfer of Spencer's ideas in his period were, as I will explain below, indeed largely political, but we should also note the conditions for the transmission of knowledge in this period. After a decade of internal turmoil and American and European military pressure, the Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown in 1868. The country was unified under the Emperor (or *Tennō*, "Heavenly Sovereign")

as head of state, and was plunged into a breakneck pace of modernization. Important for the story of Spencer in Japan, the period saw a great explosion in information transfer, not only between Japan and the rest of the world, but also domestically. Japan under the Tokugawa was never truly “closed” to the outside world, but information transmission was restricted by Tokugawa policies: Japanese were not allowed to travel abroad, and trade with Asia and the West was very limited. This all changed with the opening of treaty ports in the 1850s, and even more after 1868. This is the background to why Spencer’s ideas were imported into Japan somewhat late.

In the Meiji period, Japanese went abroad to study, and foreign experts (*yatoi*) were hired in large numbers, arriving on steamships, and a railroad network, a national postal system, and a telegraph system were built. The late Tokugawa period had seen the development of nation-wide, informal networks of scholars, but this expanded dramatically in the Meiji period when freedom of movement was expanded. The status system was abolished. The press, journals, and newspapers also expanded dramatically during this time, finding a large audience of readers educated in a new national compulsory education system. Estimating literacy rates is a very slippery affair, with great differences among regions, class, and gender, but the usual rough figure given is that, the literacy rate grew from 30 to 70 percent over the course of the Meiji period (1868–1911).³ The Meiji period also saw a number of changes in publishing, such as a change from woodblocks to moveable type, from hand presses to engine powered rotary presses, and from traditional binding to Western binding, although the early translations of Spencer’s books were published in traditional Japanese format.⁴

Translations of course played a crucial role in the transmission of knowledge, the creation of new vocabularies, and also the dissemination of information and ideas to a wider public. But when considering the appropriation of Spencer in Japan, an important caveat in this respect is that we should not confuse dates of translations with important moments of the transmission of its content. Educated Japanese were often fluent in English, and a number of them read Spencer or secondary sources on Spencer in the original, travelled abroad and listened to lectures about Spencer in Japan and abroad. Foreign books were available through, for example, Maruzen Company (*Maruzen shōsha*), founded in 1869 by Yuteki Hayashi (1837–1901), a pupil of the liberal

3 For a nuanced discussion and history of literacy in Japan, see Richard Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007).

4 See the first chapter of Edward Mack, *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi.⁵ Maruzen Company became the most important importer of foreign books into Japan, with stores in Yokohama and Tokyo, and later nationwide. Thus, outside of the world of translations, there is a large but unknown X number of transmissions of Spencer to Japan.

The boom in translations of Spencer from the mid-1870s began in earnest when his political philosophy was appropriated by the liberal Freedom and Popular Rights Movement (*Jiyū minken undō*) in the 1870s. Soon, Spencer's ideas also came to be used by their opponents, who argued for a powerful state and rejected, or argued, for a more gradual transition to popular representation. Historians of Japan have seen this as partly reflective of a tension between Spencer's liberalism and individualism on the one hand, and his organic theory of society on the other (although it is open to debate whether this is a correct interpretation of Spencer). We can perhaps call this the "dual use"-theory of Spencer's appropriation in Meiji era Japan.⁶ Let us follow the story of Spencer in Japan along these lines for the time being.

The Freedom and Popular Rights Movement was a diverse movement of examurais and others who, for a variety of reasons, appealed to the government for the establishment of popular political representation. "Freedom" (*jiyū*) became one of the neologism buzzwords of the day. These political activists found in Spencer (and others, like J.S. Mill) a scientific spokesman for their cause, and they translated accordingly. Spencer's *Social Statics* (1851) was first translated in abbreviated form in 1877 by the young student Ozaki Yukio (1858–1954), who would become one of the most important politicians in Japan. Another liberal activist, Matsushima Kō (1853–1940), who later became an important educator, subsequently translated *Social Statics* in full, significantly, as *On Equal Rights in Society* in 1882. This translation was widely read, and Itagaki Taisuke (1837–1919), the leader of this liberal movement, called Spencer's *Social Statics* the "textbook of social rights."⁷ The intended audiences of many of the translations of Spencer were the members of the movement and other educated readers, including those of the elite, to provide arguments for popular sovereignty and other liberal causes.

Competing with the liberals were more conservative thinkers, often at positions at the University of Tokyo, such as Katō Hiroyuki (1836–1916) and Ariga

5 In this chapter, for Japanese names, the Japanese name order is used: family name comes first.

6 See among others Yamashita Shigekazu, *Supensā to nihon kindai* (Tokyo: Ocha no mizu shobō, 1983); Nagai Michio, "Herbert Spencer in Early Meiji Japan," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, 1 (1954): 55–64; and Julia Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

7 Yamashita, *Supensā to nihon kindai*, 59.

Nagao (1860–1921), and with closer relations to the Meiji state. Especially Katō Hiroyuki promoted a vision of societies as biological organisms, its individuals as cells, and these organisms locked in a struggle for survival. While invoking Spencer, he developed his own theory of social evolution, and argued “rights” were not natural, but bestowed on the weak by the strong, in their own self-interest. The implication of Katō’s theory of social evolution was that Meiji state could decide to grant which rights and when, for the good of the nation. Not surprisingly, this theory of Katō was severely criticized by the liberals.⁸

A word of caution concerning the “Spencer boom” is relevant here. The number of translations of Spencer’s works is indeed large, but has been somewhat inflated, since many earlier translations were only partial translations or translations of individual chapters. More importantly, there was a larger boom in translations from all Western things happening at the same time, Spencer being just one. As a comparison, in the period from 1877–1895, at least sixteen book-length translations of John Stuart Mill (who was often mentioned in the same breath as Spencer) appeared and this is just one example. While this is indeed less than Spencer, the difference is not large enough to take the number of translations of Spencer as a sign of a country as being in the grip of Spencer. A large number of translations of Spencer’s work is also reflective of his being a prolific writer, and it does not preclude the possibility that one translation of another author might have been more widely *read* (Marx’s *Capital* for example come to mind). Darwin’s *Origin* was indeed only translated fully for the first time in 1896 (a partial translation of the *Descent* had appeared in 1881), but when discussing “evolutionary theory,” Japanese intellectuals tended to refer to Darwin, Spencer, and Haeckel, the usual lineup.

