

Confucianism and the Meirokusha

Reassessing the Japanese Intellectual Tradition in the “Global Enlightenment”

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Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

Modern International and Transnational History

Master's Thesis, Spring 2021

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Abstract

The academic society *Meirokeisha*, founded in 1873, epitomizes what is today sometimes referred to as the “Japanese enlightenment”: the engagement with and transfer of Western political and philosophical ideas to Japan in a bid to nurture and foster *bunmei kaika*, “civilization and development”. Confucianism, the long-established intellectual tradition predominant in Japan in the immediately preceding period, is construed as the binary opposition to this phenomenon, the “tradition” necessitated by the belief in the “modern”. This thesis takes up the considerable Confucian influence in the magazine published by the *Meirokeisha* in order to problematize this narrative of a “Japanese enlightenment”. It is argued that Confucianism cannot be essentialized as “conservative” or “traditional”, because of the wide variety and sometimes contradictory nature of the different responses to Western thought engendered by Confucianism. Confucian concepts continued to shape and inform the adaptation of Western philosophy and political thought even in the work of Japanese experts on the West who distanced themselves from Confucian orthodoxy. Looking toward Sebastian Conrad’s historical framework of a “global Enlightenment”, this thesis links the story of the *Meirokeisha* with global trends as a starting point to understand the dynamic, two-way history of Western political ideas and their adaptation in other parts of the world. In particular, the ways in which the Confucian philosophical concept of Principle (理 C. *lǐ*, J. *ri*) found expression in the work of *Meirokeisha* members Tsuda Mamichi and Nishi Amane, even when discussing Western political ideas such as the establishment of a popularly elected assembly, will be examined. Furthermore, it will be suggested that Confucian practice, such as the scholarly and practical ideal of individual enlightenment and a related societal obligation, found new expression in the writings of Sugi Kōji and Mori Arinori as the ideal shifted and became tied to pedagogy and statecraft suitable to the changing conditions of Meiji Japan. The role of Confucianism at this juncture in Japanese history remains relevant in the current world where the concept of “modernity” and its relationship to European Enlightenment thought is being rethought and supplemented with insights which point away from the presupposed convergence of “modern” societies. As the legitimating moral and philosophical underpinnings of that modernity might be more open to contestation now than they were at the time of the *Meirokeisha*, Confucianism remains an important wellspring for alternative conceptualizations of what “modern” can mean.

Preface

The idea of individual accomplishments takes focus away from the fact that no one ever accomplishes much without the people around them. That I have been able to finish this thesis is a testament to the immense privilege and support I have enjoyed along the way. Although knowing it is bound to be insufficient, I would be amiss should I fail to at least make some attempt at expressing my gratitude.

From my supervisor at the University of Oslo, Daniel Maul, I have received not only valuable insights into the methodology and process of writing transnational history, but also a belief in the merits of my thesis, unwavering even when my own was not. I am also indebted to Professor Toufoul Abou-Hodeib for particularly fruitful comments on an earlier draft of the introduction to this thesis.

This thesis would never have materialized without Michael Burtscher's class on Confucianism and State Building in East Asia at Sophia University, which I attended while on exchange in the autumn of 2018. I remember the frustration of my inability to understand the source material, completely unfamiliar as it was to me, but Professor Burtscher's patient and engaging discussions eventually succeeded in drastically expanding my view of the world.

I am thankful to Taymour for important suggestions and inspiring conversations, at campus and during our archipelagic excursion. I also want to express my gratitude to Jens and the other friends at university who through their presence, digital and otherwise, have kept me from losing complete touch with the real world through numerous rounds of lockdown.

Most importantly, I could not imagine any more valuable support than the one I have continuously enjoyed from my parents. This thesis would not have been possible without them, and the weekends spent recuperating at Villa Wonka. To them, and to the rest of my family, I will always be grateful.

Axel Andreas Julsrud
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Notes on the Text

In this thesis, Pinyin is used for the Romanization of Chinese and the names of Chinese historical figures, except for Chinese words in book titles and the names of authors, in which case the original Wade-Giles system of romanization is retained. The Hepburn system for romanization is used for Japanese, but vowel diacritics are sometimes dropped in words that are well known in English (for example “shogun” and “Tokyo”).

East Asian names are given with the surname first throughout the text.

When citing the *Analects*, Slingerland’s translation has been employed (Slingerland, Edward. (trans.) *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003).

When citing the *Mencius*, van Norden’s translation has been employed (van Norden, Bryan W. (trans.) *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2008).

References to both these works are given in the form of book and chapter number, for instance “*Analects* 5.13”, with pagination referring to the editions listed above.

Introduction

The story of Japan's nineteenth century intellectual transformation – a part of the political revolution known as the Meiji restoration and the subsequent changes in virtually all aspects of society – has sometimes been told as a “Japanese Enlightenment”.¹ Since there was no apparent alternative, claims of the universality of the Western “modern” were convincing to many, including the set of thinkers who were the intellectual leaders in guiding Japan toward *bunmei kaika* (“civilization and enlightenment”) inspired by Western political and philosophical thought.² Because the primary sources seem to support it, with their talk of the splendor of Western civilization and eagerness to denounce Japan's “unenlightened” past, the story has continued to be told much the same way.³ The backward theories of Confucianism, which according to the binary view of modernization theory constituted Japanese “tradition”, had to be shed in order for “enlightened” progress to materialize. The key actors in this drama were the members of the *Meirokeisha*, an intellectual society which had nothing less than the “promotion of enlightenment” as its *raison d'être*.⁴

A story compelling for its explanatory simplicity, but one beset with problems. The first is that the view of “development” as a linear process along universal lines which the West happened to pioneer has been all but discarded as untenable.⁵ The central importance conferred upon European enlightenment thought in producing the rationality and secularity upon which “modernity” in turn was constructed is reiterated with retellings of the Japanese duplication of the same chain of events, Paris replaced with Tokyo and Voltaire with Fukuzawa.⁶ However, tendencies of such a duplication (to the extent that they can really be found) is not a

¹ Braisted, *Meiroke Zasshi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) [Henceforth abbreviated as “MZ” with volume and page number, unless referencing Braisted's introduction]; Blacker, *The Japanese Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

² “Civilization and enlightenment” is the standard translation of the Japanese 文明開化, *bunmei kaika*, which will be discussed later in this introduction. The “Western” ideas which influenced the *Meirokeisha* thinkers were extremely varied, from classical liberalism to utilitarianism and social Darwinism, often making the use of more precise terms difficult. “Western” will be used to signify European or American origin, for lack of a better term.

³ For instance: “Envy [the various countries of Europe's] civilization and mourning our own unenlightenment, we have suffered unbearable sorrow, having finally concluded that our people seem indeed to be incorrigibly ignorant”. MZ1, p. 3.

⁴ See n. 48.

⁵ Tipps, “Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies”. Although modernization theory has fallen out of fashion, much talk remains about “modernity”, sometimes pluralized as “modernities” in order to avoid the universalization of European modernity. However, this pluralization might come at the price of severely limiting the analytical salience of the term. See: Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities”; Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 113-49.

⁶ Fukuzawa Yukichi, the most famous of the *Meirokeisha* members. See Appendix A for biographical notes. The most widely cited English biography of Fukuzawa explicitly compares him to the French *philosophes*: Blacker, *The Japanese Enlightenment*, pp. xi-xii.

confirmation of the universality of Europe's development, but perhaps rather a product of the patterns of international flow of ideas in the nineteenth century, and of conscious emulation. More important, Fukuzawa was not Voltaire. And this is the second problem of the story of the *Meiokusha* "enlighteners": they were not so disconnected from Japan's past as they construed themselves to be. Telling a story of Japanese duplication of the Western experience is an exercise in obscuring the most interesting aspect of this critical juncture in Japanese history – the vast array of different responses to the tidal wave of Western influence, the heterogeneity of which serves as proof of the important ways in which Japan was *not* analogous to the West. Since Confucianism was the most important intellectual tradition (although really a set of different traditions) in Japan in the period prior to the "opening" to the West, it is natural to examine the various ways in which Confucian concepts were used to make sense of, modify, and evolve Western-originated thought during this period. Despite the *Meiokusha*'s indisputable predilection towards the West, references to Confucianism are peppered throughout the pages of the magazine published by the society, the *Meioku zasshi*. Explaining this fact, not by dismissing it as stylistic or functional, but by using it as the starting point for a re-evaluation of the contingency of Japanese thought in a global perspective, is the impetus of this thesis.⁷

There is a need to re-anchor the *Meiokusha* thinkers within their historical context: as participants in a transnational network of intellectual transfer, but also firmly embedded in the intellectual traditions of their local environment. Sebastian Conrad has constructed a framework for this kind of analysis in his concept of a "global Enlightenment", which seeks to de-centralize what we think of as the "Enlightenment" to include actors such as the *Meiokusha* thinkers.⁸ Allowing for Confucianism to play a positive part in such a "global Enlightenment" challenges many conventions, in particular the binary opposition of "traditional" versus "modern", and the assumption that Confucianism should be identified with the former rather than the latter. The resulting picture is a fascinating story of cross-cultural exchange, dynamic and alive rather than one-sided and pre-determined. It is also a story of a worldview straining to adapt to the cultural maelstrom of the claims of universality inherent in Western "modernity"

⁷ Thomas Havens seems to argue that one *Meiokusha* thinker's references to East Asian intellectual tradition were functional, serving to "...smooth the way for a new outlook...", with an assumed implication that they were not to be understood as indicative of influence upon Nishi himself. Havens, *Nishi Amane* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 96.

⁸ Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History".

in the nineteenth century. The merits of Conrad's framework will be discussed below, along with questioning the extent to which it provides an apt characterization of the *Meiokusha*.

I have primarily consulted Braisted's full translation of all the forty-three issues of the *Meioku zasshi*.⁹ Because this translation is sometimes slightly tendentious in its wording (for instance by a liberal use of the word "Enlightenment"), cross-referencing to the original Japanese, available online, has been done.¹⁰ The original Japanese has been presented in the text of this essay in such cases, or when wishing to highlight the particular choice of words by the original author.

The theme of Confucian influence in the writings of the *Meiokusha* thinkers will be brought down to a workable size by focusing on two topics. Firstly, attention will be given to how Confucian metaphysics were discussed and reinvented as a part in the debate on whether to establish a popularly elected assembly. As will be shown, the metaphysical concept of "principle" was referenced and used – in divergent, modified ways – to support political arguments by both Tsuda Mamichi and Nishi Amane.¹¹ The choice of looking at these two thinkers in particular is based on their hitherto impeccable "enlightenment thinker" credentials, as students of the Dutch liberal economist and later finance minister, Simon Vissering (1818-88). Although there were *Meiokusha* members who were clearly "more Confucian" in their outlook than Tsuda and Nishi, references to Confucianism in their writings, particularly by Tsuda, were numerous and highly interesting put in their proper context of intellectual developments in Tokugawa-period (1603-1868) Confucianism.¹² Paying adequate attention to their different view on Confucian metaphysics should not detract from their achievements in introducing various Western concepts to Japan, but rather serve to contextualize their encounter with these ideas, and explain their sometimes differing political views.

In the second chapter, the concrete manifestation of Confucian ideals in the role of the "sage" is argued to have taken on a new form in the writings of the *Meiokusha*. In the context of the changing international environment, and arguably also related to the *Meiokusha* scholars' self-perception in the context of the "global Enlightenment", the "enlightened statesman" emerges as a new ideal, carrying over from the "old" Japan to the "new" certain traits previously identified with the Confucian sage. This topic has been chosen to illustrate

⁹ Braisted, *Meioku Zasshi*.

¹⁰ Nihon goshi kenkyūshiryō, "Meioku zasshi".

¹¹ See See Appendix A for biographical details.

¹² Sakatani Shiroshi and Nishimura Shigeki were perhaps the most Confucian-oriented contributors to the *Meiokusha zasshi*, both of whom rather little has been written about in English. For the former, see Huish, "Aims and Achievements of the *Meiokusha*", pp. 497-501. For the latter, Shively, "Nishimura Shigeki".

that Confucian ideas, although considerably diluted or modified, could have practical implications even as the Japanese elite was set on pursuing “civilization and enlightenment”. Although it is generally accepted that Confucianism inspired the conservative moral turn of 1880s Japan, the example of possible Confucian inspiration for the ideal of a “enlightened statesman” is novel in its focus on Confucian contribution to Japanese “civilization and enlightenment” rather than as a conservative counterreaction to it.¹³

Before pursuing these two topics of analysis, it is necessary to provide more context and to clarify certain key concepts. In the following chapter, the *Meiokusha* thinkers and the intellectual environment of their time will be outlined, which necessitates also a brief introduction to Confucianism. Subsequently, Sebastian Conrad’s “global Enlightenment” framework will be examined closer as a way of contextualizing the global forces of which the *Meiokusha* was a part. Finally, a cursory overview of the historiography on Confucianism and modernity is intended to contextualize the thesis and convey a sense of what is at stake in the way historians portray this interaction.

¹³ For a collection of Confucian-inspired conservative critiques of education policy in this period, see De Bary et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, pp. 766-88.

1. The World of the Meirokusha and How to Write About It

THE MEIROKUSHA, “CIVILIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT”, AND THE ROLE OF CONFUCIANISM IN PRE-RESTORATION JAPAN

When Mori Arinori, Japan’s first chargé d’affaires in Washington from 1871-3 and later to become well known as a highly influential education minister, returned to Japan from the USA in 1873, he sought out Nishimura Shigeki, a renowned scholar of Confucianism and “Western studies”, for the purpose of establishing an academic society. The idea had come to Mori during his time in Washington, having established friendships with persons involved in several different such organizations.¹⁴ Nishimura later recounted Mori’s motivations, citing him as having said:

I should like to see our scholars organize a society, along American lines, in which they could gather for discussion and research. Moreover, the morals of the Japanese people have in recent years shown a steady decline, with the bottom not yet in sight, and it is precisely our senior scholars who must come to the rescue. The society which I propose therefore should on the one hand promote learning, and on the other set an example of moral conduct.¹⁵

The society founded by Mori and Nishimura was given the name *Meirokusha* (明六社), which translates as the “Meiji Six Society”, Meiji Six being the year of founding, 1873.¹⁶ As pointed out by Watanabe Hiroshi, the name was something of a double entendre, with contemporary readers most likely knowing to read 明六 (*meiroku*) also as 明け六つ (*akemutsu*), “the sixth hour of the morning”, implying the “dawn” of a new era.¹⁷

The citation above illustrates a central point about this new academic society, that of synthesis between Japan and the West. Although wanting to establish a society “along American lines”, Mori displays a concern with public morality and the scholar’s obligation towards this end - a central characteristic of Confucian thought since the time of Confucius himself (551-479 BCE).¹⁸ The influence of Confucianism on the *Meirokusha* members, while impossible to completely ignore, is often glossed over, as it has been considered difficult to square with the compelling narrative of Mori and his colleagues as Western-oriented “apostles

¹⁴Hall, *Mori Arinori* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 235.

¹⁵ Cited in *ibid* p. 234.

¹⁶ “Meiji six” refers to the sixth year of the reign of the Meiji emperor.

¹⁷ Watanabe, *A History of Japanese Political Thought*, Noble (trans.). (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2012), p. 375. The fact that one word could be read in different ways is a consequence of the complex history of the Japanese language and the different ways in which Chinese characters have been used to write in Japanese.

