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Axel Julsrud

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Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut
Koserstraße 20
14195 Berlin

Contact information:
For more information, please consult our website www.globalhistories.com or contact the editor at:
admin@globalhistories.com.

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By

Axel Julsrud

Abstract

This article reassesses the political thought of the Japanese nineteenth-century scholar of "Western studies", Tsuda Mamichi, by looking at the ways in which he utilized the Confucian concept of "Principle" in his adaptation of Western political and philosophical ideas. It is argued that Confucianism has been under-appreciated as a dynamic and inventive component of the transnational intellectual transfer of the nineteenth century, termed by Sebastian Conrad the "global Enlightenment". Tsuda's use of the concept of Principle legitimized a progressivist world view which accommodated the establishment of new political institutions inspired by Western civilization, most importantly the establishment of a popularly elected national assembly. It is therefore possible to follow Kiri Paramore's lead and speak of a "Confucian liberalism" when discussing Tsuda's thought. Finally, it is suggested that Tsuda's writings provide evidence to refute the historiographical error by which the central concepts of Confucianism have been assumed to be inherently incompatible with "modernity" or "enlightenment thought", caused in part by earlier Eurocentric scholarship such as "modernization theory".

About the author

Axel Julsrud has a MA in Modern International and Transnational History from the University of Oslo. His thesis explores the role of Confucianism in the interaction between Western and Japanese political thought in the nineteenth century. From this autumn, he will be continuing his studies of the history of global society through a research scholarship by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

Introduction

> Even though public law and civil law are man made [sic], they follow the nation's progress, vary with the enlightenment [開け, hirake] of the people, and arise from unavoidable conditions and the dictates of the times. This is almost the same as Heaven's Law [天律, J. tenritsu] that has been a compelling determinant through the ages. Human laws are invariably injurious if they do not arise from unavoidable dictates, and unchanging human laws have yet to be established since their value varies according to time and place. This is why Yao [堯] and Shun [舜][1] invariably followed the middle path.[2]
>
> -Tsuda Mamichi, June 1874.

In the above citation from the Western-oriented academic journal *meiroku zasshi* (明六雑誌, published in Tokyo from 1873 to 1874, Tsuda Mamichi (津田真道, 1829-1903) advocates for the reformation of public and civil law in accordance with "unavoidable dictates of the times", corresponding to the steady progress of what has here been translated as "enlightenment".[3] In the following issue, he uses the same logic to argue for the establishment of a popularly elected national assembly, supporting a petition which had been presented to the Meiji government to this effect in January 1874.[4] What is remarkable about this citation is the seamless combination of a belief in the unilinear progress of human society inspired by Western liberalism with a justification rooted both in Confucian metaphysics ("Heaven's Law") and ideals of governance (references to Yao and Shun), to the point that his thought might be labeled, somewhat provocatively, as "Confucian liberalism" or "Confucian progressivism".

Tsuda's role as a liberal reformer and member of the Meirokusha (明六社) society of so-called "enlightenment thinkers" in Meiji Japan has featured in most of the English-language scholarship which mentions him.[5] However, as indeed is the case with the scholarship on most Japanese intellectuals who expressed positive assessments of Western liberal political thought, his continued reference to and engagement with Confucian philosophical and political ideas has been all but ignored. More than simply omitting an interesting part of Tsuda's scholarship, this historiographical tunnel vision is argued to be both cause and effect of a conventionally Eurocentric way of narrating Japan's encounter with Western political and philosophical ideas, obscuring the dynamic and contingent processes of intellectual adaptation taking place before and after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. This article is an attempt at remedying this mistake by connecting Tsuda Mamichi's writings with the newly emerging literature on the concept of a "global Enlightenment", championed by Sebastian Conrad.[6] Conrad's framework, which will be explained in the next section, provides a useful way of contextualizing the intellectual developments in early Meiji Japan within a larger global context. This article uses Tsuda's writings as a launching pad to suggest some modifications in how Confucianism fits into the larger context of the Enlightenment – in particular arguing against the

notion that Confucianism and "modernity" are somehow mutually incompatible. Instead, Tsuda's writings exemplify how the Confucian concept of Principle (理) could be used to champion a Western-inspired political progressivism, indeed even establishing a parliament based on European models.[7]

The Global Enlightenment and Confucianism

How should we make sense of the massive social and political transformations of the nineteenth century in which Tsuda Mamichi took part? One common way has been to tell the story of two revolutions, a technical industrial revolution preceded by an intellectual revolution – the European Enlightenment.[8] The subsequent diffusion of an assumed nucleus of "modern" political theory and behavior from Europe to the rest of the world has conventionally been argued to constitute the birth of a "modern" world characterized by universality.[9] Perhaps the biggest problem with this master narrative is that historical experience does not support a general trend of convergence following the emergence of the so-called modern world in the nineteenth century, as scholars of "modernization theory" eventually were forced to recognize.[10] Divorced from its teleological ending point in "modernity", the story of the universalization of a pre-packaged European Enlightenment is also being called into question.

