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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs

—With Special Reference to Well-known English Proverbs— (5)
(日英諺の比較研究)

Kengo Tamura

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I Introduction

The English proverbs used in this paper have been selected from the books listed in the Bibliography at the end of this paper. In the present paper, the 30 proverbs which are taken up are divided into three categories, as shown in Part II of the Contents. These categories are used solely for the sake of convenience, and should not be considered as a definitive classification. For each category, 10 proverbs for (A), 10 for (B), and 10 for (C) have been chosen.

These proverbs were explained and provided with a simple commentary and quoted phrases, with Related Sayings listed below each. By the word 'proverb' as used in this paper is meant a short, popular, and witty saying which expresses some truth or useful knowledge or idea.

Notations used in this paper : —

Italics : Japanese

— — : the meaning of each English proverb

“ ” : quotation

II Categories of Proverbs

Category A

A-1 Art is long and life is short.

—Originally, (1) a lifetime is too short to acquire skills or learning in any depth. Now, (2) human life is short, but art, such as painting, music, etc., lasts far longer than the brief span of human life.—

The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates (about 460–377 B.C.) expressed his frustration thus : “Life is short, the art long, opportunity fleeting, experience treacherous, judgment difficult.” Many famous writers have used this saying in their work. “Art is long, and Time is fleeting, And our hearts, though stout and brave, still, like muffled drums, are beating, Funeral marches to the grave.” (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

(1) Even if you keep on studying only one of the sciences throughout your life, it is absolutely impossible to have a complete knowledge of it. You should keep on studying as long as you live.

(2) Artists are mortal, but amazingly their works live on forever. Their spirit is put into their works, which keep shining over the people throughout the world, just like the sun.

《Related Sayings》

1. *Shōnen oiyasuku gaku narigatashi.*

(A boy at once grows old before learning enough.)

2. Life is short, and time is swift.

3. Life is but a span.

—A stone will be gradually worn away by dripping water.—

Sometimes the word ‘continual’ is used instead of ‘constant’ in the US, and ‘dropping’ is used instead of ‘dripping’. Perseverance and patient effort will ultimately achieve a difficult and unlikely objective, no matter how puny the effort might seem. Making efforts in our lives is definitely a stepping stone to happiness, and making efforts towards great objectives is a privilege granted to man alone in the animal kingdom.

“When we do the best we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another.” (Helen Keller)

“We seldom break our leg so long as life continues a toilsome upward climb. The danger comes when we begin to take things easy and choose the convenient paths.” (Nietzsche)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Tenteki ishi o ugatsu.* (Tiny drops pierce even a hard stone.)
2. Little strokes fell great oaks.
3. Little by little and bit by bit.
4. Rome was not built in a day
5. At first you may not succeed, but try, try, and try again.
6. Where there is a will, there is a way.
7. Slow but sure wins the race.

—If one sets out to do something, one is sure to make mistakes along the way.

He who does not want to make mistakes avoids trying to do anything.—

You cannot achieve anything of real value without being prepared to risk making mistakes. Another English proverb says, “He who never fails will never grow rich.”, “Failure is the teacher of success.” This is true, but most young people today tend to avoid failure, and what is worse, they may think it quite possible to be successful in life without hardships. They do not recognize that their failures could be a stepping stone to success. The only difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is the way they are used.

“If *A* is success in life, then *A* equals *x* plus *y* plus *z*. Work is *x* ; *y* is play ; and *z* is keeping your mouth shut.” (Albert Einstein)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Shippai wa seikō no moto.* (Failure is the source of success.)
2. We learn by our mistakes.
3. Success has many fathers, while failure is an orphan.
4. From the sublime to the ridiculous is only one step.
5. Success is never final and failure is never fatal.
6. Failure is the only highroad to success.

A-4

Hunger is the best sauce.

—When one is hungry, all food tastes good, because he is so eager to eat it.—

A hungry man does not need sauce or seasonings even for plain food. This saying is universal and has been attributed to Socrates. The Latins also had a saying, “Hunger is the best cook.” If you want to enjoy your food, you should be hungry before dining. These days it is said that many Japanese children do not feel hungry because they can easily get and eat their favourite food as much as they want, and it is not surprising that some of them have diabetes and high blood pressure from overeating whatever they like. On the other hand, children in developing countries are dying of hunger every day. They cannot obtain enough food, because of various reasons caused by geographical, political, economical, and other problems in their countries. This unreasonable situation should be solved at once not only by politicians but also by each one of us.

