

The Ideals of Educational Reforms
in Japan

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Foreword

The author of the present booklet had the honor of representing Japan at the First National Conference on the Occupied Areas, sponsored by the American Council of Education, with the cooperation of the Department of State, which took place on the 9th and 10th of December, 1949.

The first piece of writing in this book, entitled "Ideals of Educational Reforms in Japan", is the address delivered by the author before the American audience in the course of the Conference at a report-meeting which was specially thrown open to the public. Except for a few omissions, this speech was printed almost in full at the beginning of the "Educational Record" issued in January 1950. Now that I am here for the first time publishing the original text in Japan, I have decided to call the whole book by the title of this address.

During about a year that has elapsed since the author returned from his short stay in the United States, where he had gone to present the above-mentioned address, our country has been visited by many American guests such as university adminis-

trators, the professors of Stanford University who came for the "American Studies Seminar", medical educators and doctors, and recently, the second American Education Mission. The rest of the writings in this booklet are addresses and remarks made by the author at the various meetings with these American scholars, educators and administrators.

In the present world, where we are threatened by a continuous "cold war" and at times by a "hot war", nothing is so urgently needed as true mutual understanding and co-operation among the various peoples of the world. And this is to be emphasized particularly in respect to the problems of education and culture which form the foundations of politics and economy. The author will be most happy if this small book shall be of any help to foreign visitors, from America and elsewhere, as well as to such Japanese people as may read English, in giving them information about the reform, present conditions and problems of culture and education in Japan.

In connection with the writing of the texts of the addresses contained in this book, the author wishes to offer his heartfelt thanks to those who helped him overcome his linguistic handicaps, particularly a friend of his who, with his whole-hearted enthu-

siasm and an uncommon proficiency in English, co-operated with the author in preparing the Washington address as an undertaking of national magnitude.

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I The Ideals of Educational Reforms in Japan

Address at the First National Conference
on the Occupied Areas sponsored by the American Council
on Education, with the co-operation of
the Department of State
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Of all the international conferences that have been held in the United States since the end of World War II for discussion of cultural and educational problems, this, I presume, is the most deeply significant occasion. The fact that not only is it held under distinguished auspices, but it is being attended by eminent scholars and educators representing leading organizations in America, by prominent officials of the Allied Forces in occupied countries, notably Japan, Germany and Austria, and by educational representatives of these countries, is in itself sufficient evidence of its supreme importance. It may not be improper, therefore, to think of it as a sort of prelude to the coming Peace Conference, embodying, as it does, the substance of what may be called a preliminary peace conference on education.

In view of this fact I esteem highly the privilege

of sitting with you at this momentous Conference table as an unofficial representative of educational Japan together with my good friend, Colonel Nugent, Chief of the Civil Information and Education Section, GHQ, Tokyo, who is the official bearer of General MacArthur's message to the Conference. I am particularly appreciative of the complete freedom of speech so graciously and generously accorded to a Japanese educator like myself and I can assure you that I shall make full and judicious use of that freedom in laying before you, as best I may with my imperfect command of your language, the real situation of Japanese educational reforms and in conveying to the Conference our earnest hopes for the future of world culture.

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Let me begin, Ladies and Gentlemen, solemnly and in all humility. First of all, I wish to make the frank admission that Japan's provocation of the recent war and her defeat in it were not primarily the results of the inferiority of her political power or the meagerness of her material resources. The war she fought and lost was, in the last analysis, one of spirit against spirit and of individual against individual. Japan came to grief, because her spirit, her humanity, was grievously at fault, and realiza-

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tion of this fundamental fact must be, in my opinion, the starting point of her reconstruction. This means that the reconstruction of her education is the first and foremost condition of Japan's revival and future development. It must be so reconstructed, that is to say, as to create for her people a new spirit and a new outlook upon life and the world. I am happy to say that important beginnings in this direction have already been made under the wise and enlightened guidance of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. These educational reforms, along with other epoch-making reforms in the Constitution and the political and economic systems of the country, bear glorious witness to the high statesmanship of General MacArthur for whom I have a hearty admiration not only as a great military leader but also as a rare personality. No one can doubt that they are splendid achievements, imposing monuments of statesmanship, but how are they to stand and long endure, like houses built on rock? My answer is, by revolutionizing the spirit and humanity of the Japanese people. Without this twofold revolution, any number of reforms, however admirable in themselves, will be neither efficacious nor enduring.

