

JAN SWYNGEDOUW (1935–2012)

In Memory of a Friend and Colleague

On 8 October 2012, Jan Swyngedouw passed away at the age of seventy-six. Illness had obliged him to leave Japan, where he had lived for fifty years, and return to his native Belgium where he was hospitalized briefly before breathing his last. The following is a collection of short “in memoria” composed by his colleagues and friends in Japan. The opening entry, by Akaike Noriaki, was prepared especially for this Bulletin, and the second, by Peter Knecht, was printed in The Japan Mission Journal. The others were issued electronically in Japanese as a tribute prepared by the Japan Association for the Study of Religion and Society in the JASR-MailNews dated 28 December 2012.

Akaike Noriaki 赤池憲昭

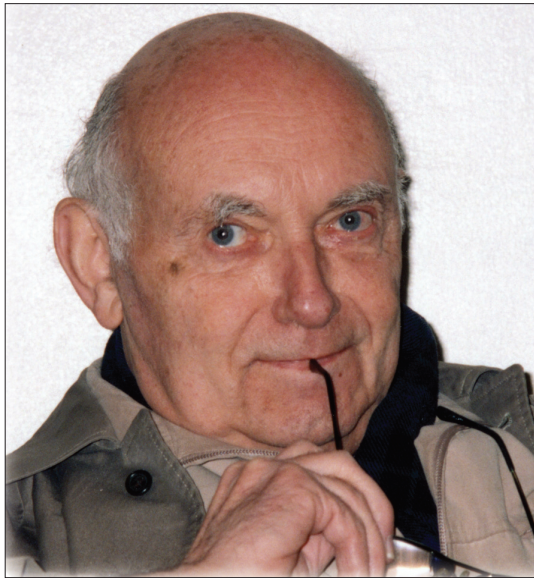
THE TRUTH IS, when word of Jan Swyngedouw’s death reached me, I was stunned: “It can’t be!” I said to myself, and then, as I felt my mind go blank, “Damn!” Finally I grew despondent and began to ask myself, “Can it be true?”

A conversation I had with Jan in 2008 was indirectly responsible for this stream of thought. It was at the funeral of our teacher Wakimoto Tsuneya in Hiratsuka where we met after a long lapse. “Shall we go for a bite to eat?” I suggested. Happily we found a table in a nearby restaurant where we were able to have a good chat. In the course of our conversation he mentioned that in 2011 he would celebrate fifty years as a priest and fifty years in Japan.

When I think back on it, I imagine the deep emotion behind Jan’s words about the course of his life. I was taken in by the prospect of that half-century milestone and could only wonder to myself how we might celebrate it. We walked back to the train station and when we reached the steps, he said that he found it difficult to walk up the staircase and headed for an elevator in the department store. He didn’t seem to have any trouble walking. “What’s wrong?” I blurted out without thinking. It was a careless thing to say, and I should have been more considerate. It just never occurred to me that Jan would later suffer a serious illness.

Our contact goes back to the early 1970s when I took up a post at Aichi Gakuin University and Jan was enrolled in the doctoral program where he was already shining a scholar’s beacon. In 1973, at his encouragement, we traveled

together to an international conference of the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse (CISR)* in Europe. Our relationship was solidified in 1976 when he began work at the newly-founded Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Nagoya and was appointed associate professor at Nanzan University. This relationship continued for two decades, which were also his most productive years as a scholar, though he continued to write well after that.



Jan published widely in both Japanese and English. In addition to his books, translations, and academic essays, he wrote book reviews and newspaper articles, gave public lectures, and participated in roundtable discussions. Looking over the list of his achievements, they seem to fall into two groups. On the one hand, he dealt with questions of secularization and the defining of religion; and on the other, with Japanese identity and the religious consciousness of the Japanese. These four themes were often woven together in his writing and in some of his essays show a rather complex development of ideas.

His writings on secularization began with an essay published in 『宗教研究』 (*Religious Studies* 208, 1971), “The Current Debate over Secularization with a focus on Thomas Luckmann.” In it he introduced the state of the secularization debate and its major themes in Europe and the United States. His clear and precise language became the starting point for an examination of the connection between that debate and the state of religion in contemporary Japan. In it he took up questions such as whether secularization marks the decline of religion or its transformation into a purification or privatization of religion. Depending on one’s perspective, he argued, the meaning of the term changes, with the result that the matter of defining religion becomes all the more difficult. Rather than lay down his own conditions, he seems to have taken his lead from Luckmann’s approach to the notion of religion as a system of human meaning aimed at “transcendence of the physical nature of the human organism.”

In subsequent essays published in 『国際宗教ニュース』 (*International religious newsletter*, 1976), 『思想』 (*Thought*, 1979), 『東洋学術研究』 (*Journal of oriental studies*, 1987), and so forth, he pursued the problem in connection with the sociology of religion. Special mention should be made of a 1978 meeting of the CISR

in Tokyo where he represented Japanese interpretations of secularization. Jan was instrumental in inviting large numbers of Japanese to the biannual meetings of the CISR, typically held in Europe. In addition to his own presentations, he advanced the international contribution of Japanese scholars.

