

Report from Latin America

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From May to August of 2001 the author traveled around Latin America, capping a year's sabbatical in Barcelona, Spain, with a series of lectures on Japanese philosophy and the borderlands of Buddhist and Christian thought. A complete list of lectures and their venues is included in "Academic Contributions of Members" later in this issue (pages 66–69). What follows is a personal report on those travels.



TO THE PEOPLES OF Latin America, Japan remains a land very distant and very foreign. Understanding of its language and literature, its history and customs have not kept pace with the economic and political involvements that have drawn the two worlds closer together throughout the course of the last century.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, relations of Latin America with Asia were mediated and controlled almost exclusively by the colonial powers of Europe. This changed in the early years of the twentieth century with the first waves of immigrants from Japan. By the middle of the century pockets of Japanese communities were scattered across the continent from Costa Rica to Argentina. The children born into those communities felt little, if any, of connection to the homeland of Japan. Schooling, intermarriage, and increasing unfamiliarity with the language and habits of their parents or grandparents all hastened the assimilation of the younger generations into the surrounding reality of Latin America. The case of Brazil, whose citizens of Japanese origin accounts for nearly 1% of the total population, has been the most researched in this regard, but the patterns are not significantly different from those in other countries where immigrant communities of *dekasegi* from Japan had come to make a home for themselves. So thorough has been the assimilation, it hardly makes sense to speak of a "Japanese" contribution to Latin American culture being made by these groups. Their interest in knowing and promoting knowledge of their ancestral homeland is a poor reflection of their numerical presence. From the viewpoint of academia, the Latin America

Nissei and *Sansei* have not been the moving force for the advance of Japanese studies that might have been expected.

I do not mean to hold those of Japanese ancestry in Latin America responsible for not having done something they ought to have done. On the contrary, given the choice, I should consider their cultural accommodation the more important—and almost more difficult—contribution. The second wave of *dekasegi* who came in the post-war years are another matter. These were not immigrants, but simple emigrants come to enrich themselves and return home. Beginning in the 1950s and reaching a peak during the 1970s, Japanese enterprises invested money and personnel to Latin America in search of cheaper production costs and new emerging markets. Like the multinationals of Europe and the United States, their interests were fundamentally profit-oriented. Lacking the colonial experience (and above all, the experience of dealing with colonial revolutions), the level of understanding of local culture, language, music, and literature by businessmen dispatched to Latin America lagged far behind that of their European counterparts. Not surprisingly, so did their capacity to transmit or deepen appreciation of their own history and traditions.

The Japanese culture that the business world brought to Latin America was primarily aimed at their own consumption. Where possible, existing schools with instruction in Japanese were refurbished and brought up to standard; where not, new schools were constructed under the wing of the largest enterprises so that the children of those exiled in the foreign culture would not suffer the disadvantage of falling behind their classmates back home in Japan. These were complemented by an assortment of restaurants and shops whose initial purpose was to service the Japanese *Issei*, and their families, but which attracted a local clientele as well. Government agencies and embassies did what they could to promote an understanding of Japan, but all too often in a paternalistic manner, wrapping the basically economic motivations of the *dekasegi* in the brightly colored *furoshiki* of an exotic, traditional culture. Considerable donations were made to university programs and research centers aimed at the serious study of things Japanese, but local *Nissei* communities tended to be drawn into these projects only obliquely and were not taken seriously as a bridge between the two worlds. To the *Issei* leaders of the business world, the thorough assimilation of the *Nissei* was seen primarily as the scar of their de-Japanization.

In the 1990's the tables were turned. With the revision of Japan's immigration law, *Nikkeijin* were actively sought out from Latin America by companies in need of skilled and unskilled workers for jobs previously closed to foreigners but suddenly left unfilled because of a decline in the Japanese work force. By the end of the decade there were some 254,000 Brazilian and 46,000 Peruvian *Nissei* at work in Japan under the new law. Meantime, the word *dekasegi* has found its way into the Portuguese and Spanish language in Latin America, and with it the unpleasant

connotations of discrimination this term has today for the workers themselves and their families. Not without a certain irony, the disappointment felt in Japan at the failure of Latin Americans of Japanese descent to retain more of their ancestral culture (or, put the other way around, at their successful assimilation into foreign cultures) has not produced much sympathy for those who wish to maintain and transmit their Latin culture while living in Japan. The tacit assumption shared by the government, the schooling system, organized religion, and the ordinary populace seems to be that if care for the first generation of immigrants is too deeply institutionalized, it will interfere with the assimilation of their children into Japanese society.

