

Debating Japanese Patriotism in the Global Context: Alfred Ligneul and the Controversy on *The Clash between Education and Religion*

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In November 1892, an interview of Inoue Tetsujirō, the first professor of philosophy at the Imperial University of Tokyo, was published in *Kyōiku jiron*, a journal on education.¹ The journal asked for his views on the relationship between education and religion, Christianity in particular. In essence he made a general point that Christian faith and the spirit underpinning the Imperial Rescript on Education were potentially in conflict with each other.

Inoue's remarks triggered immediate responses from Christians. Leading Protestant thinkers of the time including Yokoi Tokio and Uemura Masahisa among many others published their views in defence of Christianity. In reply, Inoue published a booklet entitled *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu* (*The Clash between Education and Religion*) in April 1893.² In that book, Inoue referred to a number of recent incidents involving Christians. One such incident occurred almost two years earlier: Uchimura Kanzō's *lèse majesté* Incident. On 9 January 1891, Uchimura, who was then a teacher at the First High School in Tokyo, allegedly failed to bow properly at the ceremony of the reading of the Imperial Rescript of Education. This caught the attention of some nationalist students and teachers, who condemned Uchimura instantly. Consequently, he was forced to resign from the school. Inoue argued that the *lèse majesté* incident was the tip of the iceberg; many Christians, he claimed, behaved in disrespectful ways to the Japanese emperor. The debate simmered intensely and generated, according to one count, 21 books and 220 articles³ and, according to another, 76 books and 493 articles.⁴ The articles first appeared in journals on education (*Kyōiku jiron*), Christianity (*Rikugō zasshi*), academic research (*Tōyō gakugei zasshi*) and current affairs (*Kokumin no tomo*, *Nippon hyōron*). Journals for women (*Jogaku zasshi*) and a Buddhist publication (*Bukkyō*) among others later published commentaries on the controversy, and were followed by reports in newspapers.⁵

While this debate is certainly one of the best known controversies in Meiji Japan, perhaps less known is that contributors to the debate were not limited to Japanese authors. One non-Japanese author is Alfred Ligneul (1847–1922), a French Catholic missionary. Ligneul arrived in Japan as a member of the Paris Foreign Mission Society in 1880. Before moving to Hong Kong towards the end of his life, he lived in Japan for thirty years. He published over fifty books in Japanese, typically with

¹ Seki Kōsaku, ed., *Inoue hakase to kirisuto kyōto*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Tetsugaku Shoin, 1893), 1: 1–9.

² Inoue Tetsujirō, *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu*, in Seki, *Inoue hakase to kirisuto kyōto*, 1: 48–115. This article first appeared in a journal *Tensoku* and reprinted in many others. A slightly extended version was subsequently published as a book under the same title by Keigyōsha in April 1893. The book's text is reproduced in *Kindai Nippon Kirisutokyō meicho senshū dai IV ki: kirisutokyō to shakai kokka hen*, ed. Suzuki Norihisa, vol. 25 (Tokyo: Nippon Toshō Center, 2004), pp. 1–183. The following citations are from the Seki edition.

³ John F. Howes, *Japan's Modern Prophet: Uchimura Kanzō, 1861–1930* (Vancouver: UBC press, 2005), p. 80.

⁴ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 133.

⁵ A number of these articles are collected in Seki's anthology with his editorial remarks that are heavily partial to Inoue.

the aid of his collaborator Maeda Chōta, on a wide range of topics from theology to current affairs.⁶

Ligneul's work, written in response to the debate on Inoue's *The Clash between Education and Religion*, is entitled *Shūkyō to kokka* (Religion and the State). It was published at the final stage of the debate in September 1893.⁷ It was clearly intended as the first of two or more volumes; however, the first volume was banned from circulation immediately, so no subsequent volumes appeared. Ligneul's *Religion and the State* was intended as a point-by-point rebuttal of Inoue's *The Clash between Education and Religion*. Had the work been completed and published, it would have constituted a comprehensive critique of Inoue's argument. After the debate was over in late 1893, however, Ligneul returned to the issues discussed in the controversy especially in the book *Aikoku no shinri* (The Truth of Patriotism) published in 1896.⁸