The fundamental question, therefore, is: What should be the guiding principle of Japanese educa-

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tion? What are the spirit and substance that shall inform that principle? These, I believe, can be no other than recognition of the personality of the individual and a free quest of Truth. These are the Renaissance ideals in the West, and I have always maintained that Japan must have her own Renaissance. It is true that the Restoration of 1868 which ushered in modern Japan was a unique opportunity for effecting radical changes. But during the ensuing period of her history, namely the Meiji era, she was so engrossed in the work of equipping herself as a modern state, that she had to subordinate all human values to tasks of immediate urgency, namely consolidation of her national power and the acquisition of wealth. But it is never too late to mend; now is the time for us to repair the grave historical omission and set about accomplishing a renaissance through the restoration of learning and the recovery of humanity on the basis of universal Humanism.

Permit me to speak with candor. Strictly speaking, this is not an assignment merely for Japan; it is for the whole modern world with its nationalism and capitalism perpetually making of man an instrument and a machine, depriving him of his personality. The mechanism of power and economic organization are both edifices, so to speak, original-

ly erected by man for his own benefit, but now they threaten to rise like a Frankenstein monster against man, their own creator. The Leviathan of Thomas Hobbes is no mere historical allegory; it lives among us and above us in our modern political and economic life. Nor is it absent from the scheme of Communism itself which started out as "a liberator of mankind" but which is exposing it to a new menace and a new peril. It is but small wonder, then, that nowadays one hears of the need for a second Renaissance.

But the humanistic movement for individual freedom and independence cannot by itself accomplish for Japan a spiritual revolution. In Europe the Renaissance was followed and fulfilled by the Reformation and that, to me, is a most significant fact. In Japan, however, we have had no religious revolution of that kind. The propagation of Christianity, it is true, was legally and nominally recognized by law in 1873 but from that day to this, its reception by the Government and people of Japan has been, on the whole, cool and indifferent. The time has come for them to make their serious encounter with this world religion which recognizes and upholds Man as *Persona* or a being whose value is intrinsic and universal.

Incidentally, I wonder if the world, too, does not

stand in need of a second Reformation. To my mind, ultra-mysticism and institutionalized religion which stifle and paralyze human dignity and freedom is powerless to save our world and our humanity, for religion must be something that makes for the freedom of man in his cultural and social life, helping him and the world to realize for themselves Truth and Justice.

In my country Shintoism as a state religion and a fanatical kind of Nationalism have had their day and a new nation consecrated to Culture and Democracy is in the making. This means to us the opening of a new historical period, the keynote of which is the regaining of our long-lost humanity and a re-discovery of God. In place of the Meiji Constitution bestowed upon the people from above by the Emperor and the Imperial Rescript on Education, we now have the Constitution of Japan adopted in the name of the people and the Fundamental Law of Education as guarantees of the transformation. No longer is education the exclusive monopoly of privileged classes, but it is thrown open to all alike on the principles of universal education and equal opportunity in education. We have discarded the exclusive and hierarchical school system of the past and adopted, in the main, the so-called 6-3-3-4 system provided for in the "School

Education Law". Along with this, a new orientation is being given in the content and method of instruction and the training of teachers. Japan's reformed education is already coming into operation.

