

Japanese Philosophy And Politics

Joshua W. K. Liao

(This is the last of a series of three articles on the history of Japanese philosophy—Editor.)

The national trait of obedience now assumed the form of academic subservieny and often killed creative genius in the bud—the more so because, by taking a short-cut in order to quickly turn out native leaders, every university, while allowing almost optional class attendance, placed scholarly research on a closely supervised apprenticeship basis. In consequence, the majority of university students would manage to pass the annual examinations but forget most of what they learned, while only a few could form a habit of intensive study and master the method of independent work. As to post-graduate students, each one was supposed to cling to the same professor for three to five years, during which period of time he would work like an apprentice and errand-boy. Expected to help the professor at work and report on his own work regularly, he could neither criticize his teacher and advisor nor deviate in his intellectual exploration from the beaten track of his predecessor. There was no final examination or debate; he merely submitted his dissertation to his supervisor for approval in order to receive the doctorate degree, which was thus conferred by the university in name but in fact by his supervising professor. The five-years of supervision and subservieny stereotyped his mind and personality and his knowledge was so one-sided and specialized that it failed to appreciate most of the allied subjects. For such reasons, in proportion to the high percentage of literacy and the enormous number of university graduates and professional academicians, creative scholars in Japan have been few and far between.

Growth Of Nationalism

Just as every budding scholar worshipped his teacher, advisor, and predecessor, so did the Japanese people whole-heartedly admire the Germans. Having found German ideas and institutions nearest to theirs and therefore easiest to learn, they considered everything German the best. To become united and powerful, the Germans had waged and won three successive wars. So, then, must the Japanese also fight their neighbors successfully and successively. In 1895 they defeated China and in 1905 Russia. In 1914, the Government joined the Allies and fought Germany, but the people remained pro-German. Prince Ito was adored as the Japanese Bismarck; the Emperor Meiji, worshipped as the Japanese Kaiser William I.

After the victorious war against Russia, the Japanese became not only self-confident but also conscious of world affairs and prospects, and

this spurred academic interest in the idealism of Berkeley and Hume, Eucken and Bergson, as well as of Kant and Hegel. As nationalism, capitalism, and imperialism rose, interest in Hegel and Nietzsche, in Adam Smith and the Mills gradually gained academic orthodoxy.

On the whole, the philosophical interests of Tokyo Imperial University remained historical and critical, while those of Kyoto Imperial University were analytical and systematic. Founded in 1897, the latter began the publication of the *Philosophical Studies* (哲學研究) in 1916, whereafter neo-Kantianism in particular was introduced and expounded, and for years German thinkers like Rickert, Windelband, Husserl, Dilthey, and Simmel were favorite subjects of discussion.

Meanwhile, Rickert's pupil Sayuda Kiichiro (左右田喜一郎), while teaching in the Tokyo College of Commerce, expounded his system of culturalism and theory of value, revealing neo-Kantian influences. In Waseda University, Professor Kaneko Umaharu (金子馬治), and in Tokyo Imperial University, Professor Kuwaki Genyoku, too, developed similar trends of culturalism.

During the First World War the focus of interest turned from neo-Kantian to neo-Hegelian idealism. With the latter as his starting point, Professor Nishida Kitaro (西田幾太郎) built up his system of thought in innumerable volumes—e.g., *Studies in Good* (1911), *Thinking and Experiencing* (1915), *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (1917), *The Philosophy of New Idealism in the Present Age* (1917), *Problems of Consciousness* (1900), *Art and Morals* (1923), etc. According to him, at the bottom of self-consciousness lies pure experience exhibiting the absolute free will, and self-consciousness is the synthesizing process of such antinomies as rationality and irrationality, being and non-being, affirmation and negation, etc. He conceived of "non-being" (無) in terms of "inability to be a predicate of a true being." Thus, anything that cannot predicate anything else cannot be in existence. This novel idea, developed in detail in his recent work *From Workers to Seers* (1927), is peculiar to his thought and shows such originality that the German philosopher, Rickert, spoke highly of him as the leading Japanese philosopher of the day. In him appeared the first Japanese thinker of initiative after half-a-century of introduction of Occidental academic philosophy.