¹⁸ Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 21-6, 32-4.

of enlightenment”.¹⁹ It is indeed a commonality of the *Meirokeisha* members that they were Western-oriented, but the degree and particular manner in which this orientation manifested itself in practice varied considerably between individual members.

Recognizing these differences, Alistair Swale has proposed four categories of classifying the *Meirokeisha* thinkers: “veteran scholars of Western Studies”²⁰ (Nishi Amane, 1829-97; Tsuda Mamichi, 1829-1903; and Katō Hiroyuki, 1836-1916), “technocrat intellectuals” (Mori Arinori, 1847-89; Mitsukuri Rinshō, 1846-97; Sugi Kōji, 1828-1917; and Kanda Kōhei, 1830-98), “Confucianist modernizers” (Nishimura Shigeki, 1828-1902; and Sakatani Shiroshi²¹, 1822-81), and finally “entrepreneur scholars” (Nakamura Masanao, 1832-91; and Fukuzawa Yukichi, 1835-1901).²² Without examining in detail these categories, attention will be directed toward the fact that all four categories describe different kinds of intellectuals, and that the latter category included the only members who were not in government employ. Most of them had a background in “Western studies” and had been employed in the state bureaucracy because of this. Further, they were all born in a time period spanning the 1820s to 40s, meaning they all lived through the dramatic end of the Tokugawa era (1600-1868); indeed this was a crucial, formative time in the lives of most of the founding members. While limits of space prevent an examination of the biographies of all the eleven members listed above, understanding the historical setting of the transition to Meiji Japan (1868-1912), and particularly the concurrent developments in “Western studies”, will provide some clues as to the structural conditions which affected each of the *Meirokeisha* members.

When the *Meirokeisha* began their activities in 1874, the dust had not yet settled after the 1868 collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate.²³ Japan had just experienced the shattering of the two and a half centuries of the “Tokugawa peace”, and was currently undergoing a transformation of its social structure the scope of which is hard to overstate. The last decade of the shogunate saw the signing of commercial treaties with Western powers under implicit military coercion; the fate of Qing China following the Opium War (1839-42) had made a deep

¹⁹ The term “apostle of enlightenment” is taken from the title of a chapter in Hall, *Mori Arinori*.

²⁰ Swale uses the Japanese term *yōgakusha* (洋学者) which I have translated as “scholar of Western Studies” for sake of clarity.

²¹ Sakatani was not a founding member but he is still included by Swale on account of being one of the most prolific contributors to the *Meirokeisha*.

²² Swale, *The Meiji Restoration*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 98-122.

²³ Shogunate, or *bakufu*, refers to the political system of rule by a *shogun*, a military title originally bestowed upon an individual by the imperial court, but which since the 14th century had become a hereditary title held by different families, or dynasties. Since 1603, the office of shogun had been held by the Tokugawa family.

impression in Japan. Termed the “Meiji Restoration” for the alleged “return” of political power from the shogun back to the imperial family, the change of power in 1868 in reality saw the moderately sized clique of activists who had led the overthrow of the former regime ascend to power. Although they had initially rallied support with demands for a more hardline foreign policy under the slogan of *sonnō jōi* (“revere the emperor and expel the barbarians”), ill-fated small-scale military clashes with Western powers in 1863 and 1864 forced the revolutionary leaders to acknowledge they were in no position to challenge the Western powers militarily.²⁴ Once in power, for the purpose of ensuring Japan’s sovereignty, they believed it necessary to reorganize Japanese society into what might today be labeled as a centralized, “modern” nation state rather than confront the West immediately.²⁵ Thus, in Marius Jansen’s terse words, the Meiji period began with the “basic restructuring of domestic society”.²⁶

During the preceding Tokugawa period, contact with the outside world was limited. Although the often-used term *sakoku* (“closed country”) is anachronistic and misleading in its severity, the shogunate indeed tried to limit and control the channels through which contact with the outside world was possible.²⁷ One of these channels was the port of Nagasaki, where the Dutch were allowed to keep a small trading station.²⁸ All other European merchants were denied access due to the shogunate’s suspicion of Catholic missionary activity.²⁹ The vast majority of information about the West available in Japan up until the mid-nineteenth century came through this port, and the language through which Japanese intellectuals came to know Europe was Dutch - hence the term *rangaku*, or “Dutch Studies” which in the Tokugawa period was used synonymously with “Western studies”.

Rangaku was initially largely limited to the translation and study of Dutch books on military science, anatomy, astronomy, and other technical sciences. Knowledge of Western

²⁴ In 1863, the southern domain of Kagoshima was shelled by a British squadron over the murder of an Englishman the previous year. Similarly, Chōshū domain provoked Western powers by attacks on ships sailing through the Shimonoseki Straits, which resulted in clashes with a French squadron in 1863 and one consisting of several Western powers the following year. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 197-207. See also Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 199-204, 231-6.

²⁵ Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, pp. 172-213; 300-24.

²⁶ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 294.

²⁷ Kazui, “Foreign Relations During the Edo Period”.

²⁸ More specifically, they were allowed to rent a small, man-made island in Nagasaki harbor connected to the city with a bridge they were not allowed to cross unless given special permission. *Ibid* pp. 80-5.

²⁹ The Portuguese and Spanish had engaged in commerce and proselytizing in Japan since the sixteenth century, but from 1633 to 1639 a series of “expulsion decrees” saw the tightening of central control in Japan over matters of foreign relations, resulting in the system of a limited numbers of government-approved access-points with the outside world. *Ibid* pp. 75-80.

languages (almost exclusively Dutch) and sciences was often monopolized by families in Nagasaki and Edo who served as translators and the like.³⁰ The establishment of what eventually came to be the *bansho shirabesho* (“Barbarian [Western] Documents Research Center”) was tied to a family in the shogunate’s employ who specialized in Western astronomical knowledge.³¹ Although Western studies was a niche intellectual pursuit for most of the Tokugawa period, the *bansho shirabesho* became in one historian’s estimation the “training ground for the intellectual elite which dominated Japanese scholarship in the 1870’s”.³²

Western studies increased in importance as the threat of Western powers grew larger in the 1840s and 50s, which is exactly the period in which most of the *Meirokeisha* members were educated and started their careers. Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi were both employed at this institute beginning in 1857, and Katō Hiroyuki started as an assistant in the institute in 1860, rising to the position of administrator in its successor institution, the *kaiseijo*, in 1868.³³ Moreover, at this time, Japanese Western studies scholars began to travel to Europe and America for the first time. Mori Arinori left his home for England at the age of 18 in 1865.³⁴ Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi studied in the Netherlands from 1862 to 1865, arriving back in Japan the following year.³⁵

If Western studies had seen an increase in the 1850s, it paled in comparison to the tidal wave of Western culture which rushed in on Japan following the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Irokawa Daikichi put it as follows:

The influence of European and American civilization in Japan during the 1860s and 1870s was traumatic and disruptive to a degree that is rarely found in the history of cultural intercourse. We were engulfed both by capitalist culture that proudly brandished enormous industrial and military power, and by science and technology.³⁶

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 211-2.

³¹ Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 107-8.

³² Havens, *Nishi Amane*, p. 36.

³³ *Ibid* p. 36-7; Davis, *The Moral and Political Naturalism of Baron Katō Hiroyuki* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 10-2.

³⁴ Hall, *Mori Arinori*, p. 61.

³⁵ Havens, *Nishi Amane*, p. 40-56. These were not the only *Meirokeisha* members who had studied abroad in this period of increased enthusiasm of Western studies during the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate: Nakamura Masanao had served as chaperone for other Japanese students in England from 1866 to 1868, and Mitsukuri Rinshō had studied in France in 1867. Fukuzawa Yukichi did not study abroad, but he had served as translator on two round trips to the USA and in a delegation to Europe in 1862. Swale, *The Meiji Restoration*, pp. 98-9.

³⁶ Irokawa, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*, Jansen (trans.) (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 51.

More than just “science and technology”, Western knowledge in all thinkable disciplines and traditions was suddenly a hot commodity. The aspiration toward achieving a “modern” society inspired by the examples of the Western countries in this period in Japanese history is routinely summed up in the expression *bunmei kaika* (文明開化, “civilization” or “civilization and development”).

The “civilization and development” movement, which the *Meirokeisha* is often said to have spearheaded, had the goal of “rais[ing] Japan to the level of wealth and power that had been attained in the United States and the advanced nations of Europe [through] sweeping reforms in education as well as fundamental changes in many areas of government and society”.³⁷ The participants of this movement discussed and advocated such issues as “the natural rights of freedom and equality, popularly elected representative bodies, and radical reforms of marriage and family”.³⁸ Although some hold *bunmei kaika* to have been an “unavoidable metamorphosis of the old Japan”, it is perhaps most accurate to consider it a sort of *Zeitgeist* among certain influential circles in the early Meiji period.³⁹

This is the context within which the *Meirokeisha* is remembered. The young scholars of Western studies who had crossed the globe in search of knowledge in the 1850s found themselves in the position of being authoritative voices on matters which were regarded as being of the utmost national importance - how should Japan go about building their political system, given the experiences of the West? What was the correct economic policy? Would it be expedient for Japan to adopt Protestantism, or the Latin alphabet? Was the relatively prominent role of Western women evidence of an “enlightened society”, or idealism gone too far? All of these questions, and innumerable more, are addressed in the academic journal published by the *Meirokeisha*, the *Meirokei zasshi*, from 1874 to 1875.

The *Meirokeisha* members, who through their academic background and experiences abroad were Western-oriented in a way most Japanese plainly could not be, did not simply passively receive Western ideas and repeat them in Japanese. Indeed, the mere act of *translating* into Japanese was not as simple as a straight-forward rendering of English concepts into Japanese, because a large number of new Japanese terms had to be invented in order to describe Western concepts such as “law”, “liberty”, “sovereignty”, “society”, and so on. In

³⁷ De Bary et al. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, p. 694.

³⁸ *Loc. cit.*

³⁹ Motoyama, “Meirokeisha Thinkers”, p. 239.

doing so, Confucian concepts were often reimagined or repurposed to explain such foreign terms.⁴⁰ One historian explains that this was “not simply a matter of words but also of epistemology and philosophy, because terms, notions, and values that had been cultivated by Chinese Learning and Confucianism became the basis for developing Western Learning.”⁴¹ Moreover, Confucian political and philosophical concepts were drawn upon not just by means of translation, but in explicit discussion and comparison with Western political concepts discussed in the *Meiroke zasshi*. It should be clear then, that in order to understand the intellectual outlook of the *Meiroke* scholars, it is necessary to have a grasp of the Confucian intellectual tradition which permeated the society they lived in, and without which “Western studies” would not have developed in Japan in the way it did.

The origins of what eventually came to be classified and labeled as “Confucianism” stretch so far back as to elude precise historical dating, at least as far back as the Zhou dynasty (c. 11th century - 256 BCE). Confucius (551 - 479 BCE) is customarily credited for the foundation of the basics of Confucianism based on certain practices and texts developed earlier in the Zhou dynasty - Confucius famously claimed his role to be a transmitter of “ancient ways” rather than an innovator.⁴² The central theme of Confucius’ teachings might be said to be “humans and [...] the fundamental principle of humanity”. He presented a system of ethics based on the belief in the possibility to cultivate goodness, and also tied this ethics to more spiritual concepts such as “Heaven”, fate, and the importance of religious ritual.⁴³

In the two and a half millennia following the death of Confucius, there have been innumerable other “transmitters” who have shaped the history of Confucianism. During the period preceding and including the Han Dynasty (202 BCE - 220 CE), Confucianism faced challenges from other intellectual traditions such as Legalism, Moism and Daoism, and was subsequently adapted and given a clear political dimension. During the Song and Ming Dynasties (960-1279, 1368-1644) another important transformation took place, at which point complex religious and metaphysical concepts were developed, clearly influenced by, yet

⁴⁰ Howland, *Translating the West* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002 *passim*, but see pp. 64-5 for a poignant example.

⁴¹ Kurozumi, “Tokugawa Confucianism and Its Meiji Japan Reconstruction”, p. 385. See also Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*, pp. 73-5, and Kurozumi, “The Nature of Early Tokugawa Confucianism”, p. 345.

⁴² *Analects* 7.1, p. 64. “Confucius” is the latinized form of “Kong Fuzi”, meaning master Kong, the common title used to refer to the man whose name was Kong Qiu or Kong Zhongni.

⁴³ Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, p. 26.

mostly critical toward, Buddhism and Daoism.⁴⁴ The Confucianism of this period is commonly known as “Neo-Confucianism”, or “Zhu Xi Confucianism” after the scholar who synthesized and compiled these new interpretations, and it was this broad strand of Confucian thought which was most important in the development of Japanese Confucianism.⁴⁵

Neo-Confucianism, transmitted from China to Japan via Korea, generated a flood of scholarship in the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). Containing within it centuries of accumulated discussions on moral, religious, political, and metaphysical questions when it arrived in Japan, various parts within the Confucian tradition could be highlighted or accentuated in a bewildering number of combinations, resulting in a highly dynamic and varied intellectual landscape.⁴⁶ In Tokugawa society, Confucianism competed with Buddhism and native Japanese spiritual beliefs (commonly known as Shintō) for influence, often displaying a high degree of syncretism. Although not as intimately connected to the Japanese state as once thought, Confucianism became an integral part of Japanese society at this point.⁴⁷ With the “arrival” of the West and Western thought in Japan at the end of the Tokugawa period, Japanese Confucianists could only realistically make sense of the changing circumstances in reference with the philosophical and political framework within which they operated. The subjects of this thesis, the *Meiokusha* thinkers, did, generally speaking, exactly this, although they went further than most of their contemporaries in criticizing Confucianism while at the same time remaining tied to it in important ways.

The above is a rough sketch of the social and intellectual environment of Japan leading up to 1874, as the *Meiokusha* started publishing its journal. The essays in the journal were framed as part of a crucially important mission to bring Japanese society “up to date” or to release it from the shackles of the misguided beliefs of the Tokugawa era, as illustrated by the short text on the jacket of every issue of the *Meioku zasshi* expressing the member’s hope that

⁴⁴ *Ibid* pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ Makeham (ed.). *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), pp. x-xiv. Sometimes spelt “Chu Hsi”, other names include “Cheng-Zhu Confucianism” and “Song Confucianism”. Note that the use of “Neo” in “Neo-Confucianism” does not entail a break with the earlier Confucianism, as its practitioners saw themselves as participating in the same, continuous tradition. For this and other reasons, the term “Confucian(ism)” is preferred throughout this thesis even when discussing thinkers or concepts usually discussed in connection with “Neo-Confucianism”, opting to use the latter term only in the few instances where there is any reason to distinguish between the two.

⁴⁶ Boot, “Two Kinds of Neo-Confucianism”, p. 461.

⁴⁷ Kurozumi, “The Nature of Early Tokugawa Confucianism”; Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

their work would serve to “promote enlightenment among their countrymen”.⁴⁸ This is how the *Meiokusha* scholars envisioned their role in society, and it is in this context that they have been termed “Enlightenment scholars” or leaders of the “Japanese Enlightenment”.⁴⁹ However, the assumed connection to the European Enlightenment has been exaggerated. I will now address some criticism toward the use of the term “Japanese Enlightenment” in writing Japanese history, and instead explore the merits of contextualizing the *Meiokusha* as related to a larger “global Enlightenment”.

INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL SETTING: THE GLOBAL ENLIGHTENMENT

The international political situation of the 1870s is perhaps best characterized as the precipice of the so-called “high imperialism”, a period of time in which Europe most dramatically exploited the power discrepancy between it and the rest of the world which had developed over the course of the preceding century or so.⁵⁰ Crucially, though, it was also characterized by the responses of the peoples who were confronted with this increased European international presence.⁵¹ As mentioned above, the defeat of Qing China in the Opium War of the 1840s was a greatly alarming event which convinced numerous Japanese officials belonging both to the shogunate and the various regional domains of the need to introduce Western military technology in order to defend against the Western “barbarians”.⁵² Answering the Western military threat with the adoption and utilization as far as possible of the Westerners’ own tools was a response seen not only in Japan, but all over the nineteenth-century world. Political entities including Mehmet Ali’s Egypt (1805-48)⁵³, Ahmad Bey’s Tunisia (1806-55)⁵⁴, the Ottoman Empire at various times starting with the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807)⁵⁵, Kabaka Mutesa’s Buganda (1857-1884)⁵⁶, and Siam under the rule of Chulalongkorn (1873-1910)⁵⁷ all displayed responses which might be characterized as “defensive developmentalism”.

⁴⁸ Braisted, *Meioku Zasshi*, p. xvii. The term Braisted has chosen to translate as “enlightenment” in this case is “知識” (*chishiki*), which is usually translated as “knowledge” (see for instance the translation of the same text in Huish, “Aims and Achievements of the *Meiokusha*”, p. 508).

⁴⁹ See the section below for the origin and discussion of this term.

⁵⁰ Curtin, *The World & the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 36; Ballantyne and Burton, “Empires and the Reach of the Global”, p. 285.

⁵¹ This is the main argument and running theme of Curtin, *The World & the West*.

⁵² Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 270-4.

⁵³ Goldschmidt Jr., *Modern Egypt* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), pp. 15-28.

⁵⁴ Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 14-7.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 40-174.

⁵⁶ Curtin, *The World & the West*, pp. 116-27, 140-4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-4.

Generally speaking, such “defensive developmentalism” also usually included efforts toward state centralization and reform of the civilian educational system, as well as having the effect of creating a bureaucratic, military, or intellectual elite of educated, Western-oriented persons.⁵⁸

Because the international hierarchy of Western imperialism found justification in religious, philosophical, and political thought, such aspects of Western society naturally came to be carefully examined by those exposed to it.⁵⁹ Perhaps of particular interest was the political and philosophical legacies of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment.⁶⁰ As a way of bringing together various non-European encounters with this topic under one historical concept, Sebastian Conrad has proposed the use of the term “global Enlightenment”. According to Conrad, as non-European statesmen and intellectuals looked toward the legacy of the European Enlightenment for how to understand and grapple with increased European pressure and presence in their countries, the Enlightenment itself was reformulated and reinvented.⁶¹ Connecting the “assumed universalism” of the European Enlightenment with local conditions, a process of intellectual hybridization created a “global Enlightenment” and shaped the course of history in nineteenth century Asia.⁶² This sort of dynamic has also been identified by historians of Europe when looking at areas outside the traditional center(s) of the Enlightenment. Jeremy Black writes:

The vitality and applicability of traditional views and their capacity for development were such that in much of Europe the Enlightenment can be seen either as the import and sometimes grafting of new fashions, or, indeed, as largely the product of the development of indigenous thought. [...] It is more appropriate in some cases to note the coincidence and in some spheres congruence of new and traditional ideas and to be cautious in regarding the former as necessarily alien to the latter or as defining an Enlightenment.⁶³

Conrad’s project is at its core an expansion of this perspective to areas even further away, driven by Europe’s own expansion into all corners of the globe during the nineteenth century.

⁵⁸ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 75-89.

⁵⁹ Worringer, *Ottomans Imagining Japan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 25-34. All of these topics were commented upon in various issues of the *meiroke zasshi*, see for example Tsuda Mamichi’s discussion of Christianity in MZ3 pp. 38-40.

⁶⁰ For the influence of the French Revolution upon Ottoman political thought, see Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), pp. 53-64. See also Yamamoto, Genzō, “Navigating the Euro-American Enlightenment: Japan and the Modern World”, p. 126

⁶¹ Conrad. “Enlightenment in Global History”, p. 1013.

⁶² *Ibid* p. 1022.

⁶³ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 260.

A direct link to the European Enlightenment is present in the *meiroke zasshi*, with references to and translations of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Charles Montesquieu (1689-1755), David Hume (1711-76) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), among others, peppering the pages of the journal.⁶⁴ However, the *Meiroke* writers were more preoccupied with Western thinkers closer to their own time, like Auguste Comte (1798-1857), John Stuart Mill (1806-73), Samuel Smiles (1812-1904), and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).⁶⁵ Here, a caveat to Conrad's terminology must be introduced: the Japanese response to European intellectual history was not limited to the "Enlightenment" in a narrow sense. Although perhaps slightly confusing, it seems the utility of Conrad's concept lies not so much in the tracing of particular ideas ("Enlightenment thought") and their modification in other parts of the world, as it does in the realization that European intellectual history more broadly underwent this process of diffusion and adaptation. As the ideas of not only Montesquieu and Hume, but also Mill and Spencer were adapted and syncretized in the writings of intellectuals such as the *Meiroke* thinkers, a transnational "global circuitry" was tightening, causing those ideas to become incrementally less "European" in an exclusive sense, and more "global".⁶⁶ As pointed out by Conrad, an ex post facto realization, partially at least, of the Enlightenment's universalistic language was being carried out.⁶⁷

The concept of the "global Enlightenment" allows us to contextualize the work of the *Meiroke* as part of a global movement of dynamic interaction with Western political and philosophical ideas. While shaped by contingencies of culture and political environment, it might be comparable with the "national and cultural revival" which had begun in the Middle East earlier in the same century known as *nahdah* ("renaissance" or "awakening").⁶⁸ In the Arabic-speaking region around the middle of the century, a similar Western-oriented intellectual elite promoted ideas which the *Meiroke* members would have supported unhesitatingly: a belief in the idea of progress and in a positivist rationality, as well as a

⁶⁴ For instance, MZ4, pp. 45-7; MZ23; pp. 295-6; MZ40 p. 487.

⁶⁵ The influence of Comte on Nishi Amane has been discussed by his biographer (Havens, *Nishi Amane*, pp. 93-113, 218-9), Nakamura Masanao translated works by both Mill and Smiles, and Mori Arinori personally met and discussed Japanese politics with Spencer (Hall, *Mori Arinori*, pp. 227-90, 483-4.) This is naturally not an exhaustive list, but merely indicative of the influence of these and other 19th century European thinkers on the *Meiroke*.

⁶⁶ Rosenberg (ed.) *A World Connecting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 5-9.

⁶⁷ Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History", p. 1022.

⁶⁸ El-Ariss, "Let There Be *Nahdah!*", p. 260.

“historicist habit of mind” in which “objects become intelligible only by grasping them as a part of a causal process of development”.⁶⁹

Rather than trying to argue any fundamental similarity, I have chosen this example in order to highlight the particular self-understanding displayed by both the *nahdah* intellectuals and the *Meirokeisha* scholars as intellectuals of a new age, bringing new ways of thinking to their countrymen. This is analogous to the sort of definition of the Enlightenment proposed by Dan Edelstein, as a “matrix in which ideas, actions and events acquired new meaning”.⁷⁰ In other words, if the particular ideas of the *Meirokeisha* thinkers were not “Enlightenment thought” in the European sense (although the influence from and thematic overlap with the European enlightenment was significant), then the contextualization and presentation of these new ideas as belonging to “a set of practices considered ‘enlightened’” is certainly present.⁷¹ In the way they perceived their own role as guides toward the “new Japan”, contextualizing their actions within a schema of *bunmei kaika* as a sort of domestic “civilizing” or “enlightening” mission, the *Meirokeisha* thinkers can be contextualized as part of a “global Enlightenment”, even if “Enlightenment” might be too narrow a term when looking at the contents of the *Meirokeishashi*.

Since the use of the term “Enlightenment” in describing the intellectual situation in early Meiji Japan has met some opposition, it is necessary to address this criticism before moving on. Alistair Swale’s argument that the Enlightenment was a culturally contingent event and that “there is no historical necessity that there should emerge in the Orient a correlate to the Western event” is sound.⁷² However, Swale’s criticism was directed to a different usage of the term “Enlightenment”, namely as a European phenomenon which, it was argued, found a parallel in Japanese history. Swale’s criticism is in fact compatible with Conrad’s view of the “global Enlightenment”, which seeks exactly to move away from the idea of the Enlightenment spreading elsewhere from Europe without modification, and instead toward a decentering of the Enlightenment as something which was also “made” in “Istanbul, Manila and Shanghai”.⁷³ The historical framework of the “global Enlightenment” it is not an attempt to understand Japanese history through ill-conceived parallels with European history, because the analytical

⁶⁹ Di-Capua, Yoav. “Nahda: the Arab Project of Enlightenment”, p. 61.

⁷⁰ Edelstein, *The Enlightenment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018), p. 13.

⁷¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁷² Swale, *The Meiji Restoration*, pp. 90-3, quote on p. 91.

⁷³ Conrad, “Enlightenment in Global History”, p. 1025.

sequence is the exact opposite: rather than taking the particular ideas of the French *philosophes* as some sort of standard to look for in Japanese intellectual history, the cultural and temporal contingencies of 1870's Japan constitute the *starting point* to look for insights into the longer history of a sequence of related intellectual movements. This provides a valuable framework for understanding Japanese intellectual thought as distinct from, but not unrelated to, the vast context of a rapidly changing world in which there were several other countries facing similar challenges as Japan.

The use of the term “global” is not a mere geographical modifier to an essentially European Enlightenment, which would result in the already familiar story of Enlightenment thought, having been developed in Europe, being spread to the rest of the passively receptive world.⁷⁴ Instead, it signifies a broadening of which voices are deemed relevant in the story of that proliferation of ideas, and the inclusion of subsequent adaptations in the encounter with different traditions of thought as a relevant part of that story. With this framework, it becomes possible to discern more clearly the role of local political and philosophical traditions as “positive” forces for adaptation, rather than “negative” forces of reluctance or resistance - two different roles which were *both* filled by those traditions.

Swale's criticism is directed as much toward the Japanese term *keimō* (啓蒙) as it is the English “Enlightenment”. Douglas Howard has traced the use of this word in English and Japanese historiography, and deems it an “anachronistic choice informed by the wish to find an Enlightenment in Meiji Japanese history analogous to the European Enlightenment and thereby confirm a universal standard of development in Japan's modernization”.⁷⁵ The scholars of 1870s Japan did not refer to what they were doing using the term *keimō*, but the common belief to the contrary creates a connection with the European Enlightenment stronger than it was in reality. Therefore, there is good reason to remain critical of a gratuitous use of the term “Japanese Enlightenment” such as Swale and others have argued, and even to question the strength or necessity of the link between the European Enlightenment and the *Meiokusha* as proposed by Conrad.⁷⁶ As suggested above, however, the merits of Conrad's de-centralized, transnational approach to the intellectual history of the nineteenth century has several merits

⁷⁴ See William McNeill's self-criticism in the republication of his 1963 classic for a candid explication of this kind of narrative, as originally applied by the author not just to Enlightenment thought but to the “rise” of the West in general: McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁷⁵ Howard, *Translating the West* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), pp. 38-40, quote on p. 40.

⁷⁶ Huish, “Aims and Achievement”, p. 514. Conrad makes the same mistake of relying, to a certain extent, on the term *keimō* as evidence to support his arguments. Conrad, *Enlightenment in Global History*, p. 1019.

as a framework for understanding the *Meirokeisha*. One does not need to agree with Conrad's conclusion of the necessity of a "long history of the Enlightenment" in order to enjoy the analytical salience of focusing on the patterns of transnational intellectual interaction identified in his article.

The following essay is not a complete discussion of Japan's participation in Conrad's "global Enlightenment", but rather an exploration into how certain ideas originating from one Japanese political and philosophical tradition, Confucianism, played a role in the processing and adaptation of certain "modern" European political concepts. The focus on Confucianism, which is often perceived as "conservative", in an examination of Japan's experience of the "global Enlightenment" might come across as counterintuitive, but in fact it illustrates perfectly the usefulness of Conrad's "global Enlightenment" framework.⁷⁷ Rather than excluding Confucianism from the *bunmei kaika* narrative in which it sits rather uncomfortably, the focus on the local cultural contingencies exemplified by Conrad's decentering of the "Enlightenment" concept allows us to give Confucianism adequate attention as an intellectual tradition which might be utilized for various purposes. This framework allows us to address and explain facts which might seem confusing if one believes Confucianism to be simply "conservative", for example the pervasiveness of Confucian concepts in the writings of the *Meirokeisha* thinkers.

In order to understand better some of the challenges the above historical and theoretical framework is intended to address, such as the enduring simplistic view of Confucianism as nothing more than "conservative", a brief overview of the historiography on the dynamic between Confucianism and "modernity" is in order. This is because, as will become clear, "modernity" has been the primary lens through which early Meiji Japan has been studied, and one which has had major implications for common views on Confucianism.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DISCUSSION OF CONFUCIANISM AND "MODERNITY"

The various discussions on Confucianism and "modernity" are plagued by two fundamental issues. Firstly, the issue of defining "Confucianism", secondly, the issue of defining "modernity". Confucianism is a term encompassing a vast range of moral, intellectual,

⁷⁷ The narrative of Confucianism as inherently "conservative" is perhaps most prevalent in works on Chinese history (To take just one example: Hao, Yen-P'ing and Wang, Erh-Min Wang, "Changing Chinese Views of Western Relations, 1840-95", pp. 172-6, 181-8), but influential also in histories of Japan, for instance Smith, *Confucianism in Modern* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1973).

philosophical, political, and religious ways of thought and practices. Various strains of Confucian thought can emphasize or de-emphasize concepts either advantageous or detrimental to a vast range of political measures. Likewise, “modernity” eludes precise definition, to the point where it has been suggested that “you know it when you see it”.⁷⁸ The various contradictory characteristics attributed to “modernity” make it an unwieldy concept, and the difficulty is compounded by the term’s Eurocentric origins. Both the continued belief in the “singularity” of European “modernity”, as well as the conscious denial of this singularity, pluralizing the term to encompass all manner of “modernities”, come with the drawback of retaining modernity “on an intellectual pedestal, [...] mak[ing] it more difficult to talk about salient issues in altogether different terms”.⁷⁹ If modernity is “the end point of a certain narrative of progress, which creates its own starting point (tradition) as it defines itself by its end point”, then Confucianism has served the function of “modernity’s tradition”, not just in a representative sense, but in being subjected to the search of substantive attributes to contrast with the “modern”.⁸⁰

Tracing the influence of one vague concept onto another equally vague concept is largely futile. The solution has often been to narrow down “Confucianism” to a particular set of thoughts or thinkers, and “modernity” to a particular characteristic of “modern” Japan.⁸¹ This brings the complexity of history down a workable size, but if the simplification is done without adequate justification, there is no guarantee that the insights one acquires about a particular form of Confucianism is generalizable to other forms. Furthermore, it leads to the problem of teleology. If the starting point is, say, explaining the rise of fascism in pre-war Japan, and if the Confucian norm of loyalty to one’s superior is found to be a compelling contributing factor to the rise of the Emperor-system, this leaves little room for exploring the other political manifestations of Confucianism which were thinkable, likely, and even present during the same period.⁸²

One prominent scholar of Japanese history wrote in 1965 that “all who write on Tokugawa thought must at some point ask themselves how their work relates to Maruyama Masao’s [work]”, something which holds true almost 60 years later (albeit perhaps to a lesser

⁷⁸ Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 260.