As a number of commentators have already pointed out, a key issue of the debate on Inoue's *Clash between Education and Religion* was whether Christian faith could be in conflict with the spirit underpinning the Imperial Rescript on Education. Thus much of the Japanese Christian effort was devoted to the demonstration of compatibility between Christian faith and the spirit underlying the Imperial Rescript on Education. Much ink had been spilt in the decade prior to the proclamation of the Imperial Rescript on the potential danger of Christianity to the Japanese state and society. Inoue reframed the threat of Christianity as a potential risk to the new fundamental norm of morality and education, as defined by the Imperial Rescript on Education. He thereby put in a sharp relief that the ongoing debate on Christianity's potential danger to the Japanese state was about the alleged conflict between two canonical texts. An overwhelming majority of contemporary Christian responses addressed this point. The proclamation of the Imperial Rescript on Education thus constituted a very important context of the debate. I shall not elaborate on this further, suffice to note that existing scholarship has typically underscored this aspect of the controversy.

While the potential conflict between Christian faith and the spirit underpinning the Imperial Rescript on Education was a key issue, the controversy over Inoue's *Clash between Education and Religion* was far more complicated and multifaceted than that. The purpose of this paper is to highlight some hitherto underappreciated aspects of Inoue's claims and their intellectual context in view of Ligneul's critique. I single out two aspects that have not been fully appreciated in previous scholarship. One is that the controversy was also about Japanese patriotism, and the other is that controversy's intellectual context was not entirely Japanese. These two points become clear when we view the controversy from the standpoint of Alfred Ligneul. Indeed, Ligneul was aware that the conflict between Christianity and the Imperial Rescript on Education was a key issue; however, he also identified patriotism as another important issue. That explains why he wrote *The Truth of Patriotism* when he revisited some of the issues he discussed in *Religion and the State*. As for the intellectual context of the controversy, the plain fact that Ligneul was French, not Japanese, helps us appreciate his distinctive viewpoint: Ligneul criticised the 'materialism' he perceived to be the basis of Inoue's standpoint. The reference to 'materialism' is quite unusual in view of responses from other—

⁶ For a concise but wide-ranging survey of Ligneul's work and his influence, see Yamanashi Jun, "Kindai nippon ni okeru Rigyōru (Ligneul) shinpu no shuppan katsudō to sono hankyō," *Katorikku kenkyū* 79 (2010): 39–73.

⁷ Rigiyōru [Alfred Ligneul], *Shūkyō to kokka* (Tokyo: Fukyūsha, 1893).

⁸ Rigiyōru [Alfred Ligneul], *Aikoku no shinri* (Tokyo: Bunkaidō, 1896).

predominantly Japanese—Christian commentators. I shall expand these two points in turn.

First, in response to Inoue's claim that Christianity undermines patriotism, Ligneul insisted that, on the contrary, Christianity reinforces patriotism. This outright rejection of Inoue's claim has not been viewed favourably by historians. Ikumatsu Keizō, for instance, noted rather critically that a majority of Christian responses including Ligneul's was 'merely apologetic about Christianity that is not non-nationalist but strengthens loyalty and filial piety as well as patriotism'.⁹ Ikumatsu compared and contrasted the majority views with the 'magnificent' writings by Uemura Masahisa and Kashiwagi Gien, the two Protestant leaders who criticised the type of patriotism that Inoue was promoting. Uemura and Kashiwagi's responses were undoubtedly polemically skilful, as the two Protestant thinkers shifted the focus of debate to the question of the types of patriotism. But I do not think that Ikumatsu's negative appraisal of the majority's responses especially that of Ligneul's pays due attention to Inoue's polemical stance, to which Ligneul and others were responding.

