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Nationalism, Religion, and Social Darwinism

Nation and Religion in the Works of Katō Genchi and Liang Qichao

Why does nationalism require religion? This article explores an answer to this question within discourses of Social Darwinism that gained in popularity globally from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Social Darwinism conceived of international relations as the struggle for existence among societies or states as social organisms. In order to form a competitive state, it argued, the solid integration of the nation is necessary. Social Darwinism also called upon religion for this objective. Therefore, the integration of a society or a state requires people to share common values, and it was claimed that religion could play an important role in realizing social cohesion. This study attempts to show that an example of such an argument can be found in Katō Genchi's theory of religion that advocated Statist Shinto in Japan. The author also argues that the same case was made by Liang Qichao in his religious thought during the late Qing and early republican periods in China.

KEYWORDS: Katō Genchi—Liang Qichao—Nationalism—Social Darwinism

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REFLECTING widespread academic interest in nationalism, recent scholarship has devoted significant attention to the relation between nationalism and religion. While scholars have sought to specify how this relation can productively be studied, one particular issue has been marginal in much of the recent scholarship. To my knowledge, no one has paid close attention to the question of why nationalism requires religion.

Eastwood and Prevalakis sort out four distinct ways of studying the connection between religion and nationalism (EASTWOOD and PREVALAKIS 2010, 98). The first is to treat nationalism as the god of modernity, and posits the religious origins of nationalism. The second is to presuppose that nationalism fills the vacuum that religion's prior decline created. In other words, it argues that secularization gives rise to nationalism. The third is to maintain that in the process of modernization, nationalism displaced religion. More to the point, it is nationalism that caused religion's displacement from its role of the "sacred canopy." Due to the modernization caused by nationalism, which facilitated the differentiation of the religious sphere from the political as well as social spheres, religion has dropped and lost many functions it had but can no longer meet efficiently. The fourth is to deal with religion as part of nationalism. From this standpoint, religious nationalism arises as opposed to secularism. In short, the first is to extend the concept of religion to include nationalism as a subtype of religion; the other three ways consider nationalism as functionally equivalent to religion. For that reason, the four presuppose that religious nationalism rivals secular nationalism. Moreover, the first three approaches are premised on religious history in the West in that the god of modernity took over the place of the Christian God.

Nationalism serves to integrate individual citizens into a unified unit and, at the same time, specify this unified unit as, for example, a state, nation, or ethnic group. Given that religion used to play such an integrative role, it seems understandable that nationalism is thought to have taken over the role of religion. From the above, it may well follow that nationalism is functionally equivalent to religion. However, why is it that in Japan, nationalism called upon religion for the formation of modern statehood? Shinto has not been recognized as a social institution that integrates Japanese society. So why did nationalism have to "invent" State Shinto (国家神道) where it had not existed?

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A claim was made by the Nagoya High Court that “as a matter of fact, during World War II, State Shinto was imposed upon the Japanese nation from above, thereby impinging on the constitutional principle of the freedom of faith and functioning as a spiritual basis for Japanese militarism.”¹ This claim has been contested. According to Nitta Hitoshi, this construal of State Shinto derived from a theory of Statist Shinto (国家の神道) put forward by Katō Genchi 加藤玄智 (1873–1965), who taught at the Japanese Military Academy and Tokyo Imperial University. Nitta argues that Kato’s theory concerned how Shinto ought to be (NITTA 1997, 311) and thus had nothing to do with how Shinto actually was during the war. For Nitta, it is only in postwar Japan that Shinto as it ought to be for Katō was conceived as if it had been oppressive during the war. The complexities of the disputes as to the historical reality of State Shinto need not concern us here. Rather, I would like to highlight that Katō presented a normative account of Shinto as a particular value system that he hoped would be shared by the Japanese and unify them as a nation.

Japanese intellectuals such as Katō were not alone in attempting to connect religion to nation-building. Here Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873–1929) deserves special mention. Liang was born in Guangdong Province in China in 1873 and sought refuge in Japan as the Hundred Days’ Reform was ended by the coup of 1898. In May of 1899, Japanese scholar of religion Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 invited Liang to deliver a lecture at the spring conference of the Society of Philosophy in Japan, where Liang asserted that the revitalization of the East requires a return to the true teachings of Confucianism (LIANG 1899a).² Liang’s assertion was premised on the proposal of his teacher, Kang Youwei 康有為. Kang had campaigned for establishing Confucianism as the national religion during the 1890s in China, which developed into a political movement after the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 that established the Republic of China. Confucianism was also considered a common value system and thus essential to integrate Chinese society. Liang’s lecture in 1899 was intended to advertise Kang’s account of the role of religion in national integration.

