

THE ONE AND THE MANY

By ROBERT SCHINZINGER

The relationship between the individual and the community is one of the central problems of human life. If this is the case in normal times, how much more so in years in which historic developments demand supreme efforts from the individual and the community. A nation which has solved this problem for itself in an impressive manner is Japan. Anyone who has spent even a little time in Japan, or who only knows the country from books, is conscious of this. It is not easy to define this Japanese solution, for it has its roots in the sphere of philosophy and psychology and, in order to explain it, it is necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with Japan.

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NOT far from my house there stands, surrounded by tall trees, the famous Nogi shrine. Every day I can see people of all ages, singly or in groups, making their way there and expressing their admiration for the General's great personality by bowing before the shrine. The veneration of heroes and the admiration of great personalities are deeply rooted in Japan and are not confined to national heroes. A Japanese doctor has even set up a shrine to Robert Koch in his private garden. It is a mistake to believe that the Japanese regards his foreign teacher only from the point of view of usefulness; the high esteem for the personality itself plays a very important part.

How can this be reconciled with the striking uniformity of Japanese life? Conventions, the radio, and the press are monotonous; and the national uniform, which is worn by many as an expression of the national spirit, can be regarded as a symbol of the general uniformity of life. Of course, it is also said that even in the United States, the paradise of individualism, a man who wears a straw hat out of season is in danger of being lynched. It may not really be as bad as all this. But anyone who preferred to follow his own sense of temperature instead of the calendar would certainly

cause a sensation in Japan as well as in America.

"IT'S NOT IN SEASON"

On one occasion, when swarms of flies suddenly appeared in my home in the middle of winter and I asked for flypaper in a department store, I was given the significant reply: "*Arimasen*. We don't have any; it's not the season." That which is not fixed by habit does not exist. Make the following experiment: go into any restaurant and order something that is not on the menu, let us say hot tea in summer (black tea, of course). You will be told that from July 1 on only cold tea is served. You will not succeed in persuading the waiter or waitress to satisfy your individual desire for hot tea, even if you offer them a high price. Of course, they have black tea and hot water; there is also no lack of courtesy; but it is not on the menu.

Being the European individualist I am, I often forget that this very standardization and regulation of individual life by common conventions is a fundamental part of civilization. It is true that modern individualism developed in Europe in the eighteenth century in opposition to tradition and convention, that is, to overcivilization. However, this struggle ended not in anarchy but in the establish-

ment of new though freer forms. The eighteenth-century revolution was a bourgeois one: the middle classes demanded the right of free individual development, a right possessed at that time only by the aristocracy. The aristocrat was judged according to his personality; while the commoner was judged only according to his special achievements.

SUPPRESSION OF PERSONALITY?

The commoner's struggle for the right to be regarded as a personality was identical with Rousseau's cry "Back to Nature!" Unknowingly, I once offered the example of a Rousseauist in Japan by eating a banana on the street. To eat on the street is against all the rules of good manners in Japan. A student came up to me and said: "Professor, when I see you eating a banana on the street I have to think of Rousseau's 'Back to Nature!'" To this day I do not know whether he was admiring or censuring me.

The question is: how can an individual build up and maintain his personality if his life is confined in all directions by conventional etiquette? The Western observer's first reaction is usually a feeling that the free development of the personality is obstructed here by the restrictions of society. It would seem that feudalism and the totalitarian state suppress the free individual personality. We hear thousands of little examples of the kind I have given, about tea, flypaper, and bananas. But it is certain that a truly great personality is neither helped nor hindered by such little things. Indeed, I should say that it is just the great personality which does not need to maintain its individuality by an extravagant artist's bow.