Inoue's claim of incompatibility between Christianity and patriotism derived largely from European sources, in part from a recent historical work by W. E. H. Lecky (1838–1903). Lecky was a prominent Irish historian, political theorist and later politician. Today he is best remembered for his historical scholarship including a gigantic *History of England during the Eighteenth Century*.¹⁰ In the *History of European Morals*, Lecky insisted that patriotism was 'a moral duty . . . habitually discouraged'¹¹ by the Christian Church. According to Lecky 'patriotism itself, as a duty, has never found any place in Christian ethics, and strong theological feeling has usually been directly hostile to its growth'.¹² Lecky noted three reasons might be assigned to the 'repugnance' between Christianity and patriotism:

The first is that tendency of strong religious feeling to divert the mind from all terrestrial cares and passions, of which the ascetic life was the extreme expression, but which has always, under different forms, been manifested in the Church. The second arises from the fact that each form of theological opinion embodies itself in a visible and organized church, with a government, interest, and policy of its own, and a frontier often intersecting rather than following national boundaries; and these churches attract to themselves the attachment and devotion that would naturally be bestowed upon the country and its rulers. The third reason is, that the saintly and the heroic characters, which represent the ideals of religion and of patriotism, are generically different for although they have no doubt many common elements of virtue, the distinctive excellence of each is derives from a proportion or disposition of qualities altogether different from that of the other.¹³

Christian fathers such as Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine, Lecky maintained, did not develop

⁹ Ikumatsu Keizō, "Kyōiku to shukyō no shōtotsu ronsō," in *Kindai Nippon shisō ronsō*, eds. T. Miyagawa, Y. Nakamura and H. Furuta (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1963), pp. 234–61.

¹⁰ For his life and thought, see Donal McCarthy, *W. E. H. Lecky: Historian and Politician, 1838–1903* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1994).

¹¹ W. E. H. Lecky, *The History of European Morals*, 2 vols, seventh revised edition (New York: D. Appleton, 1921), 2: 144.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2: 145.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2: 145–46.

any significant idea about the this-worldly state; they were instead preoccupied with an imaginary kingdom in the next world. The passage on the Church Fathers' indifference to this worldly state was precisely what Inoue cited.¹⁴ Lecky was only one of many European intellectual authorities Inoue relied on, but Lecky's view was particularly useful for Inoue as it made a historical claim that Christianity undermined patriotism.

Inoue's recourse to Lecky's historical claim about the relationship between Christianity and patriotism explains why Ligneul persistently made the point that Christianity solidified and enhanced patriotism. Ligneul was not a historian, so he countered Inoue's historical claim by another historian's view: François-René Chateaubriand (1768–1848). Drawing on Chateaubriand's account, Ligneul painted a portrait of the French army officer Louis-Gaston de Sonis as a Christian patriot who fought the Battle of Loigny in the French-Prussian War.¹⁵ Ligneul's notion of patriotism was best exemplified by the manifestation of a martial spirit of self-sacrifice in a military context.¹⁶ His point was to show a recent French example of the marriage of Christian faith and patriotism *in action*, thereby highlighting the mere words of self-claimed patriots such as Inoue constituted a less authentic and perhaps flawed patriotism.

Patriotism was thus a crucial issue in the controversy as Ligneul observed it; however, the relationship between Christianity and patriotism was, for him, only part of a larger question about the relationship between Christianity and morality. At the conclusion of his discussion of Louis-Gaston de Sonis, Ligneul wrote: 'If Japan faces no choice but to enter a war on another country in the future, what enables Japan to produce loyal and brave soldiers, who fight for their own country, is never materialism that Dr Inoue preaches'.¹⁷ Ligneul sparingly criticized 'materialism' in his *Religion and the State* as he observed it was the basis of Inoue's philosophical stance. He did not expand on what he meant by 'materialism' in *Religion and the State*; it is suffice to say that according to Ligneul, materialism rejected the existence of the soul and enshrines the material wellbeing of individuals. What follows from this is, for him, 'not to sacrifice oneself for the country but to sacrifice the country for oneself'.¹⁸ Thus, the proliferation of materialism meant the decline of patriotism.

