

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-

sciousness of the unity of nature, and especially of the unity of the individual soul with the Absolute, were a characteristic of undeveloped, that is, of undifferentiated mind, then all primitive peoples should display it in a superlative degree. It should show itself in every phase of their life. The more primitive the people, the more divine their life—because the less differentiated from the original divine mind! Such are the requirements of this theory. But what are the facts? The primitive undeveloped mind is relatively unconscious of self; it is wholly objective; it is childlike; it does not even know that there is self to suppress. Primitive religion is purely objective. Implicit, in primitive religion without doubt, is the fact of a unity between God and man, but the primitive man has not discovered this implication of his religious thinking. This is the state of mind of a large majority of Japanese.

Yet this is by no means true of all. No nation, with such a continuous history as Japan has had, would fail to develop a class capable of considerable introspection. In Japan introspection received early and powerful impetus from the religion of Buddha. It came with a philosophy of life based on prolonged and profound introspection. It commanded each man who would know more than the symbols, who desired, like Buddha, to attain the great enlightenment and thus become a Tathagata, a Blessed one, a Buddha, an Enlightened one, to know and conquer himself. The emphasis laid by thoughtful Buddhism on the need of self-knowledge, in order to self-suppression, is well recognized by all careful students. Advocates of Oriental "impersonality" are not one whit behind others in recognizing it. In this connection we can hardly do better than quote a few of Mr. Lowell's happy descriptions of the teaching of philosophic Buddhism.

"This life, it says, is but a chain of sorrows. . . These desires that urge us on are really causes of all our woe. We think they are ourselves. We are mistaken. They are all illusion. . . This personality, this sense of self, is a cruel deception. . . Realize once the true soul behind it, devoid of attributes, . . an invisible part of the great

impersonal soul of nature, then . . . will you have found happiness in the blissful quiescence of Nirvana" [p. 186]. "In desire alone lies all the ill. Quench the desire, and the deeds [sins of the flesh] will die of inanition. Get rid, then, said Buddha, of these passions, these strivings, for the sake of self. As a man becomes conscious that he himself is something distinct from his body, so if he reflect and ponder, he will come to see that in like manner, his appetites, ambitions, hopes, are really extrinsic to the spirit proper. . . Behind desire, behind even the will, lies the soul, the same for all men, one with the soul of the universe. When he has once realized this eternal truth, the man has entered Nirvana. . . It [Nirvana] is simply the recognition of the eternal oneness of the two [the individual and the universal soul]" [p. 189].

Accepting this description of philosophic Buddhism as fairly accurate, it is plain that the attainment of this consciousness of the unity of the individual self with the universal is the result, according to Buddha, and also according to the advocates of "impersonality," of a highly developed consciousness of self. It is not a simple state of undifferentiated mind, but a complex and derivative one—absolutely incomprehensible to a primitive people. The means for this suppression of self *depends entirely on the development of the consciousness of self*. The self is the means for casting out the self, and it is done by that introspection which ultimately leads to the realization of the unity. If, then, Japanese Buddhism seeks to suppress the self, this very effort is the most conclusive proof we could demand of the possession by this people of a highly developed consciousness of self.

It is one of the boasts of Buddhism that a man's saviour is himself; no other helper, human or divine, can do aught for him. Those who reject Christianity in Christian lands are quite apt to praise Buddhism for this rejection of all external help. They urge that by the very nature of the case salvation is no external thing; each one must work out his own salvation. It cannot be given by another. Salvation through an external Christ who lived 1900 years ago is an impossibility. Such a criti-

cism of Christianity shows real misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine and method of salvation. Yet the point to which attention is here directed is not the correctness or incorrectness of these characterizations of Christianity, but rather to the fact that "ji-riki," salvation through self-exertion, which is the boast of Buddhism, is but another proof of the essentially self-conscious character of Buddhism. It aims at Nirvana, it is true, at self-suppression, but it depends on the attainment of clear self-consciousness in the first place, and then on prolonged self-exertion for the attainment of that end. In proportion as Buddhism is esoteric is it self-conscious.