EDUCATING THE MITSUIS

The attempt at introducing Western individualism and liberalism in Japan, which was recommended by many as the solution of the problem of personality, has created more new problems and confusion in Japan during the last half-century than it has solved old ones. A typical example of this is shown in an

article by Baron Mitsui (*Monumenta Nipponica*, 1942). He writes about the history and the house laws of the Mitsui family. The very term "house law" is foreign to us in the Occident. The author shows how the education and career of the various members of the Mitsui family were fixed by the house law of their ancestors, and how through this the individuals received the best possible preparation for their great task of being leaders of the family and of the business. When, however, after the Meiji Era the business was reorganized into a modern concern, the individual members of the family came more and more to lose, in the anonymous mechanism of the vast concern, their position as leaders. When they were young, the sons were sent to England and America to be educated. They were given a complete, all-round education like aristocrats. Later on they were given representative positions, but they were no longer the real leaders of the concern. For that purpose, specialists were employed, who were connected with the house of Mitsui neither through blood nor any other personal bonds or vassalage. Thus, paradoxical as it may sound, the author shows how, with the advent of liberalistic and individualistic ideas, the members of his family were forced out of the leading positions because they had been educated as personalities only and not as business leaders. In contrast to this they had formerly, through a special training in the various branches of the business, been brought up to be leaders within this business.

TRAINING FOR TYPE

The objection might be raised here that this is a special case. However, I believe that it is essentially characteristic. The strength of the old Japanese educational system lay in the determination and exclusiveness with which an individual was educated into a type. The young knight was brought up to be a typical knight, the young merchant to be a real merchant. In the material with which his life provided him, he could prove his personality. The weakness of modern education lies in the fact that

the individual is to be educated into a personality, but that the historical and social conditions under which the personality is formed and maintains itself are disregarded.

We have spoken of many little things which hinder the free development of the personality in Japan. The removal of these obstacles is not sufficient to form personalities. But where the individual is educated toward concrete goals in a concrete situation, the basis for the practical forming and proving of the personality is given. Prior to the penetration of Western influence, education in Japan was class education. The young knight was educated to be a knight; he was provided with everything he needed later on in life to master any situation in which a knight might find himself.

Next to the knight, but far below him in the social order, came the peasant. Life itself trained him to be the typical peasant; he grew up in the circle of his family and was shaped by his traditional work.

The artisan, socially lower than the peasant but above the merchant, received his technical training and was at the same time educated in the specific ethics of the artisan by admonition and, even more, by example. Here we find the roots of Japanese applied arts in which many masters have distinguished themselves by their personality, while countless anonymous masters have passed on the traditions of their art.

The merchant, for his part, had his own problems. His calling was trade and the acquisition of money; for that purpose, the ethics of the knight or the artisan were of no use to him. Great personalities, such as the ancestors of the house of Mitsui, were great by the fact that they clearly recognized the special nature of their calling and, with this in mind, consistently directed their actions accordingly. They realized that, if a merchant wants to live like a knight or a monk, this must inevitably lead to the ruin of his house. In all these cases, the goal toward which the individual was educated was that of ful-

filling a given task in a given historical and social environment.

THE BREAK-UP OF TRADITION

Since the Meiji Era, Japanese education has, very properly, overcome the one-sidedness of class education and set up national education as the superior ideal. It must be admitted, however, that it has not yet been grasped everywhere that national education is not the teaching of a special subject but the path and spirit of vocational training. The most difficult pedagogic problem in these modern times was the attempt to harmonize Japanese national education with the Western ideal of education toward the free individual personality. The main difficulty here lay in the fact that Western pedagogy itself did not see its own historical roots. That is to say, it regarded the conditions prevailing in eighteenth-century Europe as absolute.

Twentieth-century Japan was quite right in remembering her individual national conditions. Of course, it cannot be avoided in this respect that some pedagogues now regard these Japanese conditions as absolute and set themselves up as the standard of correctness for all nations and all times. On the one hand, these reformers would like to apply the Japanese national educational ideal to all nations, while on the other hand liberal reformers would like to apply the European educational ideal of the eighteenth century, as it is, to Japan. However, it cannot but lead to confusion if one picks out a phase of the historical development of one nation and sets it up as the absolute standard for another nation.

