

XXIX

SOME PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL  
EVOLUTION

AND now, having studied somewhat in detail various distinctive Japanese characteristics, it is important that we gain an insight into the general principles which govern the development of unified, national life. These principles render Japanese history luminous.

Let us first fix our attention on the fact that every step in the progress of mankind has been from smaller to larger communities. In other words, human progress has been through the increasing extension of the communal principle. The primitive segregative man, if there ever really was such a being, hardly deserves to be called man. Social qualities he had very slight, if at all; his altruistic actions and emotions were of the lowest and feeblest type. His life was so self-centered—we may not call it selfish, for he was not conscious of his self-centeredness—that he was quite sufficient to himself except for short periods of time. It was a matter of relative indifference to him whether his kinsmen survived or perished. His life was in only the slightest degree involved in theirs. The first step of progress for him depended on the development of some form of communal life. The primary problem of the social evolution of man was that of taking the wild, self-centered, self-sufficient man, and of teaching him to move in line with his fellow-men. And this problem confronted not only mankind at the beginning, but it has also been the great problem of each successive stage. After the individual has been taught to live with, to work with and for, and to love, his immediate kinsmen (in other words to merge his individual interests in those of the family, and to count the family interests of more importance than his own), the next step was to induce the family to look beyond

its little world and be willing to work with and for neighboring families. When, after ages of conflict, this step was in a measure secured and the family-tribe was fairly formed, this group in turn must be taught to take into its view a still larger group, the tribal nation. Throughout the ages the constant problem has been the development of larger and larger communal groups. This general process has been very aptly called by Mr. Bagehot the taming process. The selfward thoughts and ambitions of the individual man have been thus far driven more and more into the background of fact, if not of consciousness. The individual has been brought into vital and organic relations with ever-increasing multitudes of his fellow-men. It is, therefore, pre-eminently a process of social or associational development. It not only develops social relations in an ever-increasing scale, but also social qualities and ideals and desires.

Now this taming, this socializing process, has been successful because it has had back of it, always enforcing it, the law of the survival of the strongest. What countless millions of men must have perished in the first step! They consisted of the less fit; of those who would not, or did not, learn soon enough the secret of existence through permanent family union. And what countless millions of families must have perished because they did not discover the way, or were too independent, to unite with kindred families in order to fight a common foe or develop a common food supply. And still later, what countless tribes must have perished before the secret of tribal federation was widely accepted! In each case the problem has been to secure the subordination of the interests of the smaller and local community to those of the larger community. Death to self and life to the larger interest was often the condition of existence at all. How slow men always have been and still are to learn this great lesson of history!

The method whereby this taming process has been carried on has been through the formation of increasingly comprehensive and rigid customs and ideas. Through the development and continued existence of a common language, series of common customs, and sets of common

ideas, unity was secured for the community; these, indeed, are the means whereby a group is transformed into a community. As the smaller community gave way to the larger, so the local languages, customs, and ideas had to break up and become so far modified as to form a new bond of unity. Until this unity was secured the new community was necessarily weak; the group easily broke up into its old constituent elements. We here gain a glimpse into one reason why the development of large composite communities, uniting and for the most part doing away with smaller ones, was so difficult and slow.

The process of absorption of smaller groups and their unification into larger ones, when carried out completely in any land, tends to arrest all further growth, not simply because there is no further room for expansion by the absorption of other divergent tribes, but also because the "cake of custom" is apt to become so hard, the uniformity enforced on all the individuals is liable to become so binding, that fruitful variation from within is effectually cut off. The evolution of relatively isolated or segregated groups necessarily produces variety; and the process whereby these divergent types of life and thought and organization are gradually brought together into one large community provides wide elements of variation, in the selection and general adoption of which the evolution of the whole community may be secured. But let the divergent elements of the lesser groups once be entirely absorbed by the composite community and let the "cake of custom" become so rigid that every individual who varies from it is branded as a heretic and a traitor, and the progressive evolution of that community must cease.

The great problem, therefore, which then confronts man and seems to threaten all further progress is, how to break the bondage of custom so as to secure local or individual variations. This can be done only through some form of individualism. The individual must be free to think and act as experience or fancy may suggest, without fear of being branded as a traitor, or at least he must have the courage to do so in spite of such fears. And to produce an effect on the community he must also be more or less protected in his idiosyncrasies by popular toleration.