⁷⁹ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 115.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 126. Also in some cases the search of attributes which are said to herald the modern, in the “strange parallels” tradition of finding “modernity” developing also outside of Europe. See n. 92 below.

⁸¹ See the discussion on Maruyama Masao’s work below.

⁸² Bix, “Rethinking ‘Emperor-System Fascism’”, p. 9.

degree).⁸³ It might be useful to trace the influence of Maruyama on some of the discussions on Confucianism and “modernity” in the English-language historiography in order to highlight the above-mentioned issues of unclear definitions and teleological explanations. While in no way intended to be exhaustive, looking at Maruyama’s highly influential work and certain reactions to it might suitably position this thesis in an ongoing debate.

Between 1940 and 1944, Maruyama Masao (1914-96) published a series of essays which would later be collected and published as a monograph in 1952, and in 1974 in English translation as “*Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*”. Already before the English translation appeared, this work became central in the English-language historiography on the intellectual history of Japan, creating the foundation and framework within which the subsequent discussion would take place. Maruyama’s main arguments can be summarized as follows: Firstly, Tokugawa Japan was characterized by an ideological system based on the “orthodox” Zhu-Xi school of Neo-Confucianism, which Maruyama identified with Hegel’s concept of stagnant, “nonhistorical”, “Oriental” despotism. Secondly, this ideological system was challenged and ultimately defeated by competing intellectual traditions, primarily the *kogaku* or “ancient learning” school, in which Maruyama located certain “seeds of modernity” such as a budding nationalism.⁸⁴

Maruyama’s negative view of Confucianism can to some extent be explained by his inability, under the yoke of militarist oppression in 1940s Japan, to criticize directly the ultra-nationalist aspects of his own society. Maruyama himself later explained how his essay published in 1942 on “Fukuzawa Yukichi’s critique of Confucianism” came about after realizing that Fukuzawa’s works “could be read, line by line, as a penetrating critique of the age I was living in myself”.⁸⁵ In one historian’s estimation, Maruyama “overlapped” Neo-Confucianism with the militarist society of 1940s Japan, narrating the disintegration of the former almost as a cathartic exercise.⁸⁶

⁸³ Craig, Albert. “Science and Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan”, p. 155.

⁸⁴ Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, Hane (trans.). (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1974), *passim*. See especially pp. 3-6 for the characterization of Confucianism as static. In the introduction to the English translation, Maruyama clearly distanced himself from his previous views. His original arguments are summarized here because of the influence they had on the subsequent historiography, despite the author himself eventually abandoning them. *Ibid* pp. xvi, xxxiii-xxxvi.

⁸⁵ Karube, *Maruyama Masao*, Noble (trans.). (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2008), p. 68.

⁸⁶ Kurozumi, “Tokugawa Confucianism and Its Meiji Japan Reconstruction”, p. 375.

One negative legacy of this narrative has been the enduring conception of Confucianism as the “traditional” antithesis of “modernity”. Following Maruyama’s example, the “seeds of modern Japan” have usually been looked for *outside* the Confucian intellectual tradition, such as in the ideas of the “ancient learning” school. While the “ancient learning” school is (and should be) recognized as a variety of Confucianism in itself, Maruyama’s analysis was concerned with their “fundamental opposed forms of thought”, the ways in which this school “dissolved” or liberated itself from certain Confucian concepts.⁸⁷ Another negative legacy is the conceptualization of the Confucian intellectual tradition as inextricably tied to the “traditional” Tokugawa regime. Kurozumi Makoto has shown how the tight-knit relationship between the Tokugawa state and its “Confucian ideology” assumed by Maruyama has not been supported by later scholarship.⁸⁸ Moreover, Kiri Paramore has argued convincingly for the reaffirmation of Confucianism as a framework which could encourage as well as impede the “development” of various Western ideas in Japan.⁸⁹

In any case, thus distorted by the particularities of Maruyama’s narrative, Confucianism’s role in Japanese history as “backward” and as the antithesis of the “seeds of modernity” said to be present in other parts of Tokugawa thought became more or less entrenched. This was due to the subsequent role of Western (mainly American) historians, influenced by modernization theory, who picked up on the convenient idea of Confucianism presenting the clearest antithesis to “modernity”. For instance, a six-part conference in the late 1950s and 60s produced six volumes on “Studies on the Modernization of Japan” (1965-71).⁹⁰ One of the contributors to this conference, known as a highly respected historian of Japanese cultural history, Robert Bellah, was quite candid in later describing the basic, Western-centric optimism which in his view characterized postwar scholarship on Japan: “It was the heyday of modernization theory. [...] Modernization was the process that produces all the good things: democracy. abundance - in short, a good society. Like ours. I’m afraid that was a major

⁸⁷ Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, p. 216. Particularly, “nature” as opposed to “invention” as the source of morality. For *kogaku* as Confucianism, see Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*. pp. 62-5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid* pp. 370-5.

⁸⁹ Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*, pp. 94-166.

⁹⁰ Garon, “Rethinking Modernization and Modernity in Japanese History”, p. 347-8.

implication of the whole idea”.⁹¹ Almost needless to say, a society “like ours” did not have much room for Confucianism, which was not paralleled in Western “modernity”.⁹²

While the Western-centric theory of linear modernization quickly fell out of fashion, Confucianism remains above else closely associated with “traditional”, conservative moral prescriptions and is often only mentioned as a counterreaction, and not part of, Japan’s drive toward “civilization and enlightenment” following the Meiji restoration.⁹³ While Confucianism beyond a doubt was expressed in reactive, conservative ways, this is not the whole story, and presenting it as such is an essentialization of Confucianism as “conservative” which excludes the other ways in which Confucian thought was manifested.

Considering the history of simplified images of Confucianism as a convenient paper tiger, outlined only to a limited extent in the preceding bibliographic discussion, the present author joins newly emerging voices calling for the inclusion of non-typical expressions of Confucianism to be included in our understanding of this broad tradition of thought, and to recognize the complex and often contrasting roles played by Confucianism in Japanese intellectual history.⁹⁴ An example of this will now be presented, looking closer at how a Confucian metaphysical concept was used to underpin discussions on Western political thought by *Meirokeisha* members Tsuda Mamichi and Nishi Amane.

⁹¹ Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), p.xii.

⁹² Except for, interestingly, as a functional equivalent to Weber’s “protestant spirit”, which was first argued by Bellah and subsequently picked up by proponents of the “Confucian capitalism” thesis of the late twentieth century as South Korea, Taiwan, and other “Confucian” communities experienced explosive economic growth. For a rebuttal of this thesis, see Tu, Wei-ming (ed.) *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁹³ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 404-6, 410, 460-2; Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 37, 104-113.

⁹⁴ Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*.

2. Principle (理) and Parliaments

Physical and human affairs are invariably governed by laws. And these laws, being natural laws, are absolutely never controlled by man. They are called Heaven's Law [天律, *tenritsu*] by Westerners and Heaven's Principle [理, *ri*] by the Chinese. [...] Heaven's Law or Heaven's Principle refers to the systematic order in all things, as it is nothing more than the cause that determines the nature of things. [...] The principle governing [man's] conscience [...] is also no more than Heaven's Law.⁹⁵

-Tsuda Mamichi, 1874

Although we call all principles by the same name, in fact there are two kinds. We must realize that they are not related in the slightest. To identify this distinction, one is called human principle [心理, *shinri*] and the other physical principle [物理, *butsuri*].⁹⁶

-Nishi Amane, 1874

In the quotation above, Tsuda Mamichi⁹⁷ is discussing the Western concept of scientific laws ("Heaven's Law") which he equates to the Confucian concept "Heaven's Principle", or simply "Principle" (理 C. *lǐ*, J. *ri*). For him, Principle denotes the structuring pattern found not only in the natural world, but also in human psychology and society. However, Nishi Amane provides a contrasting assessment, maintaining that "physical principle" was not related in the slightest to "human principle" like Tsuda claimed. It will be suggested that these differing views played some part in Tsuda's and Nishi's different assessment of Western political thought, particularly the question of establishing a popularly elected assembly in Japan. It is intriguing that these thinkers, whose careers were centered on their expertise on *Western thought* engaged with Confucian philosophical issues to such an extent in their argumentation.

This chapter will look more closely at the concept of Principle as employed by Tsuda and Nishi in order to give a concrete example of how Confucianism impacted the adaptation and syncretization of the "global Enlightenment" in Japan. It is an examination of one aspect of Confucian metaphysics which was not, as has been claimed, simply discarded after being outcompeted by Western thought, but which engaged with it and molded it.⁹⁸ Accordingly, the

⁹⁵ MZ11, p. 139. In this particular section of his translation, Braisted refers to 天理 "Heaven's principle", although Tsuda simply wrote 理 "principle" in the original Japanese. This is probably for sake of convenience as Tsuda goes on to use 天理 throughout the rest of the text. There is no reason to believe Tsuda intended the two terms to be interpreted differently.

⁹⁶ Havens, *Nishi Amane*, p. 134. Braisted has chosen "physical principles" and "mental principles", which correspond more closely to the terms, but Havens' translation is a bit more indicative of the way in which they were used by Nishi.

⁹⁷ See Appendix A for biographical notes.

⁹⁸ Blacker, *The Japanese Enlightenment*, pp. 14-56; Craig, "Science and Confucianism", pp. 133-4; 149-55.

chapter extends to the nineteenth century previous observations about the syncretistic capability of Confucianism in other contexts.⁹⁹ First, it is necessary to examine shortly the meaning and history of the term “Principle”.

The Chinese character 理 originally meant “the lines running through a piece of jade” but has been used as a philosophical term at least since the Chinese Warring States Period (5th century BCE to 221 BCE).¹⁰⁰ Most early uses of the term convey a sense of an underlying “pattern”, such as the story in the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* which tells of the cook who can butcher an ox so smoothly he never has to sharpen his axe, due to his intuitive understanding of the “patterns of tendons and bones, or ‘principles’, that heaven has put in the beast”.¹⁰¹ The term subsequently evolved to take on a metaphysical character. In the third century CE, Wang Bi explained that “Just as one recognizes the movement of things so too the principle by which x is x can also be known”.¹⁰²

It was not until the Song Dynasty (960-1279), however, that the concept of Principle came to occupy a central position in Confucian thought. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Zhou Dunyi (1017-73) and Cheng Yi (1033-1107), Zhu Xi’s (1130-1200) interpretation of the term became highly influential. For Zhu, all things in the world were created through an interaction of Principle and *qi* (氣, C. *qì*, J. *ki*), the former guiding and patterning the latter, which was the physical and spiritual stuff of all things. In this function, Principle was a “cosmic blueprint” which made all things as they were.¹⁰³ Herein lies the connection between abstract Confucian metaphysics and practical morality. Since there was an observable and coherent principle in all things, the same was logically also true of the human mind. Through a process of introspection, therefore, it was possible to grasp the appropriate ethical behavior in accordance with the universal Principle.¹⁰⁴ Importantly, this led the concept of Principle to also

⁹⁹ Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, pp. 4-9; Ooms, “The Nature of Early Tokugawa Confucianism”, pp. 341-4.

¹⁰⁰ Numerous suggestions on the appropriate English translation of 理 have been put forward (e.g. “structure”, “pattern”, or simply avoiding the question by romanizing the Chinese/Korean/Japanese pronunciation), but I have chosen to stick with the commonly used “Principle” for reasons of readability, capitalizing the initial letter in order to signify the use of the word as a philosophical concept. For a discussion on the translation of this and certain other Confucian terms, see Makeham (ed.), *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), pp. xiv-xxi; xxv-xxxi.

¹⁰¹ Zhang, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*. Ryden, (trans.). (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 26-30, citation on p. 30.

¹⁰² *Ibid* p. 31.

¹⁰³ *Ibid* pp. 32-7.

¹⁰⁴ Rošker, *Traditional Chinese Philosophy and the Paradigm of Structure (Li 理)* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), pp. 85-90.

take on a normative character: it was not merely that by which x was x, but also that by which x *ought to be* x.¹⁰⁵ For Zhu Xi and his followers, Principle governed not merely the natural order, but also the moral order.

When the concept of scientific laws was first introduced to Japanese scholars of Western studies during the Tokugawa period, it was equated to the concept of Principle as the observable intrinsic pattern of the natural world. For scholars such as Satō Issai (1772-1859) and Sakuma Shōzan (1811-64), Western science was entirely reconcilable with a Confucian worldview since the moral authority of Principle remained untouched by the idea of scientific laws.¹⁰⁶ Sakuma's ideas are especially interesting as several of the *Meirokeisha* thinkers studied at his school in Edo. For him, the scientific experimentation of the west embodied the concept of 窮理 (*kyūri*), or «exhausting principle», which had been advocated as the correct way to acquire knowledge about the world in the Neo-Confucian tradition for centuries.¹⁰⁷ This can be seen in his translation of “physics” as 窮理学 (*kyūrigaku*), “the study of exhausting principle”.¹⁰⁸ Tsuda Mamichi was clearly influenced by this history of synthesis between Principle and scientific laws, but as will now be examined, his interpretations differed in some interesting ways.

TSUDA MAMICHI'S USE OF PRINCIPLE

Tsuda Mamichi (1829-1903) was a prolific contributor to the *Meiroke zasshi*, yet he is not among the most well-known of the *Meirokeisha* members. One explanation of this might be that unlike several of his colleagues, he did not go on to found any institution which would ensure the longevity of his name.¹⁰⁹ Despite a successful government career and being ennobled into the *kazoku* peerage system of Japan as a baron, nor did he hold any high-profile office. Apart from these reasons, there might be another contributing factor to Tsuda's relative obscurity: as will be shown, his political thought defies easy classification as “enlightened” or

¹⁰⁵ Zhang, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Confucianism in Modern Japan* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1973) pp. 26-7. See also de Bary et al. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, pp. 628-51 for short biographies and translated excerpts from the writings of Sakuma and Yokoi Shōnan (another late Tokugawa Confucian who was engaged in Western learning).

¹⁰⁷ Shao Yong's (1011-77) concept of “observing things” or “investigation of things” carries the same meaning and was influential in Sakuma's thought. Wyatt, Don J. “Shao Yong's Numerological-Cosmological System”, pp. 25-9.

¹⁰⁸ Sakamoto, Rumi. “Confucianising Science”, pp. 219-21.

¹⁰⁹ Fukuzawa Yukichi famously founded what is today Keiō University. Mori Arinori founded the *shōhō kōshujō* which today is known as Hitotsubashi University, and Nakamura Masanao founded a school for Western learning, the dōjinsha.

“Confucian”, and therefore does not fit neatly in the narrative of Meiji era “civilization and enlightenment”.

The following analysis of Tsuda’s work is limited, and one should be careful in drawing conclusions about the entirety of his political thought based on his *Meiroke zasshi* contributions alone. Nonetheless, it will hopefully become clear how it is highly misleading to write about Tsuda Mamichi, the “enlightenment thinker”, without considering his Confucian intellectual heritage. The few English-language biographical accounts which exist of Tsuda understandably emphasize his and Nishi Amane’s period of study at Leiden university from 1862 to 1865 and subsequent role in introducing Western law, economics and statistics to Japan. It is a remarkable story, and representative of the two men’s roles as pioneering students of “Western studies”.¹¹⁰ However, if one does not include the ways in which Tsuda carefully balanced and combined Confucian and Western concepts, one runs the risk of reducing him to a mere vessel of European ideas. Looking closer at the role of “principle” in Tsuda’s thought is one way to avoid such a misleading conclusion.