As far as I can determine, no other Christian critics attacked Inoue's 'materialism' to the same extent as Ligneul. In order to understand this, we need to turn again to Inoue's polemics. While it has been noted that Inoue did not oppose Christian ethics altogether (as he recognized the utility of Christianity for private virtues),¹⁹ Inoue's attack may also be understood as an attempt to sever the link between morality and Christianity. He underlined the fact that Christianity was no longer widely practiced by leading intellectuals in Europe and America.²⁰ This observation was a fruit of his six-year study in Germany.

In order to argue for the passing of Christianity in the Euro-American world, Inoue drew on a wide range of remarks from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Arthur Schopenhauer, Ernest Renan and Herbert

¹⁴ Inoue, *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu*, p. 74.

¹⁵ Rigiyōru [Ligneul], *Shūkyō to kokka*, pp. 122–44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 103–104.

¹⁹ Maekawa Michiko, *Kindai Nippon no shūkyōron to kokka* (University of Tokyo Press, 2015), pp. 34–35.

²⁰ Inoue, *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu*, pp. 72–91.

Spencer. However, one should not overlook that Inoue relied no less heavily on a number of less known thinkers of his own time. Among the most frequently cited was Georg von Gizycki (1851–1895), a philosopher at the University of Berlin.²¹ He was one of the leaders of the Ethical Culture movement in Germany; indeed, he contributed to the formation of the German Society for Ethical Culture (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur*)²² in October 1892. The Ethical Culture movement was initiated and led by Felix Adler. Its objective was to work towards the independence of ethics from any religious—Christian in particular—foundations, and the movement expanded internationally before World War I. In the Anglophone world, Stanton Coit (1857–1944) and William Mackintire Salter (1853–1931) led the Ethical Culture movements in Britain and the United States respectively.²³ Among the founders of the German Society for Ethical Culture was Ludwig Büchner (1824–1899), who, in 1881, had founded the German Freethinkers League (*Deutscher Freidenkerbund*), the first German organization dedicated to promoting a scientific ethics.²⁴ The participants of the Ethical Culture and the Freethought movements subsequently joined the zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919)’s monist movement, the organizational base of which was the German Monists League (*Deutschen Monistenbund*), founded in 1906.²⁵ And importantly, those Freethinkers and the members of the Ethical Culture and Monist associations operated mutually interconnected movements. It is acknowledged that they largely shared materialism as their fundamental philosophical principle.²⁶

Incidentally, Lecky, whom I mentioned earlier, may not be categorized often as one of those who were committed to the Ethical Culture movement; however, given his anti-Christian ideological stance, Inoue’s reliance on Lecky is consistent with his appeal to the intellectual authority of the Ethical Culture movement. J. M. Robertson viewed Lecky as part of the Freethought movement in the nineteenth century.²⁷ Just as the intellectuals of the Ethical Culture Movement attempted to disengage morality from religion (Christianity in particular), so Lecky’s historical narrative severed patriotism from Christianity.

Strikingly, Inoue’s observation about the decline of Christianity among Euro-American intellectuals drew repeatedly on von Gizycki, Büchner, Coit, Salter, and Haeckel among others. This is indicative of Inoue’s affinity with their intellectual movements. Inoue made his polemics personal when he

²¹ On Georg von Gizycki, see for instance Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World Without War: The Peace Movement and German Society, 1892–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1975), pp. 124, 126; Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 78; Tracie Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject: Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Todd Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 243.

²² On the German Society for Ethical Culture, see Tracie Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject: Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

²³ On the Ethical Culture movement in Britain, see G. Spiller, *The Ethical Movement in Great Britain: A Documentary History* (London: Farleigh Press, 1934).

²⁴ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World Without War*, p. 124.

²⁵ Satō Keiko, *Hekkeru to shinka no yume* [Haeckel and the Dream of Evolution] (Tokyo: Kōsakusha, 2015), pp. 245–64.

²⁶ Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, p. 19.