Such being the nature of Buddhism, we naturally ask whether or not it is calculated to develop strongly personalized men and women. If consciousness of self is the main element of personality, we must pronounce Buddhism a highly personal rather than impersonal religion, as is commonly stated. But a religion of the Buddhist type, which casts contempt on the self, and seeks its annihilation as the only means of salvation, has ever tended to destroy personality; it has made men hermits and pessimists; it has drawn them out of the great current of active life, and thus has severed them from their fellow-men. But a prime condition of developed personalities is largeness and intensity of life, and constant intercourse with mankind. Personality is developed in the society of persons, not in the company of trees and stones. Buddhism, which runs either to gross and superstitious polytheism on its popular side or to pessimistic introspection on its philosophical side, may possibly, by a stretch of the term, be called "impersonal" in the sense that it does not help in the production of strong, rounded personality among its votaries, but not in the sense that it does not produce self-consciousness. Buddhism, therefore, cannot be accurately described in terms of personality or impersonality.

We would do well in this connection to ponder the fact that although Buddhism in its higher forms does certainly develop consciousness of self, it does not attribute to that self any worth. In consequence of this, it never has modified, and however long it might be allowed to

run its course, never could modify, the general social order in the direction of individualism. This is one reason why the whole Orient has maintained to modern times its communal nature, in spite of its high development in so many ways, even in introspection and self-consciousness.

This failure of Buddhism is all the more striking when we stop to consider how easy and, to us, natural an inference it would have been to pass from the perception of the essential unity between the separate self and the universal soul, to the assertion of the supreme worth of that separate soul because of the fact of that unity. But Buddhism never seems to have made that inference. Its compassion on animals and even insects depended on its doctrine of the transmigration of souls, not on its doctrine of universal soul unity. Its mercy was shown to animals in certain whimsical ways, but the universal lack of sympathy for suffering man, man who could suffer the most exquisite pains, exposed the shallowness of its solicitude about destroying life. The whole influence of Buddhism on the social order was not conducive to the development of personality in the Orient. The so-called impersonal influence of Buddhism upon the Eastern peoples, then, is not due to its failure to recognize the separateness of the human self, on the one hand, nor to its emphasis on the universal unity subsisting between the separate finite self and the infinite soul, on the other; but only on its failure to see the infinite worth of the individual; and in consequence of this failure, its inability to modify the general social order by the introduction of individualism.

The asserted "impersonal" characteristic of Buddhism and of the Orient, therefore, I am not willing to call "impersonality"; for it is a very defective description, a real misnomer. I think no single term can truly describe the characteristic under consideration. As regards the general social order, the so-called impersonal characteristic is its communal nature; as regards the popular religious thought, whether of Shintoism or Buddhism, its so-called impersonality is its simple, artless objectivity; as regards philosophic Buddhism its so-called impersonality is its morbid introspective self-consciousness, leading

to the desire and effort to annihilate the separateness of the self. These are different characteristics and cannot be described by any single term. So far as there are in Japan genuine altruism, real suppression of selfish desires, and real possession of kindly feelings for others and desires to help them, and so far as these qualities arise through a sense of the essential unity of the human race and of the unity of the human with the divine soul, this is not "impersonality"—but a form of highly developed personality—not infra-personality, but true personality.

We have noted that although esoteric Buddhism developed a highly accentuated consciousness of self, it attributed no value to that self. This failure will not appear strange if we consider the historical reasons for it. Indeed, the failure was inevitable. Neither the social order nor the method of introspective thought suggested it. Both served, on the contrary, absolutely to preclude the idea.

When introspective thought began in India the social order was already far beyond the undifferentiated communal life of the tribal stage. Castes were universal and fixed. The warp and woof of daily life and of thought were filled with the distinctions of castes and ranks. Man's worth was conceived to be not in himself, but in his rank or caste. The actual life of the people, therefore, did not furnish to speculative thought the slightest suggestion of the worth of man as man. It was a positive hindrance to the rise of such an idea.

