

京都大学大学院文学研究科  
アジア親密圏/公共圏教育研究センター  
第6回公開セミナー

# The Meaning of 脱亜/Datsu-A

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On 15 March 1885 a small editorial was published in the journal Jiji shinpō (時事新報) titled Datsu-A ron (脱亜論, Argument for leaving Asia). It did not have a specific author, except the editors as a collective (我輩, wagahai; “we”), so we do not know who wrote it. At the time of its publication it did not matter, because the editorial aroused hardly any attention then. 48 years after its publication it became attached to the name of Fukuzawa Yukichi, when it was included in the 1933 edition of his Collective Writings, military hostilities against China having created a political demand for legitimizing the war, and Fukuzawa of course was an important national symbol. It is only after World War II, perhaps even as late as the 1960s, 80 years after its publication, when the small editorial rose to the position of one of the most important single texts in Japanese literary history, and the decisive text leading to Japanese military imperialism and the invasion of Asia. Yet, the small editorial never advocated any military action against China or any other country. This is a curious history.

The argument of the presentation goes like this:

1. Perhaps the editorial should not be read in the customary way against the background of WW II, but as an intervention in its contemporary language game (Sprachspiel) in the 1880s, and to look at the rules of that game in the Wittgensteinian and Skinnerian sense.
2. The editorial should be interpreted as a cosmological argument rather than as a foreign political one.
3. Other contemporary cosmological concepts, especially that of 東洋 Tōyō, should be taken into consideration when interpreting what 脱亜 meant and what it DID NOT mean.
4. We should also look at the rules of the language game of the 1960s to understand why a much later generation suddenly placed so much importance on an 80-year-old editorial.

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京都大学文学部新館5F 社会学共同研究室(L521)

(参加無料・当日参加歓迎)



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