In order to elucidate Kato’s and Liang’s conceptions of the relationship between nationalism and religion, I propose to examine how Social Darwinism informed their ideas.³ Social Darwinism became globally popular during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Famously, it was Yan Fu’s 嚴復

1. On the so-called “Tsu Jichinsai Case,” the court famously ruled that public expenditures on a *jichiinsai* (a Shinto groundbreaking ceremony) are illegal; see Nagoya High Court Judgment, 14 May 1971, *Hanrei Jihō* 判例時報 630.

2. All citations from original texts in Chinese have been translated by the author.

3. I define Social Darwinism as holding the view that the state or society is an evolutionary organic entity in the fierce competition for survival. As social evolutionism is generally called

translation of T. H. HUXLEY's *Evolution and Ethics* (1896) that introduced Western thought to China in the late nineteenth century. His translation of *Evolution and Ethics* made known Herbert Spencer's social evolutionary theory to Chinese intellectuals. While Kang's charting of humankind's historical passage through the Three Ages of Disorder, Approaching Peace, and Universal Peace had influenced Liang's thought, Liang was also significantly inspired by Social Darwinism. Liang became instrumental in infusing Social Darwinism into the minds of Chinese intellectuals thanks to his lucid writings. He thereby established himself in Chinese society during the late period of the Qing Empire.

On the other hand, since Ernest Fenollosa lectured on social evolution based on the first volume of SPENCER's *The Principles of Sociology* (1880–1897) at Tokyo Imperial University, Spencer's works were also translated into Japanese, and those works which drew on Spencer's thought were widely circulated in Japan. Relying on Social Darwinism, for example, Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 understood international relations as natural competition among states. Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 advocated “the ethics of the citizenry” for “the survival of the fittest” (MIYACHI 2012, 76). Following the lead of Inoue, Katō Genchi developed his theory of religion.

For Liang and Kato, Social Darwinism was knowledge that was taken for granted. As we will see later, it is arguable that Social Darwinism linked their theories of religion to nationalism. Social Darwinism explores international relations from a viewpoint of the survival of the fittest and the law of the jungle. It seems that such a viewpoint induced proponents of Social Darwinism to posit that the survival of a state depends upon the social cohesion of a nation. Hence it is not surprising that their attention was devoted to the role of religion, a role that presumably enables people to share common values in order to achieve social cohesion.

In what follows, I first attempt to show that Social Darwinism underlay Katō Genchi's theory of Statist Shinto. I argue that for Katō, for the formation of a nation it is necessary that all members of the national community share an affiliation to the same religion. Second, I hope to demonstrate that a similar argument for the relationship between religion and the formation of a nation was

“Social Darwinism,” it is thought that social evolutionism derives from an application of Darwin's theory to society. However, it is Spencer, rather than Darwin, who contributed to its popularity more than anyone else. Yet, Social Darwinism is hardly identical with Spencer's thought. Neither was Spencer's thought accepted nor understood in its entirety, and it is difficult to present a clear-cut outline of Social Darwinism (HAWKINS 1997, 32). Moreover, as Bannister points out, social evolutionism is a suspect concept (BANNISTER 1979, 3–13). Social Darwinism should be understood as a cluster of Spencerian ideas that emerged from the widespread acceptance of Spencer's neologism, “survival of the fittest,” which was taken to mean “the best always win” and “the stronger prey on the weaker.”

made by Liang as, like Japan, the modernization and the Westernization of late imperial and early republican China became urgent.⁴ As we shall see later, Liang conceived of the teachings of Confucius as a progressivism concerned with sociopolitical innovation. More to the point, he understood Confucianism as isomorphic to the evolutionary theories of Darwin and Spencer (LIANG 1899a, 58). That is to say, evolutionary theories framed Liang's thought on religion in a significant way.

Katō Genchi: The Reunion of the Divine and the Human

KATŌ (1935) distinguishes “Statist Shinto” (国家的神道) from “Sect Shinto” (宗派的神道). Further, he divides Statist Shinto into “Shrine Shinto” (神社神道) as its form and “National Polity Shinto” (国体神道) as its spiritual content (KATŌ 1935, 1). Katō emphasizes that “National Polity Shinto constitutes the spirit, beauty, and quintessence of Shinto” (KATŌ 1935, 395). According to him, the kernel of Shinto lies in “the divine monarch as a manifestation of sacred humanity” (KATŌ 1935, 998). What characterizes Katō's veneration of the emperor is that he finds in the emperor the union of the divine and the human.⁵

For Katō, religion designates “the divine-human interaction and the reunion of the divine and the human” (KATŌ 1912b, 766). He contends that religion typically manifests itself through a human being's approach to the divine in which the divine simultaneously draws the human to itself. Upon this basis, Katō postulates a historical trajectory in which as the human and the divine come close to each other, religion evolves accordingly. Since, for him, the essence of religion is found in the unity of the divine and the human, as religion reduces the distance between them, if that distance were completely dissolved, religion would lose its reason to exist. Hence, religion is to disappear at the end of its evolutionary

4. While it is Kang Youwei who advocated Confucian revival, Liang was more influential than him over his contemporaries as well as the following generations in this regard. Thus, this study focuses on Liang's thought as the counterpart to Katō's theory of Statist Shinto.

