Beyond Autonomy and Belonging

Toward a Global Vision for Christian Nurture

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A YEAR AFTER THE devastating end of World War I, W. B. Yeats penned his much-quoted *The Second Coming* in which he envisions the apocalyptic disintegration toward which modern Western history seemed to be rushing headlong. The brutality of "the war to end all wars" shocked the world into the recognition that modernity had dawned in all its godless fury. Of that same historical moment, D. H. Lawrence wrote that "all the great words were canceled out for our generation" (Migliore 1992). Yeats' poem portrays a world in the midst of violent denouement. The past was no longer dependable, and the future was shrouded in ominous fears. In an eerie premonition of the subsequent horrors that have marked much of this century, Yeats depicts an irreparable breach in communication.

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

In Yeats' day and in ours, indifference and fanaticism are often the twin responses to the dissolution of our known worlds. Indeed, the decade following the First World War was marked by an unbridled hedonism on the one hand and the emergence of fascism on the other. The stock market crash of 1929 brought the hedonism to a temporary halt, but in spite of some bold attempts at resistance, there was ultimately no spiritual center in the West or East adequate to foil the rise of Hitler, Mussolini, and Tōjō.

Out of the chaos of a centerless history comes a new vision.

> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
> The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
> When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
> Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
> A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
> A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
> Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
> Reel shadows of indignant desert birds.

Instead of bringing the promised liberation, here the parousia of Christ ushers in a fearful oppression. In the final tragic irony of this frightening poem, Christ is transformed into anti-Christ.

> The darkness drops again; but now I know
> That twenty centuries of stony sleep
> Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

Before we casually reject Yeats' anti-Christian parousia, let's allow his vision to haunt us for awhile.

If this poem is read as a polemic against both indifference and fanaticism, what might it say to the Christian church at the close of the twentieth century? In such a reading, the breach in communication may be understood as having occurred between the church ("falcon") and Christ ("falconer"). Yeats' words present an equal challenge to those on the left who often seem to "lack all conviction" in their readiness to sacrifice the traditions of Christian faith for the sake of the latest social or theological trend, and those on the right who, in their zeal for doctrinal purity, "are full of passionate intensity" but often miss the mystery and paradox at the heart of evangelical Christianity.[1] In a postmodern world where the old power arrangement in church, society, and nation are crumbling all around us, it is not surprising that forces on the right and the left are pitted against each other in a desperate pursuit of their own version of the status quo.

In the end, authoritarianism and complete tolerance are different paths to similar tyrannies, both destructive of the human spirit. Yeats' declaration that "the centre cannot hold" is an indictment of a church that has often ignored the transformational leading of the Holy Spirit. Yeats clearly discerned the need for a spiritual center capable of opening up the human spirit to an imaginative vision for humanity's future. Bitterly disappointed with the Christian church he knew, he delved into various magical and mystical traditions and eventually created his own arcane religious system. His theology was bizarre, but he did see clearly that, instead of freeing people to love and serve the world for which Jesus died, both extremes of orthodoxy and complete tolerance imprison people in the twin unrealities of self-righteousness and self-deception.

At the end of the twentieth century, we find ourselves at a spiritual crossroads not unlike the post-World War I situation. In a dreadful fulfillment of Yeats' vision of "the blood-dimmed tide," violence has arguably become the currency of our time. We have become, as Marshall McLuhan warned, the numbed citizens of a global electronic village, no longer capable of feeling, with John Donne, that the death of any person diminishes our humanity. In an unrelenting barrage of images that expose the most intimate suffering and sorrow of total strangers all around the world, the electronic media reminds us daily of the depth of our sin.

> The Church confesses that she has witnessed the lawless application of brutal force, the physical and spiritual suffering of countless innocent people, oppression, hatred, and murder, and that she has not raised her voice on behalf of the victims and has not found ways to hasten to their aid. She is guilty of the deaths of the weakest and most defenseless brothers [and sisters] of Jesus Christ (Bonhoeffer 1949, 114).[2]

Bonhoeffer's confession of guilt is as contemporary today as it was when he wrote it just prior to the outbreak of World War II.

