

Common Consciousness

Uchiyama Gudō

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What is common consciousness? Before I answer to this, let me try to talk a bit about consciousness.

Consciousness means to become aware of something by oneself. This, in turn, does not mean to discover something that others do not know, nor does it mean that one should not learn from others. To become aware of something by oneself refers to things, no matter whether learned from others or discovered by oneself, that one digests deeply in one's mind and makes one's own. Moreover, if we distinguish consciousness in terms of social class, we come up with several differences. The consciousness of a priest is not the same as that of a politician. The consciousness of a priest is also probably different from that of a philosopher. In fact, even priests, depending on their geographic location and historical period, cannot be said to all be the same.

Thus, there are myriad differences in consciousness, depending on the person, time, and place; however, there must be something that is common to them all. There must be something that is at stake for all of them, as they all live in this world. The learned and the uneducated, the noble and the lowly, the rich and the poor – there is something they must become conscious of through cooperation. This is what I call “common consciousness”.

Conscious Action

The development of an individual and the development of a nation can be considered to be the same process. For example, when an individual is still a child, all of its interests depend exclusively on those of its father, elder brother, and the elders. But when one grows up, he will not follow blindly his father or elder brother against his own will; in other words, he will act in a conscious way. In the same fashion, when a nation is in its infancy, people are subjugated to other people: those of great strength, vast knowledge, and immense wealth. However, when members of a society advance to the point of acquiring consciousness of their ability to become free, all individuals begin to participate in politics, from the village on up to the state. At first, we the people are taught that our existence depends on the sovereign, and we accept this idea blindly, but eventually, we acquire consciousness that the government is an organism working for us, the people. People then become able to advocate democracy.

I don't know what the consciousness of a priest or a scholar is, but for those of us who are satisfied with the consciousness of common people, we think that it is enough if each individual among the people will acquire consciousness to this extent. Therefore, in the following chapters, I will discuss common people's consciousness.

1. Individual consciousness
2. Family consciousness
3. Village consciousness
4. Municipality consciousness
5. Factory consciousness
6. Agricultural consciousness
7. National consciousness

Individual Consciousness

If we look at the long history of the human race, we find that in the beginning, humans lived contented with the fruits given to them by nature, or on fish, birds, and animals; to protect themselves from the weather, they could do nothing but take shelter under trees or in caves. They were in this condition for a long time. However, the human race has as its progenitor a mysterious holy spirit that makes us progress without pause until we reach the ultimate. Our progress may be as slow as the steps of a cow, but we have passed down that immortal spirit to our sons and grandsons, and until now we have been struggling against the immense power of nature. Because of that struggle, today we have agriculture, animal husbandry, and industries that satisfy our desires for clothing, food, and dwelling; for our spiritual dimension, there are schools, churches, and books for the continuous improvement and progress of our spirit.

But our spirit is not satisfied with all this and, day and night, it continues fighting against our external circumstances. How long must we keep struggling before we can stop? There is no simple answer to that. However, there is something we do know. If we look at the traces left by our ancestors, and if we observe the spirit carried by the blood coursing through our arteries, there we hear the incessant sound “freedom, freedom.” Yes, our ancestors, consciously or unconsciously, have been struggling for this freedom, and since we share the very same spirit, we too must keep on fighting until victory, no matter how strong nature’s hardships and how cruel the ruler’s despotism.

What is the freedom we will achieve after this struggle? To put it simply, it is being able to always act according to one’s will, without ever being obstructed or bothered by anyone. That is, it means to always respect one’s own will while at the same time respecting the will of the others, and to live in peace. In short, the final goal of the human race is independence and mutual aid, the realization of freedom, equality, and fraternity. If we look at the evolution of politics, law, religion, and ethics, they have been developing from heteronomy toward autonomy; thus after attaining self-governance the people will use their eventual individual surpluses to compensate for other’s inefficiencies. This is natural evolution, and this is also the ultimate ideal of life. Everyone should fight and strive toward this goal.

Many seem to doubt that these ideas will improve the lot of all people. The doubters stress that human beings are just a kind of animal; their animal nature, which forces them to ignore others in order to satisfy their own desires, cannot be eliminated, as it is based in our bodies. However, as in the old verse, “take the weeds from the paddy field, and they will become fertilizer,” with the development of the spirit, the effort toward satisfying one’s endless desires will be perceived as inferior to enjoying life together with all others.

How do we know this? Because many of our ancestors have said so. As in the saying, “eliminate selfishness and act with benevolence,” you all know many people who have saved their fellows from hardship even at the cost of their own precious lives. Besides, aren’t there in the army today hundreds of thousands of young people in the prime of their youth from all over the country, ready to give their lives at any time for their nation?