Sebastian Conrad has argued for a global, decentered story of the Enlightenment, a "global circulation, translation, and transnational co-production" of enlightenment knowledge.[11] Conrad criticizes the tendency to write about the Enlightenment as something pre-produced in Europe and subsequently spread elsewhere in an inevitable forward march of "progress". Instead of defining enlightenment on European premises and subsequently searching for traces of it outside of Europe, Conrad looks at which actors were talking about it, and for what purpose. This results in a longer history of a global Enlightenment, co-created by actors not just in eighteenth century Europe, but also in places all over the globe during the following century.[12]

Although Sebastian Conrad's article succeeds in disentangling "enlightenment" from Eurocentric conventions of writing world history and should serve as an inspiration, it also inadvertently exemplifies the degree to which scholars of East Asian intellectual history are faced with the challenge posed by the enduring legacy of such Eurocentric conventions. In a brief comment in his article, Conrad makes passing mention of the "somewhat paradoxical" nature of Confucianism's contribution to the "mixing and hybridization" of enlightenment in East Asia.[13] This runs counter to Conrad's own argument – if the Enlightenment was not passively received outside Europe, but constantly re-invented to fit disparate local contexts, why should Confucianism not play a part in this process in East Asia? The explanation for Conrad's quip lies in a long tradition of scholarship which has tended to portray Confucianism as inherently opposed to Western "modernity", already present during Tsuda's time.[14]

The idea of the binary opposition between Confucianism on the one hand and "modernity" or "enlightenment" on the other can be traced back to vehement attacks on Confucianism and Confucian scholars by certain influential Meiji intellectuals, Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉, 1835-1901) chief among them. Although he was himself a Meirokusha member, Fukuzawa had personal and political interests in situating himself as a new kind of scholar by publicly denouncing the established Confucian intellectual elite, in turn securing his vocational prospects.[15] Fukuzawa's portrayal of Confucianism as hopelessly outdated and inferior to Western science and philosophy was likely appealing to both his contemporary readership and scholars of later ages for multiple reasons: for his readers, it provided both a diagnosis (Confucianism) and prescription (learning from Western "civilization") for the security challenges facing Meiji Japan. This simplified narrative could subsequently be effortlessly repurposed by modernization theorists of the post-war era, dueo how it conveniently corroborated a view of "tradition" making way for "modernity".

This portrayal of the relationship between "modernity" and Confucianism found further support in the negative assessment of Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism as "stagnant" found in Maruyama Masao's (丸山眞男) highly influential war-time work Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan.[16] Starting in the 1950s and continuing well into the 1970s, modernization theory provided perhaps the most important lens through which the nineteenth and twentieth century history of Japan was studied by Western scholars.[17] Although Confucianism was not always outright rejected as having played a part in this modernization process, however defined, the roles assumed to have been played by Confucianism were highly constricted. An example of such a constricted view is the focus on the similarity between Confucian hierarchical loyalties and the rationalization of political authority leading to the establishment of bureaucracies, also hierarchical in organization.[18]

As newer scholarship sheds light on the variety of philosophical and political views which historically were combined with or even emerged from Confucian concepts, the reductionist view of Confucianism employed by modernization theorists has increasingly come under criticism.[19] In fact, among his colleagues in the Meirokusha, Fukuzawa's staunchly anti-Confucian views were rather exceptional. There were those, like Nishi Amane (西周, 1829-1897), who were critical yet included or referenced Confucian concepts even when discussing Western ideas. And there were also contributors who discussed Western ideas from what could safely be characterized as a Confucian point of view, such as Sakatani Shiroshi (阪谷素, 1822-1881) and Nishimura Shigeki (西村茂樹, 1828-1902). The result was a body of intellectual writings displaying a highly interesting mix between components sometimes erroneously assumed to be mutually incompatible. Tsuda Mamichi's Confucian progressivism is perhaps one of the most striking examples of this. Yet, it has received virtually no attention in English-language historiography.

What follows is a brief outline of the role of one important Confucian concept, "Principle", in a selection of Tsuda's political writings in the meiroku zasshi. The way Tsuda made use of this concept is argued to suggest not merely a Confucian-facilitated adoption of Western political concepts such as progressivism and parliamentarianism, but more

importantly a Confucian adaption of these ideas, creating a distinct, Japanese "co-created" variety of Enlightenment thought.