Despite Jan's enthusiasm for the problem of secularization. He realized that concrete results from the study of "religion and secularization in contemporary Japan" remained vague. For one thing, the origins of the secularization question had been accompanied by concerns in the Christian churches where church-centered religiosity was giving way to private religiosity. Since religion in Japan is not based on the church model, the debate over secularization did not quite fit. Or again, it is said that because Japan's religions have a secular element to them from the start, secularization is not particularly problematic for contemporary Japanese society. Whereas debates in Europe and the United States may be of theoretical interest, there is a tendency in Japan to hold fast to the particularity of its own religious scene. Jan was aware of the foreign origins of the "secularization debate," but he suggested that it was worth looking into present-day "Japanese secularization theory" (or theories of the transformation of religion), including Japan's *matsuri* and rites of passage. He felt that not only Christianity but all religion in the twentieth century, especially in industrialized societies, is showing signs of great upheaval. To be sure, there are changes taking place in Japan: for example, funerals awaiting reunion with ancestral spirits in which everyone saw the deceased off to the cemetery are giving way to funerals where only a restricted number of persons participate, thus diminishing its significance as a rite of passage.

In Jan's case, interest in the secularization process became a springboard that propelled him into concern with the form of religion in Japan's so-called secular society and from there into the structure of Japanese consciousness and discussions of "Japanism." Understandably, he did not develop a general theory of his own on such matters but presented his ideas in a book he entitled *Journeys with the Japanese* (『日本人との旅』, Nihon Kirisutokyō Kyōdan Shuppankyoku, 1983).

His earlier book, *The Structure of Shared Harmony* (『「和」と「分」との構造』, Nihon Kirisutokyō Kyōdan Shuppankyoku, 1981), was a collection of essays, including those on secularization. In preparing them for publication he had to abbreviate some of the pieces with the result that some of them are more difficult to read than the original. In contrast, *Journeys* is a lighter, often humorous work based on things he had written for a magazine he created with some students and reorganized into book form. In it, he cleverly weaves together tales of encounters with Japanese and Japanese ways of thought and views of human nature. *Journeys* is also an autobiographical account that gives a peek into how Jan understood himself. In 1960, after seven years of seminary training, he was ordained to the priesthood. He completed his studies the following year and in

August was informed by the Superior General of his religious order, the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that his repeated requests for assignment to Japan had been approved. With the words of St. Paul in his heart—“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law”—he set out on a forty-day sea voyage with a passion to become Japanese.

In his words, the “first love” turned to “unrequited love.” There were many reasons for this. For example, in a chapter dealing with the “desk-drawer mode of thought” of the Japanese, he writes with a touch of irony: “Thanks to the special gift of the Japanese for dividing human beings into ‘Japanese’ and ‘Westerners’ (foreigners), no matter how long I have lived in Japan I have been allowed to continue my unending journey to become Japanese.” Neither in this book nor elsewhere in his writings did Jan ever appear to revoke his desire to become Japanese. But he did speak of a new stage in his love affair: “The third stage, ‘true love,’ is a state of balanced mutuality in which the similarities and differences, the strengths and the weaknesses, and many other aspects are all given their due.” But first love, unrequited love, and true love, he confessed, do not follow one another so tidily. They come mixed together and full of hardships.

For Jan, however, the Japanese way of being religious is reflected in the model of true love. We see this in his contribution to a dialogue with Shinto on “the universal and the particular,” edited by the Nanzan Institute and published as 『神道とキリスト教』(Shinto and Christianity, Shunjūsha, 1984). Since the religions of Japan have long been rich in diversity, he observed, both theoretically and practically it has esteemed “the harmony of the many.” In contrast, Christianity has, at least until recently, enjoyed a monopoly that sustained the ideal of “world unity.” “But however ardently it may uphold its ideal, Christianity cannot afford to ignore reality. As I see it, Christianity has a great deal to learn from the spirit of ‘harmony of the many’ advocated among Japan’s religions.”

In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Nanzan University, the Institute published a collection entitled 『宗教と宗教の〈あいだ〉』 (“Between” religion and religion, Fūbaisha, 2000). In his contribution, Jan wrote that while, in principle, the trend towards globalization in today’s world values the idea that various culture and religions each have their own role to play, the unfortunate fact is that this amounts to little more than rhetoric. “That is, the self-centeredness of cultures is an obstacle to intercultural exchange; and when it comes to the dialogue among religions, even now self-centeredness continues to cause great harm. Such self-centered dialogue has a ‘hidden agenda’ and we can hardly be surprised when critical voices accuse the dialogue of being a strategic means for world domination. Thus insofar as religious diversity and religious differences are not valued as such, interreligious dialogues will be no more than meetings.” Jan put heavy emphasis on relativizing religious tradition,

concluding that “By relativizing one’s own religion, one moves beyond mere encounter to the promotion of mutual exchange in the encounter.”