The Leftist Movement

As in 19th century Germany, so in 20th century Japan Hegelians split into rightist and leftist fac-

tions. In 1895 appeared Tsuta Sanemichi's (津田真道) *Materialism* in Japanese. In 1901 the Social Democratic Party was formed by Abe Isoo (阿部磯雄), Katayama Sen (片山潜), and Kotoku Akimizu (幸得秋水) and was dissolved by order on the same day. Kotoku published his *Gist of Socialism* in 1903, became an anarchist and atheist, and was found guilty of high treason in 1910 and sentenced to death.

In 1907, Katayama founded the Commoners' Association and in 1911 organized the Socialist Party. Following the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, he openly avowed communism and in 1920 promoted the publication of the periodical *Socialism* and in 1921 the rise of proletarian literature in Japan. The Japanese Communist Party was first organized in 1920, reorganized in 1926 and its influence spread rapidly. When another communist leader, together with wife and nephew, Ohsugi Sakae (木下栄), was assassinated by a young officer in 1923, Katayama managed to escape to Russia, where he lived in exile as a Central Executive Member of the Third International until his death in the nineteen thirties.

Heterodox Thinkers

Inside the academic circle, while rightist thinkers were registered as orthodox, leftist elements were always ostracized as heterodox. Unlike the former, who confined themselves to the class-rooms, the "bad boys" always looked to the marketplace to keep abreast with the tide of world affairs. Abe, for instance, remained a socialist professor in Waseda but published his famous *The Age of Socialism* in 1924 and organized the Socialist Mass Party when universal suffrage was inaugurated in 1926. As Party President he was well liked but was often maltreated by agents of the Military following the outbreak of the Mukden Incident in 1931.

Abe's younger colleague in Waseda, by the name of Sano Marabu (佐野學), who published his *Prospects of the Historical Process* in 1928, has been a staunch ideological spokesman of the leftist movement in Japan. Yet, so far the most prolific author and professor has been Kawaue Hajimu (河上肇) of Kyoto Imperial University, author of such widely read books as *The Fundamental Conception of Economics* (1910), *Studies in the Materialist View of History* (1921), and *The Basic Theory of Marxian Economics* (1929). Thanks to his literary efforts, Marxism spread far and wide, reaching its climax of popularity in 1926, when the liberal Minseitō (民政黨) was in power. In 1927, the Japanese *Workers and Farmers' Daily* was

founded and the complete works of Marx and Engels appeared in Japanese.

Following the general round-up of Communist Party members on March 15, 1928 by the reactionary Seiyukai (政友會) cabinet under the war-lord Premier Tanaka (田中義一), a number of leftist authors and thinkers, including Kawaue and Sano, were arrested, questioned, and detained for harboring dangerous thoughts in the hope that they would change their minds while sitting in jail. Some of them died "mysteriously" inside jail while others remained there till the end of the Second World War.

Since then, the Japanese leftists have separated into the Socialist and Communist Parties. Yet, in the Japanese translation of Mao Tsé-tung's *New Democracy*, both have found their New Testament, distributing free copies like noon extras. When the first Socialist Cabinet appeared on the stage in 1947 under Premier Katayama Tetsu (片山哲), it showed considerable resemblance to the British Labor Party. In the recent election, however, the Communists seem to have gained at the expense of the Socialists. And their basic difference seems to lie between nationalism, monarchism, and moderation on the one side and internationalism, republicanism, and extremism on the other. The Communists alone have dared to demand and have been agitating for the earliest deposition of the *Mikado*—the seed and root of Japanese imperialism, militarism, and capitalism.