“I have always believed and still believe that artists who live and work with spiritual values cannot and should not remain indifferent to a conflict in which the highest values of humanity and civilization are at stake.” (Pablo Picasso)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Himojii toki ni mazui mono nashi.* (When one is hungry, nothing is tasteless.)
2. Hungry dogs will eat dirty puddings.
3. Hunger finds no fault with the cookery.

A-5

It is easy to bear the misfortunes of others.

—It is easy for us to accept the ill fortunes of others and to deal summarily with

them.—

You can tell others in the face of misfortune to be cheerful because you do not have to suffer the hardship yourself. It is in the nature of things that you are basically unconcerned about others and consider yourself more important than other people, although you should not be too egotistic. You should cherish and value yourself, but you should not expect others to think much of you except in certain unavoidable cases. When you find someone unhappy, you should try to be considerate of him and help him. When you are in the depths of despair, you need to share your misery with someone because you cannot live alone.

“ ’Tis some comfort to have a companion in our sufferings.” (Susannah Centlivre)

“I never know any man in my life who could not bear another’s misfortunes perfectly like a Christian.” (Alexander Pope)

“All of us have sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortunes of others.” (Duc de La Rochefoucauld)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Tonari no binbo kamo no aji.* (A neighbour’s poverty has the good taste of duck.)
2. *Wagami o tsunette hito no itasa o shire.* (Pinch yourself to know the pain of others.)
3. Misery loves company.

A-6

Make haste slowly.

—Going slowly and carefully is often the quickest way to get something.—

If you act quickly, proceed with caution. In ancient Greece, this proverb meant that tasks done in too much haste were performed badly and not on time. Sometimes this proverb is quoted in its Latin version *festina lente*.

Fruit and vegetables produced by using chemicals, and fish raised by man-made feed at a farm are worse for your health than those which are grown in a natural environment. Using artificial chemicals in the production of plants and animals for food is expanding everywhere in the world, which is sometimes very harmful for our health. Why do people use chemicals in the production of food? Maybe they are making haste to cause plants and animals to grow faster in order to gain more profit. However, organic farming methods should not be neglected either. It is impossible for man to fight against nature.

“The greatest assassin of life is haste, the desire to reach things before the right

time, which means overreaching them.” (Juan Ramón Jiménez)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Isogaba maware.* (When in haste, take the round-about way.)
2. *Seitewa koto o shisonjiru.* (Haste makes waste.)
3. More haste, less speed.
4. Anger and haste hinder good counsel.
5. A hasty man drinks his tea with a fork.
6. Haste makes waste.

A-7

Other times, other manners.

—Each generation or era has different manners.—

It is in the nature of things that, as times change, so do our way of life, standards of behaviour, and language. It is difficult for old and conservative people to accept the manners of a new era, and they often criticize the behaviour and the way of thinking of the younger generation. Different standards of behaviour are appropriate in different eras, although they may be obsolete now. There are some harmful customs, including unscientific medical care, superstitions, and so on. They should be changed quickly, because not all traditions have been altered by the progress of society. On the other hand, some good traditions have survived and are still giving people hope and courage. You should be flexible about accepting what is necessary and abandoning the harmful conventions of the past.

“Time is a strange thing. It is a whimsical tyrant, which in every century has a different face for all that one says and does.” (Goethe)

“Every epoch has its character determined by the way its population react to the material events which they encounter.” (Alfred North Whitehead)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Utsureba kawaru yono narai.* (Times change and so do customs.)
2. Time changes and we with time.

A-8

There is no place like home.

