



An Outline of a Theory of Civilization

Yukichi Fukuzawa

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An Outline of a Theory of Civilization Yukichi Fukuzawa

Yukichi Fukuzawa rose from low samurai origins to become one of the finest intellectuals and social thinkers of modern Japan. Through his best-selling works, he helped transform an isolated feudal nation into a full-fledged international force.

In *Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, the author's most sustained philosophical text, Fukuzawa translates and adapts a range of Western works for a Japanese audience, establishing the social, cultural, and political avenues through which Japan could connect with other countries. Echoing the ideas of Western contemporaries such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, Fukuzawa encouraged a grassroots elevation of the individual and national spirit, as well as free initiative in the private domain. Fukuzawa's bold project articulated thoughts that, for him, bolstered the material evidence of Western civilization. He argued that the essential difference separating Western countries from Japan and Asia was the extent to which citizens acted like free and responsible individuals.

This careful new translation, accompanied by a comprehensive critical introduction, highlights the truly transnational aspects of *Outline of a Theory of Civilization* and its status as a foundational text of modern Japanese civilization. Approaching Fukuzawa's progressive thought with a fresh eye, these scholars elucidate the monumental and peerless quality of his work.

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