With the collapse of our old familiar worlds comes a grave anxiety about the future. We look around and wonder with Yeats what nightmarish "rough beast" is being born in our midst. What kind of world awaits our children and grandchildren? In response to this terrifying question, some absolutize the past, clinging to old ways. They want a future that is basically a remake of an idealized past. Others want to absolutize present experience, proclaiming the old ways irrelevant. They imagine a future that is a new and improved version of the present. However, neither a romanticism that longs for the good old days in the name of Christian orthodoxy or a complete tolerance that embraces all human experience

in the name of Christian love will provide adequate visions of the future.

The church is presently confronted with an immense gap between a holistic biblical vision for human life and the prevailing achievement ethos of modern consumer culture. Walter Brueggemann suggests that this present situation of the church can be theologically interpreted as a kind of exile.

> ...Exile is an intentional identity that is theological as well as geographical. Exile articulates that the new place is not home and can never be home because its realities are essentially alien and inhospitable to our true theological identity. Now I suggest that accepting identity as exile, along with geographical reality, is an act of polemical theological imagination that guards against cultural assimilation. Exiles have a stake in stating clearly, perhaps in exaggerated form, the differences between the identity and faith of the community and the seductive urgings and promises of the empire (Brueggemann 1986, 110-111).

The ideologies of right or left have been woefully inadequate in presenting an alternative vision sufficient to lead the church in the midst of this present exile. This failure of ideology is rooted in our tendency to demand the future on our own terms. We long for control of our personal and corporate destinies, and we go to great lengths to try to convince ourselves and others that we really can create the future. In this process of making the future, we come up with a multitude of attempts to fend off the voids that confront us personally and corporately. But in the end, all our personal, social, national, and cultural ego gymnastics still leave us face to face with the stark uncertainties of the future. We need to seek paths that will lead us personally and globally to a new vision of the center where we may dare to entrust both present and future to the free, sovereign God.

If there is such a center that holds us without cloning us, it must be large enough to encircle the whole human family. We need a vision equal to the God who in Jesus Christ has embraced the whole world in all of its staggering diversity. Ideologies divide us and move us off-center, but faithful biblical imagination can free us and lead us all closer to the center. Brueggemann writes,

> The central task of ministry is the formation of a community with an alternative, liberated imagination that has the courage and the freedom to act in a different vision and a different perception of reality (99).

For nurture in Christian faith to be true to the God who in Jesus Christ has been revealed as Lover of the world, we must be constantly engaged in a two-step movement of repentance and openness. We need the courage to continually hold up our present cultural realities in the light of the shared memories of faith and to dare to be open to the uncertainties of God's hopeful future.

PERSONAL, METHODOLOGICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

At the outset, I would like to attempt to clarify some of the perspectives that have informed the search at the heart of the present paper. Many streams of experience, study, and theological reflection seem to be approaching a convergence, sometimes with a sense of logical coherence, sometimes on the level of intuition.

The first major impetus for this exploration was the sense of urgent concern about the world that I felt as a child of the 1960s and 1970s. With the power of vocation, I felt called to leave the familiarity of a small American town, to cross over the borders of family, religion, nation, and race. Ethnocentrism, religious parochialism, nationalism, materialism, and systemic racism, like heavy weights, were pulling my generation down into an ultimately com-

promised lifestyle. I feared that those oppressive cultural patterns would obliterate every remnant of my humanity. What some people called the "American Dream" looked to me like the worst kind of nightmare. It seemed to me then that, if I really believed in an essential solidarity among all people, I would have to leave home. So I did.

This journey led me first to Western Samoa, where I spent a year as a volunteer teacher in the Peace Corps. The world has never looked the same since that year in ancient Samoa. Next I taught English for two years in Kōfu, Japan, and practiced Zen Buddhism at Enkoin Temple. After reaching a deadend in my Zen practice, at the persistent prompting of a local missionary I started reading the New Testament. To my great surprise and joy, I experienced a dramatic conversion to Jesus Christ. From that point on, my understanding of vocation changed drastically. After five years of teaching and graduate study in the United States, I returned as a missionary to Japan in 1987. Thus for nine of my adult years, I have had the profoundly disorienting joy of living and growing in the midst of people with whom I do not share the same ancestors or cultural maps.

