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THE BETRAYAL OF THE EAST ASIAN ENLIGHTENMENT:
THE RISE AND FALL OF FUKUZAWA YUKICHI'S BOURGEOIS LIBERALISM

By

MINHYUK HWANG

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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By MINHYUK HWANG

Dissertation Director:

Dr. Stephen Eric Bronner

This study explores the intellectual tradition Fukuzawa Yukichi, a renowned Japanese political theorist of the nineteenth century, initiated. Fukuzawa was not only the proponent of liberalism whose Western ideas spread to East Asia, but also the most representative liberal of his time. His life and thought represented the general history of East Asian liberalism—its rise, frustration, and betrayal. Many scholars acknowledge Fukuzawa's contribution in spreading liberalism and enlightenment in his early life and awakening the dormant masses in Asia to face the modern world. Fukuzawa, however, later betrayed transnational solidarity in Asia and encouraged imperialism in Japan, which naturally drew heavy criticism. Understandably, postmodernists regard Fukuzawa's betrayal as a fundamental failure of Western modernity and, further, the problem inherent in the idea of enlightenment and “progress” as such. This study is an attempt to defend Fukuzawa's project of East Asian enlightenment against the postmodern critique and find the universal significance of the tradition—not just in the Asian context. The impulse of imperialist expansion and totalitarianism came from the frustration of enlightenment rather than its continuation and extension. As this study will show, the frustration of the Enlightenment and liberalism was due to the liberals' failure to maintain their own commitment to progress and universal rights.

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Introduction

This study explores the intellectual tradition Fukuzawa Yukichi,¹ a renowned Japanese political theorist of the nineteenth century, initiated. Despite his distinguished brand of liberalism and enlightenment tradition he adapted, there has been little research into his life and theories. My primary aim in this study is, therefore, addressing the significance of comparative political theory by introducing this fascinating theorist of the enlightenment in Asia.

The main purpose of comparative political theory has changed little since Fred Dallmayr persuasively summarized its goal: Western political theory should end its “monologue” approach and start engaging in cross-cultural “dialogue” to find “truly universal” ideas.² However, compared to the traditional focus on the ancient tradition of the East, very little attention has been paid to the modern tradition that emerged from the experiences of Asian intellectuals who struggled between Confucian tradition and modernity. These intellectuals, who constituted what I call “East Asian enlightenment,” had to confront imperialism and also Western modernity, which encouraged them to actively engage in the theory and practice of two fundamentally different traditions of political theory.³

Further, the enlightenment tradition that emerged in Japan, which shook world history by quickly modernizing the country into the only world power in Asia, remains somewhat

¹ Every East Asian name mentioned in this study will be written in the original order: the family name first, which is followed by the given name. Fukuzawa is thus his family name.

² See Fred Dallmayr, “Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory,” *Perspectives on Politics*, no. 2 (June 2004): 249-257.

³ To name just a few of these neglected intellectuals in the Chinese enlightenment: Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao seem to be the ones most ignored by Western political theorists. The former tried to reform Confucianism to fit with universal history, which made the latter—who was also Kang’s student—call him the Martin Luther of Confucianism. Aside from specialists in Chinese history, however, very few Western political theorists have been exposed to them. As the most important work of Kang, see K’ang Yu-wei and Laurence G. Thompson, *Ta T’ung Shu: The One-World Philosophy of K’ang Yu-wei* (New York: Routledge, 1958). About Liang, see Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch’i Ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

under-researched. These intellectuals of the East Asian enlightenment were genuinely the first to seriously engage in “cross-cultural dialogues,” with, perhaps, far more serious and urgent political concerns than any political theorist of our time. In order to truly engage in cross-cultural universality, then, comparative political theory should rehabilitate the great modern theorists in Asia from obscurity. This study begins the task by introducing the most extraordinary political theorist who initiated the East Asian enlightenment, from a small island in the East: Fukuzawa Yukichi.

Fukuzawa is generally respected in Japan as a pioneer of liberalism and enlightenment. His face is still drawn on the ten-thousand-yen bill, which makes him, so to speak, the Ben Franklin of Japan. Outside of Japan, however, his legacy is often considered controversial and is sometimes even hated. He was not only the proponent of liberalism whose Western ideas spread to East Asia, but also the most representative liberal of his time, for better or worse. His life and thought represented the general history of East Asian liberalism—its rise, frustration, and betrayal. Most scholars acknowledge Fukuzawa’s contribution in spreading liberalism and enlightenment in his early life and awakening the dormant masses in Asia to face the modern world. Fukuzawa, however, later betrayed transnational solidarity in Asia and encouraged imperialism in Japan, which naturally drew heavy criticism, particularly in Korea and China. Understandably, postmodernists regard Fukuzawa’s betrayal as a fundamental failure of Western modernity and, further, the problem inherent in the idea of enlightenment and “progress” as such. Confucianists and nationalists in Korea and China also frequently link the “failure” of (Western) modernity with Fukuzawa. For them, Fukuzawa is no more than a betrayer of the harmonious and orderly tradition of East Asia in favor of Western philosophy, which they believed would fundamentally

encourage aggressive and expansionist politics.⁴

This study is an attempt to defend Fukuzawa's project of East Asian enlightenment against the postmodern critique introduced above and find the universal significance of the tradition—not just in the Asian context. Of course, even within the non-Western context, Fukuzawa's enlightenment project is worthy of Western political theorists' attention. While many countries outside of Western Europe and North America are still struggling with modernization, Japan rapidly modernized herself with minimal sacrifice in the nineteenth century, and Fukuzawa Yukichi played a significant role as the most respected educator during that period. In the urgent moment of the Western invasion of Asia, Fukuzawa did not waste any time on “harmonizing” different traditions and philosophies. He directly addressed the most serious issue: the creation of a rational bourgeois class which would be an agent for modernization and general social reform. Constantly under the threat of assassination, Fukuzawa bravely criticized the samurai class's irrational obsession with loyalty to the Emperor and encouraged them to be reborn as a new, rational class, armed with what he often called “a spirit of individual independence and self-reliance.”⁵

The most important lesson of Fukuzawa's (Asian) liberalism is that it tries to use tradition as a practical resource to promote the universal ideal in liberalism and the liberal rule of law instead of being obsessed with keeping with the “spirit” of Japan. Fearing the revolt of the reactionary traditionalists, many non-Western liberals compromised with conservatives who refused to accept the possibility of universal rights in favor of defending

⁴ For an example of the postmodernist critique of Western modernity in Fukuzawa, see Rumi Sakamoto, “Dream of a Modern Subject: Maruyama Masao, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and ‘Asia’ as the Limit of Ideology Critique,” *Japanese Studies* 21, no. 2 (2001): 137-153. For an example of the Confucian critique of the Japanese enlightenment, see Kim Do Hyung, “A Study of Kato Hiroyuki's Early Political Thought (*Katō Hiroyuki ui chogi jeongchi sasang yeon'gu*),” Ph.D. dissertation, Sungkyunkwan University, 2013.

⁵ See Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, trans. David A. Dilworth (New York, Columbia University Press, 2012), 19-26.

the particularity of their “culture” or “identity.” By contrast, Fukuzawa courageously criticized this conservative obsession with identity as a “credulity” and reinterpreted the tradition from the perspective of the universal progress of history. Even some feudal traditions in Japan, Fukuzawa argued, prepared Japan for the liberation of individual rights and the cultivation of individual autonomy, which would be realized in the due course of history.

Due to the dynamic change in his thoughts and politics, however, Fukuzawa’s life and thought cannot be merely limited to an Asian context. He was a liberal but also a nationalist. He was a rationalist but also had an irrational existential desire to have the West recognize the greatness of Japan. He was a stubborn individualist but also encouraged individuals to be united under the banner of “National Rights,” as his contemporary Japanese would call national sovereignty or their national interest.⁶ He constructed his own idea of progress based on individual rights and liberation of individual autonomy but later became increasingly skeptical of the idea of progress. His life had been filled with desperate struggles between a realistic goal to save Japanese sovereignty and a more idealistic goal to bring about progress.

Fukuzawa’s contradictions with himself reflect the serious question that modern liberals face today. The role of liberals and their relationship with the idea of “progress,”

⁶ “National Rights,” or *kokken* in the original term, seemed to emerge as the mid-nineteenth century Japanese intellectuals’ yearning for the independence of their weak nation from the Western imperialism, which is not far from Lenin’s idea of national self-determination. As Japan grew as a regional power in the late nineteenth century, however, “National Rights” became increasingly similar to the European fascist ideology. Initially a “right of independence” ended up as a “right of ruling the whole of Asia.” This interesting but horrific development is also found in Fukuzawa himself, and the details will be discussed in the Chapter 4 of this study. Check Chapter 10 of Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. by David A. Dilworth & G. Cameron Hurst III, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Also, compare it with his *Critique of Current Affairs* (*jijishōgen*) in Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū* (Complete collection of Fukuzawa Yukichi) vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 96-231. *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū* will be hereafter abbreviated as *Zenshū*.

derived from the Enlightenment, increasingly became challenged and obscure.⁷ As liberals lost their conviction for progress, the heritage of universal individual rights and the belief in progressive history was thought to be imploding in the West. The democratic procedure, one of the few remaining values that modern liberals have defended faithfully, is unable to stop the far right from encroaching on mainstream politics. This situation makes Fukuzawa's betrayal of his own enlightenment project even more relevant for our time. Unlike postmodernists' belief, the impulse of imperialist expansion and totalitarianism came from the frustration of enlightenment rather than its continuation and extension, or as Horkheimer and Adorno would say, "dialectic of enlightenment." As this study will show, the frustration of the Enlightenment and liberalism was due to the liberals' failure to maintain their own commitment to progress and universal rights.

So many liberals, like Fukuzawa, have betrayed the progressive cause when the left needed their support the most. For example, the rise of neoliberal solutions, or "the Third Way," to the Reagan-Thatcherian market fundamentalism further intensified the problem it sought to remedy. On the other hand, neoliberal governments and politicians frequently engage in aggressive foreign policies based on dubious ideas, such as "expanding democracy." Conversely, the left, frustrated by the neoliberals, often attack modernity and the idea of progress itself. Neither position is an intelligent one. The political compromise of neoliberals cannot be identified with the rational consequence of the original egalitarian impulse in liberalism. The more important question is what is the key mechanism that caused such a compromise in the first instance?

⁷ By "progress," I mean a broadly shared belief among the Enlightenment philosophes that the human beings should endeavor toward a certain ethical end that would universally benefit the individuals and their cultivation of reason. It does not necessarily exclude progress in technological advancement and material prosperity, but ethical progress should be considered paramount. For example, see Amartya Sen's defense of freedom as an end in itself and also as a precondition for material progress in Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999).

This study suggests that Fukuzawa's struggle between liberalism and nationalism helps explain not only the cause of such compromises but also the consequences as well. His life shows how the idea of progress and liberal universalism is important in keeping politics rational and humane in a troubled time while also demonstrating what liberalism often lacks—a strong commitment to its own principles.⁸ In Fukuzawa's case, the extraordinary Japanese liberal ended up compromising with militarist expansionism in order to unify the “will of people.” His infamous semi-fascist slogan, “domestic peace [for] external competition [or aggression],” would be one of the most unthinkable remarks for a “liberal” to utter.

Fukuzawa was certainly not a fascist. Just like classical Scottish liberals, he hated government interference into the private life of the individual, especially when such interference was not duly mediated by the liberal rule of law. It is still questionable, however, why Fukuzawa and his fellow Japanese liberals—and other Asian liberals in general—could not stop their totalitarian enemies and sometimes even actively supported part of the totalitarian cause. As the starkest example, Yi Kwang-su, a Korean liberal writer who openly paid homage to Fukuzawa as the single most respectable intellectual, later converted to an active supporter of Japan's totalitarianism in the 1930s, encouraging his fellow Koreans to “fight for the Emperor” until the West perished before the glory of Greater East Asia. Hu Shih, a Chinese liberal intellectual who led the enlightenment movement in the early twentieth century, later supported Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist totalitarianism on the condition that Chiang would implement Western democracy after communism was crushed. This promise remained unfulfilled when both Hu and Chiang died.

Although some Western readers might wonder why Asian liberals should betray their

⁸ I will discuss this claim in more detail at the end of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

cause, in fact, the liberals' betrayal of the Enlightenment was nothing new to the European history either. German liberals' betrayal of their initially revolutionary cause is especially astonishing. The impetus for social reform was hindered by the German liberals' obsession with social harmony and national "greatness" that would eventually support imperialism. The liberals commonly dreamed "of a state or of a political party which would create social harmony out of conflict, which would be guided by cultural and ethical objectives and by the ideal of German greatness in world affairs."⁹ Indeed, as Fritz Stern argues, the German liberals rather encouraged than hindered the growth of the distinctive German "illiberalism."¹⁰ Looking at the historical record, liberals have never performed particularly well against the rise of fascism.

Rather than relying on abstract conjecture that liberalism has a tendency of producing, thus giving fuel to reactionary movements, this study theorizes that the existential desire for recognition of one's identity played a key role in Fukuzawa's betrayal. Many other liberals, of course, also betrayed the cause of the Enlightenment. Just as hyper-nationalism of the German working class made social democrats support the Kaiser's war, Fukuzawa could not resist the appeal of realizing the Great Empire of Japan. He could not bear that many Westerners regarded Japan as inferior to, or even a part of, China, which made him extremely eager to "prove" that Japan was a far more civilized and stronger nation than China. None of these concerns had anything to do with his early emphasis on liberal autonomy and rationalism. They were all existential concerns, which were also the most authentic expressions of Fukuzawa's subjective feeling. Although Fukuzawa's sense of humiliation

⁹ Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 134.

¹⁰ See Fritz Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism: Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

and yearning for a greater Japan was authentic, it was obviously irrational and incompatible with his enlightenment project.

What seems to be more significantly related to Fukuzawa's existential turn was the weakness—not excess—of liberalism in providing a firm ideological foundation for its followers. Like European social contract theorists, Fukuzawa found that the central idea of modern politics came from the understanding that politics should be based on an artificial creation rather than a pre-political attachment. He even believed that such trust in an artificial creation—law and state institutions—was “superior” to trust in religion or a traditional sense of loyalty. As soon as he became skeptical about the idea of “progress,” however, he chose what he loved instead of what was rational. The liberal rule of law alone was too abstract to expect the Japanese people to “love” it in their hearts, so Fukuzawa willingly chose what would unite the people—the Emperor and the idea of the Great Empire of Japan.

Fukuzawa's betrayal does not tell us that liberalism and the Enlightenment would dialectically lead to totalitarianism or fascism. It only tells us that the Enlightenment tradition should be more faithfully committed to its initial idea of progress and the expansion of universal rights. Liberalism and socialism, the two great heirs of the Enlightenment,¹¹ should staunchly defend the idea of progress and keep their politics more attached to the historical tradition of progressive movements. Attacking the fundamental elements of universal rights in the Western tradition in favor of “recognition” of different “identities” or “cultures” only results in the spread of relativism and, consequently, the excess of nationalism and nativism that we see in abundance now.

The controversial choice made by Fukuzawa Yukichi and its enduring influence on the Japanese imperialism and totalitarianism exemplify the danger of the simplified

¹¹ See Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004), 9.

Machiavellianism that “the ends justify the means.” Fukuzawa, along with many liberals, believed that irrational means can be justified if they contribute to the ultimate rational end, the creation of the liberal constitutional monarchy in Japan. Not surprisingly, he even believed that Japan’s military intervention in her Asian neighbors’ affairs would help them more quickly reform themselves into liberal nation-states. It is, however, undeniable that the Japanese imperialism initiated in Fukuzawa’s time left an indelible legacy in the further radicalization of the Emperor worshippers and their support of war crimes in the Pacific War. It clearly shows how fatuous it is to believe that Western imperialism somehow did more good than bad for the colonized people.¹² No ends can perfectly justify all means, especially when such means would involve the possibility of invoking irrationalism.

The puzzle of means and ends in Fukuzawa’s irrationalism, thus, tells us of another important element in the progressive tradition: the primacy of pacifism. Initially defending pacifism as a more rational approach to strengthen Japan, Fukuzawa shifted his position and began supporting military expansion for the sake of a grand mission that would “civilize” Asia. He seriously dreamed that Japan would spread modernity and enlighten the ignorant masses in Asia. The legacy of the military expansion of Japan, however, remained largely humiliating. The unavoidable concern with “national interests” in military actions would always blur the consistency in the progressive cause behind it. It is certainly true that people sometimes do not know what is truly beneficial for themselves but forcing them to do what is deemed to be “progressive” is always a dangerous option. If some people should be genuinely “forced to be free” à la Rousseau, the freedom should be maximized as against force. The historical experience in Fukuzawa’s East Asian enlightenment illuminates the

¹² As the most distinctive example of this controversial argument, see Niall Ferguson’s defense of British imperialism in Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2017).

importance of pacifism more than any other case.

To sum up, the East Asian enlightenment initiated by Fukuzawa Yukichi had two sides. It was a liberal movement that emphasized individual autonomy and the manifestation of universal rights based on liberal rule of law, but it was also promoted by strong nationalist sentiment against the threat of Western imperialism. The liberal elements in Fukuzawa's thought strongly contributed to the liberalization and overall modernization of the country, as his books and pamphlets were widely read by almost all Japanese intellectuals. On the other hand, the nationalist elements in his later political pamphlets and newspaper articles ultimately encouraged the growth of reactionary politics, including military expansionism. Considering that the military expansion of the Japanese Empire ultimately resulted in the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Fukuzawa's reactionary turn cannot be easily condoned. The point is, however, that his nationalism became pronounced not because of his conviction regarding modern civilization and liberal values but precisely because of his renunciation of those values. Unfortunately, his liberalism alone was not enough to suppress his existential desire for the international recognition of Japanese identity, thus his betrayal of the East Asian enlightenment.

To complete the enlightenment project that remains unfinished to this day, the left should reconstruct liberalism rather than renounce it simply as a remnant of the bourgeois. While embracing the historical power of rationalism originating from liberalism that challenged the reactionary tradition, the left should suggest an alternative to the weakness of liberalism in maintaining the progressive impetus. Fukuzawa's struggle with the rational belief in modern politics as an artificial creation of men should be taken seriously. Frustrated by the emptiness of the liberal foundation of politics, Fukuzawa eventually chose the

Emperor and the great imagery of the Japanese Empire instead of the rational belief in liberal rule of law alone. Taking pre-political foundations, like religion, as a basis for modern politics can be, according to Habermas, considered an “embarrassment to a state that was committed to neutrality.”¹³ However, left-leaning liberals like Habermas have not suggested any effective alternative. Habermas’s suggestion to construct a secular allegiance based on the value of the liberal constitution would not work for those who need an emotional attachment in the first place.¹⁴ The left should retrace their heritage from the Enlightenment and reidentify the periods in the social movements they themselves generated where neither emotional attachment of the masses nor the impulse toward a rational society was lost. Such moments should be revitalized by a strong commitment to humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism that the Enlightenment initiated in the first instance.

Fukuzawa Yukichi’s life and thought cannot be reduced to a page in a history book. His project of East Asian enlightenment manifested the power of the bourgeois rationalism which would defeat all kinds of reactionary adversaries of his time. Moreover, Fukuzawa’s betrayal of his own project of enlightenment should not be understood as a permanent frustration of the progressive impetus in the Enlightenment. Precisely the opposite is the case—Fukuzawa’s life and thought should inspire new generations to trace what went wrong with the Enlightenment. Only if such a task is properly completed will the left eventually be able to revitalize the Enlightenment that has remained unfinished since the betrayal of the liberal bourgeois.

¹³ See Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas, *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2006), 21.

¹⁴ For Habermas’s suggestion of “constitutional patriotism,” see Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity (1990),” in *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 491-515.

Chapter 1

Social Background: Fukuzawa Yukichi and the Transformation of Japan

Fukuzawa Yukichi was born on January 10, 1835, in the vibrant merchant city of Osaka, the center of Western Japan throughout her history.¹ This was also the year Mark Twain was born, so Fukuzawa's Japan was the contemporary of Twain's Gilded Age in America. Unlike Twain's America, however, Fukuzawa's Japan had been in a deep dormant state. The Tokugawa Shogunate, the feudal military government that ruled the island country for more than two hundred years, still rigidly maintained its seclusion policy. It was only thirty-two years after Fukuzawa was born that the declining Tokugawa Shogunate's feudalism was dismantled by the Meiji Restoration, one of the most radical "revolutions from above" in world history.²

A year and a half after Fukuzawa's birth, the Fukuzawa family had to leave Osaka, due to the sudden death of his father. By the order of the lord of Nakatsu domain, the hometown of the family, his widowed mother was forced to come back to their ancestral hometown with baby Yukichi and all of his brothers and sisters. This abrupt change in the environment challenged the whole family with its shift from the mainstream Japanese life in Osaka to the marginalized one in Nakatsu, with its different dialects and culture. This seemingly simple biographical information about Fukuzawa's childhood already reveals the

¹ The basic biographical information not cited in this study was based on Fukuzawa's autobiography. See Yukichi Fukuzawa, *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, trans. Eiichi Kiyooka (New York, Columbia University Press, 2007). For the original Japanese version, see Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū* [Complete collection of Fukuzawa Yukichi] vol. 7 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 1-260.

² The typical view of the Meiji Restoration as a reactionary "revolution from above" was most notably presented by Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). Such perspectives have also been challenged by many. For example, see Roger W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan: A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and Seong Heui Yeob, *joyonghan hyeokmyeong: Meijiyooshin gua ilboneui geonguk* [Silent Revolution: The Meiji-Revolution and Japan's State-buildings] (Seoul: Somyung Books, 2016).

intriguing nature of the sociohistorical influence on Fukuzawa's thought. Almost from the moment he was born, he was somehow destined to experience the collision of different worlds, which he would experience on a far larger scale less than twenty years later when Commodore Perry's "Black Ships" would single-handedly tear down Japan's two hundred years of seclusion. The following quote from the preface to Fukuzawa's *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* sums up how the Japanese intellectuals in the early Meiji era felt about change in their time:

Consider how all of today's scholars of Western Learning were, but a few years back, students of Chinese Classics, or of Shinto or Buddhism. We were all either from feudal samurai families or were feudal commoners. It is as if each of us has lived two lives with one body, or each person has two completely different bodies... For my whole purpose has been to take advantage of the present historically unique opportunity to bequeath my personal impressions to later generations.³

His nuanced cynicism toward "scholars of Western Learning (*yōgakusha*)" notwithstanding, the experience of living two completely different lives with one body was taken as a "unique opportunity" available only to Japanese intellectuals who lived through that particular period in history. Fukuzawa was not exaggerating. The social and political transformation of Japan in the few decades around the Meiji Restoration was akin to the European discovery of the New World, the challenging of old beliefs initiated by the Reformation, the destruction of the old class systems through "bourgeois revolutions," and rapid increases in productivity via the Industrial Revolution *in concert*. Moreover, the Confucian metaphysics that touted the immutability of the fundamental order and principle in the world were completely disrupted and transformed by Western rationalism.⁴ Instead of suffering a mental breakdown from the

³ Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. by David A. Dilworth & G. Cameron Hurst III, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) 4. My translation from "It is as if..." to "...different bodies."

⁴ In fact, "Confucian" metaphysics I am referring here is actually "Neo-Confucianism," which was first developed by the eleventh century Confucian philosopher Cheng Yi and later integrated by the famous founder of Neo-Confucianism, Zhu Xi. Before them, Confucianism was generally a practical guide to politics and individual lives more than anything metaphysical. As an example of the excellent analysis of the transformation

unbearable degree of social transformation, Fukuzawa encouraged his fellow intellectuals to be live witnesses of progressive history. Those who experienced both premodern and modern lives only in a few decades would have regarded as nonsense the harsh intellectual criticism against modernity as “regressive.” Although not everyone welcomed the rapid transformation toward modernity with the same enthusiasm, no reasonable intellectuals in late nineteenth century Japan were able to denounce the progress made in their time as completely worthless.

Since it was obvious that there was no turning back to the feudal society under Shōgun—the military dictator of feudal Japan⁵—an unprecedented set of diverse thinkers emerged to explain what on earth was going on. These intellectuals were urged to explain the new world they were witnessing and suggest the blueprint for the future from different ideological spectrums. Moderate conservatives still wanted to rely on Confucianism as a foundation of the country while accepting only technologies from the West. Radical reactionaries invoked the notion of the timeless “Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*)” of Emperor worship and called for the Emperor’s direct rule.⁶ Some intellectuals were deeply moved by the universalism in Christianity and concluded that Christianity would restore the morality of Japanese society and save Japan from Western invasion. Premature forms of republicanism and anarchism were also observed. Indeed, someone needed to stand up and systematically analyze what kind of turmoil they were in and give a clear vision for their future by a comprehensive understanding of diverse perspectives competing at the time. Fukuzawa, before anyone else, claimed that he was able to perform this task.

Maruyama Masao, arguably the single most influential liberal thinker in post-war

from Neo-Confucian metaphysics to modern thoughts in Japan, see Masao Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. by Mikiso Hane (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974).

⁵ The word Shōgun is an abbreviation of *Sei Taishōgun*, which means “the Great General who subjugated the savages.”

⁶ The relationship between the Emperor and Shōgun will be explained in due course.

Japan, praised Fukuzawa as one of the few Japanese intellectuals who consciously thought about their own method and perspective and freely moved between different perspectives in order to achieve an intellectual insight.⁷ In other words, in the vein of Karl Mannheim's call for "total perspective" and "free-floating intellectuals," Fukuzawa was able to utilize "different positions and social vantage points as they emerge in the stream of social life... from its particular point in the stream to recognize the stream itself."⁸ In Chapter 4, I will examine the extent to which this claim is true and whether it is praiseworthy at all. What is important at the moment, however, is that that Fukuzawa had the freedom to observe and choose from diverse competing perspectives, making him a unique type of liberal in the intellectual history of the world. As the authority of the traditional Sinocentric world-view tottered, a variety of new beliefs were threatening the old beliefs in Japan—a reformed Confucianism, a radical Emperor worship, Christianity, economic liberalism, radical republicanism, anarchism and many more. Fukuzawa refused to buy into any of them, consciously maintaining distance from ideologies to dispassionately investigate the truth of the matter in politics.

Since the change in the West was much more gradual than in Japan, no Western intellectual would have been exposed to such a radical change of material conditions and world views. The question is what kind of social upheaval allows such an abundance of diverse perspectives to emerge? In other words, it is critical to investigate the nature of and the chasm between the "two lives" that Fukuzawa and his contemporaries had to live.

⁷ See Maruyama Masao, "Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku" [The Philosophy of Fukuzawa Yukichi] in Matsuzawa Hiroaki (ed.), *Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku—hoka roppen* [The Philosophy of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Six Other Essays] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001).

⁸ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (London: Routledge, 1960), 134.

A. The Tokugawa Shogunate (*Bakufu*): Strictly Controlled Military Dictatorship with Feudal Embellishment

The Shogunate-domain state (*baku-han kokka*), a system that divided Japan into many different “domains (*han*)” with the most superior lord (*shōgun*) ruling the other domain lords (*daimyō*), emerged from the end of tiring warfare during the “Age of Warring States (*sengoku jidai*).” When Tokugawa Ieyasu, the most powerful but also politically astute warlord, permanently ended the 150 years of the Age of War in 1615, the foremost issue was how to tame those bellicose warriors that rapidly increased during the war. Ever since the Emperor lost political power to the military dictator (Shōgun) and only survived as a symbolic and religious figurehead of the state, the ruling class of Japan had become essentially warriors.⁹ Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s¹⁰ ambitious war against Korea and China in 1592 was also partly a solution to the excessive number of samurais who had become increasingly superfluous once he unified Japan under his rule.¹¹

Ieyasu solved this issue with a carrot-and-stick approach. He was the most powerful warlord but only the most powerful “among the peers.”¹² Other warlords, each of whom was the lord of their respective “domain (*han*),” were forced to declare allegiance to him rather

⁹ The use of the Chinese character “shi” in Japan provides the most striking example that shows the peculiarity of the ruling class in Japan. The Chinese character “shi” indicates literary scholar-gentry that was the majority of the Confucian ruling class in Korea and China. It was the standard character of the gentlemanship in Confucian beliefs, which essentially represents the academics who devoted their lives to studying Confucian philosophy. In Japan, however, the character “shi” mostly indicates the samurai class, and oftentimes the character “shi” itself was read as “samurai.” For a general introduction of the samurai class and how it became a ruling class of Japan, see Mitsuo Kure, *Samurai: An Illustrated History* (North Clarendon: Tuttle, 2001).

¹⁰ Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), often ranked by the Japanese public as one of the most respected persons in history, unified Japan for the first time since the Age of Warring States began. His ambition also led him to the plan to invade Korea and even China, as evidenced by his effort to learn Chinese. It was frustrated by the allied force of China and Korea and the great naval exploit of Yi Sun-sin, a Korean general who primarily led the navy force of Korea. Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea (1592-1598) is one of the most dramatic historical events showing the intricate international relationship and the balance of power among Japan, Korea, and China. See Samuel Hawley, *The Imjin War: Japan’s Sixteenth-Century Invasion of Korea and Attempt to Conquer China* (Seoul: the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 2008).

¹¹ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000), 19.

¹² Ibid., 33.

than being completely conquered as the First Emperor of Qin ended feudalism in China. The warlike samurais who were loyal to their respective warlords could still keep their loyalty to their lords since the warlords themselves became loyal to Ieyasu and the Tokugawa clan as a whole. Peace was established, Confucianism flourished instead of the warrior spirit, and samurais did not have to kill anyone anymore. Everyone seemed to win—except that this was a prelude to the demise of the Japanese ruling class and the emergence of an educated segment in the samurai class who proclaimed that they should replace the old samurai spirit with liberalism. Fukuzawa was the leader of this educated segment of samurais.

A defining characteristic of Tokugawa Japan was that it was a *relatively decentralized Confucian State*. Ever since Western scholars studied the Tokugawa era, the first thing that had caught their attention was its unique distribution of power that seemed to be more closely akin to European feudalism than to the centralized Confucian state in China. To be sure, it was a Confucian state—samurais were citing “*kō tei chū shin* (filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty, and sincerity)” everywhere, and such Confucian tenets legitimized the social order by keeping the lower class docile.¹³ Yet each domain, despite its allegiance to the Shogunate, enjoyed a meaningful level of autonomy and maintained its own military force. Based on Tokugawa feudalism’s high degree of autonomy, Maruyama Masao once compared it to the *Bundesstaat* system.¹⁴ Marius Jansen summarized this issue in the following manner:

Edwin O. Reischauer’s term “centralized feudalism” encapsulates this paradox and identifies the problem: Japan was neither fully centralized nor fully feudal. Since World War II historians in Japan have followed substantially the same path by

¹³ In the eighteenth century, there was a nationalist reaction to the domination of Confucianism led by scholars of “national studies,” with Motoori Norinaga at the forefront. Nonetheless, their “national studies” were still under the strong influence of Confucian ethics.

¹⁴ Maruyama Masao and Katō Shūichi, *Honyaku to nihonno kindai* [Translation and Japan’s Modernity] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 20.

analyzing the Tokugawa system as a *baku-han kokka*, or “*bakufu-han* state,” to indicate the duality between central shogun (*bakufu*) and regional daimyo (*han*) polities... the dissolution of communist authoritarianism elsewhere has brought interest in the possibility that nongovernmental space can grow within an apparently closed system, and this in turn has led to efforts to see whether the limitations on shogunal rule at the center suffice to make it possible to consider early modern Japan under the rubric of “civil society.”¹⁵

The idea that Tokugawa feudalism—or any other totalitarian state that gives a minimal level of local autonomy—might have allowed the autonomous growth of civil society is a bold claim that is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet it is important to note that Fukuzawa, although unintentionally, took advantage of the benefit of the autonomy allowed to the local “domains (*han*, the equivalent of the states under the federal government).” The continuous growth of Western studies (also “Dutch Studies,” *Rangaku*)¹⁶ before the forced end of the Tokugawa seclusion was attributed to the local domain governments rather than the central Shogunate. The domains in the southwestern Japan had a geographical advantage that gave them more opportunities to contact Western ships. Through Dejima, an extremely small artificial island that Shōgun exceptionally opened to the Dutch merchants, curious elites in southwestern domains secretly studied various forms of Western science. It is no accident that two primary anti-Shogunate domains in the Meiji Restoration, Chōshū and Satsuma, and Fukuzawa’s hometown, Nakatsu, were all located in southwestern Japan.¹⁷

¹⁵ Jansen, 33.

¹⁶ Since the Dutch merchants were enjoying the exclusive privilege of maintaining business on Japanese soil, they became the only source of Western knowledge for many curious Japanese intellectuals before Commodore Perry forced the Shogunate to open ports. Most books from the West they were able to acquire were, naturally, written in Dutch, which makes any studies related to the West called “Dutch Studies.”

¹⁷ One might compare the Japanese case above to Hong Xiuquan’s Taiping Rebellion, which grew from southern China and almost completely destroyed the Qing Dynasty. Unfortunately, the Taiping Rebellion had nothing to do with the enlightenment movement and remained a peasant-based uprising. None of Hong’s contemporary Chinese elites were sympathetic to his cause. As all intellectuals aimed at the government employment controlled by the central administration of the imperial court, very few intellectuals paid any serious interest to Western knowledge that they would have been able to access in southern China. In such a situation, what China could take from the Western merchants was not scientific reason but only mystical elements in Christianity, which would penetrate the consciousness of one of the most impoverished and oppressed classes in the world history: the Chinese peasants. Even Kang Youwei, a reformer who rose to

The argument that the autonomy enjoyed by local domains under Tokugawa Japan aided in the rapid modernization of Japan, however, fall short in two aspects. First, not all elites from southwestern Japan were progressive; a significant portion of samurais in Chōshū and Satsuma became xenophobic worshippers of “Japanese spirit,” which will be discussed later in this chapter. Second, leaders of the southwestern domains were mostly interested in military technology from the West rather than any serious pursuit of scientific inquiry. The only thing that feudal lords cared about was the stability of class order and the privilege of upper-rank samurais because that was how domains were supposed to be run for hundreds of years. The following section focuses on the despotic element under the Tokugawa rule that was, in some respects, even more severe than China.

It should be noted, however, that *the basic nature of the Confucian despotism was nonetheless maintained* in the “centralized feudalism” in Tokugawa Japan. Whatever Japan’s distinctive feudalism could offer to their modernization, the Tokugawa state was as despotic as any premodern absolute monarchy and even more so than the Qing dynasty in China. Studying the Confucian bureaucratic state in China, Karl Wittfogel suggested the controversial “hydraulic power” hypothesis that geographical necessity of large-scale water control would give rise to a total power with the bureaucratic class rule that controls all property and population in its territory. Yet Wittfogel did not believe such total control was actually possible in premodern states that lacked advanced technologies. In China, the Confucian bureaucrats’ dream of total control remained elusive, and they had never been more than aspiring totalitarians.¹⁸ Tokugawa Japan, by contrast, seemed to have far greater

prominence after Qing China was defeated by Japan in 1895, had a limited and somewhat mystical understanding of modern science. See Li Zehou, *Zhongguo jindai sixiang shilun* [The History of Early Modern Chinese Thoughts] (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1979), 7-30 and 92-181.

¹⁸ See Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven: Yale University

control over its people. Barrington Moore believed that the Confucian bureaucrats' desire to control the bodies and minds of peasants came to its full realization in Japan when the Tokugawa state imposed ancient Chinese texts on Japanese peasant villages to maintain the newly gained peace and order. For example,

...every inhabitant of the village, no matter what his tenure or status, was ordered to belong to one of these five-man groups and that this order was well carried out. ...five-man group pledge under oath to fulfill the orders of the lord, repeating the orders as nearly as was practicable in the form they were given. ... Through the five-man group and other devices, the entire village was made to take an active interest in the behavior of every household. Marriage, adoption, succession, and inheritance were subject to effective control. Peasants were expected to watch over and correct one another's conduct, settling disputes as far as possible by mutual conciliation. ...The Japanese village displayed a fierce demand for unanimity that recalls the Russian *sbornost'*. Personal affairs were given a public character lest they lead to deviant opinion or behavior. Since anything secret was automatically suspicious, a man with private business to conduct with someone in another village might be obliged to conduct it through his headman.¹⁹

The few examples above might be enough to doubt any possibility of autonomous civil society independent from the Shōgun or feudal lords. The typical excessive emphasis on harmony is ingrained in the whole society; they used the Chinese character meaning “harmony” (*wa*, in Chinese *hé*) to refer to their own country.²⁰ These examples may not be sufficient to “prove” Japan's inability to develop a free bourgeois society without impact from the outside but more than enough to show that Tokugawa Japan was incredibly suffocating to liberals like Fukuzawa. Moore thus summarized the “feudal” element in Tokugawa Japan as follows:

...it was a relatively centralized and tightly controlled form of feudalism, so much so that one older writer refers to it as a police state, a designation that no doubt seemed

Press, 1957), 112. It seems Wittfogel never gave any serious attention to Japan, except noting the material condition there was not suited to the growth of typical hydraulic power. After all, Wittfogel's goal was to complete the analogy between the ancient Asiatic despotism and the bureaucratic rule of Stalinism, so too much attention to Asia, outside of the bureaucratic rule in China, would have been considered a digression.

¹⁹ Moore, 260-262.

²⁰ Keiko Hirata and Mark Warschauer, *Japan: The Paradox of Harmony* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 7.

much more appropriate in 1900 than it would after Hitler and Stalin. ...the Tokugawa system was not one out of which was likely to grow the theory and practice of free society as known in modern Western civilization. ...In the feudal bond uniting lord and vassal, the element of contract was very weak in Japan; the elements of loyalty and duty to superiors, on the other hand, received heavy emphasis.²¹

Besides peasants, most samurais were not allowed to move freely, as their whereabouts were tightly controlled by each domain. Leaving the domain's territory without a passport officially issued by the authorities was considered as a sin punishable by death. As a lower-rank samurai who was strictly bound by Nakatsu domain's order, Fukuzawa's father died working as the domain's accountant, which was hardly honorable since both Confucianism and Japan's "warrior spirit" (*bushidō*) despised anything related to money. Although he was a good Confucian scholar, aside from his talent in accounting, the strict class system of Nakatsu never gave him an opportunity to prove his ability in more "honorable" work. Fukuzawa Yukichi thus believed that the Tokugawa class system must have been his father's "bitter enemy" (*kataki*) since separating the classes made it impossible for the senior Fukuzawa to pursue further career growth that he would otherwise have been perfectly capable of.²² Although we do not know for sure if Fukuzawa's father had rebellious ideas against the class system—Fukuzawa was only a toddler when his father passed away and his father was a pure Confucian scholar anyway—lower-ranked samurais, like Fukuzawa and his family, were surely the most dissatisfied group in the late Tokugawa era.

Much as the character of the Tokugawa regime itself was ambivalent, Fukuzawa also maintained an ambivalent view on Tokugawa class society and its internal contradictions. Fukuzawa was known for his ruthless critique of the traditional values and customs in the Tokugawa Era and never particularly hid his hatred toward its oppressive elements. The

²¹ Moore, 233.

²² *Zenshū* vol. 7, 11.

multi-faceted nature of the Tokugawa system nonetheless left him aware of the great potential for Japan to become a liberal state that would depart from her oppressive past. Realistic and skeptical about the immediate present, but still holding the idea of progress, Fukuzawa definitely shared the attitude of the great philosophes of the European Enlightenment, which is often naively mischaracterized as optimistic by their critics.²³

Most striking in Fukuzawa's extensive critique of the Tokugawa class system was how seriously it obstructed the potential growth of individual autonomy. Analyzing the cultural origin of totalitarianism in Japan and the Japanese people's distinctive absence of any sense of responsibility about its crimes against humanity, Maruyama quoted Fukuzawa's *Outline of a Theory of Civilization*:

...[The Japanese] make a clear distinction between the moral codes that apply to people above and to people below, and an equally clear distinction in the field of rights and duties. As a result every individual is in one capacity the victim of coercion, while in another capacity he metes out coercion to his fellow-men. He both suffers and perpetrates oppression; in one direction he yields, in another he boasts ... Today's joy compensates for yesterday's shame, and thus dissatisfaction is evened out ... Peter is robbed to pay Paul...²⁴

Fukuzawa's idea above, conceptualized as the "transfer of oppression (*yokuatsu ijō*)" by Maruyama, has been widely accepted by Japanese political theorists as a main mechanism by which the Japanese totalitarianism functioned. Fukuzawa's "transfer of oppression" may appear to resonate with Arendt's "banality of evil" in that the oppression from the above was to be uncritically accepted and transferred to the different level. Unlike Arendt, however, Fukuzawa unequivocally attacked the premodern legacy as the basic tenet of routinized despotism.²⁵ In a society where social class structure was so multi-layered and

²³ To understand why Enlightenment philosophes were mischaracterized and caricatured as naïve optimists, see Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 38.

