

Yasuma Takata on Race and Power Part I: On Takata's Power Theory  
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## Introduction

Why do we have an aspiration for a development of the group that we belong? From where to where will our interest for this aspiration be directed? Yasuma Takata (1883-1972), one of the great economic sociologists in 20<sup>th</sup> century in Japan, gives us theoretical insights on this issue.

Takata has constructed his original theory of socio-economics until 1920s, and articulated its normative implications, i.e., its implications for Asian racism or ethnic austerity, especially during the World War II. When the war was over, he was 62 years old and was the chief director of the Research Institute of Ethnicity. At the beginning of his academic career, he was a radical individualist stimulated by G. Gimmel's sociology and he thought that the individualization – decline of the public and prosperity of private sphere – is not only a historical tendency but a normative ideal of modern society. The whole society in the world will be governed by ethnically hybrid citizens under a world government which respects each individual as a person regardless of its ethnical background. Having this perspective, however, he paradoxically regarded a construction of public sphere in the name of “extended-racism” as its means. He regarded that Japan or other strong nations should take the role of the construction through exercising its political means.

In reality, the “world society,” which enables an ideal individualization, would be come out through active hybridization of bloods in several empires, and there must be political struggles in which distinct ethnic groups have enough power to surrender other ethnic groups and to develop their nations to empires (“total society”). Without this political interest and power, the idea of “world society” or “world citizen” would not be realized. We just lose our hegemonic status and are governed by other ethnic groups. When the things go like this, we as an ethnic group need to exercise our leadership for the construction of a world society by making an “extended-ethnic group” through hybridization of bloods in place of showing our power as a “pure ethnic group” in the world. In other words, we need to become a leader of hybridization of ethnicity for the sake of making the world society. For Takata, the true individualist must have such an interest of “power” and be driven by the idea of hegemony which involves people into the relation of mastery and obedience. He had a realistic view on the process of civilization and took the position of “power-ism,” which saw individuals as the being that satisfies

its interest of power. He described the process how such an individual with an interest of power can establish a modern ideal of individualization.

In this paper, I shall examine Takata's theoretical contribution and draw some implications. One of the difficulties of this examination is related to his approval for Sino-Japan war. I shall first analyze his logic of power theory and his theoretical perspective. Second, I shall argue his perspective of ethnicity or racism with his justification on the war. Last, I shall investigate the relation between his theory and political discourse with an interest of its fruitful modification.

## 1. On Takata's Power Theory

In this section, we first reconstruct Takata's concept of power in the light of new frameworks: one is Nietzsche's framework of "ressentiment"/"will to power" distinction, and the other is what I would like to propose: "egoism"/"power-ism" distinction. Second, I shall examine Takata's contribution in economics with reference to these frameworks and draw some theoretical implications which have not been pointed out before.

### 1-a. Theoretical significance of Takata's conception on "power"

In his magnum opus, *A Theory of Power*, Yasuma Takata defines the concept of power as follows: "Power (seiryoku, Macht, pouvoir)" is a chance to be able to be subordinated. "To be subordinated" means that the man with the power can satisfy his or her sense of superiority or his or her claim to the power (Nietzsche's will to power). "Chance" here does not mean objective possibilities but means a practical ability which depends on the subject's will and effort and related to its satisfaction (*A Theory of Power*, p.4).

It can be pointed out that there are three characteristics in this definition. First, those chances are not called as "power" when a person can satisfy his or her desire or sense of superiority without making others to be subordinated. Satisfied desire or sense of superiority without forcing anybody is powerless. For example, when someone can satisfy his or her desire or sense of superiority with an experience of seeing a sunset, that satisfaction cannot be related to the phenomenon of power. (Let us call those desires or senses of superiority as "desire of existence.") Second, those chances are not called as "power" when a person exercises his or her ability to take care of, to stimulate, to fascinate, or to awake others. Although those chances constitute a great part of social relations with others, it has nothing to do with the phenomena of power because those exercises do not subordinate others. Third, those chances would not be called as "power" when a person has an ability to make others to be subordinated without any exercise of

his or her will and effort. A person might be enough fascinating to be subordinated by others. However, such fascination without will and effort would not be called as power.