Tsuda Mamichi and the Interaction between Confucianism and Enlightenment Thought

Figure 1: Japanese students in the Netherlands, 1865. Tsuda Mamichi is at the far right, top row. To the far right in the bottom row is Nishi Amane, another founding member of the *Meirokusha*. Together they studied natural law, national law, international law, statistics, and economics at Leiden University under Simon Vissering, later finance minister of the Netherlands. Courtesy of the National Diet Library Digital Collection, https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/3851065/1

Tsuda Mamichi, scholar of "Western studies", and later government official in the Meiji state, was the most prolific contributor to the meiroku zasshi, the popularly read magazine published by the Meirokusha. Although David Huish has contested the actual outreach of the magazine, Japanese and Western scholars alike usually consider the Meirokusha and their publication to be at the forefront of intellectual discussion in early Meiji Japan.[20] Tsuda's central role in this academic society is enough to warrant closer study. Although he is not necessarily representative of a larger Japanese "reaction" to Enlightenment thought, he is far from being an obscure or irrelevant part of the public discussion during this time. Tsuda's particular interpretations of Western political concepts were perhaps not as hugely influential as those of Fukuzawa Yukichi, the most well-known of the Meirokusha members. However, his case is of particular historical interest for the striking way in which the creative interaction between Western political thought and

Confucianism in his writings, present also in the writings of his colleagues and other intellectuals of the age, exemplify the contingency of the introduction of "enlightenment thought" to Japan. As such, Tsuda poses a challenge to the simplistic yet resilient narrative of the unilinear "modernization" of Japanese political thought.

The following analysis of Tsuda's work is limited, and one should be careful in drawing conclusions about the entirety of his political thought based on his meiroku zasshi contributions alone. Nonetheless, it will hopefully become clear how it is highly misleading to write about Tsuda Mamichi, the "enlightenment thinker", without considering his Confucian intellectual heritage. The few biographical accounts of Tsuda in English understandably emphasize his and Nishi Amane's period of study at Leiden University from 1862 to 1865 and subsequent role in introducing Western law, economics, and statistics to Japan. It is a remarkable story, and representative of the two men's roles as pioneering students of "Western studies".[21] However, if one does not include the ways in which Tsuda carefully balanced and combined Confucian and Western concepts, one runs the risk of reducing him to a mere vessel of European ideas. Prior to commencing an outline of Tsuda's thought, it is necessary to introduce one fundamental concept which structured and bestowed meaning upon large parts of his intellectual perspective: the concept of Principle (理, C. lǐ, J. ri).[22]

Principle and its Historical Origins

The Chinese character 理 originally meant "the lines running through a piece of jade" but has been used as a philosophical term at least since the Chinese Warring States Period (fifth century BCE to 221 BCE). Most early uses of the term convey a sense of an underlying "pattern", such as the story in the Daoist classic Zhuangzi (莊子) which tells of the cook who can butcher an ox so smoothly he never has to sharpen his axe, due to his intuitive understanding of the "patterns of tendons and bones, or 'principles', that heaven has put in the beast".[23] The term subsequently evolved to take on a metaphysical character. In third century CE, Wang Bi (王弼, 226-249) explained that "just as one recognizes the movement of things so too the principle by which x is x can also be known".[24] The fact that these early descriptions of Principle are attributed to Daoist thinkers illustrate the shared historical context between Confucianism and other intellectual traditions, expressed in the concept of a time of "Hundred Schools of Thought" during the Warring States period. Nonetheless, it should be noted that despite significant thematic and lexicographic overlap, the relation between Confucianism and Daoism has been characterized for large periods by competition and that much effort has been expended toward maintaining Confucianism's denominational boundaries.

It was not until the Song Dynasty (宋, 960-1279) that the concept of Principle came to occupy a central position in Confucian thought. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Zhou Dunyi (周敦頤, 1017-1073) and Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107), Zhu Xi's (朱熹, 1130-1200)

interpretation of the term became highly influential. For Zhu, all things in the world were created through an interaction of Principle and qì (気, J. ki), the former guiding and patterning the latter, which was the physical and spiritual makeup of all things. In this function, Principle was a "cosmic blueprint" which made all things as they were.[25] This cosmological understanding of Principle was highly influenced by both Daoism and Chen (禪, J. zen) Buddhism. The latter found a devoted base of adherents in the ruling samurai class in Kamakura period Japan (鎌倉, 1185-1333). This played a part in facilitating the introduction of Neo-Confucianism derived from the work of Zhu Xi and other thinkers to Tokugawa Japan (徳川, 1603-1868) starting in the seventeenth century, and also meant that by Tsuda Mamichi's time, the concept of Principle had played a significant role in Japanese philosophy for several centuries.[26]

More than providing answers to ontological questions of the components and structure of the physical world, Principle also provided a link between Confucian metaphysics and practical morality. Since there was an observable and coherent principle in all things, the same was logically also true of the human mind. Through a process of introspection, therefore, it was possible to grasp the appropriate ethical behavior in accordance with the universal Principle.[27] Importantly, this led the concept of Principle to also take on a normative character: it was not merely that by which x was x, but also that by which x ought to be x.[28] For Zhu Xi and his followers, whose highly influential variety of Confucianism is normally termed "Neo-Confucianism" in English, Principle governed not merely the natural order, but also the moral order.