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the concept of Principle was reimagined by several Confucian thinkers during the end of the Tokugawa shogunate as identical to, or above yet in perfect correspondence with, the Western concept of “natural laws”. Consider the quote at the start of this chapter wherein Tsuda Mamichi asserts that the Western “Heaven’s Law” [天律, *tenritsu*] and the Chinese “Principle” [理, *ri*] are identical. In equating Western scientific laws with Principle, Tsuda was thus reiterating an idea which he probably had been exposed to via his teacher, Sakuma Shōzan. Furthermore, a much longer tradition of “exhausting principle” allowed him quite naturally to put the Western scientific method in a Confucian context, as they were both perceived to have the same goal of recognizing “principles” in the world.

Heaven’s Law, or Heaven’s Principle refers to the systematic order in all things, as it is nothing more than the cause that determines the nature of things. A principle [理] most easy to recognize is that, once a ball is thrown into the air, it will invariably fall toward the earth.¹¹¹

This has implications for Tsuda’s thoughts beyond just utilizing a traditional principle in order to make room for a new one. “Principle” being a concept with not just cosmological, but also moral and political connotations, Tsuda is able to utilize argumentation based on Western

¹¹⁰ Havens, *Nishi Amane*, pp. 40-65; Swale, *The Meiji Restoration*, pp. 103-5.

¹¹¹ MZ11, p. 139.

science, particularly ideas of natural laws, in spheres other than the natural sciences. He continues:

The law of gravity is somewhat difficult to understand, but still more difficult to fathom are the principles governing the flowering of plants, the formation of fruits, and the minds and movements of animals. Then when we observe the phenomenon of man, investigate his reason [理], penetrate the causes of this life and the hereafter, search for the secrets of man's creation, and inquire into the principle governing his conscience, we have reached the principles most difficult to understand. Yet this is also no more than discovering Heaven's Law.¹¹²

The logical implication, which Tsuda does not explicitly state, is a view of human morality almost entirely in line with orthodox Neo-Confucian thought: there exists certain principles observable in nature which are particular manifestations of a universal principle upon which human conduct also ought to be based. However, unlike many Neo-Confucian thinkers (but like his teacher Sakuma) Tsuda is not preoccupied primarily with questions of morality. Instead, sharing with his colleagues in the *Meiropusha* concerns about the political issues facing Japan in their time, he steers the discussion toward the issue of government.

Going on to discuss various administrative reforms which had been enacted since the Meiji restoration, the concept of "Heaven's law" looms in the background. Tsuda takes up the issue of the wider responsibilities of the centralized Meiji state as evidence of societal "progress": "Institutions are simple and laws rough in uncivilized societies. As nations gradually advance, their laws become more detailed and their institutions more complex, and there are numerous reforms in which the old is thrown out and the new introduced".¹¹³ Yet, he cautions both against clinging to "old customs[...] despite unavoidable conditions and the dictates of the times" as well as against hasty change, warning that "those who, yearning for foreign institutions and culture, destroy old customs suited to the people of the time will themselves be destroyed". This moderate position is justified ultimately through what Tsuda refers to as "Heaven's law":

Even though public and civil law are man made, they follow the nation's progress, vary with the enlightenment of the people, and arise from unavoidable conditions and the dictates of the times. This is almost in the same category as Heaven's Law that has been a compelling determinant through the ages.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Loc. cit.* Braisted has chosen to translate 理 as "reason" in this instance.

¹¹³ MZ11, p. 140.

¹¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*

Tsuda claims that the gradual refinement of laws and administration is tied to the “nation’s progress” and “the enlightenment of the people”, a gradualist argument which does not originate from Confucian political thought. Interestingly, this is said to be “almost in the same category as Heaven’s Law”, implying that the gradual tendency for administration to become more complex in line with the “progress” of society is a sort of principle in the Confucian sense of the word. In combining these concepts, Tsuda’s worldview acquires a character distinct both from the Neo-Confucian cosmology of his predecessors, as well as from a Western scientific worldview. In the latter, there is no connection between the scientific laws governing natural phenomena (such as gravity causing a ball to fall to the ground) and human affairs (such as psychology). On the other hand, Tsuda’s view was not simply “Confucian” either. For an orthodox Neo-Confucian, the cosmology of Principle often legitimated the *status quo*, rather than the progressivist outlook demonstrated by Tsuda. For Tsuda, the force causing a ball to fall to the ground is the same (or *almost* the same) force necessitating gradual reform as opposed to complacency or abrupt change in a modern state. It is Principle reinterpreted to fit the highly volatile times through which Tsuda lived.

In a later contribution to the *Meiroke zasshi* titled “Imagination”, Tsuda once again mentions “Heaven’s Law” (which, as shown above, was equivalent to “Principle” for Tsuda). The essay is a discussion of the role of imagination, or perhaps better understood as intuition, in acquiring knowledge about the world.¹¹⁵ He writes:

The empiricism of the Ch’ing [Qing] scholars and modern scientific research in the West employ only a minimum of imagination. Yet in such matters as appreciating that the earth is oval or discovering new stars, scientific research generally only establishes Heaven’s Laws after verification of what originally had been imagined.¹¹⁶

Tsuda’s argument can be interpreted in two similar but distinct ways. The first way is to interpret “what originally had been imagined” as the teachings of Confucius or other “ancient sages”, which makes the whole passage read a lot like the “natural-laws-as-principle” argument put forth by his teacher Sakuma Shōzan and others. It seems more probable, however, that “what originally had been imagined” is to be understood as the action of putting forth a hypothesis, and employing the methodology of scientific research as a way to verify or disprove

¹¹⁵ In the text, Tsuda praises the “elevated imagination” of Confucius and Daruma (Bodhidharma, the Indian monk who is said to have brought Chan (Zen) Buddhism to China in the sixth century), although he is also critical of the “distinctions in the degrees of profundity in the later Chinese studies on the natural principles of the five elements”, e.g. Neo-Confucianism.

¹¹⁶ MZ13, p. 167-8.

intuitions about the world. Following this interpretation, the implication is that modern scholars, in putting forth hypotheses and testing them, are capable of intuitive or “imaginative” insight into the “Laws of Heaven” just as valid as that of Confucius, although unlike Confucius’ intuition, a scientific methodology is needed in order to verify or disprove their intuition. In Tsuda’s words, “If conjectures on things are verified by experiment, these principles are then regarded as unchanging Laws of Heaven”.¹¹⁷

Just as in his earlier essay on government, Tsuda is not satisfied with simply linking Principle or Heaven’s Law with natural laws, however. He writes:

Verification, however, is easy in the natural sciences and difficult in the humanities. This is why metaphysical disciplines are so divided that they cannot reach conclusions. Even the self-evident principles governing such phenomena as comets and eclipses do not escape from unsupported hypotheses. How much more difficult it is to understand the humanities!¹¹⁸

It is clear from this passage that for Tsuda, the Confucian idea of Heaven’s Principle or Heaven’s Law allows for a worldview in which there are constant, unchanging “laws” in human society, differing only from natural laws in their difficulty of verification. This is not too different from orthodox Neo-Confucianism. However, in orthodox Neo-Confucianism, the principles of human society were said to have been perfected by the sage kings of antiquity, causing societal ideals largely to be locked to the past, and to China. For Tsuda, the principles of human society had not yet been perfected, and moreover they were discoverable through scientific methodology.

If there exists unchangeable truths about the ideal way to govern human societies which are possible to arrive at through scientific methodology, the implications are at least threefold: First, society can *progress*; second, the “ideal” is not to be found in the past; and third; since the West was broadly acknowledged for their superior “techniques” or scientific methodology, the West can be a model, not just China. Note that Tsuda arrives at all of the above implications, none of which are commonly associated with Confucianism, by adapting the Confucian explanatory concept of Principle already present in the intellectual context of Meiji Japan.

It is important to note that allowing for the West as embodying “Confucian” principles in their social organization does not force Tsuda to depart with Confucianism in favor of

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 168.

¹¹⁸ *Loc. cit.*

“modernization” or “Westernization”. He warns against too enthusiastically adopting Western customs or law based on the view that it is difficult to “verify principles” in the humanities:

Our people [...] cannot easily investigate and understand the institutions of civilization that have been derived from [...] countless centuries of learning and experience. [...] Today’s so-called enlightened scholars imagine liberty without knowing the price of liberty, and they freely discuss French codes, English law, and American government without studying law and political economy.¹¹⁹

This situation, Tsuda argues, is similar to “the blind men who imagined the elephant”, bringing the essay to a conclusion with a reference to its beginning, namely the role of imagination.¹²⁰ Having been exposed to only parts of “enlightened society”, Japanese intellectuals are not yet able to distinguish which Western customs are in accordance with a higher, universal principle, and which are not, lacking the “superior imagination” of a man like Confucius.

The final example of the way Principle shaped Tsuda’s adaptation of Western concepts is found in his essay entitled “Mysteries” (*kai*). Beginning with the rationalist assertion that, just as an eclipse was a mystery prior to the obtaining of astronomical knowledge which could explain it, the phenomena which up until that point been regarded as “mysteries”, such as fables of “goblins and ghosts” were in reality nothing else than the unexplained workings of the human mind. For Tsuda, understanding the Principles of the world was the way to dispel with “mysteries”, but as material science had not progressed far enough to understand the human brain, belief in certain “mysteries” was still prevalent. He goes on to state that belief in mysteries could perhaps be explained by a “momentary derangement”, a temporary impairment in the “normal functioning and rapport between [the brain] and nerves”.¹²¹

Dubious though Tsuda’s explanation might be, there are several important points about this essay. Firstly, note the equation of scientific knowledge with Principle as discussed in the preceding paragraphs. As explained above however, Principle was a broader concept for Tsuda than just scientific laws, which likely explains why Tsuda then goes on to add a normative political layer to his discussion which up until that point had been concerned only with material science:

If a nation is compared to a person, the ruler is the brain, and the hundreds of officials are the five nerve senses and one hundred organs. Once the rapport between the brain and the nerves

¹¹⁹ MZ13, p. 168.

¹²⁰ This, of course, is a reference to the Indian parable in which four blind men, having touched different parts of an elephant, reach wildly different conclusions about what it is that they had felt.

¹²¹ MZ25, pp. 315-8, quote on p. 317.

is disturbed, the five senses and hundred organs mistake their functions. This is called insanity. When women, priests, and eunuchs make light of official power or when government orders are inappropriate and the hundreds of officials mistake their functions, the great ministers being domineering and the military oppressive, how does the disturbance to the national structure [*kokutai*] and the national illness differ from the diseases of insanity and sleep-walking? Such a country should be called a nation bewitched [*kaikoku*].¹²²

This citation is a remarkable example of how an outlook on the world clearly reminiscent of the Enlightenment's rationalist belief in the progression of material science can be combined with a Confucian political morality. In essence, Tsuda is employing a metaphor inspired by Western science in order to argue for Confucian "good government" – the proper relationships between different status groups and their mutual obligations and responsibilities.

There is a final symbolic aspect of this essay which must not be overlooked. It is famously stated in the *Analects*, the chief source of Confucius' philosophy, that Confucius "did not discuss [...] the supernatural".¹²³ When asked about "serving ghosts and spirits", Confucius replied rhetorically: "You do not yet understand life – how could you possibly understand death?"¹²⁴ These quotes have often been interpreted to the effect that Confucius' concern was on the here and now, on the moral cultivation and the interpersonal relationships of the present, rather than on esoteric teachings. For Tsuda, the fact that "recent generations [were] finally moving toward civilization", dispersing mysteries along the way, caused even the "ghosts and spirits" of his time to gradually become within reach of human knowledge.¹²⁵ The symbolism of the choice of topic is clear: the progression of human knowledge allows Tsuda to examine even those topics deemed "unknowable" by Confucius, all the while keeping his bridges back to the Confucian legacy unburnt.

In conclusion, Tsuda employs the concept of "principle" in a way which undermines some common imaginations of Confucianism: that it is "premodern", "Chinese", and static.¹²⁶ He is able to take a concept which is central to Confucian cosmology and refashion it as compatible with a gradual reform of society toward "civilization and enlightenment". For this purpose, Tsuda looks to the West, but not uncritically. It is also a central characteristic of his writings that they not only legitimize, but call for this reform, as moving toward "civilization" is equated with getting closer to Heaven's principles in human society. Essentially, Tsuda's

¹²² *Ibid* pp. 317-8.

¹²³ *Analects* 7.21, p. 71.

¹²⁴ *Analects* 11.12, p. 115.

¹²⁵ MZ25 p. 316.

¹²⁶ See Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*, p. 2 for imaginations of Confucianism.

essays exemplify how a Western progressivist worldview could be reconciled with and legitimated by Confucian philosophical concepts.¹²⁷ After contrasting Tsuda's use of Principle with that of Nishi Amane below, attention will be directed towards how both thinkers referred to this concept when discussing the appropriateness of establishing a popularly elected assembly in Japan.

NISHI AMANE'S CRITIQUE AND ADAPTATION OF PRINCIPLE

Nishi Amane (1829-1897) was Tsuda Mamichi's life-long friend and colleague for many years. He is chiefly remembered for his role in introducing *philosophy*, in the sense of the European intellectual tradition and its methodology, to Japan. For Nishi, "philosophy" represented the pursuit of fundamental, universal truths, and he believed it suitable, even necessary, to substitute it for the Confucian cosmology of Tokugawa Japan. In a letter written before his departure to the Netherlands in 1862, he wrote that "The explanations of life's principles in the science 'philosophia' are superior even to Song Confucianism".¹²⁸ Although it is ambiguous what "philosophia" meant for Nishi at that point, for the purposes of this essay it is sufficient to note simply that it was something other than Confucianism, and that it was Western. The second thing to note about the above citation is that for Nishi, what made Western philosophy "better" was its superior ability to explain "life's principles". Somewhat paradoxically then, Nishi seems to argue that the advantages of Western thought lay in outdoing Confucianism in answering a "Confucian" question of how to gain knowledge about Principle. However, Principle meant something quite different to him than it did to his friend Tsuda Mamichi. This short outline of Nishi Amane's conception of Principle, compared with Tsuda's understanding of the same concept in the section above, will hopefully show how differing responses to Western thought can be traced back to differing understandings of Confucian concepts. It might also be said to show the outlines of an implicit Confucian philosophical debate nested within an explicit discussion of Western thought.

In the third issue of the *Meiroke zasshi*, Nishi Amane wrote a response to a memorial submitted to the Meiji government by certain activists and former ministers petitioning for a

¹²⁷ Nakae Chōmin, a pupil of *Meiroke* founding member Mitsukuri Rinshō, also displayed this particular kind of synthesis, "wedding the concept of Principle to the nineteenth-century gospel of progress". Watanabe, *A History of Japanese Political Thought*, Noble, David (trans.). (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2012), p. 425.

