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PL

By Tatsuki Yuasa

Each human being is born with a unique personality. Happiness exists where each individual is able to express his own unique characteristics. PL teaches people how to do this.

When an individual is able to express his character perfectly, when all people are able to express their unique characters perfectly, there should be no strife among mankind. Strife arises when it is not possible for different individuals to express their own unique natures. The fact that there is strife is a manifestation of the fact that the unique characteristics of each individual are not perfectly realized. In daily life we see many instances in which this perfect expression does not take place. Why? How does this happen? The reason is explained by PL.

PL teaches that life is art. Life itself is art. Every individual has some image of the life which he wishes to create in this world and which has to be translated into concrete form in daily life. Therefore, each image also has its own individual characteristics. When the process of translating this image into ones daily life takes place smoothly and perfectly, one is clearly very happy. PL regards this daily earthly life as the stage on which this process should take place. Art need not necessarily be sought after only in the form of painting, liter-

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ature, music, sculpture, or any other form of so-called art as it is generally understood by people. Life itself, daily life, can be transformed into art. Daily life itself should become art, perfect and happy. This is the ideal preached by PL.

The longing for beauty is intuitive. It is inherent in every human being. This beautiful image must be realised in concrete form. This can be said to be the purpose of life. Therefore, PL says that the life of man consists in self-expression.

In actual life, however, many things happen which do not seem to be beautiful. For instance, if health is considered an object of beauty, then illness is not beautiful. If harmony, a state of non-strife, is considered an object of beauty, then strife is not beautiful.

Sometimes people harbour greed or envy or an obstinate feeling. All these are not beautiful. They are negative and are not desired by man. A desire for the beautiful is an inherent characteristic of man. The fact that people do not wish to have these negative feelings can be said to be proof that man's inherent nature is good and beautiful. In short, PL attaches much importance to sentiment or feeling; but this sentiment or feeling is given a broader meaning in PL than is usually adopted in psychology. For instance, not only the feelings of anger and sadness, but other things as well are also included in this category. So in a way it can be said to be a sort of life-feeling, a living feeling.

All sentiment related to daily life,—for example, sometimes a person sticks to one idea, or gets the notion that he is a big, a very important person, or he hungers after material

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gain ; — all these things are included in the PL idea of “sentiment” or “feeling.” All such feelings, all the inclinations of human beings arise when people become enslaved by these feelings or sentiments. Then it becomes impossible to carry out the expression of ones unique individuality. When these undesirable sentiments arise, they tend to destroy or reduce the ability of each individual to achieve a perfect expression of his unique personality.

In practice it is not so easy to attain to this ideal state. On the contrary, there are many cases in which illness, strife with other people, or failure in business occur. If such undesirable things happen, one can say that they come as a result of inappropriate sentiments or feelings, that there has been some deviation from the ideal direction toward which one should proceed. In other words, PL teaches that everything that happens in actual life is determined by one's way of thinking. If there is an undesirable inclination, then actual life will show a pattern in accordance with that undesirable inclination. Therefore, if undesirable things happen in actual life, one may conclude that there has been some deviation, some undesirable inclination, in his way of thinking. This is the way PL teaches people to analyze their own lives.

It is very difficult for a person to become aware of his own peculiar, undesirable inclinations, because the more earnestly one thinks about one's own character, the deeper becomes his own peculiar way of thinking. Therefore, it is not so easy to detect these deviations or undesirable things in ones own innermost feelings. In other words, in such cases there is a lack of objectivity. Nevertheless, the peculiar, undesirable

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deviations or inclinations must be eradicated. They must be corrected so that self-expression may take place perfectly and objectively. So there is great need to realize one's own peculiar inclination and undesirable mentality, and to correct one's attitude. If this is done, then one may proceed confidently to build up a new pattern of life. The mental state, after correcting deviations and undesirable characteristics, is a state of beautiful harmony with one's environment. It brings not only equilibrium within one's self but beautiful harmony with one's surroundings.