It is also significant to note the political dimension latent in the concept of Principle as it supported the Confucian concept of rites (禮, C. lǐ, J. rei). Rites or rituals were an essential part of the governing function of classical Chinese states, a way of inducing a shared set of behaviors or moral ideas often contrasted with the coercion associated with Legalism, a competing approach to governance. Confucius taught that despite the changing form of rites throughout history, they were based on a core of knowledge handed down from the sage kings of antiquity.[29] As long as they were in accordance with the universal Principle of human affairs, as went the argument of later Confucianists, changes to the particular rites in society were permissible. Although it might seem like a trifling matter taken out of its context, Confucius' approval of substituting the more expensive (at the time) ceremonial linen hat for one made of silk could be cited to support this general idea.[30] This goes to show that there was a seed for the legitimization of political change inherent in the Confucian tradition: changing concrete aspects of society were legitimized through the dynamic relationship between rites and normative concepts such as Principle. Accordingly, Principle was a complex concept with a history of clearly discernible cosmological, moral, and political aspects. There is good reason to argue, then, that what was truly pioneering about Tsuda Mamichi and his contemporaries in Meiji Japan, who will be considered in the following section, was the scale and extent of change they reconciled with Confucian concepts rather than their application to this end per se.

Principle and the Encounter with the West

When the concept of scientific laws was first introduced to Japanese scholars of Western studies during the Tokugawa period, it was equated to the concept of Principle as the observable intrinsic pattern of the natural world. For scholars such as Satō Issai (佐藤一斎, 1772-1859) and, Sakuma Shōzan (佐久間象山, 1811-64), Western science was entirely reconcilable with a Confucian worldview since the moral authority of Principle remained untouched by the idea of scientific laws.[31] Sakuma's ideas are especially interesting as several of the Meirokusha thinkers studied at his school in Edo. For him, the scientific experimentation of the West embodied the concept of 窮理 (kyūri), or "exhausting principle", which had been advocated as the correct way to acquire knowledge about the world in the Neo-Confucian tradition for centuries.[32] This can be seen in his translation of "physics" as 窮理学 (kyūrigaku), "the study of exhausting principle".[33]

The concept of Principle, then, was reimagined by several Confucian thinkers during the end of the Tokugawa shogunate as identical to, or above yet in perfect correspondence with, the Western concept of "natural laws". As attention now will be shifted to Tsuda Mamichi's writings, it will be seen how this interpretation influenced Tsuda, who was one of Sakuma's students.

Of Principle and Parliaments: Tsuda Mamichi's Confucian Progressivism

In an essay published in one of the earliest volumes of the meiroku zasshi, Tsuda outlines his understanding of the relationship between Principle and the natural – including the human – world:

> […] physical and human affairs are invariably governed by laws. And these laws, being natural laws, are absolutely never controlled by man. They are called Heaven's Law [天律, tenritsu] by Westerners and Heaven's Principle [理, ri] by the Chinese.[34]

In equating Western scientific laws with Principle, Tsuda thus reiterated an idea which he probably had been exposed to via his teacher, Sakuma Shōzan. Furthermore, a much longer tradition of "exhausting principle" allowed him quite naturally to put the Western scientific method in a Confucian context, as they were both perceived to have the same goal of recognizing "principles" in the world, as evident in the following citation:

> Heaven's Law, or Heaven's Principle refers to the systematic order in all things, as it is nothing more than the cause that determines the nature of things. A principle [理] most easy to recognize is that, once a ball is thrown into the air, it will invariably fall toward the earth.[35]

This has implications for Tsuda's thoughts beyond just utilizing a traditional principle in order to make room for a new one. Because "Principle" is a concept with not just cosmological, but also moral and political connotations, Tsuda is able to utilize

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

> The law of gravity is somewhat difficult to understand, but still more difficult to fathom are the principles governing the flowering of plants, the formation of fruits, and the minds and movements of animals. Then when we observe the phenomenon of man, investigate his reason [理], penetrate the causes of this life and the hereafter, search for the secrets of man's creation, and inquire into the principle governing his conscience, we have reached the principles most difficult to understand. Yet this is also no more than discovering Heaven's Law. [36]

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

Principle and Political Gradualism

On the topic of the administrative reforms which had been enacted since the Meiji restoration, the concept of "Heaven's Law" looms in the background of Tsuda's discussion. Tsuda takes up the issue of the wider responsibilities of the centralized Meiji state as evidence of societal "progress": "Institutions are simple and laws rough in uncivilized societies. As nations gradually advance, their laws become more detailed and their institutions more complex, and there are numerous reforms in which the old is thrown out and the new introduced".[37] Yet, he cautions both against clinging to "old customs[…] despite unavoidable conditions and the dictates of the times" as well as against hasty change, warning that "those who, yearning for foreign institutions and culture, destroy old customs suited to the people of the time will themselves be destroyed".[38] This moderate position is justified ultimately through what Tsuda refers to as "Heaven's Law":

> Even though public and civil law are man made [sic], they follow the nation's progress, vary with the enlightenment [hirake] of the people, and arise from unavoidable conditions and the dictates of the times. This is almost in the same category as Heaven's Law that has been a compelling determinant through the ages.[39]