This line of thought is captured well in the phrase he chose for the title of his first book, “the structure of shared harmony.” To explain the religious situation in Japan, Jan distinguished between “harmony” and “share.” He proposed the Japanese ideal of “creating harmony through sharing”—discerning one’s own share and at the same time preserving harmony—as a model the religions of the world would do well to take to heart.

Jan’s hope for the world in general was, of course, rooted in his own religious sentiment and standpoint, as his own words testify. I cite from a remark he made in a discussion recorded in a book entitled 『新しい神観の探求』 (In quest of a new idea of God, Seiunsha, 1986):

As a Catholic priest, I came to Japan with an idea of God perhaps more idealistic than the typical European. Perhaps it is because I have been here so long, but the scholastic idea of God in particular has gradually grown dim for me. I have come to think that the best way to speak of God is not to speak at all.... I find it preferable to speak in deeds rather than in words....

Christians and those of other faiths need repentance. The idea we have of God and faith is something we need to seek out and then negate. I am convinced this is something that can take place in the encounter with other religions....

Christianity has always drawn on its ideals to subjugate the natural world, but we also see the tendency, especially among its believers, to hold nature as something sacred the way the religions of Japan do. This means to acknowledge diversity as such—not in opposition to each other but in a harmony that preserves balance. I myself believe that, as a human being, there is a natural polytheism deep within me.

(I must say, I was mildly astonished to hear someone who is a priest speak this way in public. At the same time, I have to admire the stout-heartedness and courage of Catholicism today in allowing such honest expression.)

From 1990 on, Jan often travelled beyond Nagoya to busy himself with priestly activities. At the time, I was wrapped up in administrative duties at the university and the opportunities to share one another’s company were few. Formally, our relationship was that of school friends, but we were too close for me ever to think of him as a priest or to speak to him as a priest. For his part, he never assumed a priestly posture or tone of voice with me. And so, when I tried to think how to summarize his fifty years in Japan, I could only think of him as a scholar and found I had no idea at all of his work as a priest or the human relationships he had built up through it.

Knowing only this one dimension of his life I have tried to summarize his thinking from his writings and in my own words. What I have to say now is a poor excuse, but as a backdrop to everything else, I would like to add a word about an aspect I have not touched on. When I was notified that Jan had moved from Tokyo to Himeji, I imagined how hard it must be on him, but I was not feeling well at the time and with all the work that had piled up for me, I put off paying him a visit. Finally I put my affairs in order and sent word that I would be coming to Himeji, only to be told by one of the staff, “Jan has returned to Belgium.” I had no idea what it all meant but dashed off a letter to his old address in Flanders. There was no reply until I read the news of his passing in a Japanese newspaper.

In the afterword to *Journeys*, Jan wrote:

What I am fumbling around in search of is not particular to Japan or Flanders or any other country for that matter. It is concrete human beings in any country who can share with one another their diverse humanity.... Should it happen that circumstances oblige me to leave Japan, I will carry on that journey happily.

But at that time, over twenty years ago, his wish was to journey with the Japanese. I have no idea what was going through his mind when he took off for Flanders on 30 November 2011. I am told that many years ago, on a visit home, Jan’s mother had said to him, “You are like a Japanese.” Recalling that in Japan he was always referred to as a “foreigner,” the question flashed across his mind, “What *is* my identity then?” After fifty years of life spent in Japan, how did he see himself?

It is only natural that various criticisms and counterarguments can be raised against Jan’s ideas of “secularization” and “Japanism.” But the enthusiasm he felt to make Japan a part of himself is something we can only be grateful for. As I think of you departing Japan with a stopover in Flanders before heading to your final home, your identity was not Japanese, Jan, nor was it Flemish. You belonged to that world where the idea of returning to heaven was born.

Even so, I should at least have been able to see you off when you left Japan. I am sorry for that. I can still see your eyes sparkling as you laugh through your words, “You got it!” “No way.” No one in Japan who has met you can forget it.

Peter Knecht

While waiting at Matsubara Church for the memorial mass for Jan Swyngedouw to begin, I glanced over his *curriculum vitae* on the memorial card and noted that had he lived a month longer, he would have celebrated his *kiju*, the joyful feast on the occasion of his 77th birthday on the 8th of November.

He did not complete the full “circle” marked by that number of years, yet in a different sense his life did run a complete circle. It began and ended in Belgium, and though his dream of being buried in the earth of his beloved Japan did not come true, Japan was where he spent the greater part of his life and where he could express his rich personality to the full, in scholarship, teaching, and field trips, interreligious dialogue and lively social commentary, witness of Christian values to Japan and of Japanese values to the Western world.

