NATIONAL MORALITY, THE STATE, AND "DANGEROUS THOUGHT": APPROACHING THE MORAL IDEAL IN LATE MEIJI JAPAN

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> There are those, like the treasonous group that was punished this year, who embrace Dangerous Thought…the kind of unhealthy thought that opposes or destroys National Morality…[But] as long as we use National Morality to regulate Japanese society, the continued existence of the Japanese people is assured.
>
> Inoue Tetsujirō, *Outline of National Morality*

> People say that anarchism is a poison that comes from the mouths of traitors and that it is an extremely evil and dangerous doctrine…[But] the great doctrine and spirit of anarcho-communism…by striving for the happiness and advantage of everyone, will encourage the progress and improvement of humankind.
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> Sakamoto Seima, *A Word on Joining the Group*

At the end of the nineteenth century, as many in Japan began to question the idea of the superiority of Western civilization, various articulations of Japanese national identity began to emerge. One form that these expressions of cultural exceptionalism took was the discourse on National Morality. This discourse emerged as the dominant form of moral inquiry among academic moral philosophers by the close of the Meiji period. As a state-sponsored intellectual movement concerned with identifying and legitimizing the unique moral sensibilities of the Japanese, National Morality played a crucial role in the formation of national identity in Japan. Through imperial edicts, public lectures, and school textbooks on moral training, scholars and bureaucrats disseminated a morality of loyalty to the state, filiality to one's parents, and patriotism, representing each as distinctly "Japanese" virtues. Yet the National Morality of late Meiji was not merely a collection of statements on loyalty and filiality, as contemporary studies of this movement often maintain. When placed in its philosophical and socio-political contexts, the importance of National Morality's linkages with the philosophy of Personalism (a form of

philosophical idealism centering on the moral cultivation of the individual) and with anti-state political movements of the time, such as anarchism, socialism, and individualism, becomes clear. National Morality scholars drew upon Personalism to help legitimize state efforts to suppress anarchism and other forms of Dangerous Thought.

The Taoist classic *Tao te ching* observes, "When the state is in confusion, it is then that there are faithful subjects."[1] Such a statement might well be describing turn-of-the-century moral discourse in Japan. At this time, while the Dangerous Thought of anarchism, socialism, and individualism threatened to undermine the foundation of the state, various state apparatuses sought through a number of strategies to produce "good and faithful subjects." In other words, Dangerous Thought and the faithful subject emerged together, the one providing the negative condition against which the other was conceptualized and defined. National Morality played a central role in the cultivation of faithful subjects and the suppression of Dangerous Thought.

Moreover, National Morality can be seen as an effort to configure the good as the pursuit of a moral ideal. Though coded in the philosophical jargon of Personalism, this "ideal" signified complete moral homogeneity – a community of subjects perfectly loyal to the state. That which facilitated the approach toward this aim constituted "the good," while whatever inhibited or obstructed this aim was "evil." In National Morality discourse, then, an individual's actions were only truly good when they corresponded to the good of the state. Conversely, the Dangerous Thought of anarchism, socialism, individualism, and even the literary genre called "naturalism" represented obstacles on the path toward the ideal, and thus could legitimately be suppressed as social evils.

National Morality appropriated still powerful conceptions of loyalty and filiality from Japan's pre-revolutionary past and fused them with new conceptions of the person and the state developed within Personalism to produce an argument legitimizing the state's efforts to cultivate the loyal subject and suppress or annihilate obstacles on the path toward reaching this goal. This particular formulation of National Morality, appearing for the first time in Inoue Tetsujirō's *Outline of National*

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[1] Robert G. Henricks trans., *Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), pp. 222-223. All translations that follow are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Morality, represented a subtle but important reconfiguration of the discourse. This raises several important questions: How was such a reconfiguration of National Morality possible, and why did it take place when it did? What exactly was dangerous about Dangerous Thought, and how did it come to occupy such a central position in the National Morality conception of the good? Finally, what strategies did National Morality deploy for the suppression of Dangerous Thought, and how were these resisted?

The passage from the Lao Tzu text cited above refers to a space of non-differentiation – the "One" or the "Tao" – that had been lost or rejected. Once outside this conceptual space, distinctions emerge: good and evil, order and disorder, faithful and unfaithful subjects. National Morality also posited such a space, but unlike the broken antiquity of Taoism, it lay in the ever-receding future, approachable but never finally attainable. Recognizing its ideal as unattainable, National Morality proponents nevertheless sought to "approach" the ideal through the universalization of the state-centered normative space it helped to produce and through the annihilation of its other, Dangerous Thought. National Morality and its opponent, however, were inextricably bound to one another, each taking on meaning only by existing in opposition to the other.

The "loyalty" of the loyal subject took on significance precisely in opposition to Dangerous Thought, or conversely, Dangerous Thought was only "dangerous" inasmuch as it encouraged defiance and disloyalty to the state and the moral position it sponsored. National Morality could never bring about the complete annihilation of Dangerous Thought without altering (or perhaps annihilating) itself in the process. In this sense, the tension between National Morality and Dangerous Thought was marked by a desire to annihilate, on the one hand, and a need to sustain, on the other hand. In short, National Morality was constrained to stop short of the complete annihilation of Dangerous Thought – to check, to control, but not to erase it. The discourse on National Morality in Japan reveals a close connection between the pursuit of the moral ideal and violence. It was the state's pursuit of this ideal that sustained the very social reality it sought to transcend, one of moral disarray, dissension, and violence.

Inoue Tetsujirō's Outline of National Morality

In 1911, the Ministry of Education, as part of the state's efforts to create loyal subjects, selected Tokyo University philosophy professor Inoue

Tetsujirō to give a series of lectures on National Morality (*Kokumin dōtoku*, or Morality of the "Nation" or the "People"). In these lectures, Inoue criticized the unquestioned adherence many in Japan showed to the ethical theories of the West, by arguing that an investigation and cultivation of the unique moral sensibilities of the Japanese people was of paramount importance in the effort to forge national unity and protect the state. He described National Morality as "an expression of the people's spirit" (*minzokuteki seishin*), reflecting the "national character" discourse prevalent at this time.[2] Inoue placed particular emphasis on patriotism, ancestor worship, the notion of the state as a "family," and the virtues of loyalty and filial piety.

Loyalty to the emperor (the father-figure of the "family-state") was to be expressed in the same way one expressed filiality towards one's parents – hence, the recurrent call for "loyalty-as-filiality" (*chūkō ippon*) in National Morality texts by Inoue and others. In this way, the metaphor of the state as a "family" was used to evoke patriotic thought and practice. Further, Inoue invoked the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 as a foundational text for National Morality. This document, issued in the name of the emperor, called for the subject's loyalty and self-sacrifice for the good of the state. For Inoue, this rescript was "the sacred book of Meiji" and "the essence of Japan's national morality." "Within it," stated Inoue, "are listed all of those things considered to be the important points of National Morality."[3] Inoue's lectures were published in 1912 as *An Outline of National Morality* (*Kokumin dōtoku gairon*), and during the decade that followed, more than fifty scholarly works on National Morality appeared.[4]

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[2] Inoue Tetsujirō, *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* [Outline of National Morality] (Tokyo: Sanshōto, 1912), p. 4. The idea that each nation possesses its own unique national character shaped late nineteenth and early twentieth century moral discourse in Japan. Inoue, in his 1912 edition of *Tetsugaku jii* [Philosophy Dictionary], translated *minzoku seishin* as *Volksgeist*. The German notion of *Volksgeist* (i.e., spirit or genius of the Volk/folk/nation) was central to national character discourse of this time.

[3] Tetsujirō, *Kokumin dōtoku gairon*, p. 12.

[4] For a list of works on National Morality beginning with Inoue's *An Outline of National Morality*, see Inoue Tetsujirō, *Waga kokutai to kokumin*

The outflow of works on National Morality following Inoue's lectures has led some scholars to view Inoue's *Outline* as the formative or "original statement" on National Morality.[5] But of course, Inoue was not the first to emphasize the family system, ancestor worship, and loyalty to the state. Moreover, the term *kokumin dōtoku* itself had been a part of moral discourse at least since the late 1880s. This has led others to seek the origins of the National Morality movement in earlier works.[6] Yet this approach too is problematic. The search for the original statement of National Morality in contemporary accounts is only possible because of their treatment of this shifting discourse as an essentialized object with a fixed set of features that remain unchanged over time. The term *kokumin dōtoku* is treated as semantically transparent, signifying the same object and carrying the same meaning regardless of the context within which it appears.[7] Patriotism, loyalty, filiality, the "family-state," and so on become the defining "elements" of National Morality. Yet this formalizing method can only be maintained by ignoring important shifts in the social and intellectual contexts out of which statements on National Morality emerged.