5. The question of why Katō had been attracted to Shinto studies in his late thirties and why he then came to advocate a social order centered around emperor worship was first posed by TAMARU (1995). Tamaru attempts to elucidate this issue in terms of Katō's hope for “the rise of a religious genius.” Shimazono Susumu points out that what underlies Katō's Shinto studies are “his sense of a social crisis based on his statist ideas of national order” (SHIMAZONO 1996). Following these previous studies, I hope to show that both Katō's hope for “the rise of a religious genius” and “his sense of a social crisis” derive from Social Darwinism and that he theorizes them from a Social Darwinist viewpoint. Brief discussions on Katō's evolutionary ideas can be also found in FUKASAWA (1985). For a treatment of Kato's evolutionary view of religion, see TSUSHIRO (1985). For a detailed analysis of the development of Kato's religious thought see MAEKAWA (2011; 2012). Like Nitta, Miyamoto Takashi claims that Shrine Shinto has nothing to do with State Shinto since Katō's conception of Statist Shinto does not rely on Shrine Shinto (MIYAMOTO 2006).

process for its own fulfillment. While Katō calls the realization of this disappearance of religion *daidan'en* 大団円 (denouement; see KATŌ 1912b, 765), he initially posited this realization in the Buddha rather than the emperor. Katō states that “we find the ideal realization of religion in the person of the Buddha in which *daidan'en* (*Entelecheia*) has been attained.” Thus, he regarded Gautama Buddha as “an ideal manifestation of the *Deus-Homo*” (KATŌ 1912b, 756).

Katō’s idealization of the Buddha already appears in his maiden work (KATŌ 1900, 440). Japan at this time was making great efforts to import Western thought. In his opinion, however, “*sui generis* Japan” (KATŌ 1900, 5) was yet to be established for the critical assimilation and the digestion of what Japan imports from the West. As a result, Katō observes, the effort to obtain Western ideas led the Japanese to uncritical preoccupations with whatever they received from the West. It is clear to him that “a nation without intellectual independence could fall into national insecurities as well as crises of sovereignty” (KATŌ 1900, 7). Therefore, Katō is convinced that the people must be enlightened by “a healthy religion” (KATŌ 1900, 286). Such a healthy religion must be congruent with “philosophy.” “The philosophical thought attested by scholarly certainty must be made into a religion for the nation” (KATŌ 1900, 371). He envisages the emergence of a religious genius who could create such a religion (KATŌ 1900, 384), which Katō finds historically exemplified in Jesus and the Buddha.

Katō assumes both that “civilizations develop according to the law of evolution” (KATŌ 1900, 149) and that “religions evolve hand in hand with their own civilizations” (KATŌ 1900, 376). He is also explicit that each religion is to meet the needs of “the advanced religious consciousness” (KATŌ 1900, 383) that the evolution of society gives rise to. Accordingly, Katō maintains that the social progress of a nation parallels its “religious evolution.” “Each member of a national community must share the same religion that has progressed through stages of increasing social development” (KATŌ 1900, 169). As a nation envisions what it ought to be, his argument goes, “a new religion” (KATŌ 1900, 377) that is relevant to the present stage of the nation is required to emerge.

It is Katō’s view of international relations that “the present world consists in cutthroat competition between various states that promotes the survival of the fittest states, on the one hand, while compelling the unfit ones to perish, on the other” (KATŌ 1904a, 12). Under a fictitious name, he presents his analysis of contemporary evolutionism as follows. “The Darwinian evolutionary theory, which is based on the law of the jungle and the survival of the fittest, would entail egoism. Darwinism is materialistic in nature, and it would result in a materialistic atheism” (KATŌ 1904b, 9). He expects that what he calls “a new religion” or “a healthy religion” will unite selfish individuals by means of transforming their egoism and bringing them the centrality of faith in God. For him, a religion that

could hold individuals together is necessary for the nation to survive the fierce global competition for existence.

