Fukuzawa Yukichi: Confucian Entrepreneur of Meiji Japan

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Confucian Entrepreneur of Meiji Japan

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Department of History and
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Bachelor of Arts

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Introduction

If one were to ask Japanese citizens today to name the most important figures in the founding of the modern Japanese nation, one name that would inevitably appear on the majority of the lists would be Fukuzawa Yukichi. He possesses a high enough standing in the national memory to be placed on the 10,000 Yen bill, an honor that, such as in America, is reserved for those who are considered forefathers of the nation. Despite this however, it is doubtful whether many of these same Japanese citizens would be able to explain Fukuzawa's ideas. Most of them would certainly know that he was crucial in shaping modern education and schools, and they would be quick to cite his position on democracy. Few have a real understanding of what Fukuzawa actually advocated, for he has been distorted over time into little more than a vague symbol of modernity and liberalism. The true Fukuzawa is only to be found by sifting through his own history and writings, shaped by the experiences he lived through, the most important of which is the Meiji Revolution.
The Bakumatsu (幕末) and its subsequent abolition of the samurai class along with the reinstatement of the Emperor drastically altered Japan's system of government and also radically changed core beliefs about society, the role of its citizens, and the proper form of government. For the first time in the country’s long history, intellectuals were forced to answer the question, “what is a modern nation,” and more specifically, “what is the Japanese nation,” for its most powerful symbol – the samurai as personified by the Tokugawa shoguns – no longer existed.

It was during this time period surrounding the Bakumatsu that a new type of individual rose to the forefront of Japanese society: the intellectual entrepreneur. It is perhaps a misnomer to call this position “new”, for men – mostly lower class samurai – had often found employment by selling their knowledge throughout the Tokugawa Period. However, the growth of political freedom through the severing of clan ties allowed greater social mobility, and the emergence of more modern forms of capitalism ensured that such entrepreneurs could make an even greater profit in the Meiji Era (明治時代). Also, these men began to find themselves in great demand, as the new Meiji leaders sought a form for the new government they had created. Indeed, these intellectual entrepreneurs would be the key force in shaping the future of the Japanese nation.

It is worthwhile to examine the term “intellectual entrepreneur” for reasons of clarity. They should be considered similar to merchants, who were their own class and made money through the buying and selling of material goods. There were a great number of these types of entrepreneurs in Japan at this time, but the intellectual

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1 The Bakumatsu refers to the Japanese Civil War, which is typically dated in 1867/68. It was during this time that the imperial rebels (Isshin) staged a revolution against the Shogunate (Bakufu) and eventually overthrew the Tokugawa government. The Meiji Era refers to the period following the restoration of the Emperor Mutsuhito and lasted from 1868-1912. It is the years within this time period that this paper will be chiefly concerned.
entrepreneur differs from the merchant both due to his social status and the goods he offered. Typically, these men belonged to the samurai class under Tokugawa rule, but were not in places of particularly high power. In most cases, they were lower class samurai who had been forced to eke out an existence by selling themselves as educators, and often felt just as oppressed by the Tokugawa system as the commoners. It was this same group of men who flocked to the Meiji cause of reinstalling the Emperor, although it is doubtful they realized that they would be disenfranchised by the very leaders they had assisted. Following the Bakumatsu, these intellectuals continued to work in education, political science and government, as well as expanding into the fields of publishing and other businesses. Many would become newspaper editors and authors who advanced theories on the future of Japan and its people, and thus became crucial in building the Japanese nation that came into full blossom in the early to mid 20th century. Others still, such as Ito Hirobumi, became key players in the new government and would have a great influence on the form that Japanese democracy took in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

One the most important figures of this movement was Fukuzawa Yukichi (福沢諭吉). In many ways, he is seen as the embodiment of the Meiji Era and its ideals of democracy and equality; indeed, he exists in the Japanese memory as a pillar of liberalism. The historiography follows suit, as many historians – both Japanese and Western – have accepted this depiction of Fukuzawa without question. His treatises on nation-building (An Outline on the Theory of Civilization) and education (An

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2 One of the chief problems in writing this paper has been my own inability to read Japanese at a level that would allow me to use older references. For that reason, many of the sources that would help to solidify this claim have been unavailable to me.

1 文明論の概略
Encouragement of Learning\(^4\) have become centerpieces of the Japanese liberal
movement and are generally credited with creating the existing forms of Japanese
education and, to a lesser degree, its form of democracy. Certainly he is seen as being
"ahead of his time," one of a few enlightened souls who saw the country’s potential. In
fact, he could be likened to a Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Paine as the mythos
surrounding him and his ideas has become far more than the actual man.

It would not be inaccurate to call our current perception of Fukuzawa flawed; it is
full of distortions and misconceptions. Certainly he was the founder and forerunner of
many important ideas and his role in creating modern Japan is unarguable. Yet rather
than seeing him as a liberal ahead of his time, he should be seen as a man who straddled
the gap between Tokugawa and Meiji Japan, and was able to profit from his skill in
blending the old with the new. To call his ideas liberal is a gross inaccuracy that can be
credited to current trends in Japanese politics, for Fukuzawa himself was in many ways a
product of traditional society and a true Confucian scholar. This can be seen in many of
his writings. It has often been said that he was one of the largest proponents of
democracy in Meiji Japan; this is true, but only if the definition of democracy is shifted
from our own modern views to the definition that was most common in the 19\(^{th}\) and early
20\(^{th}\) centuries. Certainly Fukuzawa’s idea of equality would seem limited to us today as
it precluded both women and many of the people Fukuzawa saw as uneducated.

Exposing this misconception of Fukuzawa and his ideas is one of the key goals of this
paper. It is not the purpose of this paper to defame Fukuzawa or his accomplishments,
but rather to place them in a more accurate and revealing historical context. This is a

\(^4\) 学問のすすめ
goal that Fukuzawa himself seems to have shared, for he spent many of the last years of his life distancing himself from the liberal movement that he is so often placed within.

In order to more accurately place Fukuzawa within the new Meiji society, it is necessary to first examine his origins; for this reason, the paper will begin with a brief discussion of the Tokugawa samurai and their changing role in Japan. Gone were the days when they could maintain control simply through the use of a sword; instead there emerged a class of "warrior bureaucrats" who were most useful to their clans through skill in accounting rather than kenjitsu. These men were therefore well-educated and thus versed in Confucian thought, which will lend itself to a discussion of Neo-Confucianism and its impact on Fukuzawa's own theories. Finally, the first part of this paper will deal with the Tokugawa conception of creating a Japan that would be centered around and controlled by the samurai: specifically, bushido and the importance of individualism within a conformist setting.

The second part of this paper covers Fukuzawa's pre-Meiji years. It looks chiefly at how he fit into the Tokugawa model and his own Confucian education by examining three key points: his prominence in the field of Dutch learning, his continuing education and the importance thereof, and the influence of western ideas upon his thinking. In a way, all of these aspects of Fukuzawa's life have been used to explain his so-called liberalism, and yet when viewed in another light they can be seen as also contributing to his traditionalism.

The third and most important segment of this paper discusses Fukuzawa's post-Restoration contributions to Meiji Japan, and the many facets thereof. It outlines his rise to wealth and power, as well as many of his accomplishments such as the establishment
of Keio University, the creation of his own personal publishing company and newspaper, and his role in re-shaping the zaibatsu corporations through investment and top-down restructuring. Consequently, Fukuzawa was able to create a sphere for himself where he was outside the government, and yet still exerted an undeniable influence on political thought. The examination of such thought will be examined through the careful reading of two of his most influential works: *An Encouragement of Learning* and *An Outline on a Theory of Civilization*. It is at this point that Fukuzawa’s Confucianism will be more directly discussed, for it shaped a great deal of his thinking on how a society should be structured and run. However, it will be equally important to discuss the ways that he was non-Confucian and how he separated himself from his own educational background. It was this blending of traditional thought and new ideas that allowed him to create a powerful, new ideology for Meiji Japan that would include such seemingly divergent ideas as democracy, equality, the kokutai, and the importance of service to the state.

Finally, the end of Fukuzawa’s political influence will be examined, including the reasons why he fell from influence and spent the last of his years as a self-described Confucian hermit. Much of the reason for this comes from the fact that the Meiji leaders had indeed discovered an ideology for the new Japan, but many of its core beliefs were in direct opposition to Fukuzawa. Although he had created the term, Fukuzawa did not agree with the existing conception of the kokutai or the emergence of tennosei philosophy, which above all else revered the Emperor. The other end of the political spectrum saw the birth and growth of liberalism, particularly the Popular Rights Movement. Although Fukuzawa did share some of their beliefs, their philosophies differed greatly in many important ways, specifically in the role and rights of the common people. At the same
time, the Popular Rights Movement had come under fire from the government for being too radical; therefore, Fukuzawa saw it as prudent to distance himself from the movement. It was thus that he faded from the limelight and became a Confucian recluse, little more than a quaint relic of a past that was already fading from memory.

**Part I: The Tokugawa Samurai**

In looking at Fukuzawa and other intellectuals of the period, it is necessary to first examine the environment in which they were created. The Tokugawa Shogunate is noteworthy for many reasons, one of the most important of which is the role it created for its key citizens; that is, the class of samurai. Certainly the samurai had existed in some form or another in the past, going back to the sengoku era and perhaps even earlier, but it was under the Tokugawa that their place in society – and in history – was truly cemented. Many of the ideas that are commonly associated with the samurai today, such as honor and bushido, gained full articulation during this period. However, it is equally important to remember that the samurai class was not merely a class of warriors or soldiers, although these are often seen as their defining characteristics, but occupied several different and sometimes conflicting spheres within Tokugawa society. It is with these other roles that we are chiefly concerned in our study of Fukuzawa, as he never gained fame as a great warrior. Rather, he belonged to a group that may be best seen as a subclass, that of the lower-ranked samurai who were unable to survive on stipends from their lords and thus were forced to supplement their incomes. It was these men who formed the group of intellectual entrepreneurs with whom we are concerned. For these reasons, I will now explore the role of the Tokugawa samurai in a bit more depth, looking first from
a social perspective that encapsulates ideas about honor and loyalty, and then from an economic perspective that outlines the rise of this class of intellectual entrepreneurs.

It is impossible to consider the samurai of Tokugawa Japan without at some point exploring the idea of bushido, that ambiguous concept of obligation to one’s lord as well as to a higher, moral code. The way of the warrior certainly predates the unification of Japan by Ieyasu, but it was under his rule and that of his successors that the idea gained such a central place in samurai culture. Specifically, the Tokugawa took the idea of a moral code and coupled it with fealty to the shogunate; a samurai could no longer be answerable simply to himself and his peers, but also to his ruling daimyo and to the Shogun as well. By doing so, the shogun hoped to curtail the number of samurai carrying out their own brands of justice. They were no longer permitted to seek revenge on those who might have slighted them, a problem that was rampant during the Sengoku era and had resulted in ongoing grudge fights in which the original cause of the argument might actually have been forgotten. Controlling the samurai in this way was key to the Tokugawas’ plan of unifying and stabilizing the country because it created a well-defined hierarchy. Each samurai had to answer to those above him, starting at the very lowest classes and working all the way up to the Shogun. With this hierarchy came an enforced loyalty, which also became incorporated into the idea of bushido.