This certainly is the greatest blessing that the defeat of Japan has brought to her people who find therein light and hope for their own future. We cannot estimate too highly, with regard to our educational reforms, the thoughtful recommendations of the American Education Mission headed by Dr. G. Stoddard and the untiring effort and co-operation of the Civil Information and Education Section of General Headquarters, under the direction of its Chief, Colonel Nugent. But here I must refer to one difficulty we are up against. It is a serious one of perhaps the greatest practical importance. All these educational reforms, excellent as they undoubtedly are, actually remain in a deplorably ineffectual or a sort of "half-baked" condition, owing to insufficiency of Government appropriations. This comes from the urgency of the financial needs of our economic and industrial reconstruction, as is inevitable in a poor country like Japan suffering from a paucity of natural resources and a growing population which must be fed in a severely limited area. Nevertheless, education and cultural development are primary conditions for the new democratic

Japan. Her financial policy must be formulated so as to give education its due place and, preferably, priority over all other undertakings. We have been doing our utmost in this regard to appeal to the Government and the National Diet and request the good offices of the SCAP authorities.

Now, as to the reforms themselves, particularly those pertaining to schools below the high school level, interested members of the Conference have heard an authentic report from Colonel Nugent. I will, therefore, confine myself primarily to an expression of my own view of the ideals of the new university which began its career in April of this year.

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Everywhere in the world the University as an institution of higher learning occupies an extremely important place in the scheme of national life. Its real significance to the welfare of a people, as well as to the world, can never be exaggerated. You will then readily agree with me when I say that, in a country like post-war Japan, placed in a position of seemingly hopeless difficulty, where spiritual confusion and intense economic hardships prevail, the functions and responsibilities of the university as a seeker of the Truth are of extraordinary importance.

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Japanese universities play a vital part in the solution of the urgent problems, both spiritual and material, which confront their nation, and the course of which will determine the destiny of her people.

Let me tell you in passing that the traditions of our universities are both Oriental and Occidental. They have derived their inspiration from their sister institutions in the West whose ideals date back to ancient Greece, and combined, or rather have been trying to combine, those ideals with the ideals and methods of the classical learning of the East. In the meantime natural science has made phenomenal strides and given rise to the elaborate scheme of modern science characterized by specialization. We in Japan have not, as a matter of course, been immune from its powerful influence and, as a result, our universities have come to concentrate rather heavily on the study and teaching of technicalities in special fields, unduly neglecting their synthesis and coordination.

But, on second thought, this is not the bane of Japanese universities alone. Universities in other parts of the world are in the same predicament, hence the cry of "the crisis of the University". But this "Crisis of the University", I venture to say, stems from the crisis of the modern age itself.

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Before its present excessive "technicalization" and specialization, the University, as I need not remind you, was a Universitas Litterarum which represented a coordinating body of various branches of learning. Then came the marvellous advance of modern science. It gradually broke up the unified whole into several mutually-exclusive parts, each asserting its own absolute autonomy. The result is the menace of the disintegration of science and the collapse of the university. I cannot think of the disruption and ultimate loss of humanity in the modern age as something apart from this general trend in the academic world.

The tragedy of the situation is forcibly brought home to us when we consider how utterly powerless modern scholarship is in absorbing new scientific discoveries and techniques into its whole structure, and animating and invigorating them with its own spirituality. If in the study and exploitation of atomic power, for instance, we fail to sustain it in the general order of culture and life, the consequent disaster is only too apparent to all intelligent persons of the world. It will mean nothing but destruction of civilization itself and annihilation of the entire human race. At the bottom of all this I see dangers of Scientism — a child of Naturalistic Philosophy — which arrogantly pre-

sumes that the scientific method alone can offer correct solutions to all human problems and all the difficulties of the world.