However, it appears to Katō that the existing religions, and Buddhism in particular, are “disseminating vicious superstitions over the populace” (KATŌ 1900, 385), and they are thus far from what they ought to be. His critique of the existing religions reflects his “repugnance and distaste” for “the spiritless as well as obsequious atmosphere of Buddhism” that he confronted as he grew up in a Shin Buddhist temple in Tokyo (KATŌ 1961, 152). During his twenties, Katō was involved in a religious fraternity called “New Buddhist Caucus” (新仏教同志会) that aimed at reforms of Buddhism (TAMARU 1995, 51). While he was a Buddhist, Katō hoped to synthesize Buddhism and Christianity on the basis of which he wished to found a new religion (KATŌ 1900, 409). Yet, his religious ideals derived by and large from his images of the Buddha rather than those of Jesus.

During his thirties, Katō continued to explore a new religion in Buddhism. In his 1910 work, he argues that the heart of religion lies in the intimate relationships between the divine and the human and in their union (KATŌ 1910, 27), which were historically actualized in the person of the Buddha (KATŌ 1910, 44):

It is in the beatific person of the Buddha that his disciples intuited a living Buddhahood, the Logos in flesh, and the Truth tangibly embodied so that they were immediately struck by this inexpressible mysterious lighting. Put in Christian phraseology, it is in the flesh of Buddha that the disciples indeed sensibly witnessed the *Deus-Homo*.
(KATŌ 1910, 28–29)

In this way, Katō believes that the Buddha is the *Deus-homo* as the ultimate realization of the union of God and humanity.⁶ Moreover, the relationship between the Buddha and his disciples is idealized to be what religious communities ought to be. While Katō sought an apotheosis of the *Deus-Homo* in Japan, Nogi Maresuke’s 乃木希典⁷ suicide occurred. For Katō, this tragic incident signifies the ideal *Deus-Homo* that has come to realization in Japan. He recognizes it as being parallel to salvation in the crucified Jesus (KATŌ 1912c, 27) and praises Nogi’s death as a reappearance of what manifested Nirvana in the Buddha (KATŌ 1912c, 4). Katō insists that “in the person of Nogi, the divine humanity, that is, *Deus-Homo*, is acknowledged” (KATŌ 1912c, 44).

By projecting Nogi’s death onto Jesus and the Buddha, Katō attempts to discover an altruistic act and a spirit of self-sacrifice. He remarks that “the purest selfless spirit was revealed in the righteous death of the crucified Jesus

6. In other works, he uses *Deus-Homo*.

7. Nogi Maresuke (1849–1912) was a general in the Japanese Imperial Army. After the Russo-Japanese War, he became the mentor of young Hirohito at Gakushuin. After Emperor Meiji’s funeral, he committed suicide with his wife.

in Christianity, while it took on the form of suicide in the case of General Nogi” (KATŌ 1912c, 27). In *Shūkyōgaku* (KATŌ 1912b), the Buddha’s teaching of selflessness is interpreted as bearing self-sacrificial morality—primitive Buddhism was by no means other-worldly in character; nor was it pessimistic. On the contrary, it concerned a healthy everyday morality in present-day life (KATŌ 1912b, 673). Considering the relationship between the Buddha and his disciples analogous to that between Nogi and the Japanese nation, he urged upon the nation a spiritual reformation through the *Deus-Homo* of Nogi (KATŌ 1912c, 106).

Furthermore, the relationship between the *Deus-Homo* and the individual is applied to that between the emperor and the nation. While Katō does not explicitly describe the emperor as the *Deus-Homo*, he seems to regard the emperor as being a living deity on earth (現人神) and the best example of the realization of the union of the divine and the human (KATŌ 1912a, 83). This union is further considered to be extended to the union of the emperor (the divine) and the nation (the human). It is precisely here that he finds an imperial religion. His argument continues:

In the idea that His Majesty and we the nation form a body politic, that is, the inseparable organic unity of the head and the body as one flesh as it were—the national ideal that the sovereign and the nation are to be united—emperor worship (天皇教) can be established as religion. (KATŌ 1912a, 86)

For Katō, the evolution toward the *Deus-Homo*, namely, the union of the divine and the human, which the Buddha, Nogi, and the emperor represent respectively, is paradigmatic of the union of the *Deus-Homo* and the people, which is exactly what the nation ought to be.