It has often been written that this new hierarchy was in large part based upon conformity within the system; in other words, that it suppressed the rampant individuality that had characterized the Sengoku era. For example, seppuku (ritual suicide) had been common and encouraged during the previous Sengoku Era as a means of expressing

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one’s own morality. The Tokugawa suppressed this practice because it called into
question the higher authorities and allowed the samurai to act autonomously. However,
as Ikegami has argued, individuality was actually also an important part of the Tokugawa
system. On the large scale, this is illustrated in the governmental system itself; although
the Shogun was supposed to wield supreme power, the state structure was actually
decentralized by the existence of the daimyo, each of whom had control over a particular
region and its accompanying samurai. Each of these daimyo were given a degree of self-
determination and thus individuality in the way they chose to rule, as long as it fit into the
Tokugawas’ larger plan. As Ikegami writes:

In contrast to the prevalent image of Tokugawa Japan as a “police state,” an
image that was popularized by the classic work of E. H. Norman... the actual
strength of the regime’s control lay in its flexibility. In reality, it gave
considerable disciplinary discretion to lower- and middle-range social
organizations... By being decentralized and flexible, the Tokugawa system made
good use of the self-governing capacities of middle-range social organizations
which thereby dealt with unrest from below at an intermediary level.6

At first, it may seem that this freedom was the result of poor planning, and that this
independence was indicative of a society that was really nothing more than a cluster of
barely-related groups. That is to say, that the Tokugawa’s did not actually possess the
control they wished. However, in actuality, this willingness to bestow independence was
actually just another control scheme. By letting people perceive themselves as having

6 Ibid, 165.
freedom, they become more loyal to the system and their rulers, which in turn enforces the hierarchy.7

This independence was equally important to individual samurai as well, albeit in very different forms. The samurai of the Tokugawa era were forced to reconcile their old ideas of the true samurai as a man who followed his own moral compass with their new existence as a class of vassalic bureaucrats who served the shogunate. One of the best existing sources of this attempted reconciliation is the Hagakure, a Tokugawa-era book that recounts the actions of “true” samurai, which could then in turn be incorporated into the daily life of the samurai bureaucrats.8 One of its most important points focuses on the relationship between the master and follower. Rather than seeing this relationship as one of conformity or blind loyalty, it is depicted as an expression of free will, as the samurai chooses to serve another. If a samurai is truly loyal, he is serving his master out of love rather than obligation.

So too was individuality encouraged in death as well as life. A samurai was, of course, expected to die honorably in service of his lord or master and in this respect death was used to reinforce the hierarchy. However, as Ikegami points out, one’s relationship with death was also a form of freedom.9 An integral part of being a samurai was being comfortable with the idea of dying, so that death no longer held any power over them. “Hagakure implies that “being dead to one’s self allows a man to live free – free from the constraints of desires ordinarily associated with life, desires that impair sound judgment. The person who thinks about death on a daily basis is able to devote all his energy to the

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7 Ibid, 206.
8 Ibid, 282-284.
9 Ibid, 281.
service of his master.” Clearly, perceptions about death served a two-fold purpose: to grant the samurai another measure of independence, while also binding him to his lord.

Why is this discussion of samurai independence and individuality necessary in a paper that deals with a man whose most important entrepreneurial pursuits took place long after the abolition of the samurai class? For one, it can be seen that Fukuzawa’s entrepreneurship actually had its roots in his youth, well before the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Secondly, Fukuzawa remained deeply attached to these very ideas of autonomy for the rest of his life. Questions about service and loyalty as opposed to individuality form the core of many of Fukuzawa’s theories; it is imperative to recognize that such ideas did not come only with his exposure to western political thought, but had a basis in his own Tokugawa culture. As we will see, reconciling the individual – whom Fukuzawa saw as being essential to the creation of a nation-state – with the kokutai, a system seen as stressing the importance of conformity, was one of the main goals of much of Fukuzawa’s writing. How can someone continue to be an individual and nourish their own intellectual needs while remaining part of a larger entity known as “Japan”? What is the role of the individual in creating this new nation? The answers to these questions would be greatly influenced by Fukuzawa’s own Tokugawa education and status as a samurai.

For now, let us turn from these intellectual questions to the economic reality of the Tokugawa period samurai. During the Sengoku era and under the reigns of Nobunaga and Toyotomi, the samurai class had existed almost as a parallel to the landed aristocracy of medieval Europe. Each daimyo was a landlord who controlled a han which was cultivated by peasants who were the equivalent of feudal serfs. Each daimyo also

10 Ibid, 287.
controlled a certain number of samurai, and was answerable to those above him. This remained true into the Tokugawa era, but gradually this system began to change. The movement of samurai into castle-towns, which had begun under Toyotomi, was continued. By removing the tie between the samurai and his land, Tokugawa hoped to bring them under even tighter control. By moving them into the cities and enforcing the system of sankin kotai, he could also keep a closer eye on them and thus ensure a greater measure of loyalty.

This movement may not have been a problem for samurai families of high standing who were given a government stipend large enough to live on comfortably. However, for lower-level families it presented a distinct problem, as they did not have enough money to subsist on and yet were not qualified for many other forms of work. They detested the idea of becoming like the new merchant class, who were concerned only with making money, which was seen as the basest of desires. For this reason, the samurai were outlawed from being part of the merchant class. Unable to make money in other ways, they were therefore frequently forced to sell off treasured family possessions, particularly if their clan could off-set their poverty with additional funds. This lack of appropriate compensation for service called into question the entire vassalic system, in which the lord was supposed to provide for his loyal retainers. Therefore, a new

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12 Ibid, 33.
disillusioned group of lower-class samurai were formed, of which Fukuzawa Yukichi is merely one prominent example.\textsuperscript{15}

That is not to say that all poor samurai became intellectual entrepreneurs or tried to distance themselves from their clan and sever all ties. Many remained within their clan working as administrators, accountants, and bookkeepers. This allowed for a good deal of advancement, both because of the Tokugawa meritocracy, but also through the exploitation of family and personal associations. A lower-class samurai could improve his station significantly by proving his skill at organization, which in turn would afford him a larger stipend, more servants, and the chance to make acquaintances with even more powerful individuals. Thus, there was a certain appeal to remaining and working inside the clan structure. However, some samurai were either unable or unwilling to do so, and they form the second group with which we are concerned.

Since they had little or nothing material to sell, these men became what I am terming intellectual entrepreneurs, for what they ended up selling was in a very real sense their own education. These samurai frequently hired themselves out as teachers, private tutors, translators (this will be discussed further when we consider Fukuzawa’s connections with Dutch learning) and other jobs that specifically relied on their educational background. They also often improved their station by working within their clan as administrators, bookkeepers, and accountants. The types of skills this sort of work required afforded the samurai an advantage in that few people outside the merchant and samurai classes had the necessary education and training. A small percentage of peasants may have been educated, but the vast majority of educated men in Japan at this time generally fell into these two, higher classes. Literacy itself was a marketable skill,

\textsuperscript{15} Smith, 150.
even more so following Perry's opening of Japan if the person in question had so much as basic skills in a foreign language. Toward the end of the Tokugawa Era, working as a liaison to foreign traders and diplomats was another job that low-class samurai frequently pursued.

In this manner, many low-level samurai were able to carve out relatively comfortable existences for themselves and their families. However, there remained among many a strong resentment toward the upper echelons of the samurai hierarchy. It should not be surprising then that many of these low-level samurai flocked to the cause of the Imperialists (Isshin Shishi) during the early years of the Bakumatsu, while a large portion of the Shogun's forces were composed of samurai families with long lineages and high incomes. Some lower-rung samurai remained loyal to the shogunate; many were among the most outspoken critics of the Isshin and their cause. However, a greater number threw in their lot with the ronin, peasants and other groups who felt oppressed by the shogunate.

This depiction of the Tokugawa samurai may seem little more than a digression; however, it is key to understanding Fukuzawa's later positions on state formation as well as his own entrepreneurial activities. Many historians have seen his ventures – particularly in publishing and the creation of Keio University – as unprecedented leaps into the new modern age. It will be easily demonstrated that in reality his actions were merely extensions of the same things he and others had been doing during the Tokugawa era.

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16 Ibid, 149-150.
Dutch Learning

By the mid-19th century, many lower-class samurai shifted their focus from traditional types of learning and pursued a course of education known as Dutch learning (Rangaku). Typically, this centered on the study of Dutch language as a means to gain access to new Western ideas, particularly in science and technology. Interest in such subjects had existed since the 17th and 18th centuries when foreigners first started arriving in Japan, but by the early-to-mid 1800s it was no longer seen as a frivolous pursuit, but a necessity. To many Japanese, particularly of Fukuzawa’s class, it was becoming more and more apparent that Japan would no longer be able to isolate itself from the rest of the world and would have to take advantage of Western ideas if it hoped to ever become a modern nation, as Fukuzawa wrote in his autobiography.

[It was a few months after the coming of Commodore Perry. And the news of the appearance of the American fleet in Yedo [Tokyo] had already made its impression on every remote town in Japan. At the same time the problem of national defense and the modern gunnery had become the foremost interest of all the samurai. Now, all those who wanted to study gunnery had to do so according to the Dutch who were the only Europeans permitted to have intercourse with Japan after the seventeenth century.]

Dutch learning schools began to spring up across the country, particularly in areas with a higher concentration of foreigners, such as Osaka and Nagasaki.

Pursuing Dutch learning was also a wise course of action for many poorer samurai who saw themselves as expendable to their clans. It provided them an

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opportunity to leave their homes and thus be outside their clan’s control, giving them a
certain degree of independence. However, they were also able to fulfill their obligations
to the clan at the same time through the justification that their learning would eventually
be beneficial to those above them and the country as a whole. In this way, they were able
to reconcile their desire to escape the oppression of the hierarchical Tokugawa society
with their ingrained belief that all actions should be in the interest of the clan and country.

However, not every pursuit of rangaku was an attempt to escape clan pressures.
In many cases, it was the clan itself that encouraged its samurai to pursue Dutch learning
in the hopes that it could bring modern technology into Japan and to the clan itself.
Satsuma and Choshu, the leaders of the Meiji Revolution, in particular urged their
samurai – particularly those in positions similar to Fukuzawa’s – to pursue western
learning as they felt that such information and technology would be key in defeating the
Shogunate and restoring the Emperor to the throne. Perhaps the best example of this
philosophy is the teacher Sakuma Shozan and his disciples. Sakuma advocated the
blending of “Eastern morality and Western techniques,” praising the spirit of the samurai
on one hand while encouraging the use of modern technology.\footnote{Conrad Totman, \textit{The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu: 1862-1868} Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980. 166-167.} This, he believed, was
the only way that Japan would ever be completely free of imperialism, and so he
advocated the opening of Japan to the rest of the world. It should therefore come as no
surprise that he was assassinated in 18—by an exclusionist. His ideas, however, lived on
in his disciples, particularly Katsu Kaishu, Sakamoto Ryoma, and Yoshida Shoin.