A Spencerian: Tokutomi Sohō

“Are the Japanese not doomed to become traders and producers?” This prediction came from what is the most influential and ambitious “Spencerian” book to appear from the liberal camp during this period: *The Future Japan* (*Shōrai no nihon*), written in 1886 by Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957).⁹ Tokutomi was part of a

8 For Katō Hiroyuki, see Winston Davis, *The moral and political naturalism of Baron Kato Hiroyuki* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), and in Japanese see among others Yoshida Kōji, *Katō Hiroyuki no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Ōhara Shinseisha, 1976).

9 Ichirō Tokutomi, *The Future Japan*, trans. Vinh Sing, Ed. Matsuzawa Hiroaki and Nicholas Wickenden (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1989), 127. In this article, for readers who cannot read Japanese, I will refer to this English translation.

generation that had come of age in the early years after the Meiji restoration, experiencing its dramatic changes. Tokutomi would become one of Japan's most prolific and important journalists. He had read Mill, Bentham, and others while studying at the Dōshisha, a Christian university in Kyoto. Tokutomi's reading of Spencer's second volume of *The Principles of Sociology* in August 1884, was, according to John D. Pierson's intellectual biography of Tokutomi, a breakthrough in his thought, and it prompted him to write *The Future Japan*. At age twenty-three, he "attempted to develop a comprehensive theory of social progress in history, to analyze world conditions and trends in international relations in the nineteenth century, and, on these bases, to argue for the democratic reform of Japanese society."¹⁰ First serialized in 1886 in the journal *Tokyo Keizai Zasshi*, the book became a major bestseller. Around this time, Tokutomi put himself squarely behind Spencer's ideas, before rejecting much of it a decade later. Since Spencer's own works (as contemporaries complained about at the time) are notoriously laborious to read through, it is worth noting that Tokutomi's version of Spencer's ideas probably reached a vastly wider audience than Spencer's own works.

The Future Japan was, in essence, an exposé of Spencer's vision of social evolution as developing from the "militant" to the "industrial" type. Tokutomi saw these two tendencies or "organs" (*kikan*) as fundamentally opposed to each other and irreconcilable (although the industrial had, through a process of the division of labor developed out of the militant). Human history, and especially the nineteenth century, was therefore a battleground between these two systems, with the industrial winning out. This battle, Tokutomi argued forcefully, was the environment to which Japan had to adapt, or face the fate of "annihilation" by the West, like Burma and Vietnam had. It is interesting to note that Tokutomi did *not* consequently present the "West" as superior, or as a model to follow, since many European nations were showing strong "militant" tendencies, keeping large armies and developing a weapons industry. Germany and Russia were especially guilty of this, and Japan should avoid their predicament and better follow the example of Britain and especially the United States. Tokutomi combined this Spencerian version of social evolution with an enthusiastic endorsement of liberalism, democracy (also relying on J.S. Mill), and the free-market (also inspired by the Manchester school).

It is important to note that Tokutomi strongly endorsed an organic conception of society, which, while not developed very elaborately, held that any change in society involved changes in its other parts as well as the whole. This

10 John Pierson, *Tokutomi Soho, 1863–1957: A Journalist for Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 127.

might sound trivial today, but it had a scientific aura at the time. Importantly, with this organic metaphor, Tokutomi warned his fellow Japanese they could not change structures in society, technology, and dress without transforming Japanese culture. For example, Tokutomi predicted that communication technologies would change people's feelings. This use of the organic metaphor is important, since a tendency of the "dual use" interpretation of Spencer in Japan was to see the organic conception of society as something more the prerogative of the conservatives. In Tokutomi's case, as in Spencer's own, the organic conception of society was in fact a component of his liberalism.

Tokutomi also reinterpreted Japan's past in the light of Spencer's theories. The Tokugawa period, he argued, was a typical example of Spencer's "militant" society. "There had never been previously a feudal society like ours. There will never be a feudal society like ours again."¹¹ What were the fall of the Tokugawa in 1868, the subsequent abolishment of the samurai, and the opening to world trade, if not proof of the Spencerian transition from militant to industrial? The nation's leaders had not planned this transition, but "Extemporaneous measures, designed to meet immediate needs, completely changed our militant society into an industrial society and our aristocratic society into a democratic society."¹² Thus, for contemporary Japanese, looking at Japan through a Tokutomi-Spencerian lens must have seemed to explain many things, such as the bewildering changes, and the strange mix between the old and the new, and where it all would lead.

Tokutomi's book located and explained Japan's transformation as following long-term world historical patterns, but his vision, while seemingly believing in the inevitable victory of democracy and free trade, was not one of inevitable, unilinear progress in "stages" that societies inexorably follow, nor was it truly teleological. On the contrary, individual societies could still retrogress, stagnate, or collapse. In order to avoid this, they do well to adapt to the international *environment*, which did show a general progress towards industry and democracy. *The Future Japan* was therefore also meant as a wake-up call for his fellow Japanese, and was permeated with an anxiety that Japan might lose the momentum of progress in the right direction, if "feudal" and militaristic tendencies, regional rivalries, the illegal amassing of wealth, and increasing authoritarianism held Japan back or drove it in the wrong direction. Concretely, Tokutomi warned that the tendencies of the Meiji state to develop a large army and navy, increase armament production, and resort to threats of war in international disputes were not only dangerous, but since they fundamentally

¹¹ Ibid., 133.