Therefore, Katō discovers a “new religion” in emperor worship that brings about the organic unity of the state. What is then in question is the relationship between emperor worship and Shinto. He is determined to investigate “the type of Shinto that can be the great law and the source of public thought intrinsic to Japan” (KATŌ 1914, 58) and make it known to the nation. His religious studies are intended to enrich the spirit of patriotism (KATŌ 1914, 57). Henceforth, Katō proposes the division of Shinto shrines between “the innermost spirit” and “externality” (KATŌ 1917, 185), and names “National Polity Shinto” (KATŌ 1920, 30) the Japanese consciousness of Shinto specifically concerning statehood—a term that he borrows from Inoue Tetsujirō. In KATŌ (1929–1931, 1, 31), National Polity Shinto is described as a spiritual resource expressed religiously for the Japanese nation.

From the viewpoint of religious evolution, according to Katō, Shinto had advanced from “the sacralization of natural materials” in the primitive stage. When “advanced ethics and wisdom were activated in religious consciousness,” it then spiritualized itself into a worship for edification in the civilized stage (KATŌ 1935, 9). Finally, Shinto developed into emperor worship, with an emperor who is

equipped with wholehearted ethics as a divine virtue (KATŌ 1935, 978–92). In this manner, Katō incorporates emperor worship as filial piety (KATŌ 1926, 288) into National Polity Shinto as the quintessence of Statist Shinto.

Because he holds fast to the idea that Shinto is a religion (KATŌ 1929–1931, 2, 31), Katō remains skeptical about the theory that categorizes Shinto as nonreligious. For him, Shinto gives hope insofar as it is a religion. His hope as expressed in his early writings is that a healthy new religion will arise in the future (KATŌ 1900, 377), and this remained consistent throughout his life.

The above-mentioned points exhibit no more than “a man of the emperor cult” (TSUSHIRO 1985, 85). However, Kato’s revered emperor is not so much a real emperor as his own ideal image of the emperor. He commends emperor worship only insofar as it is thought to lead Japanese society to a future that he deems better. Hence, he stays away from the National Learning School (国学) that he thinks fails to recognize what Shinto ought to be in modern times (KATŌ 1961, 155). In comparison with the existing Shinto, his Shinto appears idealistic. Like all the armchair intellectuals, he seems to build a theoretical castle in the air, although it does look splendid. Tamaru locates Katō’s thought somewhere between popular religious movements and mere intellectual products—Tamaru labels it as one of the religious philosophical movements (TAMARU 1995, 52). The same thing can be said of Liang Qichao’s theory of religion.

Liang Qichao: National Salvation and Religion

As we saw, Katō contends that true Buddhism is by no means pessimistic; rather, it can edify people as a moral basis for their worldly lives. Liang Qichao once held the same view. Liang submits that instead of negating the world, Buddhist faith affirms it (LIANG 1902d, 47).⁸ Citing a passage from a Buddhist scripture that goes, “Unless everyone enters Nirvana, I vow not to attain the perfect Enlightenment,” he also recognizes the spirit of altruistic self-sacrifice in Buddhism (LIANG 1902d, 47), as Katō does. Liang also characterizes Buddhism by autonomy instead of heteronomy. According to him, credulousness never leads one to Buddhism; one can come to Buddhism only through one’s own intelligence. It is clear to him that the Buddhist doctrines of the immortality of the soul and karma cultivate moral agency. The belief in karma is particularly underlined as the highest doctrine of Buddhism. It is his contention that “the principles of evolution recently expounded by Darwin and Spencer simply remain within the theoretical reach of the concept of karma” (LIANG 1902d, 51). Liang points out the conformity of the doctrine of Karma to the evolutionary idea of hereditary

8. For my translation of “群治” into “society” I am indebted to TARUMOTO (1997).

transmission, and justifies Buddhism by evolutionism (LIANG 1904b). Yet, it should be noted that he does not extol Buddhism persistently.

Marianne Bastid-Bruguière divides the development of Liang's interest in religion into four distinct periods (BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE 1998).⁹ According to her, in the first period, Liang begins to study religion as he considers it to be a means of national salvation. His lecture at Tokyo alluded to earlier occurred in this period. His conception of social evolution is based on Kang Youwei's doctrine of the Three Ages that humanity develops through the Age of Disorder, the Age of Approaching Peace, and the Age of Universal Peace. In the first two ages, people are governed by the rulers from above. But, in the end, people will reach the final age in which they rule themselves (SATŌ 1996, 1103). In order to realize the Age of Universal Peace, Liang believes, the populace must be educated by religion such as Confucianism.

However, during the second period of Liang's interest in religion, as Bastid-Bruguière sees it, his thought on religion begins to change within a short period of time. From 1901, he keeps himself away from Kang's influence, and develops his own thought. He even becomes increasingly critical of Kang's theories of Confucianism and religion. Liang goes as far as to claim that there is no need for religious reformation, for fortunately China has no religion in the first place and that "while religion is useful in the ages of humankind's infancy, it is more harmful than helpful in the ages of their maturity, for religion impedes the freedom of thought" (LIANG 1902b, 3).

