

## **Excerpt from Yoshino Sakuzō, “On the Meaning of Constitutional Government and the Methods by Which It Can Be Perfected”**

Democracy is not contingent on where legal theory locates sovereignty. It merely implies that in the exercise of this sovereignty, the sovereign should always make it his policy to value the well-being and opinions of the people. . . . There is no doubt that even in a monarchy this principle can be honored . . .

Most of the misconceptions about democracy arise from emotional arguments . . . This is especially true of the small class that up to now has possessed special privileges and monopolized political power. . . . In the past the system made them rulers of the common people. In the new age they must yield this formal dominance to the people and be content with the substance of moral leadership. . . . The public is prone to say that constitutional government has failed to develop as we had hoped because the thought of the people has not developed. But whether the people’s thought develops is really determined by whether advanced thinkers properly guide it. . . .

. . . there also are criticisms of democracy that have a somewhat theoretical basis . . . First, some persons confuse democracy with popular sovereignty and see no clear difference between them. They therefore think that democracy is opposed in theory to the principle of sovereignty of the emperor. . . . Second, some persons look at the history of democracy’s development, see that it has invariably gone hand in hand with popular sovereignty, and conclude from this that it is incompatible with the monarchical system. . . . Up to a point, this theory is true. . . . But it would be a mistake to conclude that because constitutional government originated in revolutionary democratic thought, it must always be dangerous. . . .

Source: Yoshino Sakuzō, “On the Meaning of Constitutional Government and the Methods by Which It Can Be Perfected” (Kensei No Hongi O Toite Sono Yūshū No Bi O Seisu No To O Ronzu), 1916, in *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Abridged: Part 2: 1868 to 2000*, compiled by Wm. Theodore DeBary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 168-169.