²⁴ Masao Maruyama, "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism," trans. Ivan Morris, in *Thoughts and Behaviors in Modern Japanese Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 18.

²⁵ Compare with Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The

micromanaged as feudal Japan, one can always find subordinates, no matter how low one's social status is. Further, the individual has no responsibility in such a class system that strips him of his autonomy. Everything one does is "in the name of" one's superior. The absence of any individual responsibility is a characteristic of the premodern class system, where one man on top has ultimate control over the whole system, which is clearly different from modern bureaucracy, where the responsibility for each position is clearly defined, at least in a mechanical way.

It is thus somewhat natural—or even rational—to “transfer” the oppression from the above to one's own subordinates rather than form any possibility of resistance. The “unhappy consciousness” à la Hegel would never develop in a system where individuals never develop self-consciousness, and likewise, responsibility.²⁶ There is no possibility to call for solidarity that defies the inhumane structure. Even people in the lowest class can transfer the oppression they received to their children; all those poor children should do is simply wait until someone younger is born.²⁷ Whether this interesting idea can be applied to totalitarianism outside of East Asia is currently impossible to answer, yet Fukuzawa was clearly onto the profound problem that any Japanese liberal should think about at that time and, perhaps, even now.²⁸

In the earlier part of *Civilization*, however, Fukuzawa also found a relatively

Viking Press, 1963).

²⁶ See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 126-139.

²⁷ Lu Xun's most famous short story, *The True Story of Ah Q*, also points out the similar problem that Chinese peasants had. See Lu Xun, *The True Story of Ah Q: Chinese-English Bilingual Edition* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2002).

²⁸ At least in South Korea, where one can still find the remnant of the Japanese warrior spirits and class order because of the legacy of colonization, the “transfer of oppression” is rather easy to find. Every Korean male citizen who finished his military service would easily understand what “the transfer of oppression” means. Although the situation is clearly improving after the democracy of South Korea is being consolidated, the problem remains. It has been very common among lower ranked soldiers in the South Korean military that they do not even know why they are scolded by higher ranked soldiers, because oftentimes higher ranked soldiers were simply “transferring” what they endured from other higher ranked soldiers and/or officers.

progressive element that Japanese liberals would consider an opportunity: the separation of the spiritual and the political in Japan's Shogunate-Emperor dualism, which obviously resonates with the separation of church and state in the Western liberal tradition.

In antiquity Japan did have a theocracy which ruled the people, and the people's minds were simple, unquestioningly believing the one in whom the most sacrosanct and the most powerful positions in the land were united. Here, of course, the Japanese people were no different from the Chinese, in that their minds were inclined in a single direction. But by the late classical times the social fabric had broken down, and the political power lay in the hands of the samurai; the most sacrosanct was not necessarily the most powerful, and the most powerful was not necessarily the most sacrosanct. The two concepts of the most sacrosanct and the most powerful were so obviously distinct that people could hold in their heads, as it were, the simultaneous existence and functioning of the two ideas. Once they did so, they could not help adding a third, the principle of reason.²⁹ With the principle of reason added to the idea of reverence for the imperial dignity and the idea of military rule, none of the three concepts was able to predominate. And since no single concept predominated, there naturally followed a spirit of freedom.³⁰

Fukuzawa is one of the earliest thinkers who sought the origin of Japan's modernity from the separation between the Emperor as the symbolic authority and Shōgun as the *de facto* ruler of the country. Admittedly, this is a Eurocentric view that Fukuzawa accepted from his reading of Francois Guizot's *General History of Civilization in Europe*, which emphasized the Roman Catholic Church's failure to dominate secular powers as the source of progress in Western Europe.³¹ For the purpose of this study, whether Japan could have been able to develop its own modernity seems less important than the fact that Fukuzawa tried to find the source of progress in the very society that he abhorred. The way in which Fukuzawa found the seed of progress in the internal contradiction of the oppressive structure even appeared

²⁹ *dōri*. Here, the translation could be slightly difficult because Fukuzawa might have used *dōri* as something similar to the "rights" or maybe *recht* in German. Nonetheless "reason" seems to work as well in the context. See Yanabu Akira, *Honyaku-go seiritsu jijō* [The Establishment of Translated Words] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982), 151-172.

³⁰ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 28.

³¹ Maruyama Masao, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu* [Reading An Outline of a Theory of Civilization] vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987) 1-8. Although politically a legitimist, Guizot's idea of Western civilization had profound influence on the liberal understanding of history of Western Europe. There would be no disagreement that Guizot was one of the most important historians in his time. See Douglas Johnson, *Guizot: Aspects of French History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).

“dialectical” to many Japanese scholars, including Maruyama.³² Fukuzawa’s dialectical approach will be discussed in more depth in later chapters. The next section shows how this oppressive system was replaced by the most progressive and modern regime in Asia, which ironically came from the movement with the most reactionary cause—perhaps the very source of the political force which attacked Pearl Harbor decades later. This inherent irony of the “progressive” state in Asia was one of the most formidable challenges to Fukuzawa’s liberalism.

B. Fukuzawa’s Enemies Emerged from the Meiji Restoration: The Question of “Japanese Spirit”

Modern Japan emerged full of ambivalence and internal contradiction. The first intellectual legacy that constituted the contradiction was the famous “Eastern Ethics, Western Science” or “Japanese Spirit, Western Practice (*wakon-yōsai*).” It is necessary to review its historical background to understand this intriguing intellectual experiment by Confucians in nineteenth century Japan.

The arrival of Commodore Perry’s “Black Ships” at the entrance to Tokyo (Edo at the time) in 1853 marked the end of the old Japan. Commodore Matthew C. Perry, who delivered President Millard Fillmore’s official letter requesting diplomatic relationship between two countries, was already ordered to use force to open Japan if necessary. The Tokugawa Shogunate was no longer able to continue its seclusion policy without risking a war with the United States. The opening of the country became not just *an* option—it was the only possible path Japan could take to survive as a nation.

³² Maruyama gave an example of Uemoto Katsumi, a Marxist philosopher who was active in the Japanese Communist Party in post-war Japan. Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol.1, 153.

The threat from the West, however, had been felt before the Black Ships. The First Opium War, which ended in 1842, clearly showed that the hitherto “center of the world”³³ was helplessly defeated by the white “barbarians” from the West. Interestingly enough, such a dramatic defeat did not greatly alarm Chinese intellectuals. The Chinese Confucian literati were able to claim that barbarians were naturally good at wielding violence. China, as the center of the world, would be happy to pity the white barbarians by giving away a small piece of the empire’s great territory, like Hong Kong.³⁴ By contrast, the Japanese ruling class, samurais, was greatly alarmed by the defeat of China. For thousands of years, China had been a subject of admiration, constantly inspiring Japanese Confucianists as a model for culture and civilization. When this model fell under the heavy ships and guns of the barbaric white men, it would naturally have occurred to samurais—self-identified as “warriors” for almost a thousand years—that they should learn from the warring ability of the West instead of China. For many, the forced opening by Perry’s gunboat diplomacy only confirmed what was already obvious.

Even decades before Perry’s arrival, there were pioneers who anticipated a new Japan armed with Western technologies. Among the prominent members was Sakuma Shōzan, who was known for his slogan “Eastern ethics and Western science (*tōyō no dōtoku, sei-yō no gakugei*).”³⁵ This interesting slogan preceded other variants such as Korea’s *dong-do seo-gi* and China’s *zhongti xiyong* by decades, but all three of these mottos meant exactly the same thing: The Confucian ethics of the East, specifically their emphasis on formal proprieties and

³³ The meaning of the word *Zhongguo*, the word for “China” in Chinese, is the “Central State,” which suggests the Sinocentric world view of the tradition.

³⁴ See Maruyama and Katō, *Honyaku to nihonno kindai*, 19. Also, such a pathetic attitude of the Chinese intellectuals was heavily criticized by Lu Xun’s *A True Story of Ah Q* by what he called as a “spiritual victory (*jingshenshengli*).”

³⁵ Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Vol. 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 446.

loyalty to the superior, should be the moral foundation of the reform that would successfully introduce and utilize Western technologies for their immediate needs. The following passage from Sakuma's *Reflections on My Errors* (seikenroku) gives some hints about what he believed to be the "Confucian ethics of the East" as a foundation of Western science.

The noble man has five pleasures, but wealth and rank are not among them. That his house understands decorum and rightness and remains free from family rifts—this is one pleasure. That exercising care in giving to and taking from others, he provides for himself honestly, free, internally, from shame before his wife and children, and externally, from disgrace before the public—this is the second pleasure. That he expounds and glorifies the learning of the sages, knows in his heart the great Way, and in all situations contents himself with his duty, in adversity as well as in prosperity—this is the third pleasure. That he is born after the opening of the vistas of science by the Westerners and can therefore understand principles not known to the sages and wise men of old—this is the fourth pleasure. That he employs the ethics of the East and the scientific technique of the West, neglecting neither the spiritual nor material aspects of life, combining subjective and objective and thus bringing benefit to the people and serving the nation—this is the fifth pleasure.³⁶

Apparently, Sakuma never questioned the legitimacy of the Confucian obsession with personal "decorum" and the "way of the sages" as a basis for all other studies. Moreover, he never understood that there was far more than "scientific technique" in the Western civilization. One should not forget, however, that Sakuma's position was a relatively progressive one—at least in mid-nineteenth century Japan. The very reason that Sakuma emphasized "Eastern ethics" was to relieve the arch-reactionaries terrified by the possibility of social collapse due to Western missionaries and their Christianity. The fact that Sakuma was assassinated by self-proclaimed "men of high purpose" (*shishi*) armed with pure xenophobia explains that he was hardly regarded as a conservative.

Fukuzawa Sannosuke, Fukuzawa Yukichi's older brother who prematurely died from rheumatism and otherwise would have become an interesting thinker, shared the same concern with Sakuma. As a diehard Confucianist, according to Fukuzawa's autobiography,

³⁶ Ibid., 634.

Sannosuke was willing to commit himself to “filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty, and sincerity until death.”³⁷ At the same time, however, Sannosuke was an astute thinker who realized the need for Western knowledge to fight against the Westerners’ superior weapons. It was Sannosuke who recommended young Yukichi learn Dutch in order to get firsthand access to Western knowledge as soon as he was informed about Commodore Perry’s “black ships.” Considering the general trend of glorifying “righteous” assassination fueled by xenophobia in the late Tokugawa era, however, any sign of showing curiosity about Western knowledge might cost them their lives.³⁸ Without the courageous pursuit of Western knowledge led by pioneers like Sakuma, Fukuzawa’s early intellectual development would have been far more difficult.

But using Confucian ethics as a foundation for learning Western technology was problematic. Although it existed peacefully for more than 200 years, Japanese feudalism had already shown clear signs of decline by the time of Perry’s arrival. Many lower-ranked samurais were effectively stripped of their function as warriors due to the need to impose peace, which made them lose control over peasants and their agrarian production. Peasants and merchants could be protected directly by the feudal lords’ private militia, and some rich merchants could enjoy far greater social influence by giving loans to feudal lords, who increasingly became dependent on merchants at the end of the Tokugawa era. Meanwhile, the lower samurais essentially became salaried employees³⁹ without clear functions, which probably made it easier for their lords to cut their salary anytime they saw fit.⁴⁰ In this

³⁷ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 13. I slightly changed the translation.

³⁸ Fukuzawa recounted his fear of assassination around this time a number of times in his autobiography. He even dedicated a whole chapter to describing the frightening experiences. See *ibid.*, 225-238.

³⁹ Maruyama Masao compared the late-Tokugawa samurais with modern white-collar salaried workers (*sararii man*, a Japanese expression based on a broken English term). Maruyama and Katō, *Honyaku to nihonno kindai* 18.

⁴⁰ Moore, 233-238.

situation, the ethical codes of Confucianism would not satisfy any class, except the few feudal lords on top since the traditional Confucian notion of separation between four classes—samurai, farmers, technicians, and merchants (*shi nō kō shō* or, in Chinese, *shi nong gong shang*)—was gradually disintegrating.⁴¹

An even more serious contradiction in Sakuma's attempt to recharacterize the role of Confucianism was that the samurai class itself had become increasingly redundant. By the late Tokugawa era, many samurais, in addition to losing their original function as warriors, did not have any particular role in society but nonetheless had to be paid by the local domain government. To solve the financial problem that emerged as the domain lords became dependent on merchants, the privilege of the samurai class had to be abolished.⁴² Sakuma's theory did not come close to understanding this contradiction because he never considered the leading role of samurais an issue. Confucian reformers were instead concerned about how to pay samurais better with new technologies and economics from the West, rather than abolishing the class altogether.⁴³

Especially for Fukuzawa, Sakuma's theory was completely “inverted” because it was precisely the “Eastern ethics” that stripped Japanese people of the spirit of independence and self-reliance, while “Japanese practice,” such as the separation of the Emperor and Shōgun, had valuable resources to spread the idea of progress. What Fukuzawa knew, but Sakuma did not, was that the new material conditions required a new ideology—and even a new ruling

⁴¹ For an example of how people who did not belong to the samurai class earned their privilege, particularly the merchant class, see Charles David Sheldon, *The Rise of the Merchant Class in Tokugawa Japan, 1600-1868: An Introductory Survey* (Locust Valley, J. J. Augustin Incorporated Publisher, 1958), 64-84.

⁴² Although Moore believed that there was no socioeconomic equivalent of German Junkers in Japan, it is tempting to draw similarities from the parasitic status of the two reactionary classes in the advent of modernity. Moore's opposition to this view is based on the fact that samurais were generally separated from land ownership. But he indeed recognized the small-scale landowners were abundant in Japan. See Moore, 276.

⁴³ For accounts of Confucian scholars, see Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 123-124.

class to lead the transformation.

Fukuzawa's successful critique of the Japanese intellectuals' preoccupation with the technological side of the West while ignoring its inner spirit will be discussed in greater detail later. Before that, however, it should be noted that Fukuzawa's enemy was not just Confucians. A more formidable enemy was the existential response of the self-identified "warriors" to the new era—the idea of "Expel the Barbarians" (*jōi*) and "Japanese Spirit" (*yamato damashii*). Fukuzawa, I believe, initially offered good critiques against them but ultimately fell to their influence later in his life. Fukuzawa was nonetheless regarded as one of the fiercest enemies of such reactionary xenophobes. Motivated by the critique of intellectuals like Fukuzawa, however, the leaders of these xenophobes eventually contributed to the rise of modern Japan by the Meiji Restoration.

The "Japanese Spirit" (*yamato damshii*), which the young Fukuzawa Yukichi bitterly fought against, has deep roots in Japanese history. But its nationalist interpretation, combined with a warrior spirit, seemed to be a modern invention. Around the eighteenth century, what had been a simple Confucian loyalty to the superior gradually changed to the exclusive admiration and worship of the Emperor, who was believed to be the world's one and only monarch whose bloodline was eternal. When Commodore Matthew C. Perry forced the military dictator of Japan, Shōgun, to end Japan's seclusion policy, samurais began to feel a real threat to their sacred land and monarchy. The Japanese Spirit also started to mean something more radical—an action-oriented warrior spirit that encouraged anyone to willingly die for the Emperor and "Expel the Barbarians" at all costs. This irrationalism was a great obstacle to Fukuzawa, who wanted to spread Western liberalism and rationalism in Japan.

The Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin*) in 1867, arguably the single most important political event in modern Japanese history, was hardly revolutionary—at least during its inception. Its English translation, “Meiji Restoration,” correctly grasped the fact that the main political change at the time was a “restoration” of the absolute authority of the Emperor rather than a social reform. The original Japanese expression, *Meiji ishin*, was also picked up from the Confucian canonical text which praised the reformist spirit of King Wen of the ancient Zhou kingdom.⁴⁴ The Confucian “reform” is, however, always backward-looking since the exemplar of any reform was already set by ancient sages like King Wen. The fundamental transformation of social structures brought with the Meiji Restoration was neither intended nor expected. The only change that was obvious from the beginning was the transfer of political authority from Shōgun, a military dictator who ruled Japan by heredity for hundreds of years, to the Emperor who had hitherto only been a symbolic ruler and man-god of Japan—but never granted significant political power under the Shōgun’s watch.

The restoration of the Emperor’s real political power could not be welcomed by Fukuzawa for one obvious reason. It would essentially unify the sacred and the secular, which would nullify the only progressive legacy that Fukuzawa found under Tokugawa feudalism. Deeply influenced by Francois Guizot’s *General History of Civilization in Europe*, the historical separation between Shōgun’s political power and the Emperor’s religious authority gave Fukuzawa a small hope for the oppressive Shogunate government. As in Western Europe, where the religious authority of the Pope and the power of secular princes

⁴⁴ King Wen of Zhou (1152-1056 BC) is considered a founder of the Zhou dynasty, which ruled China longer than any other dynasties in history and also the model for ideal politics in Confucianism. Although it was his son, King Wu, who defeated the existing Shang dynasty and unified China under Zhou, many Confucian scholars believed that King Wen prepared the foundation of the empire. *Classic of Poetry*, one of the most important Confucian canons, praised the self-renovation (*ishin* in *Meiji ishin*, *weixin* in Chinese) in King Wen’s politics as the following: “Although Zhou was an ancient state, its mandate was self-renovation (*zhousuijiubang qimingweixin*).” *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, Chapter *Daya*, Section *King Wen (Wenwang)* (Milton Keynes: JiaHu Books, 2014) 112.

were separated, the competition between different sources of authority would lead the Japanese to find space for civil society and individual freedom.

For “men of high purpose for restoration (*ishin shishi*),” however, Fukuzawa’s rational concern for the inner value in the Shōgun’s rule meant nothing. What was unbearable for those self-proclaimed “men of high purpose” was what appeared to be the Shōgun’s cowardice and capitulationism to the West. The “men of high purpose” genuinely believed that the purest Japanese political system—the Emperor’s absolute rule that ended a thousand years ago—could save Japan from the Western threat. Like any other reactionary philosophy, no rational reason would be necessary for justification. Japan, for them, was a sacred country, protected by gods and their warrior spirit. To protect the gods’ country (*shinkoku*), one must rehabilitate the ancient authority which belonged to the god incarnated as man: the Emperor himself. Shōgun, by contrast, should not only be punished because he was an evil despot who usurped the legitimate authority from the people’s god but also because he was a sycophant of Western barbarians. Although the last point was clearly a misunderstanding, because the Shogunate was forced to comply with the Western demands, no one was able to stop the anti-Shogunate sentiment of the reckless samurais who found their honor in dying for their loyalty to the Emperor.⁴⁵

Although its origin can be traced back to antiquity, the philosophical foundation of the “Expel the Barbarians” faction active in the Meiji Restoration is often attributed to Yoshida Shōin, one of Sakuma Shōzan’s most prominent students. Yoshida’s heavy emphasis on the Japanese Spirit—*Yamato damashii*—inspired many young samurais,

⁴⁵ Fukuzawa also wrote that the Shogunate wanted to “Expel the Barbarians” more than anyone else. See *Zenshū* vol. 5, 106-107.

including the first prime minister of the Meiji Japan,⁴⁶ to devote themselves to the “action-oriented philosophy” which inspired the politics of terrorism throughout the late Tokugawa to the Meiji era and even toward the end of World War II. As a patriot who paid profound respect to Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*, Yoshida shared Sakuma’s belief that Japanese patriots had to learn the military knowledge of the West. Yet what touched the heart of many samurais was Yoshida’s belief that the superior will of Japan would bring ultimate victory once they were armed with Western technology. The following passage summarizes Yoshida’s thoughts nicely.

What is important in a leader is a resolute will and determination. A man may be versatile and learned, but if he lacks resoluteness and determination, of what use will he be? ... Once the will is resolved, one’s spirit is strengthened. Even a peasant’s will is hard to deny, but a samurai of resolute will can sway ten thousand men. ... He who aspires to greatness should read and study, pursuing the True Way with such a firm resolve that he is perfectly straightforward and open, rises above the superficialities of conventional behavior, and refuses to be satisfied with the petty or commonplace. ... Once a man’s will is set, he need no longer rely on others or expect anything from the world. His vision encompasses Heaven and earth, past and present, and the tranquility of his heart is undisturbed. ... Life and death, union and separation, follow closely after each other. Nothing is steadfast but the will; nothing endures but one’s achievements. These alone count in life.⁴⁷

Encouraging each patriot to become “a samurai of resolute” who can singlehandedly “sway ten thousand men,” what Yoshida ultimately wanted was to free the sacred and mystical power hidden in the Japanese will (*yamato damashii*). In this respect, Yoshida’s philosophy does not speak to the will of any individual subjectivity à la Nietzsche, despite their clear similarity. It was specifically aimed at a great awakening of the “Japanese will.”

⁴⁶ Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909). As one of Yoshida’s most prominent students, Itō was also devoted to his action-oriented philosophy and joined the anti-Shogunate force to overthrow the government, as did many of his fellow samurais from the Chōshū domain. After he saw the West with his own eyes, from his participation in Iwakura Mission, a diplomatic voyage group sent by the Meiji government, he became increasingly more moderate and decided to westernize Japan. He enraged Koreans after he forcefully took Korea’s diplomatic sovereignty in 1905 and ended up being assassinated by a Korean pan-Asianist, Ahn Jung-geun, who remains greatly respected by North and South Koreans alike to this day.

⁴⁷ de Bary, Gluck, and Tiedemann, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 654.

The following poem, a part of Yoshida's testament in prison before he was beheaded by the Shogunate for his alleged conspiracy to assassinate Shōgun's emissary, shows what Yoshida meant by the Japanese spirit. It is an unstoppable will to save the nation by every possible means, which defies any rational calculation of life and death.

Oya wo omō (The son's solicitude for his mother)
 Kokoro ni masaru (Is surpassed by)
 Oyagokoro (Her solicitude for him.)
 Kyō no otozure (When she hears what befell me today,)
 Ika ni kikan? (How will she take it?)
 Kaku sureba (That such an act)
 Kaku naru mono to (Would have such a result)
 Shiri nagara (I knew well enough.)
Yamu ni yamarenu (What made me do it anyhow)
*Yamato damashii (Was the spirit of Yamato.)*⁴⁸

Fukuzawa remained only a spectator to the Meiji Restoration and was never excited about the restoration of the Emperor's absolute authority.⁴⁹ As a liberal who found the only progressive legacy in the Tokugawa era in its separation of the Emperor and Shōgun, Fukuzawa would have believed that the restoration would essentially destroy the only hope for progress in Japan by blocking the freedom that would emerge from competing sources of authority. Moreover, in the turmoil of "Expel the Barbarians," westernized intellectuals, like Fukuzawa, suffered more serious death threats than they had under the Shogunate.

Fortunately for Fukuzawa, and Japan herself, the newly established Meiji oligarchy who "persuaded" Shōgun to abdicate and restore the Emperor's direct rule quickly recognized the reality: it was impossible to build a state strong enough to fight the West by

⁴⁸ Ibid., 653. Emphasis added.

⁴⁹ Maruyama Masao, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 3, 316.

the slogan of the Japanese spirit alone, without “taking care” of redundant samurais who were an enormous burden to the government. They decided to abolish the class system and even the domain system itself for better tax revenue to the central government. First, the domain lords who led the restoration voluntarily returned their territories—not demesne but indeed “territory” in the sense of the modern state—to the Emperor in order to make it clear that Japan was now an absolute monarchy, with all power emanating from the Emperor at the center. Other domain lords followed their example, partly out of the fear that their territory would be forcibly expropriated by the Meiji oligarchy. Instead, many domain lords were allowed to keep their social standing and privileges but not their hereditary rights to their domains. Every part of Japan had become directly governed by the central government with the modernized bureaucrats appointed by the Meiji oligarchs. The ruling class of Japan, samurais, officially lost their status and any privileges entailed by it. National education was established to teach Western science and other practical knowledge. Everything that would seemingly help Japan look like the powerful barbarians from the West was encouraged, from language and hairstyle to music and even everyday etiquette during mealtime. The Meiji Emperor, who was enthroned at the age of sixteen, trusted and gave his full support to the Meiji oligarchs, who, in turn, effectively utilized this support by presenting whatever they tried to do as the Emperor’s order.

The reform turned out to be a great success in hindsight, but the conflict was inevitable when ordinary samurais who bitterly fought for the overthrow of the Shogunate clearly felt betrayed by the Meiji oligarchs. It was understandable—they were the ones who died for the Emperor, but they lost all the privileges they enjoyed before the restoration. Some of them engaged in businesses, but most of them failed miserably because they knew

next to nothing besides their swords and a few Confucian texts. Many of them—perhaps the most self-aware of them—became ordinary workers because they had nothing better to do. But many of them simply refused to abandon their samurai pride and instead starved themselves to death. Of course, they never dared attack the Emperor, whose power they restored by their own blood. Rather, they came to the conclusion that the Meiji oligarchs were deceiving the young Emperor; they decided to fight a new fight against the newly established despotism led by “crooks.” These former samurais constituted the right wing of the later “Freedom and People’s Rights Movement” (*jiyū minken undō*), perhaps another great irony of the modern Japanese history, the most reactionary group characterizing themselves as liberals. This unfortunate legacy of alienated former samurais even affected many of the later socialists, such as Asō Hisashi, as they tried to “paint the Emperor red” to spread their radicalism while honoring the Emperor as the people’s true representative.⁵⁰ It was predictable that such “socialists” could not mobilize much intellectual resources when the Imperial Japanese Army, which attracted a number of alienated former samurais and their descendants, suggested a better alternative to fully endorse the Emperor’s authority and divinity.

In contrast with the other pseudo-liberal samurais, Fukuzawa clearly saw the danger in popular admiration for the Emperor’s direct rule. His initially acerbic critique of the Emperor-worshippers became increasingly milder toward the latter part of his life, and his attitude to the Emperor was obscure by the time of his death. But Fukuzawa was one of the few intellectuals who openly argued that the Emperor should remain as a symbolic figure rather than a direct ruler. This lone battle to change the Japanese Spirit from irrational death-

⁵⁰ See Rikki Kersten, “Painting the Emperor red: The Emperor and the socialists in the 1930s,” in Rikki Kersten and David Williams eds., *The Left in the Shaping of Japanese Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

defying loyalty to rational bourgeois consciousness should be understood as one of the most spectacular moments in the intellectual history of the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that Fukuzawa's defeat in this battle eventually led to the victory of the reactionary wing of the Imperial Japanese Army, which tried to "Expel the Barbarians" from East Asia and waged a "holy war" against "demonic animals from England and America" (*kichiku eibei*).⁵¹

C. Fukuzawa and Japan's Choice in the Western Threat

Confronting the two major enemies described so far, Confucianism and the Japanese spirit, Fukuzawa needed to prove that it was he, not those reactionaries out there, who was a true patriot. Fukuzawa was a nationalist like most of his Asian contemporaries; his ultimate adversaries were the Western imperialists rather than reactionaries among his countrymen. Fukuzawa, however, sought a different path than the reactionary nationalists in order to maintain Japan's independence from the threat of Western imperialism. The later chapters in this study are organized to best detail Fukuzawa's changing strategies to fight both the domestic opponents to the enlightenment and the foreign threats to the independence of Japan in a rough chronological order. The following is a brief summary of later chapters, which also reflects Fukuzawa's changing attitude toward the independence and the enlightenment of Japan.

First, Fukuzawa focused on popular education to cultivate Western liberal nationalism among the Japanese people, which is represented by one of his early bestsellers, *An Encouragement of Learning*. Fukuzawa's project of popular enlightenment began when

⁵¹ This was one of the most famous propaganda slogans used by the government and the military of the Empire of Japan during the Pacific War. It was mainly promoted by a far-right organization like the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (*Taisei yokusan kai*). For more about the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, see Jansen, 631.

he returned to Japan after serving as a translator for the Shogunate's delegation to the West. In this initial phase, Fukuzawa spread a simple message: the Japanese should learn anything they could from the West and stop being exclusively preoccupied with military technology. Although often writing how-to books on Western weapons to satisfy popular interests, Fukuzawa was most eager to introduce the liberal morality of the West, which had been completely ignored since no one believed that barbarians could have any "morality." Although there was some interest in the political institutions of the West, the democratic institutions were mostly understood as no more than a convenient tool to empower the strength of the British Empire and the United States. Rather than observing the simple appearance of democratic institutions, Fukuzawa showed a deep curiosity over how they worked on the most fundamental level; he thus asked how on earth political "enemies" would not end up killing each other, which was not only incomprehensible but even dishonorable to samurais.⁵²

After the success of *Things Western* (*seiyō jijō*), his first best-seller that introduced details about Western culture to the Japanese public for the first time, Fukuzawa became a celebrity, a go-to person when anyone wanted to know a thing or two about the West. What he needed to do, then, was explain what Japan should learn from the West. Fukuzawa's attempt to present his own argument started dramatically with his famous first sentence, "Heaven does not create one person above or below another," in *An Encouragement of Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*), which was a collection of seventeen independent articles

⁵² See the following excerpt from Fukuzawa's autobiography: "When I asked a gentleman what the "election law" was and what kind of institution the Parliament really was,these were the things most difficult of all for me to understand. In this connection, I learned that there were different political parties—the Liberal and the Conservative—who were always "fighting" against each other in the government. For some time it was beyond my comprehension to understand what they were "fighting" for, and what was meant, anyway, by "fighting" in peace time. "This man and that man are enemies in the House," they would tell me. But these "enemies" were to be seen at the same table, eating and drinking with each other." Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 134.

that he published consecutively over four years. What is distinctive in the series of writings was Fukuzawa's effort to create new men—the rational bourgeois independent from external authorities—out of a Japanese people full of samurai spirit. Fukuzawa immanently fought the action-oriented irrationalism ingrained in “Japanese spirit” in order to replace it with bourgeois rationalism—without clearly knowing it himself.

The Second Phase of Fukuzawa's enlightenment project began with his bold support for the idea of progress, which was yet an unfamiliar concept to many Japanese intellectuals. It was not until he published *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* in 1875 that Fukuzawa clearly explained what he believed to be “progress,” which was identified with individual freedom and the full development of individual autonomy. Introducing the liberal idea of progress to his nineteenth century East Asian audience was a daunting task, largely because of the strong influence of Confucianism. Emphasizing harmony and order, the utopian ideal of Confucianism was fixed in the time when ancient sages, such as Emperors Yao and Shun, ruled China thousands of years ago. History was interpreted as a “corruption” and “deviation” from the perfect harmony of the distant past. Without a doubt, the liberal idea of freedom and individualism should be understood as the greatest deviation from the ancient harmony, according to the Confucianists. After all, to Confucianists, the liberal idea of freedom and equality was never useful in keeping the harmony and order that they cherished. Such views might be of interest to some postmodernists or Straussians now, but to Fukuzawa it was quite obvious that the sacred documents of old sages were not particularly helpful to Japan, under existential threat from the West. Introducing the idea of progress and attacking Confucian morality was, Fukuzawa believed, the most important task to enlighten Japan from its constant preoccupation with the harmony and peace of the ancient past.

On the other hand, many previous studies of Fukuzawa missed the fact that Fukuzawa's critique of "Expel the Barbarians" became weaker in *Civilization* than in the early part of *Encouragement*. In short, Fukuzawa, perhaps consciously, chose to stay focused on attacking the Confucianists and toned down his attack on the xenophobic far-right group. Fukuzawa apparently tried to reason with other "Expel the Barbarians" patriots who found their cause in death-defying loyalty to the Emperor and persuade them to realize the true way of patriotism: liberalism and enlightenment that would make Japan strong enough to fight the West. This is not necessarily a betrayal of his enlightenment project, for it was a nationalist one from the beginning. Yet it seems dangerous to reconcile with the reactionary force from inside while heavily criticizing Confucianism as "Chinese" and "non-Japanese" tradition. The short-sighted strategy eventually weakened the impetus to critique the internal contradiction of the "Japanese Spirit" that all reactionaries revered. This slight and nuanced change was often overshadowed by his acerbic critique of Japanese civilization and culture in Chapter 9 of *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*. It is nonetheless obvious that Fukuzawa's emphasis on national independence and "National Right" gradually cast a blight on his progressive agenda.

The last part is how Fukuzawa ended up a warmongering imperialist near the end of his life. Alluding that Japan had progressed enough for the time being in *Transformation of the Spirit of People* (1876), Fukuzawa became increasingly critical of domestic democrats who were not satisfied with the progress made under the Meiji government and insisted on the expansion of suffrage. Frustrated by his disagreements with both conservatives and radicals, he brought up the classic right-wing strategy of "domestic peace, foreign aggression" in *A Critique of Current Affairs* (1881), believing that the external aggression would unify

diverging opinions in and out of the Japanese government and stabilize the political chaos. He also gradually retreated from his previous critique of Emperor worship and admitted that worshipping the Emperor would be quite useful for taming the ignorant masses.

This study seeks to find the cause of Fukuzawa's apparent "conversion" to the right from his inner existential desire to have the West recognize the "greatness" of Japan, which was always in his thought from the beginning of his career. When such a desire for recognition of identity overpowered the belief in progress and the hope in individual liberation, he became a supporter of imperialist wars. Fukuzawa's rationalism was overshadowed by his identity politics rather than any "dialectic of enlightenment." What Fukuzawa lacked was a strong ideological commitment to universal progress, which is a crucial weakness of liberalism—especially of "free-floating" liberal intellectuals who often fail to confront the far right while maintaining a standpoint of "repressive tolerance" decried by Marcuse.⁵³

⁵³ Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., & Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 81-117.

Chapter 2

Learning to Reason: *An Encouragement of Learning* (Gakumon no susume)

Young Yukichi was full of ambition and curiosity. He began to run his own small private school (*juku*) at the age of twenty-three in 1858. It would later go on to become Keio University. Fukuzawa ardently taught and studied any Western texts available, from medical to military topics, with other young “scholars of Western studies.” When the Shogunate decided to send Japan’s first national delegation to America in 1860, Fukuzawa did not hesitate to pull all the strings he could in order to join them, wishing to see with his own eyes the mighty barbarians who forced his beloved country to open to the world. After two years, the Shogunate officially ordered Fukuzawa to join the Shōgun’s delegation to Europe as an interpreter. Fukuzawa’s first best-seller, *Things Western* (*seiyō jijō*, 1866), came out of his experiences in this series of travels.

After seeing what was going around the world with his own eyes, Fukuzawa began ardently translating and writing whatever he learned to introduce it to the Japanese audience, thinking that “it would be delightful to make the oldies in Edo¹ [apparently meaning the officials in the Shogunate government] fall before the logic of opening the country.”² His enthusiasm to introduce the West to Japan came to fruition when he published the first volume of *Things Western*, which became an instant best-seller. He became a celebrity, and everyone believed he was an authoritative source of knowledge on the West.³

After the sensational hit of *Things Western*, however, Fukuzawa felt that his academic

¹ The old name of current Tokyo.

² Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū* [Complete collection of Fukuzawa Yukichi] vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 11.

³ The influence of *Things Western* went beyond Japan. The style of *Things Western* was copied by his Korean friend and student Yu Kil-Chun in his *Seoyu gyeonmun* (Observations on Travels in the West). See Yu Kil-Chun, *Seoyu gyeonmun* [Observations on Travels in the West] (Seoul: Shinwon Books, 2005).

responsibility should go beyond introducing someone else's ideas. Fukuzawa was initially not particularly enthusiastic about presenting his own thoughts, perhaps because translating Western books alone would guarantee enough threats to his life from those who wanted to "Expel the Barbarians." Eventually, however, Fukuzawa tired of just translating others' thoughts and wanted to seriously study to develop his own ideas.⁴ When his friends read his short but brilliant article written for the students of a newly established school in Nakatsu, Fukuzawa was persuaded to publish the article and write its sequels for the enlightenment of the general public. Overall, seventeen consecutive articles were written over four years, each receiving enthusiastic responses from readers, and the collection of all seventeen articles was published in 1876 under the title *An Encouragement of Learning* (gakumon no susume, *Encouragement* hereafter).

Since it is a collection of seventeen independent articles, Maruyama Masao considered *Encouragement* as lacking a systematic structure or consistency, despite its importance. Although the final release of the whole collection was published later than *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, which will be introduced in the next chapter, *Encouragement* is generally regarded as supplements to Fukuzawa's early thoughts or a preliminary work for *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*. While such views are understandable, *Encouragement* has a striking insight that is not clearly repeated in *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* and thus should not be overlooked: Fukuzawa wanted to inspire Japanese intellectuals to become an independent bourgeois class and create a bourgeois public sphere, without even knowing the word "bourgeois." For a samurai who had not heard of liberalism or democracy only a few years before, Fukuzawa's insight was

⁴ Maruyama Masao, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu* [Reading An Outline of a Theory of Civilization] vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987), 315-317.

truly pioneering, which would fit what Ernst Bloch would describe as “anticipatory consciousness” in his *The Principle of Hope*.

The most pressing concern for Fukuzawa when he wrote *Encouragement* was to change the nature of the ruling class in Japan. To create a rational bourgeois class, the old warrior spirit of samurais should be completely discarded, as their death-defying loyalty to their superiors was constantly at odds with rational calculation and scientific reason. Following Yoshida Shōin’s chants glorifying “man of resolute” and “decisive action,” almost action for action’s sake, a number of samurais constantly attacked Western merchants or missionaries whenever these Westerners did anything that samurais deemed dishonorable to Japan. It was obvious, however, such violent reactions of samurais would not achieve anything. It only added extra dollars to an already huge amount of reparations that the Japanese government had to pay for local domain lords’ attacks on Western ships.

Fortunately, the material base of the samurais was abolished by the Meiji oligarchs when they tried to increase the tax revenue of the central government by eliminating all samurais’ privileges, which Fukuzawa found very promising. Of course, as explained in the previous chapter, samurais reacted furiously to the stripping of their privileges and salaries. It was not just about their lost privileges; they literally became jobless. It was thus very timely that Fukuzawa suggested an alternative vision for samurais by “encouraging” them to “learn” something eye-opening and completely different, hence the title of the book, *An Encouragement of Learning*. Liberating the samurais from their ancient customs through a series of pamphlets, Fukuzawa sought to create a new man—a rational bourgeois citizen replacing action-oriented samurais.

A. The Goal: Creating a Civil Society in Japan

Most social scientists would consider the growth of civil society a fundamental condition of bourgeois liberalism and rationalism. We already reviewed how Tokugawa feudalism repressed the possibility of the free development of science and individual freedom in the previous chapter. The brilliance of Fukuzawa's early thought came mainly from his ability to recognize that Japan needed a safe space where intellectuals could freely discuss their ideas, independent from any political authority or social repression based on strict class distinctions of feudal Japan.

It was certainly impossible to expect a voluntary growth of free cities independent from the central government in Japan, due to the strict social hierarchy from Shōgun and the local lords to petty peasants. That did not mean, however, that bourgeois rationalism should be frustrated from the outset. Fukuzawa drew attention to the role of the traditional Confucian literati, which were not necessarily a ruling class of Japan as they were in China. Many literati also belonged to the samurai class, but their identity was rather understood as a mediator between the warriors on top and other people below. Moreover, there were already signs that many of the former Confucianists were converting to "Western studies," just like Fukuzawa himself. Once a civil society was created around those literati, it was certainly possible to lay the foundation of bourgeois rationalism in Japan. Although Fukuzawa never used the term "bourgeois" or "civil society" in *Encouragement*, he grasped the literati's role as a "middle class" which would contribute to the spread of liberalism in Japan.

To create a civil society in Japan, Fukuzawa believed it was of utmost importance to end the intellectuals' dependency on the support of the government. It was no accident that most enlightenment intellectuals in East Asia considered the intellectuals' independence from

the government as a first-order problem in the modernization of their countries.⁵ Any society that needs a fundamental transformation requires an agent who can lead a reform or revolution. If such a transformation needs an overthrow of existing privileges and the social order, there should be a force independent from the prevailing system of oppression. Even if it is impossible to be totally independent from the system, the revolutionary agent should at least be able to *think* differently. The Confucian states, however, had been organized in a way that systematically discouraged the rise of such an independent force.

Although scholars of the East Asian history of Confucianism often dismiss any idea of “oriental despotism” or the existence of managerial bureaucracy that was constructed for total control of society, one still has good reason to believe that such total societal control was at least attempted and idealized in theory. Wittfogel found striking similarity between the intention of total control in the Soviet Union’s collectivization program and the policies in *Rites of Zhou*, or *Zhou Li*, which is believed to be a collection of policy recommendations from Duke Wen of Zhou, an ancient sage revered by Confucian scholars for thousands of years.