—Home is the place where one feels comfortable and happiest.—

No matter how humble it may be, home is the most satisfying place to be. This phrase comes from ‘Home, Sweet Home’, a well-known song by John Howard

Payne, an American actor and playwright. “Mid pleasures and palaces tho’ we may
room, / Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home ; / A charm from the sky
seems to hallow us there, / Which, seek through the world, is ne’er met with else-
where. / Home, home, sweet, sweet, home ! / There’s no place like home ! there’s
no place like home ! /

It is true that you can find the greatest solace and contentment at home, but this
happiness is mainly acquired and being maintained by the efforts of each member of
the family. There is originally no ‘utopia’ anywhere in the world. The form of the
family has not changed since the days of antiquity.

“It’s hard for women, you know, / To get away. There’s so much to do. / Husbands
to be patted and put in good temper ; / Servants to be urged : children washed / Or
soothed with lullabies or fed with mouthfuls of pap. (Aristophanes, 448–385 B.C.)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Wagaya ie raku no kama-darai.* (There is no place like home, even when one has
to use a kettle for a tub.)
2. East or west, home is best.
3. Home is where the heart is.

A-9

There is no royal road to learning.

—One cannot attain learning without hard work.—

A royal road to something is a way of getting it without effort, and so a king’s way
is always built smooth. This saying has been traced back to Ptolemy I, who asked
Euclid (about 325 B.C.) if there were some easier ways of mastering geometry
other than learning. Euclid answered, “There is no royal short cut to geometry.”
Even if you acquire fragmentary knowledge over a long period of time, it will not be
useful, for, at times, “a little learning is a dangerous thing.” When you learn, you
should keep it mind that what you learn will bring many benefits to you and other
people. The writer believes that we should try to aim at attaining, not ‘learning for
learning’s sake’, but ‘learning for life’s sake’.

“Knowledge, [like a tree,] is a comfortable and necessary retreat and shelter for us
in an advanced age ; and if we do not plant it while young, it will give us no shade
when we grow old.” (Lord Chesterfield)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Gakumon ni chikamichi nashi.* (There is no short cut to learning.)

2. Little by little and bit by bit.

(See A-2)

A-10

Throw a sprat to catch a mackerel.

—If you want to get a big fish, use a small fish as a bait.—

It is worth sacrificing a little in order to make a large profit.

“Fishing is a risky business ; you have to be prepared to venture a small fish to catch a great one.” (John Clarke)

The principle of business is to make a large profit by a small investment. It is a well-known business strategy to use a small sprat to get a big mackerel. However, some companies abuse this saying, and sell their inferior goods at an exorbitant price to gain an excessive profit. “The commerce of the world is conducted by the strong, and usually it operates against the weak.” (Henry Ward Beecher). You should take care not to be deceived by such false economic activities, but it is not easy to find out this type of injustice.

“It is difficult but not impossible to conduct strictly honest business. What is true is that honesty is incompatible with the amassing of a large fortune.” (Mohandas K. Gandhi)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Ebi de tai o tsuru.* (One catches a seabream with a shrimp.)
2. A small gift often brings a great reward.
3. If a poor man offers you a present, he expects a return.
4. You give a pea for a bean.
5. You must lose a fly to catch a trout.

Category B

B-1

All's fair in love and war.

—When you are in love or are waging a war, you are allowed to use all strategies, no matter how underhand or unprincipled they may be.—

The rules of fair play do not apply in love and war. The assumption behind this proverb is that “the end justifies the means.” These two sayings, “When a war

begins, hell opens.” and “Love is lawless (or without reason).” show that there was a link between love and war in proverb form even in the seventeenth century. As a matter of fact, most people know that any kind of war is totally unjustified, because many people are deprived of their lives. On the other hand, love has long been understood as a force which cannot be restrained. But you know that every human activity has rules, including love. Therefore, this proverb is used “as a commentary on, sometimes as an excuse for, a nasty underhand manoeuvre, perpetrated out of romantic love, out of love for one’s country or for business advantage.” (Dictionary of Proverbs and their Origins by Linda and Roger Flavell)

《Related Sayings》

1. He who hesitates is lost.
2. Losers are always wrong.
3. Might is right.
4. Necessity has no law.
5. History is written by the virtues.

B-2

All’s well that ends well.

—When the end is happy, it makes up for previous difficulties and failures.—

This saying is most familiar as the title of one of Shakespeare’s comedies. One version of the proverb is : “All’s well that ends well ; still the fine’s the crown ; whate’er the course the end is the renown.”