The Attraction of Japan

Jan writes in his book *Nihonjin to no tabi* that as a youth he had thought of becoming a medical doctor, until one day he had a mysterious dream that caused him to abandon this idea and to decide that he would become a missionary. It was the time when the so-called “maxi” was in vogue. He disliked the priest’s soutane because of its resemblance to this long skirt, so he chose Japan as the country where he would work as a missionary, because there the priests could wear an ordinary suit.

His studies in preparation for this goal took him to Rome, where he studied philosophy at the Gregorian University. After earning a licentiate he returned to Belgium to study theology at the center of his order, the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. There he was ordained a priest on 7 August 1960. In October of the following year he finally stepped on the soil of the land of his dreams.

When Jan introduced himself to a Japanese person, he often used to say that he had come from the country of the “Dog of Flanders.” He was fluent in French, one of the languages spoken in Belgium, but unless he could not avoid it he insisted on speaking Flemish, the language of his native Flanders. He once told me of an incident that occurred on a visit to the Belgian Embassy. The clerk at the window addressed him in French as if this were most natural. Jan protested that he had a right to use his mother tongue, since Flemish speakers were as much citizens of Belgium as French speakers. The clerk was quite embarrassed, but Jan did not give in. The smile on his face when he told me the story showed the satisfaction he had felt.

Toward the Japanese language, however, he never had any feeling of resistance. For him the language was an indispensable tool for his work in this country. Ever since his arrival, he studied the language diligently and came to master it in speaking and writing to an admirable degree. When one listened to his spirited way of speaking, one had the impression that he was speaking his mother tongue. Quite often I felt a bit of envy at his mastery. It is hard to think of any missionary who became so fully at home in a new Japanese identity, even to the point of writing a newspaper column with the title *Wareware Nihonjin* (We Japanese).

First Experiences in Japan

His first assignment in Japan was to the parish of Toyooka in the archdiocese of Osaka. A year later he was transferred to the minor seminary in Nagasaki. There he spent about two years, serving also as its vice-rector, before he moved to Tokyo and got on the track that determined his future. The relatively short time he had spent in the country before moving to Tokyo was, I believe, important for him because it gave him the opportunity to think about Japanese culture and about how Christian belief fared or should fare in that culture. In Tokyo, Jan moved into the Oriens Institute of Religious Studies to become a researcher under its director, Fr Joseph Spae. In the same year, in 1966, he entered the Department of Science of Religion and History of Religion at the Graduate School of Tokyo University. There he chose Sociology of Religion as his special field of research and completed the doctoral course in 1974. The time of his studies fell within the stormy period of student revolt and its aftermath.

In the same year, 1974, Nanzan University decided to start a new Institute at its Nagoya campus dedicated to the study and promotion of dialogue among religions, the Institute for Religion and Culture. Two years later, in 1976, Jan was called to become one of the Institute's first fulltime researchers. There he spent busy and fruitful years researching, editing the *Japanese Journal of Religions Studies*, teaching classes, and speaking at numerous conferences, until his retirement in the spring of 1996. Jan is remembered by his Nanzan colleagues as a man of ebullient humor, forthright opinions, and a down-to-earth human understanding that often brought a breath of invigorating air into the world of religious studies.

He retired a few years ahead of official retirement, because he wanted to answer a call from his Congregation and dedicate the rest of his time to the formation of younger confreres, as long as he was granted good health. Nanzan University bestowed on him the title of professor emeritus, a title he well deserved. Now began a new period of work, in the Philippines but also in Africa, in Cameroon and in the Congo. As a result his life became literally a "life on the road," a life of journeying. However, he made it a point to return every year to Japan at the year end. It was important to him to spend New Year in a Japanese family dear to him for many years. The five African confreres standing at the altar to concelebrate the memorial mass for Jan were not only a symbol of Jan's activities, they were a living testimony to the wonderful fruits his work had helped to ripen.

Core Concerns of Jan's Mission Work

What was the goal Jan strove to achieve? No doubt, to bring the faith in Jesus Christ to the Japanese people was at the center of his work as a missionary. He

was convinced that this work demanded great efforts and a constant examination of these efforts. In his application for a mission field he had chosen Japan. Among the reasons he gave for his choice there are two which I find quite noteworthy. The first is a phrase he says was often heard at the time: “Mission work is not a one-way street.” The second is closely related to this: to learn from Japan. Jan held that there is no need to introduce western civilization to Japan, a country of a sublime culture, but that to the contrary “much is to be learnt from her so that I believe it should be easy to keep the grace of faith in its entire purity” (*Nihonjin to no tabi*, 1983, 35).