With the decline in the Japanese economy and the rise of unemployment, the welcome once extended to workers from abroad has been withdrawn since 2000, and it is safe to say that their numbers will decrease in the years to come. Virtually all of the workers of these immigrants have sent their children to Japanese schools, and one may still hope for a generation of bridge-builders to emerge from their midst as they grow older. For the time being, the mass influx seems to have done little to fill the lacunae in understanding among the ordinary citizens of Latin America, and little to inspire academic research on Japan.

That said, across Latin America Japan is still the most studied of all the Asian cultures. All together, university courses in the Japanese language, as well as the output of academic journals focusing on Japan, are the more numerous. In this sense, the distance from Asia in general is the greater problem. In any case, the claim that knowledge in Latin America of the Orient as a whole, and Japanese studies in particular, is badly deficient in comparison with its economic and political ties to Asia is, I admit, an enormous generalization.

I suppose I ought to know better than to begin painting with so broad a brush, especially after an extensive tour of lectures around Latin America where I had the chance to meet with numerous scholars in the field of Asian studies and to refine the rather crude impressions with which I set out.¹ I let the judgment stand as it is in the background, without further nuance and without going into the variety of theories about why things have turned out the way they have, in order to bring into clearer relief the things that, on reflection, seem to me to matter more.

¹ In 1980 I was part of a team headed by Murakami Hyōei 村上兵衛 to study the diffusion of Japanese culture and its understanding in the Americas. The results were subsequently published as a monograph, 『米大陸における《日本文化の普及方法の研究》』 [*Methods of disseminating Japanese culture in the Americas*] (Tokyo: NIRA Output, 1981). Several countries of Latin America were included in our travels. Although many of the impressions I picked up there were reconfirmed during my travels twenty years later, our published findings were too fixed on the perceptions of the Japanese communities of *Issei* and *Nissei* to give a balanced picture.



In April 2000 I left Japan, after some 23 years of working at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, for a year's sabbatical in Spain. My first project was to write a general introduction to the principal thinkers of the Kyoto school of philosophy. In them I saw, as many others before me, Japan's first original contribution to the world philosophical tradition. I had decided to write the work in Spanish which, although the second language of the Western hemisphere, was badly underrepresented in the literature on Japanese intellectual history ("scandalously impoverished," Raimon Panikkar put it in his Prologue to the completed work).² A generous grant from the Itoh Scholarship Foundation in Tokyo enabled me to purchase a sizeable library of materials, principally in Japanese, and have them shipped to the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, where I had been invited to spend the year as a visiting professor. These books were all subsequently donated to the University's library.

Pompeu Fabra has been the first university in Spain to take an active interest in contemporary Japanese philosophy. Amador Vega, a specialist in Ramon Lull and the western mystical tradition, had guided a doctoral student, Raquel Bouso, in the Spanish translation of one of the major works of the Kyoto school, Nishitani Keiji's *Religion and Nothingness*.³ The final draft of the translation was completed during an intensive six weeks at the Nanzan Institute in 1999. The only other university in the Spanish-speaking world to take an interest in Kyoto-school philosophy, as least as far as I know, has been the Colegio de Michoacán in Mexico, where Agustín Jacinto has labored for over fifteen years, almost entirely on his own, to produce an impressive collection of translations and commentaries for his university press.

During the course of my year at Pompeu Fabra, Ueda Shizuteru, a direct disciple of Nishitani and considered by many the last representative of the Kyoto school, was invited by the Faculty of Humanities to deliver a lecture on "Zen Meditation: In Search of the True Self,"⁴ in which I had the privilege of participating as translator. To the surprise of everyone involved, the University's aula magna was filled to the last row as Professor Ueda held the audience of students, professors, and the general public spellbound for over two and a half hours. All expectations were that the topic would attract no more than a handful of people. I mention this because it is something I was to experience again later during my travels in Latin America.

During my final two months in Barcelona, I myself was asked to deliver a series

² *Filósofos de la nada: Un ensayo sobre la escuela de Kioto* (Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 2002). English translation: *Philosophers of Nothingness* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

³ *La religión y la nada* (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1999).

