

literature, and now, in recent times, their rejection of the Chinese philosophy and science, their assertiveness in Korea and China and their aggressive attitude toward the whole world—all these multitudinous changes and complete reversals of ideals and customs, point to the fact that the former characteristics of their civilization were not "impersonal," but communal, and that they rested on social development rather than on inherent nature or on deficient mental differentiation.

A common illustration of Japanese "impersonality," depending for its force wholly on invention, is the deficiency of the Japanese language in personal pronouns and its surplus of honorifics. At first thought this argument strikes one as very strong, as absolutely invincible indeed. Surely, if there is a real lack of personal pronouns, is not that proof positive that the people using the language, nay, the authors of the language, must of necessity be deficient in the sense of personality? And if the verbs in large numbers are impersonal, does not that clinch the matter? But further consideration of the argument and its illustrations gradually shows its weakness. At present I must confess that the argument seems to me utterly fallacious, and for the sufficient reason that the personal element is introduced, if not always explicitly yet at least implicitly, in almost every sentence uttered. The method of its expression, it is true, is quite different from that adopted by Western languages, but it is none the less there. It is usually accomplished by means of the titles, "honorific" particles, and honorific verbs and nouns. "Honorable shoes" can't by any stretch of the imagination mean shoes that belong to me; every Japanese would at once think "your shoes"; his attention is not distracted by the term "honorable" as is that of the foreigner; the honor is largely overlooked by the native in the personal element implied. The greater the familiarity with the language the more clear it becomes that the impressions of "impersonality" are due to the ignorance of the foreigner rather than to the real "impersonal" character of the Japanese thought or mind. In the Japanese methods of linguistic expression, politeness and personality are indeed, inextricably interwoven; but they are not at all con-

fused. The distinctions of person and the consciousness of self in the Japanese *thought* are as clear and distinct as they are in the English thought. In the Japanese *sentence*, however, the politeness and the personality cannot be clearly separated. On that account, however, there is no more reason for denying one element than the other.

So far from the deficiency of personal pronouns being a proof of Japanese "impersonality," *i. e.*, of lack of consciousness of self, this very deficiency may, with even more plausibility, be used to establish the opposite view. Child psychology has established the fact that an early phenomenon of child mental development is the emphasis laid on "meum" and "tuum," mine and yours. The child is a thoroughgoing individualist in feelings, conceptions, and language. The first personal pronoun is ever on his lips and in his thought. Only as culture arises and he is trained to see how disagreeable in others is excessive emphasis on the first person, does he learn to moderate his own excessive egoistic tendency. Is it not a fact that the studied evasion of first personal pronouns by cultured people in the West is due to their developed consciousness of self? Is it possible for one who has no consciousness of self to conceive as impolite the excessive use of egoistic forms of speech? From this point of view we might argue that, because of the deficiency of her personal pronouns, the Japanese nation has advanced far beyond any other nation in the process of self-consciousness. But this too would be an error. Nevertheless, so far from saying that the lack of personal pronouns is a proof of the "impersonality" of the Japanese, I think we may fairly use it as a disproof of the proposition.

The argument for the inherent impersonality of the Japanese mind because of the relative lack of personal pronouns is still further undermined by the discovery, not only of many substitutes, but also of several words bearing the strong impress of the conception of self. There are said to be three hundred words which may be used as personal pronouns—"Boku," "servant," is a common term for "I," and "kimi," "Lord," for "you"; these words are freely used by the student class. Officials often use "Konata," "here," and "Anata," "there," for the

first and second persons. "Omaye," "honorably in front," is used both condescendingly and honorifically; "you whom I condescend to allow in my presence," and "you who confer on me the honor of entering your presence." The derivation of the most common word for I, "Watakushi," is unknown, but, in addition to its pronominal use, it has the meaning of "private." It has become a true personal pronoun and is freely used by all classes.