He must be allowed to live and work out his theories, proving whether they are valuable or not. But since individualism is just what all previous communal development has been most assiduous in crushing out, how is the rise of individualism possible, or even desirable? If the first and continued development of man depended on the attainment and the maintenance of the communal principle, we may be sure that his further progress will not consist in the reversal of that principle. If, therefore, individualism must be developed, it must manifestly be of a variety which does not conflict with or abrogate communalism. Only as the individualistic includes the communal principle will it be a source of strength; otherwise it can only be a source of weakness to the community. But is not this an impossible condition to satisfy? Certainly, before the event, it would seem to be so. The rarity with which this step in human evolution has been taken would seem to show that it is far more difficult to accomplish than any of the previous steps. To give it a name we may call it communo-individualism. What this variety of individualism is, how this forward step was first actually taken, and how it is maintained and extended to-day, we shall consider in a later chapter. In the present place its importance for us is twofold. First we must realize the logical difficulty of the step—its apparently self-contradictory nature. And secondly we need to see that fully developed and continuously progressive national life is impossible without it. The development of a nation under the communal principle may advance far, even to the attainment of a relatively high grade of civilization. But the fully centralized and completely self-conscious nation cannot come into existence except on the basis of this last step of communo-individualism. The growth of nationalism proper, and the high development of civilization through the rise of the sciences and the arts based upon individualism, all await the dawn of the era of which communo-individualism is the leading, though at first unrecognized, characteristic.

This individualistic development of the communal principle is its intensive development; it is the focalizing and centralizing of the consciousness of the national unity in

each individual member. The extensive process of communal enlargement must ever be accompanied by the intensive establishment in the individual of the communal ideal, the objective by the subjective, the physical by the psychical, if the accidental association for individual profit is to develop into the permanent association for the national as well as the individual life. The intensive or subjective development of the communal principle does, as a matter of fact, take place in all growing communities, but it is largely unconscious. Not until the final stages of national development does it become a self-conscious process, deserving the distinctive name I have given it here, communo-individualism.\*

The point just made is, however, only one aspect of a more general fact, too, of cardinal importance for the sociologist and the student of human evolution. It is that, throughout the entire period of the expansion of the community, there has been an equally profound, although wholly unconscious, development of the individual. This fact seems to have largely escaped the notice of all but the most recent thinkers and writers on the general topic of human and social evolution. The fact and the importance of the communal life have been so manifest that, in important senses, the individual has been almost, if not

\* By the term "centralization" I mean personal centralization. Political centralization is the gathering of all the lines of governmental authority to a single head or point. Personal centralization, on the contrary, is the development in the individual of enlarging and joyous consciousness of his relations with his fellow-countrymen, and the bringing of the individual into increasingly immediate relations of interdependence with ever-increasing numbers of his fellow-men, economically, intellectually, and spiritually. These enlarging relations and the consciousness of them must be loyally and joyfully accepted. They should arouse enthusiasm. The real unity of society, true national centralization, includes both the political and the personal phase. The more conscious the process and the relation, the more real is the unity. By this process each individual becomes of more importance to the entire body, as well as more dependent upon it. While each individual becomes with increasing industrial development more specialized in economic function, if his personal development has been properly carried on, he also becomes in mind and in character a micro-community, summing up in his individual person the national unity with all its main interests, knowledge, and character.

wholly, dropped out of sight. The individual has been conceived to have been from the very beginning of social evolution fully endowed with mind, ideas, and brains, and to be perfectly regardless of all other human beings. The development of the community has accordingly been conceived to be a progressive taming and subduing of this wild, self-centered, primitive man; a process of eliminating his individualistic instincts. So far as the individual is concerned, it has been conceived to be chiefly a negative process; a process of destroying his individual desires and plans and passions. Man's natural state has been supposed to be that of absolute selfishness. Only the hard necessity of natural law succeeded in forcing him to curb his natural selfish desires and to unite with his fellows. Only on these terms could he maintain even an existence. Those who have not accepted these terms have been exterminated. Communal life in all its forms, from the family upward to the most unified and developed nation, is thus conceived as a continued limiting of the individual—a necessity, indeed, to his existence, but none the less a limitation.

I am unable to take this view, which at best is a one-sided statement. It appears to me capable of demonstration, that communal and individual development proceed *pari passu*; that every gain in the communal life is a gain to the individual and vice versa. They are complementary, not contradictory processes. Neither can exist, in any proper sense, apart from the other; and the degree of the development of the one is a sure index of the degree of the development of the other. So important is this matter that we must pause to give it further consideration.