⁴ "La meditació zen: A la recerca del jo vertader," 5 October 2000.

of public lectures on the topic, “What I have Learned from Buddhism.” The lectures took up the topics of myth, self, morality, conversion, and nothingness, and were later to form the basis of several of my lectures in Latin America. As with Professor Ueda, though less dramatically, the enthusiasm of the audience for the topics, somewhat esoteric for a Spanish public, came as a pleasant surprise. During these final months I also had the occasion to visit centers teaching world religions, Asian meditation techniques, or otherwise promoting interreligious spirituality, to speak on Buddhism on a local Catalan radio station, and to set in motion several projects for future collaboration.

To all appearances, the interest of institutional Spanish Catholicism in “non-Christian” religions is all but nonexistent. Even the monks at the monastery of Montserrat, who had once taken an active part in the inter-monastic exchange with Japan, seem to have lost the impetus to carry on. The major preoccupation of the Catholic hierarchy in Catalunya with regard to other religions—or so it is perceived by the public and to the eye of a short-time visitor—has turned to resisting what they see as the black tide of agnostic humanism and to stemming the advance of new sects among their flocks. What there exists of formal interreligious dialogue centers on UNESCO’s Division for Intercultural Dialogue in Barcelona, which is currently collaborating with the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in sponsoring the creation of a UNESCO Chair on Interreligious Dialogue.

I cannot fail to mention, if only briefly, the celebrated Catalan theologian and philosopher of religion, Raimon Panikar, who has retired to the small mountain village of Tavertet two hours or so from Barcelona, where he continues to write and pursue the encounter of religions and philosophies East and West. An old friend, who has visited us at the Nanzan Institute, Raimon is a phenomenon in his own right. In Catalunya—if not indeed in the rest of Spain—he is the primary symbol of Catholic awareness of the religiously plural reality of the contemporary world. When “el sabio,” as the newspapers often refer to him, comes down to the city to lecture, the halls are filled to overflowing. His nephew, Agustín, directs Editorial Kairós, a publishing house that is engaged in promoting research and first-class translations of classics of Asian religion.⁵ My meetings with both of them, and above all my extended discussions with Raimon in Tavertet, confirmed in me again and again the impression that there is a religious dynamic at work in the country, *extra ecclesiam* on the surface but essential to the future of the Church in Spain.

It was in this setting, then, and with these stimuli that I made plans for a tour of Latin America, a continent bound by language and history to Spain, but with a reality as different as can be.

⁵ Agustín Pániker, a scholar in his own right, has recently published a massive study on the Jain religion, *El Jainismo: Historia, sociedad, filosofía y práctica* (Barcelona: Editorial Kairós, 1991).



For many years I had dreamed of returning to Latin America, where I had lived and taught prior to coming to Japan, to share something of my experience in a research institute devoted to the encounter with the religions of Japan and Asia. Offers for lectures had come and gone over the years without materializing. By a stroke of what I can only call grace, I made the acquaintance of Ekke Bingemer from Brazil who volunteered to help me make the arrangements for an extended tour of lectures and interreligious encounters around the continent after I had completed my work in Barcelona. He also arranged with an international foundation that my travel expenses would be taken care of, making it possible to lecture wherever there was interest. So it was that I set out in April 2001 for the Bingemer household in Rio de Janeiro, which was to become my home base for the next several months.

Another touch of good fortune, Ekke's wife is Maria Clara Lucchetti, professor of systematic theology at the Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro. One of the best known theologians of Latin America and guiding inspiration behind the foundation of the Centro Loyola de Fé e Cultura in Rio with branches around Brazil and now spreading to other countries, Maria Clara put at my disposition her considerable library of theological materials and facilitated my contact with academics in Brazil. More important, she shared her time and her writing with me, patiently correcting my naïveté and introducing me to people who opened my eyes to the religious reality of Brazil. To recount what I learned from her would take an essay much longer than this one.

I immediately set to finalizing a dozen or so lectures on topics from Japanese philosophy to Buddhist ethics to the Buddhist-Christian dialogue. On 7 May I set out for São Paulo, where I would deliver the first series of lectures. From there I began an odyssey that would take me through eight countries for some 54 talks, radio and television appearances, and press interviews, of which I will spare the reader here the enumeration.⁶ All of this was organized, down to the last careful detail, by Ekke and his secretaries, Teresa and Olga. On 6 June Ekke met up with me in Manaus, and together we spent an unforgettable few days in the rain forests of the Amazon before making our way down the river to Peru where our paths parted again. I worked my way across Peru, through Bolivia, and then to Paraguay before making my way back to Rio a month later. By then I was full of far more ideas than I had set out with, and immediately set to reworking my lectures and trying to put together a small book for publication in Brazil.⁷ After three relaxing weeks in Rio, I headed out on the final leg of my journey, through southern Brazil

⁶ Details of the lectures are given in "Academic Contributions of Institute Members" later in this issue (pages 66–69).