Inoue's *Outline* did more than simply reiterate the elements of loyalty, filiality, etc., which had in some form been a part of moral discourse from the 1890s. It initiated a subtle but important reconfiguration

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dōtoku [The National Morality of Our People] (Tokyo: Kōbundo, 1925), pp. 492-497.

[5] See, for example, Funayama Shin'ichi, *Nihon no kannen ronja* (Tokyo: Eihōsha, 1956), pp. 109-156.

[6] Moral philosophers Fukasaku Yasubumi and Yoshida Kumaji, for example, traced the beginnings of National Morality to the 1886 work *Nihon dōtoku ron* [On Japanese Morality] by Nishimura Shigeki. See Yasubumi Fukasaku, *Kokumin dōtoku yōgi* (Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1916), pp. 17-18; and Yoshida Kumaji's "Commentary" on Nishimura's text in Nishimura, *Nihon dōtoku ron* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1963), p. 120. Also see Nishimura, "Nihon dōtoku ron," in *Hakuo sosho* (Tokyo: Nihon kōdōkan, 1976), pp. 7, 9, 94.

[7] The term *kokumin dōtoku* took on different meanings within different intellectual contexts. See Shigeki, "Nihon dōtoku ron" and Hozumi Yatsuka, *Kokumin kyōiku: Aikokushin* (Tokyo, 1897), pp. 4-5, and his *Kempō teiyō*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1910).

of the discourse on National Morality. Inoue attempted to re-ground National Morality and its demand for loyal subjects through the construction of a new foundation for its claims, one drawing on the metaphysics of Personalism. In short, Inoue's *Outline* represented neither a smooth continuation of National Morality discourse nor this discourse's "original statement." Rather, it marks a shift in the discourse. Attention to its philosophical and socio-political contexts is, therefore, particularly important. It was at this time that National Morality began to integrate the philosophy of Personalism to legitimize the suppression of Dangerous Thought.

The Philosophical Context: National Morality and Personalism

Particularly lacking in contemporary studies of National Morality is any treatment of National Morality's connections with the moral-philosophical movement called Personalism. In the few works that address both, National Morality and Personalism are treated as two separate forms of moral inquiry.[8] But the conception of the good that Inoue put forward in 1912, as well as those developed in the majority of moral-philosophical writings on National Morality that followed, was closely intertwined with Personalism. National Morality's prescriptive statements – its demand that the people (*kokumin*) be loyal and filial, for example – rested on a framework constructed with key conceptual resources appropriated from Personalism. Understanding the fundamental concepts (the person, the good, the state, etc.) that enabled and informed National Morality's ethical claims requires a familiarity with Personalism as well.

Personalism is so called because of its attention to "personality," that is, to a self-conscious awareness of one's own individuality. In

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[8] Carol Gluck, for example, in her work on Meiji ideology, devotes a chapter to a discussion of National Morality, but does not mention Personalism. Watsuji Tetsurō and Kaneko Takezō, in their brief overview of ethics at Tokyo University, discuss both National Morality and Personalism as "the two major pillars" of academic ethics at the turn of the century, but fail to show the interconnectedness of the two. See Chapter 5 in Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), and the essay, "Bungakubu," in *Tokyo Teikoku Daigaku jutsu taikan* (Tokyo: Tokyo Teikoku Daigaku, 1942), p. 391.

opposition to the utilitarian conceptions of the person as socially isolated and atomistic that dominated early Meiji moral discourse, Personalism stressed the sociality of the person, but it did so in a way that went well beyond the trite observation that an individual was also a member of a community. Personalism held that the finite consciousness of each individual was a manifestation of an infinite or eternal consciousness (variously explained as God or as "spiritual principle"). This conception of the person, then, rejected the idea of an opposition between self and other, or between the individual and the social whole. All members of a society were seen as one, in that each participated in eternal consciousness.

For Personalism, the cultivation of each individual's personality was a moral endeavor. It meant not only the development of one's unique potentialities as an individual, but also the cultivation of a deep sense of awareness of the unity between finite and infinite consciousness, or between self and other. To achieve or at least pursue such "self-realization," as it was often called, constituted the good in the moral philosophy of Personalism because it was to realize that the good of the other was in fact also one's own. The state, in Personalist thought, was the space within which such "self-realization" took place. The primary function of the state was to facilitate the individual's social actualization by creating the conditions necessary for this to take place. That is, it functioned as the *means* to bring about the *end* of self-realization. If the state stifled this process, it was not fulfilling its purpose.[9] Yet, with the appropriation of the vocabulary of Personalism by proponents of National Morality, personality (*jinkaku*), self-realization (*jiga jitsugen/kanzen*), and

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[9] Personalism, therefore, allowed for resistance to the state under certain conditions. British idealist philosopher T. H. Green, whose own writings in translation became an integral part of Personalist discourse in Japan from the early 1890s, maintained that disobedience to the state could be justified, but only as an attempt to bring the state and its laws more into keeping with its ideal. This provided the individual with a role to play in deciding the good of the whole – if the state was moving away from its ideal (as the individual understood it to be), the individual was justified in opposing the state and its laws. See T. H. Green, *Principles of Political Obligation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), especially pp. 110 and 147. Also see Yoshida Seiichi, *Rinrigaku yōgi* (Tokyo: Tokyo hōbunkan, 1907), p. 546.

the ideal (*risō*), as well as the epistemology equating self and other or individual and social whole (each central features of Personalism), came to be deployed in an effort to legitimize a new conception of the good that prioritized the state over the individual.

National Morality described the good as the self-realization of the person or personality (*jinkaku*), that is, it posited the good in terms of an ideal to be attained. In his *Outline*, Inoue discussed personality and the ideal in much the same terms as Personalism:

> Attempting to complete (*kansei suru*) one's personality (*jiko no jinkaku*) is, namely, a method for realizing the ideal as a human being, and this method is morality (*dōtoku*).[10]

The "method" Inoue refers to here is not a methodology for moral inquiry, but rather the path of virtue (*dōtoku*), or of cultivating one's personality so as to approach the human ideal. Inoue pointed out that we can take "complete personality" as our objective precisely because personality is incomplete or imperfect. In other words, so long as personality is incomplete, it is possible to approach the ideal of complete personality.

Moreover, one approaches the moral ideal only as a subject living within a state. That is, in National Morality discourse, as in Personalism, the state functioned as the space of self-realization. Inoue pointed out, "It is within the state that one grows, is active, and develops. Thus, if separated from the state, it is impossible to attain one's aims as a human being." The state here as the space of growth, action, and development, is the only viable space of self-realization. The less "complete" or "perfect" (*fukanzen*) the state is, the more problematic the cultivation of "personality" will be. Thus, a well-organized, safe, and peaceful state is essential for the individual's self-realization.[11]

In National Morality thought, however, the ideal of complete personality referred not merely to the self-realization of the individual, but to the realization or perfection of the state as well. This was because the state, as the totality of all individual personalities, also possessed a kind of personality, one that National Morality identified with individual personality by drawing upon the self-as-other philosophy of Personalism. In short, "the completion of one's personality is the completion of the state,

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[10] Inoue, *Kokumin dōtoku gairon*, Appendix, pp. 74-75.
[11] Ibid., p. 85. Also see Fukasaku, *Kokumin dōtoku yōgi*, pp. 20-23.

just as the completion of the state is the completion of the individual's personality." In this statement by Fukasaku Yasubumi, moral philosopher (from 1912) and chair of the ethics department (from 1926 until 1935) at Tokyo Imperial University, cultivating individual or state personality was merely "viewing the same fact from different perspectives."[12]

This enabled the assertion that "good" action on the part of an individual must contribute to the completion or perfection of the state. That is, as Fukasaku put it, "the individual's actions are truly good when they are at the same time for the good of the state."[13] The individual will be unable to complete his or her personality unless this is the case. This viewpoint served as a basis for the subject's loyal and dutiful action on behalf of the state. To make sacrifices for the good of the state, according to this National Morality view, was precisely to perfect one's own personality.

National Morality's reconfiguration of Personalism was most apparent in its privileging of state good over the good of the individual (despite their ostensible identification). Whereas Personalism posited the state as merely a means to the end of individual self-realization, National Morality prioritized the completion of the state. The overriding concern of the state, according to Fukasaku, was survival, and this could best be ensured through the establishment of moral unity. Fukasaku stated, "The people must all practice a fixed morality. The term *kokumin dōtoku* refers to the morality (*dōtoku*) that the people (*kokumin*), as a people, must practice."[14] Here, Fukasaku called for moral homogeneity, for a kind of national moral identity as a prerequisite for the survival of the state. The moral inclinations of the individual, wherever they diverged from the needs of the state, would be suppressed, while social practice in general would be regulated by National Morality. Indeed, as the epigram at the beginning of this article indicates, Inoue advocated the use of National Morality to "regulate society." The object of regulation was clearly the *kokumin*, the "people belonging to the state" (i.e., the subjects of the state).

