

needful. This completes our specific study of the intellectual characteristics of the Japanese. It may seem, as it undoubtedly is, quite fragmentary. But we have purposely omitted all reference to those characteristics which the Japanese admittedly have in common with other races. We have attempted the consideration of only the more outstanding characteristics by which they seem to be differentiated from other races. We have attempted to show that in so far as they are different, the difference is due not to inherent psychic nature transmitted by organic heredity, but to the nature of the social order, transmitted by social heredity.

## XXII

## MORAL IDEALS

**E**VEN a slight study of Japanese history suffices to show that the faculty of moral discrimination was highly developed in certain directions. In what land have the ideal and practice of loyalty been higher? The heroes most lauded by the Japanese to-day are those who have proved their loyalty by the sacrifice of their lives. When Masashige Kusunoki waged a hopeless war on behalf of one branch of the then divided dynasty, and finally preferred to die by his own hand rather than endure the sight of a victorious rebel, he is considered to have exhibited the highest possible evidence of devoted loyalty. One often hears his name in the sermons of Christian preachers as a model worthy of all honor. The patriots of the period immediately preceding the Meiji era, known as the "Kinnoka," some of whom lost their lives because of their devotion to the cause of their then impotent Emperor, are accorded the highest honor the nation can give.

The teachings of the Japanese concerning the relations that should exist between parents and children, and, in multitudes of instances, their actual conduct also, can hardly be excelled. We can assert that they have a keen moral faculty, however further study may compel us to pronounce its development and manifestations to be unbalanced.

Better, however, than generalizations as to the ethical ideals of Japan, past and present, are actual quotations from her moral teachers. The following passages are taken from "A Japanese Philosopher," by Dr. Geo. W. Knox, the larger part of the volume consisting of a translation of one of the works of Muro Kyuso—who lived from 1658 to 1734. It was during his life that

the famous forty-seven ronin performed their exploit, and Kyu-so gave them the name by which they are still remembered, Gi-shi, the "Righteous Samurai." The purpose of the work is the defense of the Confucian faith and practice, as interpreted by Tei-shu, the philosopher of China whom Japan delighted to honor. It discusses among other things the fundamental principles of ethics, politics, and religion. Dr. Knox has done all earnest Western students of Japanese ethical and religious ideas an inestimable service in the production of this work in English.

"The 'Way' of Heaven and Earth is the 'Way' of Gyo and Shun [semi-mythical rulers of ancient China idealized by Confucius]; the 'Way' of Gyo and Shun is the 'Way' of Confucius and Mencius, and the 'Way' of Confucius and Mencius is the 'Way' of Tei-Shu. Forsaking Tei-Shu, we cannot find Confucius and Mencius; forsaking Confucius and Mencius, we cannot find Gyo and Shun; and forsaking Gyo and Shun, we cannot find the 'Way' of Heaven and Earth. Do not trust implicitly an aged scholar; but this I know, and therefore I speak. If I say that which is false, may I be instantly punished by Heaven and Earth."\*

"Recently I was astounded at the words of a philosopher: 'The "Way" comes not from Heaven,' he said, 'it was invented by the sages. Nor is it in accord with nature; it is a mere matter of æsthetics and ornament. Of the five relations, only the conjugal is natural, while loyalty, filial obedience, and the rest were invented by the sages, and have been maintained by their authority ever since.' Surely, among all heresies from ancient days until now, none has been so monstrous as this."†

"Kujuro, a lad of fifteen years, quarreled with a neighbor's son over a game of *go*, lost his self-control, and before he could be seized, drew his sword and cut the boy down. While the wounded boy was under the surgeon's care, Kujuro was in custody, but he showed no fear, and his words and acts were calm beyond his

\* P. 29.

† P. 36.

years. After some days the boy died, and Kujuro was condemned to hara-kiri. The officers in charge gave him a farewell feast the night before he died. He calmly wrote to his mother, took ceremonious farewell of his keeper and all in the house, and then said to the guests: 'I regret to leave you all, and should like to stay and talk till daybreak; but I must not be sleepy when I commit hara-kiri to-morrow, so I'll go to bed at once. Do you stay at your ease and drink the wine.' So he went to his room and fell asleep, all being filled with admiration as they heard him snore. On the morrow he rose early, bathed and dressed himself with care, made all his preparations with perfect calmness, and then, quiet and composed, killed himself. No old, trained, self-possessed samurai could have excelled him. No one who saw it could speak of it for years without tears. . . . I have told you this that Kujuro may be remembered. It would be shameful were it to be forgotten that so young a boy performed such a deed."\*

"We are not to cease obeying for the sake of study, nor must we establish the laws before we begin to obey. In obedience we are to establish its rightness and wrongness."†

"We learn loyalty and obedience as we are loyal and obedient. To-day I know yesterday's short-comings, and to-morrow I shall know to-day's. . . . In our occupations we learn whether conduct conforms to right and so advance in the truth by practice."‡

"Besides a few works on history, like the Sankyo Ega Monogatari, which record facts, there are no books worth reading in our literature. For the most part they are sweet stories of the Buddhas, of which one soon wearies. But the evil is traditional, long-continued, and beyond remedy. And other books are full of lust, not even to be mentioned, like the Genji Monogatari, which should never be shown to a woman or a young man. Such books lead to vice. Our nobles call the Genji Monogatari a national treasure, why, I do not know, unless it is that they are intoxicated with its style. That is

\* Pp. 42, 43.