The developed industrial apparatus state of the USSR has crushed all independent nationwide organizations (military, political, proprietary, religious); and its total managerial economy permits the establishment of innumerable bureaucratic bases for controlling all secondary (local) professional groupings and even the thought and behavior of individuals. ... To be sure, the notion of a ubiquitous control also attracted the master minds of hydraulic despotism. ... The great Chinese "Utopia" of bureaucratic government, the *Chou Li*, lists several officials who, in a well-managed state, should regulate the people's life in village and town. ... All educated Chinese officials studied the *Chou Li*...⁶

Of course, as Wittfogel admitted, the literal implementation of societal control

⁵ Aside from Fukuzawa Yukichi in Japan, this issue was most prominently raised by the “May Fourth intellectuals” in China, the intellectuals who initiated New Culture Movement in 1910s. See Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Schwarcz also mentioned Fukuzawa as the first to raise the same concern on page 32.

⁶ Wittfogel, 111-112.

described in *Rites of Zhou* was impossible for the ancient Chinese states. Not only did they lack resources to maintain a large enough number of personnel to maintain social control of every peasant, but they did not have the technological base that would allow total control over their people. It has also been said that Wang Anshi, an eleventh century scholar-official who ambitiously led a comprehensive reform of Northern Song Empire, also failed because he interpreted *Rites of Zhou* too literally. Wang's ambition, however, came to fruition when the Tokugawa Shogunate imported his pioneering totalitarian device of *baojia* system, a mutual surveillance mechanism by making each member watch others' suspicious behaviors in a group of several families.⁷ Although it was not successful in its native soil in China, the ideology that prioritizes social harmony and order over any notion of individual autonomy is deeply ingrained in the bodies and souls of East Asian people, and it was extraordinarily successful for the Japanese rulers.

The most interesting testimony, although it may not be the most trustworthy, was from a Western admirer of Confucian philosophy, Gottfried Leibniz. As one of the early European Sinophiles, Leibniz praised the "practical philosophy" of China for its effective control of people's minds to the level of the family and individual relationships.

...certainly [the Chinese] surpass [Europeans] ... in practical philosophy, that is, in the precepts of ethics and politics adapted to the present life and use of mortals. Indeed, it is difficult to describe how beautifully all the laws of the Chinese, in contrast to those of other peoples, are directed to the achievement of public tranquility and the establishment of social order, so that men shall be disrupted in their relations as little as possible. ... So great is obedience toward superiors and reverence toward elders, so religious, almost, is the relation of children toward parents, that for children to contrive anything violent against their parents, even by word, is almost unheard of, and the perpetrator seems to atone for his actions even as we make a parricide pay for his deed.⁸

⁷ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 260.

⁸ Donald F. Lach, *The Preface to Leibniz' Novissima Sinica* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1957), 69-70.

Leibniz's apparent Sinophile bias cannot be separated from his optimism in the present order, his famous belief that the current world is "the best of all possible worlds," which is justly ridiculed by Voltaire in *Candide*.⁹ The blind obsession with order and practice is a great obstacle to the Enlightenment's utopian concern in liberating humanity from dogmas. Moreover, the conflicting nature of human life, which Hegel and Marx correctly understood as the main motor of history, was fundamentally denied in Leibniz's idealization of China. Fukuzawa wanted to attack this very oriental "ideal" that was aimed at making every individual and organization obedient to the state for the sake of order and harmony. Leibniz's heaven was Fukuzawa's hell, and it seems that Fukuzawa was correct in a broad historical perspective.

Although every social class and sector was dependent on the state, which was supposed to control all properties in its territorial boundaries, the productive power of the Confucian states was enough to maintain economic growth in the eighteenth century. The efficiency of the Confucian states was usually explained by its strict meritocracy, giving priority to the opinions of the intellectuals hired by the civil service examination called "kējǔ," which produces the well-known Confucian literati or "scholar-officials." In reality, however, the intellectuals employed by the state examination were not helpful in generating economic surplus. Accumulation of wealth was regarded as something shameful that only "lowly merchants" would want to do. Every Confucian text, and the state laws based on them, encouraged all scholar-officials to maintain as frugal a lifestyle as possible. Yet obviously Confucian literati themselves were not immune to the temptation of wealth and luxuries. The dialectics from this contradiction, according to Barrington Moore, resulted in "open

⁹ See Voltaire, *Candide: or Optimism*, trans. Burton Raffel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 130.

corruption.”¹⁰ The Confucian states heavily repressed merchants, often confiscating their wealth based on arbitrary moral judgments, while the Confucian literati (employed by the government) would secretly accumulate their wealth. Not allowed to overstep the boundaries of the state ideology, the literati never had any motivation to invest their wealth to create more businesses. Any activity openly related to money-making would be truly shameful for anyone studying Confucian texts.¹¹ The goal of the Confucian bureaucrats and their ideology was primarily to keep the social order, which could generate economic prosperity when conditions were met but generally made the whole system stagnant and corrupt, especially in the nineteenth century.

Japan under the Tokugawa Shogunate was different from China. It was a federation of different semi-states ruled by feudal lords rather than a centralized Confucian bureaucracy. The degree of social control and centralization on the level of each domain, however, surpassed that of China. Samurais, although different from the Confucian literati in China as they were identified more as warriors than as literati, equally honored the social order and harmony as Confucian scholars. The strictness of its class system undoubtedly surpassed that of China and Korea where, at least in theory, anyone could apply for the state examination to become part of the ruling class, which was not the case in Japan. At the same time, like Confucian literati in China, samurais were deeply dependent on the government, both economically and ideologically. They were not allowed to imagine any alternative, which meant treason of the Shōgun’s “grace.”

Fukuzawa was the first to find it necessary to change the nature of the Japanese ruling

¹⁰ Moore, 172.

¹¹ As introduced earlier, Fukuzawa Sannosuke, Fukuzawa Yukichi’s older brother, wanted to follow “filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty, and sincerity until death.” It was, interestingly, a somewhat angry response to Fukuzawa Yukichi’s dream that he wanted to become a merchant and pile up lots of money. See Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 13.

class. Even after the Meiji Restoration and the implementation of various programs for modernization, the vast majority of the Japanese people, intellectuals and warriors alike, sought government employment rather than doing anything individually. In a nutshell, the modern individual did not exist.

There is no doubt that Fukuzawa found the revolutionary role of the bourgeois from his study of Western history. Transliterating the concept of middle class as “midduru-karassu,” Fukuzawa introduced the heroic role of the bourgeois in the progress of Western history.

...the civilization of a nation can be initiated neither from the government above nor from the people below. It must begin from a middle position which expresses the directions of the people as a whole. Success can be expected only after the nation stands on terms of equality with the government. In Western history, not one form of business or industry was the creation of the government. Their foundations were always laid by the projects of scholars in the “middle class.”¹²

Fukuzawa, however, did far more than simply introduce an idea borrowed from Western social science. He knew that the bourgeois middle-class did not exist in Japan but was nonetheless necessary for the progress of his beloved country. Fukuzawa thus specifically pointed out a particular social stratum as a potential bourgeois class and encouraged their independence from the government. This social stratum, a growing educated segment among the oversized samurais, was none other than former Confucian intellectuals.

... [People in the middle class] were neither government administrators nor the laboring masses. Theirs was exactly that middle position which leads the world by power of intellect. ...the only Japanese in the middle class who can advocate national independence and modern civilization are the scholars. But most of these same scholars are unsatisfied with their present positions. They are going into government service instead. ...they are intoxicated with the spirit of the times which looks to the government to accomplish everything. ...it is a great misfortune for Japanese civilization.¹³

¹² Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, trans. David A. Dilworth (New York, Columbia University Press, 2012), 40-41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 42.

Criticizing the intellectuals' reliance on the government as "intoxicated with the spirit of the times," Fukuzawa attempted to fundamentally change "the spirit of the time" itself, whatever it took and however difficult it would be. Unlike Hegel's dismissal of the possibility for philosophers to know the zeitgeist in advance, Fukuzawa correctly understood what kind of spirit of the time was needed for his people and that the old spirit honored for hundreds of years in his country should be abandoned. Although Fukuzawa never showed interest in Marx, his pioneering idea was a great example that implemented Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."¹⁴ Furthermore, even Marx never imagined that it would be possible for an Oriental intellectual to spread bourgeois ideology, not simply the technology that empowered the bourgeois in the West.

The second task that was considered significant in creating a bourgeois civil society in Japan was the introduction of a whole new notion of "responsibility," namely, the idea of *Beruf*, or calling, in Weber's sense.¹⁵ Somewhat akin to Plato's tripartite theory of the soul and society, Confucian ethics also required each individual to dedicate one's life to the right role in society, which would prevent the disruption of social order. It was best exemplified in Confucius's reply to Duke Jing's question about politics (or ruling): "Let the lords be lords, the subjects be subjects, the fathers be fathers, the sons be sons."¹⁶ Considered one of the

¹⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx-Engels Reader: Second Edition*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 145

¹⁵ "And in truth this peculiar idea, so familiar to us to-day, but in reality so little a matter of course, of one's duty in a calling, is what is most characteristic of the social ethic of capitalistic culture, and is in a sense the fundamental basis of it. It is an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel and does feel towards the content of his professional activity, no matter in what it consists, in particular no matter whether it appears on the surface as a utilization of his personal powers, or only of his material possessions (as capital)." Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), 19.

¹⁶ Confucius, "The Lun Yü" [Analects], Confucius Publishing Co. Ltd. Retrieved August 2018., accessed August 2018, <http://www.confucius.org/lunyu/ed1211.htm>

most crucial passages in *Analects*, Confucius's aphorism was generally interpreted as meaning one should always keep one's behavior appropriate in accordance with one's name, and was also independently studied as "a theory of proper adjustment to one's name (zhèngmíng)" or "a theory of responsibility for one's right names (míngfèn, *meibun* in Japanese)." Without a doubt, this "responsibility for one's name" was generally applied to the policies that prevented anyone from overstepping the boundaries of their class roles. In Japan, where the class division was far stricter than China, it was a crucial part of the ideology maintained by the Shogunate.

There was one critical problem in the responsibility for one's name. It relied heavily on the metaphor of family, which was then applied to the social order. The relationship between king and subordinate, the superior and the inferior in any social order, was supposed to be understood as that between father and son. The "names" here did not imply any specialized role in a society but a natural order that was given by birth. Ideally, the metaphors of family and the parent-child relationship were to propagate the idea of benevolence, which is the major tenet of Confucianism. It was thus often argued that the superior had the responsibility to compassionately take care of the inferior and the inferior had the responsibility to obey the superior. In practice, however, only the latter responsibility was emphasized. The responsibility of the superior could be mentioned when there was a political purge and the new person in charge needed some excuse to eliminate powerful persons or groups who lost the political struggle, so the rebels could successfully claim that the despot should be punished because they abused their power over their subordinates. There was no institutional check on the persons in powerful positions other than ideological beliefs that they should be compassionate, as fathers would be to their children. Sometimes such a moral

check indeed worked, but it was certainly not as effective as the institutional check and balance created by Western liberalism.

Fukuzawa clearly knew the problem in applying the metaphor of family to social orders. Going one step further, Fukuzawa believed “responsibility for one’s name” to be a pre-political justification of political order, which he thought was a major hindrance to a rational understanding of politics. The creation of the independent bourgeois class is deeply related to the rationalization of world views and politics à la Max Weber. Following the social contract theories, Fukuzawa emphasized the importance of understanding political order as an artificial creation and contract made between independent individuals. Although there was certainly an influence of Western liberalism and social contract theories, few Western liberals at the time were as specific and clear in their critique of the fundamental problem in a pre-political understanding of politics.

...the advocates of the theory of moral subordination¹⁷ make an interesting case for extending the parent-child relation to all human relations. But there are grave objections to this. The parent-child relation can only be one between real parents, whose wisdom is mature, and their own immature children. It is impossible for the same relation to prevail with another person’s child. ...Indeed, nation, village, government, or business companies are all relations among grown-ups and among strangers. Will it not be difficult to apply the principle of parent-child relationship here? ...the relation between government and people is not that of flesh and blood. It is in essence an association of strangers. Personal feelings cannot be the guiding principle in an association among strangers. It is necessarily based on the creation of a social rule and social contract. Even when they dispute over minute points of interpretation, if both of them abide by the rule, they will come to some peaceful agreement. And for this reason national laws are created. It may be essential to have the above hierarchy of enlightened monarch, excellent ministers, and docile people, but by entering what schools can such faultless sages be created? By what educational process can such splendid citizens be obtained?¹⁸

Fukuzawa, however, did not have to be depressed that the Japanese people were caught up in

¹⁷ The translator translated *meibun* to “the theory of moral subordination,” which is essentially what *meibun* resulted in, but it is a little overstretched interpretation of the literal meaning of *meibun*.

¹⁸ Fukuzawa, *Encouragement*, 80-81.

the “responsibility for the name.” All he had to do was slightly flip the tradition into something that would fit with bourgeois ethics. If one removes the metaphor of the family in the responsibility for the name, it is not impossible to reinterpret it to individual dedication to one’s destined work, which would be very similar to Max Weber’s idea of *Beruf*, or, as translated in English, “vocation” or “calling.” In the following passage, Fukuzawa tried to shift the Japanese belief in the responsibility for the name into the responsibility for one’s professional duty (*shokubun*).

Meibun, or the theory of moral subservience, is an empty concept, and the concepts of “high” and “low,” and “noble” and “base” are equally useless. Now if these ostentatious names and the actual responsibilities truly corresponded, and people really fulfilled their duties, I do not think I would have any objection to them. That is, the government is the country’s counting room, and has the duty to rule the people. The people are the country’s financiers, and the duty financially to support the government. The duty of civil officials is to decide upon the laws of the government. The duty of military officers is to fight according to their commands. In addition, there are set duties for scholars and townsmen. If an upstart of superficial learning hears that his duties were unnecessary and forgets them, or breaks the law as a citizen; or if the government meddles with private industry; or if soldiers discuss politics and start wars on their own; or if civil officials submit to brute force and obey the command of military officers—if such things were to happen, the country would be in great turmoil. There would be anarchy and lawlessness, caused by superficial knowledge of independence and freedom. *Meibun* or “moral subservience” and *shokubun* or “one’s duty” may look alike in written characters, but they are completely different in meaning.¹⁹

Fukuzawa’s thought was considered fairly radical for his time, mainly because he challenged the mainstream ideology of the Japanese class system. To avoid unending death threats from samurais who believed in “Expel the Barbarians,” he needed to make his thoughts appear to be moderate. At the same time, Fukuzawa still wanted to imply the need for the fundamental change in people’s minds and the social structure. The passage above is a great example of Fukuzawa’s effort. He was doing three things at once: First, he attacked the responsibility for one’s name as vague and obsolete. Second, he rejected that dismissal of

¹⁹ Ibid., 84-85.

responsibility for the name would bring social collapse and suggested the responsibility for one's professional duty, or vocation, as a better alternative to maintain social order. Third, on the basis of this seemingly conservative argument for "social order," Fukuzawa let liberal ideas naturally permeate his conclusion, such as the civilian control and neutrality of the military and the protection of private businesses from government intervention, saying "if the government meddles with private industry... if soldiers discuss politics and start wars on their own; or if civil officials submit to brute force and obey the command of military officers... the country would be great turmoil." By carefully circumventing the possible irritation of reactionary samurais, Fukuzawa successfully propagated his belief that Japan needed autonomous and rational bourgeois who would be fully professionalized in what they were doing and armed with the spirit of independence.

As the first public intellectual in East Asia, Fukuzawa kept his theory and practice consistently based on the bourgeois liberalism, which was obvious in his personal life. Since the Meiji government turned their direction away from the reckless "Expel the Barbarians" faction toward the modernization of Japan, the expression "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*) became a major catchphrase in Japanese society. In 1873, six years after the Restoration, a group of "scholars of Western studies" decided to organize themselves into an academic association called "Meiji-six Society" (*meirokeisha*). They also decided to publish perhaps the first academic journal in East Asia, Meiji-six Magazine (*meiroke zasshi*). One of the most meaningful achievements of the Meiji-six Society was the creation of a certain, although limited, form of the public sphere. The ideas discussed in the Meiji-six Society and their magazine formed, to a degree, a meaningful connection between intellectuals and oligarchs in the Meiji government. This, in Habermas's terms, helped the "opinion-formation"

of the incipient civil society in Japan and, further, translated it into a “will-formation” that would create real influence on the Meiji government’s policies.²⁰

Of course, the liberal function of the Meiji-six Society should not be exaggerated because the primary aim of the Society was to discuss how Japan could become stronger and more capable of standing up against the West on equal terms. Moore simply dismissed such efforts as what any ruling class would do in fear of the unprecedented challenge to their privileges and the status quo. Indeed, “[if] Japan were to become an independent modern nation, she would need a population that could read and write at least well enough to handle modern machinery, and an army to fight enemies abroad and keep order at home.”²¹ Moore thus concluded that this intellectual movement was “scarcely revolutionary,” for its primary purpose was to discuss how Japan would survive, not the social revolution that would shake the foundation of the ruling class.²² Nevertheless, not all premodern nations chose to create a public sphere or an independent intellectual society to modernize themselves. Despite the deep-seated nationalist underpinnings of the Meiji-six Society, it would be a mistake to simply reject their liberal contribution.

Fukuzawa was often regarded as the vocal advocate of the radical or liberal wing of the Meiji-six Society. He did not hesitate to criticize the Japanese tradition whenever he found it inappropriate for the new vision of the modern state, which was not necessarily favorable to the Meiji oligarchs’ position that Japan should keep their traditional warrior spirit and basic tenets of Confucianism. To maintain his objective perspective on the government, he staunchly kept his independence from the government. Even when every

²⁰ For a recent study on the Meiji-six Society and their achievement, see Kōno Yuri, *Meiroku zasshi no seiji sisō: Sakatani Shiroshi to dōri no choson* [Meiroku Zasshi and the Challenge of Sakatani Shiroshi: An Interpretation of Early Meiji Political Thought] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2011). About Habermas’s argument about public sphere and its will-formation and opinion-formation, see Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 329-387.

²¹ Moore, 273.

²² Ibid.

influential member of the Meiji-six Society eventually became a government bureaucrat or an advisor to the Emperor, Fukuzawa refused to participate in the government post-Meiji Restoration. He was personally committed to his belief that intellectuals should be independent from the government and create their own autonomous civil society and public sphere. As Keiō Gijuku, the private school Fukuzawa established, became more and more financially stable, Fukuzawa was able to remain a public intellectual with stable financial support until he died.²³

Fukuzawa was not always in conflict with the Meiji oligarchs. Although he refused to join the government himself, Fukuzawa believed that his responsibility as a public intellectual was to guide people and the government to mutual cooperation, as he often emphasized “the harmony between people and the government (*kanmin-chōwa*).”²⁴ He was more aligned with a liberal wing of the intellectual groups but always cautious about the romantic democratic ideal that would equate the ruled with the ruler, which was found in the later radical generation who were fascinated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, such as Ueki Emori or Nakae Chōmin. Fukuzawa, on the other hand, held an elementary idea of the Hegelian *Rechtsstaat*, which understood the state as an institutional mediator of competing interests between individuals. At the same time, the influence of Scottish

²³ Some Fukuzawa scholars seem to believe that his refusal of the Meiji government’s invitation came from his unconscious affinity with Confucianism, for he might not have been able to betray the grace of Shōgun, who employed him before the Restoration. I believe, though, this argument is almost nonsensical considering Fukuzawa’s thoughts and behaviors throughout his life. First of all, it was an “order” of Shōgun that he worked for the Shogunate as a translator, which a petty samurai in his twenties would be never able to refuse even if he wanted to. Fukuzawa also certainly disliked the Shogunate government as he deemed the Shogunate’s goal was only keeping the status quo of their own power than modernizing the country. It is true that Fukuzawa was not on good terms with the Meiji oligarchs, especially with Itō Hirobumi, but his dislike of the early Meiji government also consistently came from the Meiji government’s reactionary commitment to “Expel the Barbarians.” Although we cannot wholly trust what Fukuzawa said about himself, as he was a rather complicated character, as I will discuss in the later chapters, extra caution is needed if one wants to associate Fukuzawa’s motivation with Confucian beliefs.

²⁴ This theme is most notably discussed in his *A Theory of National Diet (kokkai ron)*. See *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 64-93. The expression “*kanmin chōwa*” is found in his *A Theory of the Trend of Current Affairs (jiji taisei ron)*. See *ibid.*, 252.

liberalism on Fukuzawa made him believe that there was a clear separation between the realm of the government and that of private individuals. Intellectuals' responsibility was thus to form a civil society that would help both the state and the people work together in their shared concerns and achieve the mediation of diverse individual interests. The creation of independent bourgeois class was crucial for such mediation, so he personally ran a private school and later even published a newspaper, which was enormously influential—although not always in a good way.²⁵ The dynamic roles of Fukuzawa's school and newspaper in Meiji Japan nonetheless greatly contributed to the growth of civil society.

B. Argument: Enlightenment for the People, Not the Government: Creation of the “Japanese people” that did not exist

The articles collected in *An Encouragement of Learning* showed how Fukuzawa approached the problem in the idea of “Expel the Barbarians” and the action-oriented warrior mind. He needed a clear reason that would persuade samurais to abandon their honor of dying for their lords. Fukuzawa thus began with the obvious commonality between him and the “Expel the Barbarians” faction: their patriotism.

As Benedict Anderson argues, modern nationalism developed only after the construction of the collectively shared sense of time by the modern printing press and a standard national language.²⁶ Just like Anderson's example of Javanese language, Japanese also did not have a word for “society,” which assumed the existence of free and equal individuals.²⁷ They might have distinguished themselves from Koreans or Chinese, but under

²⁵ Fukuzawa's newspaper, *News on Current Affairs* (jiji shinpō), generally supported Japan's imperialist expansion in Asia, which will be discussed more in Chapter 4.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006).

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 6. Also, see Yanabu Akira, *Honyaku-go seiritsu jijō* [The Establishment of Translated Words]

the Tokugawa Shogunate, there was very little sense of shared identity between different classes. It was in this sense that Fukuzawa famously argued that “in Japan there is only a government, and as yet no [Japanese] people.”²⁸ In this situation, it was impossible to build a standing army that would even allow petty peasants to take the traditionally honored role of “warriors.” Fukuzawa was, hence, convinced that the samurais needed a different kind of patriotism to successfully fend off the threat of imperialism.

Fukuzawa, sharing the patriotic sentiment of most of his contemporaries, believed that Japan would lose her national sovereignty if they kept sitting on their hands while the imperialist powers abused Japan in the name of concessions and treaties. He staunchly opposed reckless samurais, however, who tried to attack foreigners and Japanese collaborators, which would only result in soaring reparations owed to Western powers. Fukuzawa’s strategy was to prove that a liberal could become a “better patriot.” The basic premise of *Encouragement* was that the spirit of individual autonomy and independence, not the irrational warrior mind in the Japanese samurai culture, would save Japan from the Western threat. By the same token, it was the rational bourgeois, not the action-oriented samurais, who would be able to save Japan from the turmoil of imperialist invasion. Further, such rational citizens would form “Japanese people” endowed with rights of freedom and equality. What Fukuzawa was doing in *Encouragement* was thus creating a liberal “nation” which would be the fundamental base of the future Japanese nation-state. Upholding the Japanese “nation” instead of gods or the Emperor was a radical position at the time. Although he did not accept the radical democratic idea that “the people” are the sovereign, he shifted the paradigm of politics in Japan by introducing the idea of “nation.”

(Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982), 3-22.

²⁸ Fukuzawa, *Encouragement*, 32.

Fukuzawa's main suggestion to his fellow patriots was "[first,] individual independence, then national independence (*isshin dokuritsu shite ikkoku dokuritsu suru*)."²⁹ The true power to protect one's nation, for Fukuzawa, came from independent individuals who did not rely on the dogma propagated by the authorities and who would die for their own individual rights. By resorting to the prevalent nationalism among samurais, Fukuzawa tried to spread liberal notions of rights and duty, which entailed liberal nationalism. He thus wrote,

...all nations are equal; but when the people of a nation do not have the spirit of individual independence, the corresponding right of national independence cannot be realized. ... The person who can himself discern the right and wrong of things, and who does not err in the measures he takes, is independent of the wisdom of others. The person who makes his own livelihood through his own physical or mental labors is independent of the financial support of others. If people do not have these independent qualities of mind and are merely reliant on the power of others, the entire nation will be dependents and there will be no one to support them. ...³⁰

Although this seemed to subordinate individual autonomy to patriotic zeal, this is not necessarily a bastardization of liberalism. Rather, it linked the liberal notion of individual autonomy with the Machiavellian republicanism which opposed mercenary forces in favor of a citizen army. People should be able to recognize Japan as something of their own, which would make them defend the country as they would defend their own properties. The citizens would then be mobilized to fight for their own freedom and equality rather than for any collective attachment to pre-political sentiments. At this level, such a loyalty to one's country would not be different from what Hans Kohn described as a Western "civic" form of nationalism, which is contrasted with "ethnic" nationalism found in Eastern Europe.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., 20. In Dilworth's translation, "National independence through personal independence," which changed the order of Fukuzawa's original sentence.

³⁰ Ibid., 20-21.

³¹ See Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Although his distinction of "civic" and "ethnic" nationalism is legitimately challenged as historically incorrect, the concepts still seem useful.

It is certainly a mistake to believe civic nationalism could inspire a stronger nationalist mobilization than ethnic nationalism. Just like Habermas's hopeful notion of constitutional patriotism (*Verfassungspatriotismus*), civic nationalism does not promise the same patriotic zeal that would be provided by totalitarian ideologies: "One does not die for a program that one understands, one dies for a program that one loves."³² Fukuzawa therefore did not rely on liberal tenets alone to inspire patriotic sentiments. Individual autonomy had to be understood on an instrumental basis for the existential survival of a pre-political, or ethnic, collective whole identified as "Japanese people." His idea of the Japanese people as an ethnic community consistently played a crucial role in his defense of individual autonomy throughout *Encouragement* as well as *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*. For Fukuzawa, the ethnic notion of Japanese identity was instrumental for persuading haughty samurais to believe that they should share the same identity and rights with peasants to fight for the common destiny of the whole nation. Even the pre-political notion of the ethnic nation of Japan, therefore, had a radical implication for the Japanese people, who hitherto only identified themselves as subordinates to a higher rank rather than individual "I," or in Descartes's term, "a thinking being." In short, what Fukuzawa ultimately wanted to emphasize was not *Japanese people*, but *Japanese people*.

Along with his bold introduction of individual autonomy, Fukuzawa translated the concept of "right," in the sense of individual right for the first time to an East Asian language, as "*kenri tsūgi*," literally meaning "a principle of power as a universal righteousness." In detail, Fukuzawa argued:

...all men are equal and they can live in freedom and independence without hereditary status distinctions. ...The birth of man is the work of nature and the power

³² Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 65, in Stephen Eric Bronner, *Ideas in Action: Political Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 109.

of man. People should love and respect one another, and each person should fulfill his own duty without infringing upon others. ...However, they may not be equal in outward appearances. Equality means equality in essential human rights,³³ even though in external conditions there may be extreme differences between rich and poor, strong and weak, intelligent and stupid persons.³⁴

As a strict class society controlled by a class-based ideology, Japanese people under the Tokugawa Shogunate would never be able to imagine the so-called equality before God, in the sense that “all men are created equal” in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. Moreover, aside from the obvious difficulty that would arise from importing the Western conception of “God-given rights,” there was another critical hindrance Fukuzawa had to address to introduce this crucial liberal concept. A “right” should be understood as a certain legitimate entitlement for anyone to do something, but no one had been entitled to do anything without the superior’s directive in premodern Japan. The closest expression that would explain such a natural entitlement in East Asian languages would be “power (*ken*, *quán* in the Chinese pinyin),” which Fukuzawa’s translation, *kenri tsūgi*, was based on.

The use of the Chinese character for “power,” however, was controversial because it was almost impossible to persuade samurais to believe that a petty peasant would have “power.” To samurais, “power” only belonged to mighty feudal lords or Shōgun—peasants or even lower-ranked samurais had no business with such a thing. The universal understanding of any kind of entitlement was, thus, almost impossible to them.³⁵ Fukuzawa, again, instrumentally invoked samurais’ patriotism and argued that the universal distribution of “power”—or, more simply, individual rights—would make Japan strong enough to compete with the West. Even the lowliest Japanese men, according to this conception, would

³³ *kenri tsūgi*, a principle of power as the universal righteousness.

³⁴ Fukuzawa, *Encouragement*, 13.

³⁵ About the difficulty of translating “rights” in Japanese, see Yanabu, 149-172

understand the importance of protecting their country.

Of course, Fukuzawa's introduction of "rights" is not merely an instrument for patriotism. A more important task was to create responsible citizens who would help the rational exercise of state power. In short, there had been the rights of the government and the rights of the people, but Japan only had recognized the rights of the government, which overwhelmed and disregarded those of the people. This resulted in discouraging education and enlightenment in the population, which would create a vicious circle that allowed the government to abuse its power even more. In this case, no rational state would emerge.

...we find that the government had violated the great principle of the equality of man by taking advantage of the conditions of wealth and poverty, strength and weakness, as evil instruments to obstruct the rights of the poor through its own wealth and power. Therefore we must keep uppermost in mind that all men are inherently equal. This is the most important principle of human society. It is called reciprocity or equality in the West. ... But there is also an argument on the other side. Generally speaking, in dealing with the people, harshness or moderation in the law must be proportionate to the nature of the people. ...[A] nation's harsh government is not necessarily attributable to a tyrant or tyrannical officials. The people, through their own ignorance, bring down such misfortune upon themselves. ...[If] people want to avoid tyrannical government, they must forthwith set their mind to the pursuit of learning, so as to elevate their own talents and virtues to a position of equality with the government. This is precisely the purport of the learning I am encouraging.³⁶

Seeking a balance between the rights of the government and the people, Fukuzawa tried to create a rational and educated Japanese citizenry who would not only honorably disobey a tyrannical rule but also empower the rational function of the modern state. One might find this argument a less than impressive centralist political position. Such an understanding, however, ignores the true radicalism behind the idea of rational citizens who would have equal standing with state power in a country which had for centuries maintained one of the most oppressive hierarchies in the world.

What is apparent in Fukuzawa's attempt to link rights and the collective identity is the

³⁶ Ibid., 16-17.

unavoidable link between rights and the idea of citizenship. In short, the denial of citizenship necessarily results in the denial of rights. In a premodern society where individuals are strictly divided between numerous ranks and classes, the creation of a certain loose sense of homogenous identity was necessary before introducing an idea of citizenship. Building a modern sense of “nation” was, thus, necessary for creating the idea of common citizenship, which would then guarantee individual rights. It is in this sense that Fukuzawa famously criticized Japanese tradition as “there is only a government, and as yet no people.”³⁷

The ultimate goal of Fukuzawa’s support for individual autonomy and individual rights added up to his urgent call for building a Japanese people, or “nation”—the nation-state in the modern sense of the term. Perhaps inspired by the bourgeois nationalism in the French Revolution and the subsequent revolutionary wars, Fukuzawa concluded the individual freedom and equality embedded in bourgeois liberalism would make each Japanese individual more responsible and competent, making the whole population a unified nation that would understand what it meant to fight for their own rights. Although Fukuzawa, somewhat intentionally, ignored the cosmopolitan impulse inherent in the bourgeois liberalism, his commitment to the liberal idea of freedom and equality provided a check on the possible deterioration of his theory into a radical reactionary ideology.

What Japan needed was, according to Fukuzawa, the people of a nation-state who would refuse to be subservient to any external authority. His fellow samurais might have believed that the most problematic “external authority” would be Western imperialist powers. Indeed, both Fukuzawa and reactionary samurais lamented the subservient attitude of Japanese merchants and government employees to Westerners. Yet Fukuzawa correctly identified the real origin of the “spirit of subservience” as the social system in Japan that

³⁷ Ibid., 32.

encouraged the intellectuals' dependence on the state. Like any other Confucian state, individuals had been hierarchically placed below the "benevolent" rule of the state, which had perpetuated the general subservient culture among individuals. In short, the state itself was both the source and the object of Japanese people's subservience to external authority.

...But the reason for [the Japanese people's subservience to the government] can never be ascribed to their greed for profit alone; because of their ingrained education, they have had the sole desire of becoming government officials, being obsessed with the idea that nothing can be achieved except through the government. ...Newspapers being published at the present time, as well as certain written memorials, also illustrate this trend. ...every commendable trifle about the government is praised in bold letters. They are like courtesans flattering their guests. If we read the memorials, we find that their wordings are always extremely base. They look up to the government as if it were some god. ...Their extremes of insincerity are the result of the fact that, never having had an example of equal rights, they are oppressed and blindly led by the spirit of subservience. Thus they are not able to realize their real capacity as citizens. It is generally correct to say that *in Japan there is only a government, and as yet no people*.³⁸

It is important to note, however, that Fukuzawa did not advocate the naïve "decentralization" argument that is prevalent among the political theorists of our time. He wanted to raise bourgeois consciousness among the Japanese people and make the state more effective and, in a way, stronger. State power should be no longer recognized as a sacred order that should be obeyed absolutely but respected as a covenant that the people themselves consented to for the objective actualization of their rights, which resonates with both social contract theories and Hegelian understandings of rights. Fukuzawa was thus able to say:

[Since] the people have contracted to entrust the authority of the law to the government, they may on no account disobey the law, thereby violating the terms of that contract. It is the right of the government to arrest and execute a murderer. It is the right of the government to arrest and put a robber in prison, as well as to settle lawsuits, to prevent violence and disputes. The people must not interfere with these prerogatives to any degree. If, in ignorance of this principle, a person should take it upon himself privately to execute a murderer or to arrest and lash a robber, it would be rendering a private decision on the other person's crime as well as violating the law of the land. This is called a private punishment, the crime of which is

³⁸ Ibid., 31-32. Emphasis added.

unpardonable. In this case of private vendetta, the laws of civilized countries are exceedingly severe. They exercise authority without being brutal.³⁹

Fukuzawa's criticism of "private punishment" clearly emphasizes the priority in the formal recognition of rights mediated by the state over the naïve affirmation of the experiential, which would remain isolated subjectivity in each. Samurais, for centuries, not only praised the righteous revenge against the enemy of one's master—or father, mother, older brothers, or anyone respectable in the Confucian sense of loyalty and filial piety—but also condemned the unwillingness for such revenge. The samurais once held the privilege to execute any peasant on the spot if their behavior was deemed dishonorable, the judgment of which was often highly subjective and thus arbitrary. Only chaos would ensue from such private enforcements of "justice." One of the crucial goals in Fukuzawa's effort to create the free and equal Japanese people was, therefore, to construct a strong and effective rational state which would moderate the subjective actions of "spirited" samurais. Only the autonomous citizens who were conscious of their rights would be able to recognize the artificiality of the modern state, as in social contract theories, liberating them from the chain of the old order while creating a liberal rule of law. This point is also related to Fukuzawa's critique of the traditional Japanese value that emphasized the direct and resolute action against any dishonor, which will be discussed further in the following section.

C. The Impact of Encouragement in Meiji Japan: To Challenge the Basis of Oriental Despotism

To say Fukuzawa's *Encouragement* was simply a "best-seller" is an understatement; *Encouragement* was read by almost all Japanese people who were at least remotely interested

³⁹ Ibid., 44.

in the West. When the first complete collection of Fukuzawa's writings was published in 1897, Fukuzawa wrote an additional introduction to *Encouragement*, where he said 3.4 million copies were sold by that time.⁴⁰ This number should be jaw-dropping, considering that the estimated population of Japan in 1897 was about 43 million⁴¹ and widespread piracy of academic writings among the poor Japanese intellectuals was a routine practice. Moreover, not everyone would have been able to read Fukuzawa's eloquent style of writing despite the rapid increase in literacy rates under the Meiji government. It seems safe to say that everyone who had access to higher education might have read *Encouragement*.

Without a doubt, however, the simple number would not be able to translate the true impact of the sensational message in *Encouragement*. It fundamentally disrupted the minds of the former samurais who recently lost their privileges under the Meiji government's reform. Fukuzawa not only opened a new path to the careers of samurais but also convinced them that the new path was qualitatively superior and morally correct. According to *Encouragement*, it was not the warrior spirit of samurais but the rational bourgeois citizens that would lead Japan to civilization and save her from the military threat of the West. This nationalist rhetoric moved the rigid minds of samurais who were hitherto terrified by the spread of Western knowledge.

There was, however, a further achievement behind the nationalist appeal of *Encouragement*. According to Franz Neumann's analysis of Nazi Germany, the key characteristic of such a lawless regime was its nature as a "non-state" or "stateless state."⁴² As the Tokugawa state increasingly lost control, samurais were rapidly attracted by the

⁴⁰ *Zenshū*, vol. 1, 38.

⁴¹ Statistical Survey Department, "Population by Sex, Population Increase and Decrease, Population Density (1872-2009)," Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan, accessed April 28, 2018. www.stat.go.jp/data/chouki/zuhyou/02-01.xls.

⁴² Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944* (New York: Harper, 1944), xii.

lawless politics of assassination motivated by excessive xenophobia. By accepting Fukuzawa's liberal nationalism, however, many such samurais were encouraged to resist and undermine the fundamental principles of totalitarianism in favor of jointly constructing a rational state that would implement the liberal rule of law. Although in the end it was a lost cause, as Imperial Japan increasingly became militarized and, finally, totalitarian by the 1930s, Fukuzawa's liberalism offered real promise. What should be remembered is how the ideas in *Encouragement* retained young Fukuzawa's dream of eliminating the seeds of totalitarianism by changing the old samurai spirit and implementing a liberal rule of law, which was "the road not taken" by both Meiji Japan and old Fukuzawa.⁴³

Fukuzawa's *Encouragement* was an ambitious attempt to change the nature of the Japanese people from feudal subjects to the people of a nation-state. And it had a real practical impact for its cause. *Encouragement* offered guidance for many wandering samurais to recharacterize themselves as citizens of a rational state.

In a series of reforms, including the Abolishment of the Domain System (*haihan chiken*) in 1871, the Meiji government eliminated the official class distinction between samurais and commoners, which left the samurais literally obsolete and helpless. Already at the beginning of the Tokugawa period in seventeenth century, however, samurais' independent base and their ties to the land were broken. In fact, they were already obsolete from the moment they were paid stipends instead of keeping their own land. The stipend, which was provided sans labor to the samurais, was a price paid to keep them from revolting.⁴⁴

There were several options for samurais, who were officially declared obsolete in

⁴³ I will discuss the problem of Old Fukuzawa's betrayal further in Chapter 4.

⁴⁴ Moore, 232.

1871. First, they would unite with the peasants dissatisfied with the new rule, as the Meiji government's taxation was harsher than that of the Tokugawa Shogunate at times. The process of abolishing the domain system included a certain reorganization of land ownership, which often threatened the peasants' livelihood.⁴⁵ Alienated samurais, who no longer had any lord for whom they would honorably risk their lives, often found their emotional shelter by uniting with some segments of the peasantry. They accused the Meiji government of being more tyrannical than the Shogunate and distorting the true will of the Emperor. Ironically, this reactionary unity was also the base of the "Freedom and People's Rights Movement" (*jiyū minken undō*).

Concepts like "freedom" and "rights" clearly expressed the influence of liberalism propagated by Fukuzawa and his fellow liberals. It was true that the initial mobilization of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement originated from a reactionary impulse against modernization. But it would be a grave mistake to belittle its contribution to the history of Japanese liberalism. If they wanted to disobey the government, which Japanese people were not particularly good at, they needed a systematic theory to defend their position. Many of them thus had to learn liberalism through Fukuzawa. Ueki Emori, a liberal thinker influenced by Fukuzawa's early works and one of the founders of the Liberty Party (*jiyūtō*), was able to develop and propagate his radical ideas without even learning a Western language.⁴⁶ Although the reactionary wing of the movement eventually betrayed its egalitarian cause and instead supported militarism, they left a hope that the Japanese people were no longer subordinate feudal subjects who would show absolute obedience in every situation.

⁴⁵ See Roger W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan: A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁴⁶ Maruyama Masao and Katō Shūichi, *Honyaku to nihonno kindai* [Translation and Japan's Modernity] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 49-53.

One of the most meaningful practical impacts of Fukuzawa's *Encouragement* on the Japanese people was that it directly, and effectively, attacked the vicious symbiosis between the despotic government and the intellectuals. Aside from joining the popular movement, the other options for samurais declared "obsolete" involved seeking government employment or opening independent businesses. As briefly explained in the previous chapter, however, former samurais' businesses were rarely successful because they were never trained in such things. Money-making had always been considered as something to be frowned upon and dishonorable. Naturally, the former samurais who lost government stipends tried everything to get their money back. Many found it too risky to join the popular opposition movement or directly criticize the government. The only remaining option, then, would be to become a government employee again, which, however, only begged the question: Why should the government hire them again? The financial burden to support samurais was the precise reason why the Meiji oligarchs dismantled their age-old class system despite the huge backlash from reactionary forces.