Enforcing moral sameness required suppression, as Fukasaku's own statements make clear. Fukasaku pointed out that, because of egoism, the individual will at times ignore the needs of others or engage in activities that oppose the state (*han kokka teki koi*). "But, the power and the life of the

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[12] Fukasaku, *Kokumin dōtoku yōgi*, p. 637.
[13] Ibid., p. 638.
[14] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

state lies in suppressing the egoistic spirit (*shuga shin*) of the individual so as to resist this kind of anti-state activity and, in adapting the individual to the state, to finally bring forth self-sacrificing action in which the individual extinguishes his egoistic self and brings to life his eternal higher self on behalf of the state." Fukasaku called this "State Personalism" (*kokka teki jinkaku shugi*), and maintained that this must be the basis for the cultivation of Japan's National Morality.[15] In National Morality discourse, then, complete personality meant a perfected state personality, a morally homogeneous totality subsuming all individual personalities.

The moral ideal of complete personality served as the basis for Inoue's conception of the good. In his *Outline*, he stated:

> Once this great aim [of complete personality] is decided upon, the good and the evil of human society can for the first time be settled. That which is in accord with this objective is the good; that which is not in accord with this objective is evil.[16]

Here, in theoretical terms, Inoue has defined "the good" according to his National Morality perspective. His definition asserts that whatever is conducive to bringing about the ideal of complete personality is the good. Obstacles in the path of the ideal can legitimately be suppressed as evil. By equating the good of the person with the good of the state, and then carefully specifying what constituted the good of the state (e.g., loyalty, obedience), National Morality discourse delimited the good of the individual. The good, then, was no longer the form of self-realization compatible with individual ends as put forward by Personalism; the good now constituted conduct that served the state.

The ideal of complete personality therefore must be understood as a hypothetical moral space in which there is perfect moral action, where every thought and every action of each subject serves the state. In Inoue's definition, the good is not this ideal itself, but the "approach" toward this ideal end. To approach the ideal, then, is to universalize a contingent and perspectival discourse, that is, to attempt to establish a moral space determined and regulated by the state, and this involves the sometimes violent suppression of otherness. Yet the ideal, according to Inoue, would

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[15] Ibid., pp. 638-640.
[16] Inoue, *Kokumin dōtoku gairon*, p. 75.

remain forever out of reach, meaning that personality would never be fully complete or perfected.

The approach, then, had no endpoint. In this scenario, the state continually seeks to approach the ideal of the subject's perfect loyalty, but never attains it. As approach entails not only the universalization of the state's own normative views but also the suppression of moral alterity, the social reality of moral dissension, suppression, and violence is sustained. When Inoue's definition of the good is understood as allegory, we see that his ethical claims were not merely the objective conclusions of value-neutral philosophizing. They corresponded to the normative orientation of the state seeking to cultivate loyal subjects ready to serve the state, on the one hand, and to suppress Dangerous Thought, on the other hand. In other words, Inoue's definition of good and evil referred to loyalty to the state and Dangerous Thought, respectively.

The Socio-Political Context: National Morality and Dangerous Thought

In the summer of 1910, while Inoue lectured on National Morality to the East Asia Society, a study group that he had established, police were completing the arrests of several hundred supposed anarchist activists suspected of involvement in a plot to assassinate the emperor. In December of that year, when the trial associated with this case began, Inoue, at the request of the Ministry of Education, was again lecturing on National Morality, this time to instructors in charge of moral training at Japan's Teachers' Colleges. At the conclusion of the trial, twenty-four of the accused were sentenced to death. Twelve of these had their sentences later commuted to life imprisonment, while the other twelve were executed in January 1911. This came to be known as the High Treason Incident (*Taigyaku jiken*).[17]

That Inoue's lectures on National Morality so closely coincided with the arrests, trial, and execution of these anarchist activists is suggestive of the close connections between National Morality discourse and the state's efforts to suppress anarchism. Indeed, about six months after the executions had been carried out, Inoue alluded to the High Treason Incident

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[17] Regarding the trial for those accused in the High Treason Incident, see Itoya Toshio, *Taigyaku jiken* (Kyoto: San'ichi shobō, 1960), pp. 51-92, 125-195.

in yet another lecture that was to become the basis for his *Outline*. This lecture, like his previous lecture in December 1910, was at the specific request of Minister of Education, Komatsubara Eitarō. There, to an audience of educators in the field of moral training, Inoue spoke of the enemies of National Morality:

> Within Western civilization lies very harmful thought. There is even a great poison. These poisonous elements, not surprisingly, were imported into Japan along with beneficial elements. As a result, there are those, like the treasonous group that was punished this year, who embrace Dangerous Thought.[18]

Here, Inoue referred to those involved in the High Treason Incident. He assured his audience that the threat of this Dangerous Thought to National Morality had not ended with the execution of those twelve anarchists, for there still remained "those among a portion of society who embrace unhealthy thought, even though they go unpunished. It cannot be denied," he asserted, "that there are some who embrace the kind of unhealthy thought that opposes or destroys National Morality." As the above indicates, there was a close connection between the discourse on National Morality and the social disruptions it sought to control. Inoue advocated "the use of National Morality to regulate Japanese society" so as to ensure "the healthy existence of the Japanese people."[19] As a threat to the health of Japanese society, Dangerous Thought had to be suppressed.

Inoue was not alone in his condemnation of this Dangerous Thought, which referred generally not only to anarchism, but also to socialism and individualism. In 1911, just after the conclusion of the High Treason Incident, the educator and materialist philosopher Katō Hiroyuki described socialism as an "extremely dangerous thing" because, he believed, it was inconsistent with the good of society and the state.[20] Two years earlier, the "elder statesmen" and former prime minister Yamagata Aritomo collaborated with legal scholar Hozumi Yatsuka to warn of the dangers of socialism:

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[18] Inoue, *Kokumin dōtoku gairon*, p. 10.

[19] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[20] Katō Hiroyuki, "Shizen to rinri," cited in Kaneko Takezō, *Rinrigaku Jiten* (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1957), p. 234.

> The people…turn their efforts to the destruction of the foundations of the state and society. Herein lies the genesis of what is called socialism. Its immediate causes are the extreme division between rich and poor and the marked changes in ethics that accompany modern culture. It is now urgently necessary…for the sake of national and social self-preservation, to exercise the strictest control over those who espouse its doctrines. The spread of this infection (*byōdoku*) must be prevented; it must be suppressed and eradicated.[21]

As with National Morality scholars, Yamagata and Hozumi viewed the dangers of "social destruction" as a moral problem. "Changes in ethics" was one of the "immediate causes" for the emergence of socialism. The suppression of socialism, here represented as a disease to be stamped out, and the "exclusion of individualism," were to be coordinated with the cultivation of "healthy thought" which involved the promotion of "wholesome and beneficial reading."[22]

The High Treason Incident marked a high point of suppressive violence and violent reaction to suppression that had been taking place for some time. At the close of Japan's war with Russia in 1905, rioting broke out in the Hibiya district of Tokyo. Rioters (numbering ten thousand by some estimates) attacked and burned more than 350 buildings, including police stations and police boxes, the prime minister's residence, the foreign ministry, and private homes. More than one thousand people were injured and seventeen were killed (mostly by the police attempting to restore order with drawn swords).[23] In 1907, called "the year of the strike," strikes at the Ashio copper mines, the coalmines of Koike, and the dockyards in Uraga

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[21] Yamagata Aritomo and Hozumi Yatsuka, "Shakai hakaishugiron," in Yamagata Aritomo, ed., *Yamagata Aritomo ikensho* (Tokyo: Hara shobō, 1966), pp. 315-316. This translation is from Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 176.

[22] See Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 177.

[23] The causes of this riot are a matter of some debate. See Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann, eds., *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 264, 275.

led to violent rioting.[24] In June of the following year, with the release from prison of socialist activist Yamaguchi Kōken, his supporters took to the streets waving red flags and shouting "anarchism." This was the so-called Red Flag Incident. Police moved in, charging demonstrators with violation of the Peace Police Law (*chian keisatsu hō*), and arrested fourteen, including anarchists Arahata Kanson and Osugi Sakae. In his autobiography, Arahata described his treatment at the hands of the police. "The police stripped Osugi and myself naked and dragged us by our feet through the corridors. They kicked and beat us…finally, they were surprised when I lost consciousness and relented."[25] So intense were the social disruptions of this time that the entire period between the Russo-Japanese war and the rice riots of 1918 has been called "a period of urban mass riot."[26]

This Dangerous Thought that National Morality scholars, bureaucrats, legal scholars, and others feared was the evil that Inoue spoke of in his definition of the good. It was "that which is not in accord" with the objective of complete personality. In other words, Dangerous Thought, inasmuch as it undermined state authority, constituted an obstacle on the path toward the ideal of complete loyalty to the state. Only through its eradication could the good flourish. To approach the ideal, therefore, required violence – the suppression of the alterity of the other, or the reduction of the other (i.e., Dangerous Thought) to the same (National Morality). But what steps were taken to increase the authority of the call for loyal subjects and to undermine that of Dangerous Thought? And how did proponents of the so-called Dangerous Thought respond?