When you start doing something and cannot make a good start, or when you find that in the middle of the course of your undertaking you are not in a better position, then you console or cheer yourself up with this saying. From the viewpoint of never giving up, this saying is very helpful, but Max Lerner writes, “Despite the success cult, men are most deeply moved, not by the reaching of the goal, but by the grandness of the effort involved in getting there.” So, from the viewpoint of emphasizing the importance of the process of making an effort, this saying will not be accepted favourably.

《Related Sayings》

1. *Owari ga daiji.* (The end is important.)
2. *Owari o tsutsushimu koto hajime no gotokunba yabururu koto nashi.* (Lao-tsze) (If you are as careful about the ending as you were about the beginning, you will not fail in anything you do.) –*Nichi-Ei Koji Kotowaza Jiten* (Dictionary of Proverbs)

3. The end crowns the work.

B-3

All that glitters is not gold.

—Something that seems to be good on the surface may not be so when you look at it closely.—

You should not judge something by its outward appearance. Superficial attractiveness does not necessarily show what a thing really is.

You cannot judge inner character so easily. Most of us tend to judge other people by their appearance, including their position in society, academic background, financial status, and so on. Appearances are sometimes deceptive ; if they are genuine, they should not be too showy in order to attract others' attention. It is very important for us to distinguish the true from the false. It depends on your good judgment in these matters whether you can make your life happy or not.

“If the artificial is not better than the natural, to what end are all the arts of life ? To dig, to plough, to build, to wear clothes, are direct infringements of the injunction to follow nature.” (John Stuart Mill)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Hito wa mikake ni yoranu mono.* (One is not always what one appears to be.)
2. Don't judge a book by its cover.
3. Appearances are deceitful (deceptive, deceiving).
4. Never choose your women or linen by candlelight.

B-4

Don't cut off your nose to spite your face.

—Don't do anything in a fit of temper that will ultimately result only in harm to yourself.—

The meaning of 'to spite' here is 'to be revenged upon.' When you are cool-headed and reasonable, you can often judge correctly even in difficult situations, but when you lose your temper and indulge in angry and spiteful action, “it often happens that you cannot see the wood for the trees.” And so, you harm yourself just because it might also punish another person. When you get angry, you should control yourself and try to change your way of thinking. “Beware of the man who does not return your blow : he neither forgives nor allows you to forgive yourself.” (George Bernard Shaw)

“It is difficult to fight against anger, for a man will buy revenge with his soul.”
(Heraclitus, 500 B.C.)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Tanki wa sonki.* (A short temper results in loss.)
2. Do not burn down your house to annoy your wife’s mother.
3. He who digs a pit will fall into it. (Proverbs xxvi, 27)
4. Pardons and pleasantness are great revenges of slanders.
5. The remedy for injuries is not to remember them.

B-5

Even Homer sometimes nods.

—Even the greatest are liable to make mistakes.—

Even the great Greek poet, Homer, was not at his best all the time. Horace wrote of Homer’s occasional lapses : “Sometimes even good Homer himself nods ; but in so long a work [as the *Iliad*], it is allowable if there should be intervals of drowsiness.” Even the most gifted make mistakes when they are careless or overconfident. “The errors of great men are venerable because they are more fruitful than the truths of little men.” (Nietzsche). It is natural for people to make mistakes. There is yet another proverb which says, “To err is human, to forgive divine.” (Alexander Pope). When you do something, you should not be afraid of failure, and be lenient with the faults of others. It is disgraceful when someone takes advantage of your mistakes and weakness for his benefit. “Who throws a stone at the sky may have it fall on his head.”

“The stupid neither forgive nor forget ; the naive forgive and forget ; the wise forgive but do not forget.” (Thomas Szasz)

“A life spent in making mistakes is not only more honourable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.” (George Bernard Shaw)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Saru mo ki kara ochiru.* (Even a monkey falls from a tree sometimes.)
2. *Kōbō nimo fude no ayamari.* (Even Kōbō makes mistakes with his writing brush.)
3. Nobody is perfect.

B-6

Let bygones be bygones.