¹²⁸ Havens, *Nishi Amane*, p. 44.

popularly elected assembly on a Western model.¹²⁹ The gist of Nishi's critique of this memorial was that even though a popularly elected assembly might be appropriate for Japan at a later time, it was not currently suitable. He takes issue with the memorialists' argument that the people's payment of taxes affords them a right, in accordance with a "universally acknowledged principle", of sharing in the affairs of their government.¹³⁰ He writes:

Now let me take up government as an entity that arises from a social contract. According to one version, the people say to the officials, "You shall rule us because we are supporting you by contributing half of our labor to your administration." Another type of social contract arises when the people say: "We shall subscribe half our labor for your support so that you may rule us. To prevent you from acting arbitrarily, however, we shall participate in formulating the laws by which you will govern us." Thus, while we may assume that government arises entirely from a social contract, as did Rosseau, the right to practice in government is not a right related to the payment of taxes. Indeed, the government of a country does not invariably arise from a contract. This is especially the case when historical traditions differ.¹³¹

Setting aside the actual argument put forth by Nishi in the above quotation, notice the extent to which Western political thinking informed this discussion. On first glance, it could be hard to even tell that the above quotation was written in Japan, and not in Europe. However, before arriving at this discussion of Western political thought, Nishi had in fact meticulously constructed a foundation by clarification of his interpretation of the Confucian concept of Principle. The appropriateness of political institutions with regards to differing "historical traditions" could only be convincingly argued, Nishi felt, by reshaping the concept of Principle in a way which was appropriate to his argument.

The dual natural and moral nature of Principle awarded a universalist legitimacy upon political structures said to be in accordance with it, such as the memorialists' insistence that a publicly elected assembly was in accordance with a "universally accepted principle". For Nishi, however, who did not believe in the political universalist implications of this metaphysics, the argument could be refuted by bifurcating "Principle" into two unrelated parts: "natural" and "human principles".

Nishi did not believe that "natural principles" had any connection to "human principles".¹³² This means that he assumed a stance opposite of Tsuda, who equated the principle of a "ball falling to the ground" with the Principle governing human psychology.

¹²⁹ De Bary et al. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, pp. 722-4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid* p. 723.

¹³¹ MZ3 p. 41-2.

¹³² MZ14 p. 178.

After describing the universal, invariable principle of gravity upon a “pebble thrust into the air”, Nishi goes on to ask rhetorically if you give a man one hundred yen with which to purchase goods thirty miles away, would he invariably return with the goods, just like the pebble returning to the ground?¹³³ It is doubtful that Tsuda would agree to the comparison – the existence of an *a priori* Principle giving rise to human emotions and desires does not exclude the possibility of humans acting counter to such a Principle. This point notwithstanding, what Nishi is getting at is not a philosophical question, but a political one:

Now I have heard that, according to Western studies in government, a rule will only be successful if it is adapted to the area and the times after the level of public enlightenment has been clarified [as opposed to natural principles which are universal]. Here is where the fundamental laws of the physical sciences and of government differ.

For Nishi, human principles vary with time and space. Or, in current jargon, Nishi is highlighting the cultural contingency of human societies. In order to make such an argument, Nishi saw it necessary to distance himself from the moral universalism of Confucian metaphysics.

This idea in fact has roots in the intellectual history of Tokugawa-era Confucianism. The “orthodox” Zhu Xi school of Neo-Confucianism, until this point usually the subject of references to “Confucianism” in this essay, had never had a monopoly on interpretations of Confucian concepts in Tokugawa Japan.¹³⁴ One of the most important alternative “Confucianisms” was championed by Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728).¹³⁵ A central figure in the *kogaku* or “ancient learning” school, he is primarily known for his advocacy of bypassing the interpretations of the Song Dynasty Confucians and “returning to the classics”. Inspired by his senior contemporary, the Confucian scholar Itō Jinsai (1627-1705), Ogyū also pioneered the dissolution of the union between the natural and the normative aspect of Principle which he saw as an unfortunate effect of Buddhist and Daoist influence.¹³⁶ This aspect of Ogyū’s thought seems to have influenced Nishi Amane, who is known to have read Ogyū in his youth.¹³⁷ The

¹³³ MZ3 p. 41.

¹³⁴ This, despite efforts to outlaw “heterodox” teachings in the 1790 Kansei reforms. Ooms, *Charismatic Bureaucrat* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975), pp. 139-50.

¹³⁵ For Ogyū’s life and thought, see Lidin, *The Life of Ogyū Sorai* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1973), pp. 7-130; Tucker (trans.), *Ogyū Sorai’s Philosophical Masterworks* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), pp. 3-134; and Watanabe, *A History of Japanese Political Thought* (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2012), pp. 159-80. There is a tendency in the literature to refer to Ogyū with his pen name, Sorai, but in this essay his family name will be employed as short hand for sake of consistency.

¹³⁶ Chung, “Between Principle and Situation”, p. 259.

¹³⁷ Havens, *Nishi Amane*, pp. 23-6.

fact that Nishi looked to Ogyū's interpretation of Principle as a philosophical anchoring of his discussion of Western political theory clearly illustrates that reference to the Confucian philosophical legacy was an important part of Nishi's introduction of Western political concepts to a Japanese context.

Albert Craig presents a different view of Nishi's bifurcation of Principle, denying that it was related to previous intellectual developments and arguing that Nishi received the idea from Western philosophy.¹³⁸ While it is correct to note that Nishi's purpose in doing so was probably inspired more by Western philosophy than by Ogyū's example ("liberating" nature from ethics rather than the other way around), it remains hard to accept Craig's assertion that this should be taken as proof of Ogyū's and Nishi's similar ideas as being "not at all related", especially when there is autobiographical evidence of the influence of Ogyū upon Nishi in his early years.¹³⁹

This is not to say that Principle was a central concept in Ogyū's or Nishi's thought – rather, the opposite was the case. Although the concept of Principle was clearly important enough to compel Nishi to preface his discussion of the merits of a publicly elected assembly with a clarification of that term, he was rather dismissive of it elsewhere. In connection with a discussion of the origin of things, Nishi seems to argue for the existence of a Creator, and dismisses the idea of Heaven (天, *ten*) and Heaven's Principle (天理, *tenri*) as "the erroneous path of the Sung Confucians".¹⁴⁰ In another passage, belief in Principle seems to be nothing more than mere superstition to him: "when common people deify trees, stones, insects, and beasts or when the eminent and erudite believe in Heaven, Reason [理], or a Supreme Ruler, they all believe without knowing".¹⁴¹

The way Nishi distanced himself from the Neo-Confucian interpretation of Principle yet retained the concept in a modified form in his own philosophical system, is perhaps symbolic of the ambiguous position of Confucianism more broadly Nishi's work – or even in early Meiji in general. As shown by his connection to Ogyū Sorai, even the way Nishi chose to disentangle the concept of Principle had precedent in the history of Tokugawa Confucianism. To be sure, Nishi did not characterize himself as "Confucian", nor does it make sense to do so. However, he remained in dialogue with a largely Confucian intellectual tradition, illustrated

¹³⁸ Craig, "Science and Confucianism", pp. 158-60.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155, Havens, *Nishi Amane*, p. 23-4.

¹⁴⁰ MZ9, p. 121.

¹⁴¹ MZ4, p. 50. Braisted has chosen to translate 理 as "reason" in this instance.

also through his frequent references to Chinese history and Confucian classics.¹⁴² The image of Nishi as a “leader of the Enlightenment”, if that term is taken to mean “champion of the new at the expense of the old”, is therefore sorely incomplete.

WHAT DID PRINCIPLE MEAN FOR THE JAPANESE “GLOBAL ENLIGHTENMENT”?

On the question of the establishment of a popularly elected assembly, Nishi and Tsuda assumed different positions, and those positions were clearly related to their different interpretations of Principle. We have seen how Nishi split Principle into two parts, “natural” and “human” principles, and used it to argue against the universalist arguments put forth by the memorialists wanting to establish an assembly on a Western model. Although techniques and technology based on “natural” principles could be introduced to Japan with no complications, Nishi believed political institutions based on “human” principles were subject to the changes of time and space and therefore more complicated to emulate.¹⁴³ On the other hand, Tsuda accepted a general assembly because he saw it as an “unavoidable dictate of the times”.¹⁴⁴ His view of the inherent Principle of government, inspired by European progressivism, saw the proliferation of knowledge and subsequent advance of “civilization” (開化, *kaika*) take on a central role. There is no better way to spread knowledge among the people in accordance with this Principle, he concludes, than establishing a popularly elected assembly.¹⁴⁵ His inclusion of the Confucian concept of Principle into his progressivist worldview additionally gives it a moral sprinkling rooted in a familiar concept of right and wrong. Clearly then, differing understandings of Principle went hand in hand with different evaluations on the practical application of European political thought to Japanese society.

The question of how the Confucian concept of Principle mattered to the “global Enlightenment” in Japan is complicated and cannot be answered exhaustively based on the cursory observations presented in this essay. A few interesting implications of the preceding analysis of Tsuda Mamichi’s and Nishi Amane’s writings might nonetheless be conjectured. Although Tsuda and Nishi disagreed about the extent to which Principle was a suitable philosophical concept with which to make sense of the world, neither of them rejected it altogether. The fact that they both, despite differing in their judgment, continued to refer to it

¹⁴² Swale, *The Meiji Restoration*, p. 103.

¹⁴³ MZ3 pp. 40-3.

¹⁴⁴ MZ12 pp. 155-9.

¹⁴⁵ MZ12 p. 159

seems to point to the role played by this, and perhaps other Confucian concepts, as part of an intellectual “compass”, without which navigating the new torrent of intellectual impulses from the West would be that much more difficult. The preoccupation with fundamental metaphysical and moral questions had created a wide Confucian vocabulary of which “Principle” represented only the tip of the iceberg. Any serious engagement with Western philosophical and political ideas would seem to require the inclusion of these terms and concepts, at least initially, to properly situate new ideas in a Japanese context. If this indeed is a more accurate characterization of Confucianism’s interaction with Western thought, the correct observation but mistaken interpretation of Sebastian Conrad’s quip that Confucianism was “somewhat paradoxically” a part of the “global Enlightenment” in East Asia should become clear.¹⁴⁶ Kiri Paramore addressed precisely this misconception in discussing “Confucianism as liberalism”:

Modern academic writing has a long tradition of portraying Confucianism as inherently opposed to the politics of Western modernity. [...] Yet the earliest positive Japanese assessments of Western governance in general, and democracy, liberalism, and egalitarianism, in particular, were made through Confucian lenses and argued in Confucian terms by Confucian scholars.¹⁴⁷

Paramore’s description fits Tsuda Mamichi and Nishi Amane better than previous characterizations of them as “Enlightenment thinkers” removed from their Confucian heritage. Although calling them “Confucian scholars” might be to stretch the argument too far, the writings of Tsuda and Nishi should compel scholars to move away from the tendency to gloss over or “rationalize” Confucian connections in Japan’s “global Enlightenment”.

Confucianism is more than abstract philosophy – it is also fundamentally social, and “practiced” in the real world.¹⁴⁸ Just as Japanese thought adapted to new, Western impulses, Meiji society was undergoing dramatic transformations as well. In the following chapter, the personal ideal for members of the Meiji period intellectual elite will be examined as it was reformulated and adapted to fit the changing times by certain *Meirokeisha* writers. Looking at this aspect of Confucianism’s changing role in Meiji society supplements the preceding theoretical discussion with a small glimpse of Confucianism’s continued, though altered, significance to the historical actors of the period.

¹⁴⁶ Conrad, “Enlightenment in Global History”, p. 1023.

¹⁴⁷ Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*, p. 118.

¹⁴⁸ Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, pp. 11, 30-4.

3. The Sage and the Enlightened Statesman: Reinventing Individual Enlightenment

A true statesman possesses innate talents and virtues that enable him during peace to plan for the increasing prosperity of the country and during adversity to restore peace and tranquility by healing injuries and by easing national calamities. This true statesman will accumulate training and expand in wisdom by observing foreign and domestic history in detail and by committing to memory the true record of his own country. In addition to ripening his knowledge in written materials, he will also verify on the basis of actual facts. Thereby will he acquire means for administering the country, for thoroughly understanding the true principles of society, for penetrating public feeling, and for acquiring facts.¹⁴⁹

-Sugi Kōji, 1874

The Master possessed special and outstanding ability and knew the essentials of great learning. He studied literature extensively and had a firm memory. He practiced what he learned and investigated things with effort, comprehended human relations and understood the principle of things, investigated to the utmost wherein one should abide. Consequently, his mind was completely free and without any doubt, and he clearly understood the substance of the Way.¹⁵⁰

-Lü Yu-shu, end of the eleventh century

The first citation is taken from Sugi Kōji's¹⁵¹ article in the tenth issue of the *Meiroke zasshi* titled "The True Statesman". In it, Sugi describes what he considers the ideal statesman for contemporary Japan: an innately talented and virtuous administrator, who, armed with the insight of history and "actual facts", could lead his country toward peace and prosperity. It is well known that among the *Meiroke* founding members, all but Nakamura Masanao and Fukuzawa Yukichi were at one point employed by the state.¹⁵² As such, this description might well be taken as indicative of the personal aspirations of some of the *Meiroke* members, a new scholar-bureaucrat ideal tailor-made for the new age.

It is identical in form and has significant overlap in content with typical descriptions of Confucian sages, represented above by Lü Yu-shu's (1044-90) eulogy for his teacher, Cheng Hao (1032-85). The importance placed on practical learning, and the application of that learning in everyday life is a continuing feature. As is the more abstract idea of "understanding the Principle", or "understanding the true principles of society". Sugi's emphasis on the examination of history as an important source of knowledge is not explicitly mirrored in the

¹⁴⁹ MZ10, p. 131.

¹⁵⁰ Chan (trans.), *Reflections on Things at Hand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 305.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix A for biographical notes.

¹⁵² Braisted (trans.), *Meiroke Zasshi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. xx.

other quotation above, but it was nonetheless a defining characteristic of Neo-Confucian thought.¹⁵³

William Theodore de Bary has explained that “enlightenment” took on a second meaning in Japan during the course of the nineteenth century. The original meaning was “enlightenment” as the goal of spiritual cultivation, while the other was “enlightenment” as a social movement - what is today translated as *keimō*, and which was not yet in usage at the time of the *Meiokusha*.¹⁵⁴ Thus the idea of *individual* enlightenment predated the idea of social enlightenment in Meiji Japan, and influenced the way in which the *Meiokusha* members viewed their own role in society. Although it might seem that the translation of both concepts into a common English term is misleading, it must be kept in mind that the *Meiokusha* writers were preoccupied to a large degree with English texts in which terms such as “enlightenment” were frequently used, and which they had to make sense of in some way. As such, rather than viewing the comparison of pre-existing and “foreign” concepts as later-day confluents, there is good reason to focus on exactly this “blend” of intellectual concepts as a method through which the *Meiokusha* writers made sense of the widely divergent intellectual traditions they straddled, rather than attempting to neatly separate the various strands making up their thought. While there was no direct link, such as that provided by the English word “enlightenment”, between the two concepts at the time of the *Meiokusha*, the following section will argue that the *Meiokusha* engaged in a reinvention of the concept of personal enlightenment, tying it inextricably with the concept of societal enlightenment in the process.

CONFUCIAN INDIVIDUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

In Tokugawa society, the Confucian sage was not a “lofty and remote figure in the past” or a “hazy abstraction”, but rather an attainable ideal for those engaged in study.¹⁵⁵ In theory, anyone could become a sage, and the sage was accordingly a plausible model for self-cultivation for those with the money and free time to devote themselves to study, which in Tokugawa times for the most part meant the *samurai* nobility who received monetary stipends from the government.¹⁵⁶ In the words of the famous Neo-Confucian scholar Zhou Dunyi (1017-

¹⁵³ De Bary, “Common Tendencies in Neo-Confucianism”, pp. 34-8, 42-3.