There can be no doubt that the intention to learn from Japan was the pervading motive he had at heart throughout his life as a missionary as well as a researcher. But what did it mean for him “to keep the grace of faith in its entire purity”? In his youth he had met with many missionaries whose dedication deeply impressed him; nevertheless he harbored questions concerning their work. Was it not the case that they not only spread the pure faith but that with it they also brought the “grace of culture” to the peoples whose culture they thought was not yet sufficiently advanced? Furthermore, was the “grace of culture” they brought with them not the western culture familiar to themselves but foreign to the people of their mission country? As a result, for the people they met, faith in Jesus Christ became closely bound up with their admiration for western culture, leading to a darkening of Christ’s pure message.

As a seminarian Jan already felt that there was no need to burden people with such an unrelated and heavy cultural weight. It should be possible to purely transmit the grace of faith to the Japanese. What was the impression he received when he met the reality of the church and the life of faith in Japan, and how did he react to it? We might find a hint towards answering this question in the two great themes Jan continually pursued and repeatedly rethought: secularization and cultural communication.

Secularization

When Jan entered the Graduate School at the University of Tokyo, he did not choose a particular religion, such as Buddhism or one of its schools, as the subject of his research. Instead he decided to study the sociology of religion. The name of this field of research aligns two seemingly opposed terms: religion and society. In other words, it brings together the sacred and the profane. At first glance, one of these two terms, religion, seems to exclude the other, society (or culture), but Jan rather saw a dynamic relationship existing between the two for which “secularization” was the characteristic expression. This term carried multiple meanings for him. It was not simply a name for the progressive weakening of religion in modern society.

Jan points out that, roughly speaking, two quite different meanings of secularization can be discerned. The tendency of many sections of society, for example politics and education, to increasingly move out of the sphere of the influence of religion he labels “secularization of society.” The other kind he calls “secularization of religion,” not in the sense of a weakening of faith but rather as pointing to changes occurring within religion. They are changes arising because peoples’ religious concern is being redirected from a focus on the other world to a focus on this world. Emphasis has come to be placed on the character and role of Christianity in the present-day world and on the road it has to take in this world, because “Christianity is by no means to be separated from culture.”

It seems to me that here his understanding resembles the one advocated by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who stresses that religion is one of the many aspects of culture. Yet for Jan the relationship between religion and culture is one marked by tension. The tension can never be completely resolved, but it should foster continued reexamination and reevaluation of the relationship. That is why it is and must be a dynamic relationship. In such an environment, Jan says, religion, or for that matter Christianity, cannot lose its energy by merely accepting the culture where it lives.

When the Gospel is presented free from any preconceived but unnecessary weight upon meeting Japanese culture, Christianity will exert an influence on that culture while at the same time it will be prepared to learn a great deal from that culture. For Jan, therefore, Japan is a place well suited to prove that “Mission work is not a one-way street,” a topic he continued to ponder and discuss for many, many years.

Meeting Jan

Jan’s and my field of studies and research were different, his being the sociology of religion, mine the anthropology of religion, yet our interests and our thinking had much in common. More than that, I am under the impression that a mysterious bond existed between the two of us long before we had ever met. A look at the order in the study room of each one of us or at the way we kept our research material quickly revealed that ours were two worlds quite apart from one another, perhaps even opposed to one another. Yet it seems to me that they were also an illustration of Pascal’s words “*Les extrêmes se touchent.*” When I look back at the time I spent with Jan, I notice that although there were moments where we had conflicting ideas about a topic, we never had a serious dispute.

I feel that in the history of our relationship there was something like an “incubation period.” During my studies in Rome, whenever I attended a lecture in the great lecture hall of the “Greg” I used to sit next to a Belgian seminarian who was not only a member of the same Congregation as Jan but was born in the

same town. Since their early schooldays, the two had been intimate friends. He often told me stories about his friend Jan so that this person became strangely familiar to me although I had never met him. After graduation our roads led us in different directions, my Belgian friend going to the missions in the Philippines, while I went to Switzerland. One of my classmates was assigned to Japan. There he began his missionary work in Nagasaki at Nishimachi Church. I arrived several years after him and was still attending language school when one day I found a letter from him in my mail. He wrote: "Here in Nagasaki I have met the person who is the close friend of the Belgian with whom you used to sit in the classroom in Rome." It still took a few more years before I had a chance to meet Jan in person.

I had just finished language school and was planning to go for further studies at a university, but could not quite decide on a suitable place. That was the moment when I made up my mind to visit Jan at Oriens and ask his advice. Although it was my first meeting with Jan, I felt as if I had known him already for a long time as a close friend. He encouraged me to take the entrance examinations into the Graduate School of Tokyo University, a suggestion that opened the road for me to study Cultural Anthropology.

For a number of years we attended classes at the same campus in Hongo, but I believe I met Jan on campus only twice, at a special seminar of Professor Yanagawa Keiichi. Off campus, however, we met quite regularly once a month at a saké restaurant in Shinjuku to taste good saké and a great deal of Shinshu country dishes that were often unknown and even strange to us. Over meals in this restaurant we also had many inspiring conversations. Jan liked to drink saké and did not refuse to eat food he had not tasted before; however, I do not remember a time when he took the lead to order food he did not know yet. Decisions about a suitable restaurant or what to eat and drink he usually entrusted to me.