Moreover, he goes on to argue that "what the West calls 'religion' involves in making a fetish of superstitions." Therefore, he regards religion as the least conducive to the development of humanity (LIANG 1902a, 52). Yet, it must be noted that his criticism of religion is not directed against Confucius. Liang does not include Confucianism in the category of religion, stating that Confucius is not so much a religious teacher as a philosopher, or a scholar of political economy, or an educator (LIANG 1902a, 52). While the true value of Confucianism as scholarly ideas will be shown in an advanced civilization, he explains, it remains available only to a small number of the elite until humankind becomes fully civilized. Thus, an alternative way for the edification of the masses must be sought elsewhere. Whereas the religious person cannot rival the philosopher in exploring the truth, Liang claims, the philosopher is less competent than the religious person in leading the masses (LIANG 1902c, 44–45). According to him, the "global masses" of today are too feeble to unite themselves. They can be united

9. For an important treatment of Liang's religious thought in addition to Bastid-Bruguière's article that traces in detail the development of his thought, see MORI (1998). Drawing upon these two works, this article attempts to summarize the development of Liang's thought and to find what persisted through that development.

only when guided, and religion is one of the best means to integrate the masses. Since religion possesses an invisible force to exert pressure on the freedom of the masses, it can make their spirit one and the same. Thanks to this power of integration, Liang hopes, religion can overcome its selfish desires and fractional disputes (LIANG 1902c, 46).

In addition, he observes that the religious spirit resembles the military spirit. He reasons that a nation in the “barbarian stage” has recourse to religion alone. In contrast, the people at the zenith of civilization are no longer in need of religion, he argues, because they are capable of ruling themselves. Unfortunately, for Liang, China as well as the world at large are yet to reach that maturity. Therefore, China cannot have national unity without religion (LIANG 1902c, 46). Since the late Qing dynasty faced its so-called “greatest danger of partition,” the social evolutionary law of the jungle appears to him more than a metaphor. Thus he is propelled to search for a means of survival for China.

LIANG (1902d) construes Buddhism to be relevant for the national integration of China. That Buddhism to which he entrusts his hope is neither the historic Buddhism nor the existing one. It is the Buddhism that he envisions through the lens of a Social Darwinist world view. This is a “new religion” that he wishes could give rise to the new Chinese nation (LIANG 1902c, 45). Still, for him, such a new religion is considered the second best means of national renewal at the same time. This ambiguity of his construal of Buddhism betrays his disappointment to his fellow Chinese, which is further deepened during his travels in the United States (LIANG 1904a).¹⁰ In these travels, he finally comes to hold “enlightened despotism” (LIANG 1906), that the Chinese nation be led by an enlightened despot under coercion (TAKAYANAGI 2003). Then, during “the third period” that begins after 1905, as Bastid-Bruguère sees it, Liang becomes disinterested in religion.

Religion—Buddhism in particular—reappears in his thought during the fourth period of his interest in religion that starts in 1918 and ends with his death. Regarding the mature Liang’s thought, what comes to the fore are both the critique of his early statism and his turn to individualism as well as a cosmopolitanism that accords with the fashion of the age after World War I (YOSHIZAWA 2003, 222–23). Certainly, he himself describes his earlier position as a “chauvinistic statism” (LIANG 1920, 69). Yet, what he criticizes is not so much statism as much as chauvinism. In his writings based on his observations and information about postwar Europe, he commends the cosmopolitan state (LIANG 1919, 21). This seems to indicate that he now extends his statism to embrace the whole human community. He never renounces the “whole” in favor of the individual. Rather, Liang seeks “the whole” above the nation-state. During this last period of

10. For Liang’s travels in the United States, refer to KAWAJIRI (2005).

his intellectual development, while he continues to hold on to some elements of nationalism insofar as they are useful to incorporate individuals into the whole, the locus of “the whole” is shifted from the existing state to a higher community.

On the other hand, Liang accepts no prospect that political associations and party politics will be able to rescue China. His distaste for associations and party politics are expressed quite frankly in his critical letter of 1927 on the contemporary political situation in China: “I would never join any association and organization, for they seem to me hopeless of saving China” (DING and ZHAO 2009, 729). His criticism derives from the fact that political associations fail to advance in China as a whole. Nonetheless, his concern with China remains persistent even during this last period.

