

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN JAPAN

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Part I

It is said that agricultural techniques were introduced into our country from the continent about the dawn of the Christian Era. Since then Japan has made itself an agricultural country thanks to abundant moisture and rainfall, for the Japanese archipelago belongs to the monsoon zone. The ancient industry of Japan was agriculture, and it has fundamentally prescribed the way of living of the Japanese people for the last two thousand years.

The sun being the source of all life and the first element of agricultural products, it was regarded as a goddess by the primitive Japanese people. The sun goddess named Amaterasu Ōmikami is the chief deity of primitive Shintoism. It was the goddess who presided over the other clan gods and a natural and human world.

The Japanese people, centuries on end patiently engaged in farming, working in the fields with sweat on their brows, looking up to the sun on high, loved to bathe in water to get rid of the soil and sweat from their bodies. They were people who were really fond of cleanliness. Thus there was formed a kind of sensualistic ethics that cleanliness was good and uncleanness bad. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." This ethics is the essence of Japanese Shintoism, and here lies the reason why "light, pure and straightforward sincerity" is highly emphasized in Shintoism as the cardinal virtue from which originates all virtues.

Everything was bound to cardinal virtue. Through pure-heartedness all the people who were related to the Sun Goddess and other gods, were united with one another, making a community. To borrow the expression used by Prof. F. S. C. Northrop in describing the fundamental characteristics of oriental culture, it was the principle of "all-embracing continuum, or unity." I would rather call it "the principle of universality." Here arises a way of thinking that gods and men are united on the same plain through this principle.

On the contrary, impurity of heart and body severed the relation between gods and men and between men and men. Therefore the Japanese people would purify their bodies and remain for a night in a Shinto shrine, sharing the products of their fields with the god of their clan and having a friendly talk with one another.

They highly valued the peaceful atmosphere of communion with the god of their clan.

The gods of primitive Shintoism were sympathetic, peaceful and egalitarian. Here lies a clear distinction between the Japanese gods and the Judean transcendental God who was the Deity of absolute justice and who loved but at the same time judged the people with wrath (Gottes Zorn).

Thus it can be understood that the Japanese society of earlier times was a community of peaceful farming families. The Japanese united by such a presiding goddess and clan gods were not people with sturdy spirit who made their own way beholding the light of God on high in the midst of a dreary desert; but they were people of exceedingly gentle, patient and peaceful spirit. This proves to be the good point of our people who value peace, and at the same time it is our weakness as we lack the spirit of autonomy. Thus we have seldom had our own isms and principles, and so also our inadequacy to do independent thinking. While the Japanese people may be gentle and kind-hearted as individuals, however, they are easily apt to succumb to the pressure of a large group. Being moved by a sort of mob-mindedness, our people become at times unreasoning and violent. It is to be noted here that the peaceful spirit (Nigi-tama, soft-mindedness) of the Japanese is a brother to a spirit of valour or violence (Aratama, brave-, or wild-mindedness). This spirit sometimes makes the dark side in contrast with the peaceful trait. This tendency sometimes plays a rôle in Japanese aggression, when it is combined with narrow-minded insularism. The so-called "State Shintoism" as reorganized by the Kan-nushi (Shinto priest) philosophers under the influence of Japanese Buddhism during the 12th and 13th centuries is closely related to this aspect of the Japanese spirit. It was quite different from the peaceful primitive agricultural Shintoism and performed a great part in bringing about our recent tragedy. "State Shintoism" has a close relationship with militaristic Bushido, the ideology of the samurai who wielded great power as the ruling class since 13th century.

Such being the case, with gentle, peaceful and all-embracing spirit, the Japanese people encountered the cultures of foreign countries with a compromising attitude, instead of standing bigoted against them. For instance, as is seen in the case of "Honjisuizyakusetsu" in the 11th century which advocated the oneness of Buddhism and Shintoism, and of "Sankyokiitsusetsu" from the 9th century up to the 19th century which advocated the oneness of the Three Teachings (Shintoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, or Taoism) and also of "Wakonkansaisetsu" which had appeared since the 10th century, and advocated that man should have the Yamato spirit (pure-hearted Japanese spirit); but wisdom and intelligence must be gained through the study of Chinese classics. A later instance is "Oriental Morality" (Confucianism) and "Western Arts" (Sciences and Techniques) advocat-

ed by Zōzan Sakuma. This idea appeared on the eve of the Restoration of Meiji in the 19th century and lasted till the surrender of Japan in World War II. It had been the guiding principle of modern Japan. In short, our historical guiding principle was an apparent unification of the traditional culture and the culture of foreign countries, but lacked a genuine integration of them. Here looms up the fundamental characteristics of education in Japan as involving many problems due to a lack of "our own isms".