¹² Ibid., 159.

belonged to the “militant” type, they were also retrogressive. He believed “that military expansion must by all means be halted.”¹³ Japan had to embrace just laws, property rights, abolish tariffs, build harbors, allow free access to Japan for foreigners, and above all, international free trade and democracy. The work was thus also an appeal to the young, and a critique of conservatives and nostalgic thinkers, and the nation’s current leadership.

What historians have noticed less is that Tokutomi’s use of Spencer also meant, perhaps counter-intuitively, a rejection of the idea that economic and military strength went hand in hand, an idea that in Japan had been expressed in the influential slogan *fukoku kyōhei* (“rich nation, strong army”), and which Tokutomi rejected as a “sophism.”¹⁴ Again and again, Tokutomi argued that the “industrial,” was incompatible with the “militant.” In an industrial age, production of weapons takes up industrial capacity, requires huge tax increases, and thus debilitates normal economic activities. Hence military buildup in an industrial age undermines its own conditions of possibility by paralyzing industry and thus diminishing wealth. Despite Tokutomi’s reminding the reader many times of the real dangers of Western colonial aggression, he argued that the “struggle for survival” in the nineteenth century would no longer be one of physical force, but of intellectual and economic competition. In this sense, Tokutomi’s Spencerism was faithful to Spencer himself, who certainly did *not* believe that the “struggle for survival” between nations was a force in future evolution. This being decades before the coinage of terms such as “spin-off” and the “military-industrial complex,” Tokutomi’s argument might have been persuasive, and it is important to see that Spencer was mobilized here for a political message against aggressive foreign policy and military spending.

For Tokutomi, and not a small number of Japanese like him, Spencer’s theory of evolution from militant to industrial had an immense explanatory power. It explained the country’s past, the Meiji restoration, and the dazzling changes following it, in terms of a “scientific theory” of evolution, and pointed towards a possible bright future. More importantly, Tokutomi’s argumentation shows how Spencer’s general theory of social evolution could be appropriated by a Japanese intellectual and applied to a particular case – Japan’s transitions during the Meiji period – to convey and serve a particular political purpose.

13 Ibid., 126.

14 Ibid., 175.

A Diverse Legacy

The “dual use” theory has its limitations for understanding Spencer in Japan. An important addition to this theory has been made by the historian Douglas Howland, who has argued that the introduction of Spencer’s sociology in Meiji Japan, regardless of the strife between liberals and conservatives, made possible the envisioning of “society” (*shakai*, one of the neologisms of this period) as such. Envisioning “society” as a phenomenon, to be understood scientifically, and potentially to be manipulated, Howland argued, signaled a shift in Japanese intellectual history from an enlightenment model of progress to a scientific model.¹⁵ There are other limitations to the dual use interpretation of Spencer in Japan. Firstly, as can be seen from Tokutomi, the idea that the liberals drew on Spencer’s individualism while the conservatives drew on his organic conception of society does not hold up. Both liberals and conservatives appropriated Spencer’s organic conception of society for their own purposes. Secondly, the dichotomy of liberals versus conservatives itself is somewhat simplifying for this period, with various figures straddling both sides and crossing over from one to the other. Thirdly, and more important, since most scholars who have studied the role of Spencer’s ideas in Japan have limited themselves to these highly visible political debates during the 1870s and 1880s, we have come to understand Spencer’s role in Meiji Japan almost exclusively through the lens of these political debates, thereby ignoring other fields where Spencer’s theory was used, such as psychology, biology, the position of women, education, and religion.

It is notable that the translation of Spencer’s *Social Statics* (and a later separate translation singled out as “The Rights of Women”) was one of the first texts to appear on women’s rights in Japan. Mori Arinori (1847–1889), an important Meiji leader who drew much on Spencer, also advocated the reform of marriage and called to end mistreatment of women. When commentators interpreted the Tokugawa period in terms of the “militant” society, they noted how, as Spencer’s theory would predict, women’s liberties were most restricted among the samurai, but less in other status groups in Tokugawa society.

Spencer’s relevance for biology has been forgotten in Japan and elsewhere due to the later characterization of his thought as “social Darwinism.” Contemporaries did take Spencer’s theories on biology seriously, and his role in this field is an important aspect of the history of science in Japan that has not yet been researched. It is noteworthy that Charles Whitman (1842–1910),

15 Douglas Howland, “Society Reified: Herbert Spencer and Political Theory in Early Meiji Japan,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, 1 (2000): 67–86.

who taught biology at the University of Tokyo after Edward S. Morse, lectured while using Spencer's *Principles of Biology*, as he thought this was the best book to understand biology in general.¹⁶ Hence the first generation of Japanese biologists, Ishikawa Chiyomatsu (1861–1935), Yatabe Ryōichi (1851–1999) and others, learned at least one part of their biology education through Spencer. How this influenced biology in Japan is a matter for future research.

Another, not immediately political, aspect of the history of Spencer in Japan is his importance for religion. Firstly, Spencerian agnosticism seemed to have been popular among young intellectuals in the early Meiji period, much to the complaint of Christian missionaries. As a result, Spencer was sometimes seen as a danger to religion, despite his own call for reconciliation between religion and science. This fear did not disappear overnight. To give just one example, the Christian Kishimoto Nobuta, at a speech in Chicago in 1893, argued that Japan was a “battlefield of religious and non-religious secular forces as much as of Christianity and other religions,” and that “Many Japanese intellectuals were indifferent or hostile to religion in general, and thus religious forces in Japan should first fight such agnostic, nihilistic, and rationalist, and materialistic intellectuals, influenced by figures like Spencer, Comte, and Schopenhauer.”¹⁷