¹⁵⁴ De Bary, “Neo-Confucian Cultivation”, p. 141.

¹⁵⁵ De Bary, “Sagehood as a Secular and Spiritual Ideal”, p. 127.

¹⁵⁶ Not all Confucians held this view of sagehood. In Tokugawa Japan, Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) is the most prominent example of a Confucian thinker who denied the feasibility of becoming a sage. See *ibid.* pp. 154-72.

73): “The sage aspires to become Heaven, the worthy aspires to become a sage, and the gentleman aspires to become a worthy”.¹⁵⁷

As reaching sagehood is something one could experience only after having grasped fully the Confucian “Way”, it is not a simple task to pin down with words what exactly it entailed. De Bary has written that the experience of reaching sagehood “no doubt in part as a reflection of residual Buddhist and Taoist influence, [was] often expressed in terms of achieving a kind of illumination or enlightenment [...]”.¹⁵⁸ Without employing complex Confucian concepts and terminology, the personal experience of “sagehood” might be described as a blissful understanding of one’s role in the cosmos and in society, of an “elevation of mind which transcended the petty problems of the world while yet dealing effectively with them”.¹⁵⁹

The latter part of the above quotation is significant, for the Confucian sage was not a religious recluse who cut himself off from society. Rather, he was one who, through his proper knowledge of the principles of the world and of human affairs, could deal effectively, compassionately, and fairly with the “petty problems of the world”. To some extent, this translated into a form of social responsibility. The clearest expression of the assumed responsibility of the Confucian scholar toward society is to be found in a famous passage in the Confucian classic known as “The Great Learning” (大學, C. dàxué), which warrants a lengthy quote:

The ancients, in wishing to display enlightened virtue in the world, first brought good order to their states. Wishing to bring good order to their states, they first regulated their households. Wishing to regulate their households, they first cultivated themselves. Wishing to cultivate themselves, they first rectified their minds. Wishing to rectify their minds, they first made their intentions [sincere]. Wishing to make their intentions [sincere], they first perfected their knowledge. Perfecting knowledge lies in coming to things. Come to things, and subsequently knowledge is perfected. make knowledge perfect, and subsequently intentions are made [sincere]. Make intentions [sincere], and subsequently the mind is rectified. Rectify the mind, and subsequently the self is cultivated. Cultivate the self and subsequently the household is regulated. Regulate the household, and subsequently the state is brought to good order. Bring good order to the state, and subsequently the world is at peace. From the Son of Heaven down to the ordinary people everyone without exception should take cultivation of the self as the root.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Chan (trans.). *Reflections on Things at Hand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ De Bary, “Sagehood as a Secular and Spiritual Ideal”, p. 129.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid* p. 128.

¹⁶⁰ Johnston and Wang (trans.) *Daxue and Zhongyong* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012), p. 47.

Johnston and Wang chose to leave *cheng* (誠) in Chinese in their translation, providing three suggested translations: sincere, genuine, pure. I have chosen to stick with the former English translation for readability, since only the gist of the concept is needed to understand its function in the citation.

From this quotation, the Confucian connection between individual cultivation or “enlightenment” with society or politics becomes clear. The assumption was that political order was predicated on the moral exemplar of the ruler in particular, or the ruling class more broadly interpreted. As written in the *Analects*, “The Virtue of a gentleman is like the wind, and the Virtue of a petty person is like the grass - when the wind moves over the grass, the grass is sure to bend”.¹⁶¹

Generally speaking, the Confucian scholar had, following his internal moral and spiritual cultivation, a duty to partake in the political sphere. This duty is sometimes termed “ordering the world” (經世, C. *jīngshì*, J. *keisei*), and started with moral self-cultivation. There is even a sense that fulfilling one’s political and societal obligations was a way of fulfilling one’s humanity.¹⁶²

In this way, personal “enlightenment” was a prerequisite to the equally important contribution to the proper “ordering” of the world. The precise contents of such a personal “enlightenment”, and of the related societal obligations were of course highly contingent on the differing emphases and variations possible within a Neo-Confucian framework of thought. However, as Japanese society underwent dramatic changes in the late Tokugawa and especially in the early Meiji periods, the idea of the Confucian sage could only be stretched so far before it began to seem ill suited. It is perhaps not surprising then, that the concept, which had already been contested earlier in Chinese and Japanese history, should see a drastic reinvention in the 1870s.¹⁶³

All of the citations above, from Zhou Dunyi, the *Great Learning*, and the *Analects* (along with the rest of the Confucian canon), would have been familiar to the *Meirokeisha* writers. However, despite being part of the intellectual elite of their day, none of them seemed to harbor any ambition of becoming a Confucian sage, or “ordering the world” through mere personal cultivation. Instead, these concepts seem to have been reinvented and reformulated in terms which were more meaningful for the cultural contingencies and the particular intellectual environment in early Meiji Japan in which they participated.

¹⁶¹ *The Analects* 12.19, p. 134.

¹⁶² Chang, Hao. “The Intellectual Heritage of the Confucian Ideal of *Ching-Shih*”, pp. 72-5.

¹⁶³ De Bary argues that the trend of reimagining sagehood is already visible in both Ming dynasty Confucianism and in the Tokugawa era “Ancient Learning” (*kogaku*). De Bary, “Sagehood as a Secular and Spiritual Ideal”, pp. 172-80.

THE ENLIGHTENED STATESMAN

As the quotes at the beginning of this chapter illustrate, the ideal of the “enlightened” or “true” statesman as envisioned by Sugi Kōji was reminiscent of the Confucian sage as a political personal ideal. While Sugi’s “enlightened statesman” was not Confucian, it seems plausible that his concept had the same function as the idea of the sage, and furthermore that the characteristics of this “enlightened statesman” were influenced considerably by the above-described scholarly characteristics and political obligations of the Confucian sage. Let us now examine closer these characteristics to see in what ways they were similar to or different from the ideal of the Confucian sage.

The most obvious difference is the altered conditions for what constituted personal “enlightenment”. For Confucians, all or some of the commonly accepted Confucian canon were a source of fundamental authority. For most of the *Meiokusha* writers, Confucianism no longer provided sufficient authority on its own – for some, it could profitably be supplemented by Western learning, but for others it represented “empty learning”.¹⁶⁴ Hence, Sugi’s true statesman, “in addition to ripening his knowledge in written materials” would also “verify on the basis of actual facts”.¹⁶⁵ It is by no means outside the scope of Confucian thinking to combine book-learning with empirical observation - in China, Korea, as well as in Japan, variations of “practical studies” emerged during the centuries prior to Sugi describing his ideal statesman.¹⁶⁶ However, given the *Meiokusha* thinkers’ biographical backgrounds as Western Studies experts, Sugi’s references to “actual facts” should, I think, be tied to Western scientific thinking. As such, Sugi’s true statesman is one who could combine insights from Confucianism (or other “classical” teachings) with those of western empirical research.

The argument for continued importance of Confucian self-cultivation to the *Meiokusha* writers does not rely solely on Sugi’s oblique mention of “written materials”. Consider the following quote from Mori Arinori’s “First Essay on Enlightenment”, which

¹⁶⁴ Tsuda Mamichi described the idea of the “five elements”, which is a part of Song dynasty Neo-Confucian cosmology, as *kyogaku* (“empty learning”). MZ3, p. 38.

¹⁶⁵ MZ10, p. 131.

¹⁶⁶ For a limited outline of this literature, see de Bary and Bloom (eds.). *Principle and Practicality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Kalton, Song, Lee Eul-ho, Han and Park Chong-hong’s chapters in Korean National Commission for UNESCO (ed.) *Korean Philosophy: Its Tradition and Modern Transformation* (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 2004); and Tucker, Mary Evelyn. *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989).

follows a description of “half-enlightened” societies, which is likely meant to include Tokugawa Japan:

Many instances may be found in history of people who have stopped temporarily at this point of half-enlightenment. In the long run, this arises when men have become unable to stimulate their intellects, their thought being out of harmony with their feelings so that they are credulous, or misled, or boastful, or hesitant. Those who overcome these difficulties will finally attain a brilliant level of talent and virtue, having understood the wonders of creation and the principles in things, encouraged brotherly love, and developed discrimination. These should be called men who have reached the level of enlightenment.¹⁶⁷

Mori’s imagined “enlightened” man is able to “understand the principles in things” and has “developed discrimination” - these are concepts associated with Confucian sagehood. Interestingly, he has also understood “the wonders of creation” and “encouraged brotherly love” - phrases which most likely stem from Mori’s experiences with Christianity.¹⁶⁸ This point aside, what is clear is that for Mori, the kind of enlightened individual needed in Meiji Japan was not merely a technical specialist, but someone who had cultivated intellectual and moral virtues as well.

Paralleling the concept of “ordering the world” as discussed in connection with the Confucian sage above, Mori’s enlightened man did not pursue intellectual and moral virtues for his own benefit, but for the benefit of his society. Writes Mori:

Once national customs have achieved this level in some part, countries can construct machines, erect buildings, dig mines, build ships, open seaways, produce carriages, and improve highways. [...] By these means, the virtues of social intercourse will spread through the liberal expansion of commerce, products will reach perfection as machines are increasingly refined, and men will ultimately appreciate the true value of civilization. I would say that only then can countries defend their prestige and enter the glorious realm [of enlightenment].¹⁶⁹

This quote, following immediately after the other, elucidates Mori’s logic of the development of society as a corollary of individual cultivation - or, one could say, the “enlightenment” of society following the “enlightenment” of the individual. Sugi made the same connection implicit in his envisioning of a statesman - not, say, a scholar - as the embodiment of personal enlightenment. Nishi Amane wrote that “it is naturally the responsibility of those in authority in good time to guide the people tenderly by the hand from ignorance to the level of enlightenment, just as one gently removes all the weeds without pulling up the seedlings”.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ MZ3 p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ See Hall, *Mori Arinori*, pp. 95-128.

¹⁶⁹ MZ3 pp. 30-1.

¹⁷⁰ MZ1, p. 4.

This quote is significant not only for illustrating the social responsibility of “those in power”, who presumably had already reached a “level of enlightenment”, but also for Nishi’s allusion to a passage in the Confucian classic *Mencius* in doing so:

One must work at it, but do not assume success. One should not forget the heart, but neither should one ‘help’ it grow. Do not be like the man from Song. Among the people of the state of Song there was a farmer who, concerned lest his sprouts not grow, pulled on them. Obviously, he returned home and said to his family, ‘Today I am worn out, I helped the sprouts to grow.’ His son rushed out and looked at them. The sprouts were withered.¹⁷¹

In other words, although this passage is most commonly referenced in a context of personal cultivation, Nishi seems to advocate for a moderate policy of “promoting enlightenment”, perhaps by having public officials lead by example, like the Confucian scholars of past.

Nishimura Shigeki also presented an argument which was in agreement with Mori’s and Sugi’s, although from a slightly different angle, in his essay titled “Government and Ethics Are Not Separate Paths”.¹⁷² In what comes across as a patently Confucian criticism of “nobles and high officials” of recent times, Nishimura reasserts the importance of personal moral cultivation as a precondition for good governing. He does this by referring to the sequential argumentation of the *Great Learning* quoted above, as well as Mencius’ maxim that “the family is the foundation of the nation and that the individual person is the foundation of the family”.¹⁷³ It becomes clear from his writings that for Nishimura, the concept of *bunmei kaika*, often translated as “civilization and enlightenment”, did not necessarily entail the “Westernization” of society, but rather meant something more like “personal character becoming good”.¹⁷⁴

Significantly, and characteristically of all the *Meirokeisha* writers, Nishimura was sure to supplement these references to the Confucian canon by borrowing the authority from Western voices which he saw as supporting his argument; Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Brown, and Francis Wayland.¹⁷⁵ For instance, Nishimura quotes Bentham as having observed that “what is good from the point of view of governing is not bad from the point of view of ethics”.¹⁷⁶

It is perhaps not surprising that a scholar of Western studies who still clearly valued the heritage of Neo-Confucian thought such as Nishimura would present such a view, but the

¹⁷¹ *Mencius* 2A2.16a, p. 40.

¹⁷² MZ31 pp. 379-82.

¹⁷³ *Mencius* 4A5.1, p. 91.

¹⁷⁴ Shively, “Nishimura Shigeki”, p. 197, n. 1.

¹⁷⁵ The latter is translator Braisted’s best guess based on an ambiguous reference.

¹⁷⁶ MZ31 p. 381.

example serves to underpin the impression given by Sugi and Mori of the continued importance placed on individual moral and intellectual cultivation. While the two latter writers displayed a reimagining of what that cultivation entailed, Nishimura seemed content with harmonizing the pre-existing Confucian tradition of personal cultivation with complementary voices from the West as a means of imbuing it with new authority. Before concluding, it is worth pondering briefly the nature of the particular societal obligations tied to personal “enlightenment” as re-envisioned by Sugi and Mori.

Sugi’s true statesman appears very much a product of the uncertain times of the early Meiji period. His intellect and his knowledge of history was to be used in foiling the schemes of aggressive foreign statesmen and to hatch his own, and in a foreign crisis he was to “appear like a Bodhisattva to his countrymen by employing all manner of defense techniques to prepare against foreign invasion...”.¹⁷⁷ As Sugi imagined him, he was very much tied to the trend of defensive development mentioned at the onset of this thesis which was visible in numerous countries’ encounter with the West during the nineteenth century.

Mori’s enlightened man was also imagined as responsible for the development of his country’s infrastructure and military armaments. However, he was additionally to fill an important role which neither the Confucian sage nor Sugi’s true statesman could: a promoter of “civilization”. During a debate with fellow *Meirokeisha* member Fukuzawa Yukichi on the appropriate role of scholars in society, Mori suggested that it was “impossible to regard the progress of civilization in society as the responsibility of the government”, because “this responsibility lies with the people who understand and promote civilization”. Criticizing Fukuzawa’s view that it was not appropriate for scholars to accept government employment, Mori bluntly stated: “It makes no difference whether they promote civilization as officials or private persons”.¹⁷⁸

Having “understood” civilization, Mori’s “enlightened” man had a responsibility to educate his countrymen, and in this way to contribute to the progress of his country. This is similar to the Confucian sage’s obligation of “world-ordering”, but different in its procedure. Rather than simply leading by moral example, the obligation of Mori’s “enlightened” man was an educational one - it is surely not irrelevant that Mori went on to become one of Meiji Japan’s

¹⁷⁷ MZ10, p. 132.

¹⁷⁸ MZ2, pp. 23-4.

most influential Education Ministers.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, this contextualizes Mori's vision of what he wanted to accomplish by founding the *Meirokeisha*. The inner side of the jacket of each issue of the *Meiroke zasshi* stated the hope that the magazine would "promote 'enlightenment'" among their fellow countrymen.¹⁸⁰ While it may not be a fair assessment to conclude that Mori or his colleagues by this wished to promote themselves as the "sages" of Meiji Japan, it leaves no doubt as to the sincerity and sense of importance with which they undertook their task.

THE "GLOBAL ENLIGHTENMENT" IN PRACTICE?

