

The Need of an East Asian Outlook

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THE topic "The Need of an East Asian Outlook," arises from the fact that most of the highly educated Filipinos have a one-sided culture, having neglected the philosophy of the Orient and devoted themselves almost exclusively to the outlook of the Occident. I propose to present briefly the spiritual perspectives of India, China, Japan, and the Philippines.

First, as to India.

The thought and literature of India are a precious mine still undiscovered by the Filipino intellectuals. The pure and profound spirituality of that ancient people should stir and lift the soul of any Filipino who is persuaded that the things of the spirit are the true and eternal values. The lives of the holy sages of India, who have embodied the sublime genius of that country, should be studied by the Filipino intelligentsia. The ancient scriptures known as the Vedas, the books of the Upanishads which record the realization of the ultimate truth on the part of great mystics and saints of different periods, the grand and mighty Sanskrit epics called the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the transcendent spiritual devotion and fervor of Jainism and Buddhism, and the

various philosophic systems of India—all these should enrich the culture of Filipino thinkers and widen their spiritual outlook.

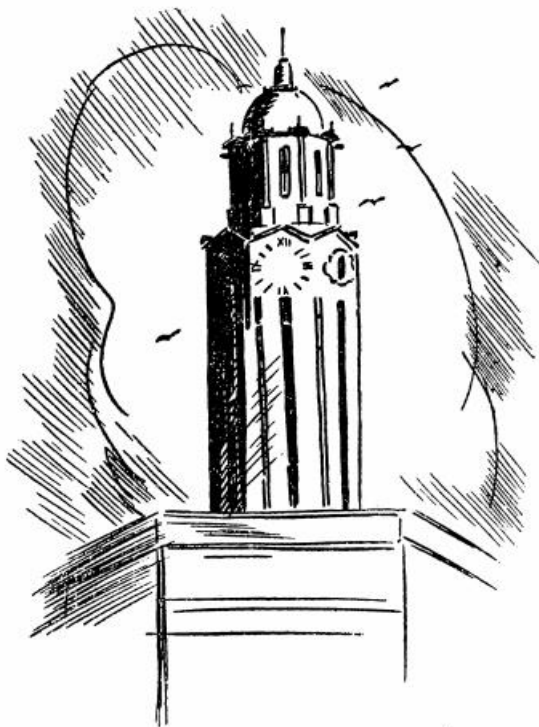
Next, China.

Ignorance of the Chinese classics is prevalent among Filipino intellectuals. Very few have read translations of the Analects of Confucius, the Great Learning, the Doctrine of the Mean, and the works of Mencius. This is deplorable because from these vital and profound writings the philosophy of the Far East has drawn a great deal of its basic concepts. On them also rests the Chinese theory of life, which is the Confucian viewpoint of enjoyment of a simple life and the harmony of social relationships. Coupled with this philosophy is the doctrine of the Golden Mean, which signifies the spirit of reasonableness and the rule of common sense.

To give glimpses of the untold wealth of the Chinese classics, let me quote from them at random:

From the Confucian Analects:—"Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous."

Also this:—"Tze-Kung asked, saying, 'Is there one word which



may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master said, 'Is not *Reciprocity* such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'

Again this from Confucius:—"The firm, the enduring, the simple, and the modest are near to virtue."

From the book of the Doctrine of the Mean:—"Earnest in practising the ordinary virtues, and careful in speaking about them, if, in his practice, he has anything defective, the superior man dares not but exert himself; and if, in his words, he has any excess, he dares not allow himself such license."

From the works of Mencius:—"If a man love others, and no responsive attachment is shown to him, let him turn inwards and examine his own benevolence."

Japan's Inspiration

THEN, as for Japan, we Filipinos should study Bushido, which is the inspiration of the life of Nippon. Bushido means the "ways of military knight-hood." It was the code of conduct among the "sumarai" who were a class of fighting knights.