But Spencer also played a larger, positive, and more lasting, role in religious thought in Japan. Firstly, Spencer's ideas played a role in the general understanding of the phenomenon of “religion” itself. Spencer was introduced in Japan at a time when religion was undergoing important changes. While there had always arguably been something like religion in Japan, the Japanese term “religion” (*shūkyō*) was a neologism (the term had previously been used to describe the “doctrine” *kyō* of a particular Buddhist sect, *shū*). And just like Spencer's thought was important in the catalyzing of the *idea* of “society” itself, so was Spencer also important in the Japanese construction of other large modern categories and phenomena such as “religion,” “science” (*kagaku*), and “philosophy” (*tetsugaku*), all Meiji neologisms.¹⁸

Part of the appeal of Spencer's *First Principles* was that it discussed the relation between religion, science, and philosophy, in a very comprehensive and systematic way, and (at least initially) helped many to make sense of these new

16 Ishikawa Chiyomatsu, *Ishikawa Chiyomatsu Zenshū*, ed. Ishikawa Chiyomatsu kankō kai, vol. 4 (Kōbunsha: 1935–1936), 80–81.

17 Nirei Yōsuke, “Toward a Modern Belief: Modernist Protestantism and Problems of National Religion in Meiji Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 34:1 (2007), 168.

18 For a discussion of new categories in Meiji Japan, see among others Howland, *Translating the West*, and for religion and philosophy, see G. Clinton Godart, ““Philosophy” or “Religion”? The Confrontation with Foreign Categories in Late Nineteenth Century Japan,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69, no. 1 (2008): 71–91.

large categories and how to organize a mass of new knowledge and theories that was being introduced (and produced) in Japan. Moreover, Spencer seemed to offer a scientific explanation for why there was a differentiation into these different branches, according to a universal pattern of evolution. At the same time, Spencer, especially in his *Principles of Sociology*, also provided an explanation for the origins of religion, its development, its relation to psychology, and gave religion a function in the evolution of human societies. Spencer's "Religion: A retrospect and prospect," was also separately translated in 1888 as *The Evolution of Religion*.¹⁹ Hence Spencer's theories also provided a scientific approach to what was, at least in terms of discourse and categorization, the new phenomenon of "religion." Meiji Japanese philosophers often explained the distinction between philosophy and religion in Spencerian terms. To give just one example, Inoue Enryō (1858–1919) was one of the most important Meiji-era Buddhist philosophers. He spent much of his life advocating a modern, philosophically valid Buddhism that was in accord with science. When discussing the distinction between religion and philosophy, he echoed Spencer when he wrote: "Roughly speaking, the world – in the broadest possible meaning of the word – consists of two parts. Technically these are called the knowable world and the unknowable world. In plain language, they refer respectively to the world that can be known with the human intellect and the world that cannot. In other words, they point to the distinction between philosophy and religion."²⁰

Secondly, Spencer also played a role in religious theories propagated by Japanese religious thinkers. Firstly, this was felt in attempts to harmonize religion and science. In *First Principles*, Spencer argued that religion and science would further differentiate, with science relinquishing religious ideas, and religion giving up superstition and unfounded knowledge claims, both would crystallize into their pure forms. A clash between religion and science, therefore, was only temporary. In the 1870s and 1880s, this was potent material for Buddhist and Christian thinkers alike, both groups in a position of feeling on the defensive in a rapidly modernizing society in which science claimed an authority on truth-claims.

Further, while Spencer's thought was of course seen largely as new, Western, and modern, in some respects it touched common ground with religious

19 Ariga Nagao, trans., *Shūkyō shinkaron* (Tokyo: Makino shobō, 1888).

20 *Bukkyō tetsugaku* (1893), in Inoue Enryō, *Inoue Enryō Senshū*, ed. Tōyōdaigaku sōritsu hyakunen kinen ronbunshū hensan iinkai, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Tōyōdaigaku, 1987–2004), 107–113. Spencer discusses the distinction between religion and science as "opposite sides of the same, religion the invisible, science the visible," in Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1867).

thought in Japan. The choice of translating Spencer's term "principles" as *genri* ("fundamental principle" or "pattern") echoed Confucian philosophy, the term *ri* being the key object for inquiry into nature. The idea that the whole of nature emerged from a single mysterious and undifferentiated origin was recognized as similar to the Confucian metaphysical idea of the "Great Ultimate." Not a few Buddhist thinkers saw a useful parallel between Spencer's "Unknowable," and Buddhist notions of the Absolute, expressed as "Thusness" (*Shinnyo*): both could be interpreted as an all-pervading cosmic absolute, beyond the grasp of reason. Spencer's epistemological conclusion from his theory about the Unknowable, that "in ultimate essence nothing can be known,"²¹ that ultimate reality is beyond discursive knowledge, was a position that resonated with a long history in East-Asian religious thought of the ineffability of the highest truth. For example, Inoue Enryō found much to his liking in Spencer's philosophy. Inoue pointed his finger to past Buddhists, whom, he argued, had not really understood or clearly formulated the relation between the relative world and the absolute, and often discussed the Buddhist idea of the Absolute, "suchness," (*Shinnyo*) as having much in common with Spencer's "Unknowable."²² Spencer's ideas about the Unknowable, it must be mentioned, were at the time criticized in Europe, and in Japan too it was by no means uncritically accepted. For example, Inoue Enryō argued that an epistemological problem with Spencer's theory was that he had simply *posited* an unknowable outside the knowable.²³

Evolutionary conceptions of religion, often along Spencerian lines, were widely talked about. Inoue argued along Spencerian lines that Buddhism itself had evolved from a singly homogeneous source, growing in complexity to diverse heterogeneous schools. This, he argued, was a proof of Buddhism's strength and its modernity. For example, in 1903, Tokutomi Sohō, discussed above, who by this time had reversed on his pacifism and embrace of Spencerian liberalism, continued to discuss religion in Spencerian terms. He argued that the essence of religion comes from an "authority," which sets man's hearts at peace, and derives from the "mysterious" or "Unknowable" (using *fukashigi*, the same word used for Spencer's "Unknowable"). The essence of

21 Spencer, *First Principles*.

22 See for example, Inoue Enryō, *Bukkyō tetsugaku* (1893), in *Inoue Enryō Senshū*, edited by Tōyō Daigaku sōritsu hyakunen shūnen kinen ronbun shū hensan iinkai, vol. 7, 107–181 (Tokyo: Toyodaigaku 1990), 109. For an English translation, see G. Clinton Godart, transl., "Inoue Enryō," in *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, Edited by James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2011), 619–623.