National Morality's Strategies for Self-Legitimacy and Suppression

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[24] Carol Gluck cites a Yokohama magazine: "Beginning with the Ashio copper mine riot, the disturbances at the Koike coal mines and the Uraga docks have followed one upon the other, and now there is the violence at the Horonai mines…there is no doubt that this year [1907] is the year of the strike," in *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 175.

[25] Arahata Kanson, *Kanson jiden*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1999), p. 278.

[26] Najita and Koschmann, eds., *Conflict in Modern Japanese History*, p. 268.

Proponents of National Morality made use of a number of strategies intended to shore up the authority of their own position while serving to de-legitimize and eradicate the variety of alternative normative orientations they collectively termed Dangerous Thought. These strategies included efforts to represent alternative moral views as dangerous, to establish the "timeless" (and therefore indisputable) features of National Morality, and to disseminate National Morality through lectures, imperial edicts, moral training textbooks, and so forth.

Inoue's statements concerning the High Treason Incident were part of an effort to de-legitimize a collective outlook otherwise called Dangerous Thought. For Inoue, anarchism was not the only danger to National Morality. In the one epithet of Dangerous Thought, Inoue grouped together a wide variety of diverse views on society, the person, and nature. Individualism, socialism, anarchism, literary naturalism all became, under Inoue's representation of them, the collective other of National Morality. Treating these diverse modes of thought as a single, unitary object facilitated their de-legitimation. All became "harmful," "poisonous," and "dangerous." Indeed, the dangerous and destructive nature of one could be attributed to each of the others.

Moreover, Inoue, Yoshida Seiichi, and other proponents of National Morality made it clear that the claims this "other" made concerning society, the individual, and morality were not in any sense "Japanese," rather, they were "foreign" imports from "Western civilization." Yoshida, for example, in the preface to his *Essentials of National Morality* [*Kokumin dōtoku yōryō*], closely echoed the words of Inoue writing four years before. Yoshida discussed the disruption Western civilization had brought to the intellectual world of Japan. "Within Western civilization," he stated, "is included a great deal of unhealthy thought of the kind that destroys national morality."[27] The "unhealthy thought" referred to here included anarchism, socialism, and individualism, each according to Yoshida, a product of Western civilization. To admit that any view prioritizing the individual or calling for the abolition of the state was "Japanese" would have inhibited National Morality's own claims to speak for what was authentically Japanese.

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[27] Yoshida Seiichi, *Kokumin dōtoku yōryō* (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1916), p. 353.

Through this collective representation, all of Japan's social ills could be attributed to a single, "foreign" other, a single obstacle to moral homogeneity and social stability. In National Morality discourse, then, Dangerous Thought became as "the Jew" in Slavoj Zizek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology*: "an intruder who introduces from outside disorder, decomposition and corruption of the social edifice…appear[ing] as an outward positive cause whose elimination would enable us to restore order, stability, and identity."[28] By representing anarchism, socialism, individualism, and literary naturalism in this way, Inoue and other proponents of National Morality legitimized their suppression. Thus, the suppression of the "dangerous other" was of central importance to the National Morality project. Yet, it was equally important, of course, to secure the legitimacy of National Morality.

The architects of National Morality devoted a good deal of effort to establish the timeless values of the Japanese people. There are, they claimed, certain unchanging moral sensibilities common to all Japanese, those living today and those of remote antiquity. By projecting contemporary constructions of National Morality into Japan's past, that is, by rewriting the past so as to accord with the state's need for loyal subjects in the present, National Morality discourse sought to mask the contingency of its claims and enhance its authority.

This required the essentialization of Japan's past as well as its present. Situated within the national character discourse prevalent at the time, National Morality scholars developed a series of oppositions between Japan and other countries, and between Orient and Occident, to create the unique moral characteristics of the Japanese. Inoue Tetsujirō, for example, opposed the "instinctiveness" of Japan's National Morality to the "intellectual" nature of "Western morality." Implied here is that an intuitive or instinctive morality based on feeling is more authentic (or at least better suited to the character of the Japanese) than the rational, calculating, and "intellectual" morality of the West. Inoue also upheld the family-state, headed by the emperor as father figure, as a central feature of Japan's National Morality and something unique in the world.

In regard to the virtue of loyalty, Inoue asserted that although China does know the teaching of loyalty-as-filiality (*chūkō ippon*), it lacks

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[28] Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), pp. 127-128.

the actuality of it. China prioritizes filiality over loyalty, while in Japan loyalty to the state comes first. In the individualistic (*kojinshugi*) West, loyalty and filiality are not attributed the same degree of importance as they are in group-oriented (*dantaishugi*) Japan.[29] In each case then, essentialized conceptions of the other were used to assert the timeless features of a Japanese moral identity.

Fukasaku Yasubumi constructed an even more comprehensive set of oppositions with which to define Japan's National Morality, as well as the morality of the "Orient" generally. He described the morality of the West as individualistic, theoretical, concerned primarily with universal moral truths, and emphasizing independence. National Morality, on the other hand, he described by way of direct opposition to each of these characteristics of the West. It was group-centered, practical, concerned primarily with the particular moral sensibilities of the Japanese, and emphasized selflessness. In addition, he opposed Western morality's intellectual (*chiteki*) quality to Japan's emotive (*jōteki*) nature. As an example, he stated, "we must view the theory of utilitarianism, which has been called a morality of calculation, as an intellectual morality. We must view our country's morality of loyalty and filiality as one of feeling."[30]

Within this national character discourse, the essentialization of the other went hand in hand with the essentialization of the self. While National Morality scholars insisted upon a particular moral character of "the Japanese," they were constantly confronted by alternative moral positions within Japan that called their claims into question. Only through the annihilation of these alternative moralities could claims to universal status (within the localized space of Japan) for a unique Japanese moral sensibility be fully verified. The spirit of the Japanese people, the family system, and the values of the Japanese each drew its authority from the idea that they were unique attributes of Japan and common to all Japanese. Contemporary narratives on Japanese culture often reassert and sustain these same essentialized attributes. But it is worth noting that many of the supposedly "timeless characteristics" of the Japanese and Japanese culture are here – in early twentieth century Japan – being produced.

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[29] Inoue*, Kokumin dōtoku gairon*, Chapter 7. Regarding loyalty-as-filiality in China, see Chapter 10.
[30] Fukasaku, *Kokumin dōtoku yōgi*, pp. 37-38.

In addition to efforts to undermine the authority of Dangerous Thought through strategies of representation and measures for masking the contingency of National Morality, National Morality scholars worked closely with the state, particularly the Ministry of Education, to widely disseminate National Morality doctrine. In 1910, for example, the Ministry of Education organized a special lecture series in which Inoue and others[31] lectured on National Morality to students, middle school teachers, and instructors in charge of the departments of moral training at the Teachers' Colleges.[32] These lectures and the audience to which they were directed clearly reflected the state's awareness of the importance of education in the dissemination and legitimation of its own moral orientation. Such Ministry of Education sponsored lectures were an effective means of disseminating National Morality, particularly as they exerted a kind of hierarchical control over the education system through the indoctrination of both regular teachers and instructors at the Teachers' Colleges. Yet the state's most effective means for disseminating National Morality was through textbooks for moral training that were used by primary, middle, and high school students.

In 1897, state authorities announced that all school textbooks for moral training would be produced by the government rather than by private companies. Six years later, the first set of "state-authorized textbooks" (*kokutei kyōkasho*), were completed. After Japan's victory in its war with Russia in 1906, however, and with increasingly vocal and patriotic statements on Japan's unique and distinctive national essence or *kokutai*, dissatisfaction with these textbooks grew. Hozumi Yatsuka was among the more vocal of the critics who claimed that the current textbooks did not go far enough to emphasize the moral characteristics of Japan, in particular, the "great moral principle of loyalty and filial piety (*chūkō no taigi*)." Siding with Hozumi, the Nihon Kōdōkai (a society for moral education established

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[31] Legal scholar Hozumi Yatsuka also participated in this lecture series, during which he discussed "The Main Points of National Morality" and moral training textbooks for use in the third year of school education.