We often feel that many Japanese believe that in all things of the West there is no form whatever because there is no Japanese tradition or etiquette in them. Young people with excellent manners in Japanese surroundings and with the best taste in Japanese things often show a lack of good taste toward European things and act without "form" in European surroundings. A misunderstood individualism has produced a type that has given up its own traditions and has not found a new form.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

A very high personal standard is needed to compensate for the lack of traditional form by courtesy of the heart and natural tact. If respect and a feeling of responsibility toward one's own work are added, which is quite often the case with artists and artisans, scholars and soldiers, then the possibility is also given for individual intuitive judgment. But when this high standard of personality is brought about neither from within nor by the ethics of one's calling, the average man without strong tradition is exposed to the influence of every new fashion and makes up for his own uncertainty by arrogance. This pseudo-individualism believes that it can safely do without the concrete historical and social conditions of its existence, and forgets that true personality does not develop in a vacuum but by means of its activity within and for the community.

If we now ask how the personality forms and maintains itself in the community of the Japan of today, we must bear in mind that in Japan the community is never an abstract idea of society but the concrete community of the family, the neighborhood, the guild, and the Japanese national organism (*kokutai*).

Let us start with the family. First of all we must recognize that in Japan the family is not the same thing as the family in modern Europe or America. One of the greatest surprises I experienced in Japan was when I heard that the engagement of the daughter of a friend of mine was being celebrated without the presence of the fiancée. I discovered that an engagement in Japan does not mean that two young people announce the fact that they love each other and want to found a family. On the contrary, an engagement in Japan means that two old families decide that, for the continuation of one family, a daughter (or a son) of the other family be adopted. For this purpose, no kiss of betrothal and not even the presence of the bride is necessary. Only the seals of the heads of the families are required.

PERSONALITY IN THE FAMILY

Marriage and divorce are of concern chiefly to the head of the family who wishes to increase or decrease his family. Only after his thirtieth year is a young man allowed by law to introduce a bride into the family against his father's will. The fact that modern parents ask for their son's or daughter's consent to the marriage does not alter the fundamental "family law" character of the marriage.

The head of the family represents the whole family with all its branches toward the outer world. Up to a few years ago, only the head of the family had the right to vote. Within the family, the head of the family also has the last word, but the family council plays a very important part. (This must be a very old custom; for even in the ancient holy writings of Japan we read that the gods assembled in council.) It is here, in the family council, that the personality makes itself felt. The wife, of whom it is generally believed that she is suppressed by the husband, is often enough a decisive factor in this council, although it must be admitted that the young wife who cannot get her way in the family council is frequently forced to play her little diplomatic game behind the scenes. A strong personality, although limited in its freedom as an individual, can develop and maintain itself within the given community of the family—not by fleeing from historical reality but by mastering it.

This is not the place to discuss the family system as a source of economic strength; but we must mention one point which is essential to the problem of personality. Since the head of the family is in control of the family fortune, and since every member of the family who meets with misfortune finds refuge in the family, whoever acquires wealth immediately has a retinue of relatives, to care for whom is his moral obligation. From our Western point of view this seems to be an economic disadvantage; for, we say, who would strive for wealth if its acquisition immediately provides him with a crowd of relatives who do not allow him to enjoy his wealth?

THE HARE AND THE CROCODILE

Such an objection reveals the vast chasm between our way of thinking and that of the Japanese. In so frugal a country as Japan the material enjoyment of wealth is limited. For its spiritual enjoyment, however, one of the conditions is the very fact that this wealth permits the establishment of a large household in which the size of the retinue of relatives and others is an essential factor.

The old Japanese fairy tale of the hare and the crocodile reveals the importance placed in ancient times on the size of the retinue: a hare who wished to cross over to a distant island challenged a crocodile as to who had the larger retinue. The crocodile immediately called all his friends together so that the hare, by pretending to count them, could walk across on their backs to the distant island.

