

Excerpt from Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Western Civilization as Our Goal”

Fukuzawa Yukichi was a leading philosopher and statesman of the Meiji era. His writings focused on political and social philosophy and reform, the direction of the new nation, and the potential and limits of Western ideas for Japan. The following is an excerpt from one of his writings.

Therefore, the essence of a nation is in its national polity. . . .

Now, the only duty of the Japanese at present is to preserve Japan's national polity. For to preserve national polity will be to preserve national sovereignty. And in order to preserve national sovereignty the intellectual powers of the people must be elevated. There are many factors involved in this, but the first order of business . . . lies in sweeping away blind attachment to past customs and adopting the spirit of Western civilization. . . . Once this blind attachment has been stripped away we shall be able to enter the realm of vital intellectual activity. We shall have achieved success when national sovereignty and national polity are supported by and grounded on the intellectual power of the whole nation.

It is extremely easy to preserve imperial succession. My message to the gentlemen of the land is to have no thought but that of loyalty. Loyalty is a good thing, but nothing less than complete loyalty will do. If we wish to preserve imperial succession, we must do so by increasing the glory of that succession. But the glory of imperial lineage will vanish if national polity is not solid. . . . Western civilization is an incomparable means for both strengthening our national polity and increasing the prestige of our imperial line. Why, then, do we hesitate to adopt it? We should not even think twice about the matter.

Source: Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Western Civilization as Our Goal,” *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst, trans. Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973: 28.