What, then, it will be asked, should we do to overcome this crisis, salvage culture and humanity, and restore the spirit of the university? It seems to me that the only thing for us to do is to create such cultural ideals as will infuse life into modern civilization by recovering the internal unity of the relations of mankind and the harmony of spirit and nature. If somewhere in the world, no matter where, a new order of values or a new system of thought is founded for the synthesis of spirit and matter, it will be hailed as a glorious common property of mankind, open to all, irrespective of color or creed, and we Japanese scholars and university-men shall consider it an honor and a privilege to be allowed to cooperate with our eminent colleagues and distinguished universities in the world and to contribute toward the solution of our common problem and the accomplishment of our common mission.

The challenge of our task here involved is indeed one that is not likely to be met so easily or summarily, as the difficulty resides within the modern age itself. Even so, or rather because it is so, we cannot help emphasizing all the more the

supreme necessity of the cooperation of all sciences, diversified as they are, in the spirit of the unity of learning. Through this cooperation, I hope that before some particular science or technique is applied to actual life, an effort will have been made to arrive at a comprehensive and co-relative understanding of the meaning of scientific achievements. I am one of those who advocate the humanistic spirit in opposition to the naturalistic trends more or less predominant in all countries of the world. What really matters in this regard is the community of purpose which should bind together all the branches of science, be they natural, cultural, or social. My own understanding of a cultured person is he or she who has a deep sense of values embodied in such purpose. Culture in this sense is not mere knowledge as an intellectual ornament but a spiritual equipment necessary for those who, as enlightened citizens, would live high on the crest of their age.

But the realities of the actual world, from this point of view, are far from reassuring. The common defect of modern man is not deficiency in special knowledge or professional expertness but want of culture in the basic sense. For all the progress of precise scientific theory and technique, he is terribly ignorant of life and of the world.

An outstanding thinker of modern Europe, criticizing the modern man, writes of the age of New Barbarians. There seems to be some truth in his description when we reflect how human savagery in its organized form has increased in direct proportion to a development of civilization and science yet unparalleled in history. A world war we have had not once, but twice, and a third might — may God forbid — be on its way.

Where, in this dismal picture, does Japan stand? As provoker of the recent world catastrophe and as a perpetrator of shameful inhuman atrocities, she cannot but accept, literally and unconditionally, the accusation that she is a nation of Old Barbarians. Her history has known neither the Renaissance nor the Reformation and in that fact may be sought the chief, if not the only, explanation of her spiritual backwardness. Nevertheless, I am happy to say that we have not been without our share of chosen souls who, through thick and thin, have not lost the courage of their convictions but nurtured the seeds of Truth and Life already sown, preparing for the coming of this day.

One important fact about our current educational reforms is that thereby the university course has been so extended as to include as its basis liberal education for the formation of character and the

making of free and social-minded citizens, which we regard as one of the fundamental duties of our universities.

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By what I have so far said, I do not mean to imply, of course, that the university may stand aloof from the outside world and rest satisfied with being a mere place of study and culture. I must confess that in the past our Japanese universities have been accused, not unjustly, of their "ivory tower" seclusion which has detached them more or less from the realities of social and business life. As a matter of fact, in the choice of subject-matter and methods of study and investigation, for instance, our universities and research institutes have hitherto shown a tendency to prefer theory to practice, the abstract to the concrete, and pay rather scant regard to the social implications of the work involved. We now realize the shortcomings of such an attitude and feel grateful for the wise and friendly counsel of the American Board of Consultants on Cultural Research in Japan who visited us last autumn and made a careful and painstaking field-study of the matter.

Here we cannot conceal from you our unbounded admiration for the way your American universities

function by striking a happy balance between theory and practice. We admire, and are deeply impressed by, the wonderful success and efficiency with which they maintain a lively contact and a constant inter-flow between the academic and outside worlds. Let us take a leaf out of your book in this respect, and make it a guide and an inspiration for our Japanese universities. Fortunately, indications are not lacking to show that they are moving in the right direction. There is already a keener appreciation, than ever before, of the social role of the university and its responsibilities for public welfare. In the field of natural science all its resources, in the way of knowledge and technique, are, and will have to be increasingly, utilized for the rehabilitation of industry and, more urgent still, for the relief and improvement of the living conditions of the war-ravaged people. Likewise, Japanese scholars in social and cultural fields will henceforth turn more and more of their attention and efforts to the positive and realistic aspects of their studies to help establish a better social order and a freer community of men and women. Especially will this be the case with our economists and political scientists.