23 Inoue Enryō, *Tetsugaku yōryō* (1888), in *Inoue Enryō senshū*, vol. 1, 147.

religion, this belief in a supra-rational absolute will not change, but, he argued, religious institutions have to adapt to society. While in *The Future Japan*, he had been unabashedly anti-Buddhist, he now defended a role for Buddhism in Japan.²⁴

Another example of the remarkable variety of the ways in which Spencer was appropriated in Japan was the case of Mori Arinori.²⁵ One of the early Meiji leaders, Mori had read Spencer during his stay in the United States, and when he became ambassador to England from 1879 to 1884, met Spencer, and consulted with him. Mori also spent time in the prestigious Atheneum Club, and held his farewell party there, attended by Spencer. Mori eventually became minister of education, and in this position employed Spencer's philosophy in his own ideas and policies. Mori does not fall into a dualist scheme of "liberals" versus "conservatives." He advocated freedom of religion, and probably inspired by both Mill and Spencer, the equality of women and the reform of marriage (which at the time still allowed for official concubines), but also installed military led physical training in schools, a top-down centralized education system, and was lukewarm about a parliamentary system for Japan.

When he became minister of education, the central elements of Mori's educational reform were to boost physical and moral education, two elements he found lacking in Japan. Spencer formed the theoretical basis for this endeavor. Spencer had argued that education should prepare students to live independent and full lives, as this was a prerequisite for a free society in which the external controls of the militant society had been removed. Mori shared this belief. Opposing some of the conservatives, he wanted to install an ethics education that was not Confucian in outlook, and wrote an *Ethics Textbook* (*Rinrishi*), which was inspired by Spencer's *Principles of Ethics*. Mori adopted Spencer's idea that the key in ethics was a balance between egoism and altruism, and Mori modified it by calling it *jita heiritsu*, which he rendered himself in English as "the *cooperation* of self and other."²⁶ Mori's interest in physical education came from his own samurai schooling and his experience with muscular Christianity in the United States, but it was Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*, that led him to place great emphasis on the balance between the three aspects of education. Hence from 1886, worried that the physical component had been neglected, he advocated the

24 Shinbukkyō dōshikai, eds., *Shōrai no shūkyō* (Tokyo: Shinbukkyō dōshikai, 1903).

25 This section on Mori is largely based on Ivan Parker Hall, *Mori Arinori* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), and Alistair Swale, *The Political Thought of Mori Arinori: A Study of Meiji Conservatism* (London: Routledge, 2000).

26 Swale, *The Political Thought of Mori Arinori*, 170, and Mori Arinori, *Rinrishi*, 424–429.

installation of military-style physical education in Japanese schools, run by the army, probably not what the anti-militarist Spencer had in mind. It also caused a great controversy. The military aspect of physical education was of course abandoned after 1945, but the basic orientation of a balance between the three elements of education has remained to this day in the form of the basic principle of the “three educations” (*san'ikushugi*).²⁷ These are some of the more longer lasting but less noticed effects of Spencer in Japan.

Mori also consulted with Spencer over Japan's political future, and presented him with a draft of a constitution. In what became a famous episode, Spencer gave what he himself called “conservative” advice, to not prematurely replacing the old with the new, but “grafting” the new (democracy) on the old (family system). As Alistair Swale has pointed out, Mori's own *On a System of Representative Government for Japan* of 1883, the draft of which he showed to Spencer, set out with the question “How to engraft a Representative System of Government on the political institutions of Japan?” – suggesting Mori was strongly inspired by Spencer who had put the problem in the same words. Mori argued that Japanese society was not ready yet for a parliamentary system.²⁸ Spencer later wrote to statesman Kaneko Kentarō (1853–1942):

Probably you remember I told you that when Mr. Mori, the then Japanese Ambassador, submitted to me his draft for a Japanese Constitution, I gave him very conservative advice, contending that it was impossible that the Japanese, hitherto accustomed to despotic rule, should, all at once, become capable of constitutional government. My advice was not, I fear, duly regarded, and so far as I gather from the recent reports of Japanese affairs, you are experiencing the evils arising from too large an installment of freedom.²⁹

Spencer, fearing Japan would fall prey to Western imperialism, also advised against allowing intermarriage. It is noteworthy that on this high level of government consultation with the great philosopher, Japan did not follow Spencer's advice, and allowed intermarriage, and adopted a constitution and a parliamentary system.

