

СЕКЦІЯ ІV. РЕЛІГІЇ ТА ФІЛОСОФСЬКІ ВЧЕННЯ СХОДУ

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THE JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN NATURE

Key words: human nature, Japan, Shinto, Confucianism, Buddhism.

For centuries, thinkers have crossed swords over the enigma of human nature: what makes us humans; what we are by nature; do we have the opportunity to change, to improve our nature; are we basically good, ambivalent or evil? The Japanese believe that people are inherently good. Such views are largely attributable to the strong influence of Shinto on Japanese culture and system of values [13]. Shinto is an authentic ethnic religion of Japan that contributed to the formation of the basic structure of Japanese mentality and behavior [6]. According to Shinto, people are initially good and sinless and our world is initially good too. There is no concept of original sin in Shinto. Malicious spirits bring evil into the world. They adversely impact human beings and reduce their ability to resist temptation. When human beings act wrongly, they pollute themselves. This impedes the proper flow of life and Kami's blessings. The term Kami refers to a wide range of creatures, objects, and phenomena. Kami are real world phenomena understood as divine [7], "human beings, birds, animals, trees, plants, mountains, oceans – all may be Kami" [5, p. 14]. Ancestors or killed soldiers are also seen as Kami [8]. Kami sometimes appear as gods, however they do not fall under the Western definition of this term.

Shinto ethics is not based on a specific set of moral laws and commandments. People should follow Kami. And Kami themselves are not perfect: they make mistakes. This concept allows to avoid the formulation of absolute moral norms. There are no moral absolutes in Shinto; it evaluates good or bad actions and thoughts in a certain context: circumstances, intentions, goals, time, and place. “Shinto was influenced heavily by the influx of Chinese philosophies and religions including Confucianism and Buddhism. Confucianism brought into Shinto the concept of venerating ancestors while Buddhism introduced new philosophical thinking and religious rites. Due to the popularity of Chinese ideologies, Shinto became less important for more than a thousand years. However, Shinto began to re-emerge through the influence of neo-Confucianism developed in the seventeenth century. Moreover, with the emerging nationalism during the late Tokugawa period, or the Edo period, in the 1860s, Shinto became reformed to wield great influence on the lives of the Japanese people once again. Therefore, the Shinto, native religion of Japan, influenced the Japanese worldview by introducing the ideas of spirits, both evil and good, that interact with the human world [9].

Along with Confucianism, Buddhism strongly influenced the Japanese worldview. Nowadays, Shinto, Confucianism and Buddhism are naturally woven into Japanese life. Confucius believed that humans lived in the moral world. Morality is an integral part of the structure of the universe. According to the philosopher, people are basically good – every human can be a benevolent sage [4]. All people can cultivate virtue and act in accordance with the Mandate of Heaven. Confucius made the concept of jen the main theme of his conversations: jen (humanity) became general virtue [2]. This idea is clearly seen in the teaching of Mencius who took a step forward in explaining human nature. He declared that human nature was originally good. Evil is not inborn but due to a human’s failures and inability to avoid evil influences from outside: “If you let people follow their feelings (original nature), they will be able to do good. This is what is meant by saying that human nature is good. If man does evil, it is not the fault of his natural endowment. The feeling of commiseration is found in all men; the feeling of shame and dislike is found in all men; the feeling of respect and reverence is found in all men; and the feeling of right and wrong is found in all men. The feeling of commiseration is what we call humanity; the feeling of shame and dislike is what we call righteousness; the feeling of respect and reverence is what we call propriety (li); and the feeling of right and wrong is what we call wisdom. Humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are not drilled into us from outside. We originally have them with us” [1, p. 54].

Humans want to be happy; it makes them seek to do good to others – this is the leitmotif of the Buddhist text “Milindapanha” [12]. Mahayana masters developed the doctrine of Buddha-Nature. According to it, all beings possess the nature of Buddha and can attain Buddhahood [10]. True, self-identical,

unconditional, unspeakable nature of all things – Tathatā – abides in all beings and does not undergo any changes in “perfect” and “dirty” states [11]. Absolute purity is human’s innate predisposition. This is Buddha and his teachings’ purity. Therefore, Japanese culture rooted in Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism considers human nature good; and this innate predisposition remains unchanged [3].

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DANIEL HAQIQATJOU'S CRITIQUE OF MODERNISM

Key words: Islam, Modernism, Enlightenment, Daniel Haqiqatjou, menace to Islam.

Islam claims to be one true religion transcending culture and history. The heart of the Islamic attitude appeals to eternal truth proclaimed by the Sustainer of the universe. Of course, this claim challenges all religions and worldviews, including Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Atheism, Agnosticism, and present-day liberalism. Despite the fact that these Islamic theological claims are filled with supranaturalistic and metaphysical elements, they remain unchanged for a hundred years. The primary reason for this is Islamic traditionalism and isolation from Western civilization.

But today things have sharply changed. Islam is no longer a religion of a specific region and community. What's more, Islam in the West is now reputed to be the fastest-growing religion. Muslims are involved in Western politics, education, religious dialogue, economics, IT, etc. Yet present Western culture is a product of Enlightenment, which introduced an age of reason and the separation of church from the state that has now permeated the whole Western attitude. According to Modernism, theology is not a credible source of genuine knowledge and must give way to science. Given this fact, the question arises: is there a way of reconciliation of Islam and Modernism? There has been much speculation and debate among Muslim theologians concerning the challenge of Modernism. So-called Muslim modernists advocate positive cooperation with Modernism. Another reaction comes from the conservative wing of Islam, pointing out the impossibility of reconciliation between Islam with Modernism.

Daniel Haqiqatjou is an American Muslim intellectual, who reacts strongly against Modernism, liberalism, and present-day agenda. In his book