On one level, this journey has had much to do with an inward movement toward self-discovery expressed in the words of singer Tom Waits, "I never saw my home town till I stayed away too long." On another level, it has had to do with going beyond the boundaries of self in making deep connections with countless friends across culture. Somewhere within this coming back to self and going out to others has been a recurring conviction that what really defines who we are is much bigger, less deterministic, and more profoundly liberating than what the social sciences can tell us. To borrow a phrase from Canadian songwriter Bruce Cockburn, I have sensed that we all share a "rumor of glory" whose power can transform us personally and reinterpret the often debilitating claims of ego, society, and culture.

One of the major intellectual trends in the second half of the twentieth century has focused on the growing conviction that all human knowing, from the mundane observations of daily life to the arcane investigations of natural science, inevitably involves personal knowing.[3] Polanyi's *Personal Knowing* and Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolution* are two seminal books that have inspired a whole plethora of works in an amazing variety of fields, including literary criticism, theology, and social science. A common theme of these books is the critique of epistemological "objectivity" and the ancillary claim that we inevitably bring our particular intuitions and angles to whatever subject we seek to understand. Regardless of how "scientific" our investigations appear, we can never bracket out our pre-understanding. The very choice of a subject for investigation is strongly influenced by who we have been and who we are becoming. We invest ourselves in certain directions. Whether we seek to know more about the human brain or the Christian gospel, our prejudices, perspectives, and hunches inform and direct our search for deeper understanding.

This view may appear as heresy to those who want to cling to the enlightenment notion that we are somehow capable of grasping and communicating "objective" truth. We must be quick to add, however, that in the place of this failed objectivism, a vacuous relativism will likewise lead us no closer to the truth. In fact, it is the philosophical dead ends of relativism and objectivism behind the ideologies of left and right that continue to contend for ascendancy in church and society today. In their unwillingness to enter into serious dialogue with the other side, both sides are equally prone to ideological demagoguery and belligerence. The church needs to move away from objectivism and relativism and closer

to an open-hearted understanding of Christian faith that is more respectful of the mystery and subversive nature of the biblical vision.

As Kierkegaard argued 150 years ago, truth is never an ideologically cut and dry matter. There are profound paradoxical and fiduciary dimensions at the very heart of all human knowledge. Building on Kierkegaard's insights, James Loder, a theologian, and Jim Neidhardt, a physicist, have written in their recent book *The Knight's Move* about a "strange loop"[4] at the center of human knowing, including knowledge of God (Loder and Neidhardt 1989, 315). As an example of the interdisciplinary implications of this epistemology, Loder and Neidhardt suggest that Bohr's complementarity principle of light as wave and particle is analogous to and may have been indirectly affected by the God/man Chalcedonian epistemology of Kierkegaard.

> The aim here is not to reduce Christology to the logic of complementarity, nor is it to inflate quantum physics into a sacred act. Surely much of the richness and complexity of both these fields will elude and transcend this analogy; however, the analogy will show that these separate realms of inquiry may not be as remote from each other as we tend to assume. Indeed, this may provide a starting point for pressing deeper into the unity of truth that lies behind all our efforts to make God and nature intelligible for the wholeness and integrity of human life (83).

This epistemology has deeply influenced the present paper.

Though we may no longer claim a univocal objectivity in the conversation about what it means to be human, we stand in a tradition that proclaims that God's will has been disclosed most decisively in the person of Jesus Christ. To put it another way, we are grasped by Truth, but we must find the grace to continually confess that our particular responses to that Truth are always feeble and provisional. On this side of eternity, ours must always be truth with a small "t." This is both a frightening and potentially liberating prospect in a post-colonial world that finds itself in desperate need of deep healing between religious, racial, and ethnic groups.

Like the world of Yeats' Second Coming, ours is a world in the midst of birth pangs. The relative value and adequacy of competing truth claims can no longer rest on the judgment of one sex, race, nation, or church. This situation calls for a new kind of interaction between knower and known that will resemble an open dialogue of imagination more than a closed monologue of ideology. Participants in genuine dialogue are committed to a bigger vision of truth. They do not deny or compromise their own convictions, but neither do they insist that their truth is the only truth.