27 See Mark Elwood, *Principle, Praxis, and the Politics Of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995).

28 Swale, *The Political Thought of Mori Arinori*, 82–88.

29 David Duncan, *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* (London : Williams & Norgate, 1911), 319.

The “Spencer Bust”

From the 1890s onwards, and especially after the turn of the century, Spencer’s name appears less and less. Japanese scholars already began treating Spencer as a past chapter in the history of ideas. In 1927, when reflecting on the history of social thought in Japan, one commentator asked: “How did his [Spencer’s] thought, that was for a time at the height of popularity, vanish without leaving a trace?”³⁰ It is a question not many scholars have asked. Amidst all the talk of the “Spencer boom,” the “dual use” theory of Spencer in Japan did not tell us a lot about the limitations of Spencer’s role in Japan, or why it declined so dramatically. The passing of time in itself is of course not a reason, since older figures like Marx, Goethe, and Hegel continued to be influential. But theories do sometimes also follow a pattern similar to fashion, and by the turn of the century, Spencer had a distinctive mid-nineteenth century aura around him, and his writing style did not help. Another commentator, Nishimura Tengai, who wrote in 1890 about Spencer, declared, “in a nutshell, he gets lost in long-windedness.” Nishimura stated that Spencer gives so many examples that are out of place that “if one opens his book and just looks at the examples, one wonders if this is a ghost house (*bakemono yashiki*), or *The Journey to the West* (*Saiyūki*). In other words, his works are like a *manjū* [a bun with a bean-jam filling] with a really thick outer layer, using an abundance of weird examples, while talking only very little about the essence of his philosophy.”³¹

To a large degree, the decline of Spencer’s importance in Japan was part of a world-wide pattern, and can be attributed to the further specialization of disciplines with their own methodologies, such as in psychology and biology, a growing split between the sciences and the humanities, and the further rise of Marxist thought and the discipline of sociology to understand society (although Spencer’s popularity started to decline in the 1890s, before Marxist thought made serious inroads in Japan). Philosophers criticized Spencer for his deductivist method and there was a rise in interest in epistemology and Neo-Kantianism, as well as German idealism.

However, just as there are local circumstances for the successful transmission of ideas, there are also local conditions for the decline of ideas. Firstly, Spencer’s evolutionary pattern from “militant” to “industrial,” from war and rigidity to liberty and peace, as he himself realized, was belied by later historical events. In Japan, it seemed to have been really the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895 that resulted in territorial gain, access to markets, a large indemnity

30 Shimoide Shunkichi, *Meiji shakai shisō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Asano shoten, 1932), 48.

31 Nishimura Tengai, *Wakan taisei kokon gakusha retsuden* (Tokyo: Kōbunkan, 1890), 299.

from China, a boost in national prestige and a wave of jingoism, which blasted away Spencer's optimistic model of modernity. When France, Germany, and Russia intervened to force Japan to give up its hold on the Liaodung peninsula, which most Japanese saw as legitimate war booty, the disappointment and anger was huge. Tokutomi Sohō experienced it as a turning point in his life, and he gave up his Spencerian liberalism and began to argue for a more aggressive foreign policy. The much larger and devastating, but nevertheless victorious, Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905, did little to revive Spencerian pacifism. And the few who opposed the war had turned to socialism. Contrary to Tokutomi's predictions, Japan's military build-up, expansion, and war did not seem incompatible with industry and trade.

Secondly, concomitantly with these wars, Japanese intellectuals and ideologues began to revive (and re-invent) Tokugawa-era martial values, known as *Bushidō* (The Way of the Warrior) as the spiritual and timeless essence of the Japanese people. This was exactly the opposite of Spencer's theory that militant values, such as loyalty, would gradually decline. One of the most influential spokesmen for the revival of *Bushidō*, Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933), argued, in contrast to Tokutomi's earlier wholesale characterization of the Tokugawa society as "militant," that Spencer's characterization in fact applied only to the samurai class (conceding for example that women in the samurai class were the most restricted), which was a tiny minority, and even then only to a very limited degree. More importantly, he argued that the Tokugawa era and *Bushidō* had fostered in the Japanese the value of loyalty, an "ethical outcome" of the political theory of "the state as anteceding the individual – the latter being born into the former as part and parcel thereof, – he must live and die for it or for the incumbent of its legitimate authority."³²

Thirdly, and most obviously, when capitalism and industry began to take off in Japan, as elsewhere, it did not seem to bring Spencer's promised moral improvement. On the contrary, the public attention was drawn to what came to be known as the "social problem," the slums, prostitution, alcohol abuse, violence, and crime.

Spencerism was not just replaced. Nor did it wither away. The intellectual credibility and appeal of Spencer was also actively demolished by influential intellectuals and academics. Let us look at Nakajima Rikizō (1858–1918), an important academic philosopher at the University of Tokyo, and a teacher of a new generation of important philosophers. Hence his criticism of Spencer, which he passed on to his students, is important and gives some insight into the decline of Spencer in the academy. Nakajima became one of the major

32 Inazo Nitobe, *Bushido* (1905, Tokyo: Charles R. Tuttle, 1969), 88–89.

proponents of the philosophy of Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), himself a critic of Spencer, and whose Hegelian philosophy enjoyed a large popularity in the Japanese philosophical world from the 1890s. Nakajima's philosophical outlook was more religiously oriented than Spencer's (he later became involved with Theosophy), probably one reason for his interest in Green. Nakajima's treatment of Spencer in his 1898 *Short Biographic History of Western Philosophy* is revealing. Here he grouped Spencer in the "second period" of British philosophy (together with Reid, Hamilton, and Hartley), which was followed by a "third period" exemplified by T.H. Green.³³ Hence Nakajima, already in the 1890s, relegated Spencer to a past stage in the evolution of the history of philosophy.

Nakajima was very concerned about moral education in Japan and was personally involved in writing textbooks. Hence he had a stake in the evaluation of Spencer's theory of ethics. In 1909, Nakajima published *Spencer's Theory of Ethics*, one of the few book-length studies on his thought in Japan at the time.³⁴ In this work, probably intended for students and the general public, Nakajima presented a whole range of arguments against Spencer, not only his theory of ethics. We can probably assume that Nakajima had been teaching these criticisms of Spencer at the University of Tokyo, thus contributing to the demise of Spencerism in Japan.