† P. 45.

‡ P. 61.

like plucking the spring blossom unmindful of the autumn's fruit. The book is full of adulteries from beginning to end. Seeing the right, ourselves should become good, seeing the wrong, we should reprove ourselves. The Genji Monogatari, Chokonka, and Seishoki are of a class, vile, mean, comparable to the books of the sages as charcoal to ice, as the stench of decay to the perfume of flowers.\*

"To the samurai, first of all is righteousness; next life, then silver and gold. These last are of value, but some put them in the place of righteousness. But to the samurai even life is as dirt compared to righteousness. Until the middle part of the middle ages customs were comparatively pure, though not really righteous. Corruption has come only during this period of government by the samurai. A maid servant in China was made ill with astonishment when she saw her mistress, soroban (abacus) in hand, arguing prices and values. So was it once with the samurai. They knew nothing of trade, were economical and content." †

"Even in the days of my youth, young folks never mentioned the price of anything; and their faces reddened if the talk was of women. Their joy was in talk of battles and plans for war. And they studied how parents and lords should be obeyed, and the duty of samurai. But nowadays the young men talk of loss and gain, of dancing girls and harlots and gross pleasures. It is a complete change from fifty or sixty years ago. . . . Said Aochi to his son: 'There is such a thing as trade. See that you know nothing of it. In trade the profit should always go to the other side. . . . To be proud of buying high-priced articles cheap is the good fortune of merchants, but should be unknown to samurai. Let it not be even so much as mentioned. . . . Samurai must have a care of their words, and are not to speak of avarice, cowardice, or lust.' ‡

A point of considerable interest to the student of Japanese ethical ideals is the fact that the laws of Old Japan combined legal and moral maxims. Loyalty and

\* P. 120.

† P. 129.

‡ P. 130.

morality were conceived as inseparable. Ieyasu (abdicated in 1605, and died in 1616), the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, left a body of laws to his successors as his last will, in accordance with which they should rule the land. These laws were not made public, but were kept strictly for the guidance of the rulers. They are known as the Testament or "Honorable Will" of Ieyasu, and consist of one hundred rules. It will serve our purpose here to quote some of those that refer to the moral ideal.

"No one is to act simply for the gratification of his own desires, but he is to strive to do what may be opposed to his desires, *i. e.*, to exercise self-control, in order that everyone may be ready for whatever he may be called upon by his superiors to do."

"The aged, whether widowers or widows, and orphans, and persons without relations, every one should assist with kindness and liberality; for justice to these four is the root of good government."

"Respect the gods [or God], keep the heart pure, and be diligent in business during the whole life."

"When I was young I determined to fight and punish all my own and my ancestors' enemies, and I did punish them; but afterwards, by deep consideration, I found that the way of heaven was to help the people, and not to punish them. Let my successors follow out this policy, or they are not of my line. In this lies the strength of the nation."

"To insure the Empire peace, the foundation must be laid in the ways of holiness and religion, and if men think they can be educated, and will not remember this, it is as if a man were to go to a forest to catch fish, or thought he could draw water out of fire. They must follow the ways of holiness."

"Japan is the country of the gods [or God—'Shinkoku']. Therefore, we have among us Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintoism, and other sects. If we leave our gods [or God] it is like refusing the wages of our master and taking them from another."

"In regard to dancing women, prostitutes, brothels,

night work, and all other improper employments, all these are like caterpillars or locusts in the country. Good men and writers in all times have written against them."

"It is said that the Mikado, looking down on his people, loves them as a mother does her children. The same may be said of me and my government. This benevolence of mind is called Jin. This Jin may be said to consist of five parts; these are humanity, integrity, courtesy, wisdom, and truth. My mode of government is according to the way of heaven. This I have done to show that I am impartial, and am not assisting my own relatives and friends only."\*

These quotations are perhaps sufficient, though one more from a recent writer has a peculiar interest of its own, from the fact that the purpose of the book from which the quotation is taken was the destruction of the tendencies toward approval of Western thought. It was published in 1857. The writer, Junzo Ohashi, felt himself to be a witness for truth and righteousness, and, in the spirit of the doctrine he professed, sealed his faith with a martyr's suffering and death, dying (in August, 1868) from the effect of repeated examination by torture for a supposed crime, innocence of which he maintained to the end. It is interesting to note that two of his granddaughters, "with the physics and astronomy of the West, have accepted its religion."