Consider, first, man in his earliest stage of development. A relatively segregarious animal; with a few ideas about the nuts and fruits and roots on which he lives; with a little knowledge as to where to find them; the subject of constant fear lest a stronger man may suddenly appear to seize and carry off his wife and food; possessing possibly a few articulate sounds answering to words; such probably was primitive man. He must have been little removed from the ape. His "self," his mind, was so small and so empty of content that we could hardly recog-

nize him as a man, should we stumble on him in the forest.

Look next upon him after he has become a family-man. Living in the group, his life enlarges; his existence broadens; his ideas multiply; his vocabulary increases with his ideas and experiences; he begins to share the life and thinking and interests and joys and sorrows of others; their ideas and experiences become his, to his enormous advantage. What he now is throws into the shade of night what he used to be. So far from being the loser by his acceptance of even this limited communal life, he is a gainer in every way. He begins to know what love is, and hate; what joy is, and sorrow; what kindness is, and cruelty; what altruism is, and selfishness. Thus, not only in ideas and language, in industry and property, but also in emotions, in character, in morality, in religion, in the knowledge of self, and even in opportunity for selfishness, he is the gainer. In just the degree that communal life is developed is the life of the individuals that compose it extended both subjectively and objectively. Human psychogenesis takes place in the communal stage of his life. Human association is its chief external cause.

It matters not at what successive stage of man's developing life we may choose to look at him, the depth and height and breadth, in a word, the fullness and vigor and character of the inner and private life of the individual, will depend directly on the nature and development of the communal life. As the community expands, taking in new families or tribes or nations, reaching out to new regions, learning new industries, developing new ideas of man, of nature, of the gods, of duty, inventing new industries, discovering new truths, and developing a new language, all these fresh acquirements of the community become the possession of its individual members. In the growing complexity of society the individual unit, it is true, is increasingly lost among the millions of his fellow-units, yet all these successive steps serve to render his life the larger and richer. His horizon is no longer the little family group in which he was born; he now looks out over large and populous regions and feels the thrill of his growing life as he realizes the unity and community of

his life and interests with those of his fellow-countrymen. His language is increasingly enriched; it serves to shape all his thinking and thus even the structure of his mind. His knowledge reaches far beyond his own experience; it includes not only that of the few persons whom he knows directly, but also that of unnumbered millions, remote in time and space. He increasingly discovers, though he never has analyzed, and is perhaps wholly unable to analyze, the discovery that he is not a thing among things; his life has a universal aspect. He lives more and more the universal life, subjecting the demands of the once domineering present to decisions of a cool judgment that looks back into the past and carefully weighs the interests of the future, temporal and eternal.

Every advance made by the community is thus stored up to the credit of its individual members. So far, then, from the development of the communal principle consisting of and coming about through a limitation of the individual, it is exactly the reverse. Only as the individual develops are communal unity and progress possible. And on the other hand, only where the communal principle has reached its highest development, both extensively and intensively, do we find the most highly developed personality. The one is a necessary condition of the other. The deepest, blackest selfishness, even, can only come into existence where the communal principle has reached its highest development.

The preceding statement, however, is not equivalent to saying that when communalism and individualism arose in human consciousness they were both accepted as equally important. The reverse seems always to have been the case. As soon as the two principles are distinguished in thought, the communal is at once ranked as the higher, and the individual principle is scorned if not actually rejected. And the reason for this is manifest. From earliest times the constant foe which the community has had to fight and exterminate has been the wanton, selfish individual. Individualism of this type was the spontaneous contrast to the communal life, and was ever manifesting itself. No age or race has been without it, nor ignorant of it. As soon as the two principles became

clearly contrasted in thought, therefore, because of his actual experience, man could conceive of individualism only as the antithesis to communalism; it was felt that the two were mutually destructive. It inevitably followed that communalism as a principle was accepted and individualism condemned. In their minds not only social order, but existence itself, was at stake. And they were right. Egoistic individualism is necessarily atomistic. No society can long maintain its life as a unified and peaceful society, when such a principle has been widely accepted by its members. The social ills of this and of every age largely arise from the presence of this type of men, who hold this principle of life.

If, therefore, after a fair degree of national unity has been attained, the higher stages of national evolution depend on the higher development of individualism, and if the only kind of individualism of which men can conceive is the egoistic, it becomes evident that further progress must cease. Stagnation, or degeneration, must follow. This is what has happened to nearly all the great nations and races of the world. They progressed well up to a certain point. Then they halted or fell back. The only possible condition under which a new lease of progressive life could be secured by them was a new variety of individualism, which would unite the opposite and apparently contradictory poles of communalism and egoism, namely, communo-individualism. Inconceivable though it be to those men and nations who have not experienced this type of life, it is nevertheless a fact, and a mighty factor in human and in national evolution. In its light we are able to see that the communal life itself has not reached its fullest development until the individualistic principle has been not only recognized in thought, but exalted, both in theory and in fact, to its true and coordinate position beside the communal principle. Only then does the nation become fully and completely organized. Only then does the national organism contain within itself the means for an endless, because a self-sustained, life.