According to Dr. Nitobe in his book entitled "Bushido, the Soul of Japan," the sources of Bushido were Shintoism, Buddhism, and the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Each of these fountains has contributed distinct traits to Bushido. Thus, Shintoism, which is ancestor worship, has furnished Bushido the principles of patriotism and loyalty. Buddhism has strengthened the Japanese serenity and calmness in the face of suffering, danger, and death. Confucius and Mencius have re-asserted the Japanese characteristic of family solidarity and clarified the relations between the ruler and the governed.

Among the principles of Bushido are courage, politeness, and loyalty. Let me speak of them briefly.

Courage is instilled into the mind of Japanese children. Incidents of military bravery are told them. Parents train their children in hardship and suffering. Bushido also teaches calmness and self-restraint in the face of tragedy and death. It is considered undignified to betray emotions of sorrow, so that when there is death in the family, one must show composure and keep on smiling to sympathizing friends. This stoical firmness is the result of centuries of experience in self-discipline and resignation to the decrees of fate.

Politeness is an outstanding principle of Bushido. The philosophy of courtesy is thus expounded by Dr. Nitobe:—"Much less do I consider elaborate ceremony as altogether trivial; for it denotes the result of long observation as to the most appropriate method of achieving a certain result. If there is anything to do, there is certainly a best way to do it, and the best way is both the economical and the most graceful." Dr. Nitobe adds:—"I have said that etiquette was elaborated into the finest niceties, so much so that different schools, advocating different systems, came into existence. But they all united in the ultimate essential, and this was put by a great exponent of the best known school of etiquette, the Ogasawara, in the following terms: "The end of all etiquette is to

so cultivate your mind that even when you are quietly seated, not the roughest ruffian can dare make onset on your person.' It means, in other words, that by constant exercise in correct manners, one brings all the parts and faculties of his body into perfect order and into such harmony with itself and its environment as to express the mastery of spirit over the flesh."

Coming now to loyalty, it is perhaps the most distinctive trait of Bushido. A well-known example of loyalty is the act of the 47 Ronins. In 1702, Asano lord of Ako, was frequently insulted by Kira, a high official. So Asano wounded Kira within the palace, for which offense Asano was condemned to commit "hara-kiri" and his property was confiscated. Asano's 47 followers planned to vindicate their master's honor. In December of 1703, the 47 Ronins attacked the mansion of Kira, and after a terrible fight, subdued Kira's retainers, and Kira was captured. Upon Kira's refusal to commit "hara-kiri", Kuranosuke, the leader of the 47 Ronins, cut off Kira's head, which was taken to Lord Asano's tomb as an offering. The 47 Ronins were sentenced to kill themselves.

Filipino Moral Code

I TAKE up now the Filipino outlook on life. In a recent radio address I reiterated my long-standing advocacy of the restoration of our ancient native virtues. I then urged, as I now urge, the revival of the Filipino Moral Code, as practiced by our ancestors. In that old ethical system, some of the virtues included are: Strict moral training of children, righteousness, self-respect, honesty, industry, courage, courtesy, simplicity of life, modesty, self-sacrifice, and family solidarity.

When the Spaniards came to the Philippines in the 16th century, they found that our ancestors observed this moral code. Let me cite some Spanish authors:

Morga, who wrote in 1609, says that insulting words were considered more serious than bodily injury. This shows the deep sense of personal dignity of our forbears.

Loarca, who wrote in 1582, says that the natives were a vigorous and warlike race; that one of the causes of war was when a woman of the clan was abducted; and that it was a capital offense to enter another's house at night against the owner's consent.

Father Chirino who wrote in 1604 says that the Filipinos were extremely polite, and that they were moderate in the use of intoxicating liquors.

On the native women's virtue, we have the testimony of two Spanish authors. Pedro Ordoñez de Cevallos who wrote in the 16th century said that the native women were extremely chaste. And Loarca, already mentioned, said that the Filipino women were modestly dressed, covered their whole body and were very clean.

I have thus offered glimpses into the East Asian outlook on life. With the encouragement of the Imperial Japanese Forces, we Filipinos should cultivate Oriental philosophy. I hope I have aroused in the mind of the Filipino reader an initial interest in Oriental culture.