However, this lack of stubborn self-centeredness proved itself to be a good instrument for adopting and assimilating foreign cultures because of its flexible, susceptible quality. The result was a special amalgamation of cultures. Seen from this standpoint, it could be said that Japanese Shintoism, Indian Buddhism and Chinese Confucianism combined themselves each with the other and inaugurated the amalgamation of oriental cultures in this country.

As a corollary of this development, the characteristics of Japanese education may be spoken of as importation, assimilation and creation. Thanks to such a cultural situation, some Japanese thinkers and leaders of the 19th century grasped the practical principle to grapple with the crisis of the country boldly, integrating Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. It had prepared a powerful spiritual condition that stood firm against a surge of "Eastward Ho's" of the Western powers and a consequent colonialization. In this connection, we had several forerunners with Bushido spirit.

Substantially the history of Japanese education consists of the following five types: I. education at Daigakuryo as a means of government officials (7th-12th century), II. education at temples aimed at educating nobles and bushi (samurai) of the middle class and below. It was built up on Buddhism (12th-16th century). III. education at Terakoya which had greatly developed as the education of common people after the 16th century and especially in the 19th century. IV. national education from the Meiji Era downward. V. "New Education" to-day.

Generally speaking, Daigakuryo was for the training of government officials. Viewed from the point of popular education, the education at Daigakuryo based upon Confucianism could be said to be of not so great importance in the history of Japanese education up to the 12th century.

Buddhism was introduced into Japan in the 6th century, and it was the Buddhist belief and teaching that completely overwhelmed Japan in the Middle Ages, from the time when nobles were at their height in power to the time when the Muromachi regime was founded. During this period there appeared great books on religious philosophy such as "Zyūzyūshinron" by St. Kūkai, "Shyōbogenshō" by St. Dogen, and "Kyōgyōshinshō" by St. Shinran. Kamakura Buddhism of the 13th century has caught the attention of Arnold Toynbee, as one of the significant points in the world history, because Buddhism reached the stage of unique develop-

ment in this country. The history of education in Japan in the Middle Ages when Buddhism was at its zenith, is closely related in every respect to the history of Buddhism. It is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the two.

The ultimate object of Buddhism is to save by virtue of the compassion of Buddha all human beings who have committed sins. This Buddhistic compassion is also an element of the oriental principle called the "all-embracing continuum, or unity." However, salvation in Buddhism is sought in the World-Beyond-Nirvana. Buddhism is originally transcendent; but all human beings, including independent ones, are sinners. We can say m.m. that Buddhism lacks "le contact vital avec la réalité." In case Buddhism is related to the actual world, it is apt to compromise with political authorities and sometimes becomes related to militarism. This tendency can be clearly traced in Bushido which appeared from the 12th century onward and was closely connected with Buddhism.

Bushido, which might be called a sort of amalgamation of Shintoism and Buddhism, especially Zen, emphasizes the idea of making feudal lords absolute and immutable; and it built up the virtues of fortitude and responsibility as the leading qualities of the samurai and at the same time it was the source of the late Japanese militarism. Finally Bushido with its militaristic, expanded interpretation evolved from the 19th century; eventually it helped bring about the great catastrophe of Japan. It may be said here that the authoritarian characteristics inherent in Buddhism and Bushido were the fundamental characteristics of education in Japan.

The ancient Japanese clan society once experienced a great change in government designated by the name of "Ritsuryo-seiji." This was the so-called "Regulation State," ruled by national law after the custom of the Tang Dynasty. It incorporated the policy of public ownership of land, but this type of government did not take root in Japanese soil because of its undue way of administration for the conservative disposition of our society at that time. Towards the beginning of the 10th century private land ("Shōen") came to be owned by temples and other groups and individuals. Together with the appearance of this private land ownership, there came into existence the samurai who protected and presided over the private lands, and finally those samurai who came to have hegemony of the government. The result was the confrontation of the Genji and the Heike clans (12th century). There followed the friction of warriors who supported two opposing emperors (14th century) and ultimately the Age of War-fare (15-16th centuries). During these periods "Bushido" education started. Bushido is chiefly based upon combined beliefs in Buddhism and Shintoism; but after Iyeyasu Tokugawa became the "Shōgun" (dominator of the government) in 1603, a type of feudal regime was formulated which advocated that the samurai class was the highest, and loyalty to one's lord and filial piety came to be advocated as the cardinal ethics

of man. The ruling principle of this ethics was sought after in Confucianism, the ideal of which was to be a gentleman of honor and scholarship. Thus Bushido that had been based upon combined beliefs in Buddhism and Shintoism, was then transformed into another type of Bushido based upon Confucianism. It was called "Shidō."