The famous teacher Yoshida Shoin (1830-1859) of Choshu was Sakuma’s
disciple and among the first to advocate the study of Western ideas and successfully
integrate them into Japanese education. Yoshida’s story is well-known and serves as an interesting parallel to Fukuzawa’s own life; like Fukuzawa, he was born to a low-ranking samurai family. His family was under the rule of the daimyo of Choshu, which would become one of the hotspots of Imperialist activity. At age eight, he began to study Confucianism and by age fifteen came under the tutelage of Sakuma. From then on, he immersed himself in the study of western military technology, just as Fukuzawa immersed himself in Dutch learning. Upon the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry’s black ships in Japan, Yoshida rowed a small boat out to meet them and learn the secrets of the West. For this, he was exiled to Hagi, where he set up a small school called Shokansonjuku (Village School Under the Pines) and began teaching the men who would eventually become the Meiji revolutionaries. Yoshida’s key principle was to use Western techniques and weaponry to drive the barbarians from Japan’s shores. “Eastern morality, Western techniques,” the phrase coined by Yoshida’s own teacher Sakuma Shozan, would later become one of the most common slogans of the Sat-Cho revolutionaries. He also expressed a belief in the ultimate sovereignty of the Emperor, while remaining loyal to Tokugawa rule and continuing to advocate the opening of Japan. It would be difficult to overestimate Yoshida’s influence; many of his students went on to become leaders of the revolution, and two would later be made prime minister. One of these men, his student Ito Hirobumi, went on to become Japan’s first prime minister and integrated many of his teacher’s ideas into his governmental policies.¹⁹

The stories Fukuzawa Yukichi and Yoshida Shoin are similar in ways that reveal important aspects of intellectual entrepreneurship in late Tokugawa and early Meiji Japan.

Both were men whose families were lower ranking and who had struggled in their early years to make a name for themselves. Both blamed this at least in part on the Tokugawa system of hierarchy, as well as the unwillingness of Japan to let in outside ideas. Each was involved to some degree with foreigners, with varying levels of success; Yoshida Shoin’s service was rejected by Commodore Perry, but Fukuzawa was able to secure a seat on the first Japanese ship to travel to America. Both eventually enjoyed success as educators and political theorists. This often proved the most effective path for Tokugawa intellectuals who had engaged with Western ideas. Unlike Yoshida, however, Fukuzawa was able to avoid entanglement in Bakumatsu factionalism; although he was disliked by many people on both sides and faced several assassination attempts, he proclaimed himself neutral and never gave his support to one side or the other. Yoshida was an ardent supporter of the Isshin faction and helped to plan many of their activities, including the assassination of Ii Naosuke. For this, he was sentenced to death and was beheaded on October 15th, 1858.20 One could easily imagine a similar fate for Fukuzawa had he been more vocal about his political views.

Fukuzawa pursued Dutch learning with particular fervor and enthusiasm throughout his early life. He first began studying Dutch in 1854 in Nagasaki. At first, his purpose was nothing more than to get away from his hometown and the samurai of his clan. “The true reason I went there was nothing more than to get away from Nakatsu… I turned at the end of the town’s street, spat on the ground, and walked quickly away.”21 However, even at this early stage he was already looking toward the future; mastering Dutch would allow him access to gensho, western-style books written in Dutch on the

21 Autobiography, 22.
subjects of science, military technology, et cetera. At this point, Fukuzawa seems to have focused on Dutch learning as something that would allow him to change his position in society, to distance himself from the clan hierarchy. In other words, he was not yet clearly focused on using Western ideas for the betterment of Japan; instead, he was continuing to employ methods used by the Tokugawa intellectual entrepreneurs. This is clearly illustrated in his opinions of his first Dutch teacher, a man named Matsuzaki Teiho, who was a medical student and retainer of the lord of Satsuma. Fukuzawa relates the story of how he realized he had actually surpassed the skill of his teacher.

Matsuzaki gave me first the letters of the alphabet with the pronunciation of each in Japanese ideograph... After a while I began to be familiar with them, and found myself able to understand something of the language. I realized then that my teacher was not overly brilliant in his strange subject. I thought: “He hasn’t much of a brain. If it were Chinese instead of Dutch, our position would be reversed. If I learn Dutch as well as I know Chinese, I would not have to bow to this fellow. Someday I shall turn on him, and teach him Dutch.”

Clearly, Fukuzawa saw this as an opportunity to distance himself from the clan structure, as he did when he decided to move to Osaka to continue his studies.

It will prove useful at this point to compare Fukuzawa to another low-ranking, Tokugawa era samurai. Like Fukuzawa, Kokichi Katsuo lived during the last years of Tokugawa rule, and enjoyed few of the privileges offered to the higher echelons of the samurai class. At the age of fourteen, Kokichi ran away from home, effectively turning himself into a ronin, a masterless samurai who lived at the very bottom rung of

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22 Autobiography, 25.
23 Autobiography, 37.
Tokugawa society. He was forced to sleep outside, sell his possessions and beg for alms, borrowing money from the few friends he made with no intention of repaying it. His dream was to become a retainer in a nobleman’s house and thus achieve a life of luxury, but his methods differed greatly from Fukuzawa’s. He gambled and fought for money, even after becoming a student at a kendo (swordfighting) dojo, and continued to borrow money from his fellow students. Eventually, he was able to gain a following and established himself as a gangster; for example, at one point he helped his landlord clear out tenants who were not paying their rent on time, then replaced them with his own friends and associates. He also helped the man settle his debts, with the understanding that he would be repaid with interest. He was able to accomplish most of his successes through force, or the threat of force. In one memorable example, he intimidated a group of peasants who lived in an associate’s fief by threatening ritual suicide, after which they quickly kowtowed. He later established a protection racket and was able to lead a life of relative comfort. As he writes, “I wore kimonos of imported silk and fine fabrics that were beyond the reach of most people. I ate my fill of good food, and all my life I bought as many prostitutes as I liked. I lived life fully.” Yet by middle-age, Kokichi was put on house arrest by his superiors; it was during this period of confinement and introspection that he wrote his autobiography, and it is evident that he was ashamed of his life and the things he had done.

It is not hard to imagine Fukuzawa’s life taking a similar direction; he and Kokichi were men from the same class who faced many of the same problems. Their

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25 Ibid, 156.
decisions to leave home to pursue better lives form distinct parallels, as do the hardships they encountered. Both men were forced to sell all their possessions in order to pay off family and personal debts. Despite this, however, Fukuzawa’s life ended up quite different from Kokichi’s. This can be directly traced to Fukuzawa’s pursuit of Dutch learning and the opportunities it afforded him. Kokichi himself admits that lack of education was one of the things that held him back, and even later in his life tries to remedy this by learning how to read and write. It was men like Kokichi that Fukuzawa wanted to see elevated beyond their low status, and it was this equality that he would later advocate. Education was the means to this end, and for that reason Fukuzawa ardently pursued his chosen path of Dutch learning.27

*Rangaku*, then, was a way to improve one’s station in society, or at least Fukuzawa hoped it could be. However, it is clear that the leader’s of clans such as Fukuzawa’s realized that the pursuit of Dutch learning was luring away many of their men. While some of these clans might have embraced knowledge from the west, many would also have seen it as unacceptable. Furthermore, many did not see the value in learning language. Fukuzawa’s own clan would not allow him to go to Osaka simply to learn language because there was “no precedent of a samurai leaving his duty for the purpose of studying *Rangaku*.”28 Instead, he was forced to lie and write in his petition to leave that he would be studying gunnery, a skill that would undoubtedly be seen as pragmatic and useful.

Despite such difficulties, Fukuzawa was able to make much of his career in Dutch learning, the majority of which took place at the Ogata school in Osaka. It is important to

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27 Huber, 211.
28 Autobiography, 49.
examine the form this education took, because it had a great influence on Fukuzawa's
later ideas on education. In general, the students focused their studies on Dutch language;
long hours were spent reading, copying and translating Dutch texts on various subjects.
There was no formal curriculum to speak of, only a loose collection of Dutch dictionaries
and grammar books. Thus it was up to each student to determine and carry out his own
course of study. Fukuzawa himself never actually mentions a teacher or instructor at
Ogata, with the exception of the headmaster, and he emphasizes the amount of work each
student did independently. The only instruction received came from older students
helping the new ones. "It was a point of honor never to expect or receive any help; each
student had to depend on his own ability..."29 Hands-on learning was also encouraged,
no matter what the subject or difficulty, a principle that was borrowed directly from
earlier, more traditional Confucian academies. Students at Ogata School would
frequently finish scientific texts and then attempt to replicate the results by performing
the experiment themselves. Therefore, their learning was not only theoretical but
practical as well.

This independent pursuit of Dutch learning was accompanied by another trend:
the rejection of all things Chinese, especially the traditional Chinese-based education
system. Previously in Japan, Chinese learning had been embraced as the ultimate symbol
of culture and refinement. However, during Fukuzawa's youth there was a violent
backlash against all things Chinese, which were seen as being un-Japanese. This was
also true to some extent of Western learning, but whereas some groups saw the potential
benefit of Western ideas, Chinese learning (kangaku) was being rejected. Even
Fukuzawa, who had been inundated with Confucian ideals from his childhood saw

29 Autobiography, 82.
Chinese thought as being backward. “Our general opinion was that we should rid our
country of the influences of the Chinese altogether.” This first manifested itself in the
dismissal of Chinese medicine, which had been used for centuries in Japan and had been
believed to be the most advanced in the world. However, upon the arrival of Westerners
to Japan, Chinese medicine was replaced by “more advanced” methods. Chinese ideas
about the necessity of keeping the body’s energies in balance were rejected as being
superstitious and old-fashioned. In the same vein, Confucian learning was attacked as
being worthless, as it merely encouraged students to repeat the ideas of their master
without working out the problem themselves. The Confucian scholars were also seen as
being haughty and acting above their station. It was this kind of behavior that Fukuzawa
and his comrades were most interested in getting rid of.

In his autobiography, Fukuzawa stresses the fact that he and his fellow students
abandoned all aspects of kangaku and replaced them with Dutch learning, but in reality
this is far from the actual truth. As Margaret Mehl has pointed out, the Meiji leaders
were in fact heavily influenced by Chinese ideals as they began to form their new
government.

Not only did many Chinese ideas and patterns continue to be influential after
1868, but the leaders of the revolution themselves introduced Chinese concepts
and symbols which were new to Japan... The very slogan of the restoration,
sonno joi (‘respecting the monarch, repelling the barbarians’), represented a
Chinese ideal formulated by the historian Ssu-ma Chien in the second century BC.
The restoration itself was usually described by the words fukko or... isshin
('renewal'); both were classical Chinese terms, as was the era name ‘Meiji’, which came from the *I Ching*.

Fukuzawa, too, was unable to completely shed his Confucian background.

Not only were the revolutionaries influenced by Chinese ideas in their rhetoric, but the students of Dutch learning themselves were heavily influenced by trends in Neo-Confucianism, although they may not have admitted or even realized it at the time. These changes in ideology took place first in China and gradually spread throughout Korea and Japan, permeating Neo-Confucian thought. As Catherine Jami writes, “There had always existed imperial institutions for medicine and astronomy.” However, with the fall of the Ming Dynasty (1644), the new Qing rulers began to introduce several new innovations, such as integrating “medicine and the sciences into their general policy of imperial publication, thus granting these disciplines new prominence.” No longer seen as merely technical fields suited only to the lower classes, they were hitherto accepted as being part of the realm of Confucian scholarship.