Equally opposed to the rise of this idea was the method of that introspective thought which discovered the fact of the self. It was a method of abstraction; it denied as part of the real self everything that could be thought of as separate; every changing phase or expression of the self could not be the real self, it was argued, because, if a part of the real self, how could it sometimes be and again not be? Feeling cannot be a part of the real self, for sometimes I feel and sometimes I do not. Any particular desire cannot be a part of my real self, for sometimes I have it and sometimes I do not. A similar argument was applied to every objective thing. In the famous "Questions of King Melinda," the argument as to the

real chariot is expanded at length; the wheels are not the chariot; the spokes are not the chariot; the seat is not the chariot; the tongue is not the chariot; the axle is not the chariot; and so, taking up each individual part of the chariot, the assertion is made that it is not the chariot. But if the chariot is not in any of its parts, then they are not essential parts of the chariot. So of the soul—the self; it does not consist of its various qualities or attributes or powers; hence they are not essential elements of the self. The real self exists apart from them.

Now is it not evident that such a method of introspection deprives the conception of self of all possible value? It is nothing but a bare intellectual abstraction. To say that this self is a part of the universal self is no relief,—brings no possible worth to the separate self,—for the conception of the universal soul has been arrived at by a similar process of thought. It, too, is nothing but a bare abstraction, deprived of all qualities and attributes and powers. I can see no distinction between the absolute universal soul of Brahmanism and Buddhism, and the Absolute Nothing of Hegel.*

Both are the farthest possible abstraction that the mind can make. The Absolute Soul of Buddhism, the Atman of Brahmanism, and Hegel's Nothing are the farthest possible remove from the Christian's conception of God. The former is the utter emptiness of being; the latter the perfect fullness of being and completeness of quality. The finite emptiness receives and can receive no richness of life or increase in value by its consciousness of unity

* It seems desirable to guard against an inference that might be made from what I have said about Hegel's "Nothing." Hegel saw clearly that his "Nothing" was only the farthest limit of abstraction, and that it was consequently absolutely empty and worthless. It was only his starting point of thought, not his end, as in the case of Brahmanism and of Buddhism. Only after Hegel had passed the "Nothing" through all the successive stages of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, and thus clothed it with the fullness of being and character, did he conceive it to be the concrete, actual Absolute. There is, therefore, the farthest possible difference between Hegel's Absolute Being and Buddha's Absolute. Hegel sought to understand and state in rational form the real nature of the Christian's conception of God. Whether he did so or not, this is not the place to say.

with the infinite emptiness; whereas the finite limited soul receives in the Christian view an infinite wealth and value by reason of the consciousness of its unity with the divine infinite fullness. The usual method of stating the difference between the Christian conception of God and the Hindu conception of the root of all being is that the one is personal and the other impersonal. But these terms are inadequate. Rather say the one is perfectly personal and the other perfectly abstract. Impersonality, even in its strictest meaning, *i. e.*, without "conscious separate existence as an intelligent and voluntary being," only partially expresses the conception of Buddhism. The full conception rejects not only personality, but also every other quality; the ultimate and the absolute of Buddhism—we may not even call it being—is the absolutely abstract.

With regard, then, to the conception of the separate self and of the supreme self, the Buddhistic view may be called "impersonal," not in the sense that it lacks the consciousness of a separate self; not in the sense that it emphasizes the universal unity—nay, the identity of all the separate abstract selves and the infinite abstract self; but in the sense that all the qualities and characteristics of human beings, such as consciousness, thought, emotion, volition, and even being itself, are rejected as unreal. The view is certainly "impersonal," but it is much more. My objection to the description of Buddhism as "impersonal," then, is not because the word is too strong, but because it is too weak; it does not sufficiently characterize its real nature. It is as much below materialism, as materialism is below monotheism. Such a scheme of thought concerning the universe necessarily reacts on those whom it possesses, to destroy what sense they may have of the value of human personality; that which we hold to be man's glory is broken into fragments and thrown away.