To summarize what has been said thus far, if one has undesirable inclinations, they will express themselves in concrete form in one's daily life. This must be detected and realized. But if a person is unable to do this for himself, then he must get guidance from someone having objectivity, someone who can give objective comments and objective judgement. Each individual can learn what has to be corrected and how he has to analyze, review, and correct his conduct in life. So each follower of PL must try to carry out the teaching given him by teachers qualified to give such advice. Then each follower can live a life without fault, that is to say, a life in which one's own unique personality is perfectly expressed. At least each follower must try his best to attain this state.

In this process there is a very important factor which plays a very great role, that is, God (Mioya Ōkami^a). Something that is inestimably greater than one's self. So each follower, in order to attain the perfect state, must pray to God that he may correct his way of thinking. He must pray that the

a. 大元靈

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beautiful harmony with all his environment will not be disturbed, and that his undesirable inclinations will not crop up in daily life. Such a prayer must be very sincere and intense. In other words, PL teaches that the proper and valuable thing in one's self is to be expressed with the help of God. However, that which gives spiritual guidance, that which gives spiritual advise, is not God but the Patriarch (Oshie Oya^v) of PL.

Naturally the prayers of the believers are offered to God, but because of the language barrier, the response to prayer is not given by God directly. Although God does not communicate through human language, he does give warnings in the form of illness, failure in business, or strife with other people. These can be regarded as divine warnings that something is wrong with one's way of thinking. The trouble is, however, that this is not realized by the person concerned. In PL phraseology this experience is called *Mishirase*^b that is, something known by God. The real actual meaning of *Mishirase* is interpreted by the Partriarch, and explained in human language.

There are many more things I would like to discuss and more details of PL that I could explain, but I think it would be better to have questions and then from the questions explain in more detail.

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Q: How is the Patriarch different from the ordinary follower? What experience did he have that enables him to understand God?

Mr. Yuasa: In the beginning the Patriarch himself was just

a. 教主 b. 神示

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an ordinary person who could not distinguish between the warning of God and other things; but after very strenuous training he acquired spiritual eyes to make the distinction. In the beginning there was a man named Mr. Tokumitsu Kanada,^a who subjected himself to innumerable kinds of austerities, or spiritual training, and discovered a way of salvation whereby he could attain great spiritual heights. Among other things he discovered that all human suffering is a divine warning to mankind. The father of the present Patriarch became a disciple of this Kanada and after much training gradually came to understand the meaning of these divine warnings. Of course, Kanada himself understood this to some extent, but not deeply.

The present Patriarch studied under his father, the former Patriarch, and after undergoing much training he at last succeeded in attaining a state in which he could distinguish between appropriate things and inappropriate things. This mental or spiritual qualification of the Patriarch will continue also in the future. It will not end with the physical death of the present Patriarch. The ideal of all PL followers is to acquire this spiritual qualification. Consequently, in the future the number of people who can give appropriate spiritual advise will gradually increase. Even at present there are two or three followers who have attained a high degree of spiritual insight. Therefore, although the present Patriarch is the one who has attained the highest spiritual level, when he dies he will be succeeded by one of those who are spiritually the highest, and this line of succession will never cease. In other religions there is a founder, but we have no founder. We can have many

a. 金田徳光

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Patriarchs. There will always be a living Patriarch. Each Patriarch will be a different person, but they will all be the same in spirit and function,

Q: Will you please tell us about the ceremony in which the Patriarch takes on the sins of the believers?

Mr. Yuasa: The Patriarch gives the teaching (*mioshie^a*) to the followers and the followers obey this teaching. When a follower receives a warning in spite of his observance of the teaching, it is the Patriarch and not the follower who is responsible to God for the warning. Each month there is a meeting in which the believers participate for the purpose of transferring their responsibility to the Patriarch. Prayers are offered there in order to make it possible for the Patriarch to bear responsibility for the sins of the past month. At this ceremony God will bless him and give him strength.

Q: Tell us about the organization and activities of PL.