The dissemination of these new trends may have been slow, but it clearly had enormous effects on Japan. “In both Korea and Japan, Neo-Confucianism dominated scholarship generally and thus also investigations into medicine and the sciences. In Japan, Chinese learning was appropriated in medicine, astronomy, and mathematics through various forms of synthesis with local knowledge.”

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30 Margaret Mehl, *Chinese Learning (kangakii) in Meiji Japan (1868-1912)*. Pg. 50.
32 Ibid, 83.
others in the field argue is that Dutch learning itself was not limited to Western knowledge; that in fact merchants from Europe frequently passed through or stopped in China on their way to Japan, and that Neo-Confucian ideas about science were disseminated in that manner. In fact, many Dutch learning scholars may have confused kangaku (Chinese learning) for rangaku (Dutch learning) because of their overlapping ideas and the method of their propagation. The two influenced each other and in turn influenced Meiji Era scholars who were anxious to gain as much "modern" knowledge as possible.

It was at this time too that Fukuzawa began what could be seen as his first real entrepreneurial pursuits in the form of print copying. The Ogata school possessed a Dutch volume known as the Döeff dictionary. Occasionally, a daimyo would request a copy of this book, and would order that the copies be made by students of the Dutch language. These students were well-paid for their efforts: sixteen mon a page, which was a good deal more than the rate for copying Japanese texts, and were even higher if the daimyo was from Edo rather than Osaka. At six thousand pages, a poor student could make a good sum of money. This allowed Fukuzawa and other students to pay their cost of living. It also gave the leaders of those clans like Satsuma and Choshu a reliable and cheap source of Western ideas while avoiding any entanglements with the Shogun’s government.

The Dutch learning boom of the mid-19th century afforded Fukuzawa another opportunity after he had graduated from Ogata School; the extraordinary chance to be one of the first Japanese to visit America. After first moving to Yedo in 1858 to study English and gain an elementary grasp of the language, he was offered a seat on the

36 Ibid, 87.
Kanrin-maru, the first Japanese ship to cross the Pacific Ocean. This expedition was funded by the Shogunate to accompany the first Japanese envoy to the United States, who was sailing on an American ship. In part, this voyage was an attempt to prove to the peoples of the Western world that Japan was ready to become a modern nation; it had been only five years since Japanese engineers had built the first Japanese steamship, and there were no foreign navigators or technicians on the Kanrin-maru. Of this point Fukuzawa is especially proud: "As I consider all the other peoples of the Orient as they exist today, I feel convinced that there is no other nation which has the ability or the courage to navigate a steamship across the Pacific after a period of five years of experience in navigation and engineering."\(^{37}\)

It was in fact Fukuzawa's involvement with Dutch learning that allowed him to become part of this expedition; a doctor who served the Shogun was also a leader in the growth of rangaku and a previous acquaintance of Fukuzawa's. Fukuzawa used his connections with the doctor to get a seat on the ship. Personal ties of this sort were frequently used by entrepreneurs at the time when other methods were ineffectual or impossible. This connection to the Shogun is particularly interesting, because it points to a willingness by the government to allow in western ideas, despite the fact that it had vehemently opposed such ideas before. However, at this time the dissident forces were beginning to gain considerable power (again, particularly in Satsuma and Choshu) and the Shogunate realized that in order to defeat his enemies, it would have to adopt at least some of their methods.

Once in the United States, Fukuzawa continued his pursuit of all things Western with single-minded zeal. He was particularly interested in science and technology and

\(^{37}\) Autobiography, 110.
thus built on his studies at Ogata. However, it was during his tour of the United States that Fukuzawa first began to become interested in the workings of democratic government. He was astounded by the “liberal” attitude Americans held about women and their rights, as well as the lack of reverence for past leaders like George Washington. These aspects of American society were the complete antithesis of Japanese society, where women had few rights and families like the Tokugawa were held in immeasurable esteem. Fukuzawa also noted how Americans seemed to be wasteful with their resources, such as iron, because they possessed such great quantities. All in all, America seems to have struck Fukuzawa as a bastion of modernism and everything that went with it, both the positive and negative. Although it may appear from reading his biography that he was little more than a tourist, Fukuzawa left the United States with a great deal of knowledge that would benefit him in the years ahead.

One of the ways in which Fukuzawa was obviously influenced by his time in the United States was in his ideas about the role of women. Fukuzawa noted with some amazement that the roles of men and women in the United States seemed to be reversed when compared with Japanese society. This was highlighted while Fukuzawa was visiting a Dutch doctor. “While the mistress of the house stayed constantly in the drawing room entertaining the guests, the doctor, the supposed master, was moving in and out of the room, directing the servants. This was the reverse of the domestic custom in our country.” At a party attended by Fukuzawa and his hosts, men and women danced together in close proximity, which the Japanese visitors found greatly amusing, but these strange occurrences were more than mere amusements; they were the traits of a

38 Autobiography, 114.
modern society in which men and women shared a greater degree of equality, and it is
telling that Fukuzawa chose to include these two stories in his autobiography.

The other telling feature of his trip that Fukuzawa relates was the amount of
wastefulness that he saw in American life. “There seemed to be an enormous waste of
iron everywhere. In garbage piles, on the seashore – everywhere – I found lying old oil
tins, empty cans, and broken tools. This was remarkable to us, for in Edo, after a fire,
there would appear a swarm of people looking for nails in the ashes.”^39 This may have
struck Fukuzawa in part because of his own frugality, but it must also have been a
powerful indicator of what industrialization could accomplish. This one, simple detail –
the great quantity of iron – must have reinforced his idea of the United States as an
incredibly rich and powerful nation.

Why is this trip to the United States so important to looking at Fukuzawa
Yukichi’s career as an intellectual entrepreneur? The answer is two-fold. One, it gave
him a springboard from which he dove more deeply into exploring ideas about freedom,
democracy and modern forms of government. Fukuzawa does not mention these ideas at
all before his trip to the United States, so it is safe to say that his trip abroad was what
inspired his later ideas about creating a new Japanese nation. Two, in the entrepreneurial
sense it presented the first opportunity to pursue a money-making enterprise based on his
knowledge of the West. In a way, it was something he could place on his “resume,”
showing that he was unique even among others who had studied the west. This is clearly
shown in an incident that took place as he was leaving the United States. He had his
picture taken with a young woman, which has now become the most famous photograph
of Fukuzawa. He did not tell his friends about it until they were on their way home, until

he was sure they could not duplicate his action. Gloating, he made it clear that this was evidence he had been to the United States: “But how many of you have brought back a picture of yourselves with a young lady as a souvenir of San Francisco? Without any evidence, what good is it to boast of your affairs now?” This strategy for increasing his own fame and importance worked, for upon his return to Japan he wrote and published his first book, *On Conditions in the West*, which became Japan’s best-selling book.

When he returned from the United States (and a brief stop in Europe), Fukuzawa found himself in a country that was in the beginning stages of a conflict that would escalate into a bloody civil war. The imperialists, led by Satsuma and Choshu, were waging a campaign to “expel the foreigners” and create a government under the control of Japan to the Emperor. Fukuzawa was quickly hired by the bakufu as a translator of correspondence between Japan, the United States and Great Britain; he relished this position as it allowed him to continue his studies while earning a living. This must have seemed a relatively stable position at the time, but Fukuzawa’s future did not remain certain for long.

Anti-foreign forces were gaining momentum and political backing exponentially; along with ridding Japan of foreigners, they also wished to rid it of all foreign influence. This put Fukuzawa in a dangerous position. His expertise in Dutch learning and his knowledge of the West marked him as an enemy of the Imperialists. Fukuzawa writes, “The reason the *ronin* included us [students of western learning] in their attack was that they thought we scholars … were liars misleading the people and opening the way for the Westerners to exploit Japan.” Fukuzawa sensed that this could lead to nothing but

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40 Autobiography, 120.
41 Autobiography, 142.
trouble for him and his comrades, and thus attempted to stay uninvolved: "Consequently, he tried to keep a low profile while translating for the bakufu and running his school of western studies. He continued to fear personal harm from anti-foreign sources, but he expected that eventually his compatriots would come to their senses and recognize the importance of foreign learning." However, it was not only the Imperialists who saw men like Fukuzawa as a threat. Ideas from the west about democracy were beginning to infiltrate the revolution, therefore the Tokugawa bakufu also saw them as a threat. By the mid-1860s, Fukuzawa began to fear for his life as more and more of his friends were charged with real or imagined offences related to their studies and views on Westernization. He himself suspected assassination attempts on his life.

Fukuzawa was allowed a brief respite from this chaos in 1867 when he returned to the United States as part of a mission to obtain warships for the Shogunate. However, this break was short-lived and when he returned to Japan things had escalated to outright warfare. Fukuzawa was accused of actions against his clan and ordered to do penitence, after which he disengaged himself from all activities that could be considered political in nature. This made him something of a hermit, although threats against his life continued.

In his autobiography, Fukuzawa describes himself as a non-partisan in the revolution; he believed that neither side was completely in the right or completely wrong. Because of his family’s low-rank within his clan, he felt as though he had been oppressed

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44 Ibid, 172-73.
by the Shogunate. However, he also did not approve of the violent actions and anti-
foreign sentiment of the Imperialists. As he sums up his feelings:

1. I disliked the bureaucratic, oppressive, conservative, anti-foreign policy of the
   shogunate, and I would not side with it.

2. Yet the followers of the imperial cause were still more anti-foreign and more
   violent in their action, so I had even less sympathy with them.

3. After all, troubled times are best for doing big things. An ambitious man
   might cast his lot with one or the other of the parties to win a place for himself.
   But there was no such desire in me.\(^45\)

This last statement is misleading, because it is obvious from his later works that
Fukuzawa did have ambitions and a definite idea about his place in Japanese society. It
is far more likely that he did not wish to join either side because it was unclear at the time
who would win. At the same time, Fukuzawa would have seen joining one side or the
other as giving up his own personal freedom, which he had worked so hard to cultivate
and maintain.

Fukuzawa did not merely sit idle, however, while the Revolution raged all around
him. Instead, he used the chaos of the Bakumatsu to his advantage. It was at this time
that Fukuzawa the entrepreneur first demonstrated his full potential and keen eye for
lucrative business pursuits. In 1858 he bought a large piece of land and a mansion which
had previously been inhabited by a daimyo. He began work building his family a new
home, as well as the first buildings of what would become Keio University. His students
often left to fight on both sides of the civil war, but Fukuzawa himself was ignored by the

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\(^{45}\) Autobiography, 187.
bakufu and only occasionally had to deal with Imperialist soldiers from Choshu, who demanded room and board. Fukuzawa continued to build and strengthen his new school despite the violence that erupted all around him. Thus, by the end of the Revolution he had already created a strong business that continued to thrive in the relative peace and prosperity of the Meiji Era.

**Keio University**

By the 1860s, Fukuzawa Yukichi had already gathered together a large handful of students who were interested in pursuing the study of Western ideas and technology: a new, expanded form of Dutch learning, so to speak. However, in order to gain legitimacy as an educator, Fukuzawa desired to create a more permanent, lasting symbol of his commitment to Western education. This came to fruition in the establishment of Keio University. The creation of Keio University is in many ways the perfect example of how Fukuzawa used his skills as an entrepreneur to further his ideals about education. It is also one of the earliest examples of him using the events happening around him – in this case the Meiji Revolution – to his own advantage. Finally, the way in which was Keio was run and the focus of its studies shows Fukuzawa using both the Confucian and Dutch learning aspects of his own educational background to provide his students with opportunities for employment within the emerging Meiji government.