But this does not constitute the whole of the difficulty. This method of introspective thought necessarily resulted in the doctrine of Illusion. Nothing is what it seems to be. The reality of the chariot is other than it appears. So too with the self and everything we see or think. The igno-

rant are perfectly under the spell of the illusion and cannot escape it. The deluded mind creates for itself the world of being, with all its woes and evils. The great enlightenment is the discovery of this fact and the power it gives to escape the illusion and to see that the world is nothing but illusion. To see that the illusion is an illusion destroys it as such. It is then no longer an illusion, but only a passing shadow. We cannot now stop to see how pessimism, the doctrine of self-salvation, and the nature of that salvation through contemplation and asceticism and withdrawal from active life, all inevitably follow from such a course of thought. That which here needs emphasis is that all this thinking renders it still more impossible to think of the self as having any intrinsic worth. On the contrary, the self is the source of evil, of illusion. The great aim of Buddhism is necessarily to get rid of the self, with all its illusions and pains and disappointments.

Is it now clear why Buddhism failed to reach the idea of the worth of the individual self? It was due to the nature of the social order, and the nature of its introspective and speculative thinking. Lacking, therefore, the conception of individual worth, we see clearly why it failed, even after centuries of opportunity, to secure individualism in the social order and a general development of personality either as an idea or as a fact among any of the peoples to which it has gone. It is not only a fact of history, but we have seen that it could not have been otherwise. The very nature of its conception of self and, in consequence, the nature of its conception of salvation absolutely prohibited it.*

*I remark, in passing, that Western non-Christian thought has experienced, and still experiences, no little difficulty in conceiving the ultimate nature of being, and thus in solving the problem, into which, as a cavernous tomb, the speculative religions of the Orient have fallen. Western non-Christian systems, whether materialism, consistent agnosticism, impersonal pantheism, or other systems which reject the Christian conception of God as perfect personality endowed with all the fullness of being and character, equally with philosophic Buddhism, fail to provide any theoretic foundation for the doctrine of the value of man as man, and consequently fail to provide any guarantee for individualism in the social order and the wide development of personality among the masses.

We have thus far confined our view entirely to philosophic Buddhism. It is important, therefore, to state again that very few of the Japanese people outside of the priesthood have any such ideas with regard to the abstract nature of the individual, of the absolute self, and of their mutual relations as I have just described. These ideas are a part of esoteric Buddhism, the secret truth, which is an essential part of the great enlightenment, but far too profound for the vulgar multitudes. The vast majority, even of the priesthood, I am told, do not get far enough to be taught these views. The sweep of such conceptions, therefore, is very limited. That they are held, however, by the leaders, that they are the views of the most learned expounders and the most advanced students of Buddhism serves to explain why Buddhism has never been, and can never become, a power in reorganizing society in the direction of individualism.

Popular Buddhism contains many elements alien to philosophic Buddhism. For a full study of the subject of this chapter we need to ask whether popular Buddhism tended to produce "impersonality," and if so, in what sense. The doctrine of "ingwa,"* with its consequences on character, demands fresh attention at this point. According to this doctrine every event of this life, even the minutest, is the result of one's conduct in a previous life, and is unalterably fixed by inflexible law. "Ingwa" is the crude idea of fate held by all primitive peoples, stated in somewhat philosophic and scientific form. It became a central element in the thought of Oriental peoples. Each man is born into his caste and class by a law over which neither he nor his parents have any control, and for which they are without responsibility. The misfortunes of life, and the good fortunes as well, come by the same impartial, inflexible laws. By this system of thought moral responsibility is practically removed from the individual's shoulders. This doctrine is held in Japan far more widely than the philosophic doctrine of the self, and is correspondingly baleful.