A few words must be added here in this connection. In the period of the War Ages in China (403 B.C.-221 B.C.), there appeared many distinguished thinkers headed by Confucius who vied with one another in the creation of new thoughts and ideas. They brought about the golden age in the history of Chinese thought. On the contrary, in the War Ages in our country (15-16th century), such famous artists as Sesshū and Motonobu appeared, but no noteworthy thinkers. Distinguished thinkers or scholars appeared, only when the foundation of feudal government was firmly laid down in the 17th century by the Tokugawa Shōgunate. With completion of the feudal system in Japan in the Early Modern Ages (17th-19th century), Confucianism as educational doctrine thoroughly overwhelmed every stratum of Japanese society. The feudal code of order for the samurai, tillers of the soil, craftsmen and merchants was studied from the Confucian standpoint. It was Sokō Yamaga (1622-1685), a strategist and Confucian scholar who founded "Shidō", the way of life for a samurai and at the same time for a gentleman of high honor in the Confucian sense, transcending "Bushido". Other distinguished thinkers were Tōjyu Nakae (1608-1648), Jinsai Itō (1627-1705), Ekiken Kaibara (1630-1714), Baigan Ishida (1685-1744) and Sontoku Ninomiya (1787-1856). Also noteworthy is a close relationship between the history of Confucianism and that of education in Japan. This relationship is similar to that of the history of Buddhism and Confucianism in the Middle Ages. Here we can again hardly draw a line of demarcation between the two. In the light of the idea evolved by these thinkers, the heart and will of Heaven, which is the absolute source of all and embraces all, is "Jen," compassion. It is the universal principle for all races and individuals, as it is the cardinal virtue which presides over the four tributary virtues—"I" (Justice), "Li" (Propriety), "Jy" (Intelligence) and "Sin" (Fidelity). By virtue of Jen which is the will of heaven, men fulfil and realize themselves and are united in harmony. Jen is the principle of the "All-Embracing Continuum, or Unity." Although this principle had been recognized by the few thinkers, mentioned above, loyalty to one's lord and filial piety which are authoritarian elements in Confucianism ruled the agricultural, insular feudal society of our country. Independence of individuals was ignored, and Jen, as the universal principle, was not realized.

Generally speaking, in Buddhist- and Confucianist-centered education up to the Meiji Era, authoritarian elements such as paying homage to the authority of the state and putting emphasis upon loyalty and filial piety dominated all others. The undercurrent of these elements exercised great influence over nationalistic educa-

tion from the Meiji Era downward. It is a well-known fact that the Confucian ethics centered on loyalty to the Emperor and filial piety furnished the foundation for "The Imperial Edict on Education" (1890), which proved to be the Bible of teaching in Japan from the Meiji Era on to the end of World War II.

Part II

For the maintenance of independence free of suppression by any political authority, the first important and ultimate condition must be the universal principle of "all-embracing continuum, or unity" (the principle of universality), as is seen in Dōgen, Shinran, Sokō, Tōjyu and Sontoku. Without this principle, "courage sufficient to face an enemy of ten thousands, in case one be confident to be just and right, examining oneself deliberately", may never be expected in any man. Under authoritarianism people are at the mercy of their ruling class without having opportunity for independent ways of thinking. Self-reliance in its true sense is fostered in a climate of the principle of universality and not in that of authoritarianism. However, this universal principle alone is not enough; for it alone is inclined to fall victim to and to serve authoritarianism, when man is not confronted with a real problem to attack. Here another principle is essential to the education for independent thinking and freedom. It is a realistic attitude in grappling with actual problems of life. This universal and eternal principle recurs in men who struggle practically with actual life problems according to the very principle, and in this way it is re-actualized and there dawns a new history. This is "the principle of reality." For the autonomy of individuals, the principle of reality is imperative in addition to the principle of universality.