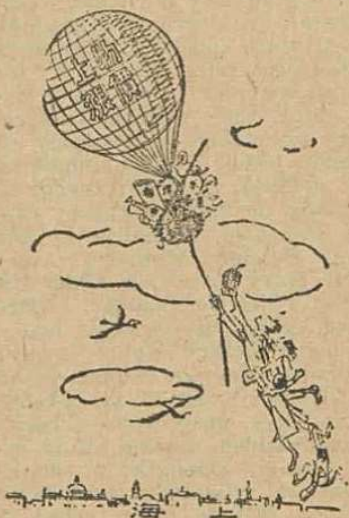
Nipponism And World-Conquest

The year 1931, when Japanese philosophers celebrated the 100th anniversary of Hegel's death, marked both the merging of German absolutism with Japanese spiritualism and the resurgence of totalitarianism in Japanese politics. Between the horns of Kato's dilemma, the pendulum once again swung back to military dictatorship. During the ascendancy of the liberals the fighting caste, though pushed to back seats, had to keep calm in view of the repeated diplomatic successes and victorious foreign wars under liberal leadership. But it was biding its time to launch a comeback. The struggle was to be waged between the sword and the pen.

Strangely enough, almost the entire era of seven decades (1867-1937) was lived out by two opposing patriarchs—Prince Saionji and Toyama Mitsuru (頭山滿). Unlike Saionji, who stayed in the limelight all his life, Toyama preferred to move the strings behind the scenes while keeping a flock of young die-hards around him. He wanted the quickest mastery of Western technology, importation of foreign machines, and utilization of foreign weapons all for accomplishing expansionism and militarism. Aside from these developments of the west, he hated anything of foreign origin. To him, any further Westernization was national betrayal and Shintoism and Bushido should be revived as bul-

warks against foreign influence. So in the wars against China and Russia he gladly inspired Japanese boys to march to the fronts. When the Treaty of Portsmouth, concluded between Japan and Russia through Theodore Roosevelt's mediation, was found to grant Japan no reparations except the southern half of Sakhalin and the South Manchurian Railway, a growing number of Japanese patriots became so indignant that demonstrations of discontent were staged in Tokyo and Yokohama. The envoy Komura (小村壽太郎) upon his return had a narrow escape. Japan should at least have received the North Manchurian Railway and extended her sphere of influence as far as the Amur River, they insisted. Malcontents, naming themselves after the river called Kokuryūko (黒龍江) meaning the Black Dragon River, secretly formed the Black Dragon Society with Toyama as their patriarch and leading spirit. Advocating northward expansion on the Asiatic Continent, they promoted the continental policy and prepared for another war against Russia.

GONE WITH THE WIND



This cartoon, from the *Shun Pao*, shows the skyrocketing of commodity prices.

Assassinations

At the end of the First World War, when communist propaganda and infiltration were gaining influence, the Japanese super-patriots became anti-Communist as well as anti-Russian. Denouncing what they called racial discrimination in the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, naval discrimination in the Washington Conference in 1921, and the United States Immigration Law of 1924, they began to harbor anti-Anglo-American sentiments, too. During the first decade after the War, though liberal elements were still holding sway, the super-patriots, backed by the Military, waged sporadic war against both liberals and leftists through public demonstrations and private assassinations. Thus, Premier Hara Kei (原敬) fell a victim to the dagger of a young die-hard in 1921; Ohsugi Sakae was murdered in 1923; and

unarmed Koreans were massacred after the earthquake of 1923. Likewise, right after the London Naval Disarmament Conference in 1930, which had appeared distasteful to Japanese expansionists, Premier Hamaguchi received a mortal wound from an assassin from which he died the next year. In the same year, 1930, Kihira's (紀平正美) *Japanese Spirit* (日本精神) appeared.