[32] The Teachers' Colleges (*Shihan gakkō*) were part of Japan's educational system from 1872 until 1945 when they were replaced by the departments of education within universities. They were established to train teachers for positions in primary and secondary schools. See Monbusho, ed., *Gakusei hachijūnen shi* (Tokyo: Okurasho insatsu kyoku, 1954), pp. 134-137, 195.

by the educator and Confucian scholar Nishimura Shigeki) issued an "Opinion on State Moral Education Textbooks" in which it was stated, "The Imperial House and the State in our country, of themselves, constitute one body. Since our national polity is one in which there is no State apart from the Imperial House and the Imperial House does not exist apart from the State, loyalty to the ruler is patriotism and patriotism is loyalty to the ruler."[33] The current textbooks, according to the Nihon Kōdōkai, did not make this identity clear.

In response to growing pressure, the Ministry of Education again revised its moral training textbooks, placing greater emphasis on the notions of family-state, filiality or loyalty-as-patriotism, and ancestor worship, as well as on expanding the sections on the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.[34] Compared to the 1903 textbooks, the revised 1910 version de-emphasized personal and social ethics and placed greater emphasis on state and family ethics.[35] Of particular concern in these texts were the subject's obligations to the state.

Inoue, for example, in his "Newly Edited Textbook for Moral Training," asserted that a vital and well-organized state can only be secured when each subject "submits to the commands of the state." "The state possesses an absolute and unlimited authority over the subject," he declared, "and the subject may not defy it, whatever the situation might

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[33] See Karasawa Tomitarō, *Kyōkasho no rekishi* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1960), p. 278. This translation appears in Kosaka Masaaki, *Japanese Thought in the Meiji Era*, trans. D. Abosch (Tokyo: Pan Pacific Press, 1958), p. 387.

[34] Revised texts included chapters on "The Glory of the National Polity," "The Unity of Loyalty and Filial Piety," "Guard and Maintain the Imperial Prosperity," and "The Teachings of Our Imperial Ancestors." See Karasawa, *Kyōkasho no rekishi*, p. 286. Also see Wilbur M. Fridell, "Government Ethics Textbooks in Late Meiji Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1969-70), pp. 826-827; and Kosaka, *Japanese Thought*, pp. 387-388.

[35] The declines and increases in the 1903 texts and 1910 revised texts were: personal ethics (41.7% down to 37.9%); social ethics (27.6% down to 23.6%); state ethics (14.7% up to 18%); and family ethics (10.4% up to 14.3%). These figures are from Karasawa, *Kyōkasho no rekishi*, p. 228. Also see Fridell, "Government Ethics Textbooks," p. 827.

be."[36] Such assertions of the authority of the state and demands for the obedience of the subject were common to the state-authorized moral training textbooks of this time.[37] Moreover, these textbooks were disseminated more widely than the previous state-authorized textbooks, becoming the first truly nationwide textbooks for moral education.[38]

Further efforts to disseminate National Morality took the form of government edicts. Just several months after the Red Flag Incident of June 1908, the Home Minister Hirata Tosuke drafted and issued the Boshin Edict (*Boshin shōsho*). According to then Vice-Minister of Education Okada Ryōhei, the Boshin Edict was issued to combat the disunity brought about by "many undesirable phenomena…such as naturalism and extreme individualism."[39] The edict called upon the "loyal subjects" of Japan to follow the "teachings of Our Revered Ancestors" which included frugal living, hard work, and diligence. Upon the careful adherence to these teachings, the edict proclaimed, rested the fate of the nation.[40]

In his study of education in modern Japan, historian Karasawa Tomitarō linked this edict to socio-moral disorder and to the government's efforts to legitimize National Morality. "From the time of the proclamation of the Boshin Edict in 1908," he observes, "the government viewed social uneasiness and confusion as the result of moral and ethical disorder, and consequently attempted to even more strongly compel compliance with the family-state morality of loyalty, filial piety, and so on."[41] Of course, the Boshin Edict was itself part of the state's struggle to authorize the "family-state morality" of National Morality. Moreover, the Boshin Edict invariably

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[36] Inoue Tetsujirō, *Shinhen shūshin kyōkasho* (Tokyo: Kinkōtōshoseki kabushiki kaisha, 1911), pp. 20-21.

[37] For additional examples, see Yoshida Seiichi, *Shūshin Kyōkasho* (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1912); and Nakashima Rikizō, *Shūshin shin kyōkasho* (Tokyo: Bungakusha, 1911).

[38] On this point, see Imai Seiichi, *Nihon kindai shi*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1977), pp. 62-63.

[39] *Teikoku kyōiku* 323 (November 1908): 118-119, cited in Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 109.

[40] The text of the Boshin Edict is included in Monbusho, ed., *Gakusei hachijūnen shi* (Tokyo: Okurasho insatsu kyoku, 1954), p. 716.

[41] Karasawa, *Kyōkasho no rekishi*, p. 288.

appeared, together with the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, as a frontispiece in moral training textbooks.

These two key government statements on moral propriety, then, were not simply issued to state and local prefectural bureaucracies, but were efficiently disseminated so as to become central texts in the moral training of each Japanese student. Through various strategies then, National Morality proponents sought to de-legitimize Dangerous Thought while enhancing the authority of their own moral claims. Nevertheless, the National Morality position was by no means unassailable.

Strategies for Resistance

Socialism, individualism, anarchism, and other forms of thought opposed to National Morality resisted its efforts to create a homogeneous moral space through a number of discursive strategies.[42] First, they sought to undermine National Morality's authority to speak for the good by depicting it, as well as the state that sponsored it, as a moral failure. Although National Morality scholars emphasized the subject's obligations to the state, the state itself was not without certain moral obligations to its subjects. National Morality's justification for its demands for loyalty to the state lay, in part, in the role the state played in protecting the lives and property of its subjects. Inoue, for example, wrote of this legal contract in his 1905 exposition on state and world morality. "The state protects us. It keeps our lives, our property, and so on, free from danger, and the inevitable result of this is that we in turn must carry out our proper duty to the state."[43] Fukasaku Yasubumi, Yoshida Kumaji, and other National Morality scholars spoke of the state in similar terms.[44] Many claimed, however, that the state had failed to fulfill this obligation, and as a result,

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[42] Obviously non-discursive strategies were carried out as well. A number of examples have been mentioned above, such as the Red Flag Incident, strikes, riots, and assassination plots. These, for the most part, have been well-documented. The discursive strategies discussed here, however, have not.

[43] Inoue Tetsujirō, "Kokka teki dōtoku to sekai teki dōtoku" *Teiyu rinrikai rinri koenshu* (February 1905), p. 62.

[44] See for example Fukasaku, *Kokumin dōtoku yōgi*, pp. 18-24, and Yoshida Kumaji, *Waga kokumin dōtoku* (Tokyo: Kodokan, 1918), pp. 285-288.

had no basis for its demands of absolute loyalty. Defiance was justified by calling attention to the moral failings of the state.

The pollution of the lands surrounding Yanaka village in Tochigi Prefecture and the subsequent deaths due to copper poisoning caused by the Ashio copper mine provided critics of National Morality with a vivid example of the moral failings of the state. Arahata Kanson, a proponent of socialism and editor of the anarchist journal *Modern Thought* (*Kindai shisō*), wrote of the effect of the copper pollution in *A History of the Destruction of Yanaka Village* ("Yanaka mura metsubō shi," 1907): "The power of the government and the wealth of capitalists have brought the ruin of this tiny village in what can only be called a well-organized crime."[45] Outraged by what he saw as "the government's merciless cruelty," Arahata wanted retribution. "Let us look to the day which will surely come," he wrote, "when we will revenge ourselves on [the government], using exactly the same means and methods as they used on the people of Yanaka village."[46]

Arahata believed that it was precisely through this kind of disregard for the people that the state created conditions for the growth of anarchism. "The government abuses people, mistreats them, and oppresses them. It mocks the people, has nothing but contempt for them, and governs them badly. And, in doing this, it is producing many violent anarchists, whom we will always regard with affection."[47] Here, Arahata redirected blame. The state itself was responsible for any disruption the anarchists had caused because it had failed in its moral obligation to the people. Others were more concise in their criticism: "The emperor, the wealthy, the large landowners – they are all blood-sucking ticks."[48] This was Buddhist monk and socialist sympathizer Uchiyama Gudō's explanation for the poverty

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[45] Arahata Kanson, *Yanaka mura metsubō shi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1999), p. 24.

[46] Kanson, *Yanaka mura metsubō shi*, p. 172 [translation from John Crump, *The Origins of Socialist Thought in Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 308].

[47] Ibid., p.124 [translation, p. 308].