Since the nineteenth century, a quasi-scientific paradigm that has clung to a technological conception of objectivity has dominated academic discussions concerning human ego, society, and culture. During that same period, theology, even when bending over backwards to be relevant, has for the most part been excluded from public discourse on the human condition. Of course, we should not ignore or underestimate the massive contributions of the social sciences in describing and analyzing the convolutions of human ego, culture, and society.

However, wherever self, culture, or society have been seriously examined, psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists have invariably bumped up against the universality of religion and religious experience. It seems that we have always posed the God question, created stories in response to that question, and organized ourselves into ritual communities. If a fundamental part of being human means asking the theologi-

cal question, perhaps the time has arrived for theology to participate again in the conversation about what it means to be human. This participation seems especially warranted both in light of the new epistemology and the present world situation. The present paper is an attempt to interact theologically with the social sciences in the search for a global vision for Christian nurture.

In his description of human spirit as "exocentric centeredness," German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg has suggested a way across the impasse between the human sciences and theology. Pannenberg speaks of human exocentricity as an openness to the world and, by implication, "to what is beyond the world" (Pannenberg 1985, 69). He goes on to say that "exocentricity compels men and women to find outside themselves a center that will give unity and identity to their lives" (480). In other words, relationship with others, the world, and the transcendent makes and keeps us human. Psychology, sociology, and anthropology have and will continue to shed light on the complex ways we relate to other people and the objects of our world. But if, as Pannenberg hints, the final telos of our drive toward relationality is "beyond the world," we are face to face with the theological question.

Pannenberg makes the theological question explicit by going to great lengths to show how exocentricity is evident in our instinct-transcending play, in our positing of the self-question, in conversation, and in religion. Bringing to bear contemporary understandings in biology, psychology, anthropology, and sociology, Pannenberg's description of exocentric centeredness is a way of speaking of human spirit in which, in contradiction to the instincts we share with other animals, we live both in and beyond ourselves. Most decisively, exocentricity is found in the universal human drive to create an all-encompassing vision of the world that he calls the "religious thematic"—the "web" or "universe" of meaning that underlies the shared lives of individuals; "a life springing from a shared center that transcends the limitations of individuals" (409). The exocentric nature of human spirit suggests a way beyond the belonging/ autonomy dialectic in the present discussion.

AUTONOMY AND BELONGING

We discover a remarkable parallel to Pannenberg's description of human spirit as exocentric centeredness in the interactional developmental theory of Robert Kegan. In our drive to make meaning of the world, Kegan suggests that we are always being pulled simultaneously toward differentiation (autonomy) and integration (belonging). This tension is universal, finding particular but not unique expression in all human becoming, regardless of time and place. This balancing act between autonomy and belonging has been expressed by such terms as self versus society, individual versus community, independence versus dependence. Kegan asks, "Is it possible to evolve a model of personality development which takes account not only of both sides of this tension but of the tension itself?" (Kegan 1982, 5).

The cross-cultural dialogue offers some suggestive answers to Kegan's question. Some cultures clearly assign relative value to the first term in the autonomy / belonging dialectic, while others give precedence to the second. I have chosen to call the first type of culture *I-centered* and the other *we-centered.* In both cases, the main term is clearly heard as the dominant theme running through the symphony of personal, cultural, and social life, while the secondary term may be understood as a stubborn, recurring counterpoint to that dominant theme. This reciprocal relationship may be pictured as in Fig. 1 on the following page.

In this paper I have examined Japan as a paradigmatic example of a we-centered cul-

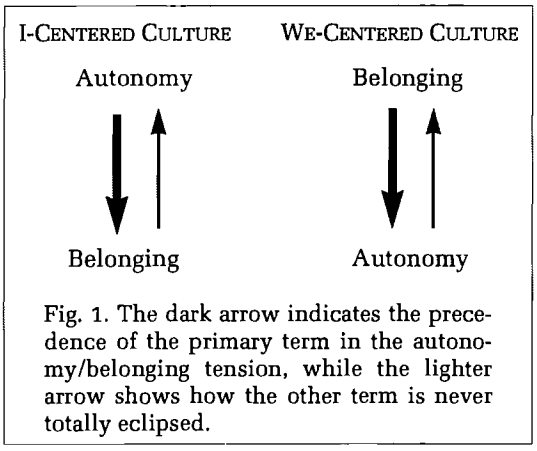

Fig. 1. The dark arrow indicates the precedence of the primary term in the autonomy/belonging tension, while the lighter arrow shows how the other term is never totally eclipsed.