Mori Noriko points out that while Liang’s thought on religion became increasingly scholarly in style in the course of his life, he remains consistent in his interests in the doctrine of reincarnation and a selfless spirit of Buddhism (MORI 1998, 213–14). It is explicit in his speech of 1923 that, for him, selflessness is common to Confucianism and Buddhism. In this speech, he remarks that “we can be freed from afflictions as we get rid of our personal and private concerns.” What would remain then are “concerns for humankind—parents, the family, friends, the state, and the world.” His comment that “suffering for humankind constitutes my act of faith” (DING and ZHAO 2009, 631) suggests that he has never left from his concern with the state, the world, and humankind, namely, his concern with “the whole.” As his “faith” consists in suffering for the whole, his insistence that the individual contributes to the whole stays the same.

His remark on an antireligious movement in 1922 also indicates the same posture. This movement emerged in opposition to the World Student Christian Federation that announced a conference in Beijing in April 1922. Liang observes that disputes over this conference signal an active public spirit that should be welcome. In his public lecture delivered on 16 April 1922, he first defines religion as the individual’s object of faith, and speaks to his audience as follows:

The object of faith may be natural beings such as a serpent, fire, and genitals, or transcendent beings such as God, Paradise, and the Pure Land, or religious individuals such as Lü Dongbin, Guan Yu, Muhammad, Jesus Christ, and Gautama Buddha. Additionally, a secular ideology may well be seen as a religion insofar as individuals have absolute faith in it. A case in point is Marxism. Those who adhere to Marxism in Europe might be called “the people of Marxist faith”; those who espoused anti-Manchu nationalism during the late Qing period may be called “the persons of anti-Manchu faith.” Faiths in secular ideologies are isomorphic to religious faiths as far as their mental operation is concerned.

(LIANG 1922, 19)

From a phenomenological viewpoint of consciousness, Liang submits, faith in religion is identical to faith in secular ideology. In short, he argues, an anti-religious movement holds an anti-religionism as a religion.

Liang does not mean to deny secular ideologies as such. It is his position that religion is sacred, necessary, and useful for humankind (LIANG 1922, 23). His emphasis on the advantages of religion to the public welfare of society is consistent with his earlier opinion articulated in his lecture of 1899 in Japan that the revitalization of the East requires a return to the true teachings of Confucianism.

For him, “faith is holy such that it revitalizes the individual as well as society.... The most serious problem of the contemporary Chinese is their lack of faith” (LIANG 1922, 24). Such an insight makes him doubtful whether the Chinese nation could survive the fierce international struggle of all against all for existence (LIANG 1922, 25). Hence, “what is necessary for our nation is nothing but faith in order to prevent social corruption” (LIANG 1922, 25). This argument is not so much a theological defense as a defense of religion in terms of social proficiency—the contention that he already put forward in his lecture of 1899. On the other hand, Liang later moves beyond a naïve prospect of religion in his youth. In his lecture delivered to students in 1927, he no longer identifies morality and faith with religion proper. “Needless to say, knowledge and talent are important. But morality and faith are all the more indispensable—by faith I do not mean to refer to religion” (DING and ZHAO 2009, 735). He goes on to contend that “in order to reform our society, we must begin to edify the individual one by one; one becomes two; two become four; in the end, thousands or even millions of individuals will be edified” (DING and ZHAO 2009, 736). It seems that his conviction that the reformation of the whole begins with the cultivation of the individual continues to stand firm, even though his point of emphasis on the edification of the individual has shifted from positive religion to abstract faith. There seems to be no fundamental change in his prospect for social reform. That is to say, however he names it—for example, religion or faith—the social function that he expects of it is one and the same: namely, the edification of the individual.

Conclusion

Right after he was exiled to Japan, Liang saw banners to welcome soldiers. These said, “May you sacrifice yourselves in duty!” It struck him tremendously that Japan was ready to sacrifice the individual to the state. This was the moment in which he realized the importance of the self-sacrificial service of the individual for the whole. According to Roland Robertson, nation-states “copy” ideas and practices from other societies (ROBERTSON 1995, 41). It is in that moment that Liang “copied” from Japan the idea of national integration for the struggle for existence in a global society.