[48] Uchiyama Gudō's statement is cited in Akiyama Kiyoshi, *Nihon no hangyaku shisō* (Tokyo: Buneisha, 1968), p. 33. John Crump also touches on this statement by Uchiyama. For an alternative translation, see Crump, *The Origins of Socialist Thought*, p. 310.

many had to endure. In his view, the powerful – the wealthy, those who governed, even the emperor – were concerned not with the well-being of the people but only with their own further enrichment. Uchiyama was among the anarchist activists executed in the High Treason Incident.

Sharing many of Uchiyama's views, socialist Katayama Sen described the moral failings of Japan's capitalist society just after the turn of the century. "In the world of socialism," wrote Katayama in his 1903 work *My Socialism* (*Waga shakaishugi*), "true morality will prevail." In the capitalist society of his day, however, he saw morality offered up in sacrifice for the benefit of the capitalist. Katayama asserted that his current society, characterized by severe economic competition for monetary gain, impeded the development of true morality. "To hope for the development of civic virtues (*kōtoku*) in a society governed by selfishness is like searching for a fish in a tree." He believed that in a capitalist society, it would be futile to expect any real development of a "true morality":

> The religionist, the moralist, and the scholar are mere tools for justifying the capitalist's position, their knowledge, truths, and ideals are completely discarded and ignored. Their opinions and arguments are like those of the religionists and moralists of the slave states in the southern part of North America, who, during the American Civil War carried out to end slavery, taught soldiers in their camps that slavery is a fair and just institution.[49]

For Katayama, scholars of National Morality were nothing more than tools for the legitimation of an immoral capitalist system. Instead of joining the battle to bring about "true morality," they merely reinforced the conditions that impeded it.

National Morality was also criticized as an exploitative system of obligations. While *kokumin dōtoku* was upheld as "the people's morality," anarchists attacked it as a "morality created for the benefit of one certain class alone."[50] The well-known writer and proponent of individualism Natsume Soseki echoed this sentiment in a 1911 article on literature and

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[49] This and the preceding citations are from Katayama Sen, "Waga shakaishugi" [My Socialism] (1903), in Kishimoto Eitaro, ed., *Nihon shakai undo shisōshi*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1968), pp. 112-113.
[50] See *Kindai shisō* 1/5 (February 1913), p. 1.

morality. Soseki claimed that National Morality was less a set of virtues than duties, adherence to which was to the state's, but not necessarily to the individual's advantage. "When we look closely at the old Confucian moral slogans – loyalty, filial piety, chastity – we realize that they were nothing but duties imposed solely for the benefit of those who possessed absolute power under the social system of the time."[51] This statement, written in August 1911 (shortly after Inoue's lectures on National Morality at Tokyo University and about half a year after the executions associated with the High Treason Incident), was not merely a critique of the moral views of Japan's past; it was a thinly veiled critique leveled directly at National Morality.

Economist Kawakami Hajime, arguing from the standpoint of individualism, put forward yet another critique centering on National Morality's neglect of the individual. Kawakami is perhaps best known as a Marxist social philosopher. But in 1911, before his association with Marxism, Kawakami (at this time a lecturer on economics at Kyoto University) developed a systematic and comprehensive critique of the ethics of "state-ism" (*kokkashugi*), a term he used to refer to National Morality. He criticized National Morality's emphasis on the state and its disregard for the individual. "The value of the individual's existence lies simply in being a tool for planning the development of the state." Kawakami maintained that because the ethics of state-ism privileged the survival of the state over the needs – even the lives – of every individual, it was an absurd doctrine:

> If this were a case in which killing every individual was necessary for maintaining the existence of the state, then the state would be kept alive even though all individuals would be sacrificed. This is the inevitable and logical conclusion of state-ism.

The ethical view of state-ism, then, demanded patriotism, loyalty to the state, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the good of the state. Kawakami contrasted Japan's state-ism (*kokkashugi*) to the individualism (*kojinshugi*) he believed characterized Western countries. In the West,

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[51] Natsume Soseki, "Bungei to dōtoku" [Literature and Morality] (1911) in *Natsume Soseki zenshū*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1985), p. 384. This translation is from McClellan and Rubin, trans., *Kokoro: A Novel, and Selected Essays* (New York: Madison Books, 1992), p. 245.

Kawakami explained, the individual is the end and the state the means, therefore, the state would be dismantled rather than allow the sacrifice of the individuals that it comprises. In Japan, however, the people are no more than "the slaves of the state." Moreover, he noted that while the people of Europe and America have rights, Japan is "a country of obligations" where loyalty, courage, and public service are regarded as the highest virtues.

While National Morality proponents warned of the dangers of individualism, Kawakami asserted that the true danger was the ethics of state-ism because it led scholars to "sacrifice their truth to the state." These scholars upheld the state as an "omnipotent" apparatus "for attaining the good." "But the state does not do good for the people," Kawakami insisted, "indeed, it cannot do good." The state, he argued, makes demands on the people and can do nothing else. The individual is unable to set his or her own existential ends because the state demands the sacrifice of the individual to whatever is of benefit to the state.[52]

These descriptions of the moral failings of the state – its disregard for the welfare of its subjects, its encouragement of the "exploitative capitalist system," and its emphasis on duties and obligations as opposed to the needs of the individual – marked the limits of the state's ability to legitimize National Morality discourse and formed a basis for rejecting the state's demand for loyalty, obedience, and self-sacrifice. From an emphasis on the state as a moral failure, critiques of National Morality moved to a more sophisticated level of engagement – the struggle for the meaning of key terms in the moral discourse of the day.

National Morality and the state did not have a monopoly on the meaning of morality and the terms closely associated with it. Resistance to efforts by the state to create a society of homogeneous subjects, all equally loyal to the state, took the form of redefining or inverting the meaning of terms deployed by the state for the purpose of instilling loyalty. It was when Dangerous Thought, upon whose "otherness" National Morality relied for its own legitimacy, began to openly assert its own configurations of moral

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[52] For these citations by Kawakami, see his "Nihon dokutoku no kokkashugi," in *Kawakami Hajime chosakushu*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1964), pp. 189-194. Compare this statement with that of socialist Katayama Sen in 1903: "The religionist, the moralist, and the scholar…their knowledge, truths, and ideals are completely discarded and ignored," in Katayama, "Waga shakaishugi," p. 113.

action that it became particularly dangerous in the minds of National Morality scholars.

Moral positions were attacked and defended on the basis of the extent to which they contributed to the well-being of society or the state. Moral positions that somehow benefited society or the state were considered "wholesome." Thus, the term *kenzen* (healthy, wholesome) and its opposite *fukenzen* appeared frequently in both National Morality discourse and in the writings of proponents of Dangerous Thought. In the wake of the High Treason Incident, for example, Komatsubara Eitarō, Minister of Education during the particularly repressive second Katsura Administration (1908-1911), sought to suppress "the popularity of naturalism and the penetration of socialism" by encouraging "wholesome (*kenzen*) reading beneficial to public morals."[53] To this end, he appointed in 1911 a special committee to promote "wholesome" values in literature. In this context, wholesome literature was the sort that incorporated the values espoused in National Morality: loyalty, filiality, patriotism, etc., Literary Naturalism was the primary target of the Education Ministry's committee. This genre of literature emphasized the authority of the individual and regarded National Morality "with defiance and disgust." For naturalist writers, this committee was "nothing but a branch police station for thought control" and a transparent government effort to annihilate their literary genre.[54]

While the Katsura regime sought to suppress naturalist literature by emphasizing its "unwholesome" character, writer Soseki, inverting the term, defended it precisely for its "wholesomeness." Soseki observed that in recent years "naturalism" evoked fear (particularly among those in government) and had been seen only as a "depraved" and "licentious" form of literature. But he asserted that such fear and hatred was in no way warranted. Soseki urged people to see naturalism's "wholesome side," as a form of literature that engages with human failings and human blunders, allowing the reader to reflect on his or her own weaknesses. In this sense, Soseki maintained, "the literature of naturalism is just as concerned with

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[53] Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 171.
[54] See Koboshi [pseudonym], "Bungei jihyō," *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin*, (January 1908), pp. 55-57; and Togawa Shūkotsu, "Bungei iinkai shi-ken," *Chuo koron* (June 1911), pp. 87-89. Both are cited in Rubin*, Injurious to Public Morals*, pp. 207-209.

morality as the literature of romanticism."[55] Nevertheless, the state viewed literary naturalism as "unwholesome" and as a threat to its authority. Despite the efforts of Soseki and others, the popularity of naturalist literature waned, a development that pleased Inoue who regarded it as good "for the sake of public morals."[56]

In another example of this strategy of reconfiguring or inverting terms, Uchiyama Gudō, the Buddhist socialist mentioned above, attempted to reconfigure the "treasonous" act of defying state and emperor into an act of "heroism" by questioning the emperor's divine status. Outraged by the government's response to the Red Flag Incident of 1908, Uchiyama in the same year published and distributed an article calling for the abolition of the government and the establishment of "a free country without an emperor." Justifying this to his readers, Uchiyama argued that such an act was not treasonous, rather, it was a just and heroic act. It would abolish an exploitative and oppressive system most had been tricked into accepting. The emperor, Uchiyama claimed, through the medium of primary school teachers, had tricked the people into believing he is the child of the gods.[57] Under Uchiyama's reasoning, treason became heroism and the divinity of the emperor became deception. This reconfiguration of treason – describing defiance of the state as "heroic" – carried with it the implication that the loyalty to the state that proponents of National Morality were so concerned to instill, ought to be replaced by a higher loyalty to the needs of the destitute. In this sense, Uchiyama's views clearly represented an obstacle to National Morality's "approach" toward moral homogeneity.