Fukuzawa obtained the land on which he built Keio University in 1858 while the chaos of the revolution was in full swing. The land and its accompanying mansion had
been owned by a *daimyo*; typically these men were ones who lived outside Tokyo and only used the residence while fulfilling their responsibility to the *sankin kotai* system. This system had been implemented by Tokugawa Ieyasu in the early 17th century and called for all *daimyo* to spend part of every year in Edo and the rest in their own *han*. As an attempt to keep the *daimyo* under the watchful eye of the Shogunate, *sankin kotai* had been remarkably useful. However, as the Meiji Revolution grew more chaotic, the system lost most of its usefulness, as it became impossible to keep track of which *daimyo* had fulfilled their obligations; furthermore, the shogunate would be constantly trying to determine which of his vassals were loyal and which were not and thus maintain a balance in Edo between the trusted and distrusted. Certainly, the government did not want too many of its enemies left in the countryside where they could plot in relative secrecy, nor could it afford to keep the majority in Edo due to the possibility of violent rebellion.

During the height of the *sankin kotai* system, it had been almost impossible to purchase land in Edo, due to unavailability and exorbitant prices. However, with the dissolution of *sankin kotai* there was suddenly new, more affordable land available, and Fukuzawa immediately leapt at the chance that would allow him to create the school he had long been planning. Once again, Fukuzawa was able to largely avoid involvement in the Revolution even during this hectic time. Choshu soldiers did occasionally show up and demand lodging on the new grounds, and several of his students left to join either side in the conflict. However, as Helen Hopper writes, "Strangely, this chaotic time proved auspicious for Fukuzawa. Defeat of the Shogun’s forces, establishment of the
Emperor’s authority, and the completion of Fukuzawa’s new school were all achieved simultaneously.\footnote{Hopper, 47.}

Fukuzawa’s desire in creating Keio was to introduce what he saw as the modern system of learning to Japan and to provide students with a more Western education. The curriculum at Keio was largely based on Fukuzawa’s own pursuits of Western learning and his background in Confucianism, contradictory as that may seem. The school was similar to English private schools with regards to the teaching methods used and the structure of the faculty, and the main texts used were books that Fukuzawa himself had brought back from the United States and Europe\footnote{Japanese education at this time was equally influenced by the German model, which relied heavily on independent research by students rather than one-sided lecturing by professors. In 1897, Kyoto Imperial University officially adopted the German system, but would only last for seven years. Afterward, Kyoto University would adopt a system similar to that used at Tokyo University, which was based on a Chinese/Confucian model. This further highlights what how unique Keio was at the time in terms of its goals and success. Information courtesy of Professor Morikazu Ushiogi, Nagoya University, Japan.}. The curriculum included such subjects as philosophy, science, English language and grammar, and American history, all of the information presented coming from Western sources. Students were encouraged to speak their minds and express their opinions, regardless of their place or seniority at the University.\footnote{It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that Japan formed what could be thought of as an organized university system. It is unclear at what point Fukuzawa began to use this word to describe his academy, but the term does serve to underline the fact that he saw Keio as a modern institution and perhaps how he wished to separate it from older, Tokugawa institutions.} In this way, Keio was a “cooperative organization of colleagues in which no one [was] superior to anyone else,” a conception of schooling that may seem at first very modern and Western, but is equally rooted in the Confucian belief that anyone could be trained and that social position or hierarchy did not matter. The
priority of the school’s education system was to “inculcate freedom and independence in students”, as well as Western-influenced ideas about equality.\textsuperscript{49}

However, that is not to say that Fukuzawa had abandoned his Confucian roots. Quite to the contrary, Keio was in many ways similar to the Tokugawa schools of Fukuzawa’s youth. Students were taught comportment and proper behavior, which were deemed as essential qualities in any educated person. Fukuzawa’s teaching style also reflects his Confucian upbringing. He fully expected his students to be eager to learn and to pursue their education without prodding from instructors; he was unwilling to spoon feed them the answers he hoped they would discover on their own. It was just as Confucius had said: “I do not open up the truth to one who is not eager to get knowledge, nor help out any one who is not anxious to explain himself. When I have presented one corner of a subject to any one, and he cannot from it learn the other three, I do not repeat my lesson.”\textsuperscript{50} For Fukuzawa, a student who could or would not do so was not worth the effort of teaching.

Whether seen as Western-style private school or Confucian academy, Keio University is best described in terms of an entrepreneurial pursuit. Certainly Fukuzawa himself saw it in this light, as is revealed in his rhetoric to students and fellow faculty. “We have gathered together as a corporation to found a school, to collaborate with and cultivate each other in the study of Western learning...” This characterization of the school as a corporation was a metaphor that Fukuzawa used frequently; the Corporation’s business was education, and the profit was “civilization and enlightenment.” The structure of the school further reflects this: students were not required to pay tuition, but

\textsuperscript{49} Hopper, 53.

\textsuperscript{50} Confucius, \textit{The Analects}. Section Two, Part Seven. Available online at http://classics.mit.edu/Confucius/analects.mb.txt.
instead paid in labor and monetary contributions, as if they were more akin to stockholders in a company who each had a share in making the school successful. After moving the school to Mito in 1871, Fukuzawa required his students to sign corporation agreements that made this corporate conception of the school even more concrete.

In many ways, Fukuzawa was wise to create this conception of the University as a business, for beyond providing “enlightenment” to its students, it also gave them the opportunity to gain high-position jobs. During the final years of the Tokugawa Shogunate, even a basic education in Western learning and English language was enough to secure a high-level position in government, as has been shown with Fukuzawa’s own rise to the coveted position of hatamoto, or special retainer. It is unlikely that a low-ranking samurai like Fukuzawa would have been sent on so many important missions and given the many honors he received without his knowledge of the West. After the Restoration the situation became more competitive; only those with workable knowledge and practical skills would gain positions in the new government. Fukuzawa recognized this and realized that his students would have to be the cream of the crop if they wished to flourish in Meiji Japan. This explains the high standards he set at Keio, for the students, teachers and himself. This hard work paid off in the form of many Keio students becoming high-ranking government officials or entrepreneurs in their own right; entrepreneurs who would go on to help finance many of Fukuzawa’s other pursuits, which will be discussed in the following section. For example, several Keio students went on to manage the powerful Maruzan zaibatsu, and were hired on the basis of their excellent business training at the university. In this way, Fukuzawa created a security net that allowed him to try more daring entrepreneurial pursuits. This network also afforded
his students special privileges and benefits, and gave Fukuzawa the same kind of connections that he enjoyed during the Tokugawa Era, such as the aforementioned doctor who secured him a seat on the *Kanrinmaru*.

**Fukuzawa the Entrepreneur**

Keio University was only the first – and perhaps most ambitious – of Fukuzawa’s many entrepreneurial efforts. Soon after the end of the Revolution and the birth of the new Meiji Era, he embarked upon a series of projects that highlighted his skills as a Western scholar and a cunning businessman. The first of these, funded mostly by the success of his first book *Conditions in the West*, was the creation of his own publishing firm. Fukuzawa realized that by publishing his works himself rather than through a third party, he could significantly cut costs and make a larger profit. Typically in the Tokugawa era, publishing had been done by merchant firms; Fukuzawa admits that in the past his only contribution had been to write the manuscript. The merchant publishers handled the duties of copying the manuscript, cutting the woodblocks, making prints, binding the work, et cetera. They in turn charged a royalty from all sales, substantially cutting back on the author’s profit. Fukuzawa saw the inefficiency in this and thus hired his own workmen, bought the bales of paper, and appointed men from his clan to oversee the production. In this way, his two most successful books, *An Encouragement of Learning* and *An Outline on the Theory of Civilization* were published to great personal profit. Both books went on to become national bestsellers and provided Fukuzawa with the money to continue to fund Keio in addition to his future ventures. Although
Fukuzawa himself denies the fact. it is likely that this small step alone made him independently wealthy and allowed him the economic freedom he experienced for much of the rest of his life.

Fukuzawa used this freedom to pursue much more daring financial ventures, such as the creation of a specie bank for Japan. After the 1881 economic disaster caused by Saigo Takamori’s Satsuma Rebellion, Fukuzawa deemed it necessary to protect his investments by going into banking. For that reason, he placed most of his money in Maruya Bank, which had been formed by Maruzan affiliates, many of whom were former students of Fukuzawa’s. This experience in the banking world helped Fukuzawa come to the conclusion that if Japan was going to thrive in the world free market economy, it was going to need a specie bank that would protect its gold and silver currency. Too much specie was already leaving the country due to unfair trade agreements and treaties. Fukuzawa used his connections with the heads of important businesses and zaibatsu such as Mitsui and Yasuda, many of whom had been his students at Keio, to gain enough capital to establish Japan’s first specie bank, the Specie Bank of Yokohama. Foreign branches of this bank were eventually set up, and would eventually lead to the creation of Japan’s most important banking firm, the Bank of Japan.

Throughout the end of the 19th century, Fukuzawa continued to use his power as headmaster of Keio to gain connections in the business world. He frequently used his influence to get his students top positions in important corporations and the government. Helen Hopper sums up this aspect of Fukuzawa in the following way:
He worked with the leaders of Mitui, Mitsubishi, and other well-known companies who were gathering the lion's share of Japan's growing industrial wealth. In this he did well for his country and perhaps even better for himself. He also spread the wealth of Keio knowledge throughout the business world, where individual graduates formed a sort of management clique in experience and success.\(^1\)

Fukuzawa used these ties to provide himself with investors and the necessary capital for funding his many projects. More than that, however, Fukuzawa saw these former students of his as improving Japanese society and turning the country into a modern nation.

Already well-entrenched in the business world, Fukuzawa moved into yet another realm, that of journalism. He already possessed the necessary knowledge and equipment for publishing, as well as an audience who was familiar with his views and dedication to disseminating modern ideas. In 1882 the inaugural edition of the *Jiji Shinpo* was published as a "free and independent" daily paper, unaffiliated with any political party but dedicated to spreading the truth about all of them. As Fukuzawa himself wrote, "Our primary aim in taking the *Jiji* will be to record development in recent civilization."

Unlike other daily papers of the time, the *Jiji Shinpo* was not aligned with any particular ideology or platform. The only overarching belief was in progress and modernization, creating a strong and well-informed Japanese people who would be able in turn to create a strong nation.

Fukuzawa's paper quickly became a forum for political debate, largely due to its format and the credentials of its editor-in-chief. The paper was dedicated in equal parts

\(^{1}\) Hopper, 116.
to objectively reporting the news and editorials commenting on the state of Japan and events in the rest of the world. Advances in science and technology were paid special attention, as well as changes in modern daily living. Conflicting opinions were welcomed and even encouraged; any intellectual debate which would better educate the Japanese people was seen as a positive influence. Therefore, the purpose of the *Jiji Shinpo* is best seen as civilization, the reshaping of the Japanese public into a modern citizenry.