As Hegel had considered history the "embodiment of spirit in the form of events" and the world-spirit to be revealed in world-history, authors on the Japanese Spirit now came to hold and prove that the Divine Will, as first outlined by the Sun Goddess, had been fulfilled through the life of the Yamato race in its four phases—the Way of the Gods, the Yamato Tamashii, the Way of the Warrior, and finally the Japanese Spirit. In response to Spengler's *Decline of the West*, which challenges Hegel's teleological philosophy of history, academic philosophers like Tanabe after 1930 redoubled their efforts to study Hegel's dialectic and philosophy of history. Thereafter appeared a number of writings on Japanese thought, political ideas, and historical philosophy by Watsuji Tetsuro (和辻哲郎), Miki Kiyoshi (三木清), Takahashi Satomi (高橋里美), etc.

The Imperial Way

With the culmination of the worldwide post-war economic depression in 1930 and international politics losing its balance of power, and with the Chinese Nationalists occupying China Proper, trying to persuade Chang Hsueh-liang of Manchuria to submit, Japanese supremacy was challenged. The Japanese Military, unable to wait longer, finally struck by creating the Mukden Incident in September, 1931. Because world opinion, as evidenced through the League of Nations, was turning against Japan, the then Foreign Minister Shidehara (幣原) of the Wakatsuki (若槻) Cabinet, whose liberal diplomacy had been praised abroad, attempted to halt the Japanese advance into the Great Wall and patch up the situation peacefully by speaking to the *Mikado* personally, but he was manhandled by the Army Minister Araki Sadao (荒木貞夫). In the Diet Araki proudly said: "Who dares oppose our arms when we are prosecuting our holy mission on the Asiatic Continent? We declare to the world that we are a militaristic nation in the cause of Kodo (皇道 the Imperial Way). Let all of us show the spirit of Japan before the rest of the world...." Thereafter the cabinet split and resigned en bloc.

Meanwhile, Araki published his notorious *Addresses to the Japanese Nation* aiming thereby to hammer new ideas of expansionism, militarism, and racialism into the mind of every Japanese.

In fact, every Japanese while a school child had already read about Napoleon and Genghis Khan. The latter conqueror one Japanese author even identified as Minamoto

Yoshitsune (源義經), a younger brother of Yoritomo, and this story was believed by many Japanese. The change of the famous novelist Kikuchi Kan (菊池寛) into a pro-military writer startled nobody, but the transformation of Niitobe (新渡戸) from a liberal into a jingoist justifying Japanese militarism and expansionism both at Geneva, Switzerland in 1931 and at Banff, Canada in 1932 surprised the world and disappointed his Christian friends. On the other hand, Professor Minobe (美濃部), whose organic theory of the emperor was singled out for attack by super-patriots, resigned honorably from the Peerage in 1932; and Professor Takigawa (瀧川) of Kyoto Imperial University College of Jurisprudence, whose liberal interpretation of the Constitution was disapproved by the then Education Minister Hatoyama (鳩山), retired gracefully into private life in 1933.

At the end of 1931, a Seiyukai cabinet under Inukai (犬養毅) appeared. Also unable to satiate the Military's territorial hunger, Inukai died in his official residence at the hands of young officers in May, 1932. In 1933, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations; in 1934 she abrogated the Nine Powers' Pact. In 1935, Japanese warriors penetrated into the Peking and Tientsin area. For the Military, the move was neither fast nor smooth enough because "pro-foreign" elements had been the constant drawback. Some of the young officers decided on a coup to purge the whole Government of "traitors" and "self-seekers." So on February 26, 1936, ex-Premier Saito (齋藤實内) and Takahashi (高橋是青) and several other top-ranking statesmen were murdered. The next cabinet fell to the then Foreign Minister Hirota (廣田弘毅), a Black Dragon Society member, who became the man of the hour acceptable both to the *Mikado* and the Military.