In addition to the three hundred words which may be used as personal pronouns the Japanese language possesses an indefinite number of ways for delicately suggesting the personal element without its express utterance. This is done either by subtle praise, which can then only refer to the person addressed or by more or less bald self-depreciation, which can then only refer to the first person. "Go kanai," "honorable within the house," can only mean, according to Japanese etiquette, "your wife," or "your family," while "gu-sai," "foolish wife," can only mean "my wife." "Gufu," "foolish father," "tonji," "swinish child," and numberless other depreciatory terms such as "somatsu na mono," "coarse thing," and "tsumaranu mono," "worthless thing," according to the genius of the language can only refer to the first person, while all appreciative and polite terms can only refer to the person addressed. The terms, "foolish," "swinish," etc., have lost their literal sense and mean now no more than "my," while the polite forms mean "yours." To translate these terms, "my foolish wife," "my swinish son," is incorrect, because it twice translates the same word. In such cases the Japanese *thought* is best expressed by using the possessive pronoun and omitting the derogative adjective altogether. Japanese indirect methods for the expression of the personal relation are thus numberless and subtle. May it not be plausibly argued since the European has only a few blunt pronouns wherewith to state this idea while the Japanese has both numberless pronouns and many other delicate ways of conveying the same idea, that the latter is far in advance of the European in the development of personality? I do not use this argument, but as an argument it seems to me

much more plausible than that which infers from the paucity of true pronouns the absence, or at least the deficiency, of personality.

Furthermore, Japanese possesses several words for self. "Onore," "one's self," and "Ware," "I or myself," are pure Japanese, while "Ji" (the Chinese pronunciation for "onore"), "ga," "self," and "shi" (the Chinese pronunciation of "watakushi," meaning private) are Sinico-Japanese words, that is, Chinese derived words. These Sinico-Japanese terms are in universal use in compound words, and are as truly Japanese as many Latin, Greek and Norman-derived words are real English. "Ji-bun," "one's self"; "jiman," "self-satisfaction"; "ji-fu," "self-assertion"; "jinin," "self-responsibility"; "ji-bo ji-ki," "self-destruction, self-abandonment"; "ji-go ji-toku," "self-act, self-reward"—always in a bad sense; "ga-yoku," "selfish desire"; "ga-shin," "selfish heart"; "ga wo oru," "self-mastery"; "muga," "unselfish"; "shi-shin shi-yoku," "private or self-heart, private or self-desire," that is, selfishness"; "shi-ai shi-shin," "private or self-love, private-or-self heart," *i. e.*, selfishness—these and countless other compound words involving the conception of self, can hardly be explained by the "impersonal," "altruistic" theory of Japanese race mind and language. In truth, if this theory is unable to explain the facts it recognizes, much less can it account for those it ignores.

To interpret correctly the phenomena we are considering, we must ask ourselves how personal pronouns have arisen in other languages. Did the primitive Occidental man produce them outright from the moment that he discovered himself? Far from it. There are abundant reasons for believing that every personal pronoun is a degenerate or, if you prefer, a developed noun. Pronouns are among the latest products of language, and, in the sphere of language, are akin to algebraic symbols in the sphere of mathematics or to a machine in the sphere of labor. A pronoun, whether personal, demonstrative, or relative, is a wonderful linguistic invention, enabling the speaker to carry on long trains of unbroken thought. Its invention was no more connected with the sense of self, than was the invention of any labor-saving device. The

Japanese language is even more defective for lack of relative pronouns than it is for lack of personal pronouns. Shall we argue from this that the Japanese people have no sense of relation? Of course personal pronouns could not arise without or before the sense of self, but the problem is whether the sense of self could arise without or exist before that particular linguistic device, the personal pronoun? On this problem the Japanese language and civilization throw conclusive light.