All of this points to a Fukuzawa who was concerned only with the betterment of Japan; of course, this was of the utmost importance to him, but it must be remembered that as an entrepreneur one of his main goals was to make a profit. To do so, Fukuzawa used the *Jiji* as a space for running advertisements, both service and product oriented, from shipping firms to cosmetics and wine. By 1886 he had opened his own advertising firm; like most of the other ventures he undertook, Fukuzawa came to realize that more profits could be made by controlling every aspect of the enterprise. It is impossible to underestimate the effect this had on Japanese journalism and publishing in the future. By creating a network of connections both within and outside the enterprises he was involved in, Fukuzawa turned himself into what was essentially one of Japan’s first modern corporations, on par with the powerful *zaibatsu* who controlled such businesses as shipping and heavy industry.

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Fukuzawa the Intellectual

It is possible when looking at all these entrepreneurial enterprises to forget that Fukuzawa never considered himself a businessman, or at least was never willing define himself as such in public. In his eyes, he was an intellectual first and foremost, an advancer of modern ideas intent upon influencing the future of the Japanese nation. If we are to believe Fukuzawa’s words, monetary profit was not the goal of any of his ventures, but merely a measurement of their success, an idea that is strikingly Confucian and reminiscent of traditional Tokugawa thought. Throughout his own writings, Fukuzawa refuses to admit that he had any skills in the realm of business, despite all evidence to the contrary. Instead, he characterizes his success as the outcome of his high ideals – that is, to create a strong and powerful Japan that would be able to stand toe-to-toe with the Western giants, the United States and Great Britain.

“Rich nation, strong army” was a slogan that came to characterize the Meiji Era. In fact, it was Fukuzawa who had originally coined the term in one of his publications. Simply put, it meant that in order to be competitive with the Western powers, Japan would need to become a modern, unified nation with all its people working toward the same goal, be they rural peasants, industrial workers, or soldiers. Fukuzawa greatly expanded on this idea in what is perhaps his most influential work, *An Outline on the Theory of Civilization*.

One of the areas in which Fukuzawa is most frequently seen as a modernizer and a liberal ahead of his time is in his ideas. Indeed, his writings often focus on the importance of creating a modern Japan through education and reshaping the government,
as can be seen in *An Encouragement of Learning* and *An Outline on a Theory of Civilization*, his two best-selling works. The former outlines a plan by which the Japanese people and their very way of thinking would be reshaped through education, which in turn would train them to create and live in a “modern” society, while the latter places the emphasis on creating a democratic form of government based on the models presented by Western nations. He stresses the equality of all men in terms that seem taken directly from Locke and Jefferson: “It is said that heaven does not create one man above or below another man.”\(^5\) This clearly points to a mindset quite different from that of the Tokugawa Era, in which the importance of hierarchy has been seen as essential to maintaining order in society. In a similar way, Fukuzawa often challenged the oppression of women and was thus seen as an advancer of women’s rights. In this way, he became a supposed champion of liberal causes and gained his current status as a hero of modern Japan.

Yet it is this aspect of Fukuzawa’s life that is the most misrepresented. While it is true that he believed in “democracy” and “equality,” his definitions of these terms differ significantly from our own modern ones and are deeply rooted in his Tokugawa/Confucian upbringing. In reality, the form of democracy that Fukuzawa advocated now seems quite limited: he clearly states in *An Outline on a Theory of Civilization* that a democracy like that of the United States, in which every (male) citizen has suffrage, is impractical since most common citizens are not educated enough to cast an informed vote. So too, his efforts in education may at first seem liberal-minded, but in actuality only a small percentage of Japanese families could afford to send their child to a private school like Keio; most of his early students had come from samurai families. It

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was, in fact, the curriculum that Fukuzawa created that was far more modern than the actual structure of the schools. It should also be remembered that even in the West at this time, democracy was something very different from what it is today, as were ideas about women's rights and other subjects Fukuzawa concerned himself with. People who were seen as radical liberals at the time would strike most of us today as strikingly conservative or at least borderline moderate.

The purpose of this section is to look at Fukuzawa's career as an intellectual and a writer by examining the most influential of his written works. By doing so, it can be seen that although many of his ideas were quite modern and advanced for their time, he was not the radical liberal that he is often depicted as. Although he often denied their value, Fukuzawa frequently clung to the ideas created by his Tokugawa upbringing and Confucian education. This is equally evident in his private and family life, which will also be briefly examined. If anything, Fukuzawa should be seen as a moderate, someone who was able to balance his more liberal leanings with conservative ideas as well. This will be accomplished by first looking at *An Encouragement of Learning*, followed by *An Outline on a Theory of Civilization*, as well as small portions of his lesser works.

**An Encouragement of Learning**

In his famous 1885 essay *Escaping from Asia*, Fukuzawa wrote:

Once the wind of Western civilization blows to the East, every blade of grass and every tree in the East follow what the Western wind brings... We do not have time
to wait for the enlightenment of our neighbors so that we can work together
toward the development of Asia. It is better for us to leave the ranks of Asian na-
tions and cast our lot with civilized nations of the West.55

It was this idea of leaving Asia behind and joining with the West that most shaped
Fukuzawa’s ideas on education. This was largely because other Asian nations had been
conquered and colonized by the West; China had been carved into “spheres of influence”
and treaty ports, and Korea was seen as simply backward and powerless. Fukuzawa
thought that if Japan did not modernize until it was an equal of the Western powers, it too
would eventually be overcome by the “epidemic scourge” of imperialism.56 He saw
education as key to this process, and Keio University as a bastion of modernization, a fort
that would forever keep the foreign imperialists as bay. In 1868 he claimed, “Whatever
happens in the country, whatever warfare harasses our land, we will never relinquish our
hold on Western learning. As long as this school of ours stands, Japan remains a
civilized nation of the world.”57 It is equally important to realize the very Confucian
nature of his words, however, as Fukuzawa places a much greater emphasis on the
importance of ideas in strengthening a nation at a time when Western nations were
focusing almost exclusively on military strength.

The Western epidemic, however, had many benefits as well as disadvantages,
particularly in terms of education. Fukuzawa divided knowledge into two categories: one,
mathematics and reading, and two, the sciences and other higher-level thinking such as

55 Fukuzawa Yukichi, Escaping from Asia.
56 Akira Iriye, “Japan’s Drive to Great-Power Status” in The Emergence of Meiji Japan, edited by Marius B.
57 Autobiography, 211.
philosophy. This first group had long been taught in terakoya, or temple schools, in which the teachers were Buddhist monks, Shinto priests, or other village officials. The terakoya had seen a huge growth during the early part of the nineteenth century, and so many samurai, even those of low-rank, had been educated in this manner. However, Fukuzawa felt that while the terakoya education system had done an adequate job in the first category, it had virtually ignored the second, termed jitsugaku. This category included things like engineering, chemistry, physics, and medicine, as well as political science and economics. It was because such subjects were ignored that Fukuzawa modeled Keio University on British private schools, and went to great lengths to build a curriculum based on Western knowledge. As has been noted earlier, the texts were exclusively those that Fukuzawa had brought back from America and Europe after his various journeys. Similarly, Fukuzawa recruited foreign teachers to staff his faculty.

An Encouragement of Learning is often seen as the ultimate expression of Fukuzawa’s belief in the importance of a modern, Western education. It was one of the first books published in modern Japanese— that is, both kanji and kana rather than simply kanji, which could often only be read by scholars—in the hopes that more people would be able to read it and benefit from its ideas. In the past, most works were written in the Chinese style and included characters that would be incomprehensible to everyone except the small, educated elite. This, coupled with Fukuzawa’s own claims that Keio University was open to everyone regardless of their ancestry or wealth, suggests that at least in the field of education, Fukuzawa believed in equality and equal opportunity.

Furthermore, he constantly stressed that this equality could only be achieved if the people of the nation were well educated; in other words, a person can only be free and
equal in society if he has first attained *personal* independence. This could be achieved through *jitsugaku*. This freedom, once attained, applied “not only to the private self, but to the nation as well.” After all, the populace is made up of individuals, and only an educated populace can make informed decisions on important topics such as government, trade, et cetera. Furthermore, the ability to have such freedom was a human or natural right:

> Each individual man and each individual country, according to the principles of natural reason, is free from bondage. Consequently, if there is some threat that might infringe upon a country's freedom, then that country should not hesitate even to take up arms against all the countries of the world.  

It is difficult to ascertain just exactly what Fukuzawa means here by “natural reason,” for the term seems to be an amalgamation of several ideas, both original and gleaned from other sources. It does have the connotation of being linked to Enlightenment thought, and it is certain that Fukuzawa had been influenced by thinkers like John Locke. However, it also seems to be used in relation to *kokugaku*, which would make it a more concrete, almost scientific term. In each case, however, it denotes personal independence.

_Jitsugaku_ may have been seen as the path to personal and national independence, but what exactly did it entail? One of the most important aspects that Fukuzawa stresses is literacy, not only for the upper classes but for everyone. For centuries, important philosophical or theoretical tracts had been composed in classical Chinese or an archaic form of Japanese, which was written solely in characters (*kanji*). Only someone with years of education would be able to even begin to be able to read the characters and thus

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58 _An Encouragement of Learning_, 3.
59 Ibid, 5.
understand the ideas put forth. Hiragana, one of the two syllabic alphabets in Japanese which had been created by women during the Heian Era (794-1192), was seen as lowly or common, and therefore not used. These, along with katakana which had originally been created by Buddhist monks to aid in the pronunciation of sutras, were limited to works that would be read by the lower classes. However, Fukuzawa saw the need to integrate the kana system into all of Japanese writing, even the most complicated works, so that everyone could benefit from the ideas put forth. An Encouragement of Learning was one of the first of such books. Likewise, Fukuzawa’s own writing is purposefully simple and clear, with the hopes that both his students and regular Japanese citizens would be able to understand his ideas.

The second important aspect of An Encouragement of Learning is increasing knowledge in what Fukuzawa calls “the sciences”. This included subjects such as biology, chemistry, physics and psychology, but also economics and political science as well. In particular, Fukuzawa focused on those skills which could be used in creating a modern Japan; industrialization was gaining momentum at this time and was generally seen as the one area in which Japan had the most catching up to do if it wished to rival the West. This required the knowledge and skill to create factories, the machinery to fill them, and people who understood the logistics of running and managing such a plant.

The third thing that Fukuzawa states is that members of the now defunct samurai class needed to become involved in the new Meiji society. Unlike the middle and lower classes which needed to be educated before they could become a benefit, the ex-samurai already possessed much of the necessary training to work in modern businesses and
government. They had for years been functioning as the bureaucrats and accountants who literally ran the Tokugawa system.

However, in some respects Fukuzawa’s ideas in *An Encouragement of Learning* are not new or modern at all. Aside from the obvious references to Locke and other Western enlightenment figures, Fukuzawa draws heavily on his own Confucian upbringing. In the Confucian tradition, education was seen as key to personal betterment and was not limited only to the upper classes. Any person with the desire to learn was to be taught, although this was not always true in practical application. Confucius himself said that he would teach any man who could bring him a piece of meat.

Education would allow a person to be free in a sense from the influences (i.e. corruption) of society, to make his own enlightened decisions. By doing so, this person could use his own positive influence to better society, just as Fukuzawa’s education allowed people to create a better, more modern Japanese nation. The most important point to take away from this is that in both cases, education is equated to freedom that will begin with the individual and then spread to society and the nation at large.