The obvious problem former samurais who tried to become the new Meiji government's employees faced was that they were not useful anymore. Samurais were often versed enough in the old swordsmanship, Confucian texts, or premodern military studies from China, but none of these were as important as before. The first volume of *Encouragement* precisely answered this problem: What samurais needed was "practical studies" (*jitsugaku*) that would benefit not only the livelihoods of people but also encourage scientific studies based on factual data and rigorous principles.

The object of one's primary efforts should be a practical learning that is closer to ordinary human needs. For example, a person should learn the 47-letter kana

syllabary, methods of letter writing and of accounting, the practice of the abacus, the way to handle weights and measures, and the like. And there is much additional knowledge to be acquired. Geography is the guide to the climates not only of Japan, but of the many countries of the world. Physics is the science which investigates the properties and functions of the myriad things of the universe. History books chronicle in detail the conditions of the countries of the past and present. Economics explains the financial management of self, family, and the state. Ethics expounds the natural principles of personal moral cultivation and of social intercourse. ...By grasping the practical matters of each science, which vary in subject matter and content, he can search for the truth of things and make them serve his present purposes. The above-mentioned subjects are ones common to mankind, matters which everyone should have an interest in, irrespective of rank or position. After acquiring learning in these areas, individuals can go on to do their duties or manage their family businesses, with independence redounding to the individuals, families, and the nation alike.⁴⁷

Samurais who essentially lost their way of life accepted Fukuzawa's *Encouragement* as a self-help book. According to Maruyama Masao, "To the Japanese people at the time, the title of the book, *An Encouragement of Learning*, somewhat banal from the perspective of the modern people, was deemed fresh as a fluttering fish."⁴⁸ They essentially accepted it as a good source of career advice.

After publishing the first article of *Encouragement* and seeing somewhat excessive enthusiasm from readers, Fukuzawa would have perhaps realized that there was something he missed. Learning practical studies and science was certainly necessary, but everything would be futile for Fukuzawa's ultimate goal of creating a new, enlightened Japan with the rational bourgeois citizens if all of those who learned practical studies ended up as government bureaucrats. Such deterioration was a real possibility since the Meiji government ardently sought the knowledge of Western languages and sciences, which made anyone who studied such things easily employed by the government. Traditionally, the failure of the Confucian literati's moral check on despotism was due to their economic subordination to the government properties. The literati supported despotism to keep their economic base, and, in

⁴⁷ Fukuzawa, *Encouragement*, 4-5.

⁴⁸ Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 3, 317.

turn, the despots helped the literati's bureaucratic class rule. The relationship between the monarch and the literati in Confucian states was, more often than not, a vicious symbiosis rather than a placid checking of power. The whole purpose of Fukuzawa's enlightenment project depended on breaking the tie between them. Fukuzawa thus repeatedly emphasized that intellectuals should stop seeking government positions. Instead, they should try to do their own studies or business in the private sector.

[The] government has only the power of commanding; persuasion and actual example belong to the private sector.Let [the private sector] correctly manage [its] own affairs within the bounds of the law. Should I suffer injustice due to bad government decrees, I should exhort the government severely without subservience. For it is the extreme urgency of today to make the government wake up to the need of sweeping out old abuses and to revive the rights of the people. ...My point is that human affairs should not merely be under government control. Scholars and townsfolk also have their own roles to play. The government is what it is, a Japanese government; and the people are what they are, the Japanese people. ...As they then come gradually to understand their goal, the ingrained spirits of both the despotism of the government and the social subservience of the people will gradually disappear. For the first time a Japanese people will be born who will be a stimulus to the government instead of its plaything. Scholarship, business, and law will naturally return to their rightful owners. There will be a balance of powers between government and the people, through which we shall be able to preserve national independence as well.⁴⁹

It is obvious that Fukuzawa was no ideological guardian of "small government." His "private sector," or *shiritsu*, does not mean the realm of endless competition between self-interested individuals. Rather, it played the role of the public sphere where a Kantian "public use of reason" could be activated, where the process of citizens' opinion-formation would not be affected by any external authority.⁵⁰ Fukuzawa's argument for the independence of the private sector, therefore, adds up to the hope in the completion of a strong and accountable nation-state, which would achieve progress of the whole nation and advancement of common good, rather than generating wealth of a nation through private interests, as often argued by

⁴⁹ Fukuzawa, *Encouragement*, 33-34.

⁵⁰ See Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 18-19.

classical political economists.

Finally, the most powerful political impact of *Encouragement* came from its devastating critique of the old samurai mentality, which scandalized the entire “Expel the Barbarians” community. As mentioned several times, Fukuzawa wanted to substitute the “action-oriented” samurais à la semi-Nietzschean Yoshida Shōin⁵¹ with the rational bourgeois citizens he found from his reading of Western philosophy and historical studies. Such a substitution required samurais to fundamentally abandon the “Japanese Spirit” (*yamato damashii*) appreciated by Yoshida. This point was more clearly addressed in *Encouragement* than any other works of Fukuzawa, which makes *Encouragement* even more important in some respects than his masterpiece, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Fukuzawa began his critique of the action-oriented samurai mentality and “Japanese Spirit” from his provocative understanding of “martyrdom” in book seven of *Encouragement*. Dying for one’s lord was regarded as the most sacred representation of the warrior’s loyalty and a key part of the Japanese Spirit. Knowing that such meaningless sacrifices were too frequent among samurais, particularly in their attempts to kill foreigners, Fukuzawa realized that he needed to introduce a new notion of sacrifice. Fukuzawa defined (the English word) “martyrdom” as “[deeds of the] persons who are concerned about the world and undergo sufferings or even sacrifice their lives because of it.”⁵² The best example of this, according to Fukuzawa, is a person’s sacrifice in their peaceful resistance and protest of wrongdoings of

⁵¹ See Chapter 1, Section B for more information about Yoshida.

⁵² Fukuzawa, *Encouragement*, 57. The “world” in “...concerned about the world...” is my translation. The original translator chose “their country” for the translation of “yo,” which literally means the world or, generally, “society.” I generally respect the original translation because it fits well in the flow of the whole text. I therefore believe this to be an intentional mistranslation.

the government, because “sacrificing their own lives to uphold the principles of justice will ultimately win their hearts. Once this happens, they will repent of their own wrongdoings, naturally throw off their arrogance, and reform their ways.”⁵³

More controversies arose from Fukuzawa’s description of what are *not* examples of true martyrdom but only a meaningless sacrifice. Fukuzawa considered *hara-kiri*⁵⁴—a form of suicide by cutting one’s own stomach open that samurais deemed the most honorable death—as nothing more than a servant committing suicide in fear of punishment after losing the master’s money. Immediately, the whole community of samurais acted out on Fukuzawa’s blasphemous language. Yet Fukuzawa’s message was clear:

...the reason for their heroic deaths was in most cases related to a war between two lords who were vying for political supremacy, or to perform some vendetta for their lord. ...it was of no benefit to society. The idea that the mere sacrifice of one’s life is everything, whether it is for the sake of one’s lord or out of apology to him, is common in illiterate and uncivilized societies. But in the light of modern civilization, such people must be said not to have known the true reason for sacrificing their lives. In essence, civilization means to advance the levels of knowledge and virtue of the people, so that each and every person can be the master of his own affairs in his dealings with society. It means that, without harm to either side, every person enjoys his own rights and thereby contributes to the security and prosperity of all. In this light, were civil wars or vendettas actually in accord with the purpose of civilization?⁵⁵

From the standpoint of civilizational progress, which is defined as each individual “[advancing] knowledge and virtue” and enjoying “his own rights and thereby contribut[ing] to the security and prosperity of all,” Fukuzawa courageously denounced reckless “death-defying” actions of loyalty, which had been considered crucial in the Japanese Spirit. Fukuzawa revealed the emptiness of the Japanese Spirit by asking what can really benefit the whole civilization and the people. Further, it is only the “master of his own affairs in his

⁵³ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁴ Fukuzawa used the word “*seppuku*” instead, which has the same meaning.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 57.

dealings with society” that can foster the prosperity of a civilization, which is drastically contrasted with meaningless deaths committed due to samurais’ sense of honor and loyalty. There is no doubt that Fukuzawa thought of the liberal bourgeois individual as the “master of his own affairs.”

Unfortunately, as he grew older, Fukuzawa did not maintain his critical attitude to the “Expel the Barbarians” faction and their ideology, which was a grave setback to the history of the East Asian enlightenment. Nonetheless, the voice of rationality inspired by Fukuzawa continued to play a role in resisting militarist impulses under Imperial Japan. Many liberals influenced by Fukuzawa’s early writings later criticized the old Fukuzawa’s support of militarism, and *Encouragement* was the main weapon of those liberals’ critique.

D. The Lesson of Fukuzawa’s *Encouragement of Enlightenment*: The Possibility of a Bourgeois Public Sphere Before the Bourgeois Emerges

Ernst Bloch, one of the key contributors to Western Marxism, argued that the utopian impulse of humanity would lead mankind to unconsciously recognize what should be manifested before any concrete materiality of liberation would be available, which he called “anticipatory consciousness.”⁵⁶ In a country where a semi-totalitarian tradition was deeply ingrained in the whole population, Fukuzawa’s hope for the progress of Japan led him to believe in what Bloch called “Not-Yet”: Japan’s flourishing bourgeois individualism and culture without witnessing the material base of the bourgeois. He was not simply awed by the advanced technology of the West as many of his contemporaries were. Fukuzawa was the only Japanese thinker among his peers who was able to uncover the secret power of

⁵⁶ See Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope, Vol. 1*, trans. by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice & Paul Knight (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986), 11-13.

individual autonomy and the liberal rule of law, which is the true foundation of bourgeois prosperity in the West.

Fukuzawa's position proved to be correct: it was the lack of strong bourgeois opposition and its spirit of individual autonomy that drove Japan into the abyss of totalitarianism. It is not even necessary to refer to Moore's famous formula, "no bourgeois, no democracy."⁵⁷ Immediately after World War II, Maruyama Masao, one of the most well-known post-war intellectuals in Japan, famously argued that what he called "ultra-nationalism" in Japan was caused by the lack of individual responsibility, which was forewarned by Fukuzawa Yukichi. According to Maruyama, totalitarianism in Japan during the war was even more problematic than that of the Nazis, because the individual autonomy was totally erased in the Japanese case. At least the Nazis believed that they did something for "their" Führer, and the Führer was identified with the German "Volk" itself, which gave a good reason for the post-war Germans to recognize their responsibility for the war crimes. By contrast, the Japanese Emperor was a god—precisely because he was *separated* from the earthly beings, people revered him and sacrificed their lives for him. Since everything was justified in the name of the Emperor, a man-god, no one—including the Emperor himself—had to take the responsibility, because, after all, you cannot question a god's actions.⁵⁸ The same problem has continued to date. Few Japanese conservatives have consistently said that Japan as a nation was clearly responsible for the Pacific War without adding any excuse. Most conservative Japanese citizens still believe that the war came almost as a natural disaster, rather than a human disaster for which someone should be held responsible.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Moore, 418.

⁵⁸ See Masao Maruyama, "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism," trans. Ivan Morris, in *Thoughts and Behaviors in Modern Japanese Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

⁵⁹ See the following: "The popular image that the left idealists promoted was of Japan as a 'peace

The anticipatory consciousness of bourgeois liberalism in Fukuzawa's *Encouragement* gave a simple but important answer to the non-Western liberals and socialists who lamented the lack of respect for individual rights in their tradition. If there is no bourgeois consciousness or culture, the bourgeois should be deliberately created, and the bourgeois public sphere should be deliberately constructed. It was possible, though not perfect, for Meiji Japan, where the semi-totalitarian order of the Tokugawa Shogunate ruled for hundreds of years. There has never been a clear alternative to bourgeois liberalism, particularly overcoming the tension between basic economic necessity and political freedom.⁶⁰ It might not be the way to progress for all cultures, but Fukuzawa's enlightenment project for the spread of bourgeois ethics and individual autonomy is worthy of more attention. At least in Japan, it was a better alternative toward the romantic celebration of communal ties and orders in villages, which actually contributed to the consolidation of totalitarian power in the 1930s.

Fukuzawa's anticipatory consciousness raises another issue of debate in contemporary Western democracies: the role of the public intellectuals. We do not have a clear understanding about the role of intellectuals, and Western intellectuals could learn from Fukuzawa's answer to this question. Most contemporary academics want independence from

nation.' As the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, they argued, Japan alone among the world's nations fully appreciated the horrors of modern warfare. Through its idealistic renunciation of force, embodied in Article 9 of the constitution, Japan should serve as an example to the rest of the world of the futility and immorality of war. In this way the left idealists took the war guilt issue and stood it on its head by allowing the Japanese to seize the moral high ground from the Americans who had defeated them." Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-militarism," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993), 139. However, the left's strategy to promote post-war Japan as a "peace nation" based on Japan's exclusive experience of atomic bombs was disastrous for the public consciousness about the war. It essentially victimized Japan rather than giving the nation as a whole a chance to build a collective sense of responsibility. As the moderate conservative Liberal Democratic Party's rule continued for five decades, only the experience of atomic bombs was emphasized, while the discussion of the responsibility became increasingly obscure.

⁶⁰ The Communist Party of China was perhaps the first communist party that actively recognized the issue and further implemented their plan to create bourgeois citizens, hence Deng Xiaoping's famous slogan, "Let some people get rich first." Evan Osnos, *Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth, and Faith in the New China* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 14

the government meddling with their academic freedom. That does not mean, however, that the intellectuals should ignore the political reality and only maintain a lofty position to real political issues. Fukuzawa's argument can be summed up as "be independent but engage," which stands the test of time and place. Fukuzawa encouraged intellectuals to avoid government employment, but at the same time he abhorred lofty intellectuals who propagated their alienated moral doctrines.

Finally, Fukuzawa's idea of the state in *Encouragement* can be considered an elementary form of corporatism. Philippe C. Schmitter recognized the idea of the "body politic," an authoritarian form of corporatism, which minimized the conflict between stakeholders and the central power.⁶¹ It is thus no wonder that Japan, where the "national body" was considered the most important idea even in premodern times, was one of the primary examples of the corporatist state. As such, Fukuzawa also had an idea of "mutual cooperation" or "the harmony between people and the government (*kanmin-kyōchō* or *kanmin-chōwa*)."⁶² Although it certainly signals the remnants of the Japanese obsession with social harmony and order, Fukuzawa was able to turn the reactionary notion of harmony into an answer to a weak, inefficient government. Many of Fukuzawa's contemporaries worried that his emphasis on the independence of intellectuals would result in an understaffed and incompetent government. Fukuzawa answered their concerns by applying his idea of "vocation," which would substitute "the responsibility for the name," as explained earlier.

...public administration is the duty of the government, but in human affairs there are also many areas in which the government should not get involved. Therefore, people and government must each contribute their share to the public good. We must perform our duty as people, and the government its duty as government, each assisting the other to preserve national independence.⁶²

⁶¹ Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *The Review of Politics*, 36, no. 1 (1974), 85-131.

⁶² Fukuzawa, *Encouragement*, 28.

In short, the different parts of society have their own vocations, which would make a collective effort to realize the progress of civilization. The “duty,” which only traditionally existed in people but not in the government, now became reciprocal. It fit beautifully with Fukuzawa’s emphasis on the role of the bourgeois intellectual who would not only hold the state accountable but also engage in politics to empower the state rather than deliberate on its function. Although Fukuzawa’s idea of mutual harmony between people and government later became increasingly more conservative, it still preserved his concern for realistic means to a utopian future where every individual would be free from old dogmas and external oppression.

Encouragement was, in short, a condensation of Fukuzawa’s efforts toward popular enlightenment. It was written for the masses in the language of the masses. It was a career advice and self-help book for samurais, but samurais who seriously read it gradually turned into bourgeois citizens who would create a new Japan. Although he did not foresee the more intense class struggle under the future capitalism in Japan, he knew where the nation should go and how they should get there.

Chapter 3

Progress for National Autonomy: *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*

(Bunmeiron no gairyaku)

As he was getting close to finishing all seventeen articles for *An Encouragement of Learning*, Fukuzawa realized that far more people had become interested in learning new knowledge from the West and fewer and fewer people wanted a simple solution to “Expel the Barbarians.” Only a few years earlier, when he was writing *Things Western* and the first part of *Encouragement*, Japan was only beginning to recognize the existence of the West. People were still terrified to see, let alone to learn, anything from the West. Western warships with formidable combat capability were only proof that white men were barbarians who would use the power of demons. Further, Christianity propagated by Western missionaries seemed to fundamentally disrupt the peaceful world of order and harmony that samurais had cherished for centuries. Fukuzawa’s writing was therefore primarily focused on “importing new Western products and knowledge and denouncing the evil customs of old Japan.”¹ In 1874, however, the situation had changed; there was universal agreement that Japan needed to learn something from the West for her survival. Fukuzawa thus decided to write a bolder and more systematic presentation of what the West truly was, what Japan specifically had to learn from them, and for what purpose. The result was Fukuzawa’s masterpiece, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (*Civilization* hereafter).

Unlike *Encouragement*, which was written for popular enlightenment, *Civilization*

¹ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū* [Complete collection of Fukuzawa Yukichi] vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 60.

was intended for “the old Confucian scholars” who were “more than fifty years old.”² The sentences of *Civilization* were thus stylistically more difficult, and the depth of its subject matter also made it an even more challenging read. Still, tens of thousands of copies were sold, and many scholars highly recommended their students read *Civilization*. Fukuzawa also said that even Saigō Takamori, who was an inspiration for *The Last Samurai*, a Hollywood movie starring Tom Cruise, read *Civilization* from cover to cover.³

The core message of *Civilization* was, like the articles collected in *Encouragement*, that Japan needed to learn Western rationalism and liberalism to catch up with Western civilization. The true significance of *Civilization* came from the fact that it introduced for the first time in East Asia the idea of “progress,” which did not exist in the Confucian view of history. Moreover, Fukuzawa also acknowledged that even the issue of national independence could not be considered important, compared to the noble cause of the progress of civilization, which was identified with the actualization of human freedom on the whole earth. Although he was a nationalist, Fukuzawa sowed the seeds of what Stephen Eric Bronner called “cosmopolitan sensibility.”⁴ What made *Civilization* a masterpiece was its uncompromising criticism of the traditional ideology of “harmony” and “order” in favor of the universal emancipation of individual liberty, which was balanced by the realistic concern with building a nation-state that would give equal citizenship to the people.

Fukuzawa’s ultimate purpose in writing *Civilization* was, of course, to build a strong

² Fukuzawa also said that he even used a bigger font for its publication in order to help old Confucians easily recognize the writing. See *ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* As a leader of Satsuma domain, Saigō was one of the most important and respected figures in the Meiji Restoration. After he resigned from the Meiji government, Saigō became a symbol of reactionary resistance against the “tyrants” in the Meiji government, which pushed a rapid Westernization in all social realms. Although Saigō was a reactionary figure who loved the traditional samurai spirit, Fukuzawa respected his patriotism, while criticizing his misguided means to the patriotic ends. See *Zenshū*, vol. 20, 168-174.

⁴ See chapter 8, “Pathways to Freedom: Rights, Reciprocity, and the Cosmopolitan Sensibility” in Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004).

Japanese nation-state. The final chapter of *Civilization*, titled “Discussing Our National Independence,” is wholly dedicated to espousing his nationalism. One might find Fukuzawa’s strong nationalist tone—even stronger than *Encouragement* at times—somewhat disturbing. Still, *Civilization* was widely accepted as a defense of liberalism, advocating freedom and equality of all people rather than narrowly concerning itself with “National Rights.” This was possible because Fukuzawa’s commitment to the progress of civilization and the liberal rule of law was serious enough to trump the reactionary impulse lurking inside him. It should be a lesson to modern Western academics who consider any idea of progress as possibly dangerous or even totalitarian.

A. The Idea of Progress Introduced to East Asia for the First Time

Historians generally agree that it is the Enlightenment that spread the idea of progressive history. Although the idea that mankind has a purpose and a clear direction toward a certain end was prevalent in Christianity and even older ancient thoughts, they were clearly different from the Enlightenment philosophes’ belief that the power of human reason and the accumulation of knowledge would guide humanity toward a better world. In East Asia, precisely the opposite was the case—history was a process of regression or deterioration rather than progress. Maruyama Masao summarized it well:

The idea that history has a purpose did not exist in East Asia. [In Confucianism] the Era of Yao-Shun Emperors, where the Way of the Saints was perfectly implemented, is set as the far distant past. Even Laozi’s anti-Confucianism that “only after abolishing the Great Way will the benevolence and righteousness come” agreed with Confucianism in its view of history as deterioration, which is a process of departing further from the ideal society. There is no ultimate purpose in the future except trying to go back as close as possible to the Yao-Shun era in the past. Therefore, the idea of progressive history does not emerge *immanently* in East Asia.⁵

⁵Maruyama Masao, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu* [Reading An Outline of a Theory of Civilization] vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1986), 98. Emphasis by Maruyama. All quotations of non-English sources without the

One of the biggest contributions *Civilization* made to political theory was its introduction of an idea of progressive history to East Asia. As Stephen Eric Bronner argues, “Progress is the crucial category for talking about change, autonomy, and drawing qualitative distinctions.”⁶ It is certainly possible that the idea of progress would set an ethically problematic goal, as obvious in modern capitalism’s fetishization of an unsustainable degree of economic prosperity. But such “progress” was never upheld by the proponents of the Enlightenment. As Ernst Cassirer believed, the “progress” of the Enlightenment was always concerned with both quantitative development and qualitative, that is, normative problems.⁷ By the same token, Fukuzawa’s enlightenment project emphasized the qualitative progress in liberal ethics as well as technological advancement. Like any theorist of the European Enlightenment, Fukuzawa knew the intricate connection between the quantitative intellectual growth and the ethical goal to liberate humanity: neither of the two can be completely subordinated to the other but they are still deeply intertwined.

Fukuzawa, thus, did not simply introduce the idea of progress; he clearly identified progress with the completion of individual liberty and refused to accept the surface value of Western technology as a true goal of history. It should be noted that Fukuzawa’s belief in progressive history made him committed to liberation of individuals and, most importantly, tamed his nationalism. The “progress” was set clearly in opposition to the totalitarianism of the past, which revived in Japan decades later.

The first task that Fukuzawa faced was to attack the Confucian philosophy of history,

translator’s name are my translations.

⁶ Stephen Eric Bronner, 2004, 18.

⁷ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettigrove (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), 5. Quoted in Stephen Eric Bronner, 2004, 18.

“history as a deterioration,” in favor of “history as a progression” toward individual emancipation. Fukuzawa, earlier than anyone else, saw the problem in the Confucian understanding of history as a process of further deterioration from the ideal society. The Confucian utopia generally idealized the Yao-Shun era of the ancient China,⁸ but there is little evidence that even Confucius was knowledgeable enough about the specific institutions and politics of Kings Yao and Shun, which was already 1,500 year-old legends for Confucius himself. What gave Confucius a more specific vision was the feudalism under the Zhou dynasty (1046-771 BC), which ended about two hundred years before Confucius was born. The chaotic civil wars that Confucius and all his contemporary Chinese were experiencing naturally made most thinkers of the time obsessed with the restoration of order. As such, Confucius was mostly interested in harmony and order in feudal hierarchy rather than any liberating concern for human beings.

Confucius had every reason to believe that politics of the feudalism that the Zhou dynasty implemented represented the most ideal political system, because the “good old past” for Confucius was a rather practical option that was more readily available than a simple utopian idea. The chaotic Spring and Autumn Period, which Confucius had to live through, was the age of unending civil wars, which immediately followed the seemingly harmonious and orderly rule of the ancient feudalism under Zhou dynasty; there was no reason to ignore the system that prolonged peace right before the chaos broke out. Unfortunately, the huge success of the Confucian School after the Han dynasty, which stabilized China in 202 B.C., made Confucianism too conservative. The simple “good old past” ended up becoming an ideological goal that future generations should endeavor to achieve. To break this ideology of

⁸ In East Asian languages, “Yao-Shun era” is still an idiomatic expression for the “good old past” in prosperity and peace. Legend says that people of the Shang dynasty under Yao and Shun did not even remember their rulers’ names, because it was so peaceful and perfect that no one had to think about politics.

the good old past, Fukuzawa tried to disenchant the people from the ideological romanticization of the Yao-Shun Era, for it was only based on the ignorance of people and could not be applied in modern Japan.

...if we tried to apply the laws of modern Western countries to the times of Yao and Shun, no one would be able to understand them. The reason people would not obey these laws would not be that the people were evil, but that they would not have the intelligence needed to understand the laws. If such people were given free rein to do as they pleased, it would be impossible to imagine what harm they might cause society. ...The country was like a single family or a classroom, with the ruler as the parent or teacher. To the extent that his power and virtue were inscrutable, he was like a god. He was simultaneously parent, teacher, and god. In such a situation, if the ruler of the country checked his selfish desires and cultivated virtue, even if he were not too intelligent, he was praised as a benevolent ruler or enlightened emperor. This is what was called “the tranquility of the barbarians.” Of course, in such an age this was unavoidable; it could even be called admirable. The governments in the times of Yao and Shun were of this kind. On the other hand, if the ruler indulged his selfish desires, was not virtuous, and relied only upon authority and force, he was called a tyrant. This is what was called “the tyranny of the barbarians,” where the people could not be secure about even their lives.⁹

By relativizing the utopian past of the Yao-Shun Era only as a product of a particular historical condition, Fukuzawa laid out a foundation to build an idea of progressive history. What is interesting is Fukuzawa’s belief that the intellects of people form the historical conditions which would determine the type of government that rules people. Belittling it as “tranquility of barbarians,” Fukuzawa firmly argued that the politics of Yao-Shun were only suitable when the intellects remained at a primitive level and would never work in the modern era where people’s knowledge was further diversified and accumulated.

There are, according to Fukuzawa, political systems that work in “barbaric” or “primitive” times, and there are systems that function in modern civilizations. And we can find in history that the former is developing toward the latter over time. Fukuzawa did not believe that this progress would happen at the same time for all people or all cultures as

⁹ Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. by David A. Dilworth & G. Cameron Hurst III, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 143-144.

Bloch's concept of "non-simultaneity of simultaneity" suggests.¹⁰ Everyone should, however, eventually endeavor to achieve modern civilization by cultivating individual virtues, which will be discussed in later sections. Before elaborating his beliefs in ideal civilization, Fukuzawa arbitrarily set up his "stage theory" of civilizational progress, and he explained the first two stages before arriving at the full development of civilization as the following:

... the concept "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*) is also a relative one... ...the designations "civilized" (*bunmei*), "semi-developed" (*hankai*, half-enlightened), and "primitive" (*yaban*, barbaric) have been universally accepted by people all over the globe. For there are stages through which mankind must pass. These may be termed the ages of civilization. First, there is the stage in which neither dwellings nor supplies of food are stable. ...At this stage man is still unable to be master of his own situation; he cowers before the forces of nature and is dependent on the favors of others, or on the chance vagaries of nature. This is called the stage of primitive man. ...Secondly, there is the stage of civilization wherein daily necessities are not lacking ...Though book learning flourishes, there are few who devote themselves to practical learning (*jitsugaku*). Though in human relations sentiments of suspicion and envy run deep, when it comes to discussing the nature of things men lack the courage to raise doubts and ask questions. ... They know how to cultivate the old, but not how to improve it. There are accepted rules governing society, but slaves of custom that they are, they could never form rules in the true sense. This is called the semi-developed stage. It is not yet civilization in the full sense.¹¹

Admittedly, many problems would follow Fukuzawa's somewhat bold stage theory. Fukuzawa clearly knew that the three stages he laid out were arbitrary and, more importantly, relative. This stage theory is neither based on Hegelian dialectics nor Marx's economic base but broadly resonates with the Enlightenment philosophes' vague hope in progress led by human reason. No explanation was given, however, for what would motivate progress forward from the stage of barbaric or half-enlightened nations. One might still see Fukuzawa's preoccupation with knowledge and academic studies as the key measure to civilizational progress, which might be an influence of the Confucian remnants in Fukuzawa.

I believe, however, the concerns above slightly miss the point. Fukuzawa was

¹⁰ Ernst Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics," *New German Critique*, 11 (1977): 22-38.

¹¹ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 17-18.

espousing a completely new idea to break the age-old mythical longing for the old lost utopian Yao-Shun era. The simple possibility of the alternative itself was revolutionary enough, for very few among his peers even dreamed that there could be, and should be, an alternative to the ancient harmony and order. Many Japanese scholars also interpreted Christianity as an instrument for establishing order and encouraging loyalty to the superior.¹²

A more important matter in the passage quoted above is that Fukuzawa was trying to critique Japanese tradition by attacking “the semi-developed” or “half-enlightened.” The ideology of harmony deeply ingrained in the traditional Japanese culture and scholarship prevented any brilliant Confucian scholars from questioning the authenticity of their good old past.¹³ Fukuzawa challenged this rigid ideology of harmony by criticizing the lack of “courage to doubt and ask the questions,”¹⁴ which was directed to Confucian scholars who never dared to raise any doubt about ancient sages’ deeds. Its implication is essentially the same as Kant’s famous “motto of enlightenment”: “*Sapere aude* (dare to know).”¹⁵ It is obvious that Fukuzawa was willing to take the role of the revolutionary bourgeois influenced by the Enlightenment rationalism, which tried to bring everything under the judgment of human reason. At least when he was writing *Civilization*, Fukuzawa’s thought kept the revolutionary impetus in liberalism.

¹² Ebina Danjō, one of the most influential Christian preachers in Meiji Japan, openly said, “The core idea of Christianity is pure fraternity, and the core idea of our nation’s foundation is loyalty to the king and patriotism. They are one and the same.” Ebina Tanjō, “Chūkun aikoku to hakuai” [Patriotic Loyalty to the King and Fraternity], *Rikugō Zasshi*, 161 (1894) 12, quoted in Han Sang-il, *Jaeguk ui siseon: Ilbon ui jayujuyi jishikin Yoshino Sakuzo wa Choseon munjae* [Perspective of the Empire: Yoshino Sakuzo, A Japanese Liberal and the Korean Question] (Seoul: Saemulgyeol Chulpansa), 78. Regarding the influence of Christianity in Meiji Japan, see Irwin Scheiner, *Christian Converts and Social Protest in Meiji Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

¹³ In philosophical terms, Ogyū Sorai, one of the most brilliant Confucian scholars in the seventeenth century, indeed challenged the traditional notion of the harmonious “nature” ideologized by Zhu Xi in the twentieth century China. Even Ogyū, however, never doubted the legitimacy of the feudal order under Zhou dynasty, or, naturally, the Tokugawa shogunate. See Maruyama, 1974.

¹⁴ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 17-18. See the quote above.

¹⁵ Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” 17.

One of the greatest contributions Fukuzawa made in his brand of liberalism is that he was one of the thinkers who most clearly demonstrated why freedom of speech was crucial for progress. In short, Fukuzawa identified progress with freedom of speech: Progress emerges from freedom, and freedom emerges from “diversity of ideas contending each other (*tajisōron*).”¹⁶ Fukuzawa often quoted John Stuart Mill throughout his career as a writer. It seems that the source of Fukuzawa’s support for freedom of speech might be also his reading of *On Liberty*. There is an obvious similarity between Fukuzawa and Mill’s defense of freedom of thought, as both of them considered it to be a motor for progress and a precondition for finding more reliable and reasonable knowledge. Fukuzawa, nonetheless, developed his own argument about freedom of speech based on the Confucian tradition of learning from the ancients, yet he also brilliantly shifted the authoritative interpretation of the ancient Chinese history.

As briefly explained earlier, the dominant view on the history of ancient China was that the harmonious rule of the Zhou dynasty fell apart because the benevolence and propriety observed under the Zhou dynasty was forgotten, and the system, accordingly, deteriorated into chaotic conflicts between warlords in the Spring and Autumn period (771-476 BC). Under the system that valued harmony and order above anything else, no positive value could be discovered from the Spring and Autumn period and the subsequent Warring States period (475-221 BC). Fukuzawa, however, fundamentally tore down such an interpretation and instead declared that the two chaotic periods in Ancient China were, in fact, the time “filled with the spirit of freedom.”

Toward the end of the Zhou period China fell into a condition of rule by petty princes,

¹⁶ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 28.

and several hundred years followed in which the people knew no rule by the Zhou Court. The entire country was in turmoil during this time; autocratic despotism lost considerable ground, and, as soon as there was a little room in people's minds, their thoughts naturally turned towards freedom. Throughout the three thousand and some odd years of Chinese civilization there was never a time when conflicting teachings were more loudly proclaimed or when black and white were so completely opposite than at the end of the Zhou. ...it is probably safe to conjecture that in those days the Chinese mind was quite active and filled with the spirit of freedom.¹⁷

Along with his bold claim that the peace in the Yao-Shun era was only “tranquility of barbarians,” Fukuzawa's interpretation of the chaotic civil war period in ancient China as “filled with the spirit of freedom” was considered blasphemous. Before Fukuzawa, almost no East Asian thinker had ever described the Spring and Autumn period and Warring States period as anything but disastrous.¹⁸ “The Hundred Schools of Thought (zhūzǐ bǎijiā)” emerged as a variety of intellectuals tried to think through how to end the chaos and establish a more humane rule in China. For many Confucian historians, the emergence of the Hundred Schools of Thought was regarded simply as an overflow of heresies. Fukuzawa, however, believed that the emergence of Hundred Schools of Thought during the chaotic era was the precise proof that it was the time when free thinking was most encouraged in the entire history of China.

Fukuzawa also had further proof that the emergence of numerous schools of thought in the Spring and Autumn period represented the spirit of freedom. As soon as the First Emperor of Qin (*qínshǐhuáng* or *shǐhuángdì*) unified China, he began to purge the intellectuals and repress their freedom of thought. Confucian scholars had only criticized the First Emperor's purge of Confucians rather than the purge of intellectual freedom itself. The demise of the short-lived Qin Empire (221-206 BC) was, as Confucian scholars argued,

¹⁷ Ibid., 26-27.

¹⁸ Maruyama Masao also agrees with this view that Fukuzawa was the first one who interpreted the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in a positive way. See Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 1, 140-141.

caused by the First Emperor's misguided belief in the Legalist School propagated by Shang Yang and Han Feizi, who believed the best way to bring orderly rule was to implement strict and severe laws to control people, which was the polar opposite of Confucian moralism based on the idea of benevolence.¹⁹ Fukuzawa, however, correctly pointed out that Confucians themselves did the exact same thing that the First Emperor did as they purged other schools when they came to dominance. He then revealed the true motive of the First Emperor's purge of intellectuals.

Why, then, did the First Emperor of Qin so detest the theories and disputes of the hundred schools and prohibit them? Simply because their voices were loud and they were a serious threat to his hegemony. Since his only reason was that they were a threat to his rule, this clearly shows that elements of freedom must have emerged during the disputes among the hundred schools. If you maintain only a single school of thought, no matter how pure and good, it will by its very nature hinder freedom. We know that *the spirit of freedom can exist only in an atmosphere of diversity of ideas and contending views*.²⁰

Modern sinologists generally agree that the Hundred Schools of Thought indeed generated a rich heritage of philosophical and political thought in Chinese history. One can find both a primitive form of extreme individualism and anarchism of Yang Zhu on one hand and the strong egalitarianism of Mozi on the other. Some scholars even argue that there is a similarity between modern libertarianism and early Taoism propagated by Laozi and Zhuangzi.²¹ Fukuzawa found the great momentum for progress was generated in the middle of numerous “heresies” competing against each other. The dominance of Confucianism in the history of China, however, made it impossible for the spirit of freedom to develop further.

¹⁹ There is a grain of truth in this claim. The failure of the Qin Empire was generally explained by its exclusive reliance on severe laws uncoupled with the efforts to implement an ideological foundation. Carl Schmitt made a similar claim in his critique of Hobbes's reliance on positive laws. See Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, trans. George Schwab (London: Greenwood Press, 1996).

²⁰ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 27-28. Emphasis added.

²¹ Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* (*daodejing* in modern pinyin) is included in David Boaz's *The Libertarian Reader* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

Fukuzawa continued to argue that it was a blessing for Japan that she had a system which separated the sacred—the Emperor—from the real political power—Shōgun—because such multiple sources of authority would have the potential to generate room for the spirit of freedom to grow, whereas the sacred and the political power was unified in China, destroying the early potential of freedom and progress.²²

Furthermore, Fukuzawa found a paradoxical truth that freedom could exist only when one recognized others' freedom and thereby accepted limits on one's own freedom. Such an insight would remind modern readers of Isaiah Berlin's famous defense of "negative freedom" against the abuse of esoteric "positive freedom," which would deceitfully promise unlimited freedom by equating freedom with equality.²³ Refusing a metaphysical notion of freedom, Fukuzawa followed a simple concept of freedom as an absence of external restraints and humbly accepted the possible conflicts between freedom of different subjects. Fukuzawa summarized this paradox as "freedom emerges from un-freedom."²⁴

...the freedom of civilization cannot be bought at the expense of some other freedom. It can only exist by not infringing upon other rights and profits, other opinions and powers, all of which should exist in some balance. *It is only possible for freedom to exist when freedom is limited.* Thus, in any area of society, whether it be the government, the people, scholars, or bureaucrats, when there is one who has power, whether it be intellectual or physical, there must be a limit to that power. In general, the power wielded by human beings cannot be a pure good; there almost always is some natural evil mixed in with it. Sometimes power is abused because of a person's cowardice, at other times it is used to the detriment of others because of a person's aggressiveness. Instances of what I mean can be found in all ages and in all lands. This I call the curse of imbalance. Those in power must always take stock of themselves.²⁵

From the idea of negative freedom, Fukuzawa developed his own argument that

²² Of course, as discussed in the Chapter I, Fukuzawa tried to make his argument resonate with the separation of church and state in Western Europe. See Chapter 1, Section A.

²³ Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

²⁴ This sentence is my translation of the italicized sentence in the following quotation. I retranslated it to convey a more literal nuance.

²⁵ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 176, emphasis added.

progress would require balance between freedoms of different subjects, which could relate to one of the greatest conceptual developments from liberalism—providing checks on and balancing power. Precisely because there is a certain degree of “alienation” in the realm of subjective freedom, true freedom can emerge and, consequently, progress is possible. The “bourgeois separation of the legislature, administration and judiciary,” which Lukacs believed that “workers’ council [should] eliminate,” actually has the essence of freedom and progress that no socialist should look down upon if they are truly committed to the progress of history.²⁶

The final point that marks *Civilization* as Fukuzawa’s masterpiece is how he advanced his distinctive liberal vision in the form of a regulative ideal. Fukuzawa’s ideal destination of civilization was the state where every individual was able to cultivate and enjoy their autonomy without being restrained by dogmas or external oppression. The condition was defined only from the perspective of an individual who would be liberated from what Kant called “self-incurred immaturity,” which made individuals uncritically follow the authority of the church or social customs.²⁷ Although there is no evidence that Fukuzawa ever read Kant—he would have found German idealism too esoteric and metaphysical for his purpose of encouraging the Japanese to learn “practical studies” of the West—his idea on the final stage of civilization clearly resonates with the concept of Kant’s regulative ideal.

Thirdly, there is the stage in which men subsume the things of the universe within a general structure, but the structure does not bind them. Their spirits enjoy free play and are not credulous [*wakudeki*: to uncritically believe and follow] of old customs.

²⁶ Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), 80.

²⁷ See Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” 17.

They act autonomously and do not have to depend upon the arbitrary favors [and authority] of others. They cultivate their own virtue and refine their own knowledge. [They cultivate their virtue and knowledge by their own effort.] They neither yearn for the old nor become complacent about the present. ...This is what is meant by modern civilization.²⁸

The paragraph above was the summary of Fukuzawa's belief regarding the final goal of civilization. There is no mention of "nation" or "Japan" in Fukuzawa's vision of the ultimate end of civilization. Neither did he mention "Europe" or "West," as he would frequently do when introducing a Western liberal idea. This is because the "ultimate end" should be understood as universal—no specific culture or group should be prioritized. What is clear as a subject in the description above is only the individual, who would enjoy his or her life without resorting to the chain of dogmas descended from the past. Fukuzawa's vision can be understood as, borrowing Henry Pachter's term, "a highest stage of individualism" minus a concrete understanding of economy.²⁹

As briefly noted earlier in this section, Fukuzawa's different "stages" of civilization were only relative designations. He never identified the full development of civilization with any specific political system or movement. Even the Western civilization he admired was not the perfect model for progress, for the following reason:

...although we call the nations of the West civilized, ...many of them, if we were to be more precise, would fall well short of this designation. ... For example, there is no greater calamity in the world than war, and yet the nations of the West are always at war. ...Even worse, [their] international diplomacy is really based on the art of deception. ... When, several thousand years hence, the levels of knowledge and virtue of the peoples of the world will have made great progress to the point of becoming utopian, the present condition of the nations of the West will surely seem a pitifully primitive stage. Seen in this light, civilization is an open-ended process. We cannot be satisfied with the present level of attainment of the West.³⁰

²⁸ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 18-19. My translation added in brackets.