The fact is that the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxon and Japanese peoples parted company so long ago that in the course of their respective linguistic evolutions, not only have all common terms been completely eliminated, but even common methods of expression. The so-called Indo-European races hit upon one method of sentence structure, a method in which pronouns took an important part and the personal pronoun was needed to express the personal element, while the Japanese hit upon another method which required little use of pronouns and which was able to express the personal element wholly without the personal pronoun. The sentence structure of the two languages is thus radically different.

Now the long prevalent feudal social order has left its stamp on the Japanese language no less than on every other feature of Japanese civilization. Many of the quasi personal pronouns are manifestly of feudal parentage. Under the new civilization and in contact with foreign peoples who can hardly utter a sentence without a personal pronoun, the majority of the old quasi personal pronouns are dropping out of use, while those in continued use are fast rising to the position of full-fledged personal pronouns. This, however, is not due to the development of self-consciousness on the part of the people, but only to the development of the language in the direction of complete and concise expression of thought. It would be rash to say that the feudal social order accounts for the lack of pronouns, personal or others, from the Japanese language, but it is safe to maintain that the feudal order, with its many gradations of social rank, minute etiquette, and refined and highly developed personal sensitiveness would adopt and foster an impersonal

and honorific method of personal allusion. Even though we may not be able to explain the rise of the non-pronominal method of sentence structure, it is enough if we see that this is a problem in the evolution of language, and that Japanese pronominal deficiency is not to be attributed to lack of consciousness of self, much less to the inherent "impersonality" of the Japanese mind.

An interesting fact ignored by advocates of the "impersonal" theory is the Japanese inability of conceiving nationality apart from personality. Not only is the Emperor conceived as the living symbol of Japanese nationality, but he is its embodiment and substance. The Japanese race is popularly represented to be the offspring of the royal house. Sovereignty resides completely and absolutely in him. Authority to-day is acknowledged only in those who have it from him. Popular rights are granted the people by him, and exist because of his will alone. A single act of his could in theory abrogate the constitution promulgated in 1889 and all the popular rights enjoyed to-day by the nation. The Emperor of Japan could appropriate, without in the least shocking the most patriotic Japanese, the long-famous saying of Louis XIV., "L'état, c'est moi." Mr. H. Kato, ex-president of the Imperial University, in a recent work entitled the "Evolution of Morality and Law" says this in just so many words: "Patriotism in this country means loyalty to the throne. To the Japanese the Emperor and the country are the same. The Emperor of Japan, without the slightest exaggeration, can say, 'L'état, c'est moi.' The Japanese believe that all their happiness is bound up with the Imperial line and have no respect for any system of morality or law that fails to take cognizance of this fact."

Mr. Yamaguchi, professor of history in the Peeresses' School and lecturer in the Imperial Military College, thus writes in the *Far East*: "The sovereign power of the State cannot be dissociated from the Imperial Throne. It lasts forever along with the Imperial line of succession, unbroken for ages eternal. If the Imperial House cease to exist, the Empire falls." "According to our ideas the monarch reigns over and governs the country in his own

right. . . Our Emperor possesses real sovereignty and also exercises it. He is quite different from other rulers, who possess but a partial sovereignty." This is to-day the universally accepted belief in Japan. It shows clearly that national unity and sovereignty are not conceived in Japan apart from personality.

One more point demands our attention before bringing this chapter to a close. If "impersonality" were an inherent characteristic of Japanese race nature, would it be possible for strong personalities to arise?

Mr. Lowell has described in telling way a very common experience. "About certain people," he says, "there exists a subtle something which leaves its impress indelibly upon the consciousness of all who come in contact with them. This something is a power, but a power of so indefinable a description that we beg definition by calling it simply the personality of the man. . . On the other hand, there are people who have no effect upon us whatever. They come and they go with a like indifference. . . And we say that the difference is due to the personality or the want of personality of the man."* The first thing to which I would call attention is the fact that "personality" is here used in its true sense. It has no exclusive reference to consciousness of self, nor does it signify the effect of self-consciousness on the consciousness of another. It here has reference to those inherent qualities of thinking and feeling and willing which we have seen to be the essence of personality. These qualities, possessed in a marked way or degree, make strong personalities. Their relative lack constitutes weak personality. Bare consciousness of self is a minor evidence of personality and may be developed to a morbid degree in a person who has a weak personality.