United Front

After the outbreak of the China Incident in July, 1937, totalitarianism rose at the expense of parliamentarianism with all parties whipped into a united front. After the fall of France and the rise of German prestige in 1940, most Japanese politicians were urged to form the Imperial Rule Aid Association with a view to launching a one-party system. From then on ensued a dictatorship with no dictator; for nobody dared to act absolutely freely under the sacred shadow of the *Mikado*.

With the Tripartite Alliance, the fusion of Japanese militarism with German and Italian jingoism reached its crowning phase. When converging on Moscow in December, 1941, Japan's European allies wanted her to sandwich the Russians in Siberia. Instead, the Japanese Military, thinking southward expansion much easier and more profitable than any northward move, struck at Pearl Harbor and marched southward. Within four years time the Co-Prosperity Sphere in

Greater East Asia—the largest *Lebensraum* ever attained by the Children of the Sun Goddess—appeared and disappeared like a dream. Nevertheless, at the Pan-East-Asia International Conference held in Tokyo in 1944, the War Premier Tojo Hideki (東條英機) harangued the delegates from the puppet governments of the various occupied countries by re-affirming: "Whereas the Occident talks about the Human Way and China about the Heavenly Way, the Imperial Way of Japan is the Divine Way handed down from time immemorial through the Emperors. The Japanese people are Children of the Gods; their Emperors are lineal heirs of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. Descended from a divine origin the race is entitled to world-leadership. To accomplish their divine mission, the Japanese must establish the Co-Prosperity Sphere in Greater East Asia first and finally all over the world. Therefore, all friendly nations must follow Japan and go the way of the Imperial Forces (*Kogun* 皇軍)"

New Liberalism?

As the tide of the Second World War turned against the Axis, Japanese liberals in hibernation gradually raised their heads. As Saipan and Okinawa fell, the voice for peace became more and more audible. Still, the Potsdam Declaration was not taken so seriously as the atomic bomb. On midnight of August 9, 1945, in the presence of the *Mikado*, the last emergency conference was held attended by the Premier, Foreign Minister, Army Minister, Navy Minister, Chief of Staff, and Chief Commander. After a heated debate of several hours, these policy-makers split evenly: The Premier, Foreign Minister, and Navy Minister wanted peace-talks; the other three, more war. Liberalism and pacifism having thus regained enough strength to match the forces of despotism and militarism, the *Mikado*, when asked to choose, tipped the balance by joining the peace faction. Die-hards attempted to destroy the report on the final decision on its way to the press, but with no success.

Following the surrender ceremony aboard the *Missouri*, a new era of liberalism began. Soon the Japanese Constitution was amended to the satisfaction of the SCAP; the political parties were dissolved and re-organized; women were granted suffrage; financial magnates were liquidated; the educational system was reformed; and textbooks were revised for democratic indoctrination. The country, disarmed and occupied, the people, awakened once again to the realities of world affairs and the deceptions of their former warrior leaders, have changed. Persuaded by their enlightened leaders that their greatness could be demonstrated through defeat more than through victory, they now bow to their conquerors and want to learn from them. Unable to send millions of students abroad to study, they have made

the most of the presence of occupation forces, regarding every GI as an instructor and philanthropist as well as a conqueror and supervisor. When subjugated, the Japanese can act more subservient than any other people. The victorious Occident once again finds the Japanese very teachable. Moreover, by demonstrating their habits of industry and frugality, they have appealed honestly and earnestly to the Americans for aid and sympathy. In view of their ability and determination to achieve reconstruction and rehabilitation, America considers them worth helping and has been extending aid to them.

In their heart of hearts the Japanese are longing and planning for a comeback and another showdown. Their thinking is in terms of centuries rather than decades. Despite the growth of Communist influence, they openly utter anti-Russian sentiments, resenting the stab in their back in reply to their request for mediation. When a referendum was held to decide between monarchism and republicanism, the overwhelming majority voted for the *Mikado*—the center and basis of their unity and enthusiasm, paving the route and goal of their national resurrection. During the trial of war criminals, a number of their witnesses received telephone warnings from anonymous callers. By pretending to help the occupation forces maintain peace and order, they have asked for the right to re-arm, partially but gradually. When evacuating Formosa, they regretfully but vehemently said, "*Sayonara, junengo ni mata aimasho* (Good-bye, see you again in ten years!)"