Tsuda claims that the gradual refinement of laws and administration is tied to the "nation's progress" and "the enlightenment of the people", a gradualist argument which does not originate from Confucian political thought. Interestingly, this is said to be "almost in the same category as Heaven's Law", implying that the gradual tendency for administration to become more complex in line with the "progress" of society is a sort of principle in the Confucian sense of the word. In combining these concepts, Tsuda's worldview acquires a character distinct both from the Neo-Confucian cosmology of his predecessors, as well as from a Western scientific worldview. In the latter, there is no

connection between the scientific laws governing natural phenomena (such as gravity causing a ball to fall to the ground) and human affairs (such as psychology). On the other hand, Tsuda's view was not simply "Confucian" either. For an orthodox Neo-Confucian, the cosmology of Principle often legitimized the status quo, rather than the progressivist outlook demonstrated by Tsuda. For Tsuda, the force causing a ball to fall to the ground is the same (or almost the same) force necessitating gradual reform as opposed to complacency or abrupt change in a modern state. It is Principle reinterpreted to fit the highly volatile times through which Tsuda lived. What is more, the rapid changes Tsuda witnessed in the world during his life were themselves made sense of partly by employing the concept of Principle. Attention will now be turned toward how Tsuda used this concept to explain the Western notion of a steady progress toward "civilization" led by scientific developments, and, crucially, how Principle allowed him to furthermore support that notion on a Confucian moral base.

Principle and Progressivism

The relationship Tsuda assumed between Principle and the progress of society is visible in his article titled "Imagination". Here Tsuda once again mentions "Heaven's Law" (which, as shown above, was equivalent to "Principle" for Tsuda). The essay is a discussion of the role of imagination, or perhaps better understood as intuition, in acquiring knowledge about the world.[40] He writes:

> The empiricism of the Ch'ing [清, Qing] scholars and modern scientific research in the West employ only a minimum of imagination. Yet in such matters as appreciating that the earth is oval or discovering new stars, scientific research generally only establishes Heaven's Laws after verification of what originally had been imagined.[41]

Tsuda's argument can be interpreted in two similar but distinct ways. The first way is to interpret "what originally had been imagined" as the teachings of Confucius or other "ancient sages", which makes the entire passage read a lot like the "natural-laws-as-principle" argument put forth by his teacher Sakuma Shōzan and others. It seems more probable, however, that "what originally had been imagined" is to be understood as the action of putting forth a hypothesis and employing the methodology of scientific research as a way to verify or disprove intuitions about the world. Following this interpretation, the implication is that modern scholars, in putting forth hypotheses and testing them, are capable of intuitive or "imaginative" insight into the "Laws of Heaven" just as valid as that of Confucius, although unlike Confucius' intuition, a scientific methodology is needed to verify or disprove their intuition. In Tsuda's words, "If conjectures on things are verified by experiment, these principles are then regarded as unchanging Laws of Heaven".[42]

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

> Verification, however, is easy in the natural sciences and difficult in the humanities. This is why metaphysical disciplines are so divided that they cannot reach conclusions. Even the self-evident principles governing such phenomena as comets and eclipses do not escape from unsupported hypotheses. How much more difficult it is to understand the humanities![43]

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

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

It is important to note that allowing for the West as embodying "Confucian" principles in their social organization does not force Tsuda to depart with Confucianism in favor of "modernization" or "Westernization". He warns against too enthusiastically adopting Western customs or law based on the view that it is difficult to "verify principles" in the humanities:

> Our people [...] cannot easily investigate and understand the institutions of civilization that have been derived from [...] countless centuries of learning and experience. [...] Today's so-called enlightened scholars imagine liberty without knowing the price of liberty, and they freely discuss French codes, English law, and American government without studying law and political economy.[44]

This situation, Tsuda argues, is similar to "the blind men who imagined the elephant", bringing the essay to a conclusion with a reference to its beginning, namely the role of imagination.[45] Having been exposed to only parts of "enlightened society", Japanese intellectuals are not yet able to distinguish which Western customs are in accordance with a higher, universal principle, and which are not, lacking the "superior imagination" of a man like Confucius.

While clearly heavily influenced by Western thinkers, Tsuda's progressivist world view is not a wholesale importation of Western thought, nor is Confucianism relegated to the role of nothing more than a linguistic means to that end. As will now be considered, Tsuda found ways to incorporate Confucian political ideas of governance within his world view.