—Forget the past and don’t hold a grudge.—

This saying is based on a recurrent phrase from Homer's *Iliad* (850 B.C.) : "These things will we let be, as past and done." The word 'bygones' means events, usually offensive, that happened in the past. When you are insulted or treated unjustly by someone, if you keep on bearing a grudge against him, you are not happy, are you ? This saying tells you that you should forget unpleasant things in the past and that you should deal leniently with the faults of others. But there is another saying, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This means that one should study history to avoid mistakes of the past. This is one of the 265 proverbs that every American needs to know, according to E.D. Hirsh Jr. The idea of the latter proverb was expressed by Euripides (485-406 B.C.), who says, "Who so neglects learning in his youth, / Loses the past and is dead for the future."

《Related Sayings》

1. *Sugita koto wa mizu ni nagase.* (Let bygone flow away downstream.)
2. Things past cannot be recalled.
3. What's done cannot be undone.
4. The past always looks better than it was ; it's only pleasant because it isn't here.
5. Forgive and forget.
6. It is no use crying over spilt milk.
7. It's all water under the bridge.

B-7

Necessity is the mother of invention.

—When people really need to do something, they will find a way of doing it, even if it is very difficult.—

Plato said, "The true creator is necessity, who is the mother of invention." You can invent some devices when you have no option but to create something necessary. If you are satisfied with everything, you will not try to do anything, you will feel dull, and will get tired of life. When you have an empty space in your mind, you can find the pleasure of filling it with something you want, but when you are not needed by anyone in society, you will lose hope. As for bullying, it is said that nothing is unbearable than being ignored by others. As hunger is the best sauce, so necessity is the fountain of hope.

"The sovereign source of melancholy is repletion. Need and struggle are what excite and inspire us ; our hour of triumph is what brings the void. (William James)

"In the world, there are onle two tragedies. one is not getting what one wants, and

the other is getting it. (Oscar Wilde)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Kyū-sureba tsūzu.* (When you are in a desperate situation, there's always some way out.)
2. Necessity and opportunity may make a coward valiant.
3. Necessity knows no laws.

B-8 Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.

—Don't unnecessarily postpone doing something.—

It is good to do things at once instead of putting them off to a later date.

If you delay doing something, you often will not be able to do it another day, even if you intended to finish on that day, because you sometimes forget about it, or another job comes to you and you do not feel like doing it again. Those who can make the best use of their time can be successful in life by doing their jobs instantly. Maybe they think that “the best way to get rid of work is to do it quickly.” Those who make the worst use of their time will not be recognized or trusted by other people. They will waste precious time in their lives. And what is worse, they are not aware that they take other people's time away from them. “Successful people do what failures put off until tomorrow.”

“No idleness, no laziness, no procrastination ; never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.” (Earl of Chesterfield)

“Defer not till tomorrow to be wise, Tomorrow's sun may never rise.” (William Congreve)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Omoi tatta ga kitsujitsu.* (The day on which you resolve to do something is your lucky day.)
2. What may be done at any time is done at no time.
3. One of these days is none of these days.
4. Procrastination is the thief of time.
5. There is no time like the present.
6. Strike while the iron is hot.

—One finds it difficult to break old habits—

You tend to be slow to give up your accustomed behaviour, no matter how undesirable it may be. Japanese old people, after the Pacific war, worked very hard to support their families, and Japan has become a rich country. On the other hand, the young people now tend to be lazy and to take it for granted that they can live in luxury, but they should know that this wealthy life was given to them by the efforts of the previous generations. No one can guarantee that young people will always keep the same standard of living as their parents. If they get into the habit of behaving badly, especially while they are young, it is very difficult to get out of it when they become old. But you cannot criticize only young people for their laziness and extravagance. As a matter of fact, they are in bad circumstances, because in some respects, old people are responsible in part for the education of young people and many of today's young people were spoiled by older relatives when they were children. It is very important to cultivate good habits.

“The unfortunate thing about this world is that good habits are so much easier to give up than bad ones. (Somerset Maugham)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Narai sei to naru.* (Habit becomes nature.)
2. Habit is second nature.