"Anarchism" was another contested term. In 1908, Sakamoto Seima – among those convicted in the High Treason case – attempted to reconfigure the pejorative connotation of the term anarchism (*museifushugi*) by deflecting some of its negative characterizations:

> People say that anarchism is the poison that comes from the mouths of traitors and that it is an extremely evil and dangerous doctrine. I do not know what they mean by traitors and rebels….The society that the great doctrine and spirit of anarcho-communism points to is a society without the state and without

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[55] Natsume Soseki, "Bungei to dōtoku," pp. 382-383.

[56] Inoue, "Gendai shisō no keikō ni tsuite," *Taiyō* (November 1910), p. 67.

[57] Akiyama Kiyoshi, *Nihon no hangyaku shisō*, p. 33.

government. Indeed, it is a society that denies all authority. It is also a society which, by striving for the happiness and advantage of everyone, will encourage the progress and improvement of humankind….In such a society, all the rampage of the present monstrous private property system will disappear and the houses, fields, factories and all the other components of the economy will become the common property of everyone. Under these circumstances…[humanity] should be able to reach the limits of ethical and moral development.[58]

For Sakamoto, the "poisonous" doctrine of anarchism was in reality a "great doctrine" devoted to the promotion of the happiness, equality, and welfare of the people. To bring about the society he envisioned, however, the capitalist system of his day had to be overthrown. To this end, he called for a general strike to initiate revolution, yet in the wake of the High Treason Incident, support for such activism waned.

Perhaps just as threatening to the aims of National Morality scholars were anarchist efforts to reconfigure what constituted moral action, so that the term "morality" (*dōtoku*) itself became a highly disputed term. While Inoue lectured to Japan's instructors of moral training about the "morality of the Japanese people," anarchist thinkers, drawing on the writings of anarchist philosopher Peter Kropotkin, argued for the complete renovation of morality:[59]

Among a certain minority in society, now is a time in which conceptions of morality are completely changing. This is truly a dangerous time. The most moral of activities have now, by contrast, come to be seen as the most immoral of activities. The

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[58] Sakamoto Seima, "Nyūsha no ji," *Kumamoto Hyōron* (May 1908), p. 1. This translation is from Crump, *Origins of Socialist Thought*, p. 333.
[59] Osugi Sakae, "Dōtoku no kōzō" *Kindai shisō* 1/5 (February 1913), p. 1. In the listing for the author's name, only the character "hae" (glory) appeared. This text was almost certainly based on the anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin's "Anarchist Morality" and reflects the impact of his thought in Japan. See Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchist Morality," in Roger N. Baldwin, ed., *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970), p. 112.

practices, the learning, and the morality created for the benefit of one certain class alone, conventionally held in respect and regarded as sacred, have all been completely abandoned. People have emerged who recognize so-called immoral actions as the highest duty to themselves and to the world. Truly, these are dangerous people. But, according to the teachings of historians, and according to these dangerous people living in this dangerous age, history is ever advancing. This is a matter of creating morality. How fortunate to be born into this time, to be counted among these people. Truly, this is the chance of a lifetime.

Here "morality" is turned upside down. The "most moral of activities" becomes in this piece "the most immoral" while "so-called immoral actions" become one's "highest duty." This article was clearly meant as an attack on the state, and more specifically, on National Morality. The "so-called immoral actions" mentioned here included violent activism directed against the state. But they were only "immoral" from the standpoint of the state and National Morality. The author of this text was fully aware of the dangers in "creating" a new morality. Circumventing the "false morality" emphasizing one's duty to the state, and drawing upon a long tradition of self-sacrificing action for some higher good or ideal reminiscent of the "men of high purpose" (*shishi*) during the Meiji Revolution, this article emphasized a person's "highest duty to themselves and to the world." Finally, this statement on the creation of a new morality opposed National Morality because it was not truly a people's morality (*kokumin no dōtoku*). Rather it represented National Morality in much the same way as Natsume Soseki did, that is, as "morality created for the benefit of one certain class alone."

Arahata Kanson, writing two and half years after the High Treason Incident, contemplated the morality of terrorism. The following passage also provides an example of the reappropriation of the pre-Meiji *shishsi* ideal of risk-taking in the name of a higher good, a higher loyalty.

As Kropotkin discusses in "The Morality of the Anarchist," doing away with tyrants who oppose civilization and the way of humanity (*jindō*) is not a soap bubble that vanishes when it ascends into the air [i.e., a utopian illusion], it is the morality of the

terrorist (*terorisuto no dōtoku*). It is the command of conscience. It is the victory of human feeling over cowardice.[60]

This "morality of the terrorist," according to Arahata, calls for the defense of the "way of humanity," an explicitly moral term. In opposition to National Morality which required obedience to the state and its laws, Arahata's defense of "the way of humanity" required moral action against the state in the form of terrorism. Those seeking to abolish the state and/or to realize a socialist society put this kind of terrorist morality into practice in the High Treason Incident of 1910.

Thus, a struggle to define the terms of moral discourse was an integral part of efforts to legitimize moral views, both for those who disseminated and those who opposed National Morality. While proponents of National Morality achieved a certain degree of success in establishing such terms as morality, treason, loyalty, wholesome/dangerous/poisonous thought as fixtures of early twentieth century moral discourse, they were unable to control the way these terms were received and reconfigured.

Finally, the questioning of National Morality's truth-claims provided a third strategy with which to undermine its dominance. For example, even as Inoue, with the backing of the Ministry of Education, struggled to establish the authority of National Morality through scholarly articles, textbooks on moral training, lectures to the nation's teachers, and so on, others represented this so-called people's morality of loyalty and filiality as anachronistic, false, and devoid of authority.

Lecturing in 1911, Soseki discussed National Morality, referring to it as the "romantic morality" that was dominant prior to the Meiji Revolution of 1868. This morality, he claimed, "has by and large passed away." Linking the progress of knowledge with the decline of this romantic morality's credibility, he asserted, "although romantic morality was seen to be true originally, now…one cannot but think of it as lies. This is because [romantic morality] has completely lost its actual authority." Soseki thus viewed the National Morality project as an attempt to impose outmoded values on a society that was no longer willing to accept them. "Even if

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[60] Arahata Kanson, "Nakagi no kyomuto geki," *Kindai shisō* 1/10 (July 1913), p. 20. The term "utopian illusion" is from John Crump's translation: "the overthrowing of the tyrants who set themselves up against civilization and humanity is not a utopian illusion," see Crump, *Origins of Socialist Thought*, p. 317.

people are coerced into following this romantic morality as in the past," he claimed, "no one will practice it because human knowledge has advanced."[61] While Soseki depicted National Morality as an anachronism and as a collection of lies, socialist thinkers questioned National Morality's claims to moral particularism.

Katayama Sen, a leading Christian Socialist who spent time in prison between 1911 and 1912 for his role in organizing worker strikes, argued that morality in Japan is not a product of national character and a function of "the spirit of the people" (*minzoku seishin*) as National Morality proponents asserted, but rather a product of socio-economic conditions.[62] This view, insisting that National Morality was not tied to the character of a people, directly undermined National Morality scholars' assertion of moral sensibilities unique to Japan. The danger in this type of thinking for National Morality was that it conceived of morality as determined by factors that transcend national particularity. The morality of Japan, just like that of any other nation, was governed by universal economic principles. According to this view, then, if one wanted to understand morality in Japan, the study of economics rather than "the people's spirit" should be the focus of attention.

Even the sacred truths surrounding the emperor came under attack. National Morality affirmed the divine status of the emperor and, moreover, held that the emperor and the state were "of one body."[63] The emperor, then, was the concrete manifestation of the abstract spirit of the state (*kokka shin*). To disobey or plot against the one, then, was a show of disloyalty to the other. At the root of much anti-state activism during the late Meiji period, however, was an effort to strike at the state's key symbol for legitimacy, the divine status of the emperor. Miyashita Takichi, a machine operator at the Kamezaki iron factory in Aichi prefecture, provides an example. After his arrest in connection with the assassination plot in 1910 (the High Treason Incident), he is said to have stated in a preliminary hearing: [64]

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[61] Natsume Soseki, "Bungei to dōtoku," pp. 383-384.