²⁹ See Stephen Eric Bronner, "A Teacher and a Friend: Henry Pachter," in *Imagining the Possible: Radical Politics for Conservative Times* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³⁰ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 19-20.

What should be notable in the passage above is that Fukuzawa criticized the imperialist and warmongering actions of Western powers without completely dismissing the “present level of attainment of the West.” Not only Fukuzawa’s contemporary Confucians but also modern day postmodernists have overlooked the fact that there were liberals who opposed imperialist expansion no matter how they were influenced by the Orientalism prevalent in their time. Most notably, William Gladstone opposed the Opium Wars because he believed them to be a “sin” and a “shame.”³¹ Imperialist aggression was generally supported not only by capitalist interests but also in the name of the Christian God or the “glory” of nations and kings, which many progressive thinkers believed to be downright ludicrous. European liberals’ solidarity with the colonized and oppressed around the world directly inspired Fukuzawa to commit himself to the idea of enlightenment in Japan. This might be the case, perhaps, in all of those who fought for freedom and enlightenment in non-European nations.

While we were in London, a certain member of the Parliament sent us a copy of a bill which he said he had proposed in the House under the name of the party to which he belonged. The bill was a protest against the arrogant attitude of the British minister to Japan, Alcock, who had at times acted as if Japan were a country conquered by military force. ...On reading the copy of this bill, I felt as if “a load had been lifted from my chest.” After all, the foreigners were not all “devils.” I had felt that Japan was enduring some pointed affronts on the part of the foreign ministers who presumed on the ignorance of our government. But now that I had actually come to the minister’s native land, I found that there were among them some truly impartial and warmhearted human beings. So after this I grew even more determined in my doctrine of free intercourse with the rest of the world.³²

Witnessing with his own eyes that not all Westerners were imperialists and there was a cosmopolitan spirit in the Western nations, Fukuzawa built up his own regulative ideal. The West was the goal that Japan should aspire to at the moment, and their commitment in science would save Japan from imperialist aggression. But there was something deeper in

³¹ Roland Quinault, “Gladstone and War,” in *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives*, ed. Roland Quinault, Roger Swift, and Ruth Clayton Windscheffel (London: Routledge, 2012), 237-238.

³² Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 129-130.

their civilization—the universal liberation of individual autonomy by spreading freedom and equality for all. Even though Western civilization was an immediate goal that Japan should endeavor to achieve, Fukuzawa warned that it was the commitment to individual autonomy and the universal rights for all individuals that made Western civilization truly great. Without losing this insight, Fukuzawa continued his argument of enlightenment further, balancing his patriotic cause with the eternal goal of human liberation nested in enlightenment.

B. The Argument: Liberalism, Not “Japanese Spirit,” for National Independence

The most urgent question for Fukuzawa was how Japanese people could enjoy the equal rights that the citizens in the West would enjoy. Unless Japan would achieve the status of the nation-state equal to that of the Western states, Fukuzawa believed, there would be no way for the citizens of the new liberal Japan to enjoy the same liberty. He, thus, moved his argument *from equality of individuals to equality of nations*.

In the previous section, it became clear that Fukuzawa’s concern in the Enlightenment was not merely the independence of Japan. In *Encouragement*, Fukuzawa obsessively emphasized individual independence from government because he believed that individual independence was the cornerstone of national independence, which he learned from bourgeois nationalism. In *Civilization*, he tried to specify what he meant by the eternal goal of civilization, which was discussed in the previous section. It was, however, still unclear whether the eternal end of civilization had anything to do with the survival of Japan as a nation, which all samurais regarded as the immediate and urgent problem. Fukuzawa thus shifted the discussion of equal rights among citizens, which he had propagated ever since he wrote *Encouragement*, into a nationalist argument.

...before, many people in society have lately been advocating the theory of equal rights. ...Why is it that, despite the appealing vigor of this argument, there are so few who invoke the theory of equal rights in regard to dealings with foreign nations? Whether aristocrat and ex-samurai or commoner, all alike are citizens of the Japanese nation. And yet, because of the imbalance of rights and privileges between them, certain people find it harmful and strive for equality. Why is it, however, that no one laments the imbalance of rights between Japanese and foreigners, whose interests, feelings, languages, customs, and even physical characteristics are so different from ours? It is a shameful state of affairs. Although there are several different causes, of course, as I see it two stand out most clearly. The first is that those who advocate the theory of equal rights in society have as yet not attained a deeply personal experience of the doctrine. The second is that relations with foreigners are a recent phenomenon and we have yet to experience much trouble from them.³³

Those who “have lately been advocating the theory of equal rights” are, without a doubt, the famous “People’s Rights” activists that were briefly discussed in the first chapter. Although the activists were mainly from the samurai class, the Meiji oligarchs, dominated by clans from Chōshū domain, alienated other samurais from the central power. Their movement to expand suffrage and political participation was, however, certainly appealing to lower classes, which made the initially factional interest of the movement grow further to demand universal rights.

It was somewhat disappointing to many People’s Rights activists at the time that Fukuzawa tried to distance himself from the cause of the egalitarian movement. It was certainly a retreat from his initial commitment to egalitarianism that Fukuzawa even belittled the proponents of egalitarian People’s Rights as people who did not actually have the “personal experience” of inequality, because they were (after all) from the privileged samurai class. Nevertheless, Fukuzawa’s attention to equality between nations was a realistic concern of his time. While “People’s Rights” mainly meant the expansion of suffrage in domestic politics, “National Rights” in *Civilization* was based on the idea of the Westphalian national

³³ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 242.

sovereignty. If Japan lost the latter, the former would not mean much. The argument for “National Rights” in *Civilization* did not yet have the semi-fascist justification of the imperialist expansion for the sake of the domestic peace. More importantly, Fukuzawa did not believe that the equality between nations, that is, “National Rights,” was more important than People’s Rights—at least not until he finished *Civilization*. He never lost his hope that the true enlightenment would demolish the borders between nations and bring about the eternal freedom and equality that would nurture individual virtues further.

Someone may say that mankind’s conditions do not allow us to make national independence our only goal; we must in addition set our sights on more lasting, more noble values. This is true. The summit of human knowledge and virtue naturally aspired after is what is lofty, and we must not confine ourselves to such small matters as one nation’s independence. ...However, as things are in the world today... When we consider the situation Japan is faced with right now, we realize more and more the urgent crisis before us and have no time to look at other things. The first order of the day is to have the country of Japan and the people of Japan exist, and then and only then speak about civilization! There is no use talking about Japanese civilization if there is no country and no people. This is why I have narrowed my parameters and proposed the argument that the goal of civilization is simply our country’s independence.³⁴

This passage reveals Fukuzawa’s challenging efforts to balance his nationalist desire—having Japan recognized by the West as an equal nation—with his commitment to the general progress of civilization from the individual’s point of view. At least by the time he wrote *Civilization*, his nationalism was different from the fear-mongering right-wing argument that would constantly invoke the notion of external threat. Japan, at the time, was indeed under threat, and Fukuzawa and many of his colleagues feared that Japan would end up like India under British colonization or, in the worst-case scenario, like Native Americans who lost their land to Europeans.³⁵ Learning what happened to Native Americans, the Japanese intellectuals felt the threat of Western powers as an existential one that would

³⁴ Ibid., 254-255.

³⁵ See *ibid.*, 248.

exterminate not only the Japanese people but also all of the “yellow race.”

Although there is a certain fear-mongering irrationalism in Fukuzawa’s invocation of nationalism, he still prioritized the universal end of progress in humanity as the highest value. In short, Japan should learn Western civilization to achieve national independence and achieve national independence to attain the true progress of civilization. This was certainly an attractive formula for both patriotic samurais and egalitarian advocates of People’s Rights. It should be clearly noted that Fukuzawa never showed any interest in imperialist and militarist expansion of Meiji Japan at least by the 1870s, precisely because he still kept the utopian belief in progress of civilization along with his commitment to liberal ideas of freedom and equality. Everything changed once he dismissed these values in the 1880s, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

In *Civilization*, Fukuzawa’s nationalism seems to be less important than what he meant by learning Western civilization to achieve national independence in the first place. It was fundamentally different from the moderate conservatives and Confucianists who were still reluctant to learn the ideational foundation of the West but who were willing to study their technologies. Fukuzawa wanted the exact opposite—it was the ideational foundation, or “spirit” of the West, that mattered most and should be learned by all Japanese people.

Another great argument in *Civilization* that made Fukuzawa famous was his brave attack on “Eastern ethics, Western technologies.” As the Meiji government focused more on the traditional Japanese culture and religion rather than Confucianism as a spiritual base of Westernization, the popular slogan became “Japanese Spirit, Western Practice (*wakon yōsai*).”

Fukuzawa, however, basically flipped it—what he wanted instead was not different from “*Western Spirit, Japanese Practice*.”³⁶

Sakuma Shōzan, who famously advocated “Eastern ethics, Western technologies” as introduced in Chapter 1, had an enduring influence all over Japan. Even the Meiji Emperor himself, who was enthroned at the young age of fourteen, did not have much interest in Western education.³⁷ What appeared to be a better alternative to the old system was to introduce the technologies and sciences from the West to support Japan as an independent nation while maintaining the Confucian education of filial piety and loyalty to authority, which was expected to uphold the social order in the midst of social turmoil generated by Western influence. After the Meiji oligarchs themselves realized that the old slogan “Expel the Barbarians” alone could not create any threat to the West, they also became open to Western technologies and sciences. No one in the government, however, had a serious interest in introducing the foundation of liberalism which drove the rapid social changes in the West, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This sentiment was obvious in the slogan “Japanese spirit, Western practice (*wakon yōsai*),” slightly modified from Sakuma’s “Eastern ethics, Western technologies” to emphasize the nationalist spirit rather than broadly invoke Japan’s membership in Asia.³⁸

Fukuzawa certainly knew the popularity of “Japanese spirit, Western practice,” which was widely accepted as a clever maneuver to strengthen the nation without losing their

³⁶ Li Zehou, a renowned Chinese thinker, should be credited for the earliest use of a similar slogan, “Western essence, Chinese practice.” See Li Zehou, *Zhongguo xiandai sixiangshi lun (History of Modern Chinese Thoughts)* (Beijing: Xinhua Shudian, 1987), 311-342.

³⁷ Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 193.

³⁸ Originally, the slogan “Japanese spirit, Western practice” was a modification of “Japanese spirit, Chinese practice” (*wakon kansai*). The “Japanese Spirit” (*yamato damshii*) was often identified with nationalist sentiment, especially after the establishment of “national studies” (*kokugaku*) in the eighteenth century. See Victor Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology, Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790-1864* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

identity. It also seems that Fukuzawa took the argument quite seriously. This was, however, the moment where Fukuzawa distinguished himself from almost all other nationalists of his time—Fukuzawa did not care much about “Japanese spirit” itself and never even gave a serious thought to what such a thing would mean. He might have been interested in the practical benefits of keeping the social order by educating the Japanese tradition, but tradition itself did not interest him. What was important for Fukuzawa were the Japanese people who would eat, live, and enjoy their lives as individuals. It was impossible for him to believe that something was important simply because it was inherited from authentically Japanese culture or identity. The question was whether a tradition would contribute to the ethical and material progress of civilization in Japan.

The suspicion against the logic of “Eastern ethics, Western technology” was universal among the intellectuals of the East Asian enlightenment. Yan Fu, a renowned translator in late nineteenth century China, provocatively raised the problem of theory and practice in “Chinese essence, Western practice”:

“Essence” and “practice” are about one object. The essence of an ox has the practice of carrying a heavy load, and the essence of a horse has the practice of running long distances. I have not heard of a case that has the essence of a cow and uses the practice of a horse. Chinese studies and Western studies are as different as the appearance of Chinese and Western people, so one cannot insist they are similar. Therefore, there are the essence and practice of Chinese studies and the essence and practice of Western studies. If one distinguishes them well, they can stand together. But if one combines them, both [Chinese studies and Western studies] would perish.³⁹

Although his comment would seem a little harsh to his contemporary reformers, Yan Fu certainly had a good point: one cannot apply any theory to any practice. In short, one needs certain criteria for judgment on which tradition would connect to the desired practice.

³⁹ Li Zehou, *Zhongguo jindai sixiang shilun*, 80-81.

Upon distinguishing a progressive tradition, Fukuzawa's criteria to judge what was or was not progress were relatively straightforward. In the previous analysis, it became obvious that Fukuzawa's regulative ideal was a world in which individuals would freely cultivate their own creative potential without the oppression of external authorities or dogmas. For that reason, Fukuzawa was deeply interested in the multiplication of social authorities which would check and balance each other, as church and state checked each other in Western Europe. It was certainly not true that any Japanese tradition cherished by those who worshiped the "Japanese spirit" would provide the same impetus of freedom. Fukuzawa, thus, dared to argue that it was precisely the spirit of the West—that is, the spirit of freedom—that Japan should not ignore.

Someone says that, just as the world is divided into separate lands, so also men's sentiments and social customs, as well as their national polities and governments, are different. Therefore, he argues, is it not unwise to take European civilization as the model of modernization for every country? Shall we not attain the proper balance only if Western civilization is adapted to each country's own sentiments and social customs, and only if, while preserving each national polity and government, we select what is suitable, adopting or rejecting as circumstances dictate? ...We can distinguish in civilization between its visible exterior and its inner spirit. It is easy enough to adopt the former, but difficult to pursue the latter. ...if the wrong order is followed and the easier part is adopted before the difficult, the easier part often will prove not only useless but harmful as well. ...but some of [the scholars] seem to be talking about only the external forms of civilization while neglecting its spirit.⁴⁰

Somewhat resonating with Hegel's *Volksgeist*, what Fukuzawa saw in the "spirit of the West" was a trend in civilization that had strived for freedom. As explained earlier, Fukuzawa was fascinated by the history of Western Europe that created more than one source of authority—the religious authority from the Catholic Church and the secular authority from monarchs, which eventually developed into the separation of church and state and civic freedom. Fukuzawa, however, did not simply lament the lack of such a tradition in the East. As

⁴⁰ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 20-22.

explained in Chapter 1, Japan did have such a separation: The Emperor represented the sacrosanct while the Shōgun represented secular authority. The Emperor was revered as a god all over Japan by Shintoists and Buddhists alike, but his divine role never interfered with the Shōgun's secular rule. Between the tension of the two, Fukuzawa believed, "they could not help adding a third, the principle of reason (*dōri*, a principle of the reasonable way),"⁴¹ which would bear a spirit of freedom in the end.

Fukuzawa's liberal reinterpretation of the Shogunate rule, which he even hated for its strict class system, showed the possibility that "Western Spirit, Japanese practice" could be a great alternative to the vague slogan of Japanese Spirit. As much as "Eastern ethics, Western technology" had a universal appeal all over East Asia, and perhaps even in India, its failure was, unfortunately, universal. Analyzing the failures of "Eastern ethics, Western technology" was somewhat beyond the scope of this study. More attention should be given, however, to Fukuzawa's alternative approach, which upheld Western universalism while utilizing the tradition that could contribute to the universal progress within a particular group or culture.

The reformist strategy to preserve Western universalism while utilizing the traditional practices was not limited to Fukuzawa and Japan. Li Zehou, a respected Chinese philosopher who was once exiled in the United States after he was criticized for being sympathetic to the protestors of the Tiananmen Square in 1989, also famously attempted to shift the traditional slogan of "Chinese essence, Western practice (*zhōngtǐ xīyòng*)" into "Western essence, Chinese practice (*xītǐ zhōngyòng*)."⁴² As a Marxist philosopher who was knowledgeable in the liberal tradition of the West, Li upheld the universal notion of progress from the West while utilizing the traditional Chinese attitude that valued practice rather than metaphysics. It

⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

⁴² See Li Zehou, *Zhongguo xiandai sixiangshi lun*, 311-342.

is certainly an interesting intellectual experiment that has been taken up by everyone who has pondered liberating his or her nation from the despotism of dogma and “identity.”

Fukuzawa’s attack on “Eastern ethics” was particularly strong when he espoused the rationality in Western science. In other words, to break the myth of old virtues, Fukuzawa introduced the idea of instrumental rationality. It was directed against the stubborn Confucianists obsessed with the rigid “propriety” and traditional hierarchy.⁴³

The universal significance of Fukuzawa’s political theory lies in his revolutionary use of instrumental rationality. As is well-known to Western readers, instrumental rationality is criticized in Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as the major culprit in the Enlightenment tradition that would cause the rise of totalitarianism.⁴⁴ In spite of such a critique, Fukuzawa’s understanding of instrumental rationality was revolutionary and essential to help a society stymied with dogmas. This point requires a more careful examination because the instrumental rationality is indeed a double-edged sword. The preoccupation with cost-effectiveness to achieve a predesignated, or even predestined, end can be destructive to moral doctrines which would lead humanity to use modern technologies in a more humane way. It is, however, a different story when the religious dogmas repress scientific endeavors, as in Kant’s time. As Kant saved science from religious attacks by his categories to divide metaphysics and science, Fukuzawa took a similar role of the “great

⁴³ Another attempt to justify the scientific rationality against the postmodern attack can be found in Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

⁴⁴ See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). Also see Habermas, “Chapter IV. From Lukacs to Adorno: Rationalization as Reification,” in *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 366-399.

destroyer,” as Kant was called by Moses Mendelssohn.⁴⁵

After clarifying his intention of setting Western civilization as an immediate goal for Japan, Fukuzawa examines the specific contents of the Western “spirit” and what kind of virtues it entails. Fukuzawa divides “intellect” from “morals,” like Kant divided pure and practical reason, and divides intellect and morals into the public and private realm, respectively.

Virtue means morality, or probity; in the West it is called morals. Morals refer to a person’s interior good behavior; they enable a person ashamed of nothing within his heart and to do nothing shameful even when alone. Knowledge means intelligence; in the West it is called intellect. It is the function of pondering, understanding, and relating things. ...Fourthly you have the ability to evaluate men and events, to give weightier and greater things priority, and to judge their proper times and places; let me call this public knowledge. Private knowledge might be called the lesser knowledge of know-how, while public knowledge can be called the greater knowledge of wisdom. ...Of the four things distinguished here, the most important is the last one. Without wisdom, private virtue and private knowledge cannot develop into their public counterparts, or the public and the private functions can end up at odds with and even harmful to each other. There has never before been a clear discussion of these four.⁴⁶

It is obvious from this that Fukuzawa wanted to emphasize the role of intellect over morality. To be sure, Japan, at the time, needed scientific knowledge more than philosophy, however profound or lofty. Fukuzawa, however, does not simply abandon the role of morality in his enlightenment project—quite the contrary was the case. By introducing the power of instrumental rationality in scientific advancement, Fukuzawa criticizes the preoccupation with personal virtue in the Confucian tradition, which is also ingrained in the “Japanese Spirit” propagated by the “Expel the Barbarians” faction. Such a preoccupation

⁴⁵ Meera Nanda pointed out the universal resistance to the utilitarian, instrumental rationality in the cultural realm and its disastrous effect in the intellectual community of India. “To some extent, this disjunction between technological modernization and cultural conservatism is a normal part of modernization. Industrialization of the techno-economic sphere does carry over a more functional, instrumental rationality into other spheres of social life. But the cultural realm is not moved solely by the drive for utility, or for class interests, for that matter. On the contrary, its affective and existential dimensions actively *resist* the utilitarian drive.” Nanda, 3.

⁴⁶ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 99-100.

was historically a great hindrance for Confucian states to develop their early potential in scientific innovation. Those who engaged in scientific studies were often excluded from the Confucian bureaucratic elites who were selected by state examination that only estimated the literary knowledge of the canonical texts on Confucian morality. By attacking the domination of personal virtue in Confucianism, Fukuzawa wanted to uphold the new morality that was appropriate for a modern state, which would respect practical knowledge and individuality.

Directly targeting Confucian virtues could be too risky for Fukuzawa, who was watched by assassins from the “Expel the Barbarians” faction and spies from the Meiji government. Instead of fueling the fire of his conservative countrymen, Fukuzawa focused on the practical value of old moral codes—including the Western moral codes.⁴⁷

The things embraced by morality have always been fixed and immutable. ...These Ten Commandments and Five Relationships ⁴⁸ have formed the unchanging foundation for the teachings of the sages over thousands of years. ...It is as if the sages had said that snow was white and coal was black— what can people of later ages add to this? ...But this is not the case with intelligence. Knowledge has increased a hundredfold since ancient times. ...If we could bring back the ancient sages to live in our modern world and let them hear the theories of economics and commerce current today, or could put them aboard a steamship and send them across the ocean, or let them listen to news coming in from thousands of miles away over the telegraph, they would certainly be amazed. ...The sages never even dreamed of these inventions. Why, as far as intelligence goes, the sages of antiquity were equal to a three-year-old of today.⁴⁹

Pointing out the impossibility of knowledge accumulation in the studies of traditional moral doctrines, Fukuzawa successfully privileged the value of scientific rationality over the personal morality that dominated Japanese society and animated the Japanese Spirit.

⁴⁷ This attitude of carefully watching the language in fear of provoking political repression was also found in the Frankfurt School’s well-known commitment to “Aesopian language.” “The School had no party affiliation, still less any solidarity with the Soviet Union. What the Frankfurt School did have, though, was a long-term commitment to Aesopian language, that is, words or phrases that convey an innocent meaning to an outsider but a hidden meaning to those in the know.” Stuart Jeffries, *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School* (London: Verso, 2016), 196-197.

⁴⁸ This means *wǔlún*, the Confucian virtues that regulate five types of relationships. Fukuzawa essentially equated Confucian moral codes of five relationships to the Ten Commandment of Christianity, as equally unnecessary in knowledge accumulation.

⁴⁹ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 109-110.

Fukuzawa's provocative attack on Japanese tradition also reached out to the most "sacred" concept—the idea of "national polity (*kokutai*).” Many Western scholars of Japanese history eventually come across the difficulty of defining the meaning of "*kokutai*," which literally means "a national body," and is often translated as "a national polity." Even from premodern times, Japanese elites had an extraordinary preoccupation with their "territory," which was deemed sacred and no one ever was able to cross since the beginning of history. The reason is rather simple. The name "Japan," or "*Nippon*" means "the origin of the sun," which had perhaps been used since a little earlier than the first unified kingdom appeared in the eighth century. The spread of Buddhism that followed the emergence of the unified kingdom affected the rise of unique Japanese pantheism, which believes that all beings—even lifeless objects—have a certain spiritual energy, or a god-like essence in them.⁵⁰ Thus, so the story goes, Japan is a land of gods, and gods would always protect their land. The myth was intensified when the maritime invasion of formidable Mongolian Empire in the thirteenth century was frustrated by a typhoon, which was very common in the late summer of Japan, creating the term "*kamikaze*," which means "the wind of a god." The idea that Japan was a land which gods would always protect created a unique understanding of the national unity. In the eighteenth century, when Tokugawa Japan was partially evolving to the modern nation-state, the scholars who claimed "national studies (*kokugaku*)" tried to theorize the uniqueness of the Japanese polity based on their theory of the Emperor. For these nationalist scholars, the Emperor was the root of the "national polity (*kokutai*)" of modern Japan.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See Robert Ellwood, *Japanese Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 27-31.

⁵¹ About the extraordinary figure who founded the "national studies" in Japan, see Shigeru Matsumoto, *Motoori*

For many conservatives, the national polity was equated with the Emperor system because what made Japan unique in the world was that she was created by a god—Jimmu, the first Emperor of Japan—and the bloodline of the god—the Royal family of Japan—continued since the beginning of history. The typical modifier to the Emperor, “one who has reigned since the time immemorial (*bansei ikkei*),” represented the pride of the Japanese right-wing. It is well known that the military regime during the Pacific War was hesitant to accept the unconditional surrender to the Allies because they tried to keep the Emperor system at any costs. Many liberal historians in Japan argue that if the pathetic totalitarians had been willing to give up the Emperor system for the sake of the Japanese people, the catastrophes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki would not have occurred.⁵² Even when they reviewed the new Japanese constitution written by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) after the Allied force’s occupation of Japan, the biggest concern was whether the national polity—the Emperorship—was preserved.⁵³

Fukuzawa, more than seventy years before those totalitarians ruined their own country, already tried to break the myth of national polity and introduced his own modern understanding of Japanese nationality to the people.

First off, what does the term national polity refer to? ...It refers to a structure in which things are collected together, made one, and distinguished from other entities. Thus “national polity” refers to the grouping together of a race of people of similar feelings, the creation of a distinction between fellow countrymen and foreigners, the fostering of more cordial and stronger bonds with one’s countrymen than with foreigners. It is living under the same government, enjoying self-rule, and disliking the idea of being subject to foreign rule; it involves independence and responsibility for the welfare of one’s own country. In Western countries it is called nationality.⁵⁴

Norinaga, 1730-1801 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁵² See Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 1, 168.

⁵³ For the debate about the national polity after the occupation of the Allied, see Ray A. Moore and Donald L. Robinson, *Partners for Democracy: Crafting the New Japanese State under MacArthur* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 177-180.

⁵⁴ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 30.

In the passage above, Fukuzawa was referring to John Stuart Mill's definition of nationality in Chapter XVI of *Considerations on Representative Government*.⁵⁵ The sacred "national polity" is no more than "independence and responsibility for the welfare" of the Japanese people. What it means to "preserve the national polity," therefore, no longer equates with keeping the Emperor system and the belief in his divinity.

Fukuzawa then separates the national polity from "political legitimation" or regime type and "blood lineage" of the royal family. As soon as he defined the national polity as a modern understanding of nationality, the political legitimation of a certain type of rule or whether the royal family was well preserved naturally became a secondary matter. The only question that mattered was whether it was the Japanese people themselves who would decide their own destiny.⁵⁶ After blatantly criticizing those who "confused the blood lineage with the national polity," Fukuzawa summarized why he believed Western liberalism was necessary to preserve the national polity.

Now, the only duty of the Japanese at present is to preserve Japan's national polity. For to preserve national polity will be to preserve national sovereignty. And in order to preserve national sovereignty the intellectual powers of the people must be elevated. There are many factors involved in this, but the first order of business in development of our intellectual powers lies in sweeping away credulity to past customs and adopting the spirit of Western civilization. ...We shall have achieved success when national sovereignty and national polity are supported by and grounded on the intellectual power of the whole nation. ...It is extremely easy to preserve imperial succession. Let me ask you [samurais] of the land, isn't loyalty your topmost concern? Loyalty is indeed a good thing, but nothing less than [the greater] loyalty will do (If you want to practice loyalty, you should practice the greater loyalty). If we wish to preserve imperial succession, we must do so by increasing the glory of that succession. But the glory of imperial lineage will vanish if national polity is not solid. As I have said before, the eye too will lose its light when the strength of the whole

⁵⁵ Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 1, 164. The definition of nationality in Mill's writing comes in the very first sentence of chapter XVI. "A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any others—which make them co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves, or a portion of themselves, exclusively." John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (Rockville: Serenity Publishers, 2008), 179.

⁵⁶ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 30-34.

body is sapped. If we value the eye, we must focus upon the health of the whole body—the light of the eye cannot be preserved merely by using an eye lotion. In view of these considerations, then, Western civilization is an incomparable means for both strengthening our national polity and increasing the prestige of our imperial line. Why, then, do we hesitate to adopt it? We should not even think twice about the matter.⁵⁷

Again, by invoking the instrumental rationality to achieve national sovereignty, Fukuzawa justified his support for Western liberalism against blind loyalty to the Emperor. Fukuzawa cleverly upheld his enlightenment position as a “greater loyalty,” which he hoped to be understood by the Japanese people, who would realize that what they had been doing was only the “lesser loyalty.”

C. The Political Impact of *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*: Courageously Antagonizing All Reactionaries

Even with his effort to characterize his liberalism as the “greater loyalty,” Fukuzawa was faced not only with verbal criticisms but also numerous death threats from his enemies.⁵⁸ I believe Fukuzawa’s critique of Confucian scholars has been sufficiently discussed in the previous sections. In this section, I will examine how Fukuzawa infuriated two types of arch-reactionaries in nineteenth century Japan, who would eventually merge into one and cause the disastrous fate of Japan decades later.

The first, and perhaps the most important, reactionary force that Fukuzawa infuriated was the Emperor worshippers. As examined in the previous section, Fukuzawa rejected the dominant view that equated the Emperor with the national polity itself. Even though he persuasively argued that his cause was in doing the “greater loyalty,” not being disrespectful

⁵⁷ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 36-37. My translation is added in brackets.

⁵⁸ As noted earlier, Fukuzawa dedicated a whole chapter to describe his experiences with the threat of assassination in his autobiography. He explained that the threat to scholars who studied Western knowledge was at its peak from 1862 to 1874. *Civilization* was written in 1874 and published in early 1875. See Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 225-238.

of the Emperor, denying the importance of the Emperor's absolute rule was a risky position. The Meiji government itself, as explained in Chapter 1, was established on the idea that Japan should go back to the immemorial, the purest Japanese polity, when the Emperor personally ruled the whole land as a god. Although it was only a slogan to attack the legitimacy of the Shogunate rule, most of samurais seriously believed in the Emperor's absolute rule based on his divinity.

Fukuzawa did not take the risk of exposing that the Emperor is just a man like anyone else. Rather, he believed it was of the utmost importance to redefine the meaning of the Meiji Restoration, which most samurais considered a return to the purest Japan in ancient times, when the man-god personally led the country. Those who seriously believed in the personal rule of the man-god regarded the Restoration as the moment when they were finally able to "Expel the Barbarians." Fukuzawa did not deny the contribution of the xenophobic zeal of the "Expel the Barbarians" faction. Instead of attacking the "Expel the Barbarian" faction directly, he suggested an interesting theory of logic that separated the "proximate cause" and the "remote cause" to argue that the patriotic zeal of the "Expel the Barbarians" was, although respectable, only a proximate cause. What was important was a more deep-seated, "remote cause," which Fukuzawa believed to be the people's dissatisfaction with despotism and a desire for the liberal rule that would eliminate irrational class distinction and liberate individuals.

Only recently, the Meiji Restoration saw ...The nobles and ex-samurai lost their political power and their feudal stipends. Why did they not dare to complain about it? Some people maintain that the Imperial Restoration was due to the influence of the Imperial ...These are mere conjectures, by men who know nothing about the trend of the times. If the Imperial Household was so influential, why did it have to wait for its restoration until 1868? ...[People's] rage was stirred up by the authoritarian structure of a Tokugawa society based upon noble lineage, a structure which frustrated their talents. ...They had no way of expressing their feelings during the height of despotism

rule. Whether or not feelings can be expressed depends on which is stronger—the power of a despotic government, or the intellectual power of the people. ...But in the later Tokugawa period, human intelligence began ever so slightly to tip the scale in the other direction. ...Immediately after the revolution and the “restoration of the past,” the foreigners should have been thrown out, but this did not happen. Also, whereas the new government leaders should have stopped with the overthrow of the hated Bakufu (the Shogunate), why did they disenfranchise the daimyo (feudal lords in Japan) and the vassals as well? ...The jōi (Expel the Barbarians) ... was only the proximate cause of events. The intellectual powers of the people as a whole were moving in a different direction from the beginning. Their aim was neither imperial restoration nor expulsion of foreigners; they used these slogans merely as an opening wedge to attack inveterate privileges and despotic rule. Consequently, it was not the Imperial Household that instigated the whole movement, and the enemy was not the Bakufu. It was a battle between intellectual power and despotism. The cause behind the whole struggle was the intellectual forces at work in the country at large. This was the remote cause.⁵⁹

It seems that Fukuzawa was slightly disingenuous when he recharacterized the Meiji Restoration as if it was a Japanese version of the French Revolution. The abolishment of the feudal state system and the samurai privileges was, as detailed in Chapter 1, the Meiji oligarchs’ choice for their own survival. The Japanese people, as such, who would rise against the despotic rule did not yet exist; to create the bourgeois citizens that did not exist was the very reason Fukuzawa wrote the series of articles collected in *Encouragement*. Whether the Meiji Restoration was a bourgeois revolution or a simple reactionary reform led by the upper echelon of society was seriously debated among Japanese Marxists in the early twentieth century.⁶⁰

Fukuzawa, nonetheless, had a more profound reason to make the Meiji Restoration a bourgeois revolution. What he saw as dangerous was the nature of the Emperor-worshippers’ argument that would blatantly praise the theocratic system, which would erase the contractual character in modern politics and, instead, establish its pre-political base on

⁵⁹ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 83-88.

⁶⁰ This situation is often summarized as a debate between the “academic faction” (*kōza ha*, or “feudal” group) and the “labor-peasant faction” (*rōnō ha*). The latter understood the Meiji Restoration as a bourgeois revolution while the former denied it. See Germaine Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

religion. Fukuzawa believed that one would not be able to create a modern civic virtue by relying on a pre-political foundation, like Emperor worship. What Japan needed was to have “Japanese citizens” who would be politically united in a rational form. As emphasized before, Fukuzawa certainly realized that there would be no guarantee of rights without the idea of citizenship. Regardless of the historical authenticity, he had to make the Meiji Restoration a deed of the Japanese citizens, who voluntarily and consciously fought for their own right against the feudal oppressors. In this way, the Japanese people could be recharacterized as the free citizens of a constitutional state instead of the Emperor’s humble subjects.

...the cause of the restoration of imperial rule was neither the people’s dislike of the shogunate and attachment to the Imperial Family, nor their predilection for antiquity, nor again their suddenly recalling the idea of “true relations of sovereign and subject” that they had forgotten for hundreds of years. It stemmed entirely from people’s desire to reform the shogunate government of their time. Now that the Restoration has been accomplished and political jurisdiction returned to the Imperial Family, *as Japanese citizens* we should give it proper respect, yet the relationship between the people and the Imperial Family is no more than a political one. Close ties between them cannot be created overnight. Any attempt to force such a relationship upon the people will have the reverse effect: the result would be subjects of the pseudo gentleman type, and it would lead people to an increasingly superficial brand of loyalism. That is why I say that the Imperial Way Learning scholars’ appeal to national polity does not suffice as a means to bolster men’s hearts and raise their conduct to a higher level.⁶¹

Reminiscent of Hobbes, Maruyama Masao argued that Fukuzawa wanted to build an artificial (or “fictional,” in Maruyama’s term) source of political allegiance instead of relying on pre-political sources of power. “Only a ‘fiction’ is a pure human creation, which neither gods nor nature can replace.”⁶² This emphasis on the artificial nature of modern politics, Maruyama believed, most clearly revealed Fukuzawa’s humanism, which is why Fukuzawa is important in political theory. In terms of pure realpolitik, however, Fukuzawa’s reliance on

⁶¹ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 231-232. Emphasis added.

⁶² Maruyama Masao, “Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku” [Fukuzawa Yukichi’s philosophy], 112, quoted in Matsuda Kōichirō, “Kyomōni kakeru kotoha kanōka?” [Is It Possible to Bet on a ‘Fiction’?], *Gendai Sisō*, *Maruyama Masao Tokushū* (Modern Thought: a special issue for Maruyama Masao) (August 2014), 102-103.

artificial creation was clearly a mistake. As soon as the masses realize that their political authority is nothing but artificial, they would have a hard time finding a reason to continue their allegiance to it. It was thus not surprising that Fukuzawa eventually rejected his belief in artificial creation as a foundation of the Japanese nation-state, which is a main discussion of Chapter 4. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how much Fukuzawa in his early progressive years passionately defended the human creation of the new liberal state of Japan rather than seeing it deteriorate with the Emperor worshippers who were willing to die for anything they deemed to be loyal to their man-god.

Aside from the pure academic Emperor worshippers, a variety of social forces emerged to push further spending on military forces. They were generally not against Westernization, but their priority was always on the traditional Chinese slogan “Enrich the state, strengthen the military.”⁶³ These people can be collectively called militarists, which Fukuzawa vehemently opposed in *Civilization*.

Japanese political elites’ interest in Western military technology did not emerge suddenly from the “impact of the West” in the nineteenth century. In fact, even before Tokugawa Ieyasu unified the country, many Japanese warlords already saw the power of firearms introduced by Portuguese merchants and rapidly armed their main force with the new weapons. In the 1590s, Japanese forces armed with superior firepower overpowered the defensive Korean military, helping them capture Seoul in only eighteen days.⁶⁴ Samurai warriors that they were, seemed to be attracted to any military technology by nature. The Japanese warrior’s attitude would be, after all, to recognize one’s weakness and be willing to

⁶³ See Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000), 377.

⁶⁴ Noel Perrin, *Giving Up the Gun: Japan’s Reversion to the Sword, 1543-1879* (Boston: Nonpareil, 1979), 28.

learn from the one with the superior power. “As soon as they thought to be defeated, they immediately send students to [their former enemy’s] country.”⁶⁵

There is, of course, nothing wrong with learning from the superior. The problem was that the interest in military knowledge was disproportionately, and irrationally, bigger than any attention to the foundation of Western science, which would be required for their military power in the first place. Further, almost no one was concerned about Western economics, which would enrich individuals and the nation as a whole and eventually prepare the resources for better armament. Fukuzawa, in principle, did not object to the notion that Japan should be armed with better weapons. At any rate, it was urgent for Japan to build a military that was at least capable of self-defense. They knew what China had to go through since the Opium War, and many Japanese elites knew how the Chinese people were treated by arrogant imperialists in Hong Kong.⁶⁶ For Fukuzawa, however, military strength would naturally follow once the nation strengthened its economy and education in science. If Japan remained solely preoccupied with the military, she would drain her energy resources for further progress and eventually collapse, which is precisely how the Empire of Japan came to ruin in 1945.

Another group of patriots, somewhat more far-seeing than the *jōi* (Expel the Barbarians) advocates, has no wish indiscriminately to expel all foreigners, but sees the problem of relations with foreign powers as basically a matter of simple military weakness. ...Now, this is the thinking of men who are ignorant of the proportions of things. The fact that England has one thousand warships does not mean that she has one thousand warships only. If there are one thousand warships, there have to be at least ten thousand merchant ships, which in turn require at least one hundred thousand navigators; and to create navigators there must be naval science. ...In countries where there is an imbalanced emphasis on military strength there is apt to be no sense of proportion— indiscriminate military expenditures drain the national treasury and thus

⁶⁵ Maruyama Masao and Katō Shūichi, *Honyaku to nihonno kindai* [Translation and Japan’s Modernity] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 14.

⁶⁶ For those who are not familiar with the Opium War, see Stephen R. Platt, *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China’s Last Golden Age* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018).

undermine the country. ...When conditions are so unripe it would be to lose all sense of proportion and render things useless if Japan today were to attempt to build up only military armament. Hence our present foreign relations should not be supported by means of greater military power.⁶⁷

First of all, Fukuzawa straightforwardly argued that nothing could be achieved by the ideology of “Expel the Barbarians,” which even resisted learning military knowledge from the West. The militarists, however, were no better than them in that they never understood where the true power of the West originated. Fukuzawa believed that the true strength of a nation can grow only on the basis of better education, which would lead to the better livelihood of citizens. What seems to be common sense was a rare insight in Fukuzawa’s time and even decades later when the Empire of Japan went through a further militarization.

The political impact of *Civilization* was not limited to the reactionaries. It also raised a serious debate among liberals and radical republicans. As explained earlier, when Fukuzawa tried to reinterpret the authoritative understanding of “the national polity,” he separated two other notions that were often misunderstood as the national polity itself: the “political legitimation” and the blood lineage of the royal family. If the national polity means the Japanese people ruling the country by themselves, it is certainly a more progressive position than the belief that the national polity equates with the eternal blood lineage of the royal family. Fukuzawa’s exclusion of the “political legitimation,” however, needs more clarification.