Those convivial occasions revealed another aspect of Jan. He liked to be with people. He was particularly fond of *matsuri* and liked to bathe in their commotion. In such situations he took wonderful pictures, especially of people, the *matsuri's* participants. Yet I ask myself if he ever totally immersed himself in the festive turmoil together with the local people. I do not quite know, but I cannot remember having witnessed him in such a situation or having heard him talking about such an experience. My impression is that, although he liked the action he preferred to stay one step away from it and observe rather than be a part of it. He was open toward individuals as well as groups and showed a deep interest in both, while at the same time he was careful to keep his distance. There are, however, photographs of him clad in splendid Shinto ceremonial robes. At one time he taught Latin in the Shinto equivalent of a seminary. His fondness for traveling reveals perhaps a tireless liking for adventure. But for Jan, to travel

meant more than seeking adventure, it meant life as such and was for him, I believe, an indispensable means in order to meet people.

The Optimist

Jan, with a twinkle in his eyes, liked to make people laugh saying “I am Jan, the *yancha bōzu*” when he referred to himself. It showed his basically cheerful character, but his was a cheerfulness hiding a deeper dimension, as can be noticed when he writes in *Nihonjin to no tabi* (23) “If to be an optimist is characteristic for a Catholic mind, the same can equally be said to be characteristic for a Flemish person.” One day, at a student party, he explained this characteristic of a Catholic mind to his mentor, Professor Oguchi Iichi. Because Jan was fond of smoking, especially cigars, and of drinking saké, it was natural for him to drink and smoke at the party. Professor Oguchi was quite surprised, and asked: “Jan, aren’t you a Christian? How come you smoke and drink saké?” Jan’s short answer was: “Because I am Catholic.” This answer endeared him very much to Professor Oguchi who, after his retirement, used to come to Nagoya once a week to teach at Aichi Gakuin University, frequently meeting Jan. Before he boarded the train to Tokyo the two would drop in at a Japanese restaurant at Nagoya station and empty a few cups of saké.

Jan, dear friend, may you rest in peace!

Inoue Nobutaka 井上順孝

As best I can calculate, my association with Jan goes back forty-four years. When I entered the Faculty of Humanities at Tokyo University I found a graduate school full of unique individuals, some with experience in society, some coming from other universities. One of them stood out among the rest. Here was this Catholic priest, the first I had ever known in person, with whom I was able to converse. Just knowing Jan Swyngedouw, I felt my world grow larger.

I think it was after I had moved to the graduate school that I once put him a strange question. “Who is this Virgin Mary? Did you ever wish to meet her?” It was an odd thing to ask of someone, but his reply was unpretentious and direct. “When I was young I was afraid of meeting her. I had no idea what she might ask of me.”

Thanks to Jan Swyngedouw, the image of a priest who was fond of saké and loved the company of others was impressed on my memory. He gave me the sense that Catholic priests are suddenly ordered to fly all around the world. I believe it was when he was in Cameroon, Africa, and was listening to Japanese radio that he happened to hear my voice and recognized me at once. Jan recounted this to me on several occasions in his late years, leaving me with the

sense that here was someone who had internalized the value of “connectedness,” 縁, in Oriental culture.

Jan not only understood Japanese culture, he took pains to promote exchanges among Japanese scholars and scholars from abroad. At international conferences he was always aware of his role as a bridge, while at home he made important contributions to the study of Japanese religions. He once ventured the opinion, “The Japanese do not know how to wink.” I closed one eye. “Like this, you mean?” “No,” he replied, and he winked broadly back at me.

It saddens me even now to think that never again shall I see that mischievous smile of his.

Shimazono Susumu 島蘭進

Jan Swyngedouw was a linguistic genius. I once asked him how many languages he spoke, but he rattled off too many for me to recall. His mastery of Japanese idioms was remarkable in communicating the culture of Europe and his native Flanders. I can still hear him telling of his participation in research trips with Yanagawa Keiichi to Tokoro, Hokkaidō. I am not sure, but I think this was around 1973.

At the time, what was then the National Railway was running slow due to frequent strikes, and it took a long time to reach Tokoro. With all the connections, the best they could do was arrive late in the night. The Okhotsk Sea in March was cold. If I am not mistaken, the morning temperatures would sink to more than -10° C.

But Jan took a liking to the Hokkaidō scenery, observing how much the shape of the land, the woods, and the layout of the farm fields resembled Flanders. The latitude may be nearly the same. In Tokoro he snapped pictures of village children playing. “I love the children,” he would say. To this day family gatherings in Flanders are large. Even when studying religion, it was a matter of pride for Professor Yanagawa’s students to base their findings on community gatherings.