—All hurts heal as time passes.—

Any intense emotion, such as pain, grief or hatred, heals with time as it passes. Not only pain, grief, etc., but also many problems can be resolved with the passage of time. When you are tormented by anxiety and it seems impossible to find relief, what should you do? You should do all you can and wait patiently for recovery. Time will never betray you. Pascal said, “Time heals griefs and quarrels, for we change and are no longer the same persons.” Basically, as time goes by, we can return to our original healthy selves. Time gives us the chance to change our way of thinking, to correct our mistakes, and to pass a cool-headed judgment on a problem.

“As we advance in age, we acquire a keener sense of the value of time. Nothing else,

indeed, seems of any consequence ; and we become misers in this respect.”
(William Hazlitt)

“Time is
Too slow for those who wait,
Too swift for those who fear,
Too long for those who grieve,
Too short for those who rejoice ;
But for those who love,
Time is eternity.” (Henry Van Dyke)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Toki ga kaiketsu suru.* (Time works wonders.)
2. Time and thought tame the strongest grief.
3. Time is the great physician.
4. Time will tell.

Category C

C-1 **Accidents will happen even in the best-regulated families.**

—Happenings that are not expected, foreseen, or intended may befall anyone, regardless of his conduct or family background.—

It is impossible to prevent completely things from going wrong even if you are very careful and very well organized. You should keep it in mind that heaven is fair to all, and that “heaven helps those who help themselves.” You cannot be too careful. Originally, this proverb was used when an unmarried girl or woman got pregnant. This saying usually expresses consolation for mistakes made. It is often shortened to “Accidents will occur,” as in the following passage from *David Copperfield* : “‘Copperfield,’ said Mr Micawber, ‘accidents will occur in the best-regulated families ; and in families not regulated by..... the influence of Woman, in the lofty character of Wife, they must be expected with confidence, and must be borne with philosophy.’” (Charles Dickens)

“now and then / who is so unlucky / that he runs into accidents / which started to happen / to somebody else.” (Don Marquis)

《Related Sayings》

1. Blind chance sweeps the world along.
2. It is better to be born lucky than rich.
3. Every man has his faults.
4. Every light has its shadow.
5. He that seeks a horse or a wife without fault, has neither a steed in his stable nor an angel in his bed.

C-2

Boys will be boys.

—One cannot expect a boy to behave as a grown man.—

It is in the nature of boys to be noisy, unruly, and mischievous. You should not be surprised when they behave in an immature manner characteristic of their age. But these days many children do not have a childlike innocence or quality. It is important for their future development of mind and body that children grow up energetic and full of life. The writer believes that children are all alike. This proverb may also be used rather scathingly by women in reference to their boyfriends or husbands when they behave in a childish or unfaithful manner. The word *boys* may be replaced by the words *girls*, *kids*, *teachers*, etc.

“A boy is a piece of existence quite separate from all things else, and deserves a separate chapter in the natural history of man.” (Henry Ward Beecher)

“Schoolboys have no fear of facing life. They champ at the bit. The jealousies, the trials, the sorrows of the life of man do not intimidate the schoolboy.” (Saint-Exupéry)

《Related Sayings》

1. Of children : one is one, two is fun, three is a houseful.
2. Children should be seen, not heard.
3. You cannot put an old head on young shoulders.
4. When children are quiet, they have done some ill.
5. Naughty boys sometimes make good men.

C-3

Cleanliness is next to godliness.

—Keeping clean in person and dress is second in importance only to religious devotion.—

It is important to keep yourself clean, and those who are clean are sure to win the approval of heaven. “Slovenliness is no part of religion ; neither this, nor any text of

Scripture, condemns neatness of apparel. Certainly, neatness is a duty, not a sin ; ‘cleanliness is indeed next to godliness’” (Sermons : On Dress)

Japanese people are fond of taking a bath every day and seem to pay much attention to cleanliness. This may be because of the extremes of climate in the country, and the individual habit of keeping clean and tidy which is mostly the result of the influence exerted by each family’s way of living.

“Cleanliness is not next to godliness nowadays, for godliness is regarded as an offence.” (G.K. Chesterton)

“Man and other civilized animals are the only creatures that ever become dirty.” (John Muir)

“What separates two people most profoundly is a different sense and degree of cleanliness.” (Nietzsche)

《Related Sayings》

1. For washing his hands, none sells his lands.
2. Clean and whole makes poor clothes shine.

C-4 Don’t change horses in midstream.