When we think about all these facts, we understand that we human beings are not like cows or horses; we are not made to live subjected to authoritarian rule but instead need to be independent and free to act as we choose. This is what we call the individual's common consciousness.

No matter how well the government develops, no matter how kindly public officials lead us, they will never be able to satisfy our ideal. The more complicated the government becomes, the more corrupt it gets. Isn't it the same for tribunals? The criminal should repent autonomously and restrain himself. no matter how well the trial has been conducted, no one will know the truth better than the criminal. In particular, there is nothing more dangerous than to pass judgment on the basis of fragmentary proof. Today's government and legal system cannot function without ignoring human personality. This is part of the evolutionary process, and our consciousness must fight against it.

People commonly say that women differ from men, in that they don't need to be explicitly taught the art of living; for them, they say, it's enough to keep the house in order and raise their children. But the people who think this are very wrong. Especially today, with a huge gap between rich and poor due to the system of private ownership, this argument is profoundly mistaken. Women are not men's belongings. When husband and wife make a family together, the man is mainly responsible for securing the means of livelihood, while the woman, as his assistant, keeps order at home. This may be good as a method for division of labor; however, life is impermanent. The wife doesn't know when and for what reason she might be separated from her husband. When that happens, she, who had been making a living out of her husband's patrimony, should be able to live off of her own work without any inconvenience. Today, many people, even women, work. Especially women who are left alone with small children, when the time comes to give the children an education, if the women have no jobs they find themselves in deep desperation. one could perhaps say that these women should remarry, but then the tragedy of life would only repeat itself.

Someone could say that if we take ten people, all ten would disagree with what I just said. Indeed, that is true. One does not have to learn a profession just in anticipation of separation from one's husband. Since men and women are equal as individuals, they must work in order to raise their children and support their parents. Thus, women must also work. Theirs should not be a dependent and submissive work as befitting someone who belongs to a man; instead, women should learn an independent profession. There seem to be many contrary opinions to this. Old habits in particular will not make it easy to realize our ideas, but nonetheless, we should make up our minds and strive to achieve them.

We human beings, firmly based in this consciousness, should reflect on our present condition. Then, in the same way as we don't regret giving up our life for the state, we should keep fighting for freedom.

We human beings are all different, and some of us will be far from attaining such consciousness; others will be closer to it. Others still, having overcome this common consciousness, might be waiting at a loftier dimension. In any case, everyone should advance to this stage. Even though you are like travelers at dusk at the foot of a mountain, you should not be discouraged, because you will certainly advance step by step toward the top of that mountain called consciousness. Isn't it so? Anyone who looks attentively at human history will understand that all people, the wise and the fool, and also the poor, are heading toward the shore of freedom, each in their own way.

Thus, from the standpoint of such consciousness, how shall each of us human beings act? First of all, the adults, men and women, who are able to leave their fathers and elder brothers and live independently should take care of their own lives autonomously. When one's individual desire clashes with someone else's, they should talk with each other and make efforts to accommodate one another. In other words, one should improve upon the habit of giving to others what one desires for oneself. Then, no matter how many social groups will have been formed, it will be possible to live in peace, each developing in full one's characteristics without hurting the others.

The family, the state, the entire world: they are all aggregations of individuals, and if each individual simply lived and acted according to pure-hearted kindness – that is, with a spirit of independence and freedom, the will to help the weak, and caring for one's neighbor – we would all be able to live a peaceful and perfect collective life. We human beings should develop our spirit of independence and solidarity and fight against those who oppose this, even at the risk of our own lives.

Family Consciousness

The family is the social group closest to the individual, and if it were composed only of individuals who have acquired consciousness, it would be possible to get closer to freedom day by day, smoothly and without problems. However, the family is not composed of only individuals who have acquired consciousness. There may be a grandfather and grandmother who were born during the feudal age, there may be a wife who comes from a background with different habits from those of her husband's family, and there may be children born later. A family is a group composed of all these people. The head of the household, its center, must make a very strong effort to bring the light of freedom to all.

First of all, the head of the household who has acquired consciousness should act every day with the intention to teach the other family members – his parents, grandparents, sisters, and wife. The householder with a family of three or five should, as a matter of fact, always eat his three daily meals with his family; except when circumstances prevent him from doing so, he should avoid eating elsewhere. It won't be easy to do, but it is the duty of each single head of household to keep the good custom of taking meals together with his family. In addition, he should prepare soft food especially for the elders; everyone should put the elders first in accordance with the customs to treat elders with respect.