When eating Mongolian barbeque, Nakamaki Hirochika liked to throw in lots of garlic. The rest of us could feel our innards heating up, but Jan was no match for it. He loved Japan deeply, but sometimes he would reach his limit and let his feelings slip out. “That’s too much!” he would say, and immediately seem to turn in on himself. He had a fine voice but resisted invitations to karaoke. “If I do that, I might end up Japanese.” When introducing himself, he would often play with Japanese characters to render his name 新外道—the new heresy.

During the 1970s and 1980s he served as our guide at meetings of the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse in Europe*. He was quick to introduce us to new ideas such as Dutch theories of “pillarization” and the Italian Roberto Cipriani’s notion of “implicit religion.” His good humor always

made it easy for us to raise questions. His own original views on religion are laid out in his 1981 book 『「和」と「分」の構造——国際化社会に向かう宗教』(The structure of shared harmony: Religion en route to internationalization, Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan, 1981) and in a volume he co-edited with David Reid, Matsu-moro Shigeru, and Suzuki Norihisa, 『菊と刀と十字架と』(The chrysanthemum, the sword, and the cross, 1976). These ideas are rooted, I believe, in the common ground he saw between Catholicism and Japanese religions.

As someone who was late to travel abroad (the first time was a trip to the United States around 1984), Jan was a great help. I relied on him for so many things. I thought of this during the funeral services in Matsubara Church and was filled with gratitude.

Nakamaki Hirochika 中牧弘允

No New Year's greeting card arrived from Jan Swyngedouw in 2012. In its place was a postcard informing me that he had moved to Belgium to receive medical attention. It had come from his religious congregation in Himeji. And then, in early autumn, the news reached me through Nakano Tsuyoshi that he had passed away. And I had so hoped to see him again in Brugge...

I first met Jan over forty years ago, in 1970 when I was enrolled in the Department of Religious Studies at Tokyo University. He was about ten years older than I and we were a few years apart in the academic program, but we took seminars and shared our research with one another. As students of Professor Yanagawa we were like brothers, and never more than when we were out enjoying a drink together. He was proficient in Japanese and I do not remember speaking with him in English.

As a Catholic priest, Jan was far from authoritarian. He was always in good spirits, and even when we addressed him as “his eminence Cardinal Swyngedouw,” he never put on airs. He was the soul of curiosity and his eyes would sparkle during a discussion. As a sociologist of religion, he digested the theories of Thomas Luckmann and Karel Dobbelaere. At the same time, his grasp of Japanese culture, and in particular of Japanese religion, was deep and he was particularly devoted to understanding those of a different faith and entering into dialogue with them. He was not the kind of academic to launch new theories one after the other. His genius was in mediating and casting bridges between scholars. This was especially apparent in his efforts on behalf of countless scholars of all nationalities at the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse*.

In thinking of Jan's merits, I found myself wondering to whom I might compare him. I settled on Luís Fróis, a Portuguese Jesuit who came to Japan in the sixteenth century. He spent thirty-five years in Japan where he not only

wrote mission chronicles, but also compiled a massive *History of Japan*. A handwritten condensation of that work, probably prepared for seminarians, was discovered in Madrid after the war and subsequently translated into Japanese as 『大航海時代叢書XI』 (The great age of discovery, Monograph XI, Iwanami, 1965), and later as 『ヨーロッパ文化と日本文化』 (European culture and Japanese culture, Iwanami, 1991). It is composed of more than six hundred short entries. As one of the authors of 『菊と刀と十字架と』 (The chrysanthemum, the sword, and the cross, 1976), had Jan stepped ashore in Japan during the Warring States Period, I believe he could have developed such an accessible yet refined comparison of European and Japanese culture.

For all I know “Cardinal” Swyngedouw may now be in *paraiso* (as the *kirishitan* referred to heaven) enjoying conversation with his old friend “Cardinal” Anzai Shin.

Nakano Tsuyoshi 中野 毅

My association with Jan Swyngedouw goes back to around 1975 when I was a graduate student at Tsukuba University engaged full-time in religious studies. It seems so long ago and my memories of that time have grown rather dim. These past few days as I have been thinking about how to write a few words *in memoriam*, I find myself unable to retrieve the details of a visit I made to his hometown of Torhout near Brugge in Belgium and a stay in the home of his elder sister. I remember I was on my way to a biannual meeting of the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse* and was traveling with Yanagawa Keiichi, Anzai Shin, and Abe Yoshiya, all since deceased. That would make it either the summer of 1985, when the meetings were held in Louvain-La-Neuve in Belgium, or two years later, in 1987, when the conference met in Tübingen. Not even the notes in my computer are much help as I try to piece things together from those years.