What is common in the early works of Liang and Katō is the sense of an impending crisis as to whether their nations survive or not. Liang argues:

Any national struggle for existence depends on the knowledge as well as the capability of the people. The increase or the decrease in the knowledge as well as the capability of the people hinges in turn upon the kind of ideas and thoughts that the nation cherishes. The superiority and the dissemination of national ideas are contingent on the custom and the faith of the nation. For that reason, if the nation hopes to achieve its national independence, conversely, it has to grow its knowledge and capability. If the nation wishes to grow, it must improve its national ideas and thoughts. If it wants to change its national ideas and thoughts, it is required to renew the custom and the faith of the people and propagate something new. (LIANG 1899a, 55)

For Katō and Liang, international society means the jungle of the struggle for existence. They presuppose that Social Darwinism reveals the criteria by which to compare one state with another. States are to be measured in terms of the survival of the fittest and the law of the jungle.¹¹ The state struggling for existence is understood in the biological analogy of an organic entity. One aspect of Spencer's social evolutionism can be summarized as social organism theory, which can be extended to understand the nation as an organic entity. In order to win the international battle for existence, they also insist, the state must be strong and organically formed: the solidarity and the integration of the nation are indispensable. Hence they wrestled with the issue of how the atomistic and utilitarian individuals who seek their self-interests alone can be transformed into moral agents, thereby integrating the state into a unified whole. Katō and Liang internalized this problematic and explored the answer to it throughout their lives.

Kato's exploration proceeded from his inquiry into primitive Buddhism to the idea of a new religion of the *Deus-Homo* and ended with his proposal of Statist Shinto, the essence of which is National Polity Shinto as emperor worship. Liang thought as to whether what he conceived of as the solution to that problematic could be considered religious or not, and whether Buddhism and Confucianism should be used for his project. At any rate, for him, religion is necessary as "a catalyst in reshaping the cerebrums of the people" (LIANG 1899a, 55). He had once expected religion—Buddhism and Confucianism—to function as a "catalyst" for "faith." But, his disappointment that such an expectation is unlikely to be fulfilled turned him from religion, which, in the end, led him to his conceptual separation of faith and religion.

11. While the terms "survival of the fittest" and "the law of the jungle" denote two different things, Katō uses them as synonyms. While Liang distinguishes between them, his followers did not attend to the semantic differences between these two terms (ONOGAWA 2010, 93–99).

In spite of all the changes and revisions within their thought, the basic framework of their projects remained the same: namely, that they aspired to develop and integrate their nations by means of internalizing common values into each spirit of the individual citizen. Unless the individual were united with the state—and unless the individual were united to the whole—Katō and Liang believed the nation would fail to survive the struggle for existence. In short, the basic idea of Social Darwinism determined their conceptual frameworks and persisted in their thought.

From their Social Darwinian perspectives, two claims follow: first, what must be prioritized is the survival of the state; second, both the nationalism that incorporates the individual into the state, as well as the individual's service for the state's survival, are necessary.¹² Such a nationalism demands that people share common values in order to incline individual members of a nation to the whole. For that purpose, the existing religion is mobilized, or a new religion becomes necessary. After all, the shared values that the members of the nation imagine are to be framed by the requirements of the survival of the state.

As mentioned earlier, Liang became critical of his early chauvinistic statism and seems to have attempted to go beyond his own nationalistic framework. Kato also refers to statism as chauvinism (KATŌ 1935, 957). One may uphold chauvinistic statism, identifying the whole with “the state”; alternatively, one may envisage a wider “world” in pursuit of the whole; or one may posit a “society” as totality that is predicated on different principles. The problematic of the content of “the whole” can be in no way exhausted by Katō's and Liang's discussions. The individual, the whole, and the mediation between them are the triad of terms that constitute an “equation,” so to speak, that may solve the problematic of social unity. “The whole” signifies one of these three terms. For this term, one may choose “the state,” or “the world,” or “society.” In any case, the question presents itself: What must be the content of “the whole”?¹³ The same question about the term “religion” as mediation may also arise.

For Katō and Liang, religion stands for the mediating term between the individual and the whole. Katō and Liang were concerned with the question of what

12. Nationalism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. While it tends toward xenophobia and predatory warfare, it also lays claim to the equality and the solidarity of citizens, and orients people toward democracy. Such an ambivalence of nationalism makes sense if we look at it in terms of Social Darwinism, that the survival of the nation requires national integration amid the fierce international struggle of all against all for existence.

13. The indeterminacy of the content of a nation, as well as the impossibility of defining a nation, seem to be rooted in the impossibility as well as the meaninglessness of defining “the whole” substantially: any definition of “the whole” is more or less arbitrary. Social Darwinism temporalizes, as it were, the empty “whole” by positing the restless progress of humankind from the past toward the future.

sort of mediating term incorporates the individual into the “public” whole, for example, the state or society. They found the answer to this question in the adherence to common values and the spiritual integration of the nation that religion may or may not make possible. In this sense, they indeed faced one of the fundamental problems in social science: how is social order possible? They so internalized this issue that impatience arose in them as they tackled it. Then, they were irritated by the ignorance of those who did not share the same awareness of this problem with them, and their impatience and irritation restricted their thought.

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