A friend of mine once introduced a young man to me and said: "This is my student." What he meant was that he was paying for his entire education. Apart from moral reasons, his motive was also a social one. The merchant strives to rise out of his sphere into that of the aristocrat, whose honor is judged by the size of his retinue. Departure and arrival at the railway station are opportunities for displaying the size of one's retinue, which includes relatives, friends, and all those who are obliged by gratitude to perform this act of courtesy.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

The question of the retinue has already passed beyond the sphere of the family as such, or even of the clan. The neighborhood and the village community, for instance, have such close ties that when a soldier is called up they all go and see him off. The village shrine is the original center of this community; it is here that festivals as well as the departure of the soldier are celebrated in common. The corresponding unit in the city is the neighborhood and the district shrine. This urban neighborhood has been newly organized in the course of the present war. In the country it has never ceased to exist. The cultivation of the rice

fields alone demands a common organization of irrigation systems. Where disputes arise between the village communities over waterways, this may sometimes lead to little feuds; and it is in cases like this that the community spirit of the village and an innate gift for leadership can prove themselves. The leader is simply there suddenly. It is not outside but within the community that the personality qualified to lead develops and proves itself. Here, too, there is a council; and in the council the personality makes itself felt.

As we have said before, the neighborhood groups in the city were newly organized for the concrete tasks of air-raid precaution, food distribution, etc. The common work for air-raid precautions within the neighborhoods has actually awakened a strong, genuine community spirit. Rich and poor live wall to wall in Japan, although shut off from one another and the outside world by high walls and barbed wire. The neighborhood associations, the *tonari-gumi*, have spiritually torn down these walls. If ever the air-raid-precaution system should be tested in an emergency, there is no doubt that the situation would also produce leaders who, because of their personality, would be acknowledged within the community of the neighbors.

THE POWER OF THE GUILDS

Stronger than the neighborhood organization in the city is the professional guild. It has been important since time immemorial and, what is more, in the concrete form of the *kumi*, the group consisting of members of the same city district. This is the concrete working community of the men; while, in the neighborhood organization, it is the women who play the leading part. In the *kumi*, the real public activity of the man takes place. The *kumi* makes possible and, at the same time, limits the activities of the individual. Those who exclude themselves are beyond the pale.

It is immaterial whether a guild is organized with rules and regulations or, like the guild of the cooks and amahs

working for foreigners, follows unwritten laws—in every case the real, tenacious cohesion of the professional community is one of Japan's most important economic factors. Even the control organizations of war economy could not function if they did not make use of these existing groups both large and small. Hence the art of leadership does not consist of issuing abstract decrees but of skillfully making use of the concrete, small professional communities and, in any case, of taking their actuality into account.

Even in student life the power of the guild can be seen. Universities and, in turn, their faculties, form units: pan-student cross-connections are almost impossible. Only for the purpose of great patriotic undertakings is it possible for a pan-student organization to be formed; but here again this unit is completely shut off from other professional groups, as in the national labor service, for instance. And in a train two students from different universities will hardly ever get into conversation.

“NOT MY GIRL!”

It can be said in general that anything that happens outside of one's home, one's family, neighborhood, and guild is entirely beyond the scope of one's responsibility. I once read a short story with my students in which a shoemaker is mentioned who rushes out of his house in order to help up a girl who has fallen down on the street and to take her into his house. My question: “If a girl should fall down in front of this school, would you rush out to help her?” Answer (with a smile): “No.” “Why not?” “Not my girl!” In such cases, eager courtesy would be interpreted in Japan rather as impotency, and thus many situations arise in public over which the differently brought up foreigner never ceases to be amazed. But now for another example.

From the window of a train I once saw how at a small station a railway employee who was going to the front was being seen off by his colleagues. There was no one connected with the station—from the station master down

to the youngest ticket collector—who had not turned up or, if he was kept away by his duties, did not call out his *banzai* from the locomotive or the signal box. It was like one big family. In such moments it is evident that the personality has its existence and activity only within the community.