Mr. Yuasa: The headquarters are in a suburb of Osaka called Tondabayashi, where there is a Sacred Hall for the object of worship, a school, a gymnasium, a golf course, three baseball diamonds, a hospital, administration offices, etc. Last summer the newspapers said there were 150,000 people there for the festival. We have no exact count. As a rule there are between twenty and thirty thousand for this festival. About five thousand can stay overnight in the dormitories in the case of festivals and training courses.

Q: What is the object of worship?

Mr. Yuasa: The name of God is Mioya Ōkami, a universal God. The Patriarch has made it possible for the

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followers to seek this God in the symbol of *Omitama*^a which, after the Patriarch's deep prayers and real spiritual communication with them, are placed in all branches, where teachers reside, as well as in the headquarters.

Q: How many attend worship services?

Mr. Yuasa: Morning worship was once emphasized and at that time people gathered in the 400 or 500 branches at five o'clock in the morning in summer and six o'clock in winter. Now the halls are so small that the emphasis has changed to small home meetings where there may be only five or six present. Those people who like to may come for services of prayer, testimony, and preaching. Emphasis is also placed on personal guidance. One teacher sometimes has to counsel as many as one hundred believers a day. In Kobe (Mr. Yuasa's church- Ed.) there are eight teachers for about 5,000 members. If each teacher handles fifty a day, then 400 different believers are given counsel every day.

In Nagoya, in addition to the morning service, 3,000 people gather each day at the headquarter's building. At about a hundred small meeting places at least five or six attend but the average is twenty to thirty for each meeting. In Tokyo you are welcome to visit any of the branches, such as Shibuya, Ueno, Ebara and Ogikubo.

Q: Why was the pre-war organization (*Hito-no-michi*^b) suppressed?

Mr. Yuasa: The reason was its enormous growth and its organization. PL has a group system. Five members make up a unit. The leader makes it six. Five units make a group

a. 大神靈 b. ひとのみち

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of thirty persons. In Hyogo^a there are almost two hundred groups. These are divided into nine districts, each of which has a chief. The chiefs get spiritual instruction directly from the leader. When the leader delivers his sermon, he gives the essence in writing to the nine chiefs who in turn pass it on to the two hundred groups, and then to some 1000 units. Thus, everything can be communicated very quickly. Before the war the military leaders did not like this and, although we were quite innocent, out of fear they accused us of lese majesty and disrespect for the Grand Shrine at Ise.

Q : Are there any scriptures?

Mr. Yuasa : Not yet. We have nothing like the Christian Bible. There is a small book used for chanting prayers, but apart from this each one gets his spiritual guidance from the Patriarch.

Q : Are the personal counsellings based on teachings or on psychology?

Mr. Yuasa : Both. Counselling consists not only in transmitting teachings given by the Patriarch but also in analyzing the mental condition of the believer concerned. For example, the psychological factor is called the *shinri*^b in PL. This is the hurrying mind, or the mind of one who goes too fast. While the mind is already there, the physical body is here. Therefore, a person's physical body is minus his mind and that is very dangerous. Deep analysis takes place and concrete steps are suggested by the local teacher.

Q : How is the Patriarch chosen?

Mr. Yuasa : The Patriarch selects his successor. He knows

a. 兵庫 b. 真理

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the men among his followers who have reached the highest spiritual attainment. The Patriarch also decides who has attained spiritual enlightenment.

Q : What is the definition of God?

Mr. Yuasa : This is impossible to explain in a word, but it is different from what you understand by God in Christianity. Our God is not omnipresent or all-powerful. It may be said that all existence is the body of God. All existence is also the shades and shadows of God. God in PL has no characteristics like human beings. God is "Law" (*Hō*).* The God of PL is like the law of gravitation and has no tangible characteristics.

Note : (1) Mr. Yuasa's talk is one of a series of talks on Modern Religious Movements sponsored by the Institute. Others in the series will appear in subsequent issues of *Contemporary Religions in Japan*.

(2) The romanization of Japanese terms used by PL in its publications is as follows :

God = *Me-oya-oh-ka-me*

Patriarch = *O-shi-eh-o-ya*

Mishirase = *Me-shi-ra-say*

Teaching = *Me-o-shi-eh*

* 法 The Buddhist *dharma*.