⁷ To be published this year as *Diálogo a uma polegada acima da terra*.

to Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Tijuana. I returned to Brazil on 25 August for final talks in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

As I look over my schedule, the memory of names and faces, too many to recollect here, crowd in on me. To relive in print even a part of that requires a bigger talent for objectification than I can bring to the task. The content of my lectures is, or will be, scattered around in various other publications, and I see no need to summarize them here. Instead, I would like to single out three blocks of questions concerning the encounter of religions in today's world that I came upon repeatedly in the course of my travels.

THE FACT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Contrary to my expectations, the awareness of religious pluralism as a new context for Christian self-identity has sunk roots around Latin America as deep as any found in Europe and North America. Or perhaps I should say, it has *surfaced* after four centuries of suppression. I had the feeling, time and again, that it is not so much that waves of theological opinion washing in from abroad have been altering the perception of traditional churches to religious truth outside of Christianity, but rather that people are speaking with more confidence about what they somehow knew all along.

A recently completed five-year survey of religious attitudes among urban Brazilians, a copy of which arrived in Rio while I was preparing my second round of lectures, confirms this suspicion.⁸ Brazil is by far the largest Catholic country in the world—125 million Catholics, or some 73% of the total population. Among the questions put to those interviewed were two related to religious plurality. Asked whether they agreed with the statement, *Christianity is the only true religion, and all the others are false*, only 1% of those surveyed answered in the affirmative. Faced with the further statement, *Christianity is the only true religion, but there are true elements in other religions*, only 2% agreed. That suggests that 97% of believers side with the view that Christianity is *not* the only true religion, pure and simple. Given that this view runs counter to official Vatican statements, it is safe to assume that this is not something they learned from their bishops and pastors. Theological books and books on world religions are too far and few between in Brazil's bookstores to assume that they have had much of an effect. As for the media, they tilt towards siding with official church views on the primacy of Christianity over all other religions.

⁸ A. Damasceno et al., *Tendências atuais do Catolicismo Brasileiro: Um estudo em seis regiões*, 87–8. The authors note, however, that “in a wider sense the central tendency shows a participation limited to the frontiers of one's own religion.” The study, completed in 2001, was not yet available in printed form, but is slated to be published this year. It should be noted that some 80% of Brazil's 172 million inhabitants live in cities.

How then did virtually the entire population of the most numerous Catholic community in the church come to this religious pluralism? Not by withdrawing from the traditional church to some form of secular humanism. The percentage of practicing Christians is far greater than that of Europe and North America. I think it obvious that Brazilian spirituality has been religiously plural from the very arrival of Christianity with the European conquerors. The real question is what could have prompted this dormant sentiment to the surface.

The proselytizing activities of missionaries from Buddhist and other non-western religious traditions relatively unknown in Brazil is part of the answer. Deep-rooted indigenous traditions are another. But the catalyst, it seemed to me, was something intangible, something “in the air,” something whose movements we understand very poorly but whose effects are undeniable. Call it secular *Zeitgeist*, call it Holy Spirit, we cannot deny that there is more at work than the efforts of particular traditions. It seemed to me that this “more” was evident in other countries than Brazil, and I therefore worked suggestions on the multi-religious stratification of the Latin American soul into several of my later talks. I was reassured to find how many questions from the audience took this up, pleading for greater understanding on the part of the official churches.

I have long felt, and I said so often in my responses, that it is a gross underestimation of our times to look on the dialogue among religions as primarily the responsibility of a class of experts specially trained for the task. Research and courses on world religions in higher education are only one reflection of a greater groundswell within traditional Christianity itself, which requires—as it always has—a dialectic of theological reflection and popular imagination to be understood.

On several occasions in Peru and Bolivia, I was told in advance to expect a rather small audience because of the foreignness of my topics. Oriental philosophy was unknown; or no courses were being offered on the topics locally; or there were no Buddhists active in the city, or Catholicism was far more “traditional” than in Europe and North America; and so on. On a couple of occasions, the suspicions were well grounded, and no more than 50 to 80 people showed up. But when the hall was filled, as was more often the case, the organizers realized as well as I that something unusual was going on. In Chile and Bolivia, Buddhist monks and nuns joined the audience, and later passed me periodical literature that my hosts admitted they had never known about.