Another fact worthy of mention in this connection is an easier access by the public at large to science, both natural and social, and the fruits of

science. This comes naturally from the new spirit of science and the new attitude of scientists themselves, that is gradually and steadily emerging in post-war Japan. We owe it in large measure to the stimulus and encouragement of our American friends in Japan and here in the States. It is an excellent thing to all concerned, for the dissemination of knowledge and information on social and political matters and a wide penetration of the scientific spirit are the "sine qua non" of the democratization of Japan. No barrier should separate the so-called intelligentsia and the general public.

Saying this, however, I do not wish to convey the impression that the University should go out of its way merely to please the public, unquestioningly do its bidding and even pander to its prejudices. What we aim at is a levelling-up, instead of levelling-down, in science and culture which shall serve us in building up a national culture based on high and permanent moral values. The university may march ahead of public opinion, pioneer movements for enlightenment and, in case of need, be called upon to safeguard Truth against what John Stuart Mill calls "the tyranny of the majority."

I am firmly convinced that academic freedom and university autonomy are of far greater im-

portance for Japan, now in process of reconstruction, than for most other countries. Placed under the bureaucratic control of the Ministry of Education, Japanese universities, both State and private, had been required, from the Meiji era up to quite recently, "to prosecute studies essential to the State". Consequently it is but natural that before and during the war university-men had to champion the cause of academic freedom, even at the cost of their lives, against the forceful intervention of the Government and the military.

It is most gratifying that our new Constitution specifically provides for academic freedom, along with freedom of thought and speech. It is in every way a new departure and nothing less than an epoch-making event in Japanese history. But, politically, we are not yet quite "out of the woods", for, in Japan, unlike America, political democracy is still almost non-existent and a sudden upsurge of reactionary forces cannot be dismissed as an utter impossibility. Then again, Japanese universities have to be on guard against the invasion of the swarm of undesirable social groups that have emerged out of the abnormal political and economic conditions of the postwar years. These people are superficial and power-greedy and, of course, they have no love of learning or appreciation of educa-

tion. Should universities fall into the hands of such unscrupulous men, it is not hard to imagine how they would fare as institutions of higher learning and education.

Discussion of academic freedom inevitably leads to the moot question of "leftist professors". This question calls for an especially careful handling in my country. What we are really afraid of about the Communist-purge in our universities is this: that by too mechanical and sweeping a process of elimination, we might run the risk of victimizing again many of our liberal colleagues. The stand taken by the leading educational and academic organizations of Japan is that university professors shall not be deprived of their status by reason of their thought or membership in a legally recognized political party, unless they are demonstrably guilty of professional misconduct, such as engaging, as professors, in political activities or propaganda in support of some particular political party. In other words, the prevailing opinion in our academic circles would advocate freedom of thought, study, and publication, so long as that freedom is exercised with sincerity and in the proper scientific spirit. It would rather see, in the free competition and discussion of ideas, a stimulus to scientific progress and a means of unveiling the glory of truth. I

personally share the feeling of the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant who said, "Even though it may cause some difficulty to those in power, I would rather choose liberty". It is my conviction that the crisis of thought or culture must and can be overcome by the power inherent in Truth itself, instead of by external forces of a political or social character. It is the business of the university to see to it that thought and culture be so treated within its walls.

If our universities are to play their part in the reconstruction of their country and the promotion of world culture, they must create, with these convictions, a new mental attitude toward society, humanity, and the world. Thus and thus alone can we arouse and increase a passionate interest in ideas, truly critical and creative, that are removed equally from feudalistic, or merely conservative, thought and from a radical and destructive ideology. To inspire the University with fresh life in this manner is, I think, our urgent responsibility.