—One should not make changes when one is in the middle of doing something.—

This saying is generally used when you change your ideas or plans in the middle of a project or process. When you must change your mind, it is important to choose the right time ; you should not change direction or tactics in the middle of a difficult undertaking. It goes without saying that your life will be directed by the decision you make, because, even in the midst of an important project, you may at times find it best to change leaders. Abraham Lincoln quoted this proverb to his critics, when there was a demand for a change in the presidency : “I have not permitted myself, gentlemen, to conclude that I am the best man in the country : but I am reminded in this connexion of a story of an old Dutch farmer who remarked to a companion once that it was not best to swap horses when crossing a stream.” (English Proverbs Explained)

《Related Sayings》

1. A tree, often transplanted, bears not much fruit.
2. As a man lives, so shall he die : as a tree falls, so shall it lie.
3. Change of masters, change of manners.

—Don't put all you have into one business or one undertaking.—

This proverb teaches us that we should spread the risk by not entrusting all our hopes or resources to one single venture. In order to make a living wisely, it is important to take care not to lose everything in one venture. When investing your capital, you should not put the whole amount in a single speculation, but spread it over several. This is a business proverb, but if 'one basket' is replaced by 'one person', you need trustworthy people around you in all walks of life, and not only in your family or inner circle. Your life will be decided by how many reliable persons you can find around you throughout your life, or the number of fruitful hobbies and skills that you develop during your life.

"'Tis the part of a wise man to keep himself today for tomorrow, and not venture all his eggs in one basket." (Cervantes)

"Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold." (Helen Keller)

"The torment of precautions often exceeds the dangers to be avoided. It is sometimes better to abandon one's self to destiny." (Napoleon)

《Related Sayings》

1. The mouse that has but one hole is quickly caught.
2. Better be safe than sorry.
3. Caution is the parent of safety.
4. Full cup, steady hand.

—God-made natural scenery is better than man-made objects.—

The beauty of the countryside is preferable to urban sprawl. The proverb became better known in its modern form after it was quoted by William Cowper in *The Task* (1783). But it is surprising that the Roman scholar Varro (116–27 B.C.) had already written: "Nor is it wonderful, because divine nature gave us the fields, but the art of man built cities." We can be proud that our ancestors believed that "God is the source of nature and goodness in the world, but that the towns and their accompanying evils were invented by man." But nowadays beautiful natural scenery is being

destroyed all over the world. This is the great sin of mankind, and it is our responsibility to protect the natural environment and leave the noble legacy of nature to future generations.

“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, / There is a rapture on the lonely shore, / There is society, where none intrudes, / By the deep Sea, and Music in its roar : I love not Man the less, but Nature more.” (Byron)

《Related Sayings》

1. Nature, time, and patience are the three great physicians.
2. Nature is conquered by obeying her.
3. Nature is the true law.
4. Nature hates all sudden changes.

C-7 Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

—Attempts made to copy someone or something should be taken as an implicit and genuine compliment to that person or thing.—

To flatter is to praise excessively, untruthfully, or insincerely, in order to win favour. It is insincere not to express your opinion honestly. But if you imitate a person, that is, do as he does, you are paying him a sincere compliment. We Japanese say : *manabu koto wa maneru koto* (learning means imitating). There is an English proverb which says, “There is nothing new under the sun.” Nobody can deny that you start learning by imitating. The Japanese have been said to be imitative rather than original. In early times, we borrowed and learned a great deal from China, and later from Europe and America. But basic Japanese traits and culture were not lost in what we borrowed and imitated. Japanese people are good at absorbing and using all that is best in both the East and the West.

“We are, in truth, more than half what we are by imitation.” (Lord Chesterfield)

“Imitation is a necessity of nature ; when young, we imitate others ; when old, ourselves.” (Joseph Roux)

《Related Sayings》

1. Flattery, like perfume, should be smelled, not swallowed.
2. Beware of one who flatters unduly ; he will also censure unjustly.

C-8 Praise makes good men better and bad men worse.