In the second place this distinction between weak and strong personalities is as true of the Japanese as of the Occidental. There have been many commanding persons in Japanese history; they have been the heroes of the land. There are such to-day. The most commanding personality of recent times was, I suppose, Takamori Saigo, whose very name is an inspiration to tens of thousands of

* P. 201.

the choicest youth of the nation. Joseph Neesima was such a personality. The transparency of his purpose, the simplicity of his personal aim, his unflinching courage, fixedness of belief, lofty plans, and far-reaching ambitions for his people, impressed all who came into contact with him. No one mingles much with the Japanese, freely speaking with them in their own language, but perceives here and there men of "strong personality" in the sense of the above-quoted passage. Now it seems to me that if "impersonality" in the corresponding sense were a race characteristic, due to the nature of their psychic being, then the occurrence of so many commanding personalities in Japan would be inexplicable. Heroes and widespread hero-worship* could hardly arise were there no commanding personalities. The feudal order lent itself without doubt to the development of such a spirit. But the feudal order could hardly have arisen or even maintained itself for centuries without commanding personalities, much less could it have created them. The whole feudal order was built on an exalted oligarchy. It was an order which emphasized persons, not principles; the law of the land was not the will of the multitudes, but of a few select persons. While, therefore, it is beyond dispute that the old social order was communal in type, and so did not give freedom to the individual, nor tend to develop strong personality among the masses, it is also true that it did develop men of commanding personality among the rulers. Those who from youth were in the hereditary line of rule, sons of Shoguns, daimyos, and samurai, were forced by the very communalism of the social order to an exceptional personal development. They shot far ahead of the common man. Feudalism is favorable to the development of personality in the favored few, while it represses that of the masses. Individualism, on the contrary, giving liberty of thought and act, with all that these imply, is favorable to the development of the personality of all.

In view of the discussions of this chapter, is it not evident that advocates of the "impersonal" theory of Japanese mind and civilization not only ignore many im-

* Cf. chapter vii.

portant elements of the civilization they attempt to interpret, but also base their interpretation on a mistaken conception of personality? We may not, however, leave the discussion at this point, for important considerations still demand our attention if we would probe this problem of personality to its core.

IS BUDDHISM IMPERSONAL?

ADVOCATES of Japanese "impersonality" call attention to the phenomena of self-suppression in religion. It seems strange, however, that they who present this argument fail to see how "self-suppression" undermines their main contention. If "self-suppression" be actually attained, it can only be by a people advanced so far as to have passed through and beyond the "personal" stage of existence. "Self-suppression" cannot be a characteristic of a primitive people, a people that has not yet reached the stage of consciousness of self. If the alleged "impersonality" of the Orient is that of a primitive people that has not yet reached the stage of self-consciousness, then it cannot have the characteristic of "self-suppression." If, on the other hand, it is the "impersonality" of "self-suppression," then it is radically different from that of a primitive people. Advocates of "impersonality" present both conceptions, quite unconscious apparently that they are mutually exclusive. If either conception is true, the other is false.

Furthermore, if self-suppression is a marked characteristic of Japanese politeness and altruism (as it undoubtedly is when these qualities are real expressions of the heart and of the general character), it is a still more characteristic feature of the higher religious life of the people, which certainly does not tend to "impersonality." The ascription of esoteric Buddhism to the common people by advocates of the "impersonal" theory is quite a mistake, and the argument for the "impersonality" of the race on this ground is without foundation, for the masses of the people are grossly polytheistic, wholly unable to understand Buddhistic metaphysics, or to conceive of the nebulous, impersonal Absolute of Buddhism. Now if con-