The only occasions I had to share the speaker’s chair with a Buddhist were in Brazil, with the Sōtō nun, Claudia Koen (whom I had known from Japan). But I met numerous practicing Buddhists from Asia at the lectures, universities, in airports, and even in bookstores. This was not the Latin America I left in 1978 to come to Japan. Or perhaps it is simply that I lacked the eyes to see and the experience to ask about what was already well underway at that time.

When one thinks of the religious intelligentsia in Latin America, the mind immediately jumps to the Theology of Liberation, whose origins go back to the meeting of Latin American theologians held in Petrópolis, Brazil, in March 1964. There Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru ventured the idea that theology is basically a “critical reflection on praxis.” This line of thinking soon developed into the methodological principle of displacing doctrine from its primacy and replacing it with praxis. The unfolding of those simple insights into a full-fledged theological current is a familiar story, at least in its broad outlines.⁹ When I began lecturing in Mexico City in 1974, books on the movement were outlawed in diocesan seminaries; even to this day, there are major theological centers there that explicitly proscribe the teaching of Liberation Theology.

As is not uncommonly the case, the movement developed beyond the critical threshold to the point that it ended up promoting, at least indirectly, the exact opposite of what it had set out to do. In place of praxis, a *doctrine about praxis* became the focal point of theology, a doctrine that could be applied with the same disregard for praxis as the theology it set out to displace. One sees this trend towards abstraction in more and more of the secondary literature, which has largely overshadowed the initial inspiration of Liberation Theology in the past decade and more. I note this to observe that much the same thing has been true of interreligious dialogue, where talk about the dialogue, its methodology, its theological foundations, its rules and principles, have shunted the actual dialogue itself to a secondary position in academic circles.¹⁰

This is not to say that there has been a wane in the interest in ethical questions and the search for ethical principles for a just world order. Quite the contrary. Among all the questions I was asked about Buddhism—or more correctly, the montage of Buddhism that I was presenting in my lectures—had to do with ethics. Not the ethical stance of Buddhists to this or that current world problem, but the possibility of an ethic based on an enlightened perception of a situation rather than on the local application of universal principles. While this is a position that can be argued perfectly well from within the western philosophical tradition without appeal to Buddhism,¹¹ I tried to present it in the context of an idea of the moral

⁹ Leonardo and Clodovis Boff present a concise history of the emergence of the current in their book *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1987).

¹⁰ I have been on this problem since a 1987 essay “Interreligious Dialogue: Enterprising on an Ethos,” M. Kiyota, B. Earhart, P. Griffiths, and J. Heisig, eds. *Japanese Buddhism: Its Tradition, New Religions, and Interaction with Christianity* (Sapporo: Buddhist Books International), 135–44.

¹¹ I have attempted just such an argument in a recent essay, “Catholicizing Health.” T. Engelhardt, ed., *Allocating Scarce Medical Resources: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 297–309.

subject different from the classical Christian notion, drawing on Buddhist examples as well as passages from medieval Christian mystics.

To my astonishment, this was the least acceptable of all the points I tried to make regarding Buddhist thought. Questions from the audience about things like metempsychosis, karma, and the loss of individual personality after death showed a much greater openness to incorporate these things into a Christian framework than questions expressing doubt about the no-self as a moral subject in the midst of the evil of the world. I cannot say whether this was due more to the relatively high social consciousness of the Latin American and the attention given to institutionalized injustice, or to the simple western attachment to the heroic ego in general. Certainly I lack the experience to judge such matters, let alone to judge for an entire continent as varied as Latin America. I can do no more here than report the anomaly as I encountered it.

DIALOGUE WITH INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS

I had the impression in talking with those working with indigenous peoples in Mexico, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru that the frontier of Latin American theology had moved to the recovery of local cosmologies that date back to pre-Columban cultures. The strictures, and at times active discouragement, of this tendency by the official church and its repression from seminary curricula, while not unexpected, are having the opposite effect of fueling interest in the subject.

In fielding the many questions that came up about the dialogue with indigenous religions, I was only too aware that my experience in dialogue with the religions of Japan was of very limited use. As I stammered through my answers, I began to realize the importance of many issues I had only simply perceived before. Clearly this is a direction for the future that will affect the dialogue with world religions as much as it will affect current theologies. Concerning the recovery of ancient spiritualities, there were theoretical questions about how to incorporate alien, if not directly heretical ideas, into the Christian heritage; and if not incorporate them, at least how to find common ground with them.