Principle and the Link Between Western Progressivism and Confucian Government

The final example of the way Principle shaped Tsuda's adaptation of Western concepts is found in his essay entitled "Mysteries" (怪, kai). Beginning with the rationalist assertion that, just as an eclipse was a mystery prior to the obtaining of astronomical knowledge which could explain it, the phenomena which up until that point had been regarded as "mysteries", such as fables of "goblins and ghosts", were in reality nothing but the unexplained workings of the human mind. For Tsuda, understanding the Principles of the world was the way to dispel with "mysteries", but as material science had not progressed far enough to understand the human brain, belief in certain "mysteries" was still prevalent. He goes on to state that belief in mysteries could perhaps be explained by a "momentary derangement", a temporary impairment in the "normal functioning and rapport between [the brain] and nerves".[46]

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

> If a nation is compared to a person, the ruler is the brain, and the hundreds of officials are the five nerve senses and one hundred organs. Once the rapport between the brain and the nerves is disturbed, the five senses and hundred organs mistake their functions. This is called insanity. When women, priests, and eunuchs make light of official power or when government orders are inappropriate and the hundreds of officials mistake their functions, the great ministers being domineering and the military oppressive, how does the disturbance to the national structure [國體, kokutai] and the national illness differ from the diseases of insanity and sleep-walking? Such a country should be called a nation bewitched [怪國, kaikoku].[47]

This citation is a remarkable example of how an outlook on the world clearly reminiscent of the rationalist belief in the progression of material science characteristic of the European Enlightenment can be combined with a Confucian political morality. In essence, Tsuda is employing a metaphor inspired by Western science in order to argue for Confucian "good government" – the proper relationships between different status groups and their mutual obligations and responsibilities. Tsuda's association between expanding knowledge (investigation of Principle) of the physical world and the "enlightenment" of society might be said to be in line with Western progressivist thinking, but his subsequent associations to what he evidently considers an ideal or "correctly functioning" government seems to be best explained by the idea of a correct "Principle" of government. Accordingly, it seems that for Tsuda, Enlightenment ideas such as rationalism and progressivism were not just accepted as they were, but merged with the idea of Principle, giving them an underpinning of Confucian morality and political thought.

There is a final symbolic aspect of this essay which must not be overlooked. It is famously stated in the Analects, the chief source of Confucius' philosophy, that Confucius "did not discuss [...] the supernatural".[48] When asked about "serving ghosts and spirits", Confucius replied rhetorically: "You do not yet understand life – how could you possibly understand death?"[49] These quotes have often been interpreted to the effect that Confucius' concern was on the here and now, on the moral cultivation and the interpersonal relationships of the present, rather than on esoteric teachings on the afterlife. For Tsuda, the fact that "recent generations [were] finally moving toward civilization", dispersing mysteries along the way, caused even the "ghosts and spirits" of his time to gradually become within reach of human knowledge.[50] The symbolism of the choice of topic is clear: the progression of human knowledge allows Tsuda to examine even those topics deemed "unknowable" by Confucius, all the while keeping his bridges to the Confucian legacy unburnt.

Although Tsuda draws on thousands of years of Confucian statecraft in his admonitions on the importance of fulfilling the correct duties in accordance with one's societal role and obligations, his idea of a suitable government for Japan was radically different from that outlined in the Confucian classics. In the following final section, Tsuda's use of the concept of Principle to argue for the suitability – or even the necessity – of establishing a popularly elected assembly will be examined. Here, too, the concept serves not just a political function, but a moral one as well, displaying the continued influence of a Confucian logic in Tsuda's writings.

Principle and Parliamentarianism

So far, it has been shown how Tsuda employs the concept of "principle" in a way which undermines some common imaginations of Confucianism: that it is "premodern", "Chinese", and static.[51] He is able to take a concept which is central to Confucian cosmology and refashion it as being compatible with a gradual reform of society toward "civilization and enlightenment". For this purpose, Tsuda looks to the West, but not uncritically. It is also a central characteristic of his writings that they not only legitimize, but also call for this reform, as moving toward "civilization" is equated with getting closer to Heaven's principles in human society. Essentially, Tsuda's essays exemplify how a Western progressivist worldview could be reconciled with and legitimated by Confucian philosophical concepts.[52]

The upshot of this "Confucian progressivism" found in Tsuda's writings is the possibility of accommodating many political ideas and institutions more orthodox Confucians would have rejected as irreconcilable with the idea of the ideal society under the rule of the Confucian sages of Chinese antiquity. The most striking example of this is Tsuda's advocacy for establishing a popularly elected assembly, in support of a memorial submitted to the Meiji government in January 1874 by certain activists and former ministers

petitioning for such an institution based upon a Western model.[53] Tsuda accepted a general assembly because he saw it as an "unavoidable dictate of the times".[54] His view of the inherent Principle of government, inspired by European progressivism, saw the proliferation of knowledge and subsequent advance of "civilization" (開化, kaika) take on a central role. There is no better way to spread knowledge among the people in accordance with this Principle, he concludes, than establishing a popularly elected assembly.[55] His inclusion of the Confucian concept of Principle into his progressivist worldview additionally gives it a moral sprinkling rooted in a familiar concept of right and wrong. He writes:

> [...] it seems that we must acknowledge that this reform [introducing a popularly elected assembly] assuredly arises from unavoidable circumstances and the dictates of the times. After all, where else is public discussion and public opinion leading [than to participation by the people in national affairs through a popularly elected assembly]?