Furthermore, Fukuzawa’s ideas on education are also not as enlightened as they may seem on the surface. For example, it may seem that he is saying all people should have access to a modern education, but in actuality he often stresses that there is a large mass of people who should not or perhaps cannot be educated. This group seems to be largely populated by the lowest class (peasants), while Fukuzawa focuses on the importance of educating the middle classes, including merchants and low-ranking samurai similar to himself.

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61 Ibid, 57.
This is apparent not only in his writing, but also in his personal life, as his own family was treated quite unequally in terms of education. In his autobiography, he writes that there was no difference between the opportunities afforded to his sons and daughters, and yet none of his daughters completed a higher education. Instead, Fukuzawa saw it as much more useful to marry them to wealthy and powerful families. In fact, he makes very little mention of his daughters at all, except with the expected paternal fondness. His sons, however, all completed educations at Keio and went on to become successful and influential businessmen. So, it could be said that while Fukuzawa believed that women had the right to an education, it was not essential. When cast in this light, Fukuzawa does not differ greatly from his Western contemporaries in terms of women’s rights.

Nor does he differ greatly from Tokugawa educators, at least in terms of who should and could be educated. During the Tokugawa era, education had been limited to the samurai class as it was believed that they were the only ones who needed an education. After all, it was they who made all the governmental decisions and who controlled trade. They were also the only ones who could afford to purchase anything beyond a very basic education. However, with the growth of the merchant class during the Tokugawa period, more and more people were able to afford the high enrollment fees or the cost of a private tutor. Merchants families began to send their children to school along side those of samurai. Just as for the samurai, it was a practical necessity that merchants obtain an education so that they would possess the necessary skills (such as mathematics) to run a successful business. More than that, however, many merchants may have seen it as a chance to prove that they were every bit as sophisticated as the
samurai. It is at this time that we see merchants dressing like samurai, attending the same
plays and expensive teahouses as samurai, and even marrying into samurai families. A
proper education "proved" that Japan’s new upwardly mobile class had earned their place
in society. While this certainly galled and even frightened many samurai, it also became
apparent that if Japan were to thrive economically, an educated merchant class was a
necessity. Fukuzawa seems to have latched onto this idea, as he sees an educated class of
businessmen as essential to competing with the West.

An Outline on the Theory of Civilization

Fukuzawa’s other significant work, An Outline on the Theory of Civilization
(Bunmeiron no Gairyaku) is essentially a treatise on creating a new nation: exactly what
form the nation should take and how its people should be reshaped. It is notably different
from many of Fukuzawa’s other works in that it was not intended for the general public.
Rather, it is read as a persuasive essay to his fellow intellectuals, who at the time were
debating the future of the new Japanese nation. In it, Fukuzawa sets forth the reasons
why Japan should follow the Western nations’ example and create a democracy. This
was a key issue at the time, as there were many schools of thought competing to decide
the new form of government. Many, like Fukuzawa, advocated a democracy, while
others wished for a monarchy with all power in the hands of the Emperor. Furthermore,
even those who did agree that democracy was the appropriate path disagreed on the
details, such as who would be able to vote, the kind of legislative houses needed, et cetera.

Fukuzawa therefore decided that it was necessary to clearly outline the exact process of nation-making and how it should be played out in Japan.

The key concept behind Fukuzawa’s thinking was ‘civilization’. Once a nation achieved independence, it could then civilize itself. However, it was also necessary to have already begun this process *in order* to gain independence. As Nishikawa Shunsaku explains, “[Fukuzawa’s] main objective is crystal clear: self-sufficiency and national independence. ‘Civilization’ was both the outcome and the means to independence.”

Fukuzawa’s definition of civilization was in itself unique and quite specific to his desired goal of modernizing Japan.

In its broad sense, civilization means not only comfort in daily necessities but also the refining of knowledge and the cultivation of virtue so as to elevate human life to a higher plane... [I]t refers to the attainment of *both* material well-being and the elevation of the human spirit, since what produces man’s well-being and refinement is knowledge and virtue, civilization ultimately means the progress of man’s knowledge and virtue.

In Fukuzawa’s thinking, knowledge and virtue can best be defined as “morals” and “intellect,” these being sub-divided into private and public spheres. Private virtue, Fukuzawa thought, was rarely transmittable to society and usual surfaced only at the family level. Private intellect, however, “could be diffused into society more easily and

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Fukuzawa determined that Japanese society had been focusing too much on cultivating public virtue, while the West has focused on this creation of public wisdom.

In this as well as many other ways, Japan had fallen behind the West in terms of development. However, it would be impossible to catch up simply by building factories or purchasing modern equipment. Rather, the entire Japanese society, including its people, had to be remade into modern citizens. "Civilization meant the development of the inner spirit, namely virtue and knowledge, of the entire nation." He further denied that a strong Japanese nation could not be created simply through the building of a large military force. This is an interesting point because it was Fukuzawa who first coined the term kokutai, meaning the whole of the Japanese nation, which has become one the keywords when studying the growth of Japanese nationalism which would eventually lead to World War II. However, he himself did not believe that militaristic nationalism would benefit the Japanese people, and continued to emphasize education and the building of industry as the most important factors. While pride and enthusiasm did play a role in Fukuzawa's vision of a strong Japan, they could not be successful unless practical measures were taken as well. This is again one of the many areas in which Fukuzawa appears to have been more of a moderate.

The idea of cultivating public wisdom through private intellect may seem on the surface quite liberal. It suggests that Fukuzawa placed national sovereignty in the hands of the people, and to some degree that is true. He did believe that the people should have a say in and influence government. For that reason he recommended extending the right

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65 Nishikawa, 498.
66 Ibid, 499.
to vote to more citizens. However, he never suggested *universal* manhood suffrage, and ignored for the most part the question of voting rights for women. In Fukuzawa's mind, there were some people who lacked the necessary virtue and intellect to make decisions that would affect the entirety of the nation. Inevitably, this refers to the uneducated peasantry. It was not that Fukuzawa felt they were naturally less virtuous or intelligent, but that years of oppression had prevented them from developing these characteristics. This is why he urged education in order to cultivate such traits; in the meantime, however, voting was to be left to the educated.

**Fukuzawa's Final Days**

Fukuzawa Yukichi was highly influential during the beginning of the Meiji Era. He helped to shape ideas about how the new Japanese nation should be formed and what methods should be used in doing so. He also redefined the niche of "intellectual entrepreneur," which some samurai had long inhabited, into something that was both modern and yet harkened back to traditional Japan. Furthermore, he spearheaded the movement to create a modern education system in Japan, the ramifications of which can still be seen in Japan today. It is impossible to deny Fukuzawa's importance or influence, even if his ideas are sometimes distorted by well-meaning historians.

However, during his own lifetime, Fukuzawa saw himself slip from the limelight into relative obscurity, spending his final days as a self-described hermit who enjoyed practicing calligraphy and taking long walks, and who avoided the entanglements of political debate. Within a few short years, Fukuzawa went from being one of the most important intellectuals in Japan to someone whose ideas might only have been mentioned.

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in passing. Fukuzawa attributes this to his own personal choice; he was tired of being involved in politics and handling all the minuscule details of running Keio, and would rather spend time with his family and cultivating his own personal interests. This is probably true, at least to some degree. But it is far more accurate to say that Fukuzawa was forcibly pushed from the limelight by a group of younger, even more idealistic thinkers with whom Fukuzawa wanted no association. This is most clearly seen in the way Fukuzawa distanced himself from the Popular Rights Movement, as he saw it as far too radically liberal. This final section of the paper will deal with the reasons why Fukuzawa lost much of his influence later in his life.

Fukuzawa himself gives many reasons for why he remained uninvolved in politics throughout his life. It was certainly not that he lacked the opportunity, for he was offered government positions several times in the early Meiji Era. However, Fukuzawa saw the men who ran the government as similar to the feudal landlords, who enjoyed controlling others and took advantage of their high status in society.

The titles of nobility should have been given up with feudalism, but the men in office were bent on keeping them, thus contriving to place distinction between officials and ordinary men as if the former belonged to a nobler race of people. Anyone joining this nobler group would have to lord it over the commoner as a natural consequence... As long as I remain in private life, I can watch and laugh. But joining the government would draw me into the practice of those ridiculous pretensions which I cannot allow myself to do.68

Furthermore, Fukuzawa saw such men as morally corrupt. He cites the facts that they use their influence and position to buy large houses, keep concubines, and practice polygamy.

68 Autobiography, 309.
This too he sees as a reflection of feudal life: these men may be advocating modernity in public, but in private they do not live up to their own standards. Finally, Fukuzawa notes that the government is filled with "self-styled patriots," men who had sworn allegiance to the Shogun but quickly changed sides when it was apparent the Shogun had lost. These men, he felt, were too weak or self-serving to hold onto their ideals, and thus should not have been allowed in government.

In some ways, Fukuzawa's refusal to associate with these men supports his own self-purported status as a Confucian hermit. It was thought that by spending time in the company of corrupt people, a person would be corrupted – tainted – by their influence. In this respect, independence was encouraged. By giving in to the government's demands and joining it, Fukuzawa would have given up his own intellectual and moral independence. However, in other ways it was a decidedly un-Confucian response. A good Confucian was expected to use his learning and skills to benefit society through government service. He was expected to use his virtue to influence and change those around him. By distancing himself from politics, Fukuzawa was both ignoring his duty as a Confucian scholar and fulfilling the Confucian ideal of distancing oneself from society to avoid corruption. Of course, the issue becomes only more clouded by Fukuzawa's own views on Confucianism: he constantly denies its usefulness while steadfastly clinging to many of its major tenets.

If Fukuzawa's own reasoning is unclear or insufficient, then we must turn to the political climate of the time. It was during the latter part of Fukuzawa's life that Japan saw an growth of many radical movements, both conservative and liberal in nature. Each felt that their system would prove to be the most useful in creating a modern, unified
Japanese nation. The first of these advocated a monarchy with the Emperor at the head, which came to be known as *tennosei* philosophy and can be seen as the ideological offspring of the earlier *sonno joi* movement that had been so crucial during the Revolution. The main goal of the *tennosei* philosophy (and the government at this time in general) was to create a “Rich Nation. Strong Army” for Japan - a phrase that had also been first used by Fukuzawa - under a divine Emperor who was to be revered. However, unlike many other groups who shared the same goal, the advocates of *tennosei* believed this could be done by a Japan imbued with a sense of nationalism, pride in the *kokutai*, and reverence for the Emperor. On a more practical level, they proposed industrialization which has already been discussed above, a more powerful governmental system, and the creation of a large, modern army. There were several arguments about how the rest of the government would be structured, whether there would be a Parliament to represent the people or if all decisions would be made by the Emperor, or something in between. This is, of course, closest to the form that was adopted, with the Emperor as the ruler and a Diet under him. The general idea was that the Emperor and the Diet members would have the people’s best interests in mind, even those who could not vote. This in turn was supported by the idea of the *kokutai*, a word that had ironically been coined by Fukuzawa in his writings, which symbolized the entirety of Japanese-ness. In other words, everything from the land to the people to the Emperor was part of the *kokutai*, which must always be kept in perfect harmony.