Writing of the late Tokugawa period, de Bary noted the changing role, yet remaining relevance, of sagehood as an ideal:

...for those who owed their intellectual and spiritual formation to the Neo-Confucian tradition, the conception of sagehood was not reducible to its several parts, nor could it be wholly invalidated by changes in the social and cultural conditions which helped to shape it from age to age. Intellectual styles and social mores might come and go, but the burden on the conscience of the Confucian would not grow lighter as he was called upon to serve more varied and specialized functions. [...] None of these [new] roles could be meaningfully served except in the light of the total synthesis embodied in the conception of sagehood.¹⁸¹

Although the changes in the social and cultural conditions in Meiji Japan were extreme compared to those of the late Tokugawa period, and although the explicit links to Confucianism were sometimes consciously severed, the idea of sagehood remained discernable in the concept of the "true statesman" and of individual cultivation found in the writings of the *Meirokeisha*. These dramatic changes in the social and cultural context might have necessitated a drastic reinvention of "sagehood" to the point of it not being recognizably "Confucian" any longer. However, it is notable that even Mori Arinori, who was characterized as a "foreigner born of Japan", did not discard completely the intellectual traditions of the past, but allowed them to find new expression in concepts which seemed to him better suited to meet Japan's uncertain future.¹⁸² In this way, the Confucian legacy continued to shape one practical aspect of Meiji society.

Having examined the transformation of the Confucian sage into a "true statesman" or an "enlightened" educator in the writings of the *Meirokeisha*, one might still harbor doubts as

¹⁷⁹ Hall, *Mori Arinori*, pp. 324-389.

¹⁸⁰ Braisted, *Meiroke Zasshi*, p. xvii. See n. 46.

¹⁸¹ De Bary, "Sagehood as a Secular and Spiritual Ideal", p. 179.

¹⁸² "日本の産んだ西洋人" Hayashi, "Kindai kyōiku kōsō to Mori Arinori", p. 209. This characterization is attributed to Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), Japan's first Prime Minister.

to why this transformation was necessary at all. If the intellectual traditions of his country could not provide a suitable ideal, why didn't a man like Mori look elsewhere for new ideals in the world around him? Apart from any practical concerns of popular appeal, de Bary has provided an explanation, which, I think, goes a long way in describing the intellectual appeal of Confucian sagehood even for those who were prepared to part ways with strictly Confucian philosophy:

If, with the accelerated changes propelling Japan into an uncertain "modern" future, a simple return to earlier syntheses and conceptions of sagehood was no longer feasible, still, past experience remained a relevant gauge for measuring the new dimensions of man's humanity. These might go beyond the Neo-Confucian conception of sagehood, but man himself would be diminished if they fell short of it.¹⁸³

Confucianism was always more than ivory tower metaphysics or abstract discussions of morality: it was tied to practical, everyday concerns, of the experience of being human. This broad legacy, the "past experience" with which the "new dimensions of man's humanity" could be measured, survived perhaps even when particular theoretical constructs built on top of it did not. For instance, the respect for learning, the combination of practical and moral education, and the related obligation to utilize learning for the benefit of society were aspects related to Confucianism, but which could also exist outside of a strictly Confucian context. The ways in which the concept of sagehood was transformed in the writings of the *Meiokusha* presented in this chapter represent merely a minute example of how the transnational flow of ideas in the nineteenth century was not a simple diffusion of Western ideas such as "Enlightenment thought" into the rest of the world, but a constant reinterpretation and negotiation between different traditions of thought. For Sugi and Mori, these essentially Confucian traditions went hand in hand with their view of how to work toward an "enlightened" society inspired by the West.

¹⁸³ De Bary, "Sagehood as a Secular and Spiritual Ideal", p. 180.

Conclusion

The interpretation of Confucianism employed in this essay provides the simplest explanation to the question of the so-called “paradoxical” interaction between Confucian and “Enlightenment” thought. Although Confucianism could be and was used in conjunction with rejecting Western philosophical and political ideas, it could also be reimagined in order to assert the validity of Western concepts with greater legitimacy. Confucianism as a metaphysical system was not in diametric opposition to Western thought, so far as its assumed universal validity enabled it to incorporate new ideas such as Newtonian physics as essentially affirming the teachings of the Confucian classics, as seen in Tsuda Mamichi’s writings. Nor were individual thinkers bound to burn all bridges to the Confucian legacy should they chose to denounce central tenets of the Confucian metaphysical system, like Nishi Amane. Moreover, the legacy of Confucianism is not limited to abstract intellectual exercises but also found expression in social practices which continued into the Meiji period and beyond. The Confucian background of the Meiji-era “enlightened statesman” as described by Sugi Kōji and Mori Arinori might be one example of this.

Present in the *Mei roku zasshi* is not only the influence of ideas which were new to the Japanese context, such as discussion of Rousseau’s social contract or Newtonian physics, but also a remarkable range of different approaches to contextualize these new ideas with Confucian concepts, from deliberate synthesis to purposive criticism. As concepts such as Principle or Confucian sagehood were reinterpreted by a new generation of scholars who had no incentives to adhere strictly to past orthodoxy (as far as the Tokugawa intellectual world actually possessed an orthodoxy), they were subject to dramatic change. However, they were very seldom discarded or simply replaced by new, “imported” concepts. Although outside the scope of this essay, the interaction between “East” and “West” and Japan’s unique role in this interaction was central in the further developments in Japanese philosophy.¹⁸⁴

Talk about a “Japanese enlightenment” as a moment at which certain key concepts from Western philosophy were introduced to Japan seems inadequate so far as it emphasizes a corresponding or even converging “development” in Japanese intellectual history vis-à-vis the Western reference point. The writings of Tsuda, Nishi, and the other “enlightenment thinkers”,

¹⁸⁴ Burtscher, “Facing ‘the West’ on Philosophical Grounds”, pp. 371-4.

for all their inspiration by Western thinkers, are incomplete when removed from their Japanese context. Historians should recognize that despite the occasional claims to the contrary by its authors, Confucian concepts and conventions continued to frame and shape much of the debate in the *Meiroke zasshi*. The *Meiroke* writers were above all part of a transnational, intercultural *conversation*. Sebastian Conrad termed this conversation the “global Enlightenment”. Whether or not this is the best term for it, the inherent dynamism and plurality which it seeks to highlight is everywhere present in the writings of the *Meiroke*.

Reassessing the role of Confucianism in this conversation has the potential to tie the historiography on the Japanese intellectual encounter with Western thought to the broader history of the East Asian region, united as it was by its Confucian heritage. Scholars of Korean and Chinese history have described the interaction between Western thought and Confucianism in different places and at different times, which, when put together, paints a picture of the wide variety of responses engendered by Confucianism. For instance, in Korea, Neo-Confucian scholars had been in dialogue with Western ideas ever since the encounter with Jesuit science and theology in the seventeenth century.¹⁸⁵ During the late Joseon period and up until the Japanese annexation in 1910, various reforms efforts saw numerous efforts at reconciling Confucian concepts with Western ideas of political organization.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, the shocking decay and collapse of the Qing dynasty in China provided the backdrop for a wide array of intellectual responses by Chinese Confucian scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately, insights from this literature have only sparingly been applied to the Japanese case, perhaps due to the legacy of locating the key to Japan’s “modern encounter” outside of Zhu Xi Confucianism, particularly in the *kogaku* or Ancient Learning school, as did Maruyama.

Indeed, viewed in its global historical context, Confucianism’s encounter with Western philosophy and political thought is one of the most interesting chapters in a story which in many ways is still ongoing. As a philosophical tradition, Confucianism is still very much

¹⁸⁵ Baker, “Western Learning and New Directions in Korean Neo-Confucianism”; Chung, *A Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995).

¹⁸⁶ Yi, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization in Korean History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2007); Kim, Hongkyung “Dasan Jeong Yak-yong: A Synthesizer of Korean Confucianism”; Duncan, “The Confucian Context of Reform”.

¹⁸⁷ Furth, “Intellectual Change”, pp. 13-41.

alive.¹⁸⁸ What is more, with the much heralded rise of China to superpower status, there has emerged a debate regarding the past – and future – role of Confucianism in international society.¹⁸⁹ This debate is perhaps best understood as part of the nuancing of “modernity”, consisting of different claims to what moral or intellectual underpinnings contemporary societies or international society should be based on.¹⁹⁰ The West does not have a claim of monopoly on the future, as it perhaps seemed to have at the time of the *Meirokeisha* with the proliferation of its rational, progressivist worldview in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is hard to imagine a return to a Confucian world view or regional order in East Asia, and claims of a peaceful Confucian Chinese-centered world order is merely another distorting essentialization which politicizes Confucianism (and Chinese history) in questionable ways.¹⁹¹ Nonetheless, Confucianism remains an important historical precedent and source of inspiration for alternative visions of what the world should look like as the idea of convergence toward a Western-originated “modernity” has been called into question. Rather seeing this as a competition between contesting “modernities”, acknowledging this could be the start of a “global civilizational dialogue”.¹⁹² In this way, although the *Meirokeisha* members operated at the other end of this trend when Western-originated “modernity” was very much in the vogue, their ability to negotiate between different intellectual traditions and cultures (and to do so while retaining a markedly positive outlook on the future) is highly relevant to the challenges facing the contemporary world.

¹⁸⁸ For an introduction to contemporary Confucianism, see Elstein (ed.), *Dao Companion to Contemporary Confucian Philosophy* (Cham: Springer, 2021).

¹⁸⁹ Kang, *East Asia Before the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Wang, *Harmony and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

¹⁹⁰ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, pp. 113-49.

¹⁹¹ Millward, “Qing and Twentieth-Century Chinese Diversity Regimes”.

¹⁹² Tu, “Implications of the Rise of ‘Confucian’ East Asia”, p. 209.

Appendix A: Biographic Notes

FUKUZAWA YUKICHI 福沢諭吉 (1835-1901)

Founding member of the *Meiropkusha*. Born in Nakatsu domain, present-day Ōita Prefecture. Studied Dutch, then English, and travelled to the USA and Europe on two occasions in the 1860s. Based on these experiences, he wrote a number of works on the West which became bestsellers. Founder of Keio University. His liberal views were highly influential in the Meiji period and beyond. Fukuzawa Yukichi remains a household name in Japan today.

KATŌ HIROYUKI 加藤弘之 (1836-1916)

Founding member of the *Meiropkusha*. Originally from Tajima, present-day Hyōgo Prefecture. Studied Western Studies under Sakuma Shōzan, and specialized himself in German. Worked as instructor and administrator at the *Kaiseijō*, later as a bureaucrat in the Finance, Foreign, and Education Ministries of the Meiji state. His political views grew more conservative in the 1880s, and he is today often associated with Social Darwinism.

MORI ARINORI 森有礼 (1847-1889)

Founding member of the *Meiropkusha*. Born in Satsuma, present-day Kagoshima Prefecture. Studied in England, then the United States, before becoming Japan's first Chargé d'Affairs to the United States in 1871. In addition to other high-ranking posts in the foreign Ministry, he is remembered for his role as Minister of Education in reforming the education system starting in 1886. Mori was infamous in his time for radical “modernizing” proposals, such as a suggestion (later retracted) to introduce English as the official language of Japan. He was also the first to propose the abolishment of the right of the *samurai* class to wear swords in public - a matter of major symbolic importance - as well as the first in Japan to formalize his marriage, based on a contract with his wife, in a Western, “modern” wedding ceremony. In 1889, on the day of the proclamation of the Meiji Constitution, he was assassinated by an ultranationalist.

NAKAMURA MASANAO 中村正直 (1832-91)

Founding member of the *Meiropusha*. Born in Edo, present-day Tokyo. Studied English and translated Samuel Smiles's *Self Help* as well as John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* into Japanese. Was baptized a Christian in 1874.

NISHI AMANE 西周 (1829-1897)

Founding member of the *Meiropusha*. Born in Tsuwano, present-day Shimane Prefecture, to a minor samurai family. In 1854 he renounced his ties to his feudal lord (*dappan*) in order to avoid service as a Confucian scholar and to pursue Western Studies. Studied at Leiden university from 1862 to 1864 with Tsuda Mamichi. Back in Japan he wrote the *Hyakugaku renkan* (Links of All Sciences), a work bearing the English subtitle "*Encyclopedia*" which presented Western scholarly traditions to a Japanese audience, the primary importance being Nishi's discussion of philosophy. This, along with his *Jinsei sanpōsetsu* (Theory of the Three Human Treasures), in which he attempted to construct a morality suitable for Japan's new society informed largely by Western philosophy, has given him a reputation as the "father of Japanese philosophy".

NISHIMURA SHIGEKI 西村茂樹 (1828-1902)

Founding member of the *Meiropusha*. Born in Sakura domain, present-day Chiba Prefecture. Confucian scholar who was involved in Western studies prior to the Meiji Restoration. After the restoration he continued work as a government official, and founded the *Nihon Kōdōkan* (Japanese Society for the Investigation of the Way), a society tasked with investigating and propagating moral principles, based on Confucianism, for Meiji Japan.

OGYŪ SORAI 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728)

Tokugawa-period Confucian scholar known for his contribution to the *kogaku* (Ancient Learning) school. His reinterpretations of the Confucian classics, ostensibly more authentic than that of the Neo-Confucians, were highly influential in late Tokugawa Japan. Under the shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi and in the service of the Yanagisawa clan, he worked as an official for some years. After the death of Tsunayoshi, he founded his own Confucian school. Maruyama Masao saw in Ogyū's work the separation of nature and artifice, which he identified as an important source of Japanese modernity.

SAKUMA SHŌZAN 佐久間象山 (1811-1864)

Also known as Sakuma Zōzan. Confucian scholar from Shinano Province, present day Nagano Prefecture. Student of Satō Issai, teacher to several *Meirokeisha* members. Developed an interest in Western science, initially Western gunnery, following his lord's appointment to the shogunate's council of advisors and assumption of the responsibility of Japan's coastal defenses. Famous for his utilization of the Zhu Xi Confucian concept of «investigation of things» in exploring Western science, and for being an advocate of *kaikoku*, or “opening the country” (to Western trade), during the waning years of the shogunate. He was assassinated in 1864 because of this political stance.

SUGI KŌJI 杉亨二 (1828-1917)

Founding member of the *Meirokeisha*. Born in Nagasaki. Worked at the *Bansho Shirabesho* (Barbarian [Western] Documents Research Center) prior to the Meiji restoration. Specialized in statistics.

TSUDA MAMICHI 津田真道 (1829-1903)

Founding member of the *Meirokeisha*. Born in Tsuyama domain, present-day Okayama Prefecture. Instructor at the *Bansho Shirabesho* (Barbarian [Western] Documents Research Center). Studied at Leiden University under Simon Vissering with Nishi Amane starting in 1862. Contributed more articles to the *Meiroke zasshi* than any other member, in which the influence from Western liberalism was clear. He was elected to the first Diet in 1890 and subsequently served as vice speaker of the House of Representatives.

ZHU XI 朱熹 (1130-1200)

Confucian scholar and official of the Song Dynasty. His work synthesized the ideas of previous Neo-Confucian scholars and laid the foundation of what became the Neo-Confucian canon. Institutionalized through the state examination system, Zhu Xi's commentary became the standard or “orthodox” Confucian interpretation. For this reason, the term “Zhu-Xi Confucianism”, or “Cheng-Zhu Confucianism” (acknowledging the large influence of Cheng Hao) is often used to refer to this kind of Neo-Confucianism.

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