"The West knows not the 'Ri'† of the virtues of the heart which are in all men unchangeably the same. Nor does it know that the body is the organ of the virtues, however careful its analysis of the body may be. The adherents of the Western Philosophy indeed study carefully the outward appearances, but they have no right to steal the honored name of natural philosophy. As when 'Ki' is destroyed, 'Ri' too disappears, so, with their analysis of 'Ki,' they destroy 'Ri,' and thus this learning brings benevolence and

\* Dickenson's "Japan," chapter vii.

† Cf. chapter xxi.

righteousness and loyalty and truth to naught. Among the Westerners who from of old have studied details minutely, I have not heard of one who was zealous for the Great Way, for benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, and truth, and who opposed the absurdities of the Lord of Heaven [God].\* "Let then the child make its parent, Heaven; the retainer, his lord; the wife, her husband; and let each give up life for righteousness. Thus will each serve Heaven. But if we exalt Heaven above parent or lord, we shall come to think that we can serve it though they be disobeyed, and like wolf or tiger shall rejoice to kill them. To such fearful end does the Western learning lead."†

The foregoing quotations reveal the exalted nature of the ideals held by at least some of the leaders of ethical thought in Japan. Taken as a whole, the moral ideals characterizing the Japanese during their entire historical period have been conspicuously communal. The feudal structure of society has determined the peculiar character of the moral ideal. Loyalty took first rank in the moral scale; the subordination of the inferior to the superior has come next, including unquestioning obedience of children to parents, and of wife to husband. The virtues of a military people have been praised and often gloriously exemplified. The possession of these various ideals and their attainment in such high degree have given the nation its cohesiveness. They make the people a unit. The feudal training under local daimyos was fitting the people for the larger life among the nations of the world on which they are now entering. Especially is their sense of loyalty, as exhibited toward the Emperor, serving them well in this period of transition from Oriental to Occidental social ideals.

Let us now examine some defective moral standards and observe their origin in the social order. Take, for instance, the ideal of truthfulness. Every Occidental remark on the untruthfulness of the Japanese. Lies are told without the slightest apparent compunction;

\* P. 163.

† P. 169.

and when confronted with the charge of lying, the culprit often seems to feel little sense of guilt. This trait of character was noted repeatedly by the early negotiators with Japan. Townsend Harris and Sir Rutherford Alcock made frequent mention of it. When we inquire as to the moral ideal and actual instruction concerning truthfulness, we are amazed to find how inadequate it was. The inadequacy of the teaching, however, was not the primal cause of the characteristic. There is a far deeper explanation, yet very simple, namely, the nature of the social order. The old social order was feudal, and not industrial or commercial. History shows that industrial and commercial nations develop the virtue of truthfulness far in advance of military nations. For these virtues are essential to them; without them they could not long continue to prosper.

So in regard to all the aspects of business morality, it must be admitted that, from the Occidental standpoint, Old Japan was very deficient. But it must also be stated that new ideals are rapidly forming. Buying and selling with a view to making profit, though not unknown in Old Japan, was carried on by a despised section of the community. Compared with the present, the commercial community of feudal times was mean and small. Let us note somewhat in detail the attitude of the samurai toward the trader in olden times, and the ideals they reveal.

The pursuit of business was considered necessarily degrading, for he who handled money was supposed to be covetous. The taking of profit was thought to be ignoble, if not deceitful. They who condescended to such an occupation were accordingly despised and condemned to the lowest place in the social scale. These ideas doubtless helped to make business degrading; traders were doubtless sordid and covetous and deceitful. In the presence of the samurai they were required to take the most abject postures. In addressing him, they must never stand, but must touch the ground with their foreheads; while talking with him they must remain with their hands on the ground. Even the

children of samurai always assumed the lordly attitude toward tradesmen. The sons of tradesmen might not venture into a quarrel with the sons of samurai, for the armed children of the samurai were at liberty to cut down and kill the children of the despicable merchant, should they insult or even oppose them.

All this, however, has passed away. Commerce is now honored; trade and manufacture are recognized not only as laudable, but as the only hope of Japan for the future. The new social order is industrial and commercial. The entire body of the former samurai, now no longer maintaining their distinctive name, are engaged in some form of business. Japan is to-day a nation of traders and farmers. Accompanying the changes in the social order, new standards as to honesty and business integrity are being formulated and enforced.\*

\* It is interesting to observe that the contempt of Old Japan for trade, and the feeling that interest and profit by commerce were in their nature immoral, are in close accord with the old Greek and Jewish ideas regarding property profits and interest. Aristotle held, for instance, that only the gains of agriculture, of fishing, and of hunting are natural gains. Plato, in the *Laws*, forbids the taking of interest. Cato says that lending money on interest is dishonorable, is as bad as murder. The Old Testament, likewise, forbids the taking of interest from a Jew. The reason for this universal feeling of antiquity, both Oriental and Occidental, lies in the fact that trade and money were not yet essential parts of the social order. Positive production, such as hunting and farming, seemed the natural method of making a living, while trade seemed unnatural—living upon the labor of others. That Japan ranked the farmer higher in the social scale than the merchant is, thus, natural. In moral character, too, it is altogether probable that they were much higher.