Secondly, every country has its “political legitimation [written in transliteration ‘porichikaru rejichime-shon’].” Political here refers to matters of government. Legitimation refers to the justification of political authority. I shall translate this concept into Japanese as *seitō*. Therefore, what it refers to is the ultimate source of political authority recognized by the people. Political legitimation varies with world conditions and the times. Some accept the principle of monarchy as the criterion of

⁶⁷ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 252-253.

political legitimation; others find it in decentralized feudalism, the parliamentary system, or religious institutions.⁶⁸

What Fukuzawa refers to as “political legitimation” was not so much different from the regime type of each state. If Fukuzawa considered the regime type not as important as the national polity, which he defined as the Japanese people’s self-rule, this seems to be unsatisfying, considering the liberal standpoint that he generally maintained. National self-determination, a principle which Fukuzawa certainly relied on in his argument about national polity, can be claimed to be preserved in any totalitarian system. Further, the political legitimation of any regime type can be challenged when it fails to deliver what it promises. If what Fukuzawa wanted was the realization of true individual liberty in Japan, he needed to show that individual liberty could prosper regardless of the regime type, a difficult task.⁶⁹

Of course, what he ultimately wanted to argue was that the Emperor system was only one of many different regime types, which would not bear utmost importance for preserving the national polity. Still, Fukuzawa’s critique of emerging republicanism in Japan as “biased” and failing to keep an “open mind” seems somewhat bizarre.⁷⁰ Some former samurais were indeed fascinated by republicanism and the glorious story of revolutions in the West, but no one dared to attack the Emperor system openly, at least at the time Fukuzawa wrote *Civilization*. It is possible that Fukuzawa criticized republicanism simply to avoid his enemy’s attack on himself as a republican who was disloyal to the Emperor, but it is no more than a conjecture.

One thing we do know about Fukuzawa’s skepticism of republicanism was that it was

⁶⁸ Ibid., 31-32.

⁶⁹ Habermas argues that the crisis of the late capitalism is not so much an economic crisis as a legitimation crisis, which comes from the contradiction between political democracy that promises equality and the economic reality that makes inequality prevalent. See Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975).

⁷⁰ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 50-51.

based on his utilitarian principles. Fukuzawa enumerated different examples of republics and monarchies and argued that there could be both good and bad republics and, by the same token, both good and bad monarchies. It all depended on how well the system functioned for the benefit of the people.

Every government in the world is the product of convenience. If convenient for a country's civilization, the form of government can be a monarchy or it can be a republic. For government is a pragmatic matter. Among the forms of government that have been tried in the world since the dawn of history, we can list absolute monarchies, constitutional monarchies, aristocracies, republics, and so forth. ... A monarchy is not necessarily unsuitable, and a republic is not necessarily good. Although the French Republic of 1848 had a reputation for impartial justice, it was in fact cruelly oppressive. Austria under Francis II was a dictatorship, but a benign one. The present-day democratic government in America may be better than China's monarchy, but the Mexican republic can hardly compare with England's monarchy. Thus, even though the governments of England and Austria are good, this need not mean we should therefore emulate the ways of China. Conversely, though we applaud the democratic government of America, we should not therefore copy the examples of France and Mexico. We have to consider the realities of government rather than judge by their names only.⁷¹

The argument above seems reasonable enough, especially considering the reality of "people's republics" throughout the history of the twentieth century. There is, however, no detailed information on what makes a good or bad government, regardless of its regime type. Although Fukuzawa clearly understood the importance of the liberal rule of law, it is not clear whether he applied his understanding of it when he distinguished "good" republics or monarchies from "bad" ones. If it does not truly matter whether a country has a monarchical or republican system, there is even less reason to have a king except that it is the way it used to be, which is a reasoning that Fukuzawa hated the most as "credulous (*wakudeki*) of old customs." Moreover, it is obvious that Fukuzawa underestimated the danger posed by the reactionary impulse in classes associated with monarchism, which is a particularly important matter in a nation where landed elites formed a powerful political force. Such a reactionary

⁷¹ Ibid., 50-51.

force fortunately did not exist in England and America, which Fukuzawa idealized.

Fukuzawa's ambivalent position about an ideal regime type was ultimately related to his distrust of the masses. Although it is not obvious in *Encouragement and Civilization*, Fukuzawa never trusted the "people" very much. As Maruyama Masao suggested, "[although] Fukuzawa was a liberal who believed in inviolability of the private rights, he never became a democrat who assumes the identity between the people and the sovereign."⁷² Doubting the intellectual capability of the masses is not surprising for an enlightenment thinker who would introduce the whole idea of science to his ignorant countrymen. The problem is that he later took the Emperor system as a convenient tool to unify the masses, which was clearly a dangerous road to take.⁷³ Once the masses are mobilized by an ideology, the ideology stops being merely a tool. It is unavoidable, in politics, to make a rigorous value judgment about any 'tool' and the possible consequences that the tool would entail.⁷⁴

Fukuzawa's dangerous compromise with the Emperor system will be discussed in the next chapter. At least by the time he published *Civilization*, however, his critique of republicanism was only accepted as a gentle admonition for young People's Rights activists who were too passionate to bring about pragmatic change. He was still regarded as a guardian of freedom and equality, not least of all because of his clear commitment to progress and liberalism.

D. Fukuzawa's Theory of Civilization for Today: The Power of Liberalism as a Progressive Ideal

⁷² Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 2, 255.

⁷³ See *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 271. This matter will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

⁷⁴ "Contrary to the position that Weber himself takes, it follows that the validity of his methodology stands or falls with a solution to the problem of values. Varying an epigram that Weber draws from Schopenhauer, the conceptual apparatus of neo-Kantianism is not a taxi that one can stop at will." Guy Oakes, "Rickert's Value Theory and the Foundation of Weber's Methodology," *Sociological Theory* 6, no. 1 (Spring, 1988), 49.

Building a rational modern state on the basis of the semi-totalitarian feudal tradition is certainly a daunting task. The civilization grown in Western Europe achieved industrialization and modernity in a relatively immanent process. Somewhat resonating with Lenin's argument that "Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country,"⁷⁵ Maruyama Masao argued that the revolution of the underdeveloped country needs a stronger ideological mobilization.⁷⁶

[The] modernization of the 'underdeveloped' nation can be relatively conscious of its purpose. ...[The English] did not modernize their country by the conscious purpose of modernization, but they were modernized by the result of the [spontaneous] historical development. [By contrast] the underdeveloped countries set the model of modernization and go toward the model as a goal. Since they are conscious of their purpose, naturally, they become strongly ideological; that is, they modernize their country by the guidance of a certain ideology. It is for this reason why, even in the same West, the American Revolution was more ideological than the English Revolution, and the French Revolution was more ideological than the American Revolution.⁷⁷

If the ideological character of the modernization is unavoidable, one should be careful about choosing the ideology that would drive the modernization of their nation. Many underdeveloped nations, historically and even today, have relied on what they believe to be their traditional customs and cultural heritage as a certain "foundation" of the modernization, while capitalism or socialism is used as a practical tool to achieve prosperity. Fukuzawa, however, as analyzed in the second section of this chapter, firmly opposed such a reliance on tradition as a foundation for modernization. Anything that would connect the masses to the pre-political foundation of the national myth would fail to create a modern individual who

⁷⁵ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), XXXI: 513-518.

⁷⁶ Maruyama says that he borrowed the idea from Lenin's understanding of "spontaneity" and "class consciousness" in his *What is To Be Done*. What this means is that the Orthodox Marxism of Kautsky only emphasized the "spontaneous" transformation of capitalism by its own contradiction, while dismissing the importance of political consciousness of the working class, which should be stimulated by the voluntary effort of the vanguard, especially under the underdeveloped conditions in Russia. See Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, 45, and Vladimir Ilych Lenin, "What Is to Be Done? II. The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Class Consciousness of Social-Democracy," in *Essential Works of Lenin: "What Is to Be Done?" and Other Writings*, ed. Henry M. Christman (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 72-91.

⁷⁷ Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, 45.

was free and equal as a strong citizen of a nation-state. Although the nationalist rhetoric was perhaps unavoidable in Fukuzawa's time, his commitment in eternal progress, which is also identified with the individual freedom itself, certainly contributed to the emerging capitalist development in Japan.

Although it would be difficult to determine the success or failure of "Eastern ethics, Western practice" arguments from the Japanese case alone, one can find some hints from Fukuzawa's struggle with the Japanese Spirit and Confucian ethics. What one can learn from Fukuzawa's *Civilization* was that, without any clear, rational criteria to judge the tradition, it is certainly dangerous to build a modern nation-state based on a "traditional spirit." Such a naïve strategy to take any available traditional ideology would often create a despotism armed with modern technology as a convenient tool of domination, which, notwithstanding Fukuzawa's warning, did happen in Japan. Founding a modern nation-state based on national "spirit" has a transnational appeal. In the history of East Asia, examples of this "spirit" were exhaustive. "Japanese Spirit" drove a number of poor Japanese youths into *kamikaze* suicide attacks. North Korea's "self-autonomy (*juche*)" theory of socialism continues to starve millions of her population, while South Korea's "Korean-style democracy" defended numerous cases of torture and terrorism against pro-democracy activists in the 1970s. Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist "New Life Movement," based on Confucian ethics, Mao Zedong's constant emphasis on "the conditions in China," and even Deng Xiaoping's relatively successful "Socialism with the Chinese Characteristics" somehow justified murders and violence for the sake of regime security. It would be hard to say that any principle similar to "Eastern ethics, Western practice" historically generated a

meaningfully different result. There should be a reason for this.⁷⁸

The most obvious reason behind the problem of “Eastern ethics, Western practice” is lack of clear criteria to judge traditions from the universal point of view. If “Eastern ethics” are justified simply because they are “Eastern,” or they “preserve the old values,” contradiction with modernity is unavoidable. By contrast, Fukuzawa’s support of the diverse sources of authority—the separation of the Emperor and Shōgun—as the traditional spirit of freedom in Japan was a great example that showed the clear criteria to judge which is a “correct” tradition. By the same token, Kim Dae-jung, often remembered as the Nelson Mandela of South Korea, used Mencius’s⁷⁹ defense of the revolution that would overthrow tyrannical kings as a source of the spirit of freedom and democracy in the East.⁸⁰ Although professional scholars of Confucianism generally disagree with Kim’s interpretation, his defense of democracy from the universal viewpoint touched the heart of the masses and contributed to the transition to democracy in South Korea. One might argue that both Fukuzawa and Kim are no more than Eurocentric fawners over Western civilization, but it is

⁷⁸ In addition to these examples, Meera Nanda criticized the “alternative science” in the ideology of Hindu Nationalism. See Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

⁷⁹ Mencius was a renowned Confucian scholar in the Warring States Period, roughly around 400-221 BC. He was born about a hundred years after Confucius died and generally regarded as Confucius’s academic successor.

⁸⁰ See the following: “..... almost two millennia before Locke, Chinese philosopher Meng-tzu preached similar ideas. According to his “Politics of Royal Ways,” the king is the “Son of Heaven,” and heaven bestowed on its son a mandate to provide good government, that is, to provide good for the people. If he did not govern righteously, the people had the right to rise up and overthrow his government in the name of heaven. Meng-tzu even justified regicide, saying that once a king loses the mandate of heaven he is no longer worthy of his subjects’ loyalty. The people came first, Meng-tzu said, the country second, and the king third. The ancient Chinese philosophy of Minben Zhengchi, or “people-based politics,” teaches that “the will of the people is the will of heaven” and that one should “respect the people as heaven” itself.” Kim Dae Jung, “Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia’s Anti-Democratic Values,” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 6 (November-December, 1994), 191. One of the passages in Mencius (Meng-tzu in Kim’s writing) that Kim refers to is the following: “The king Hsuan of Ch’i asked, saying, ‘Was it so, that T’ang banished Chieh, and that king Wu smote Chau?’ Mencius replied, ‘It is so in the records.’ The king said, ‘May a minister *then* put his sovereign to death?’ Mencius said, ‘He who outrages the benevolence *proper to his nature*, is called a robber; he who outrages righteousness, is called a ruffian. The robber and ruffian we call a mere fellow. I have heard of the cutting off of the fellow Chau, but I have not heard of the putting a sovereign to death, *in his case*.’” James Legge, *The Work of Mencius* (New York: Dover Publications, 2011), 167.

unclear whether such an argument is even important. What seems to matter more is which position brought universal progress and liberation of people. It does not have to fit the “Western” theories. If a non-Western tradition can provide a legitimate critique of modern values from a universal standpoint, that is, for the good of the whole of humanity, it would certainly be worthy of more attention. The problem arises, however, when a tradition is defended as a particularistic value as “ours” without any reference to the universal values.

Another lesson of *Civilization*, especially for the political theorists under the influence of critical theory, can be found in Fukuzawa’s revolutionary use of instrumental rationality. Rationality functioning as finding the most “efficient” path to the predefined goal can indeed create an ethical dilemma, depending on what the “goal” is. Moreover, instrumental rationality has also been dismissed by political theorists who, somewhat legitimately, worry about the excessive application of methodological individualism in political science, which often has to face collective behaviors that need far more explanation than each individual’s instrumental motive. The preoccupation with individual interests, as the only possible unit of analysis in all cases, can certainly be a hindrance to the further development of political science.

Despite all the legitimate critiques of instrumental rationality, however, Fukuzawa’s application of instrumental rationality for disillusioning the Japanese people from the spell of Tokugawa class society should remind us of how revolutionary instrumental rationality can become, especially for a society that tries to dump the baggage of its past. One cannot create a revolutionary theory from the view of gods or metaphysics. Fukuzawa’s defense of scientific reason against the encroachment of seemingly “eternal” moral codes was no less revolutionary than Kant’s defense of science against institutionalized religion.

Compared to *Encouragement*, however, Fukuzawa's nationalism was somewhat intensified, especially in the final chapter of *Civilization*. One should not mistakenly believe that Fukuzawa's nationalism was a part of naturally ingrained elements to all samurais in his time. Although a certain degree of nationalism was the least common denominator among Japanese intellectuals, there were already some Christian universalists and cosmopolitan republicans in Fukuzawa's time. Compared to such universalists, Fukuzawa was still considered a nationalist in nineteenth century Japan. What the Japanese people saw in Fukuzawa was, however, his remarkable insight to harmonize the cause of universal progress and the realistic goal for Japan's survival in the harsh international environment dominated by imperialist threats. By 1875, Fukuzawa was still a famous guardian of freedom and equality rather than a cold-hearted supporter of "national interests," which he would later come to be known for. Despite some who argue that the word "independence" would summarize Fukuzawa's thought,⁸¹ what is clear in *Civilization* is not an abstract ideal of "independence" but "freedom" and "progress."

⁸¹ Nishikawa Shunsaku, "Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901)," *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education* (UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), XXIII, no. 3/4 (1993), 493.

Chapter 4

Existential Turn: Seeking National Recognition

In 2000, Yasukawa Junosuke, an emeritus professor at Nagoya University, stupefied the entire community of Japanese political theorists by revealing the darker side of Fukuzawa Yukichi. By thoroughly analyzing Fukuzawa's newspaper articles, and even his private letters, Yasukawa claimed that he discovered the bare face of Fukuzawa that was not sugarcoated or misrepresented by the authority of Mauryama Masao, whom many Japanese intellectuals considered the greatest political theorist in postwar Japan. Whether or not one accepts Yasukawa's argument, the quotes from Fukuzawa collected in Yasukawa's sensational book easily dumbfound anyone who admires Fukuzawa's pioneering liberalism. According to Yasukawa, Fukuzawa spewed aggressive words with racial hatred to the Chinese, like "we have to plunder Beijing ... or undress those Chinks¹ and take away the clothes they are wearing..." which is just one of a number of such hateful comments.² Further, Yasukawa characterized Fukuzawa as a precursor of the Japanese fascists that denied their war crimes, for he shamelessly argued "some foreigners said that we massacred the innocent Chinese in our great victory at Lüshun.....it is completely a baseless report."³

It is important to note that Fukuzawa's racism should not be separated from his theory, even his liberal works such as *Encouragement* and *Civilization*. As soon as he justified nationalism in a normative term, racism began to lurk in his political thought. No matter how

¹ "Chanchan" is a derogatory word for Chinese people that was used in late nineteenth century Japan.

² Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū* [Complete collection of Fukuzawa Yukichi] vol. 14 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 570-572, quoted in Yasukawa Junosuke, *Fukuzawa Yukichi no azia ninshiki* [Fukuzawa Yukichi's Perception of Asia] (Tokyo: Kōbunken, 2000), 264. It was Fukuzawa's comment on the process of the First Sino-Japanese war which ended with Japan's overwhelming victory in 1894.

³ Ibid., 667, quoted in Yasukawa, 261. Here, Fukuzawa denied the Japanese troop's massacre of civilians in Lüshun in 1894, which is also called the Port Arthur Massacre by Western historians.

one justifies nationalism—even as “defensive” or “resistance” to imperialism—prioritizing the unity of a particular pre-political community always imposes a danger of justifying inhumane exclusion of ‘others.’ In short, although nationalism is not synonymous with racism, they have a very high affinity to each other. As explained earlier, Fukuzawa accepted the ideal of the particular *Volksgeist* of Japan. Although his understanding of *Volksgeist* was different from the radical reactionary samurais, the normative idea of *Volksgeist* is by nature exclusive to the particular people, which naturally produces racism and xenophobia at some point. The question is, then, how such a deterioration happened specifically in Fukuzawa’s thought.

Yasukawa studied the life and thoughts of Fukuzawa as a historical figure. Revealing the continuity of Fukuzawa’s nationalism, from the early moment when he wrote *Encouragement* to the very end of his life, was one of Yasukawa’s great achievements in his critique of Fukuzawa. Yasukawa, however, was not even interested in what made Fukuzawa’s nationalism more pronounced late in his life. Being a historian rather than a political theorist, Yasukawa paid no attention to theoretical problems in Fukuzawa’s liberalism while uncovering the nationalist elements in his thought. It is unproductive to dismiss the whole theory of a thinker based on his or her personal life without examining the concrete connection between theory and practice. I will examine the theory and practice of Fukuzawa when he was beginning to be considered a right-winger, focusing on his dangerous journey for the recognition of Japan on the international stage, which is also precariously built on his “centrist” and “proceduralist” liberalism.

It is generally agreed, at least among Japanese political theorists, that Fukuzawa was the most important figure in the spread of Western liberalism in nineteenth century Japan. He

was always a nationalist, believing that Western liberalism was instrumental in reforming Japan into a modern state competent enough to fend off threats from the West. At least up to 1879, when he wrote *Transformation of the Spirit of People*, however, his commitment to liberal progress and individual rights was as equally important as his commitment to nationalism. After the 1880s, Fukuzawa's arguments became increasingly aligned with the right-wing, which provoked heavy criticism from the liberals Fukuzawa influenced in the first place. Fukuzawa condemned the "People's Rights Movement" as too radical and instigated the Meiji government, which had maintained a careful position against China and Korea by the 1870s, to take more militarily aggressive actions in Asia and impose extra taxation for the war efforts.

Questions concerning Fukuzawa's conversion have been asked repeatedly among Fukuzawa scholars, and the answers suggested, so far, would fall into three groups. First, the traditional argument comes from Maruyama Masao. He found Fukuzawa's contribution to the foundation of Japanese liberalism and suggested that Fukuzawa's turn to the right and imperialism was a mere digression and was only limited to comments on contemporary political affairs. They did not, in other words, fundamentally change his liberal principles.⁴ Second, the "conversion" argument says that Fukuzawa indeed betrayed his initial liberal cause and converted to conservatism. Third, the "irrational hypocrite" argument, led by Yasukawa Junosuke, claims that Fukuzawa never had any principles, only an irrational nationalism and racial hatred of the Chinese and Koreans. As such, he utilized Western liberal arguments to square his theory.⁵

If there is any truth in Yasukawa's somewhat harsh argument, one would need to

⁴ See Maruyama Masao, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu* [Reading An Outline of a Theory of Civilization] vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987), 326.

⁵ See Yasukawa, *Fukuzawa Yukichi no azia ninshiki*, 15-20.

focus on why Fukuzawa's irrational nationalism became pronounced only later in his career. It is true that one can already find Fukuzawa's fairly bellicose nationalist sentiment in *Encouragement*, such as "we should not hesitate to lose not only our fortunes but even our lives for the sake of [our country] (*kuni*)."⁶ His hatred of China and the Chinese people—not simply due to the Chinese people's resistance to change but Fukuzawa's racial hatred toward them—is rather obvious throughout his private letters. Still, many liberals in nineteenth century Japan were influenced by Fukuzawa's early thoughts, and they later became vocal critics of the "converted" Fukuzawa.

If the reader carefully follows Fukuzawa's shift to the right, he can draw a comparison to Hegel. Like Hegel, Fukuzawa shifted to a conservative position when he observed the limits of ideas in reality and retreated from a firm belief in progress. Many consider Napoleon's defeat in 1815 to be the point at which Hegel's outlook changed. Similarly, some understood the failure of Fukuzawa's Korean students' coup to establish a modern Korean state in 1884 to have affected Fukuzawa.⁷ Yet this is not a satisfactory explanation. Fukuzawa was already leaning toward conservatism as early as 1881, when he wrote *A Critique of the Current Affairs*. The more satisfactory answer is, I believe, that Fukuzawa's shift to the right was his existential turn, that is, his surrender to Yoshida Shōin's Japanese Spirit.

In this chapter, I will examine Fukuzawa Yukichi's later writings, such as *Transformation of People's Spirit* (1879) and *A Critique of the Current Affairs* (1881), to

⁶ Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, trans. David A. Dilworth (New York, Columbia University Press, 2012), 22. "Country" is my translation. The original translation is "homeland," which is not a correct translation of the word "*kuni*," but it makes sense in the context because Fukuzawa, here, explains how individual independence and autonomy would develop into more patriotic sentiments.

⁷ For a defense of Fukuzawa's turn to the right as being related to his involvement in the Korean liberals' coup, see Kinebuchi Nubuo, *Fukuzawa Yukichi to Chōsen* [Fukuzawa Yukichi and Korea] (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 1997) and Hirayama Yō, *Fukuzawa Yukichi no shinjitsu* [The Truth of Fukuzawa Yukichi] (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 2004).

investigate his inner surrender to the Japanese Spirit. Although Fukuzawa was always critical of the warrior mind in the Japanese Spirit, the legacy of the Japanese Spirit remained in Fukuzawa's pride in Japan as an exceptional country in Asia. Of course, the origin of such sentiments among samurais came from the belief that the lineage of the Japanese Imperial House had never been broken since the beginning of history, which Fukuzawa was never interested in and even thought was harmful. Nevertheless, Fukuzawa had developed his own version of Japanese exceptionalism by comparing Japan with China, which Fukuzawa believed was a typical, stationary "Asia" resistant to any change. This pride in Japan grew as a desire to get recognition from the "civilized" Western states, which sacrificed all other liberal ideals, thus permanently losing the initial commitment to the liberal idea of progress.

There is another serious question: If Fukuzawa surrendered to his inner desire to fulfill his existential needs, there must be a reason for the surrender as well. Fukuzawa, as I have repeatedly emphasized, was always a nationalist. The only reason he was known as a liberal more than a nationalist was his commitment to the progress of Japan, and his identification of progress as an expansion of individual liberty and the liberal rule of law. He *gradually* renounced his commitment to the liberal idea of progress, which correspondingly intensified his nationalism. In this gradual transformation, I believe, one can find the weakness of liberalism—particularly the liberalism of "free-floating intelligentsia" suggested by Karl Mannheim. Fukuzawa's "shift" to the right was actually a very nuanced and gradual process, as we already saw in *Civilization*. What he tried after writing *Civilization* was moving his perspective freely between the two "extreme" positions, revealing the ideological fallacy in each. If one does not have a clear commitment to progress itself, however, such an attempt to make "neutral" critique of the "extreme" positions would only result in allowing

the ideology of the established privileges and the status quo to crawl into the mind of the liberal, which Marcuse referred to as “repressive tolerance.”⁸

A. Fukuzawa’s Retreat From Enlightenment to Semi-militarism

1) *The Gradual Turning Point: The Transformation of People’s Spirit (Minjō isshin)*

After Fukuzawa finished *Civilization*, his Keio Gijuku, which would later become Keio University, was having financial issues, which kept Fukuzawa extremely busy doing non-academic work. Fukuzawa had to spend more time raising funds and writing newspaper articles, leaving almost no time to develop *Civilization* as he promised in its preface.⁹ To find peaceful time to concentrate on academic work, Fukuzawa had to lie to the administrative staff that he was ill, which allowed him to manage to finish a short book about a similar theme he discussed in *Civilization*—*The Transformation of People’s Spirit (Transformation hereafter)*.¹⁰

The purpose of *Transformation* was to specify the concept of progress that Fukuzawa introduced in *Civilization* and suggest its practical application to Japanese politics. Fukuzawa’s answer to how to “transform people’s spirit” was not far from the theme of *Civilization*: let people learn Western liberalism and establish a legislative body, the National Diet, to reconcile different opinions. Also, his model for the National Diet was based on English parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchism, which was certainly more progressive than the Prussian absolute monarchy that Meiji oligarchs were interested in at the time. For these reasons, many scholars of Fukuzawa considered *Transformation* as one of

⁸ Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance.”

⁹ In the preface, Fukuzawa said he was already planning to revise and develop the ideas in *Civilization*. See Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. by David A. Dilworth & G. Cameron Hurst III, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁰ See Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol.3, 327-328.

Fukuzawa's liberal works, that is, a continuation of *Civilization*. What is particularly interesting was, however, a series of ominous signs behind the seemingly liberal ideas. I will investigate those signs one by one in this section.

The first ominous sign of Fukuzawa's betrayal of progressive liberalism is found in his obsession with "gradual" progress and proceduralism. The first chapter of *Transformation* begins with Fukuzawa's introduction of "mutually opposing" ideologies: "conservatism and progressivism."¹¹ Although Fukuzawa still tries to defend what he understood as "progressivism" against the conservative attack, one cannot overlook the clear change in his tone from *Civilization*. In *Civilization*, most of Fukuzawa's arguments were focused on how and to what degree to rationally renounce old dogmas and open the eyes of people to the new world of scientific knowledge and liberal ethics. In *Transformation*, however, Fukuzawa emphasized both conservatism and progressivism have their own "harmful effects" (*heikai*), presenting his critique of the French Revolution as "replacing violence with [another kind of] violence."¹² Although this is certainly a reasonable position, it is not a good sign when such a critique of radicalism is coupled with a skeptical view of the idea of utopia itself. The following passage in *Transformation* is almost a renunciation of his own regulative ideal suggested in *Civilization*.

Also, progressivism does not mean that one should completely throw away the old and proceed with the new. ...Considering the intelligence of the contemporary era, one cannot expect to have the insight for ten thousand generations later from the beginning. One can only predict a few decades of the future ...For example, if we imagine a society which would not even be realized in ten million years, first, the

¹¹ *Zenshū* vol. 5, 13. Obviously, the "progressivism" here is not the same as the American version of the same concept. It is related to Fukuzawa's idealization of the Western Enlightenment, in broad terms, that would promote both material and ethical progress and the expansion of freedom.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15. It seems to be inspired by Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution, which was popular among the moderate conservatives in nineteenth century Japan.

division of different countries in the world would not be of any use, and establishing a government would also have no benefit. If there is neither a country nor a government, a monarch or government bureaucrats ... titles of nobility would be simply children's playing. ... [However,] the civilization of our time is still very young and immature. If it is really like children, we have no other way than treating it in a children's way...¹³

Of course, realism is important for any political movement. One can understand the argument above as Fukuzawa's relatively "mature" political consciousness compared to radical activists for the People's Rights Movement. Still, it is noticeable that Fukuzawa's description of a utopian future does not suggest any positive idea here, which is contrasted with the beautiful depiction of utopia in *Civilization*, where individuals would be able to fully cultivate their own liberty and autonomy. In *Civilization*, the utopian idea was suggested as a regulative ideal which guides the direction of progress in the present.¹⁴ In *Transformation*, however, Fukuzawa's depiction of "utopia" is only presented as a negative, which cannot be realized in any foreseeable future. Further, Fukuzawa's description of "utopia" is merely a collection of fantastical ideas of anarchism, which is obvious in "the division of different countries in the world would not be of any use, and establishing a government would also have no benefit."¹⁵ Fukuzawa perhaps learned the basic ideas of anarchism from the Russian nihilist movements, but never seriously believed such movements to be of any use and generally scoffed at them.¹⁶

Another ominous sign in Fukuzawa's *Transformation* is found in his somewhat distorted version of historical materialism. In *Transformation*, Fukuzawa tries to uphold instrumental rationality more radically as the main motor of progress. Scientific innovation

¹³ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3, Section A.

¹⁵ *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 17-18.

¹⁶ For Fukuzawa's understanding of social movements in nineteenth century Russia, including socialists and nihilistic anarchists, see *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 37-39.

and its practical application in revolutionary technologies, such as the steam engine, were almost equated with the progress itself. He emphasized the role of technological advancement in the West almost to the degree of a crude form of historical materialism.

Since a long time ago, inventions of technologies have been not a few. ...although their practical benefits are also not little, there are things that directly influenced the whole society as their practical benefits spread; they changed not only people's fortune and misfortune on their body but also people's state of intellect and virtue – they are steam-powered ship, telegraph communication, and printing press.¹⁷

Unlike the conservatives who wanted to adopt Western technology simply as an instrument to keep the traditional ethics of Japan, Fukuzawa's attention to technology deals with a more profound question. For him, "practical benefits" from technology seem to be less important compared to the revolutionary effect on people's political consciousness. All three technologies that Fukuzawa pointed out—the steam engine, telegraph, and printing press—accelerated the spread of knowledge and the growth of political movements, for they changed "people's state of intellect and virtue." At this point, it is not necessarily far from Marx's insightful outlook on technological transformation under capitalism.¹⁸

There is, however, something strangely narcissistic in the argument that follows Fukuzawa's insight about the role of technology.

...People say the Westerner's visit in the Ka'ei period¹⁹ was a great social upheaval and were extremely surprised, but I was not simply surprised because of their arrival. If those so-called Westerners had come before they invented the steam power and telegraph, there would have been nothing to worry about signing a treaty with them.

¹⁷ *Zenshū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 24-25.

¹⁸ Marx summarized the dynamic role of technology under capitalism as: "Technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations. Even a history of religion that is written in abstraction from this material basis is uncritical. It is, in reality, much easier to discover by analysis the earthly kernel of the misty creations of religion than to do the opposite, i.e., to develop from the actual, given relations of life the forms in which these have been apotheosized. The latter method is the only materialist, and therefore the only scientific one." Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. I, A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 493-494.

¹⁹ Ka'ei period is from February 1848 to November 1854. Commodore Perry's "black ships" forced the Shogunate to open Japan's ports in 1854.

...If they were the Westerners in the old days, we would not have to fear anything because we could simply [turn them away] as we did in the old days. But why were we [forced] to open our ports to Americans ... and let them trade with us? In my view, it was not the work of Americans but the work of the steam engine.²⁰

In a nutshell, what made the West formidable to Japan was supposedly their technology, not the Western people themselves. The problem here is that Fukuzawa gradually retreats from his previous emphasis on the *spirit* of the West—the idea of individual liberty and autonomy. In other words, the argument above implies that Japan would develop as fast as the West once she could adopt the key technologies, such as the steam engine and the printing press, which would naturally transform the minds of the people. Not only is this too optimistic, it also fundamentally flips the main argument of *Encouragement*, which was written to spread rational bourgeois ethics before a material foundation in place.

To be fair to Fukuzawa, there was a good reason why he rescinded his earlier admiration of the spirit of the Western people. By this time, Fukuzawa paid particular attention to the political institution, believing that there was little difference between the spirit of the ignorant masses in any country. Different outcomes would, however, follow if the masses were governed by different political institutions. The following quote from Fukuzawa's memos is from 1877, two years before the publication of *Transformation*, and shows his changing attitude toward the masses in the West.

The mind of the Japanese people is still on the level of trusting the compassion of the king, the wise talent of the ministers or generals, teachers, bosses, husbands, and parents. The mind of the Western people, which is one step ahead [of the Japanese], is on the level of trusting politics, laws, treaties, and reforms, that is, the 'state machinery.' There is a difference of one step ahead or behind, but there is no big difference between them in a sense that both of them show the case of credulity.²¹

Again, Fukuzawa was smart enough to catch the importance of the trust in the artificial political system, which is "one step ahead" of the trust in the pre-political foundation of the

²⁰ Ibid., 29.

²¹ *Zenshū*, vol. 7, 662.

Confucian ideology that encourages obedience. The emphasis was, however, obviously made on his belief that “there is no big difference” in the “credulity” between the Western and Japanese people. It also does not seem to have anything to do with the critique of the masses’ trust in the ideological state apparatus of the capitalist state. Credulity, which Fukuzawa had criticized as a spiritual enemy of enlightenment, now became a reality that elites should accept and deal with. What Fukuzawa apparently wanted was to establish the modern political institution to better manipulate the credulity of the masses, which is not necessarily compatible with his previous conviction in liberalism. His critique of the “credulity” in *Civilization* was transformed into the clever opportunity to manipulate people for the sake of purposes I will soon elaborate in the discussion of *A Critique of Current Affairs*. Before that, however, Fukuzawa’s gradual reactionary turn, which is seen in his gradually appearing contempt for the masses, becomes even more obvious and problematic in his observation of the growing socialist movement in the West.

Fukuzawa’s warning against socialism was coupled with his skeptical view on education, which would be regarded as typical in any bourgeois thinker. In the preface of *Transformation*, Fukuzawa quotes Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s reactionary statement against the education of the masses, which would cause a growth of Chartism and socialism among the poor. Along with Wakefield’s argument, Fukuzawa warned of the threat of socialism in the future Japan, which would “change the electoral laws [by universal franchise] to include the poor in politics and infringe the right of the rich.” The bourgeois reaction against the rise of a politically conscious working class is natural for their class interest, so Fukuzawa’s interest in Wakefield’s concern should not come as a surprise.²²

²² *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 8-9. The part Fukuzawa quotes from Wakefield is the following: “It is the fashion to praise this so-called education, and to insist that all sorts of good will grow out of it. I hope so—I think so—but I must

The problem arises, however, in Fukuzawa's political understanding of the rise of socialism in the West. The most repeated expression in *Transformation* is that the West now "falls in trouble (*rōbai*)."²³ First of all, Fukuzawa emphasized that revolutionary technology, such as the steam engine, was quite new to the Western people themselves and explained how it created unexpected social disturbances.

The steam engine and the telegraph ... do not especially belong to the Western people. ... Even though they invented it themselves, they are surprised by the immense power of [the technology] and fall in trouble. ... About fifty years have passed since the invention of [the technology,] but it has been only two to three decades since it was applied to real life. Nowadays, [the technology] was shared by many in the world. ... Those who utilize it well dominate others, and those who do not are dominated by others. ... What then made [the West] fall in trouble? It is the change in the spirit of people. ... In England, ... one can see such a change in the spirit of people in so-called "strikes." It has become more and more frequent to see that the mobs of laborers break away from their work and unite with their coworkers to increase their wages. ... the Western Empires fall in trouble and lost their ways.²³

Maruyama Masao, who maintained positive views on almost every aspect of Fukuzawa, praised this theme in *Transformation* as "pioneering," as Fukuzawa observed the pathological elements latent in modern technology.²⁴ Although it is not necessarily a misinterpretation, I think Maruyama failed to notice the dangerous road that Fukuzawa was taking here. Fukuzawa's obsession with technology and the West's "falling in trouble" was deeply connected to his conservative turn. If combined with a preoccupation with gradual reform rather than any radical possibility, the West's "falling in trouble" would give a Japanese elite a good reason to believe that the government should repress distracting social movements in order to let Japan progress quickly without experiencing the same trouble as the West. If the acquisition of technology makes one "dominate others" and the lack of

be allowed to add that the good has hardly yet begun to grow. Thus far, the education of the common people has not improved their lot; it has only made them discontented with it. The present fruits of popular education in this country are chartism and socialism." Edward Gibbon Wakefield (ed) *A View of the Art of Colonization* (London: John W. Parker, West Strand, 1849), 67.

²³ *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 8-10.

²⁴ Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairiyaku wo yomu*, vol. 3, 324-326.

technology allows a group to be “dominated by others,” and the “change in the spirit of people” caused by technology can make a civilization “lose their ways,” as Fukuzawa suggests, then the logical conclusion for Japanese elites would be to embrace Sakuma Shōzan’s conservative argument: learn technology—while keeping a certain spiritual “core”—to prevent social turmoil. Although Fukuzawa’s plan was certainly more liberal than Sakuma’s, Fukuzawa almost took the same road only a few years after he finished *Transformation*, which will be discussed in due course.

To sum up, the fact that the West “lost their ways” due to the very technology they created was, on the other hand, an opportunity for Japan. The spirit of individual independence became a secondary issue. Japan should, thus, fully adopt Western technologies while they were disarrayed with the challenge of socialism, and, at the same time, Japan would learn from their mistakes and prevent any social disturbances before they emerged. For some, this still may not look very far from a typical bourgeois nationalist position. But his previous commitment to individual rights and universal progress was no longer visible, which resulted in a devastating turn in *A Critique of Current Affairs*.

2) *Support for Imperialist Expansion: A Critique of Current Affairs (jiji shōgen)*.

A few years before Fukuzawa published *Transformation* (1879), the Meiji oligarchs were faced with an unprecedented challenge: the demand of establishing a legislative body, that is, the National Diet. Based on the ideas of liberals, such as Fukuzawa, the samurais stripped of their feudal privileges submitted “A Proposal to Establish a Representative Assembly (*minsan giyin setsuritsu kenpaku sho*)” to the Royal Court in 1874. They started to organize any alienated class for their political interests, which gave the movement genuinely, although

limited, liberal elements. This was the background of the famous “Freedom and People’s Rights” (*jiyū minken*) movement. Although the movement originally represented the interests of bellicose samurais who wanted to invade Korea in 1873, it also attracted a wide range of radical intellectuals, including republicans and anarchists. As the Meiji government managed to suppress the final reactionary uprising from the feudal samurai rebellion in 1877 (Satsuma Rebellion or *seinan sensō*), many samurais who were sympathetic to the cause of the rebellion pursued more democratic means. The Meiji oligarchs also sought to establish a modern legislative body to mitigate violent resistance against the government, which led to the further discussion of the very first National Diet in Japan.

Fukuzawa, originally considered as a champion of People’s Rights, gradually became aloof from the movement and, instead, increasingly preoccupied with centrist politics. Previously in the first chapter of *Civilization*, Fukuzawa warned of the “two opposite extremes of the argument.” As Maruyama Masao correctly pointed out, however, it was an admonition against mischaracterizing the opponent’s idea by presuming the extreme case or consequence from it, interpreting every argument of opponents as a slippery slope, which would end up committing a straw man fallacy.²⁵

Often, when people discuss the pros and cons of a thing, they start by bringing up the two opposite extremes of the argument; both parties are at odds right from the very beginning and are unable to draw closer from that point on. Let me give an example. Nowadays if a person mentions the new theory of equal popular rights, someone of the old school immediately sees it as an argument for a democratic form of government. He asks what will become of Japan’s national polity if Japan were now to become a democratic government, expresses fears about the immeasurable harm that will ensue, seems so upset you would think he envisions the country’s immediate plunge into political anarchy. From the beginning of the discussion he imagines some far-off future and vehemently opposes the other’s argument, without ever investigating what equal rights means or asking what it is all about.²⁶

²⁵ Maruyama. *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 1, 75-78.

²⁶ Fukuzawa, *Civilization*, 10.

After the increasing radicalization of the People's Rights Movement, however, Fukuzawa seemed to commit the same fallacy that he himself warned against in the above passage. Rather than considerately understanding the demand of the masses without any presumption, he openly characterized the People's Rights activists as utopian anarchists to justify his centrist position. As shown earlier, Fukuzawa had already used this slippery-slope argument in *Transformation* when he dismissed a utopian idea of the "progressivist." This disingenuous strategy intensified in *A Critique of Current Affairs* (*Critique* hereafter) in 1881. The purpose of Fukuzawa's deliberate mischaracterization of the progressive activists was simple; it justified his concern with the "national rights"²⁷ of Japan, which he believed would be more endangered if the People's Rights activists went too far. Considering the constant imperialist threats that Japan had to endure at the time, Fukuzawa's concern was not unfounded. By prioritizing national rights over individual rights, however, Fukuzawa had to risk the renunciation of any realistic possibility of progress, which he had identified as the individual liberation toward full autonomy only a few years before. Further, such renunciations ended up using instrumental rationality only for the sake of national rights of Japan, which came dangerously close to fascism.

The first dangerous turn in *Critique* is, as briefly explained above, to renounce the idea of progress in favor of realpolitik. From the very beginning of the first chapter of *Critique*, Fukuzawa declared his renunciation of People's rights in favor of the Machiavellian realist principle.

²⁷ It does not seem that the idea of "National Rights" (*kokken*) was as fashionable before the "People's Rights" (*minken*) movement became very popular among young samurais. I guess the very expression "National Rights" was a reactionary response to the egalitarianism of People's Rights. What is meant by National Rights broadly involved modern idea of national sovereignty and national interests. For more information about Fukuzawa's understanding of National Rights, see Fukuzawa, "Tsūzoku kokken ron" [On a Popular Discourse of National Rights] in *Zenshū*, vol. 4, 599-673.

