

タイトル	Fukuzawa Yukichi s idea of ‘ liberty ’
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引用	北海学園大学法学研究, 58(2): 69-69
発行日	2022-09-30

Fukuzawa Yukichi's idea of 'liberty'

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Fukuzawa Yukichi is thought to have tried to make Japan modern as western countries in Meiji era. He learned a lot from western books and translated them. So it is said that his ideas were very much influenced by western thought.

This article examines what exactly he learned from western books, comparing his translations of the idea of 'liberty' with the original books.

Fukuzawa wrote the theoretical book on society, 'An Outline of a Theory of Civilization' after encountering the western idea of the history of civilization. He used the idea as the framework to show the progress of human beings and society. He thought human beings developed 'intellect and moral' until they could control their behavior perfectly and become independent. He explained the process using Confucian ideas which he had learned in his youth. So his idea on society was constructed by the combination of western thought and Confucian ideas.

Fukuzawa imagined the perfect condition of civilization at the end of developing process. He thought human beings become perfect and control themselves in that situation. So they can be perfectly independent and have complete liberty in the end.

But he mentioned that we had not developed enough and it would take thousands of years to reach the situation.