²⁷ J. M. Robertson, *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001 [originally published by London: Watts & Co. in 1929]), 1: 263–65.

noted: 'Mr Gizycki is Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Berlin and is also one of my dear friends'.²⁸ Inoue's personal connection with von Gizycki is symptomatic of Inoue's sympathy with the Ethical Culture movement, although Inoue was not committed to it. Inoue's affinity to the Ethical Culture movement was confined to the anti-Christian aspect of it; indeed, on the issue of German nationalism, for example, Haeckel embraced nationalistic sentiments while the founders of the German Society for Ethical Culture were critical of the 'excesses of patriotism [and] nationalism'.²⁹ Inoue's well-known nationalistic tendencies were obviously not indebted to the German Ethical Culture movement. Despite the diversity of viewpoints among the Ethical Movement, Freethought, and Monist movements, however, it is important to note that they were largely united on the philosophical basis of materialism.

Against this backdrop, it becomes easy to see that Inoue was introducing a perspective shared by the members of Ethical Culture, Freethought and Monists societies in contemporary Europe and America: that is, the separation of ethics from religion, Christianity in particular. Inoue thereby highlighted another problem around Christianity: not only the religion's harmfulness to the Japanese state, which had been noted by a number of commentators for some time, but now its 'superstitious' and 'irrational' nature, which makes the religion out of date in view of the course of human progress. This polemical strategy undermined the standing of Christianity in the Euro-American civilization that the Meiji Japanese society was assimilating. Inoue introduced a new perspective: Christianity is no longer an indispensable foundation of the Euro-American moral thought and, at the same time, he also promoted a range of what Ligneul regarded as 'materialist' ideas, although his anchoring in materialism was by no means explicit.

Inoue's recourse to the views represented by leaders of the Ethical Culture movement and the Freethought movement was, however, rarely acknowledged, let alone reinforced, by contemporary Japanese commentators who were sympathetic to his view, perhaps the only exception being Okazaki Tōmitsu (1869–1913), who would later study for a doctorate in philosophy and economics in Leipzig and, after return to Japan, enjoyed a successful career as an entrepreneur. In August 1893—at a late stage of the *Clash* controversy—Okazaki published a book *Yasokyō no kiki* (The Crisis of Christianity); in it, Okazaki outlines the general decline of Christianity in European intellectual history before noting that 'in the nineteenth century the so-called anti-Christian view conquered the European continent'.³⁰ After observing that the attack on Christianity by Ernst Haeckel, John Tyndall (1820–93) and Robert Ingersoll (1833–1899) was even more bitter than Inoue's, Okazaki asserted that his own rejection of Christianity derived from this legacy of European predecessors, not merely reiterating the traditional anti-Christian views of Tokugawa Japanese thinkers such as Arai Hakuseki and Yasui Sokken. Thus Okazaki was quite conscious of his intellectual indebtedness to anti-Christian movements in the contemporary Euro-American world.

While Japanese Christians reacted fiercely to Inoue's claim about the opposition between Christianity and the principles found in the Imperial Rescript on Education, they responded less forcefully to his remarks about the declining influence of Christianity among Euro-American

²⁸ Inoue, *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu*, p. 87.

²⁹ Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, pp. 46–47.

³⁰ Okazaki Tōmitsu, *Yasokyō no kiki* (Tokyo: Tetsugaku Shokan, 1893), p. 19.

intellectuals. Uchimura Kanzō warned Inoue for ‘introducing to our country something far more harmful than Christianity: Atheism and Agnosticism’.³¹ However, Uchimura noted that Inoue relied on Herbert Spencer without mentioning other authors Inoue referred to more often, such as von Gizycki, Lecky and Renan. The theologian of the Orthodox Church, Ishikawa Kisaburō (1864–1932), made a Humean point that it is groundless to infer from the fact that some Euro-American philosophers do not subscribe to Christian faith that one ought not to believe in Christianity.³² Apart from these rather brief remarks, there was hardly any critical response from Japanese Christians on Inoue’s attempt to downplay the importance of Christianity in the European culture of his day. Neither Uemura nor Kashiwagi made any remarks on this point.