The mentality of the Japanese people was originally influenced by certain conditions of agriculture. Rather than cope with Nature, men should accommodate themselves to her. Some say that this is quite passive, that this is "a vegetal quality" of the Japanese mentality which seems to melt into nature and become intimate with her, instead of struggling with her and subjugating her. This is well revealed in Japanese art. Chinese art, contrariwise, has something about it stern, firm and penetrating, and Korean art has some particular quality that is vacant as well as attractive, while the outstanding features of Japanese art are intimacy with nature, and familiarity. This Japanese mentality which is adaptable to nature and has a vegetal quality is apt to be suppressed by authority and to lose its autonomy, just like an unsunned and pale flower. It is inclined to be depressed and often comes to a fatalistic resignation.

Unless a power to outgrow such a condition and restriction is fostered and a problem-solving attitude to face the world realistically by the proper scientific, economic and political techniques, is won; and unless, through integrating "principle

of reality", and "the principle of universality", the latter is rebuilt and renewed realistically, the Shintoistic pure heartedness, the Buddhist compassion and Confucian Jen, as the principle of all-embracing unity, will never be creative.

Such a creative way of thinking was noted by some pioneer thinkers and men of practical experience before and after the Meiji Restoration. In this connection the names of Sontoku (1787-1856), Zōzan Sakuma (1811-1864) and Shōin Yoshida (1830-1859) are to be remembered. They were men of independent spirit who gave to "the principle of universality" youth and fresh meaning, while grappling with the problems of their age. Confronting difficult problems, they proved to be the dynamic forces in making a new history and succeeded to some extent in preventing the colonialization of the country in the face of the great dangers of the Meiji Era.

This may be called the "grand total" of education in Japan up to the Restoration with its unique Synthesis of oriental culture (Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism) for its background. In this connection, as we have seen, Bushido plays the leading rôle. It is a very noteworthy historical achievement. The number of leading men in this achievement was very small, when the nation as a whole is considered. The general public were suppressed by authority from above and were humbled. Most of them lacked autonomy. Despite such an educational climate, practical education centering on independence of spirit was advocated by Yukichi Fukuzawa, the foremost leader of national education from the Meiji Era forward. In him is revealed the truth of modern liberalism and at the same time he had a Bushido spirit at the core of his personality.

The 20th century, none the less, is the age of socialism in which liberalism for individuals is criticized and great stress laid on social solidarity. But free progress for the public depends on the free progress of individuals. Therefore, if socialistic ways of thinking should oppress the freedom of individuals, society will fall victim to terrorism and Machiavellism. In order to correct such false ideas within socialism and to make the most of the free spirit of independence, the foundation of social solidarity must be sought in the principle of "all-embracing continuum or unity" as the field of everlasting and full interacting of the love of free individuals.

To bring up all sorts of life and to make them alive is the way of Japan, which pays homage to the sun goddess in the primitive Shinto manner, should without wavering follow. Education which is based upon the principle of the "all-embracing continuum or unity" and which aims at respecting personality of every one making him independent, free man, has scarcely been offered in our country where feudalistic authoritarianism has ruled and suppressed the people. Due to authoritarian education, self-reliant traits were poorly developed, and our people have been at the mercy of misled fascist leaders and driven into ruinous misfortune.

Even at the present time, having no firm, self-reliant mentality, the Japanese nation is apt to be led astray by all sorts of Machiavellists ; and there is a danger that Totalitarianism may arise with which we may have to do battle. However, at the cost of the terrible sacrifice of defeat and surrender, the battle for a proper way of education, respecting and valuing ourselves, not for the sake of ruling authority, but for developing each individual potentiality to the full extent, has been declared open. This fact keenly makes us conscious of the importance of our mission as educators. There will be no other way to save human beings from the disaster of nuclear war than to have "A New Atlantis" here on earth for the realization of the principle of "All-Embracing Continuum, or Unity". Therefore we have to be conscious of the "All-Embracing Continuum or Unity" (the principle of universality) on the one hand, and on the other, we must put great importance upon the need for grappling with life as it is and the real problems of society to-day (the principle of reality). Then we shall achieve an education for building up self-reliant and independent minds, educate a people who will do their best to promote the common good according to the spirit of social solidarity and religious love. The principle of reality makes up the core of the "New Education" (life-centered education) of the last decade, and the principle of universality is the core of our precious historical tradition of oriental and Japanese culture. The integration of these two principles is the most important task for Japanese education to-day. This is education for the creation of a new history, as a unity of things eternal and present. In this respect, one of the most note-worthy thinkers in the history of education in Japan is Sontoku Ninomiya.