When there are guests, it is particularly important to have meals together with one's family. There may be cases in which this is inconvenient, and some people might think that this is a form of disrespect toward the guests. However, the householder who has acquired the consciousness that one should abandon self-conceit and share joys and sorrows with one's family, should act in this way and break old customs. In an ordinary family, difficulties arise from financial problems. In the case of a guest requiring the extraordinary expenditure of 50 sen, the householder who has attained consciousness should use those 50 sen, calmly and unashamedly, for a banquet for the whole family [and not only for the guest]. If you act in this way, you can easily imagine the happiness you will bring to your family life.

It goes without saying that the householder who has acquired consciousness should never ever make use of harmful food and drinks. Harmful substances are things such as sake and tobacco.

In addition to sharing food, clothing, and shelter impartially, and distributing chores among the family members according to their abilities, there should be a home economics meeting once a week or once a month, where family concerns should be discussed among all family members under the coordination of the head of the family. In this way, regardless of the family's wealth or poverty, a family will be a little paradise.

Next, when children are born, from when they wear diapers they are raised by the mothers, but the head of the family who has acquired consciousness should not neglect his duties toward the children. As they say, "the soul of a three-year-old child attains one hundred years." Accordingly, one should not forget to infuse one's own spirit that has acquired consciousness from the time of a child's infancy. Toward that goal, while taking good care to protect the child, one should try to raise the child in the habit of acting as much as possible in its own way. Concerning children's education and choice of profession, parents should advise them upon considering their qualities, but should never force something upon them. When the time comes for one's son to choose a wife, also in this case parents should respect his freedom; they should instruct him to fight against freedom's enemies.

The greatest troubles for a family come not from wife, siblings, or children, but from one's parents and grandparents, who are from a different era. It is not easy to influence people who hold on to a fixed way of thinking and who have kept old customs for many years. The head of the household should help them acquire consciousness by holding formal conversations with them during family gatherings at least once a week. Since truth will eventually triumph one day, the light of freedom will doubtlessly and without fail illuminate the whole family and bestow its blessings upon all.

Village Consciousness

Villages, towns, and cities are the smallest organizations among local governments. In particular, the inhabitants of towns rather than cities, and those of villages rather than towns [have had close] human relations since the time of their ancestors, and these are the most intimate communities after the family. There are even villages composed of one extended family; if we look at their ancestors we find out that many of them come from either the same family or are related to one single family. Since a village is an extended family, one should expect to find in it no large differences of rank, and wealth as appropriate to the most harmonious paradise of peace; however, present conditions prevent it from being so.

The cause for this is vainglory [excessive vanity or pride], promoted as the most important aspect of our society; this consists of ignoring the others and trying to be successful alone. Another cause, I believe, is the enormous influence of the system of private property.

In the distant past, land, the most important asset in a village, was all held in common. With population growth, since land does not increase, the system of private property was introduced. At the beginning, each individual was allotted the same amount of land, but since human life keeps changing year after year, generation after generation, natural disasters and individual predispositions over a long time resulted sometimes in family dispersion. Then, some people took advantage of other people's misfortune and tried to satisfy their own desire. This is how differences in wealth originated, even in a village in which at the beginning everyone was equal; this situation still continues today.

Since material conditions (food, clothing, and shelter) have a great influence in human life, the gap separating the rich and the poor, which is largely related to such material conditions, necessarily affects the constitution and character of each individual. Even in minor things, the rich call the poor filthy and vulgar: just talking with them is polluting. The poor, on their part, point to the pompous manners of the rich and slander them behind their backs by saying that the rich are full of hot air and are unable to produce even one single grain of rice, that money doesn't last forever, and that they cannot do how they please all the time just because they have money.

Even under today's system of local autonomy, in the same village there are those who enjoy civil rights and those who don't. Those with civil rights can participate in the administration of the village, but those without them are not allowed such participation. Even among those who enjoy civil rights, there are distinctions in the rights to which they are entitled, as in the electorate of first and second class. In short, even in local administration, there are three kinds of differences among people of the same village. In addition, we cannot fathom the damages inflicted upon the personality of school-children because of differences in wealth; the same is true about participation in village rituals.

In other words, you would expect that, as inhabitants of the same village, people would have mutual interactions of the most intimate and peaceful nature, but that is not the case, primarily because of the distinctions between the rich and the poor; and what makes such distinctions even more important is the system of private property.

How can we redress this situation? To put it bluntly, since it would be difficult to abolish the present system of private property and replace it with collectivization, we should at first urge the persons of influence to build many public facilities and let all villagers enjoy them.