Firstly, echoing a larger rejection of scientism around turn of the century Japan, Nakajima rejected Spencer's deductivist method as unscientific. Nakajima also doubted "that his [Spencer's] evolutionary philosophy, in other words the basis for his theory of ethics, is the complete truth is rather doubtful."³⁵ Moreover, Spencer was too selective in his base of evidence: "He [Spencer] tried to take the life of a certain kind of scholar [his own] and turn that into the standard of all men in the real world. I think that it is for this reason that what Spencer says will not survive in the real world."³⁶ Spencer's laws of ethics, Nakajima argued, were not eternal scientific laws on which basis human behavior could be prescribed.³⁷

Secondly, Nakajima rejected Spencer's model of progress from "militant" to "industrial," and especially the idea of war as an inhibiting factor in the progress of morality. This criticism should be seen in the background of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, both resulting in victories for Japan.

33 Nakajima Rikizō, *Rettai sei'yō tetsugaku shōshi* (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1898).

34 Nakajima Rikizō, *Supensā shi no rinrigaku setsu* (Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 1909).

35 Nakajima, *Supensā shi no rinrigaku setsu*, 175.

36 *Ibid.*, 193.

37 *Ibid.*, 183.

War, Nakajima argued, often spurred the progress of morality, for example the virtues of patriotism, empathy, group cohesiveness, loyalty, all “beautiful virtues nurtured for war,” and “such habits as valuing knowledge are often gained through military education.”³⁸ Nakajima was no militarist, but was sympathetic to a revival of *Bushidō*, and in other writings lamented the decline of the samurai class as the loss of a moral example for the rest of the population. Japan, he argued, was therefore in need for a new “core class” in society that would place honor and service at the highest level, and would therefore be able to unite society.³⁹

Nakajima also rejected Spencer’s idea that a society becomes more moral as it becomes more “industrial.” On the contrary, new rifts will appear within society, and people are not rewarded for what they are worth. “We can see that this kind of harm is already happening in today’s society: war is [indeed] gradually declining, but in the struggle on the dimension of industry, people, according to their qualities, do not gain much reward, and therefore strife occurs. Therefore his theory that as society evolves from militant to industrial, the world will be one in which the principles of justice are sufficiently realized, is very doubtful.”⁴⁰ As society evolves from warlike to industrial, the gap between rich and poor grows, and it is doubtful that this will be a world in which people will receive rewards commensurate with their abilities. Nakajima rejected Herbert Spencer’s vision of society and justice, an extreme of “reaping what one sows” (*jigyōjitoku*) as ultimately immoral.⁴¹

Thirdly, Nakajima rejected Spencer’s theory of justice, conceived as the maximizing of individual freedom as long as it does not infringe upon others’ right to exercise their freedom. One problem, Nakajima argued, was that “People differ in their constitution and abilities due to their education, environment, and heredity [also according to Spencer’s own theory of evolution]. Therefore I think it is impossible to establish justice on the basis of only standardizing freedom.”⁴² Furthermore, Spencer’s idea of justice was “simply a principle of social morality, and exists only between adult individuals, while denying it exists in the family, between parent and child, or between husband and wife. This goes against common sense.”⁴³ The right to marry, property rights, rights of inheritance, rights between parent and child, and between

38 Ibid., 188.

39 Nakajima Rikizō, *Tokuiku to rinri* (Tokyo: Meguro shoten, 1907), 178–179.

40 Nakajima, *Supensā shi no rinrigaku setsu*, 202–203.

41 Ibid., 202.

42 Ibid., 206.

43 Ibid., 196.

husband and wife, could not, Nakajima argued, be explained with Spencer's theory of justice. This criticism reflected a specific late Meiji-era renewed emphasis on conservative family values (as stated in the official vision of the Meiji state as a "family state"). Nakajima, and many other Japanese at the time, asked: why indeed should a theory of ethics and justice take an abstract individual, stripped of its qualities and place in the family, as the ultimate unit and measure of justice?

In conclusion, it is probably safe to say that those aspects of Spencer's thought that gained the most attention at the time of the introduction of Spencer's thought in Japan, especially the model of evolution from militant to industrial, have proven not to have had a lasting appeal in Japan, and came to be widely rejected, accelerating Spencer's demise in Japan. Spencer's agnosticism also did not seem to have a wide following in Japan. In the medium-term, it should be noted that Spencer's thought was an important way for the early liberal movement to find its voice. But other less noticed aspects, such as in biology, his contribution to Japan's envisioning and construction of the categories of "society" "religion" and "science," and evolutionary conceptions of these phenomena (even although Spencer's own theories on these have been forgotten) might have been more lasting. Spencer's ideas on education, through Mori Arinori's efforts, have left the most visible impact on Japanese society. It is probably no coincidence that Spencer's *Education*, first translated and published by the Ministry of Education in 1880, was translated again in 1941 and again in 1955, long after his popularity as a philosopher had waned.

Perhaps the rise and fall of Spencerism worldwide can to some degree be understood as a boom and bust; Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy" was a giant systematic attempt to explain almost everything according to a couple of principles of evolution (such as from homogeneity to heterogeneity, and from militant to industrial) and adaptation. While it is often said that a good theory is simple in its formulation but able to gather many phenomena under its umbrella, unlike Darwin's theory of natural selection, Spencer's philosophy generated some inflated expectations that the theory eventually seemed not to be able to meet, and perhaps unfairly, at the first sign of trouble, phenomena that did not seem to fit the theory, and competition with rival ideas, most investors ran. In Japan's case, after an initially enthusiastic embrace amidst the changes of the 1870s and 1880s, the subsequent successes of the wars against China and Russia, which did not fit the prediction of a social evolution from militant to industrial, concomitant with an influx of new philosophies and a renewed interest in conservative and nationalist ideas, all ensured Spencerism dramatically lost value for Japanese intellectuals.