—Praise encourages a good man to better, but has the opposite effect upon a bad man.—

When you educate children, the most effective way of encouraging them to study is to praise them when they have done well. Able teachers are very careful of their way of scolding their pupils when they have done badly.

“The aim of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.” (Robert Maynard Hutchins)

“Education is helping the child realize his potentialities.” (Erich Fromm)

However, some children, when they are praised, are encouraged in their wickedness. It depends on the individual and situation whether you should praise a child or not. What is beneficial to one person is sometimes harmful or detrimental to another.

“Just as eating against one’s will is injurious to health, so study without a liking for it spoils the memory, and retains nothing it takes in.” (Leonardo da Vinci)

《Related Sayings》

1. One man’s meat is another man’s poison.
2. One man’s loss is another man’s gain.
3. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
4. Tastes differ.

C-9 The best things in life are free.

—The things that give a person the greatest happiness do not cost any money.—

You usually think that you can do much more with money than without it. “Money is indeed the most important thing in the world ; and all sound and successful personal and national morality should have this fact for its basis.” (George Bernard Shaw). “Some men worship rank, some worship heroes, some worship power, some worship God, and over these ideals, they dispute—but they all worship money.” (Mark Twain)

If you are hard up financially, it is difficult to enjoy your life fully by doing what you like, although it is not impossible. Our life is short, and we cannot buy love, health, friendship, or family with money only. We can enjoy many things without money. We

can often help those who are poor in the material sense, but we cannot help those who are poor in mind.

This proverb was popularized by the song ‘The best things in life are free’, written by B.G. De Silva, 1927. In New York, this became a hit in the Broadway musical *Good News*.

“The moon belongs to ev’ryone,
The best things in life are free,
The stars belong to ev’ryone,
They gleam there for you and me.”

《Related Sayings》

1. *Tada yori takai mono wa nai.* (There is nothing more expensive than something which is free.)
2. Money is a great servant but a bad master.
3. Money isn’t everything.

C-10 You may take a horse to the water, but you can’t make him drink.

—You can give a person an opportunity but you cannot force him to accept it.—

Even if you suggest to others what they should do, you cannot make them do it of their own accord. Nowadays, many parents make their children go to college, but it is doubtful whether these children enjoy their college life and learn as much as their parents expect. You should be careful not to force children to study, but should encourage them to start learning willingly. But someone, on the other hand, may not mind being forced. Such a person will not try to do anything unless he is forced. It has been said that the Japanese are patient and preserving, and that especially children and women were forced to follow their parents obediently. Nowadays, however, they do not obey blindly, following the example of the youth of many Western nations.

“Forcible ways make not an end of evil, but leave hatred and malice behind them.”
(Sir Thomas Browne)

“When one by force subdues men, they do not submit to him in their hearts. They submit because their strength is not adequate to resist.” (Mencius, about 314 B.C.)

《Related Saying》

1. *Hippu mo kokorozashi o ubau bekarazu.* (Analects of Confucius)

(No matter how lowly one may be, you must not take his spirit away from him.)

III Conclusion

The 30 English proverbs in this paper have been selected according to the writer's personal preference in view of their usefulness, the same as in his previous papers. Consideration of these proverbs has led the writer to reach the following conclusions :

- (1) There is a great deal of similarity between English and Japanese proverbs which deal with universal truth and basic human feelings.
- (2) Some popular English proverbs were quoted from old writings in Greek or Latin.
- (3) As the writer mentioned in his previous papers, there are some social, racial, cultural, and geographical background differences between the East and the West.
- (4) Most English proverbs are generally in complete sentence form with subjects and verbs. Most Japanese proverbs take an abbreviated form.
- (5) English proverbs are logical, powerful, and straightforward. Japanese proverbs are metaphorical and the expression is exquisitely varied.
- (6) English proverbs show traces of the influence of Christianity, Shakespeare, other famous writers, great people and so on. English proverbs are greatly influenced by early and modern Western culture and civilization. Japanese proverbs are greatly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Oriental culture and civilization.
- (7) The 30 in this paper are well known. It is confirmed again that the more research is carried out in the two different cultures through English and Japanese proverbs, the shorter the cultural distance between the two countries grows.

(本学教授 = 英語担当)

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