The theory of Freedom and People's Rights embedded in nature is the Way of Rightness, while the theory of the National Rights as an artificial creation of men is the Way of Power. ... After all, so-called states or governments in human society are nothing but old habits of laws; to uphold People's Rights given by nature, we should abolish the governments and equally distribute people's wealth. ... [However,] from its origin, the discussion of Rightness is based on an imagination that this world in our time is absolutely pure and perfect. ... The great cause of international treaties must be in promoting friendship between two countries... [but] do countries keep the promises in treaties because they do not want to violate moral principles? ... Did Napoleon invade other countries by keeping the treaties based on moral principles? How about Frederick the Great? ... This is what I meant earlier by "the theory of the National Right is the Way of Power": I am a man who follows the Way of Power.²⁸

It is noticeable that Fukuzawa understood the defense of individual rights in domestic politics as almost incompatible with keeping the realist policies in international politics. It ironically proves that the radical wing of the Japanese liberals at the time was somehow under the influence of growing internationalism in the late nineteenth century, which, unfortunately, Fukuzawa rejected as harmful to Japan. Just like in *Transformation*, but with more intensity, Fukuzawa relentlessly destroyed the progressive activists' commitment to People's Rights as a naïve idealism which imagined the world as ruled by "absolutely pure and perfect" moral principles.

Fukuzawa's turn to realist politics had multi-faceted problems. Of course, Fukuzawa kept thinking of himself as a centrist because of the powerful presence of the reactionaries who worship the Japanese Spirit and the Emperor, which Fukuzawa opposed as too conservative. On the other hand, he considered himself as bridging the gap between People's Rights and the Meiji oligarchs by leading both of them to their shared patriotism. Abandoning the commitment to liberal progress and upholding the National Rights of Japan, however, his theory became dominated too much by the concerns about stability and centrism, which rejected any positive idea from social movement. On the other hand, his

²⁸ *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 103-109. "The Way of Power" (*kendo*) can be defined as a seemingly unrighteous means to achieve a righteous goal in politics.

realist-centrist politics became a convenient tool for the realization of his desire for the recognition of Japan as an equally great nation of the Western empires. I will discuss that issue more specifically in the following section.

Fukuzawa's strategy to minimize domestic disturbance begins with his discussion of the establishment of the National Diet in Japan. Even the establishment of a legislative institution, however, is no more than a tool for his increasingly conservative political ends.

Fukuzawa provocatively declares "*nai an gai kyō*" (internal peace and external competition) as the four characters representing "the only principle."²⁹ He then proceeds to explain the specific meaning of the first two characters, "*nai an*," internal peace. As discussed earlier, Fukuzawa was worried about the rising socialism in Europe as a future turmoil that Japan should resist. At the same time, he believed that it was also a great opportunity to catch up with the West, that is, if and only if Japan could prevent the rise of socialism. The establishment of a legislative body, to Fukuzawa, was deemed a tool to silence radicalism and unify a national will.

Fukuzawa's understanding of the legislative power is, nonetheless, reasonable. First, Fukuzawa castigates People's Rights activists as "[falsely] believing that the reduced amount of the government power would be given to people" and "abusing" the People's Rights, which is a fair point.³⁰ He then goes on to lecture the activists about the real function of the National Diet, which he explains in English words as "constitutional or governmental organization," which is different from "administration."³¹ On the other hand, expressing skepticism about politicians' good will, Fukuzawa believed that politicians' pursuit of power

²⁹ Ibid., 118.

³⁰ Ibid., 120-121.

³¹ Ibid., 121.

and fortune is like a drunkard's love of alcohol, which cannot be prevented by morality or law. He thus argued that "rather than complaining about [immoral politicians,] we have to firmly establish laws about the way of governing, open the opportunity for government positions to everyone, and firmly promulgate the procedures of their appointment and retirement."³² This position can be relatable to many modern liberals who do not believe in utopian visions but are only concerned with democratic procedures.

So far, so good. Yet something seems not quite right in the argument above. Fukuzawa keeps positioning himself as a centrist and proceduralist rather than concerning himself with any specific political content. If such a centrist position merges with a preoccupation with national interests and social stability, it would necessarily deny any liberating possibility in politics and ultimately protect the established privileges and status quo. What Fukuzawa ends up doing here is thus nothing more than what Marcuse warned against as "repressive tolerance."³³ Fukuzawa wants to "open the opportunity for government positions to everyone" but firmly opposes any radical imagination of the People's Rights activists. It only expands the political space of the right-wing if the centrist's ultimate concern is social stability. Fukuzawa presented a copy of *Critique* to key members of the Meiji oligarchy, who seemed to be genuinely interested in his arguments.³⁴ As such, the far-right samurais who were still willing to die for the Japanese Spirit gradually became an important part of the Imperial Japanese Army, which committed most of the abhorrent war crimes decades later.

Fukuzawa emphasized the difference between "constitutional organization" and "administration" to disillusion People's Rights activists who hoped to directly participate in

³² Ibid., 130.

³³ Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance."

³⁴ Yasukawa, 297.

the decision making in the Meiji government. Of course, it is fair to say that administration is not the main concern of the legislative body, and Fukuzawa was right that many samurais were completely ignorant about how legislative organs would function. The separation of legislation and administration, however, does not mean that the legislative body should not bother with any business of the administration. The very purpose of establishing a lawmaking body separate from the execution of laws is, at least for a liberal theorist, to check and balance the administrative power to protect the minority. Of course, checks and balances should not be equated with constant interference, but Fukuzawa's position in *Critique* is certainly a far cry from his previous defense of "Diversity of Ideas Contending Each Other" (*tajisōron*) as a motor of progress. At least in *Critique*, establishing the National Diet means no more than "eliminating the cause of grievance to maintain social peace."³⁵

Finally, in the fourth chapter of *Critique*, Fukuzawa reveals the specific ends of his centrist politics and defense of social stability—the external expansion of the Empire of Japan, which reflects Fukuzawa's desire for the recognition of Japan's "greatness." His argument begins with the typical concern about the military, which Fukuzawa now prioritizes than any project of enlightenment and progress. First, he repeats that his "purpose is only in the [expansion of our National Rights.]" Criticizing idealists' reliance on human affection (*jō*), Fukuzawa declares that "the antonym of human affection is force. The fundamental principle of international relations is predetermined as the military force." He also flipped his own anti-militarist argument in *Civilization* by saying that military power is more urgent than any other project of modernization.³⁶

³⁵ *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 127.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 167-169.

In 1875, Fukuzawa explicitly said that education and economic development are far more important than military strength in *Civilization*. In the same year, he repeated the same point against the action-oriented samurais' instigation to wage war against Korea in his famous newspaper article "Peace or war with the countries in Asia has nothing to do with our honor or humiliation (*Ajia shokoku to no wasen wa waga eijoku ni kansuru naki no setsu*)."³⁷ One might wonder how such a drastic turn was possible. His argument against militarists in *Civilization* and "Peace or War..." was far from any idealist argument. What he maintained was that one should see what would really create concrete benefits for Japan, even in the short run, and that was, Fukuzawa argued, the enlightenment and economic prosperity. Only six years later, he completely takes these words back in *Critique*, advocating expansion of the military and aggressive military policies. He even underestimates the destructive effect of modern warfare for, so the theory goes, the damage from wars is relatively easier to recover from than natural disasters, which would now sound terrifying to anyone who remembers Hiroshima and Nagasaki.³⁸

The question is, however, what led to this abrupt turn in Fukuzawa's thought about military aggression. The following passage shows what was behind all themes, perhaps, since the beginning of Fukuzawa's intellectual career.

...for this moment the most important matter for our country is, first, letting the people in the world that there is a country called "Japan" in the corner of Asia. Knowing this is like knowing that England is in the corner of Europe. ... if they [know] this, they would finally evaluate whether [Japan] is rich or poor, strong or weak, and literate or illiterate. How many [Westerners] mind the current state of Japan? ... Some people even firmly believe that Japan is a part of China. We have to know the current reputation of our country. The reason for the current humiliation is

³⁷ Ibid., vol 20. 145-151.

³⁸ Ibid., vol. 5, 177-178. What Fukuzawa says in this preposterous argument is that war is a disaster created by human beings while natural disasters are nature's doing. If it is created by humans, it is logically easier to recover by human efforts, according to Fukuzawa. He then enumerated how many times Japan quickly recovered from disastrous wars in history. Of course, such a view was relatively common among imperialists and conservatives at the time because they were yet to experience the World Wars.

more than one... [but] the most convenient solution is to send our ships all over the world. Let our merchant ships visit all ports in the world for trading and our warships patrol all seas in the world to protect our trade ... a lot of foreigners will have opportunities to see the things of our country... Sending our ships is not simply for making the [Westerners] see our things but also letting our people see this important achievement by newspapers. For example, at the time of war between Russia and Turkey last year, the Japanese warship should have been sent to inspect the situation. The same is true for the conflict between Russia and China, not to mention Okinawa,³⁹ and even Korea. We should never stop waving our national flag on the coasts of China and Korea.⁴⁰

All of a sudden, the writing style changed into a political pamphlet rather than a rational analysis or “critique of current affairs.” Even when he suggested the priority of the military force in the national agenda, Fukuzawa relied on rational arguments that compared pros and cons in expanding the military budget. By contrast, in the passage above, Fukuzawa bursts out his emotions about national humiliation. In these explosive sentences, I suspect, Fukuzawa revealed his deep-seated concern that he had maintained for a long time but had not previously clearly manifested. It is nothing more than the West’s refusal to recognize Japan’s greatness as a civilized and also a warrior state. In short, he gave in to Yoshida Shōin’s action-oriented Japanese Spirit, which had been ingrained in the minds of samurais all over Japan. It never clearly manifested before, because of Fukuzawa’s previous commitment to progress, which he identified with the liberation of individual autonomy within liberal institutions. As he gradually retreated to his own version of centrism and renounced his regulative ideal, nothing could stop him from revealing his existential struggle. Fukuzawa then finally released his ambition, which is scarily similar to the totalitarian slogan in the Pacific War, that is, Japan should invade Asia to “protect,” liberate, and “civilize” them.

Other than Japan, which country can become the center of civilization and the

³⁹ Written as Ryūkyū in the original text. Okinawa is the largest island among the Ryukyu islands.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 179-181.

exemplar of other [Asian] nations to fight the West? We have to be determined that Japan is responsible for protecting the East. ... Think about a person who is planning to prevent a fire. Even if his house is built with stones, if neighbors' are wooden houses, he should not be at ease. ... When things become too urgent, it is possible that he would not hesitate to seize the [neighbors'] houses and reconstruct them... Now, the current situation that the Western powers put pressure on Asia is not different from the case where fire is all over the place.⁴¹

Fukuzawa's claim above is, to be fair, more understandable than the real arch-reactionary claim in the 1930s, which described the Pacific War as Japan's holy struggle to maintain its pure identity and "overcome modernity" (*kindai no chōkoku*). The real setback here is, however, that Fukuzawa retreats from basic rational principles—even instrumental rationality. As discussed earlier, Fukuzawa persuasively argued against the Expedition against Korea (*seikanron*) in 1875, which was popular among samurais full of action-oriented Japanese Spirit. Fukuzawa made it clear then that there would be no rational interests that would be gained in such an expedition and any military action would be harmful for the economy because the country was already suffering huge foreign debts from unequal treaties with Western nations.⁴² The situation was not better in 1881, which explains why even Itō Hirobumi, a moderate conservative politician and the first prime minister of the Meiji Japan, opposed such aggression. Although Japan later successfully led a series of aggressive wars in the region, Japan's expansionism was never profitable.⁴³

Once renouncing the idea of progress in favor of realist politics, there is no reason for a nationalist like Fukuzawa to support any kind of universalism or cosmopolitanism. For the first principle of "nurturing the vigor of people," Fukuzawa urged the Japanese people to

⁴¹ Ibid., 186-187.

⁴² Ibid., Vol. 20, 145-151.

⁴³ Ishibashi Tanzan, a renowned journalist active from the 1920s, who also became a prime minister of post-war Japan, made a decisive critique of Japan's reckless expansionism based on his reading of John Hobson's *Imperialism*. According to Ishibashi, Japan's imperial expansion was not only unprofitable by itself but also raised extra costs for national defense that otherwise would not exist. See de Bary, Gluck, and Tiedemann, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 182-185.

“stop the rampant spread of foreign religions.” Interestingly enough, he warns of the danger in the spread of Christianity in Japan *because* it is cosmopolitan, which “assumed the world as a family,” ignoring the national interests of Japan. To Fukuzawa, the idea of universal solidarity among many Japanese Christians is no better than the past Japanese Confucianists’ infatuation with China, which “made them forget the rights of [Japan].” Fukuzawa thus concluded that “Christianity and the theory of National Rights are mutually incompatible.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, the danger posed by Christianity was described in more existential terms, which gets very close to the arch-reactionary’s preoccupation with protecting the pure Japanese Spirit. According to Fukuzawa, as Confucianism did in the past, Christianity would make the West “the master of spirit (*seishin*),” rather than “the master of form (visible things, *keitai*).” Having a foreign master of visible technologies does not pose a danger because it would not change the hearts of people. By contrast, if people revere the West as the master of their spirit and learn their philosophy as a way to transform one’s soul, “[Japanese people] would feel uncomfortable at heart when they fight them as enemies.”⁴⁵

To be fair to Fukuzawa, attacking Christianity was certainly not limited to reactionary thinkers in East Asia. Many East Asian anarchists and socialists openly suspected that Christianity was only the instrumental puppet of imperialists. Kōtoku Shūsui, one of the greatest socialist anarchists in Meiji Japan, wrote an infamous pamphlet titled “On the Obliteration of Christ (*kirisuto massatsu ron*),” believing that the mystical element in Christianity was not different from the mysticism in the Emperor worship in Japan. Fukuzawa’s critique of Christianity, however, was rather for supporting Japan’s own imperialism than attacking Western imperialism. As Yasukawa found from Fukuzawa’s

⁴⁴ *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 209-214.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 214. For “transforming one’s soul,” Fukuzawa uses a Buddhist term, “*an shin ritsu mei*,” literally “calming the body and erect the destiny,” which is close to the state of nirvana.

contemporary Christian critique, Fukuzawa was increasingly regarded as someone who would “plot to make [Japan] a rogue state.” No matter what Christianity’s contribution to imperialism, many Japanese Christians admonished the Meiji government to cooperate with Korea and China, which Fukuzawa believed was naïve and idealistic. By abandoning the idea of progress, Fukuzawa ended up dismissing even the small possibility of cosmopolitan solidarity that was present in his previous writings.⁴⁶

In 1882, Fukuzawa’s passionate support of Japan’s militarization was accelerated by his founding of *Current Affairs News* (jiji shinpō), a newspaper run by Fukuzawa and his students at Keio Gijuku. Again, Fukuzawa emphasized the basic tenet of the newspaper as promoting “perfectly neutral opinions.” Apparently, he believed himself to be the most suitable person to have “perfectly neutral opinions” because he had no political ambition or any specific political ties to the government, which is somewhat debatable.⁴⁷ These so-called “perfectly neutral opinions” produced by Fukuzawa’s newspaper denigrated anyone who supported cosmopolitan solidarity for years to come, widely remembered as one of the most warmongering newspapers at the time of First Sino-Japanese War in 1894.

3) *Embracing the Emperor Worship: On the Imperial House (teishitsu ron)*

Fukuzawa’s theory of the Japanese Imperial House was, according to Maruyama Masao, based on the second chapter of Walter Bagehot’s *The English Constitution*.⁴⁸ In 1882,

⁴⁶ Yasukawa, 296.

⁴⁷ Fukuzawa, *Autobiography*, 321-323.

⁴⁸ Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, 320-321. Also for Bagehot’s original text, see Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 38-72. Walter Bagehot, now unfortunately almost a forgotten bourgeois thinker of the Victorian era, was recognized as “a man with sympathy to share, and genius to judge, its sentiments and movements: a man not too illustrious or too consummate to be companionable, but one, nevertheless, whose ideas took root and are still bearing; whose influence, passing from one fit mind to another, could transmit, and can still impart, the most precious element in Victorian civilization, its robust and masculine sanity.” See Frank Prochaska, *The Memoirs of Walter Bagehot* (New

Fukuzawa continued his commitment to centrism and “neutral opinions” in *On the Imperial House*, explaining to the Japanese people about the role of the Emperor in a modern state. As Bagehot’s argument does not represent the true reactionary royalists’ beliefs, Fukuzawa’s defense of the Emperor system does not reflect the Japanese samurais’ prevalent belief that the Emperor is the pure essence of Japan and should be revered as a god. The central point of *On the Imperial House* is that the Emperor should be revered only as a symbolic leader of the country, who would reconcile polarizing political factions into harmony.

In the political condition of Meiji Japan, however, Fukuzawa’s “neutral” understanding of the Emperor leaves several uncomfortable legacies. First, obsessed with having to be neutral, Fukuzawa seems to retreat from his previous belief that modern politics should be built on artificially created institutions rather than a pre-political foundation, such as the “pure” Japanese Spirit. Admittedly, his defense of the legitimacy of the Emperor system is certainly more liberal than the reactionary samurais who are willing to die for the “direct rule” (*shinsei*) of the Emperor. Fukuzawa wanted the Emperor to remain aloof from the concrete administrative work of the government or political struggles, which he believed was a better way to keep the Emperor’s sacredness. Fukuzawa’s metaphor of “family” is problematic, though, as it describes the Emperor as the patriarchal head of Japan. It essentially reduces Japan, which should be deemed a modern state, to the premodern community of blood ties. This metaphor reflects Fukuzawa’s new conviction that Japan needs to preserve an element of its premodern legacy as its political foundation to prevent the Meiji government from falling apart.⁴⁹

Continuing the dualism of “spirit” and “visible things” that he developed in *Critique*,

Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), vii. His argument about the monarchy in *The English Constitution* was still considered one of the most authoritative justifications of the constitutional monarchy.

⁴⁹ *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 263.

Fukuzawa ultimately endorses a bizarre notion that modern contractual relationships also need a spiritual element and human affection. Fukuzawa's conviction concerning the importance of the pre-political foundation of society is clear in the following quote.

When employing a servant of the house, it is not enough to just determine work hours and wages ...only when there is more or less affectionate relationship between the master and the servant, the servant can be ready to begin working. In other words, this belongs to a part of spiritual elements. Determining work hours and wages is only a part of visible things, so it is not enough to govern people. Therefore, politics only controls the visible things of the society; it is not yet enough to win the heart of the masses in the society.⁵⁰

Although it might be a practical solution to stabilize a radically changing society, this strategy cannot avoid the fundamental contradiction in “Japanese Spirit, Western Practice,” which Fukuzawa courageously criticized only a few years earlier. Fukuzawa now makes the “pure” spirit of the Emperor worshippers to infiltrate the heart of modern Japan under the banner of the Emperor. Moreover, he did it consciously, based on his obsession with centrism and neutrality, in the expectation of unifying People's Rights activists and Emperor worshippers. Without clear rational criteria for judging such a “spirit” of people, that is, accepting *Volkgeist* as a normative end by itself, the strategy to unify the masses based on a pre-political “spirit” cannot avoid creating an exclusive ethnic nationalism, which easily includes xenophobia and racism. Although emotional bonds are equally important in modern society, one should shed the tribal ties to build a modern society based on contractual relationships. Revering the Emperor as a patriarchal head of the family-state does not do that. Fukuzawa's attempt to make the Emperor the spiritual core of the people was, therefore, essentially building a *Gesellschaft* on the basis of *Gemeinschaft*, which provides the fundamental contradiction of modern Japan. It is obviously difficult to expect the growth of autonomous individuals that Fukuzawa hoped to create before in a state defined as a “family.”

⁵⁰ Ibid., 264.

Such a family-state is even more problematic if its tradition has demanded unconditional filial piety to the patriarchy for centuries, which was precisely the reality of Japan at the time.

Fukuzawa's attempt to build a foundation of modern Japan on the pre-political element of the Emperor system has a devastating effect on his discussion of Emperor's role in the military. Being learned in Western political theories, Fukuzawa correctly grasps the inherent difficulty in the civilian control of the military in a society with a strong premodern legacy. Fukuzawa knew the destructive conflict of the Satsuma Rebellion was partially caused by feudal-minded samurais' obsession with their honor of remaining loyal to their direct superior. He is thus able to say that "to win the heart of the soldiers and control their activities, it is necessary to rely on the Imperial House"⁵¹ so that the military is kept unified under the authority of the Emperor. This, however, is nothing but a temporary remedy. Unifying the feudal-minded samurais under the Emperor might keep them peaceful within the boundaries of Japan as a territorial state, but it cannot stop the totalitarian impulse that would make the soldiers justify any brutal thing in the name of the Emperor. It is no accident that Japanese anarchism became a radical pacifist movement that, ironically, aimed at assassinating the Emperor; it was a resistance against the innocent deaths of civilians and soldiers sent to foreign soils for the glory of the Emperor. The anarchists were more or less correct—the real culprit of the unending military aggression by the Empire of Japan was no one but the Emperor.⁵²

Furthermore, trying to defend the Emperor's symbolic authority in politics and military matters, Fukuzawa identified the role of the Emperor as Christianity of Japan, or at least a civic religion in a Tocquevillian sense. By mentioning the customs of the religious

⁵¹ Ibid., 268.

⁵² For more information about the early anarchism in Japan and the High Treason Incident related to them, see F. G. Notehelfer, *Kōtoku Shūsui: Portrait of a Japanese Radical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

ceremony before the sessions of the English Parliament and the American practice of appointing only Christian military officers,⁵³ Fukuzawa emphasizes that a civic religion is necessary for a modern state. No matter how many practical benefits Japan can get from this, Fukuzawa is here clearly contradicting the past himself, who ardently supported the separation of religion and politics in *Civilization*. The only “modern” element here is that Fukuzawa refuses to let the Emperor himself be directly involved in the concrete business of politics.

Fukuzawa wanted to establish Emperor worship as a civic religion that had its own realm outside of politics to keep both People’s Rights activists and conservatives together for the betterment of Japan. This “betterment,” however, involved the realization of his existential desire to make the name of Japan shine on an international stage dominated by Western powers. This position necessarily supported Japan’s aggressive military campaigns, which also necessarily created the pacifists who opposed such meaningless wars. There was, then, no way to stop these pacifists from turning against the Emperor, because, after all, the Emperor was the symbol of the glory of Japan that should be realized by the military. In this case, the only remaining option to keep the Japanese people together would be labeling the pacifists enemies of the Emperor and, consequently, enemies of Japan. The legacy of Fukuzawa’s short-sighted centrism is still visible among Japanese conservatives today, who openly denounce those who sympathize with the victims of Japan’s war crimes as “anti-Japanese.”

⁵³ *Zenshū*, vol. 5, 68-70. I have yet to find the concrete evidence of the practice of appointing only Christian military officers. Although the United States was clearly founded on the anti-Catholic sentiment and Protestant base, there were certainly Jewish soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Maybe Fukuzawa was talking only about the rank of generals or their equivalent.

B. The Political Influence of Fukuzawa's Existential Turn

As Fukuzawa's liberalism lost to his deep-seated existential desire for the recognition of Japan as a great nation, many had begun to consider him "converted" to the right. Although there is no clear agreement between scholars about whether he really converted, Fukuzawa's contemporary liberals believed that he betrayed their cause.⁵⁴ Regardless of whether there was a true "conversion" in his theory, his political allegiance in the context of Meiji Japan clearly shifted. One would miss the greater implication in Fukuzawa's thoughts if the intricate connection between Fukuzawa's theory and practice is disregarded. It is thus impossible to see the full dynamic of Fukuzawa's thoughts if his political shift is not seriously considered. Neither Maruyama's belief that Fukuzawa never betrayed liberalism nor Yasukawa's cynicism that the only consistent thing in Fukuzawa was irrational nationalism reveals the complete story of this extraordinary Japanese liberal.

The most important reason for Fukuzawa's "conversion" to the right lies in the nature of the free-floating liberalism, à la Mannheim, without any class base. The most common defense of Fukuzawa's turn to the right is that it was only "situational thinking" (*jōkyōteki shikō*),⁵⁵ which does not fundamentally affect his conviction in liberalism. Rather, Fukuzawa's turn from universal natural rights to *raison d'état* can be interpreted as "a product of strong consciousness of self-autonomy."⁵⁶ According to this interpretation,

⁵⁴ One of the liberal newspapers, *Fusō Shinshi*, criticized that "Mr. Fukuzawa is no longer himself in the old days. ... Around the time when he joined the Meiji Six Society (a pro-enlightenment academic society mentioned in the Chapter II), there was worthy elements in his spirit and intellects ... But now about Korea ... he is overtly spreading preposterous arguments." Quoted in Yasukawa, 296.

⁵⁵ Originally, this expression was used by Yasukawa, who criticized Fukuzawa's opportunistic thinking. Maruyama, by contrast, defends Fukuzawa's situational thinking as his deliberate method to approach political theories in relations to actual practices, which Maruyama called "a theory of current affairs (*jijiron*). See Yasukawa 21-25. Also, see Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, vol. 3, 313-315.

⁵⁶ Maruyama Masao, *Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku—hoka roppen*, 83.

Fukuzawa consciously made an autonomous decision that was politically realistic without being swept up by the trends of the time. It was “a corollary of Fukuzawa’s respect of man’s autonomous activeness, which refuses to see any value predetermined and endlessly relativizes it. Without a strong autonomous spirit, this cannot be done.”⁵⁷

It might be possible to defend Fukuzawa *as a person* using Maruyama’s argument above, but it ultimately fails to defend liberalism itself. Influenced by Karl Mannheim, Maruyama admired what he interpreted as Fukuzawa’s ability to move freely between different perspectives, as he was a true “free-floating intellectual.”⁵⁸ Moving freely between perspectives, however, seems dangerously close to relativizing all perspectives no matter how autonomously an intellectual would choose his or her own perspective. Only one thing is irreducible to any relativization—one’s authentic, unmediated subjectivity, which is an attractive option to hold in a political turmoil. If a free-floating intellectual “autonomously” determines that he would follow his subjective existential desire rather than carefully reason to find the most objective point of view, it is certainly possible that such a free-floating liberal can become attracted to irrational nationalism. This, I think, is one of the most important reasons why political theorists have to pay more attention to Fukuzawa—he showed what happens when a liberal relativizes all ideologies when facing political turmoil. As soon as Fukuzawa began to relativize his early conviction in the idea of progress and the liberation of individual autonomy, he had nothing but his existential desire to rely on, that is, the desire to have the West recognize Japan’s greatness. The liberal state, unfortunately, cannot solve the problem of relativization. The judicial system is established only for enforcing the “rule,” but not the “outcome.” The liberal state is essentially “rule-bound,”

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See Mannheim, 137-138.

which has only a single principle—striving for neutrality. It does not create any emotion, and by the same token, cannot prevent people from falling into the illusion of national “glory” or “greatness.”

Fukuzawa’s political shift thus revealed the weakness of liberalism, especially at the time of ideological struggle. Since liberalism, especially Mannheim and Fukuzawa’s kind, does not have a clear ideological base other than abstract rights, it is often forced to ally with more a popular ideology that has a concrete mass base. If there is a strong bourgeois class, liberalism’s problem of agency can be solved. If it is not the case, however, liberals are forced to choose an ally.⁵⁹

Fukuzawa also had a choice to ally with the People’s Rights movement, which was largely influenced by his own effort to create a bourgeois public sphere and civil society in Japan. When People’s Rights activists attracted the alienated masses, including peasants, however, Fukuzawa consciously distanced himself from the movement, which perhaps became too egalitarian for his taste. The intensifying egalitarianism in the left wing of the People’s Rights movement made Fukuzawa believe that they were infatuated with a credulity other than a traditional Confucian kind. Neither was he able to ally with the reactionaries who worshipped the Emperor as a god and tried to revive the ancient theocracy. The only choice Fukuzawa had was thus to invoke the shared existential concern among proto-liberal and reactionary samurais, which ended up with his support of militarist expansion. For many self-claimed “liberal” samurais, military campaign against Asian nations would not only give them landownership in colonies but also satisfy their pseudo-liberal passion to expand their civilization and enlightenment to Asia. This development ultimately divided the People’s

⁵⁹ Yasukawa also briefly discussed the problem in the absence of the bourgeois class base in Fukuzawa’s liberal nationalism. See Yasukawa, 104.

Rights movement into more privileged liberals and a group based on lower classes, leading to the ultimate failure of the movement itself. One cannot say that Fukuzawa and his free-floating liberalism had no responsibility in this unfortunate frustration of Japan's early progressive possibility.⁶⁰

The slogan "internal peace, external competition" in *Critique* was, combined with his previous conservative writings, such as *Popular Discourse of National Rights*,⁶¹ widely understood as a betrayal of the People's Rights movement. Ueki Emori, one of the radical champions of the People's Rights movement, who himself learned liberalism from Fukuzawa, criticized Fukuzawa's priority in National Rights.⁶²

Even if we do not have an issue with foreign countries, we have to improve People's Rights. Even if there is no foreign invasion, we have to improve People's Rights. Improving People's Rights is not intended to expand the National Rights. Rather, expanding our National Rights should be intended to improve People's Rights.⁶³

Ueki's argument above summarizes the problem of priority in Fukuzawa's turn to national rights. No matter how important national independence is for improving people's lives, at least in principle, national independence cannot be a goal by itself but should remain a means to actualize liberal rights under the modern state. Liberalism, according to its original revolutionary idea, should not tolerate the status quo for the privileged class or, at least, should not ignore the need to expand the universal right for all. Such progress can be delayed by political compromise and reasoned negotiation, but, in any case, there is no theoretical

⁶⁰ For a brief account of the rise and split of the Freedom and People's Rights movements, see Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000), 386-388.

⁶¹ *Tsūzoku kokken ron* was a pamphlet written in 1878. The pamphlet became infamous for Fukuzawa's turn to realist international politics by saying "Hundred volumes of international laws are not as good as a few cannons, piles of peace treaties are not as good as a box of ammunition. Cannons and ammunition are not for arguing existing principles but for creating nonexistent principles." *Zenshū*, vol. 4, 637.

⁶² As a side note, Ueki was not able to read foreign languages. He relied on translated work to learn Western political philosophy. See Maruyama Masao and Katō Shūichi, *Honyaku to nihonno kindai* [Translation and Japan's Modernity] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 49-53.

⁶³ Ienaga Saburō, *Kakumei sisō no senkusha: Ueki Emori no hito to shisō* [The Pioneer of Revolutionary Thoughts: Ueki Emori's Life and Thoughts] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1955), 111.

principle in liberalism that would renounce the ultimate priority in the expansion of universal rights. When the abstract “common good,” or in Fukuzawa’s case, “National Rights,” replaces the original revolutionary impulse in liberalism, liberalism stops being progressive and frustrates the enlightenment project.

The second problem that became distinctive after Fukuzawa’s turn to the right is the contradiction between his support of nationalist expansion and humanitarian intervention to the less “civilized” neighbors. The contradiction in Fukuzawa’s plan to promote “internal peace and external competition” became intensified when he began to invoke a kind of “humanitarian intervention” as a part of Japan’s military campaign. Compared to Japan, which was quickly being modernized, the leaders in China and Korea indeed looked tyrannical. Fukuzawa instigated “liberal” samurais who were still bellicose and action-oriented in nature to steer their passion for liberty into the liberation of the people in neighboring countries. In short, Fukuzawa reshaped his enlightenment project into a contradictory project that would synthesize conservative reform inside and revolutionary intervention abroad.

Just in time, three years after the publication of *Critique*, an opportunity arose for Japan’s military expansion in Korea. In 1884, Korean liberals, who were also Fukuzawa’s friends and students, staged a coup with help from Japanese troops to establish a modern constitutional monarchy, which is remembered as Gapsin Coup (*Gapsin jeongbyeon*, or *kōshin seihen* in Japanese). The coup was quickly suppressed by Chinese forces, which officially recognized Korea as their tributary and regarded the growing influence of Japan in Korea as a threat. The failure of the coup also resulted in brutal repression of liberals in

Korea, including the annihilation of families and relatives of those who led the coup.⁶⁴

Although the original plan to establish a reformist government in Korea was frustrated, Fukuzawa saw an opportunity. For “liberal” samurais, the fact that Japanese soldiers died in the battle with premodern China was a good pretext to invoke war between the civilized and the uncivilized or the progressive and the reactionary. For the reactionary, it was a humiliation for the Emperor’s troops, who should have taken revenge at all costs. Suddenly, Fukuzawa realized his hope to unify the “two extremes”—the liberal samurais who wanted to expand liberalism and the reactionaries who wanted to die for the Emperor—under the same goal. The military aggression toward “uncivilized” Korea and China would satisfy both the left and the right. It is no wonder that Fukuzawa was able to say that the “[Gapsin coup] in Korea is certainly... fortunate to us. We should necessarily take advantage of this event ... No matter what kind of policies would be implemented...it would be enough if we do not fail the great cause of the expansion of our national rights.”⁶⁵

Scholars who have a favorable view of Fukuzawa have generally interpreted Fukuzawa’s support for military intervention in Korea as an expression of his hope in the modernization of Korea and, further, the progress of Asia as a transnational community. It seems that Fukuzawa was truly interested in the modernization and enlightenment of Korea, considering his effort to help Koreans popularize the use of the Korean alphabet instead of difficult Chinese characters.⁶⁶ In the same vein, one might also want to interpret Fukuzawa’s call for “protecting Asia” in *Critique* as his passionate commitment to protecting Asia against the imperialist threat. It is also true, however, that Fukuzawa’s first and foremost concern

⁶⁴ Fukuzawa’s immediate response to this brutal execution of the whole family line of rebels was expressed in his pamphlet “The Execution of the Independence Party of Korea.” See *Zenshū*, vol. 10, 221-226.

⁶⁵ *Zenshū*, vol. 10, 211.

⁶⁶ For a positive interpretation of Fukuzawa’s interest in Korea, see Kinebuch, *Fukuzawa Yukichi to Chōsen*.

was to unify the national will in Japan by military campaign, and he emphasized that the military campaign in Asia was for the expansion of Japan's National Rights on a number of occasions. As Micheline Ishay argues, liberal internationalism has been historically intertwined with and betrayed by its nationalist aspiration, and Fukuzawa's case just adds one more example.⁶⁷ Regardless of how favorably one interprets Fukuzawa's support for military intervention in Korea, there is no difference in its result: the slowly emerging internationalist spirit in East Asia was frustrated from the beginning.⁶⁸

Although Japan's influence in Korea contributed to the latter's modernization to a degree, the Koreans, elites and the masses alike generally viewed it as aggression and invasion. Ten years later, Japan and China went to full-scale war on the Korean peninsula in the First Sino-Japanese War. As expected, Fukuzawa fervently supported the war, even donating a massive amount of money to the government to fund the war. Fukuzawa never regretted his support of war until he died happily in 1901, still proud of Japan's "great achievement" in her overwhelming victory against China. After the complete annexation of Korea in 1910, there were few ways to invoke internationalism between the two countries again, let alone between Japan and China.

C. Why Free-Floating Liberalism Betrays the Progressive Cause

⁶⁷ See Micheline R. Ishay, *Internationalism and Its Betrayal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

⁶⁸ To my view that internationalist spirit was "emerging," one might oppose this view and suggest an example of the cosmopolitan world view had existed in East Asia all along since the Sinocentric order became secure after Ming Dynasty. It is certainly true that the Sinocentric order had a cosmopolitan world view, and actually in East Asia, modernization meant the emergence of nationalist consciousness. I thus chose the word "internationalist" rather than "cosmopolitan." At any rate, the Sinocentric cosmopolitanism was inherently hierarchical, viewing the Chinese Emperor as the leader of the world and the all other races as barbarians. It is by no means the same as modern cosmopolitanism that has been related to socialist internationalism. The Sinocentric cosmopolitanism would be rather similar to the ancient Roman kind, which is the root of cosmopolitanism in the Western tradition.

It would be a great mistake for one to take Fukuzawa's betrayal of universalism to be a personal digression.⁶⁹ If his free-floating, unconvinced liberalism had some influence on his existential turn, one should think about the theoretical reason that made this pioneering liberal thinker gradually surrender to his nationalism. I have to emphasize that it was his "surrender" to, rather than continuation of, his nationalism, because his irrational nationalism was not radically pronounced until a few years after he finished *Civilization*. As a conclusion to this chapter, I will examine Fukuzawa's betrayal in a general theoretical framework.

The first issue is liberalism's lack of commitment in any defined progressive principles.⁷⁰ This, of course, poses an ambivalent problem. It is common-sensical that any principle can be easily compromised if the principle is not securely founded on a certain belief system, but one can equally and legitimately worry about the danger posed by dogmatic beliefs. To prevent the reduction of intellectual arguments into either merely relative "opinions" or ideological dogmas, Mannheim suggested a new bearer of social analysis—not "a class occupying a middle position" but "a relatively classless stratum which is not too firmly situated in the social order."⁷¹ The "free-floating" (*freischwebende*) intellectuals are expected to freely move between different perspectives to find

⁶⁹ This is the greatest problem in Yasukawa's *Fukuzawa Yukichi's Perception on Asia* and most of his other writings. Even with the unprecedentedly expansive review of Fukuzawa's writings, paradoxically, Yasukawa never escaped his obsession with the version of Fukuzawa created by Maruyama Masao. By firmly believing that Maruyama Masao glorified a hypocrite, he concentrates his all efforts to prove that Fukuzawa is not worthy of the respect he receives now, rather than trying to find a theoretical explanation about how such a contrasting evaluation of the same person can be possible.

⁷⁰ This claim seems questionable to some scholars who study intellectual history of liberalism, but it is noticeable that modern liberals often concede to the claims of cultural relativists or collectivists. For example, John Rawls's continuous modifications of his theory clearly show signs of retreat from the universalist position. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Original Edition* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2005); Rawls, *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). Also, ever since Habermas renounced the Hegelian idea of progress, many Habermasian liberals have focused on the procedural side of democracy rather than the idea of progress.

⁷¹ Mannheim, 137.

intersubjective understanding of social phenomena rather than claiming abstract neutrality or objectivity.⁷² It was, perhaps, Mannheim's solution to the "existential determination of knowledge," which he no longer thought was a possibility for a single most objective knowledge about society.⁷³

On the abstract level, free-floating intellectuals would be least likely to be infatuated with irrational dogma or, in Fukuzawa's term, "credulous." On the level of political practice, however, I am not sure if a free-floating perspective can resist political responses to existential threats. Mannheim's free-floating intelligentsia might be "classless," but few intellectuals are truly "stateless" in a realistic sense. When there is a reasonable threat to the nation-state, *raison d'état* is always a tempting option to invoke "transcendence" of different class interests. This problem is not simply reactionary impulse in ethnic nationalism but the consequence of the intricate issues in global and domestic politics that liberals have to face. As Micheline Ishay believes, "the growing cleavage between political and economic rights, global and domestic political aspirations" leads to the betrayal of democratic internationalism, particularly by the "practical nationalism."⁷⁴ Perhaps such a betrayal of internationalism is not only true for Fukuzawa but also for many European liberals and social democrats on the

⁷² Ibid., 138.

⁷³ Ibid., 239. Also, see the following account by David Kettler: "Disinterested certification and specification of the perspectival character of all political positions, Mannheim thought, could change the climate of political conflict or at least stop each one's self-serving exposure of all other ideologies from poisoning the atmosphere. The theory that can explain the perspectival character of thought will also bring with it a clearer understanding of the multifaceted, common historical situation, without, of course, pretending to bring about agreements on what is to be done. It is this catalytic role that Mannheim's notorious "free-floating intellectuals" are to perform... Rather than approximating Spengler's celebration of incommensurable morphological forms of cultural life, organically closed and determined, as Lukacs charges, Mannheim proposes in his sociology of knowledge to take note of but then to find rational uses for the existential rootedness and historical particularity of thinking and the cultural entities that thinking informs. As each ideological collective subject gains insight into the material foundations of its perspective, it partially accepts the realistic cognitive mode that provides the insight and partially becomes capable of communicating with other subjects so enlightened." David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr. "Rationalizing the Irrational: Karl Mannheim and the Besetting Sin of German Intellectuals," *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 6 (May, 1990), 1458.

⁷⁴ Ishay, xxiii.

brink of World War I.⁷⁵ Without a certain ideological commitment to universal rights and cosmopolitanism, it would be difficult for free-floating intellectuals to solve the contradiction of liberalism with its relation to internationalism.

The other problem with free-floating liberalism is that it deliberately separates itself from the class base, which can become an agent for progress. As examined earlier, Fukuzawa's "centrist" liberalism did not have a secure mass support or class base. His *Encouragement of Learning* was essentially an encouragement of the rise of the bourgeois class and its public sphere, which would replace the old action-oriented samurai class for leading modern Japan. Of course, it takes time for any premodern society to produce the material base required for the bourgeois class. Prematurely imported Western egalitarianism, Fukuzawa believed, only increased the grievances of the feudal-minded samurais and peasants, who were not deemed rational enough to think. Fukuzawa made it clear that "the reason the civilized countries still have monarchy is because the average of people's intelligence and ignorance is not yet high enough."⁷⁶ It is very common that a liberal looks down upon the "ignorant masses" when their class base is weak and their privilege threatened.