The mayor who governs the village should certainly increase the collective resources and actively establish institutions of compulsory education such as elementary schools, in order to promote [among villagers] knowledge [useful] to increase the village's economic production. He should also establish municipal and trade-union hospitals, public hygiene facilities not only limited to [treatment of] contagious diseases, that are free for all patients from the village. Next, he should establish a town hall at the center of the village, where ceremonies can be performed, where the residents of the village can have friendly exchanges: meetings of senior citizens, young people, married women, young girls, etc. Expenses for these activities should all be drawn from public funds, so as to make participation in these gatherings possible irrespective of individual wealth.

It goes without saying the prohibition of harmful drinks and food should be upheld in the same way as in families who have acquired consciousness. No matter how well organized the village government, if it allows harmful habits such as sake, tobacco, and gambling, it risks spoiling everything despite having put so much effort into this.

Municipal Consciousness

Residents of cities, towns, and villages should acquire essentially the same consciousness, but since there are great differences in wealth and status, the leaders should have the highest consciousness and make the strongest effort, otherwise it will be difficult to attain the level of consciousness necessary in cities and towns. To that purpose, the mayors and the members of mu-

municipal assemblies should exercise the spirit of public interest, respect the individuality of each resident, and establish adequate public facilities. They should be especially generous with the creation of professional schools that form the basis of independent economic activity for men and women. They should strive to increase the fundamental assets (common wealth) of urban residents so that they can enjoy a peaceful life and develop refined tastes.

Factory Consciousness

What is the industrial sector? Before I talk about this, it is perhaps necessary to outline the development of industry.. Early modern industrial development began in an age in which industry was a family economic activity, and then shifted to the age of handicraft. Later it further evolved into the present age of corporate industry.

It is possible to distinguish two kinds of corporate industry. The first is house industry; the second is factory industry. Now, is all industry part of corporate industry? Not necessarily. If we fill a box with soybeans, we cannot add more soybeans to it, but there is still some room for millet or sesame; in the same way, even though great corporate industry is becoming prominent, family industry and handicraft still exist. In general, all everyday commodities such as food, shelter, and clothing – commodities necessary to human life – in particular have come to be produced by large factories because of what we could consider, from the point of economic evolution, a natural law. Therefore, we should understand that what we call industry consciousness only refers to large factories.

A society that has acquired consciousness needs to be ordered in a well-regulated fashion, and the method to realize this consists first in hygiene [necessities], second, in convenience, and third, in ornaments [luxuries], all of which should be evenly universalized. Since the industrial sector supplies commodities needed by society, industry should be organized according to the same method.

First, it is obvious that each local area should operate its characteristic and most convenient industries according to general estimates of supply and demand in the entire world, but it is natural that manufacturing should be carried out as close as possible to the place of production of the raw materials. Today's industrial sector is based on a nation's economy, and the state aims for self-sufficiency; to that purpose, it enforces protectionist and tariff policies and engages in international competition. As I see it, this is a ridiculous policy, and even though it might be unavoidable as a step in the process towards the acquisition of consciousness, I believe that this useless and harmful international competition should be abolished immediately. These policies cause immeasurable damage to our project to build a paradise.

The first measure that is necessary to carry out this program is to establish a worldwide labor union for each factory in the same sector (cotton mills, textile factories, etc.); after estimating the demand for the year, production will be distributed to each factory, which will have to provide [its share of the] supply. Today's system of private property's exclusive focus on personal interest is a problem, but the entire industrial world ends up pursuing only this.

An opponent might say that this would create a huge monopoly that would control the means of production, with the result that the buyer would be charged unfairly high prices. Certainly, from the perspective of the present system, this is perhaps not an unreasonable concern. This is why we emphasize shared ownership of the means of production. Aside from art and luxury

items, necessary commodities such as clothing, food, and shelter, which are indispensable to everyone, should all be supplied by communal factories. This is the bottom line.

This is the level of consciousness that we have to attain and we should act with this as our compass. Those who try to stop us should be wiped away.

As for the method itself, it is conceivable that both capitalists and workers who have acquired consciousness will find the necessary clues and start the whole process.

The capitalist who has acquired consciousness will reject the old crime of living out of his capital and will come to realize that all human beings must secure their clothing and food through their own labor – this is what the old sages called paradise or the land of the gods. After making his own capital available without compensation to all as a resource for livelihood, he will think of how to best employ his talent and labor in order to realize such a paradise as soon as possible.