But when I think of Jan, I am always drawn back to that time. The night of our arrival, Jan’s sister had laid out a splendid dinner for all of us, as chickens and pigs roamed around the spacious garden outside their home. The main course was thick slices of eel boiled in white sauce. At first it looked rather fatty and I approached it with caution, but the taste was surprisingly refreshing and I had my fill. We began with a fine wine but eventually were invited to try one of Belgium’s famous beers known as Duvel (or “Devil”). It was blackish and thick to the tongue but with a sweetness that made it go down easily. We drank heartily and the mood livened.

Later, when night had fallen, we got up thinking it was time to go to bed, but Professor Yanagawa remained seated. He had had too much to drink and his legs failed him. It took a few of us to carry him to his bed on the second floor—surely

the work of the sixty-proof Devil brewed in the monasteries. We had swilled it down like ordinary beer and it had left us all fairly wasted.

I have another rather personal memory associated with our stay. At the time Korean Air was offering cut-rate tickets that obliged us to change planes in Paris for Brussels. But as often happened on such flights, the baggage handling did not go smoothly in transit. My suitcase had been left behind and could only be delivered on the following day, leaving me without a change of clothes. After arriving at Jan's sister's home, I explained my predicament, whereupon they suggested we go shopping at once. The car was readied and off we went. Once at the store, I quickly picked out some underclothes, size "S." But when I went to put them on, I found them so loose-fitting that to this day I cannot forget how uncomfortable they made me feel.

It was partly that kind of a trip, but the beautiful rows of houses in Brugge, the famous statue of the Manneken Pis in Brussels, the buckets of mussels brought to our table, and all the many other things my great senior colleague introduced to us left an endless string of happy memories that more than made up for it.

We also did serious work together. Early on we collaborated on a work edited under Professor Yanagawa's name, 『現代社会と宗教』 (Religion and modern society, Institute of Oriental Philosophy, 1978). It was based on more than two years of open lectures, with contributions by such illustrious scholars as Morioka Kiyomi. Jan contributed a piece on "Secularization: Japan and Europe," in which he introduced in simple language the debate that was in full swing at the time. One of the great achievements of later years was the interreligious dialogue between Catholics and Sōka Gakkai, edited at the Nanzan Institute as 『カトリックと創価学会』 (Catholicism and Sōka Gakkai, Daisan Bunmeisha, 1996). It was Jan who first proposed the idea. The Institute had made great strides in dialoguing with the traditional religions of Japan and Jan persuaded his fellow members that it was time to open a dialogue with the most active of the new religions. He then brought the idea to me. With the staff of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy as a core, a series of joint seminars were inaugurated in the fall of 1993. Thus began a full-scale, serious dialogue which even now I consider to have been of great significance and substance. For my part, I had to shudder at the gravity and depth I came to recognize in the history and tradition of Catholicism.

There is so much more to say, but I can only express my deep gratitude, both public and private. Take a good rest in heaven. But with so many lovers of saké like Yanagawa, Anzai, Abe, and Bryan Wilson there with you, sleep will be the last thing on your mind. Brace yourself and enjoy a Devil.

James W. Heisig

For eighteen years I worked alongside Jan at the Nanzan Institute and lived with him at the nearby Paulus Heim, where our academic and private lives flowed together in a stream of experiences I count as one of the great blessings of my time in Japan. In large part, this was due to the hundreds of visitors from within Japan and abroad we hosted at our commune-style home, none of whom left without an indelible memory of Jan—the good humor, the unexpected twist of perspective, the arresting questions that we at the Heim enjoyed day in and day out.

I recall one night sitting around the supper table when he announced that he would follow in the footsteps of his father and retire from his post at age sixty. I teased him that he would sing a different tune when the time came, but he would have none of it. And sure enough, in 1996, four months after his sixtieth birthday, he hung up his professor's robe and bid adieu to Nanzan. This did not mean that his horizons narrowed. Quite the contrary. For many years after that, until ill-health obliged him to a more sedentary life, he traveled back and forth between Africa and the Philippines to lecture to young seminary students, always making sure that his flights would take him by way of Japan.

In 1990, he made another unexpected announcement that left us confounded. He was going to relinquish his position at the Institute as a permanent fellow at the Nanzan Institute and move to the Faculty of Humanities as an ordinary professor. With no pretense to self-sacrifice and perhaps not even fully aware of the generosity of his action, he explained that he felt it best that the editorship of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* pass into the hands of our young editorial assistant, Paul Swanson. "If we don't make Paul a permanent member, some other university is going to snatch him up one of these days." To let go of the work he loved and the journal he had labored for ten years to bring to international recognition, all for the sake of a younger colleague, made us all proud to be at his side and at the same time too bewildered to know just how to react.

Happily, our collaboration continued. He commuted daily to his office in our building, kept up with his own research and writing, and took part in Institute activities until his retirement six years later. Just to hear the name Jan Swyngedouw, I cannot hold back the smile that comes over me. It was nothing short of a grace, those years I spent with him, one that taught me more than I can tell.

[Translations by James W. Heisig]