Want Comeback

To be sure, mere occupation and re-education for 10 or 20 years cannot possibly make a democratic and peace-loving nation out of a Fascist, war-like people who have for two millennia imbibed the philosophy of expansionism and militarism. Yet neither permanent occupation nor mass-migration abroad for transformation is possible. Meanwhile, the Third World War might break out, a development which the Japanese would welcome at the earliest moment as a means of giving them the opportunity to strike back.

When hitting back, they will hit harder. And the worst victims in the Japanese comeback will again be the Chinese and the Koreans. Ironically enough, the minute the Japanese laid down their arms, the Chinese Nationalists and Communists picked up Japanese arms and resumed their decade-long fratricidal war. American aid to Japan has been resented, though the Nationalists and Southern Koreans have themselves sought further American aid. Why do they not stop fighting among themselves first, set about reconstruction and rehabilitation, and then ask for further aid? As it is impossible to change overnight the national philosophy and race-psychology of Japan, all Chinese and their allies must guard against Japan's military comeback.

LETTERS From The People

Comments from readers on current topics are cordially invited: their opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the views of The China Weekly Review.

White Chinese

To The Editor:

The KMT leaders and wealthy people who have sought refuge here are ironically called "White Chinese" in progressive Chinese circles. Most of them came here when the Hsueh campaign was in progress and it looked as if the Nanking Government would be overthrown overnight. Local reporters estimate that there are from six to seven thousand of these refugees here.

Among the high ranking officials, there are T. V. Soong; Chang Li-shen, one of the CC leaders and a member of the Executive Yuan; Wu Ting-chang, former secretary general of the President; Wei Tao-ming, former governor of Taiwan; Lee Shek-cheng, member of the KMT Central Executive Committee; General Lun Yung, Yunnan warlord; General Hwang Chi-hsiang, former chief of the Chinese Military mission in Germany; Sheng Chun-lien, former secretary general to Mayor K. C. Wu; and Yang Shou-cheng, chief justice of the Nanking local court.

Legislative Yuan members in Hongkong include: Wu Shiang-ying, Sun Fo's man; Yu Yu-shu, member of the PCC; King Chen-yu, Yu's wife; Tung Chi-shin; Tai Ti-wu; and Chow Yi-tze, who is also editor of the exiled magazine *Reconstruction*.

There are also a number of KMT propaganda people here, including Tao She-sheng, vice minister of the Propaganda Department of the Central Headquarters of the KMT; Jimmy Wei, former head of the Shanghai office of the CGIO; Teng You-teh, director of the CGIO and Chen Min-teh, publisher of the *Hsin Min Pao*.

Many others are still on the mainland, but their families are here making preparations for their eventual arrival. Owing to the rush for accommodations, rents and prices for houses and land have soared and construction materials are also increasing. All the nice houses in famous districts such as Kowloon Tong in Kowloon and Courseway Bay in Hongkong have already been taken over by these newcomers. (People like Sun Fo, Ho Ying-ching, Chang Fa-wei and Chang Chung, of course, were far sighted enough to have built houses in Hongkong long before the flood of exiles.)

Also of interest is the fact that the coming of these wealthy Shanghaiers has brought a sudden turn of prosperity for the good hotels, dancing halls, bars and restaurants here. A number of stores are advertising for girl clerks who can speak Shanghai dialect, and the dancing halls likewise are hiring hostesses from Shanghai.

L. FISHER.

Hongkong
March 4, 1949

Life In Prison

To The Editor:

I was one of the 39 university students who were arrested in Nanking in the small hours of the morning of November 26, 1948, when the Battle for Hsueh was in progress. The arrest was made

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