Fukuzawa constantly skirted the *tennosei* principle in his writings, never openly voicing his opinion, but it was clear that he was opposed to the idea of one individual or
group having too much power, particularly in the case of politicians. Furthermore, he was uncomfortable with the rampant nationalism that accompanied such a philosophy, although he applauded Japan’s victory over China as “the fruit of the good inheritance from our ancestors.” Unlike tennosei radicals, however, he does not attribute such successes to the divinity of the Emperor. Instead, it is most likely based on Fukuzawa’s other ideas that he advocated a system similar to that of Great Britain or Germany, in which the monarch was more of a symbol or figurehead. To use a different metaphor, the Emperor was simply one essential organ among many that formed the body of Japan, one around which people could unite but whose importance should not be overemphasized. “Fukuzawa compares the imperial house to the eye in a human body: by the glint of the eye we know the body is alive, but for the sake of health we must be concerned with the total organism, not just a part.” Since he was unwilling to fully adopt tennosei theory, he would have been shunned by many of the leading politicians who saw this as the only viable path to greatness for Japan.

On the other end of the political spectrum at this time was the quickly growing Popular Rights Movement. Among their goals were universal manhood suffrage, increased rights for women, labor rights (in some cases), and an end to corruption within the government. This largely took the form of pork-barrel politics, in which politicians

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70 Autobiography, 308.
71 Autobiography, 335.
72 The actual system implemented in 1888 was in fact largely based on the German model of the time.
73 Organ theory may have appealed to Japanese thinkers of the time, such as Fukuzawa, because on the surface it can be compared to the notion of the kokutai, a whole made from several, smaller parts that must all work together. However, tennosei politicians rejected the idea as blasphemous due to the fact that it made the Emperor no more important than the peasantry, just as the heart is no more or less important than the lungs.
75 Ibid, 132.
would take measures and pass laws that benefited only their own prefectures and often pocketed large sums of money from the area in order to make such things happen.

Fukuzawa certainly sympathized with many of the aims of the men who advocated such goals, particularly this last, but in many regards their ideas were far more radical than his.

Two of the most famous leaders of the Popular Rights Movement, Oi Kentarou and Ueki Emori, were particularly noted for their radicalism and view of democracy, which differed greatly from the system proposed by men like Fukuzawa. Oi is generally credited as being the more radical of the two, and was the leader of the Revolutionary Democratic Faction (kakumeiteki minshushugi-ha), while Ueki Emori has been placed at the head of the “Law-abiding Faction” (gouhoushugi-ha). Regardless of this fact, it is Ueki’s ideas which seems more representative of the movement at the time. As Rodger Bowen explains it:

He was hardly a “middle-of-the-roader,” as Hirano Yoshitarou calls him. The appellation might be a fit description of, say, Fukuzawa Yukichi, who believed in gradual reform and the slow implantation of democracy from above, but it would not be an accurate description of Ueki’s thought. “His [notion of democracy] was different from the democracy of men like Fukuzawa,” Ienaga Saburou informs us, “because Emori believed democracy out to be seized forcibly, taken from below through popular struggle.”

This type of rhetoric would certainly disturbed Fukuzawa, who would have seen any government based on such a principle as doomed to failure. Without careful implementation and guidance by educated men, it would most likely fall apart. Also, we

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have already discussed his objections to universal suffrage, as he felt that it would be useless to give the uneducated masses the right to vote.

On a more practical level, Fukuzawa may have distanced himself from the Popular Rights Movement because of the personal danger being associated with it could cause. It was at this time that the Japanese government began to implement stricter laws concerning publishing and censorship, particularly in terms of newspapers and political publications. The harshest of these policies were implemented in 1883, when the government decided steps needed to be taken to defuse the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement. Having already promised to create a constitution, they “sought to shield this project from outside party pressures. In the early 1880s, many newspapers were arranging party affiliations.” The new sanctions required every paper to have a license and notice, as well as pay a security deposit in order to operate. Additionally, they were forced to submit copies of their paper to the government, which would then make and necessary corrections, censor dangerous political views, and review the sources cited. If a paper was deemed subversive, a number of penalties could be implemented, including a suspension or complete prohibition of publishing rights, seizure of printing equipment, and even imprisonment. Anyone from the owner of the paper down to the author or printer could be so punished. It became quickly evident that the government intended to enforce these policies as well: “From 1883 to 1887, 174 periodicals were suspended from publication for varying periods, and another 4 banned altogether, while 198 journalists served time in prison.”

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79 Ibid, 5. Table 1: State Restrictions in the Periodical Press, 1869-1890.
80 Ibid, 5-6.
Fukuzawa would clearly have tried to maintain a more moderate position in order to avoid being censored in this way. It has already been shown that keeping the *Jiji Shinpo* free from political alliances was one of Fukuzawa’s main goals in creating the paper. The reasoning for this can be seen as a combination of Fukuzawa’s own principles and a desire to avoid any entanglements with the government. Meanwhile, sympathizing with any group that advocated labor rights or unions (which some of these movements did) was highly dangerous, as it was seen as a sign of socialist tendencies. Socialism had not yet taken a strong hold in Japan, but its effects were beginning to be seen in Europe and the United States. And the government feared rebellion if such examples were followed. Industrialization, while greatly desired, ensured that such a movement could have vast repercussions if not completely prevented through government control.

Furthermore, Japan already had a history of problems with unions of a sort in various traditional industries. Therefore, it can be said that socialism was feared as one of the greatest menaces to the *kokutai* and a strong, modern Japan.

When seen in these terms, Fukuzawa’s retirement from the public limelight seems far less the action of a Confucian gentleman and much more the action of a man who had realized that it would not be safe or profitable for him to exert much influence. This in turn would have endangered the many institutions he had created, particularly Keio University and the *Jiji Shinpo*. Instead, his move to a life of privacy and seclusion allowed him to maintain his persona as a champion of modernity and one of the forefathers of modern Japanese thought. While subsequent scholars mentioned his name less and less over the years, it still retained an air of respect to those who shared some degree of similarity between their ideas and his. His written works especially continued
to be cited and reinterpreted in order to support various causes and movements. In fact, some historians have gone so far as to suggest that Fukuzawa was the father of Japanese nationalism which eventually evolved into militarism and resulted in imperialism and World War II. It was, after all, the radical militarists who adopted the term kokutai and used it to suggest that Japanese culture was the greatest in the world and should be spread throughout Asia. However, this is perhaps an unfair interpretation of Fukuzawa’s ideas, which by the 1930s were being taken completely out of context. Still, it is impossible to deny his influence even into the 20th century.

This leaves us with the modern conception of Fukuzawa as pillar of liberalism, which is how he is remembered in Japan and by many scholars of Meiji history. This can be explained by the fact that in later years, many different groups were claiming to continue on his ideas in the name of bettering Japan. The aforementioned militarists made use of his name, as did the moderates and liberals. The simple fact is that the liberal group eventually triumphed and subsequently adopted Fukuzawa as one of their founding figures. This makes a great deal of sense. As education became more and more important so that Japanese students could remain competitive in the world marketplace, Fukuzawa was an obvious representative. So too, as Japanese industry boomed and became one of the most dominant in the world, Fukuzawa could again be looked back as one of the revolutionaries in this field. Throughout this process, his connections to traditional ways of thinking and his ties to Tokugawa culture were gradually glossed over and forgotten. Thus, a new persona was created, and it is one that still persists today.
Conclusion

The Meiji Revolution was a time of rapid change and restructuring of Japanese society. It would be impossible to ignore the importance of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s role in helping to bring about this change. However, this role is often and easily misconstrued by those who would like to view him as one of the forefathers of modern Japan. In many ways, he has been placed on a pedestal, one that places him at the top of the liberal movement as one of its greatest proponents. He has been divorced from anything that might invoke memories of the Tokugawa Era or its institutions. This may give Japan’s current leaders a sense of legitimacy, but as we have seen it is a gross distortion of Fukuzawa’s actual persona and his ideas. In reality, he was in fact a product of the Tokugawa system that created him and others like him. As much as others may want to believe, and despite Fukuzawa’s own words on the subject, he was a man who was greatly influenced by Confucianism; it colored his beliefs on education, social hierarchy, and how a government should be structured. His method of modernizing Japan was slow, methodical and perpetrated by those in the upper echelons of society, a top-down approach that underlined his lack of faith in the “uneducated masses.” Unlike some of his contemporaries, he did not believe that democracy could be seized from below in a great popular struggle as such an action would lead only to more chaos. Yet it is precisely these kinds of thinkers that he commonly lumped in with.

It is a common problem in the study of history to equate modernization with liberalization. In the Western tradition, scholars are quick to point out how as a country
became more modern, its people gained more freedoms and rights. This is, of course, true in Japan as well, as people did gain more freedom after the fall of the Shogunate. However, it is a mistake to say that every person who advocated modernization also advocated a liberal form of government. The example of a person like Saigo Takamori illustrates the fact that many in the samurai class were able to reconcile their desire for a modern Japan with the belief that it would still be the samurai who controlled it. Once their class was dissolved, the samurai were left with two choices: to disappear in a blaze of glory like Takamori, or to integrate themselves into the new society, which is precisely what Fukuzawa Yukichi was able to do.

It has been the purpose of this paper to demonstrate how Fukuzawa remained true to his Tokugawa heritage while still being a key player in the cause of modernization. The base for this was laid in his early years, first as a student of Confucianism and then as a scholar of Dutch learning. His presence as one of the first Japanese to set foot in America points to a man that was keenly interested in all things Western, and it was these ideas that he brought back with him to Japan. From there, he continued to increase his importance and influence both within the Tokugawa system and without by becoming a successful author/publisher. With the fall of the Shogunate, he was able to continue this process at an even more rapid pace because of the freedom that entrepreneurship provided. He became a powerful figure in the realms of business, politics, and education and yet refused to become entangled in the government, maintaining a Confucian emphasis on the importance of individual cultivation. He reconciled this with the need to serve society by saying that he could best do so without the shackles of a government position and the corruption it caused. It is just this kind of action that has caused people
to see him as a liberal, but in truth it is simply another manifestation of his Tokugawa upbringing.

Fukuzawa Yukichi remains an important figure today, both in a practical sense and in the more abstract realm of public memory. His ideas about education in particular still have a great impact on the school system in Japan, and it is a testament to his foresight that Keio University remains one of the top institutions of higher learning in the country. In fact, Japan's prominence in highly technical fields such as science can be directly traced back to Fukuzawa and others like him, those scholars of Dutch learning who insisted on bringing Western technology and science into Japan. Likewise, Fukuzawa was one of the key figures in bringing democracy to Japan, or at least a version of democracy, which has changed and evolved over the years. Therefore, it is not a stretch to call Fukuzawa one of the forefathers of modern Japan.

However, it is a greater stretch to call him a father of the Japanese government which exists today, which is precisely what many of his biographers and Japanese politicians have done. Like every government, its legitimacy often depends on heroes, figures which the public can hold in their memory as symbols of the nation's greatness. Fukuzawa is one such figure; he has been turned into a symbol of the current liberal regime. Should things take a more conservative turn (which recent trends suggest they might), he will either be forgotten, or more likely his ideas will again be reinterpreted in a favorable manner. This reshaping is a constant process and one that cannot be avoided, at least to some degree. However, it is the job of the historian to attempt to operate outside this process; this is what I have tried to do in rediscovering the "actual" Fukuzawa.
Bibliography


Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Escaping from Asia*.