ture and the United States as an example of an I-centered culture. In setting out to untangle the internal dynamics of these very different cultures and to envision a way toward real dialogue between them, we may be tempted to conclude with Kipling that "East is East and West is West / and never the twain shall meet." However, if Kegan is right that the autonomy/ belonging tension is in fact a universal phenomena across cultures, the I emphases will be found in the we culture and vice versa.

This is exactly the situation. For example, Japan's forced opening to the West by the "black ships" from the United States after more than two hundred years of feudal isolation led Japanese educators who had been influenced by Christianity, such as Mori Arinori, Tsuda Ume, and others to insist strongly that the Japanese educational system take the needs of the individual more seriously. Cries on behalf of the individual are still heard today when the examination-dominated system ignores or rejects those who are not adept at rote memorization. One wonders whether, for example, the *bōsōzoku*, *o'taku*, and *gakkōkyohi* phenomena might not be largely caused by an educational system that suppresses personal expression in public.[5]

Similarly, at least since de Tocqueville's visit to the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, countless voices have decried the inherent dangers of extreme individualism.

> Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself (de Tocqueville 1969, 279).

Since the appearance in 1985 of Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart,* more and more attention has been paid to the desperate need to recapture a commitment to community in American society. There are some hopeful signs that Bellah's warning is being taken seriously. For example, in the December 8, 1993 edition of *The Christian Century,* Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow writes: "The proliferation of small groups suggests that Americans are not the lonely individualists that some critics have described" (Wuthnow 1993, 1236).

Skeptics may question whether or not the American "groupism" of the 1990s is really an expression of a self-actualization ethic that is rooted in an extreme form of individualism. One cannot help but wonder why this recent preponderance of small groups in the United States has not necessarily led to a greater concern for justice in the context of the larger community.

The claims of self and others inevitably come into sharp conflict depending on one's cultural context. Will I follow those around me or the voice within? Loder says that "the spirit in the human psyche cannot rest with incoherence" (Loder 1989, 3).[6] When faced with conflict, Loder claims, we move through a five-step process which, if successful, leads toward transformation. This is true with groups as well as with individuals. Since continual conflict is unbearable, culturally specific "resolutions" to the I/we tension are sought. Whether the reso-

lution is proposed on the level of the I or the we, the adequacy of the resolutions is often questionable. In such cases, we may say that the transformation is short-circuited. Just as ego strives to shield self from seeing threatening psychic truths clearly, so culture interrupts the conflict between I and we and proclaims one or the other side victor. In one extreme, the corporate we becomes the sole judge and the jury of the I, while in the other extreme, I turns inward, rejecting the claims of community as irrelevant. Ironically, both "solutions" to the conflict are destructive of human individuality and community.

These side-tracked transformations become crystal clear on the political level. The besetting political sin of the we-culture is totalitarianism, while the I-culture always tends toward anarchy. Nationalism, ethnocentrism, and racism inevitable find their mythical source in some I-crushing we or we-crushing I. In Japan, an emperor system that places everyone under a mythical family lineage has tended to encourage, sometimes with devastating results, a fanatical we emphasis. On the other hand, the American deification of the rights of the individual have their roots in the community-denying I. The present inability of the nation to do anything to effectively halt the extraordinary level of handgun-related acts of violence is one example of this excessive individualism. Another example of one of the more absurd tragic ironies in contemporary American society is the questioning of the prohibition against child pornography as an infringement on the producers' right of free speech. This extreme I emphasis may have its ontic sources in the American marriage of an entrepreneurial pioneer spirit and a personalized view of salvation.