Those who problematized Inoue’s attempt to sever morality from Christianity were, as far as I can determine, Ligneul and Takahashi Gorō (1856–1935) alone. The Christian intellectual Takahashi turned out to be a notorious polemicist in the second half of the series of debates because of his use of aggressive language. In an essay entitled ‘A remorseful philosopher’,³³ Takahashi repeatedly criticized, for instance, Inoue’s partiality to Ernest Renan’s *Life of Jesus* (1863) as he claims that Renan is less reliable than contemporary theologians who wrote on the life of Jesus Christ such as Karl Theodore Keim, Johannes Weiss, Augustus Neander, and Heinrich Ewald among many others.³⁴ Likewise, Takahashi claims that Inoue misunderstood William Lecky’s discussion of Christianity as the main cause of the fall of the Roman Empire.³⁵ Takahashi deployed his erudition solely for the purpose of undermining Inoue’s scholarly credibility.

Ligneul’s attack on Inoue forms a sharp contrast with Takahashi’s. Instead of merely discrediting Inoue’s scholarship, Ligneul identified the ‘materialistic’ standpoint, which was inspired by the Ethical Culture movement during his studies in Europe. Ligneul was thus cognizant of the European intellectual context in which Inoue operated. However, this is not to suggest that he was well versed in the literature of free thinkers that Inoue relied on. Indeed, Ligneul did not comment on any of the German thinkers of the Ethical Culture and other movements who inspired Inoue. Nonetheless, Ligneul’s critical references to Inoue’s ‘materialism’ clearly suggests his sensibilities of the ‘materialist’ orientation of various authors in the Ethical Culture, Freethought and Monist movements, which Inoue had recourse to as intellectual authorities.

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Prompted by Ligneul’s extensive discussion of patriotism and his repeated criticisms of materialism, the present paper has argued that the controversy over Inoue’s *Clash between Education and Religion* entailed two important aspects: one is that it was also a series of debates on patriotism or, more specifically, whether or not Christianity undermines patriotism in the Japanese context. The other is that the controversy was, in an important aspect, a ramification of the new Euro-American

³¹ Uchimura Kanzō, “Bungaku hakase Inoue Tetsujirō kun ni teisuru Kōkaijyō,” *Uchimura Kanzō Zenshū*, 40 vols. (Tokyo Iwanami Shoten, 1980–84), 2: 131.

³² Ishikawa Kisaburō, “Inoue Tetsujirō shi no kyōiku to shūkyō no rhōtotsu ron wo yomu,” in Seki, *Inoue hakase to Kirisuto kyōto*, p. 238.

³³ Takahashi Gorō, “Kaigo no tetsugakusha,” in *Hai gi-tetugaku ron* (Tokyo: Minyūsha, 1893), pp. 15–110.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 100–106.

intellectual trend. The rise of the Ethical Culture movement in particular exerted a significant influence on Inoue, who studied in Germany; Inoue thus introduced the anti-Christian perspective of the movement to bolster his criticism of Christianity. Thus Ligneul's works serve as a mirror that reflects intellectual contexts of which contemporary Japanese Christians were not necessarily aware.

The recovery of the two contexts also entails an irony. Obviously Inoue desired to show the potential danger of Christianity to what he viewed as patriotic education. His argument was framed as a defence of the Japanese moral tradition of loyalty and filial piety that the Imperial Rescript on Education affirmed. But his defence of the Japanese moral tradition from the alleged Christian threat required a non-Japanese justification: one of the reasons why Japanese public education and morality should exclude Christianity was that, as Inoue observed, the European intellectuals of his day no longer subscribed to Christian faith. What does the fact—or the *alleged* fact—of the European loss of Christian faith have anything to do with a Japanese philosopher's vindication of the Japanese moral tradition? Clearly Inoue attempted to model Japan on what he observed to be the European reality. Inoue's nationalistic defence of the distinctively Japanese moral tradition was paradoxically what one might today describe as a 'Eurocentric' project.