Our first task, then, is to cultivate a critical and creative attitude of mind. We must next develop it so as to contribute to the evolution of a universal culture common to mankind and strive for its de-

velopment in its most genuine form. In this process what is characteristically Japanese will find its unique place in the universal scheme of life, revealing itself in its native color against the general background. To my mind "the nation" is a framework, so to speak, in which what is genuinely human in a people unfolds itself with the spirit of liberty, and it has its worth in its capacity to serve the world through the excellences of its own individuality.

My earnest prayer is to see Japan preserve what is good and beautiful that has been nurtured on her soil, and, at the same time, learn all over again from America and the rest of the world all that is new and excellent, so that she may, out of these two elements, evolve a new culture essentially her own. Japan, which historically and geographically is a meeting place of the East and West, seems to be eminently fitted for such a cultural mission. We must say, therefore, that the nation is our indispensable medium of communication with the world. For this reason we passionately love our Japanese nation, notwithstanding all her sins and crimes for which she is deservedly in misery and disgrace. But this, our patriotism, is not the same thing as that blind love of the Fatherland which once drove us into an unjustifiable war. Because

we love our own Japan with all our hearts, we naturally have an irresistible desire for her independence as a nation.

But a nation's liberty and spiritual independence cannot be attained, unless she is accorded political independence. We fervently hope that America and all the other Allied Powers will unite and co-operate in hastening the conclusion of a peace treaty with Japan. But the sad fact is that the world is actually torn asunder into two hostile camps, everywhere opposing each other, so much so that both Europe and Asia have become scenes of a cold war. Personally I do not imagine that this will lead to a world war in the near future. But what if the worst should happen eventually, in spite of every thing? In such an eventuality, which I shudder to imagine even for a moment, Japan's course of action is perfectly clear. She should maintain strict neutrality and participate in no war whatsoever. This would be in accord with the letter and spirit of her Constitution and, furthermore, the Allied Powers themselves wanted her to stay neutral in any future war. Consequently we have good reason to desire that Japan may be given adequate guarantee for her neutrality in any settlement.

Having relinquished all arms, Japan now has no weapon for her own protection but the weapons of

her faith in human freedom and the dignity of man. We believe, however, that this is the only tie that can effectively bind together all the different races of the world. Unless they unite themselves into one intellectual, moral, and spiritual community, no lasting peace is possible on the face of the earth. It is on this same principle of human solidarity that the question of Japanese education, after the conclusion of the peace treaty, should be solved. The educational reforms of the past four years have not been carried out by the control or directives of the GHQ, SCAP. The Civil Information and Education Section has indeed helped us with valuable suggestions and in many other ways, but it is by our own will and efforts that the reforms have been executed. Already the foundation has been laid and the framework set up; the building awaits completion. Let me say, with a poet, that "it is work that must praise the master, though it is from Heaven that blessing comes." Obviously, the work will have to be performed, collectively and co-operatively, by many hands. In Japan her scholars, educators, and people at large must all apply themselves to the task with zeal and with a due sense of responsibility. From the world, its scholars, educators, and people of goodwill, let the blessings of sympathy and co-operation descend upon

them in good season and abundantly.

The great problem we are grappling with does not, after all, concern Japan and other defeated nations alone. It is a world problem, for an enduring peace can be secured only when, and only insofar as, mankind, in the midst of the deepest cultural crisis and the most dismal spiritual confusion it has yet experienced, has succeeded in realizing its own mental and spiritual transformation.

I sincerely hope and pray that the present Educational Conference in Washington will succeed not only as a preparation for the coming Peace Conference, but more especially in playing a historic role for the creation of a new culture and a new world order which is the common purpose and concern of all right-thinking men and women everywhere.