The largest community of all is the nation. The unity and solidarity of the Japanese people are known throughout the world; this needs no comment. Outside of Japan the Japanese has no home. The opportunity of making money and of enjoying his earnings in an unconstrained manner of living may keep a Japanese away from home for a time. But, wherever he is, he remains a stranger, and his home is always the country where his ancestors were born and where they died.

It is a different matter with those who were born abroad, the so-called “second generation.” For them it is difficult to adjust themselves to the given communal relationships and ties of the old country. They have to learn anew to find the joy and suffering, activity and fulfillment of their personality in these communities. A community is an organic entity of life in which man grows up as in light and air. Outside of it he is alone, lost, a nothing, a piece of driftwood in the ocean.

When a Japanese soldier has been seen off by his family, village, and guild, he has in a way entered the narrow no-man's-land between life and death. He has left life behind him and has quietly placed himself in the shadow of death. He does not clamor for this hour, just as no one clamors for death; but once it has come he draws undreamed-of strength from the knowledge that he is going to war as the representative of his family, his village, his guild, and his nation. He feels his personality growing in the same measure in which he leaves behind all his individual interests.

EXPRESSIONISM AND PERSONALITY

The uniformity of everyday life combined with the strong communal feeling of the Japanese offers an extraordinary

contrast to the ease with which an American, for example, may express his personality from childhood onwards. Young Japanese are envious of the freedom and ease of Western manners and conventions. But we ask: Is the ease with which a person can express his personality equivalent to the strength and depth of that personality? No. We have an analogy in art. The expressionistic vogue permitted everyone to express his personality; no one asked whether there really was any personality worth being expressed. The comparison of expressionistic mass production with the severe art of olden times, which was dominated by a strict tradition, shows that good traditional form carries more weight than mediocre individuality. The great artist enhances his energy and talent in this very conflict with tradition. Finally he dares to break away. If he succeeds, he is acknowledged as a genius. That which in his case was freedom becomes the model and strict rule for the new generation. So greatly is the breaking away of the free personality from the fetters of tradition admired that this very personality becomes the involuntary founder of a school. We constantly find such examples in the history of Japanese art. A new manner of painting Mount Fuji, for instance, can be just such an unheard-of innovation.

All of Japanese culture is to be understood in this light, and in this light only. By means of highly developed forms of culture, strong tradition restrains the mediocre individuality and thus ensures a high general level of culture.

TRAGIC CONFLICTS

What if the breaking away is not successful? Then the individual must pay for his adventure. It is a tragic conflict, and only too often suicide is the unalterable consequence. Let us consider the example of unhappy lovers. If their love comes into conflict with the family,

there is no other way out for the lovers than double suicide. This suicide is even respected by society; the unhappy young people are not denied tears of sympathetic understanding, and *shinju* (double suicide) is a favorite theme of the Kabuki theater. By their love-death they keep the freedom of their individual love and at the same time the laws of the community. The Western observer, it must be admitted, will see in this suicide the failure of the breaking away rather than a "solution" of the conflict.

So little does the Japanese lack the feeling for personality that one can even say that this feeling is more strongly and more inherently developed in his case than is usual in the West. When a Japanese makes a new acquaintance, he is able in prolonged silence to let that new personality have its effect on him. It is almost a sixth sense with which he slowly and intensively observes the stranger. An observation of this kind is to him far more important than an urgent business matter. The hasty manner in which the Westerner often thrusts his business into the foreground forms a striking contrast to the quiet reserve of the Japanese, who seems to use a business meeting only as an excuse for a pleasant chat. For the Japanese, the basis of the business is his correct estimation of the partner's personality. And this applies not only to business life.

The strong community spirit seems to leave no room for the development of individual personality; in reality, however, the functioning of the concrete communities is guaranteed, not by shrewd planning and strict organization, but by the intuitive act of fitting himself in on the part of the individual. While in Europe, where individualism has a great tradition, the emphasis today is on the awakening and deepening of the community spirit, in Japan the community is being safeguarded by the strengthening and deepening of the personality.