These three characteristics would make clear that Takata's conception of power is a "hard power" through which a person can force others by his will and effort. Takata conceived humans as being driven by this kind of power, and did not conceive humans as economic man who can follow its rational interest. He describes as follows:

...as well as in any kinds of human relations, it [continuous and customary power relation] must not occur merely based on a rational reason. A rational reason is just useful to strengthen the power relation after its formation for itself, or is able to constitute the same relation in its derivative meaning. In this sense, what matters all the time is a tendency to form a certain relation for itself. (*A Theory of Power*, p.22)

We, as humans, make power relations not based on rational reason but led by irrational driving force. Takata called this driving force as "desire of power (claim to superiority)" and he conceived that this desire would be constituted mainly with "instinct of self-uplift" or "instinct of self-sense." The desire of power is not necessarily connected with a claim to "social power." In order to be connected with social power (i.e. a claim to reign and control) it needs to bear fruit as a synthetic form with "desire of vanity and desire of possessing power" (*A Theory of Power*, p.25). According to Takata, the desire of power cannot merely be a desire to control others. To control others is an incomplete form of the desire of power. What is aspired through the desire of power is to reign (to have sovereignty), and to get "more qualified life." In order for that, we need to go beyond the stage of controlling others (*A Theory of Power*, pp.26-27).

In sum, Takata's concept of "power" would be described as follows: its origin is "desire of power." Its immediate aim is "desire of vanity and desire of possessing power" and to control others. However, its ideal is to reign and to get more qualified life. Thus, Takata's concept of "power" has three dimensions: origin, immediate aim and normative ideal. We may not share his normative ideal of the power. A person might put a priority to his or her "desire of existence" rather than desire of power. A person might have an immediate interest of cooperation with others rather than of forcing others. A person might not have a will to power. Even if a person had a will to power, he or she might not make any effort to exercise it. A person might only have a will to have a life and might not have any interest to a desire of vanity or a desire of possessing power. A person might not have any interest to an ideal superiority beyond his or her immediate concern

to control others. Those possibilities would show that Takata's concept of power is a specific way of utilizing power toward an ideal society from its origin of desire.

Nonetheless, Takata's concept of "power" is theoretically illuminating because it shows us a conceptual understanding of the logical process of nation-state. The modern society which Takata observed was a dynamic process where nation-states were born and developed toward empires or a world society. Takata's concept of "power" has much insight on the historical development of nation-state.

In order to withdraw its implications, here I would like to focus on the understanding of humans behind his concept of power in the light of Nietzsche's insights on power. Although Takata did not make it clear, his understanding of humans would be described as follows: humans do not necessarily follow his or her principle of pleasure or instinct. Humans find their own satisfaction in extending their "power" driven by the emotion of Nietzsche's resentment. Nietzsche's insight was to make a conceptual contrast between a man with resentment and a man with a will to power without any resentment: the former is regarded as vulgar and the latter is regarded as noble. Nietzsche praised "will to power" in order for having a supreme life beyond the logic of State (bureaucracy) where the resentment is an important constituent. However, in reality, many people would have a will to power driven by the emotion of resentment. Especially for those who would take responsibilities of nation-state on themselves, their interest of power would remain in the stage of resentment. I would say that what Takata conceived as an "interest of power" is a product of the connection between Nietzsche's "resentment" and "will to power."

From this understanding of humans, we can also point out that there are several findings in Takata's concept of "power." Let us make another conceptual distinction between "egoism" and "power-ism." Egoism is a doctrine which put a priority to the interest of ego, whereas power-ism is a doctrine which put a priority to the interest of power. Insofar as Takata's "interest of power" is based on the desire of power, it is an expression of "an interest of ego." However, it can go beyond the interest of ego in the following way.

"Ego" can be seen as a dynamic force which drives individuals beyond his or her personal interest (controlled preferences of the subject). Ego can drive us to have a group interest and can be a "group ego." Ego would be individualistic when a person desires "to preserve itself," "to maximize self-pleasure," or "to realize self-sense of omnipotence." Ego can also express its egoistic tendencies toward collective directions: "to preserve the group," "to maximize the group-interest," or "to expect the group development." Ego can be directed to "group egoism."