It is important to guard against a misunderstanding of the principles just enunciated which may easily arise. In

saying that the development of the individual has proceeded *pari passu* with that of the community, that every gain by the community has contributed directly to the development of the individual, I do not say that the communal profits are at once distributed among all the members of the group, or that the distribution is at all equal. Indeed, such is far from the case. Some few individuals seem to appropriate a large and unfair proportion of the communal bank account. So far as a people live a simple and relatively undifferentiated life, all sharing in much the same kind of pursuits, and enjoying much the same grade of life,—such as prevailed in a large measure in the earlier times, and decreasingly as society has become industrial,—and so far also as the new acquirements of thought are transformed into practical life and common language, all the members of the community share these acquirements in fairly equal measure. So far, however, as the communal profits consist of more or less abstract ideas, embodied in religious and philosophic thought, and stored away in books and literature accessible only to scholars, they are distributed very unequally. The more highly developed and consequently differentiated the society, the more difficult does distribution become. The very structure of the highly differentiated communal organism forbids the equal distribution of these goods. The literary and ruling minority have exclusive access to the treasures. The industrial majority are more and more rigidly excluded from them. Thus, although it is strictly true that every advance in the communal principle accrues to the benefit of the individual, it is not true that such advance necessarily accrues to the benefit of every individual, or equally to all individuals. In its lowest stages, developing communalism lifts all its individual members to about the same level of mental and moral acquirement. In its middle stages it develops all individuals to a certain degree, and certain individuals to a high degree. In its highest stages it develops among all its members a uniformly high grade of personal worth and acquirement.

Now the great problem on whose solution depends the possibility of continued communal evolution is, from this

view-point, the problem of distributing the gains of the community to all its members more and more equally. It is the problem of giving to each human unit all the best and truest thought and character, all the highest and noblest ideals and motives, which the most advanced individuals have secured. If we stop to inquire minutely and analytically just what is the nature of the greatest attainments made by the community, we discover that it is not the possession of wealth in land or gold, it is not the accident of social rank, it is not any incident of temporal happiness or physical ease of life. It consists, on the contrary, in the discovery of the real nature of man. He is no mere animal, living in the realm of things and pleasures, limited by the now and the here. He is a person, a rational being. His thoughts and desires can only be expressed in terms of infinity. Nothing short of the infinite can satisfy either his reason or his heart. Though living in nature and dependent on it, he is above it, and may and should understand it and rule it. His thoughts embrace all time and all being. In a very real sense he lives an infinite and eternal life, even here in this passing world.

The discovery of this set of facts, slowly emerging into consciousness, is the culmination of all past history, and the beginning of all man's higher life. It is the turning point in the history of the human race. Every onward step in man's preceding life, whereby he has united to form higher and higher groups, has been leading onward and upward to the development of strong personality, to the development of individuals competent to make this great discovery. But this is not enough.

The next step is to discover the fact, *and to believe it*, that this infinite life is the potential possession of every member of the community; that the bank account which the community has been storing up for ages is for the use not only of a favored few, but also of the masses. That since every man is a man, he has an infinite and an eternal life and value, which no accident of birth, or poverty, can annul. Each man needs to discover himself. The great problem, then, which confronts progressive communal evolution is to take this enlarged definition

of the individual and scatter it broadcast over the land, persuading all men to accept and believe it both for themselves and for others. This definition must be carried in full confidence to the lowest, meanest, most ignorant man that lives in the community, and by its help this downmost man must be shown his birthright, and in the light of it he must be raised to actual manhood. He must "come to himself"; only so can he qualify for his heritage.

After a nation, therefore, has secured a large degree of unity, of the confederated tribal type, the step which must be taken, before it can proceed to more complete nationalization even, is, first, the discovery of personality as the real and essential characteristic of men, and secondly the discovery that high-grade personality may and can and must be developed in all the members of the community. In proportion as the members of the community become conscious persons, fully self-conscious and self-regulating, fully imbued with the idea and the spirit of true personality, of communo-individualism, in that proportion will the community be unified and centralized, as well as capable of the most complex and differentiated internal structure. The strength of such a nation will be indefinitely greater than that of any other less personalized and so less communalized nation.