TABLE 3.1 *Major translations of Herbert Spencer's works into Japanese, 1870–1920 (place of publication is Tokyo, unless otherwise indicated)*

| Years | Original | Title | Publisher | Translator | Comments |
|-------|--|------------------------------------|---|---------------------|--|
| 1877 | <i>Social Statics</i> (1851) | <i>Kenri teikō</i> | Maruya Zenshichi (Maruzen), 2 vols, 162 and 103 pages | Ozaki Yukio | Ozaki Yukio (1858–1954) became one of the leading liberal politicians of Japan |
| 1879 | “Over-Legislation” (1853) | <i>Kanshōron</i> | Yamanaka Ichibei, 114 pages | Suzuki Yoshimune | |
| 1880 | <i>Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical</i> (1861) | <i>Kyōikuron</i> | Monbushō (Japanese Ministry of Education), 479 pages | Seki Shinpachi | Seki Shinpachi (1839–1886) was a scholar of English who had worked for both the Shogunate and the new Meiji government |
| 1878 | “Representative Government” (1857) | <i>Daigi seitai ron</i> | Suzuki Yoshimune, 86 pages | Suzuki Yoshimune | |
| 1881 | <i>Social Statics</i> , Chapter 16: “The Rights of Women” | <i>Joken shinron</i> | Shiseidō, 60 pages | Inoue Tsutomu | |
| 1882 | <i>First Principles</i> (1862) | <i>Tetsugaku genri</i> | Katō Shōshichi | Yamaguchi Matsugorō | |
| 1882 | <i>Social Organism</i> (1860) | <i>Shakai soshiki ron</i> | Matsunaga Yasutarō, 113 pages | Yamaguchi Matsugorō | |
| 1882 | <i>Prison Ethics</i> (1860) | <i>Keihō genri goku soku ronkō</i> | Yamaguchi Matsugorō, 117 pages | Yamaguchi Matsugorō | |
| 1882 | <i>The Morals of Trade</i> (1859) | <i>Shōgyō rigai ron</i> | Katō Shōshichi | Yamaguchi Matsugorō | |
| 1883 | <i>Principles of Ethics</i> , vol. 1, Part I: <i>The Data of Ethics</i> (1879) | <i>Dōtoku no genri</i> | Suhara Tetsuji, 683 pages | Yamaguchi Matsugorō | |

TABLE 3.1 Cont.

| Years | Original | Title | Publisher | Translator | Comments |
|-----------|--|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1883 | <i>Representative Government</i> (1857) | <i>Daigi Seitai ron fuku gi</i> | Ogasawara shobō | Miyazaki Masaaki | |
| 1883 | <i>The Study of Sociology</i> , Chapter 1–10 (1873) | <i>Shakaigaku</i> | Zega shobō, 5 vols, 775 pages | Ōishi Masami | Ōishi Masami (1855–1935) became the secretary of the Liberal Party of Japan and in 1898 Minister of Agriculture and Commerce |
| 1883 | <i>Political Institutions</i> , Part V of <i>Principles of Sociology</i> | <i>Seitai genron</i> | Nishimura Gendō, 118 pages | Ōichi Masami | |
| 1884 | <i>Social Statics</i> (1851) | <i>Shakai heiken ron</i> | Hōkokusha | Matsushima Kō | |
| 1884 | <i>First Principles</i> (1862) | <i>Tetsugaku genri</i> | Katō Shōshichi 3 vols. | Yamaguchi Matsugorō | |
| 1884 | <i>(Chapters 12–14 of First Principles)</i> | <i>Manbutsu shinkaron</i> | Mintokukan | Sugimoto Kiyohisa and Nishimura Gendō | |
| 1884-1885 | <i>(Partial translation of Principles of Sociology, Book V)</i> | <i>Seihō tetsugaku</i> | Ishikawa Hanjirō, 2 vols, vol 1 (390 pages), vol 2 (383 pages) | Hamano Sadashirō and Watanabe Osamu | Foreword by Fukuzawa Yukichi |
| 1885 | <i>Principles of Sociology</i> (1874–1875) | <i>Shakaigaku no genri</i> | Keizai zasshi sha | Noritake Kōtarō | Under supervision of Toyama Shōichi |
| 1886 | <i>Principles of Sociology, vol. III, Part VI, Chapter 16: "Religion: A Retrospect and Prospect"</i> | <i>Shūkyō shinka ron</i> | Matsuda Shūhei, 69 pages | Takahashi Tatsurō | Foreword by Itagaki Keisuke, leader of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement |

| Years | Original | Title | Publisher | Translator | Comments |
|-------|------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1886 | <i>Education</i> | <i>Kyōikuron</i> | Makino Zenbei, 2 vols., 571 pages | Ariga Nagao | |
| 1888 | <i>Representative government</i> | <i>Daigi seitai tokushitsu ron</i> | Fuzanbō, 177 pages | Hiramatsu Kumatarō and Takada Sanae | |
| 1894 | <i>Individual Versus the State</i> | <i>Kojin tai kokka ron</i> | Hakubunkan, 161 pages | Nagai Kumaji | |
| 1892 | <i>Principles of Ethics</i> | <i>Su shi rinri gen ron</i> | Tsūshin kōgakkai, 564 pages | Tanaka Tōsaku | |
| 1892 | | <i>Riseiron: ichimei kanpi minson ron</i> | Kobe: Shibamoto Seiji, 121 pages | Zenda Chō | |
| 1893 | <i>Over-legislation</i> | <i>Kanshō ron</i> | Bunkōdō, 115 pages | Koshikawa Gennosuke | |
| 1898 | <i>First Principles</i> | <i>Sōgō tetsugaku genri</i> | Keizai zasshi sha, 833 pages | Fujii Uhei | |
| 1923 | <i>First Principles</i> | <i>Dai ichi genri</i> | Keizai zasshi sha, 826 pages | Sawada Ken | |
| 1941 | <i>Education</i> | <i>Kyōikuron</i> | Mikasa Shobō | Ishibashi Kinusuke | |
| 1955 | <i>Education</i> | <i>Kyōikuron</i> | Tamagawa daigaku shuppan bu, 268 pages | Okamoto Ninzaburō | |