In this passage, one discerns the contours of an implicit reference to the Mencian idea of the mandate of heaven - "public discussion" and "public opinion" are cited not for their own legitimizing force, but for being symbols of the changing "unavoidable circumstances and dictates of the times", much like peasant revolts in Chinese history were perceived to signal that Heaven had revoked the mandate bestowed upon the imperial house.[56] One may assume that for Tsuda, attempting to delay or suppress the spread of "civilization" to the people by failing to establish suitable institutions would not only be politically misguided, but morally wrong, as it was in conflict with the Principle of progression of human societies – one of the myriad manifestations of the underlying cosmic Principle which humans ought to strive to act in accordance with.

Conclusion

In an earlier issue of the meiroku zasshi, Tsuda Mamichi's friend and colleague, Nishi Amane, argued against the establishment of a national assembly on the grounds that whereas physical principle [物理, butsuri] was universal, and technologies based upon them could be easily transferred from the West to Japan, human principle [心理, shinri], which underlay social and political organization, differed with time and place. This in turn meant that while a popularly elected assembly might be in accordance with Principle in 1870s England, it would not necessarily be so in Japan at the same time.[57] This bifurcation of Principle should be seen in relation with Nishi's tendency to dismiss Confucianism in favor of Western philosophical concepts, as it separated the Confucian cosmology from questions of morality. Despite this, Nishi most likely found inspiration for this bifurcation in the work of a Tokugawa period Confucian scholar, Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666-1728).[58]

Although Tsuda and Nishi disagreed about the extent to which Principle was a suitable philosophical concept with which to make sense of the world, neither of them rejected it altogether. The fact that they both, despite differing in their judgment, continued to refer to it seems to point to the role played by this, and perhaps other Confucian concepts, as

part of an intellectual "compass", without which navigating the new torrent of intellectual impulses from the West would have been much more difficult. The preoccupation with fundamental metaphysical and moral questions had created a wide Confucian vocabulary of which "Principle" represented only the tip of the iceberg. Any serious engagement with Western philosophical and political ideas would seem to require the inclusion of these terms and concepts, at least initially, to properly situate new ideas in a Japanese context. If this indeed is a more accurate characterization of Confucianism's interaction with Western thought, the correct observation but mistaken interpretation of Sebastian Conrad's quip that Confucianism was "somewhat paradoxically" a part of the "global Enlightenment" in East Asia should become clear.[59] It should also serve to illustrate how certain reductionist and stereotypical conceptions of the Confucian tradition have become entrenched – for various reasons which are not singly reducible to, but undeniably sustained by Eurocentrism in different forms. A closer look at the scholarship of Tsuda Mamichi, and indeed many of his colleagues in the Meirokusha, should compel scholars to move away from the tendency to gloss over or "rationalize" Confucian connections in Japan's "global Enlightenment".

Although shaped by contingencies of time and place, East Asia's nineteenth-century encounter with Western political thought constitutes a watershed in world history. The case of Japan is invaluable for understanding this milestone, both because of Japanese actors' pioneering role in adapting Western "civilization" to their society, as well as the diversity of opinions and reactions to this process. One should be careful not to focus excessively on the novelty of the "encounter" to the detriment of those actors' particular intellectual context, however, which necessarily gave them a different understanding of the very nature of that same encounter scholars attempt to make sense of today. Despite the singularity of the Meiji Restoration and the subsequent transformations of Japanese society, the evolution of Japanese political and philosophical thought from around the start of the seventeenth century is an essential part of that story.[60] Attention should be directed toward the fact that actors operated within pre-existing intellectual circumstances, even when their interests lay outside of them, as was the case with scholars of "Western studies" who nonetheless were influenced by Confucianism. Accepting this should hint toward a general peril of assuming unilinear causal relationships in talking about global phenomena – did "enlightenment thought", or "modernity" come from outside to Japan? Of course, the impetus from the Western philosophical and political traditions was undeniable, but significantly, "enlightenment thought" as it was experienced in Japan, was in Conrad's words "co-created", not imported. It also points to the widespread misinterpretation of "Confucianism" as something which can be reduced to a set of conceptions which are usually thought to be incompatible with "modernity". As illustrated in this article by looking closer at Tsuda Mamichi's writings, Confucian concepts could be manifested in a wide array of ways, some of which were highly harmonious with characteristic ideas of the European Enlightenment. The view of Confucianism as stagnant or essentially anathema to "modern" politics belongs to the same Eurocentric worldview, now widely discredited, which saw the "modernization" of Japanese society as something only possible by the impetus of the West.

Understanding the transnational dynamics of large international processes is a highly relevant task for scholars of the twenty-first century. Acknowledging the inherent dynamism and role of intellectual traditions in the encounter between Japanese and Western thought in the nineteenth century allows also for reexamining the similar but divergent experiences of the encounter between the West and other Confucian societies such as Korea and China – not to mention the subsequent role of Confucian rhetoric in the service of Japanese imperialism. Methodologically, this case might also be of relevance for the analysis of other global, transnational forces which shape our world today. While the interest in forces on the global level invite a top-down, or "outside-in" understanding of the world, it is crucial to remain conscious of the circumstances and terms on which those forces were identified and described, and not to ignore the experiences "on the ground" in other contexts, which may challenge some of those very constitutive assumptions.