There were also practical questions concerning how the church supported our efforts in Asia, what influence we were having on the church, and how one sustains the dialogue institutionally over time. What surprised me, however, was what I saw as a lack of theological sophistication, if not at times an outright literalism, in their approach to the encounter with these traditions. I had the sense that the gains so carefully made in theological method were being bracketed in favor of an ingenious acceptance of classical dogma. The fact that the same tendency is showing up in other spiritual movements around the world is some cause for concern, but also for reflection on the distance of theological reflection from the spiritual realities of the day.

This came home to me most forcefully during an afternoon's discussion in Cusco, Peru, with the anthropologist Jorge Nuñez del Prado. Like his father before him, he had focused his academic career on the study of Incan cosmologies in general, and firsthand research on hierarchical structure of its still active priesthood. Since retirement, he has dedicated himself to the spread of an amalgam of spiritual values Incan and Christian. In an important sense, the two traditions have been fused at the popular level for a long time. (The week I spent in Cusco coincided with the Festival of the Sun, or "Inti Raymi," celebrated annually at the winter solstice. In the past the mummies of Incan kings were paraded ritually around the cities in high celebration. In the sixteenth century the colonial powers tried to incorporate the feast into the Christian liturgy of Corpus Christi, but in fact the Christian and Andean celebrations continue to exist side-by-side to this day.)

In trying to articulate Incan religious values in a way acceptable to Christianity, Professor Nuñez singled out a core kerygma—the "diacritical marks of Christianity" he called them, citing Noam Chomsky as his inspiration—of doctrines whose literal truth was beyond question and which would set the limits to what could and what could not become part of Christian faith. I argued for hours on end—unsuccessfully, as it turned out—for shifting away from simple objectivity of the truth of doctrine to a more symbolic frame of reference in which the Incan and the Christian could find common forum. We parted at opposite ends of the theological spectrum, though he did go out of his way on the following day to attend, together with his high-school aged son, a lecture I gave at the Seminario San Antonio Abad.

Perhaps more than we realize it, the partners we choose for dialogue reflect and reconfirm our self-understanding instead of challenging it. What qualifies one as a partner? Is it institutional survival, financial strength, political influence, approachability? The question is almost unanswerable, until we put it in its negative form: What *disqualifies* someone from partnership? Here the answers, if honest, are often embarrassing. In most cases, it has to do with the other's level of understanding and the ability to articulate it theoretically. Time and again I had to ask myself, in discussing the encounter with indigenous religions, whether it was the religion itself I was interested in, or its conversion to a form in which Christians could dialogue with it.



Earlier I suggested that tracking down the reasons for the failure of Japanese studies to develop in Latin America is of secondary interest. Far more important is the climate of interest in the philosophies and religions of Asia, without which no amount of personnel or financial investment will bear much fruit. That climate, it seems to me, is just right for a new seeding. I have spoken only of the more intel-

lectual and spiritual signs, but these are being backed up by competent and dedicated scholars working under difficult conditions to advance research and teaching in the field. Studies on Japanese literature and language, new translations into Spanish and Portuguese of classical works, textual and sociological research on various dimensions of Japan's religions at home and abroad are being carried out in several places and are slowly being reflected in the graduate and undergraduate curricula. The strongest concentrations of these efforts are in Brazil, Mexico, and Peru, but many of these scholars have the foresight to reach out to the rest of Latin America through journals, conferences, and academic associations.

The great number of invitations I received to return for a course or an extended stay, or to arrange for scholars from Japan to assist their faculties, had very little to do with the quality of my own presentations. Without my either intending or anticipating it, there was something almost symbolic about the gatherings I addressed. One could feel the vitality of the interest, and with it the vocation to cooperate.

Completing this report, I feel strangely out of place sitting here at my desk in Nagoya, Japan, and at the same time have the sense that I am just where I ought to be. There are trips that change the course of a life forever. There are others that seem to reconfirm the course one has chosen. Mine was of the latter sort. Over the years, whenever I would run across former students and colleagues from Latin America on my travels, they would invariably face me with the question, "When can we expect you back?" I never took the question lightly, but at the same time I never knew quite how to answer it. I think I do now, the same way I should answer the next time my colleagues here put me the same question before a trip: "Soon—but not for too long."