[62] Katayama, "Waga shakaishugi," p. 113.

[63] Fukasaku, for example, makes such an assertion, in *Kokumin dōtoku yōgi*, p. 233. Also see Karasawa Tomitarō, *Kyōkasho no rekishi*, p. 278.

[64] Akiyama, *Hangyaku shisō*, p. 41. This translation, with only slight revision on my part, is in Crump, *Origins of Socialist Thought*, p. 312.

> Because the people of our country hold this sort of superstition about the imperial family [i.e., the emperor's divinity], it was totally impossible to realize socialism. Hence, I made up my mind to first make a bomb and then throw it at the emperor. I had to show that even the emperor is a human being that bleeds just like the rest of us, and thus destroy the people's superstition.

Miyashita, an anarchist activist, believed that the representation of the emperor as divine was the greatest obstacle to the spread of socialism in Japan and helped maintain what he viewed as an exploitative and immoral capitalist system. Like Uchiyama, Miyashita was executed for high treason.

Kaneko Fumiko, an anarchist activist imprisoned for treason in 1923, was even more than Miyashita, outspoken in her views of the emperor:

> We have in our midst someone who is supposed to be a living god, one who is omnipotent and omniscient.…Yet his children are crying because of hunger, suffocating to death in the coal mines, and being crushed to death by factory machines. Why is this so? Because, in truth, the emperor is a mere human being.

As for "the concepts of loyalty to the emperor and love of nation," they were "simply rhetorical notions that are being manipulated by the tiny group of the privileged classes to fulfill their own greed and interests."[65]

Thus, the strategy of attacking National Morality's most central truth-claims, as with efforts to lay bare the moral failings of the state and to contest the meaning of the terms of moral discourse, disrupted the legitimacy of National Morality. National Morality discourse, then, was by no means merely abstract and philosophical; it was deeply intertwined with the thought and activities of anarchists, socialists, and others that called into question the state's own moral vision for society.

Conclusions: The Dangers of the Moral Ideal

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[65] Kaneko is cited in Mikiso Hane, *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Pre-War Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 124.

The conception of the good at the root of National Morality discourse was a product of its intellectual context. In his *Outline*, Inoue claimed that through his newly formulated moral theory, the question of good and evil could finally be settled. But Inoue's decisive solution to the problem of good and evil was in fact a contingent normative claim produced within a specific set of historical conditions. Contemporary accounts of National Morality devote inadequate attention to the historical conditions out of which National Morality emerged. These accounts represent National Morality as a set of statements about loyalty, filiality, the family-state, and patriotism. Centering solely on these elements, they abstract National Morality discourse from its philosophical and socio-political contexts, and consequently overlook National Morality's connections with the philosophical movement known as Personalism and the Dangerous Thought of anarchism, socialism, individualism, and literary naturalism.   Inoue's configuration of the good as the pursuit of an ideal, and the ideal itself as complete personality, reflects the appropriation of the language and concepts of Personalism. But National Morality scholars reconfigured the terms of Personalism in such a way that the only "truly good" action was action that served the state. Unlike Personalism's ideal of self-realization, the ideal of National Morality was the perfection of the state. The good was the attempt to universalize a contingent and highly local moral perspective, or to create a state-directed moral homogeneity through the suppression of difference. Read as allegory, Inoue's ostensibly apolitical treatise on National Morality was, in fact, a highly political effort to articulate the moral basis for Japan's national identity and thereby to provide philosophical justification for the state's cultivation of loyal subjects and its suppression of what it deemed Dangerous Thought.   Dangerous   Thought   was dangerous because both its existence and assertions undermined National Morality's claim to speak for the good. While National Morality proponents demanded the approach toward their moral ideal – the state of moral homogeneity in which all subjects faithfully served the state – the presence of Dangerous Thought served as testimony to National Morality's failure to attain its ideal. In short, Dangerous Thought was viewed as an obstacle to the good and as the cause of social disorder. The pursuit of social order and the cultivation of loyal action that served the state required its eradication.   But why did this new

configuration of National Morality, one that began with Inoue's lectures in 1910-11, emerge when it did? The state's desire to create moral community produced various "other" moral communities (supporters of anarchism, individualism, etc.) who were unable to find a place for themselves in the National Morality vision for society. As this article has shown, the process of creating community through exclusion was oftentimes violent, and with the twelve executions in the High Treason Incident, neither the state nor the population in general could ignore the violence carried out by the state in its pursuit of its ideal. The violence of the National Morality project had become apparent to its architects.

Attempting to justify the state's use of violence in the suppression of anarchism and other forms of Dangerous Thought, Inoue wrote, "Those who embrace destructive thought are, in history's judgment, in error."[66] Yet, through their engagement with Dangerous Thought, Inoue and other National Morality advocates were forced to confront the realization that National Morality was itself a form of destructive and dangerous thought that worked to legitimize the open, physical violence the state used against its enemies. Moreover, its efforts to reduce various other normative orientations to a single homogeneous moral space must be viewed as a form of violence as well – the violence of the suppression of otherness.

Yet, the discourse on National Morality enabled, sustained, and reproduced Dangerous Thought even while seeking to annihilate it. In their quest to monopolize the authority to speak for the morality of the entire nation, National Morality proponents brought the issue of the moral ideal to the center of public discourse, thereby enabling those excluded by this ideal to question it. In other words, National Morality discourse opened up a space of dissent. It provided the discursive conditions for marginalized voices not merely to be feared, but also heard. Moreover, although National Morality and modes of thought opposed to National Morality posed a threat to one another, each needed the other to define and sustain itself. For National Morality, the dangerous other helped sustain its own vitality and urgency. In this sense, while National Morality and the state actively sought the annihilation of Dangerous Thought, the complete eradication of the other would have erased or at least greatly weakened the significance of National Morality.

To invoke the dangerous and destructive character of socialism,

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[66] Inoue, *Kokumin dōtoku gairon*, p. 10.

anarchism, and individualism was, therefore, not merely a descriptive activity, it was performative as well. That is, it served to create and re-create the other as the dangerous object to be opposed, suppressed, and feared. This constant condemnation of the other worked to sustain it. Every assertion on behalf of National Morality implicitly reinforced a negative conception of the other. To approach the moral ideal, then, was not to move forward or upward toward some "better" end, but to sustain the current heterogeneous social reality of conflict and dissension. In other words, to approach was always to remain within the realm of violence and suppression, and this meant the constant but incomplete annihilation of the other.

The idea of a "national morality" continues as a focus of moral discourse in contemporary Japan. In 2000, social critic, writer, and former lecturer at Tokyo University, Nishibe Susumu published a work entitled *National Morality* (*Kokumin no dōtoku*). In this text, there is much that is reminiscent of the National Morality movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. But Nishibe's project is part of a new discourse with new objectives and new enemies. Unlike Inoue and others in the 1910s who sought to eradicate the Dangerous Thought of anarchism, socialism, and individualism, Dangerous Thought for Nishibe is "civil society" and its values.

Nishibe explains the crime and political corruption of contemporary Japan as a kind of moral decline brought on by the postwar diffusion of the values of American-style modernism. The specific culprits, says Nishibe, are progressivism, humanism, pacifism, and democracy, as these form the foundation for values that privilege not the public realm, but the realm of private benefit. In Nishibe's view, "liberty destroys morality," and the idea that "all are born equal" is an exaggeration and an "unproven proposition." As for "humanism that stresses the dignity of the individual," it is "nothing more than a rash, arrogant human narcissism." Nishibe calls for a rebuilding of morality in such a way as to restore "public order" and to address the "loss of spirit" Japan suffered with its defeat in the Pacific War.[67]

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[67] Nishibe Susumu, *Kokumin no dōtoku* (Tokyo: Sankei shimbun nyūsu sābisu, 2000), pp. 212, 279. Also see Hamabayashi Masao, ed., *Tettei hihan: Kokumin no dōtoku* (Tokyo: Ōtsuki shoten, 2001), p. 17. The *Tettei*

The struggle to resist the hegemonic claims of civil society and its putatively universal values led Nishibe to the imposition of his own hegemonic claims about values common to all Japanese. His project is thus predicated upon Nihonjinron (Japanese uniqueness)-style assertions of Japanese identity. But, as with National Morality discourse a century ago, will not the efforts of Nishibe and his supporters to universalize (within Japan) some formal conception of "Japanese values" involve the suppression of alternative moralities? It appears that the problematic notion of a "national morality" is as much in need of critical scrutiny today as it was in Japan a century ago.

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hihan text provides a collection of articles that oppose and critique Nishibe's work.