What is important in Takata's theory of power, as we examine below, is the understanding that the group egoism is a chance to overcome egoism *per se*. An interest to a group power is not equal to a desire to reign. It can be sought even when a person cannot access to any chance to reign. A person can dedicate his or herself to the group interests without any egoistic concern in its ordinary sense. Let us call its attitude as "power-ism." Power-ism is a form of group-egoism but has lost its egoistic moment in individuals. Power-ism is another appearance of ego, which is contrasted both with individual and group egoism with a moment of egoistic concern. From this conceptual analysis, we can say that Takata's concept of "power" has two moments: egoism and power-ism. Those two moments constitutes the nature of the interest of power.

In the light of these two moments, we discover that there is a moment to overcome egoism in pursuing the interest of power in Takata's concept of "power". In a centralized system of power, the claim of egoism and of power-ism can be overlapped in its central part because a person can extend his or her individual interest to the group interest linearly based on the sovereign social status. However, those two claims might not be compatible in its peripheral area because a person with a peripheral status needs to restrain his or her egoistic concern and to be subordinated to the requirement of its authority. They need to take power-ism in place of egoism. For those in peripheral area, the idea of "power-ism" might become a virtue to overcome their individual egoism.

On the other hand, in a decentralized system of power, no one might extend linearly its individual interest to the group interest because no one has such a central status. In that case, every person needs to restrain its egoistic concern for the sake of satisfying its interest to power. Intermediate organizations would be the devices for which individuals can overcome their egoistic concern for the sake of its group prosperity. In an international society, each nation-state can be such a device to direct individual egoism to the interest of power. Generally speaking, an interest for the intermediate organizations is based on group egoism. However, according to Takata's conception, people might have an interest of "power-ism" in place of egoism where the power relations (reign and subordination) are merged into a world society.

According to Takata, the world will finally become "interest society (Gesellschaft)" which is based on individualism with hybrid ethnicity. In such a society, people's interest of power would be directed to human relations and lost its concern for any ethnic interest. Thus Takata's concept of "power" has a moment of overcoming egoism through the interest of power-ism and with this interest, people can make a world society beyond their concern for their intermediate groups. This power-ism, however, cannot be led merely by our "instinct of struggle:"

... [T]he instinct of struggle would take us from the stage of military struggle to the stage of peaceful relation under the control of social organization. The instinct of struggle makes us to restrain exercising our hard power. This transition is what the desire of power aims. In this sense, the instinct of struggle is one of the driving forces of our desire. However, it would not be a primary force: when we have no sense of uplift, in other words, when we cannot fix our superior status in a world society, we would not be able to make our instinct of struggle peaceful in pursuing our power. (*A Theory of Power*, p.29)

In a peaceful society, people would be able to tame their instinct of struggle and pursue their individual interest. Takata thought that the instinct of struggle would end its role where each individual would find its own superior status in a peaceful society. He thought that the instinct of self-sense (self-uplift) would be finally replaced to the instinct of struggle. This replacement can only be performed through our interest of “power-ism” and not through by altruism. The power-ism can overcome the incompleteness of the group egoism and make society more peaceful.

These descriptions are what we can find in Takata’s concept of power in the light of the “egoism”/ “power-ism” distinction. There are three historical stages on this concept. First, a person can have a doctrine of group egoism beyond his or her individual egoism. Second, a person can go beyond its group egoism with an interest of power-ism toward making a world society. Third, in a world society, a person can pursue his or her own individual interest by taming its instinct of struggle. At this final stage of the History, the doctrine of “power-ism” will end its role.

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#### 1-b. Contributions of Takata’s power theory in economics

First stage/ Second stage/ Third stage/ Fourth stage/ Fifth and final stage

#### 1-c. Final insights of Takata’s theory of power in economics

Actual level of wage would be settled so as to bring out the prosperity of its group  
(i.e. nation-state)

Explaining interest rate from power relations

Explaining power relations in the transition to planned economy