What should the workers who have acquired consciousness do? Each of them should master a technique they like and, in accordance with their natural disposition, they should strive to master a technique that they like and, in accordance with their natural disposition, they should strive to make the despotic capitalists feel remorse and amend their ways. In order to do so, they should strengthen the unity of the workers. Each [worker] should make contributions, and require the capitalists to also make contributions, [to a common relief fund] in order to neutralize as much as possible the effects of both natural and human-caused disasters.

They should establish collective scholastic institutions so that the children of the workers can more easily receive an education. Moreover, a method of insurance should be devised in order to protect the elderly and those affected by incurable diseases; collective hospitals should be established and made available to all in cases of emergency. Collective clubs (recreational organizations) should be established so that the tastes and the knowledge [of the workers] can be improved and developed. Furthermore, factories should turn into collective properties of all the workers, thereby realizing democracy in the industrial sector; this is the first step toward the realization of paradise.

I'm just listing these things, but the path leading us there has mountains and valleys, and they will not let us walk through it easily. Many comrades will have to shed their blood along the way. The workers who have acquired consciousness should take the lead and try out this process in advance.

Those who spend their lives, no matter how long, without acquiring consciousness, and those who have acquired consciousness but just follow their whims without [putting their consciousness into] action, are destined to enter into annihilation; those who act in accordance with their consciousness, even if they should die when they are just seven years old, will achieve eternal life. The saying by Confucius, "if one heard the Way in the morning, it is all right to die in the evening," refers to what I just said, because that person has been involved, even just a little, in the realization of paradise. Conscious action also involves many painful experiences, such as separation from one's parents, abandoning one's wife and children, being misunderstood by one's friends. However, the fall of one individual is for the happiness of many in society; as the saying goes, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." In this way, by overcoming many difficulties in order to put one's consciousness into practice, one will repeatedly bask in one's holy spirit as a conscious person and will be able to engage in self-cultivation in everyday life.

Such a wholesome worker, ready to die in the struggle for paradise, is the person most loved by god. Because of that, even the most stubborn capitalists and the classes in power will be able

to acquire consciousness of their sins. It's up to the worker who has acquired consciousness to put all of his or her effort into this.

Agricultural Consciousness

Considering the fact that agriculture originated before industry, it would seem that agricultural consciousness should be achieved sooner than that of industry, but in fact this is not the case, and industry appears to be attaining consciousness ahead of agriculture. This is due to the fact that the industrial workers come from an agricultural background. Their motivation for becoming industrial workers is that arable land, which is the foundation of production, is limited, but the reproduction of the human population is limitless, so the population in excess tends to move to the cities to become industrial workers. Moreover, during the feudal period, when there was no freedom to migrate like today, many second and third sons of farmers were not able to establish their own independent family but lived all their lives with their parents or elder brothers. Because of these circumstances, those who move away are persons of initiative, whereas those who remain in their villages and continue their forefather's activities are conservative; therefore, they are in general slower to acquire consciousness.

However, as the sprouts of the new grass emerge underneath the snow in the spring, even though the snow has not completely melted in the valleys, so, following the acquisition of consciousness in the industrial sector, the agricultural sector will also acquire consciousness.

The acquisition of agricultural consciousness should also begin with common ownership of the land. This will follow the acquisition of consciousness by both landowners and tenant farmers; the landowners, in particular, should study this in depth. No one doubts that the land originally exists in nature; there are several legal arguments about its becoming private property in the present time. If we consider the facts, however, our distant ancestors originally developed this land and, as a result of their long labor, it has become today's cultivable land. Accordingly, we can only conclude that, as a matter of principle, today's landowner's exclusive property of the land and their request of half of the harvest are great crimes.

Even though opponents argue that the present landowners have bought their land at considerable expense and therefore haven't committed any wrong, purchasing the land itself was still wrong. If we think that this was a lawful action, then buying and selling stolen property should also be considered lawful. Furthermore, the very money used for that purchase is the accumulation of labor, and much capital originates from stealing the accumulation of honest labor. In other words, it is like power squeezing the blood out of the weak. If landowners wish to enter the realm of consciousness and bask in the happiness of eternal life, they should not try these twisted arguments.

To put it bluntly, everyone should make a living through one's work. Private property of the land and acquisition of clothing and food through stealing other's labor leads to eternal extinction. Acquiring consciousness of this situation, one should turn the land into common property and, accordingly, all workers should be entitled to the harvest of their own work. Each worker should acquire clothing and food according to their talent and effort, and live peacefully in this paradise of happiness.

Next, the agricultural workers, in view of the above truth, should make the landowners look into their own conscience, and for that purpose, the method should be...

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