This system of thought, when applied to the details of life, means that individual choice and will, and their effect

* Cf. chapter vi.

in determining both external life and internal character have been practically lost sight of. As a sociological fact the origin of this conception is not difficult to understand. The primitive freedom of the individual in the early communal order of the tribe became increasingly restricted with the multiplication and development of the Hindu peoples; each class of society became increasingly specialized. Finally the individual had no choice whatever left him, because of the extreme rigidity of the communal order. As a matter of fact, the individual choice and will was allowed no play whatever in any important matter. Good sense saw that where no freedom is, there moral responsibility cannot be. All one's life is predetermined by the powers that be. Thus we again see how vital a relation the social order bears to the innermost thinking and belief of a people.

Still further. Once let the idea be firmly grounded in an individual that he has no freedom of belief, of choice, or of act, and in the vast majority of cases, as a matter of fact, he will have none. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "According to your faith be it unto you." This doctrine of individual freedom is one of those that cannot be forced on a man who does not choose to believe it. In a true sense, it is my belief that I am free that makes me free. As Prof. James well says, the doctrine of the freedom of the will cannot be rammed down any man's intellectual throat, for that very act would abridge his real freedom. Man's real freedom is proved by his freedom to reject even the doctrine of his freedom. But so long as he rejects it, his freedom is only potential. Because of his belief in his bondage he is in bondage. Now this doctrine of fate has been the warp and woof of the thinking of the bulk of the Japanese people in their efforts to explain all the vicissitudes of life. Not only, therefore, has it failed to stimulate the volitional element of the psychic nature, but in the psychology of the Orient little if any attention has been given to this faculty. Oriental psychology practically knows nothing of personality because it has failed to note one of its central elements, the freedom of the will. The individual, therefore, has not been appealed to to exercise his free moral

choice, one of the highest prerogatives of his nature. Moral responsibility has not been laid on his individual shoulders. A method of moral appeal fitted to develop the deepest element of his personality has thus been precluded.

It thus resulted that although philosophic Buddhism developed a high degree of self-consciousness, yet because it failed to discover personal freedom it did not deliver popular Buddhism from its grinding doctrine of fate, rather it fastened this incubus of social progress more firmly upon it. Philosophic and popular Buddhism alike thus threw athwart the course of human and social evolution the tremendous obstacle of fatalism, which the Orient has never discovered a way either to surmount or evade. Buddhism teaches the impotence of the individual will; it destroys the sense of moral responsibility; it thus fails to understand the real nature of man, his glory and power and even his divinity, which the West sums up in the term personality. In this sense, then, the influence of Buddhism and the condition of the Orient may be called "impersonal," but it is the impersonality of a defective religious psychology, and of communalism in the social order. Whether it is right to call this feature of Japan "impersonality," I leave with the reader to judge.

We draw this chapter to a close with a renewed conception of the inadequacy of the "impersonal" theory to explain Japanese religious and social phenomena. Further considerations, however, still merit attention ere we leave this subject.

XXXIII

TRACES OF PERSONALITY IN SHINTOISM,
BUDDHISM, AND CONFUCIANISM

REGRET as we sometimes must the illogicalness of the human mind, yet it is a providential characteristic of our as yet defective nature; for thanks to it few men or nations carry out to their complete logical results erroneous opinions and metaphysical speculations. Common sense in Japan has served more or less as an antidote for Buddhistic poison. The blighting curse of logical Buddhism has been considerably relieved by various circumstances. Let us now consider some of the ways in which the personality-destroying characteristics of Buddhism have been lessened by other ideas and influences.

First of all there is the distinction, so often noted, between esoteric and popular Buddhism. Esoteric Buddhism was content to allow popular Buddhism a place and even to invent ways for the salvation of the ignorant multitudes who could not see the real nature of the self. Resort was had to the use of magic prayers and symbols and idols. These were bad enough, but they did not bear so hard on the development of personality as did esoteric Buddhism.

The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul was likewise a relief from the pressure of philosophic Buddhism, for, according to this doctrine, the individual soul continues to live its separate life, to maintain its independent identity through infinite ages, while passing through the ten worlds of existence, from nethermost hell to highest heaven; and the particular world into which it is born after each death is determined by the moral character of its life in the immediately preceding stage. By this doc-