Responding to nihilists who believed "the post-war democracy [in Japan] is nothing but a fiction (*kyomō*)," Maruyama Masao said, "I would rather bet on the fiction." It shows Maruyama's strong conviction in the fictional, or artificial, construction of modern politics without a pre-political base, such as ethnicity, religion, or the Emperor, which he learned

⁷⁵ Eduard Bernstein's opposition to the war was a rare exception among those considered as the right-wing of the social democrats. His opposition to war, I believe, was possible because of his distinctive view on Marxism as a regulative ideal in the vein of Kant, rather than "free-floating" between perspectives of the working class and the bourgeois. See Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, ed. and trans. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷⁶ *Zenshū*, vol. 6, 363.

from Fukuzawa.⁷⁷ In my view, however, it is rather obvious that Fukuzawa himself ended up renouncing his conviction in such “fictions.” It seems that liberalism alone, at least Fukuzawa’s kind, might be too weak against nationalist aspirations when reactionary classes overwhelm the bourgeois. Fukuzawa tried to utilize patriotic sentiment among samurais to lead them to his liberalism, but it certainly was not easy. In *On the Imperial House*, Fukuzawa took one step back and tried to uphold the Emperor as a symbolic authority separated from politics, but such a position would not satisfy anyone if the authority of the Emperor is only fictional.

Liberals should acknowledge that democratic procedures and artificial institutions alone, although tremendously important, cannot uphold the universal rights founded by the liberal tradition. If intellectuals dismiss mass movements, it only empowers the reactionary mass movement, which does not need much intellectual support in the first place.

The final issue in Fukuzawa’s betrayal of his progressive cause is the dangerous result that would follow the complete dismissal of instrumental rationality. Fukuzawa revolutionized the intellectual scene in nineteenth century Japan with instrumental rationality as his weapon. He destroyed the dogmatic minds of samurais caught up in Confucianism and the Japanese Spirit. Fukuzawa’s unfortunate shift to the right cannot be attributed solely to his rationalism, but to his failure to hold his existential desire toward the “Great Empire” of Japan, which would be recognized by other Western powers as an equal imperialist power. Fukuzawa’s reliance on instrumental rationality cannot be held responsible for this shift, because Japan’s expansionism was not necessarily rational for any purpose, except for the ideological realization of national glory.

⁷⁷ See Matsuda, “Kyomōni kakeru kotoha kanōka?”

Admittedly, instrumental rationality is not picky about the purpose of the subject. When Fukuzawa attacked the radical People's Rights activists as idealistic and set *raison d'état* of Japan as the ultimate purpose of his liberalism, his instrumental rationality was used as a weapon to destroy the arguments of pacifist Christians and Confucians. It does not mean, however, that instrumental rationality is inherently dangerous and likely to entail a "dialectic of enlightenment" toward "a totally administered society," as Horkheimer and Adorno believed. Rather, Fukuzawa's case tells us that instrumental rationality should be understood as neutral, and one needs a commitment to the idea of progress and universal rights to guide humanity's use of instrumental rationality.

The affirmation of individual subjectivity, in the fashion of the Nietzschean existentialism, might provide a partial cure for instrumental rationality's inability to inspire political conviction. By emphasizing the will to power in individual subjectivity, Nietzsche provided an insight that the masses need an ideology and movement which they would die for. As long as such an attempt would not endorse the value of reciprocity, however, it would not go any further than the manifestation of different identities left without mediation. It is doubtful that anyone who prioritizes the recognition of one's identity will always be successful in respecting the liberal principle of reciprocity. Fukuzawa, perhaps, regarded the independence of Korea and China as equally important in the beginning, but it did not change his priority in manifesting Japan's greatness. The only viable solution for our generation seems to be nothing but endorsing the idea of progress again on the basis of universal rights and mediating different identities through the liberal rule of law, which Fukuzawa did try before his existential turn.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Japan overwhelmed the Chinese force throughout the First Sino-Japanese War and even took the Liaodong peninsula as a part of the huge indemnity.¹ Perhaps because he was too thrilled to live in the euphoria of triumph that Japan would finally be recognized as a great power, four years later, Fukuzawa suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. Even after his illness, he continued to advocate public education, and especially women's education, during the last years of his life, writing "A Review of the Great Study for Women" (*onna daigaku hyōron*) and "The New Great Study for Women" (*shin onna daigaku*). The Emperor praised Fukuzawa's contribution to the education and enlightenment of Japan by granting him 50,000 yen, which can be estimated to be almost a million dollars now. Without any hesitation, Fukuzawa donated all this money to Keio University he founded for the enlightenment of Japan. A few months later, on February 3, 1901, Fukuzawa died as a result of the recurrence of the cerebral hemorrhage. The House of Representatives, which is equivalent to the United States Congress, officially expressed condolences for Fukuzawa's death. It is said that Fukuzawa's funeral was attended by 15,000 people, lining up all the way from his house to the Zempuku Temple, where he was buried. His lifetime comrade and student, Obata Tokujirō, gave Fukuzawa a posthumous Buddhist name "*taikan'in dokuritsu jison koji*," which can be roughly translated as "the Great Visionary of the Independence and

¹ Japan had to return the Liaodong peninsula to China by the Triple Intervention, the intervention of the Western powers—Russia, France, and Germany—who wanted to check Japan's expansion into China. Particularly, the leading role of Russia in this intervention enraged the Japanese public, which became one of the causes of the Russo-Japanese War. Fukuzawa's response to the Triple Intervention was rather calm, arguing that Japan should endure this humiliation and instead endeavor to become more powerful. See Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū* [Complete collection of Fukuzawa Yukichi] vol. 15 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 175-176.

Self-reliance.”²

Fukuzawa had been remembered as a great nationalist that both the Japanese government and Keio University annually commemorated for a while. Yet his books were not encouraged after the rise of the totalitarian regime of the 1930s, which explicitly censored some parts of *Civilization*. During the pinnacle of totalitarianism, Fukuzawa was useless for totalitarians who propagandized to “overcome modernity” and the left who had no choice but becoming bolshevized and going underground. As such, Fukuzawa’s name became slightly obscure until Maruyama Masao made him a guardian of Japanese liberalism after World War II. Maruyama’s view on Fukuzawa was, however, challenged by socialists who generally interpreted Fukuzawa’s thought as a simple imperialist nationalism rather than anything liberal.³

As Fukuzawa reminiscently said in the preface of *Civilization*, he felt like living two lives with one body. Japan, in Fukuzawa’s time, was one of the most radically changing societies in world history. It is thus not surprising that his thought has multiple dimensions, often seemingly contradicting each other. The tumultuous history of the nineteenth century naturally made him a nationalist, but he was certainly not a typical one. Although there is no clear rupture between his early courageous liberal arguments and his existential turn to the recognition of Japan as a great empire, the latter is not really an extension of the former. As a conclusion of this study, I will examine whether and how Fukuzawa could have avoided his

² Koizumi Shinzō, *Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966), 197.

³ The debate about Fukuzawa in the 1950s and after was mostly focused on Fukuzawa’s short pamphlet “On Shedding Asia” (or “On Leaving Asia,” *Datsu-a ron*). In the pamphlet, Fukuzawa castigated the reactionary elites and people in Korea and China and declared that Japan should leave the “bad friends in Asia” and treat them “how the Western nations treat them.” See *Zenshū* vol. 10, 238-240. I deliberately skipped discussing “On Shedding Asia” because, first, Fukuzawa’s authorship of the pamphlet was challenged because of a slight difference in its style from Fukuzawa’s other writings, and, second, it was too short to discuss the true depth of Fukuzawa’s existential turn that I focused on in the fourth chapter. See Hirayama Yō, *Fukuzawa Yukichi no shinjitsu* [The Truth of Fukuzawa Yukichi] (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 2004).

existential turn, which became a background of the Japanese militarism for decades to come, and, by the same token, how contemporary political theorists can uphold Fukuzawa's idea of enlightenment without distorting his oeuvre.

A. Fukuzawa for Today: The Meaning of *Encouragement*, *Civilization*, and Fukuzawa's Betrayal

Fukuzawa's *Encouragement of Learning* unequivocally represented the spirit of bourgeois liberalism that he endeavored to spread in Japan. Although Fukuzawa betrayed the cause of the People's Rights movement, the bourgeois public sphere kept growing, as he earlier wished. Japanese capitalism grew faster than any place else in the early twentieth century, which also gradually created the working class and their organization.⁴ In the short-lived Taishō Democracy in the 1920s, the liberal culture in the literary scene was blooming. There is no clear evidence that Japan's military expansion was by any means beneficial to their successful evolution toward a capitalist economy. The government budget was nearly bankrupt during the Russo-Japanese War, and the Meiji government was forced to agree to Theodore Roosevelt's arbitration, which included no territorial gain or reparation from Russia, despite Japan's continuing victories.⁵ Indeed, Japanese militarism was only beneficial to the psychological satisfaction of being recognized as "one of them."

If Fukuzawa's later instigation of military expansionism was ultimately unnecessary, one might legitimately ask what would have happened if Fukuzawa had been more patient and abided by his own argument in *Encouragement* to create an independent civil society

⁴ See Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 20-21.

⁵ About the rage of the Japanese public against the Treaty of Portsmouth signed in 1905 between Russia and Japan, see *ibid.*, 26.

with a spirit of individual independence. The bourgeois class that emerged decades later in Japan was, although relatively weak, not far from the typical bourgeois that emerged earlier in Europe. They were generally not interested in Japan's glory but mostly concerned about increasing taxation due to the military expansion.⁶ One cannot deny that the emphasis on "practical studies" and bourgeois rationalism in Fukuzawa's *Encouragement* inspired such bourgeois liberalism. Some of the liberals that developed during this era even managed to resist the militarist government and criticized the militarism in the dark era of the 1930s.⁷

The influence of *Encouragement* in post-war Japan was even stronger. The famous declaration of universal egalitarianism in its first sentence—"heaven does not create one man above or below another man"—was recognized as the foremost example of the liberal heritage in the Meiji era.⁸ Fukuzawa's courageous defense of bourgeois rationalism against the action-oriented, reckless samurai spirit was one of the cornerstones that supported the post-war democracy of Japan. Even with the clear limitation in its infamous "one-point-five party dictatorship" of conservative Liberal Democratic Party (*jimintō*) for fifty years, the post-war democracy never lost civilian control of the military and managed to check the rise of fascist remnants. In this regard, it is even more tempting to wonder what could have happened had Fukuzawa been a little more patient and had he not created a contradictory legacy in his own version of Japanese militarism.

⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁷ The problem of "conversion" among the Japanese liberals and socialists was so common that it was hard to blame anyone simply for collaborating with the totalitarians after 1940s. Even many communists betrayed Comintern and started collaborating with the government, believing that communism could be manifested within the rule of the Emperor, which seems to me a typical Oriental fantasy of "equality under one man." About the problem of the conversion in 1930s, see Rikki Kersten, "Painting the Emperor Red: The Emperor and the Socialists in the 1930s," and Fujita Shōzō, *Tenkō no shisōshi teki kenkyū* [A Research on the Intellectual History of Conversion] (Misuzu Shobō, 1997).

⁸ Of course, the popular understanding of the given sentence was out of context and thus misinterpreted. What Fukuzawa actually offered was a question on why there was inequality in people's abilities even though Heaven made them equal, and his answer to the question was that it depended on the level of education. See Fukuzawa, Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Encouragement of Learning*, trans. David A. Dilworth (New York, Columbia University Press, 2012), 3.

Fukuzawa's *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* can be recognized as his greatest effort to animate the impetus to progress in Japan, and perhaps all over Asia. As Maruyama put it, "Fukuzawa's only complete theory on principles," *Civilization*, was Fukuzawa's only masterpiece that contains a systematic theory of progress. It is a result of Fukuzawa's fierce struggle to balance the roles of ethics and science in the Japanese intellectual tradition and one of the greatest defenses of science against ideological dogmas. Also, it bravely upheld individual rights and the cultivation of individual autonomy as the new ethical principle that would replace the Confucian obsession with order and harmony. Despite the strong nationalist undertone, the impetus to progress was clearly seen in Fukuzawa's regulative ideal in the liberation of individual autonomy and his notion of progress in competing opinions with freedom of speech.

One can legitimately wonder what would have happened if Fukuzawa had developed his idea of regulative ideal further and not betrayed the final goal of what he understood as "civilization." It was precisely his renunciation of the notion of progress, not his conviction in it, that changed him into a militarist later. Moreover, although Fukuzawa and his supporters praised Japan's military aggression when he was alive, Fukuzawa's idea of progress and modern civilization was a polar opposite to the genuine fascists' understanding of modernity as "deteriorating the pure spirit of Japan." It should be noted that, in 1875, when Fukuzawa finished *Civilization*, he was very skeptical about military spending. Up to that point, his primary concern was to propagate the importance of accepting the Western spirit of liberal individualism, which was generally ignored by his contemporary intellectuals. Again, it was precisely after he began to defend the pure spiritual element in the Japanese

tradition in *Critique* and *On the Imperial House* that he started supporting military expansionism.

The simple statement that Japan became an imperialist nation because they learned Western philosophy is only partially true. Japanese imperialism was a result of the fusion of realist politics for *raison d'état* and the preoccupation with the pure Japanese spirit that was deemed, by the right-wing, to be deteriorating under the influence of the West. Further, the activists who upheld the notion of progress, under the influence of Fukuzawa's *Civilization*, generally opposed militarism.⁹ Since nationalism is also a product of Western modernity, it is not necessarily wrong to say that Japanese imperialism was affected by Western thought. It is, however, ludicrous to say that Fukuzawa's project of enlightenment resulted in Japan's transformation to militarist expansionism. The idea of progress and the individual autonomy promoted by *Civilization* was not the cause of but an antidote to the Japanese imperialism that was primarily motivated by action-oriented samurais' aggressive nature—an antidote that its developer himself refused to take.

Fukuzawa's existential turn to his aspiration for the "great" Empire of Japan represents his failure to reconcile ethical principles with the desire for recognition of national identity. If one had to choose one of Fukuzawa's writings that most authentically represented

⁹ The question on whether the idea of progress influenced Japanese imperialism is important but unfortunately cannot be discussed further in this study due to its theoretical and historical depth. What I can briefly add here is the fact that the notions of "progress" and "evolution" were introduced to the Japanese intellectual scene almost at the same time, but the two concepts were often confused. Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics* (1851) was widely read by the People's Rights activists, not only because the theory of social evolution gave the reason why Japan should accept the Western philosophy but also because its title was mistranslated as "A Theory of Equal Rights in Society" (*shakai heiken ron*). It was just one of many examples that show how the Japanese intellectuals struggled with new concepts from the West. One thing I can assuredly say is that the intellectuals who were influenced by Spencer's social evolution, such as Katō Hiroyuki, later became conservatives. By contrast, liberals, like Ueki Emori and Nakae Chōmin, who read social contract theories, such as Locke and Rousseau, generally remained progressives. See Maruyama Masao and Katō Shūichi, *Honyaku to nihonno kindai* [Translation and Japan's Modernity] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 49-53, 153-155.

his subjective feeling, it could be the last chapter of *Civilization*, where he quoted his comrade Obata Tokujirō's rage against the West's humiliation of the Japanese people since Commodore Perry's visit. Maruyama said, however, it was essentially co-authored by Fukuzawa and Obata.

...at the time we first let Commodore Perry bring his squadron of warships into our waters, the gist of the argument given to persuade us into trade relations was that all men on this earth are brothers, sharing the same sky above and the same earth beneath, that if we turn a man away and refuse to deal with him we are sinners against Heaven, and so, even if it means fighting, trade relations must be opened. How beautiful Perry's words, and how unseemly his deeds! His speech and conduct were diametrically opposed. To put it bluntly, he was saying, "If you don't do business with me, you'll be doing business with the undertaker." ... Those who haughtily ride about on horses or in carriages, scattering everyone in their way, are almost all Westerners. When they get into an argument with anyone, be he a patrolman, a passerby, or a carriage-bearer, the Westerners behave insolently; they punch and kick at will, and the cowardly, weak common people lack the courage to pay them back in kind because, they say, "They are foreigners." Many simply swallow their anger and do not report such incidents. And even when there are grounds for litigation over some business dealing, to press charges one must go to one of the five ports, where one's case will be decided by their judges. Since in these circumstances it is impossible to obtain justice, people say to one another that, rather than press charges, it is better to swallow one's anger and be submissive. ...¹⁰

Anyone can notice how passionately Fukuzawa wanted to denounce the hypocrisy of the Western imperialist's propaganda that "all men on this earth are brothers." Maruyama also found that just a few years after finishing *Civilization*, Fukuzawa denounced the hypocrisy in Western internationalism again, saying "Where is the international law? What is the use of Christianity? International law is only a law for Europeans; it has never applied to the East."¹¹ It was not only an authentic feeling but also a legitimate one. The abuse of extraterritoriality in the era of imperialism was well known to the West, but many people were still not informed about the situation in Japan at the time. One can only conjecture that

¹⁰ Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. by David A. Dilworth & G. Cameron Hurst III, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 240-241.

¹¹ Maruyama, *Bunmeiron no gairyaku wo yomu*, 259-261.

it would be because the Meiji government suppressed such information out of fear that “Expel the Barbarians” faction would start assassinating Westerners again.

The greatness of Fukuzawa’s *Civilization* was, however, on the flip side of Fukuzawa’s passionate expression of his authentic personal feelings described above. Even with such a deep-seated feeling of humiliation, Fukuzawa had an insight that Japan needed to promote the “Western Spirit” of liberal individualism, as free and autonomous development of each individual would liberate everyone on Earth. It would certainly have been impossible if his priority was only in the name of independence for the nation. As soon as he relativized the primacy of progress and liberalism in *Transformation*, and he clearly shifted his priority to manifesting his identity as a patriot of the Great Japanese Empire, everything began to fall apart. A once-fierce liberal whom reactionary samurais attempted to assassinate became a supporter of military expansionism for the glory of Japan.

There is always a risk in prioritizing the authenticity of individual subjectivity. Even though the Hegelian mediation of different individual subjectivities would cause alienation of authentic feeling of each individual, the solution to such a problem should be directed to universal ethics rather than prioritizing individual subjectivity. In defense of Fukuzawa’s existential turn, he betrayed universal ethics precisely because universal ethics in international law did not function as intended. If we should point out a bigger culprit, it was the betrayal of the Western liberals who ignored the serious problems with the lack of universal application of the ethical principles developed in the Western tradition. That does not mean, however, that one should prioritize the feeling of the oppressed over anything else. It means that the West has to seriously consider its commitment to universal ethical principles again.

Fukuzawa's existential turn also presented a challenge to liberalism. In the era of "post-metaphysical philosophy," as Habermas has emphasized a number of times, liberalism has been reduced to the commitment to the procedural side of democracy rather than any substantial ethical principle of its own. Fukuzawa's betrayal of liberalism was, in part, a result of his inability to overcome this "hollowness" in liberalism, leading him to find a more secure ground to unify the masses and the government. The communitarian critique of such hollowness of liberalism, however, would pose a danger, depending on what filled the hollow space in the liberal proceduralism, just like Fukuzawa filled it with the Japanese Spirit and the Emperor. Using pre-political foundations, such as ethnicity or religion, is always dangerous in politics, but it is also true that relying on artificial creations or "fictions" can also be too fragile. It is the greatest puzzle that political theorists have to solve in our era, particularly in the era of reincarnation of fascist remnants, which overtly claim to represent the authentic feelings of nativists. The resource to fill this hollowness is, perhaps, only found when one endeavors to trace the progressive tradition in history that has fought the reactionary impulse to protect the privileges of the old, in favor of the expansion of universal rights.¹²

B. Fukuzawa for the West: Instrumental Rationality and Cosmopolitanism

The first thing one should discover from Fukuzawa's writings is that instrumental rationality alone cannot motivate any impulse toward totalitarianism. The question is: for what purpose one would utilize instrumental rationality? By attacking the Confucian preoccupation with the ancient ethics descended from the era of sages, Fukuzawa defended the importance of

¹² This is too big a question to answer in this study, but I rely here on Stephen Eric Bronner's new interpretation of "tradition" in his *Ideas in Action: Political Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

scientific reasoning against the metaphysical dogmas that are only concerned with ethical codes in private lives. For Fukuzawa, scientific reasoning could not only generate practical benefits from modern technology, but also become a weapon to destroy the Confucian obsession with order and harmony, which protected the privileged class. In short, Fukuzawa tried to achieve the goal of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* without a serious debate of metaphysics, but by presenting practical examples and political arguments.

The genuine power of Fukuzawa's defense of instrumental rationality can be identified in the fact that he was able to attack the prevailing argument that Japan—or any other non-Western nation—should keep her “spirit” while learning Western technology only as a tool to protect such a spirit. No matter how precious it may seem, a tradition should be abandoned if it becomes a hindrance to the betterment of the lives of the people. By the same token, a seemingly archaic tradition can be utilized again if it is useful in promoting the universal historical perspective, as Fukuzawa reinterpreted a feudal tradition that separated the role of the Emperor's sacred authority and Shōgun's political authority as a separation of church and state. Although Fukuzawa later abandoned all of the arguments above by endorsing the Japanese Spirit in his *Critique of Current Affairs*, the progressive legacy of his early endorsement of instrumental rationality is very clear.

It is not difficult to find the problem in renouncing instrumental rationality and the application of “science” in the studies of politics. Renouncing any “scientific” theory of progress often results in pure voluntarism, which often supports “participatory democracy” but ignores the realistic concerns about resources and conditions for political mobilization. One should not forget that voluntary participation in politics is not necessarily more important than the material conditions and interests that would make such participation

possible in the first place.

Secondly, one of the most refreshing points in Fukuzawa's East Asian enlightenment to Western readers is, perhaps, his fierce efforts to understand, embrace, and critically engage with the new theories and philosophies from the outer world that had been considered "barbaric" to his people. For a "patriotic" purpose, Fukuzawa courageously defended the values in Western liberal philosophy. True freedom would only be achieved when every Japanese individual, from the samurai to the peasant to the worker, properly understood the interplay between individual and national progress. Adapting wisdom from other countries, Fukuzawa constructed new categories that privileged scientific rationality over premodern dogmas, replacing action-oriented samurais' swords, in short, for a commitment to rational cultivation. Instead of sticking to dogmatic beliefs à la the Way of Warriors, one should reclaim Fukuzawa's critical understanding of progress—which he himself learned from the West.

It seems that the "West" Fukuzawa sought in his life has become increasingly difficult to find in the West today. Nativist attacks on multicultural changes are prevalent throughout Europe and America, while reactionaries proudly uphold their own understanding of Western civilization, which exclusively emphasizes its basis in Christianity and Caucasian ethnicity. Their "West" is, however, never the same "West" that Fukuzawa fiercely studied and tried to emulate. The true lesson of enlightenment cannot be learned by reactionaries who want to go back to the mythical "good old past" or narcissists who would equate their ancestors' deeds with their own exploits. Fukuzawa's brave refusal of the Japanese tradition in favor of progress and universal rights should be a lesson to those who never doubt the exceptional quality of their tradition—even for the people in the West. If Western civilization

is exceptional, it is exceptional because it was openly founded on the universal rights of individuals, not because certain pre-political values are cherished.

Finally, Fukuzawa's betrayal of internationalism raises a serious question about pacifism, and its value as a true momentum for cosmopolitanism. Immanuel Kant famously upheld the ideal of "perpetual peace," which would be realized if and only if the nations of the world become a federation of rational republics that renounced all means of war. Scholars of international relations have also seriously discussed "democratic peace theory," often claimed to be inspired by Kant, overemphasizing the statement that "the civil constitution of every state shall be republican," which is often equated with "democracy."¹³ The discussion often ends up with somewhat different claims from Kant's original argument—whether the democracies are less likely to fight each other or, even further, whether democracies are more likely to become hostile to authoritarian regimes.¹⁴

There is, however, one important thing from Kant's original argument that is often ignored in the inflated discussion of democratic peace theory: Kant dismissed any use of violence from the outset. The abolishment of the standing army and the ban on using force to interfere with other states' constitutions were included as "preliminary" conditions.¹⁵ In short, any violence is denounced from the beginning rather than considered a means to "expand democracy." Peace is not just an end but the *means and end* in itself.

Fukuzawa's somewhat narcissistic project to enlighten the whole of Asia certainly deserves a second look now, especially in the context of unending turmoil created by "humanitarian intervention." It is true that Fukuzawa was primarily interested in securing

¹³ Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 74.

¹⁴ See Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3, (1993): 624-638.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

Japan's National Rights more than anything else. It is also true, however, that Fukuzawa was genuinely enraged by the brutal death of his Korean students and friends, whose family members and even relatives were executed for "high treason." In this extreme situation, one can legitimately ask whether the use of violence to overthrow an oppressive regime is a legitimate means to manifest a "progressive" and "cosmopolitan" ideal. The ultimate answer to such a question, however, seems to be negative. Looking back to Kant's *Perpetual Peace* and what Fukuzawa's strategy on Asia entailed in history, one should recognize that violence cannot remain only as a means to other causes but has its own independent effect. The violent coup of Korean liberals ruined the higher cause of enlightenment in Korea, and the Japanese invasion to "help them" made the problem worse. Yun Chi-ho, one of the prominent liberals in Korea at the time, testified that "no one dared to mention enlightenment (*gaehwa*, *kaika* in Japanese) again" after the masses increasingly identified the liberal movement with the Japanese military intervention.¹⁶

The spirit of transnational cooperation was not really encouraged, but rather frustrated by Fukuzawa's support of violent means to enlighten Asia. The truly effective cosmopolitanism in East Asia was rather found among the lives and deeds of pacifist activists, most prominently Uchimura Kanzō, who initially supported the First Sino-Japanese War but repented after discovering the brutality of the Japanese troops. Further, one of Uchimura's Korean students, Ham Seok-heon, later made a great contribution to South Korea's enlightenment and her peaceful transition to democracy. Although often overlooked as naïve and ineffective, with the right conditions, pacifism should be carefully examined as the

¹⁶ Yun Chi-ho, "Diary of Yun Chi-ho, December 14, 1884," The Database of Korean History, accessed June 7, 2018, http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=sa&levelId=sa_024_0020_0120_0270&types=o.

genuine source of progress and cosmopolitanism.¹⁷

C. Fukuzawa for the East: The Spirit of Bourgeois Liberalism

The first and foremost lesson of Fukuzawa's enlightenment project in the East is, without a doubt, the ethical validity of "Eastern ethics (or spirit), Western practice." It should be examined from the history of the ambivalent legacy of Meiji liberalism and Fukuzawa's influence on it.

It is important to note that Fukuzawa renounced his early commitment to universal rights in favor of supporting the expansionism of the Meiji government. The "progressive" Meiji era is thus, in a way, a myth. Yasukawa's critique of the moderate conservative beliefs in "Bright Meiji, Dark Shōwa," represented by Shiba Ryōtarō, is also valid in this regard.¹⁸ The successful modernization taken under the Meiji government was certainly monumental, especially when compared to the difficulty in the modernizations of China and Korea, but the legacy of the Meiji era is still ambivalent. No one can deny that Meiji Japan had genuinely a liberal and progressive element in its social reform. The militarist expansion initiated in the Meiji era, however, cannot be separated from Japan's complete deterioration into totalitarianism in the 1930s.

The important question is why Meiji Japan left the legacy of militarism. In my view,

¹⁷ It is not difficult to find the English resources for Uchimura Kanzō, but it seems that very few studies have been done about Ham Seok-heon outside of South Korea. For a biography of Ham written in English, see Sung Soo Kim, *Ham Sok Hon: Voice of the People and Pioneer of Religious Pluralism in Twentieth Century Korea* (Seoul: Samin, 2001).

¹⁸ Shōwa is the name of the period ruled by the infamous Emperor Hirohito, who led Japan into the disaster of the Pacific War. Japanese historians often rely on the dichotomy of "Taishō Democracy" and "Shōwa Fascism," separating relatively liberal democratic period under the Emperor Taishō and the overtly reactionary era under Hirohito. The view that regards the Meiji era as "bright" and the Shōwa era as "dark" is common among moderate conservatives, who took a positive view of Meiji Japan's expansion as an effort to keep national independence and encourage enlightenment in Asia against imperialism, while dismissing totalitarianism under Hirohito. Yasukawa says Shiba Ryōtarō's famous novel *Clouds above the Hill* represents such a (moderate) conservative view. See Yasukawa, 9, 46-48.

Fukuzawa's betrayal of his early position that Japan should take the Western spirit of liberalism played a significant role. What made him famous in the early Meiji era was that he courageously supported the universalist position rather than upholding the "Japanese Spirit," without fearing the assassination attempts by self-proclaimed "men of high purpose." As soon as he regressed to the conservative obsession with keeping one's own "spirit" for learning the "visible things," which clearly resonates with Sakuma Shōzan's "Eastern ethics and Western technology," the progressive movement lost its most important supporter and consequently lost its impetus.

It is certainly understandable that the reformers in non-Western countries are careful in renouncing some of the old customs that are deemed reactionary but nonetheless respected by the masses. Radical reforms or revolutions always, without any exception, generate a counter-revolutionary force that would fundamentally frustrate the cause of revolution, as Marx warned in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.¹⁹ One has to ponder, however, whether it is a good idea to keep the tradition that fundamentally opposes universal rights simply for the sake of stability. By contrast, it might work better if one utilizes the universally applicable principles in the tradition, as Fukuzawa found the tradition of separation between the Emperor and Shōgun and interpreted it as a separation of church and state. Even in such cases, however, it needs great caution, because a tradition that is particular to a specific group or nation naturally has a parochial connotation. Fukuzawa took pride in the separation of the sacred and the political in the Japanese tradition, but as soon as he criticized "reactionary China" for their absence of such a separation and justified the militarist expansion of "enlightened" Japan, the progressive character in the liberal Japanese

¹⁹ Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader: Second Edition*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 594-617.

tradition vanished.

On the other hand, the most important lesson that the East can learn from Fukuzawa's betrayal of his own enlightenment project is that a disaster would occur if the struggle for "national recognition" or "national self-determination" overshadows the growth of the bourgeois liberalism. As explained in Chapter 2, Fukuzawa's *Encouragement* was an attempt to spread bourgeois rationalism and create a bourgeois class in Japan. By taming wild, action-oriented samurais into a rational bourgeois, Fukuzawa wanted to change them into an agent for a liberal reform. Although Fukuzawa later betrayed this cause himself, the blooming of liberalism and socialism under the short-lived Taishō democracy in the 1920s implies that Fukuzawa's initial plan was indeed on the right track. As capitalism rapidly grew, modern classes, such as bourgeois liberals and a unionized working class, began to oppose Japan's expansionism, even under the harsh oppression through the so-called "Peace-Preservation laws."

The dialectics that emerged from Fukuzawa's liberalism went further than a mere bourgeois liberalism. As the bourgeois became reluctant to support universal suffrage and betrayed their cause of liberalism, the socialists took their position and became true agents of universal rights. The Japanese Federation of Labor (*Sōdōmei*), the most durable social-democratic labor organization in prewar Japan, also supported greater autonomy of the Korean people and opposed the Siberian expedition of the Imperial Japanese Army.²⁰ Socialists have generally been regarded as "Korean sympathizers" in this period.²¹ It is thus no surprise that the reactionary "civilian militias" massacred both socialists and Koreans during the chaos of the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923. The general invocation of universal

²⁰ Gordon, 132.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

rights in the labor movements also encouraged women's movements. When the movement was most powerful, there was very little mention of any "identity" but rather a simple invocation of universal rights and solidarity. "They all said they just wanted to do what human beings do."²²

It is even more important to note that the reactionary force in the Imperial Japanese Army, which pushed Japan not only into the Second Sino-Japanese War but also a total war against Western civilization, was supported by anti-capitalist petite-bourgeois groups. They attacked both capitalists and labor unions and attempted to eliminate all intermediate institutions between the Emperor and his subjects.²³ Even the old conservative Fukuzawa fiercely opposed the elimination of intermediate institutions between the sovereign and the people. Once a movement took priority in the preservation of the authentic "spirit" in its identity, however, it seemed very difficult to stop such a deterioration. Nothing could represent the pure Japanese Spirit more authentically and tangibly than the Emperor himself. By upholding the Emperor as the one man who could truly represent the whole of Japan, the reactionary class developed their own version of fascist egalitarianism, which is essentially identical to the ideology expressed by the Nazi slogan "ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer."

Fukuzawa thus left a dual legacy—the two separate traditions that leaders of the East should carefully choose in their modernization projects.²⁴ His liberalism spread the seed of universalism that later bloomed, but his turn to the Japanese Spirit and politics of recognition prepared a precarious road toward totalitarian Japan. The former constituted Japan's first liberal bourgeois tradition, while the latter contributed to a conservative tradition that was

²² "tonikaku, nin'gen no suru koto wo yaritai tte, minna iundesu," *ibid.*, 223-228.

²³ *Ibid.*, 255-263.

²⁴ The refusal of modernization is, although not impossible, a very limited option in political terms. It has been successful only in extremely closed societies, such as Bhutan. Even the Kingdom of Bhutan is now challenged by the increasing influence of globalization. See Anbarasan Ethirajan, "Reality hits charming Bhutan," *BBC News*, October 30, 2013.

highly correlated with its further radicalization in the 1930s. Of course, it is certainly not an either/or choice. Even if political elites of the East choose bourgeois liberalism as their motor of modernization at first, the increasing gap between rich and poor and social transformation caused by capitalism would make the elites later attracted to the idea of homogenous national identity. Just like Fukuzawa did, any political elite in a rapid transformation would seriously consider the recognition of national identity and its “greatness” as a convenient tool to keep the nation united during social turmoil. They also have to know, however, what risks they are taking when making such a choice.

The deterioration of Meiji Japan into a totalitarian state in the 1930s was just one example that shows the consequence of the state founded on the desire for national recognition. The same thing happened in both North and South Korea. Once North Korea renounced international socialism and took the overtly nationalist “self-reliance (*juche*)” principle, there was little possibility to address the real progress of universal rights for its citizens.²⁵ By the same token, the tradition that prioritizes their national identity left a deeply reactionary legacy in both the political left and right in the South; while the right glorifies the anti-communist legacy that “saved the nation,” the left often relies on a convenient caricature of the right as the “collaborator” with Japanese imperialism. Neither was necessarily beneficial in addressing more urgent issues in the increasingly exploitative giant corporations (*jaebeol*) and the marginalization of the labor minority, particularly women and foreign workers.

In short, nothing is truly progressive in the idea of national identity, national self-

²⁵ Although the theoretical foundation of North Korea’s “self-reliance” was based on a so-called “human-centered (*in ’gan jungsim*)” philosophy, its political function was obviously for survival as a nation in the wake of the turmoil in the communist world, such as Khrushchev’s anti-Stalinist movement and Mao’s cultural revolution. It was particularly strengthened after China’s pro-West policy since the 1970s.

determination, or national independence alone. Only on the foundation of liberal republics governed by the liberal rule of law do the rights of individual citizens exist. If the Korean “left” and Chinese “Marxists” and even rising “new lefts” would not cease to invoke nationalism, one can legitimately wonder if they are truly as “progressive” as they claim. Fighting imperialism can be regarded as progressive if and only if it is directed against the inhumanity of imperialism that strips the oppressed people of their universal rights. Fighting imperialism as an expression of “national will” or national identity is not progressive by any standard.

D. The Contribution of This Study

The initial plan of this study was nothing more than making Fukuzawa known to political theorists so they might become interested in his thoughts, which I considered as a powerful case that showed the role of liberalism and enlightenment across civilizations. It is certainly lamentable that no one outside disciplines related to East Asian studies even knows the name of this extraordinary political theorist. As I finish this study, however, the universal implications I found from Fukuzawa are even greater than the man.

One of the key achievements of this study is that one can find how revolutionary liberalism would become in a society suffering from a long history of oppression. As Marx famously said:

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors," and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment."²⁶

²⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader: Second Edition*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 475.

Fukuzawa was the very first intellectual in East Asia who tried to “put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic” traditions. Although he was not able to complete this task, his critique of Confucianism was indeed devastating and the influence of Confucianism in Japan was never the same after Fukuzawa. As Marx said, the bourgeois preoccupied with “naked self-interest” and “cash payment” also emerged in Japan, and, although they were not very powerful and later betrayed the cause of liberalism, the liberals constituted the foundation of anti-imperialism and cosmopolitan solidarity that grew with socialists. It should be a good lesson to so-called “radical theorists” nowadays who increasingly dismiss liberalism in favor of abstract “community values.”

The second contribution of this study is that it reveals the importance of the idea of progress through Fukuzawa’s life and thought. By holding onto the regulative ideal that all individuals would be fully autonomous and free from any external oppression, Fukuzawa spread the idea of progress originating from the European enlightenment. It is noteworthy that Fukuzawa’s thought became increasingly close to that of totalitarians as soon as he renounced the commitment to progress in favor of the national interests of Japan. The belief that humanity progresses toward a certain ideal end does not by itself create a totalitarian ideology, especially when such an “end” implies ethical principles that endorse universal rights of individuals. By contrast, the loss of belief in progress would easily make one wonder in abstract metaphysics instead of realizable political goals or, just like Fukuzawa, fall into the trap of nationalism.

Another major contribution made by this study is that it illuminates the relations between ethics and science, which are often neglected in contemporary political theories. Perhaps as a defensive reaction to the “behavioral revolution” in the 1960s, political theorists

often took it for granted that the role of political theory is to find the “moral voice” in politics, focusing on “what ought to be” without a serious consideration of “what is.”²⁷ I believe Fukuzawa’s struggle in defending scientific reason against metaphysical attacks from Confucianists would remind political theorists of the significance of this debate. The instrumental rationality and the scientific knowledge it promotes would become not only a healthy antidote to the metaphysical dogmas but also a good supporter of the right ethical principles. Although it is certainly dangerous to allow instrumental rationality to dominate the discussion of ethics, the distinctive role of science and ethics should be respected, as Kant argued in his first *Critique*. Further, technological advancement and scientific innovation cannot be solely held responsible for some of the ethical issues they create. It is often the case that such an ethical problem was intensified by ignorance about the technology. Ethics cannot decide whether Internet-based social networking or artificial intelligence is ethically good or bad without the help of scientists, and, by the same token, political theorists alone cannot determine what should be done about the influence of such technologies on politics.

Finally, this study is a strong critique of existentialism in politics. Fukuzawa’s desire for the recognition of Japan as a “great nation” decisively affected his turning to the conservative politics and support of militarism. He also upheld the “spirit” of Japan, which he indirectly renounced earlier, primarily because he feared the existential threat of having the West as a “master of spirit.” This dynamic precisely resonates with Heidegger’s fear of “Americanism and Bolshevism,” which would “destroy the ‘German-ness’ from the middle

²⁷ As a general defense of political theory as a subfield of political science, see the following: “In the letter endorsed by the Foundations of Political Theory section of the American Political Science Association, we discover that “[i]n the development of the discipline of Political Science . . . political theory . . . has been [its] moral voice”; that political theory usefully raises questions of gender and race; and that it “remind(s) us that our methodological choices have normative and ethical implications that we cannot ignore.”” Andrew Rehfeld, “Offensive Political Theory,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (June 2010), 468.

of the Occident.”²⁸ No wonder, then, that both Fukuzawa and Heidegger became reactionary in the end. Great care must be exercised when using existentialist claims for political arguments, particularly the claims of “authentic” and “unmediated” sentiments of the subject.

Fukuzawa Yukichi is a man who deserves recognition beyond merely being a historical figure of nineteenth century Japan. He is more than “Japanese”—the discipline of East Asian studies alone cannot illuminate the universal implication of his life and philosophy. He is not only one of the few political theorists who correctly grasped the progressive impulse in liberalism, but he was also a living example of the rise, frustration, and betrayal of liberalism. I hope this study will inspire fellow political theorists to become interested in thinkers outside the West, not simply as an interesting point of “comparison” but as a contribution to the universal truth that all political theorists endeavor to find.

²⁸ “...die große Bedrohung zu sehen, daß sich der Bolschewismus und der Amerikanismus zu einer einzigen Wesensgestalt vereinigen und das Deutschtum aus dieser Einheit heraus als Mitte des Abendlandes selbst zerstören.” (Jan 29, 1943), Walter Homolka and Arnulf Heidegger ed., *Heidegger und der Antisemitismus: Positionen im Widerstreit: mit Briefen von Martin und Fritz Heidegger* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016), 86.

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