Notes

[1] Yao and Shun are mythical rulers of Ancient China who symbolize perfect governance in accordance with Confucian conceptions of benevolent rule.

[2] Tsuda Mamichi, "On Government: Part Two," in William Reynolds Braisted, trans., *Meiroku zasshi: Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 140. Henceforth abbreviated as MZ with the relevant issue number. Citations from the original Japanese are taken from Nihon goshi kenky¹shiry¶, <<Meiroku zasshi>>, accessed July 21, 2021, https://dglb01.ninjal.ac.jp/ninjaldl/bunken.php?title=meirokuzassi.

[3] The word Tsuda uses, *hirake* (開け), should not be perceived as related to the European Enlightenment or "enlightenment thought" necessarily. See Tadashi Karube, *Toward the Meiji Revolution: The Search for "Civilization" in Nineteenth-Century Japan,* trans. David Noble (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry for Culture, 2020), 183.

[4] MZ12, 159.

[5] Braisted, *Meiroku zasshi*, xxvi-xxviii; Alistair Swale, *The Meiji Restoration: Monarchism, Mass Communication and Conservative Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 103-105; Thomas R. H. Havens, *Nishi Amane: and Modern Japanese Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), passim.

[6] Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (October 2012): 999–1027, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/117.4.999. See also the reworked version of the article in Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *An Emerging Modern World: 1750-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 485-526.

[7] See page 6 in this article for an explanation of Principle.

[8] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962).

[9] William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), 599.

[10] Dean C. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, no. 2 (1973): 199-226, https://

www.jstor.org/stable/178351.

[11] Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History," 1027.

[12] Ibid, 1014-1022.

[13] Ibid, 1023.

[14] Kiri Paramore, "Liberalism, Cultural Particularism, and the Rule of Law in Modern East Asia: The Anti-Confucian Essentialisms of Chen Duxiu and Fukuzawa Yukichi Compared," *Modern Intellectual History* 17, no. 2 (June 2020): 529, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000240.

[15] Paramore, "Liberalism," 538-542.

[16] Masao Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. Mikiso Hane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), xv-xxxvii. It should be noted that Maruyama's opinion on this and a handful of other topics changed quite drastically over the years, which is evident by the extent he goes to distance himself from the ideas of the original Japanese work in a preface to the 1974 English translation.

[17] Sheldon Garon, "Rethinking Modernization and Modernity in Japanese History: A Focus on State-Society Relations," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 2 (May 1994): 346-366, https://doi.org/10.2307/2059838.

[18] Perhaps exemplified best by the six-part conference on "Studies on the Modernization of Japan" in the late 1950s and 1960s which produced five volumes (1965-71), among which an explicit description of some assumptions regarding Confucianism is found in Marius B Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 40-41.

[19] Kiri Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), especially 1-12.

[20] David J. Huish, "The Meirokusha: Some Grounds for Reassessment," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 32, no. 3-4 (January 1972): 208-229, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2718872; David J. Huish, "Aims and Achievements of the Meirokusha: Fact and Fiction," *Monumenta Nipponica* 32, no. 4 (1977): 495-514.

[21] Havens, *Nishi Amane*, 40-65; Swale, *The Meiji Restoration*, 103-105.

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

[23] Dainian Zhang, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Edmund Ryden (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 26-30, citation on 30.

[24] Zhang, 31.

[25] Ibid, 32-37.

[26] Paramore, *Japanese Confucianism*, 31-35.

[27] Jana Rošker, *Traditional Chinese Philosophy and the Paradigm of Structure (Li* 理) (Newcastle upon

Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 85-90.

[28] Zhang, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, 36.

[29] Ronnie L. Littlejohn, *Confucianism: An Introduction* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 27-28.

[30] Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003) 9.3, 87. Note that when discussing rites and their relation to Principle, the concept of the "way", or "tao" (道) is often used.

[31] Warren W. Smith, *Confucianism in Modern Japan: A Study of Conservatism in Japanese Intellectual History* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1973), 26-27.

[32] Shao Yong's (1011-1077) concept of "observing things" or "investigation of things" carries the same meaning and was influential in Sakuma's thought. See Don J. Wyatt, "Shao Yong's Numerological-Cosmological System," in Makeham, *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, 25-29.

[33] Rumi Sakamoto, "Confucianising Science: Sakuma Sh¶zan amd wakon y¶sai Ideology," *Japanese Studie*s 28, no. 2 (2008): 219-221, https://doi.org/10.1080/10371390802249180.

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

[35] Ibid, 139.

[36] Ibid, 139. Braisted has chosen to translate 理 as "reason" in this instance.

[37] MZ11, 140.

[38] Ibid, 140.

[39] Ibid, 140.

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

[41] MZ13, 167-8.

[42] Ibid, 168.

[43] Ibid, 168.

[44] MZ13, 168.

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

[46] MZ25, 315-318, quote on 317.

[47] MZ25, 317-318.

[48] Slingerland, *Confucius Analects*, 7.21, 71.