BEYOND DEVELOPMENTALISM

As an American living and working in a Japanese context, I began to search for a common language capable of moving us beyond the frictions between those who variously stake their cultural identities on one side or the other of the I and We. At first glance, theories of human development and especially the faith development theory of James Fowler seemed to offer some help in overcoming this impasse. Fowler's ideas have their footing in both the social sciences and Christian thought, combining the theories of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg with the theologies of H. Richard Neibuhr and Tillich. Following the lead of his mentor Lawrence Kohlberg, Fowler fully expected to uncover a cross-cultural validity for his theory of faith development.

No one had ever conducted faith interviews in Japan, so I embarked on a modest research project, interviewing twenty female Japanese junior college students by using an abbreviated version of Fowler's interview format (Hastings 1991).[7] Though I realized that such a small sample would not definitively prove or disprove Fowler's claim to universality, I did hope to gain some insight into how the self/other dialectic takes shape in the Japanese context.

In the course of my research, I came across the work of Yamagishi Akiko, who in 1975 reported that Japanese children and adolescents more often scored at stage three on Kohlberg's moral development scale than Americans of the same age group (Yamagishi 1980). In fact, because Asians have often failed to score above the Conventional Level on the Kohlberg scale, some critics have perceived a "cognitive bias" in the way the moral dilemmas are presented. For example, since there is no attempt to draw the interviewee into an affective identification with characters like Hans in the Kohlberg dilemmas, the charge of a Western rationalistic bias seems justified.

Carol Gilligan and her colleagues have decried a similar bias in Kohlberg's scale toward adolescent males who score higher

than adolescent females because they utilize analytical reasoning in "solving" the dilemmas. For Gilligan, the psychological theories of Freud, Piaget, and Erikson all contain a male bias that

> ...reflects a conception of adulthood that is itself out of balance, favoring the separateness of the individual self over connection to others and leaning more toward an autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care (Gilligan 1982, 17).

Since Kohlberg's theory of moral development is the main foundation upon which Fowler built his theory of faith development, wouldn't the bias that Gilligan speaks of show up in these interviews with Japanese junior college women? This is precisely what happened. In response to the deeply personal questions about how they make meaning of their lives, the students answered over and over again in terms of their relationships with others. The word *mawari* (significant others) kept coming up. Here is an excerpt from a typical interview.

> *Can you speak about what gives your life meaning and purpose?*
>
> *Mari:* To live with all my heart.
>
> *As you seek to live "with all your heart," what would be most important to you?*
>
> *Mari:* To make sure I don't offend or hurt others (mawari).
>
> *On what basis do you decide whether something is helpful or not for yourself or others?*
>
> *Mari:* Everyone knows that stealing and murder are wrong, but in addition, at the time I do something, I think of the consequences—whether they'll be good or bad—and then decide.
>
> *How do you think about the values and beliefs you hold?*
>
> *Mari:* I am always concerned about what others think of me. I'm always trying to be a "good" girl. I don't want others (mawari) to think I'm bad.... I guess I'm very defensive.
>
> *How would you describe how you are similar to and different from others?*
>
> *Mari:* I would really like to live as an individual, but Japanese people have an island mentality, and if you try to do something different, you will be scorned by those around you (mawari). When Japanese don't go along with everyone else (mawari), they are seen as strange, therefore people don't develop their individuality. For example, there is a strong tendency for Japanese teachers to treat their "unique" students poorly. I often heard of such cases in elementary and junior high school.
>
> *Does the word "unique" have a negative connotation?*
>
> *Mari:* Actually, the word should mean something good, but.... For example, there seems to be something strange about the way I speak. People (mawari) laugh at what I say. Even when it's a conversation with no particular restrictions on subject matter and I see no need for anyone to laugh, I am laughed at and so I think, "Oh, I'd better try to fit in more closely with the way others (mawari) think," and I decide against trying to stand out as an individual.

Rather than focusing on what makes them different from others, these students expressed a deep concern to be accepted by others and to maintain and strengthen relationships at any cost.

When I tried to understand these interviews in light of Fowler's theory, I was ultimately forced to conclude that the Japanese way of construing the self/other dialectic was based not on the individual's differences from others, as in human development theory, but on a drive toward belonging and relationality. Gilligan's work with young women suggests that this concern for

connection *with* others rather than *against* others may be reconceived in the more positive and dynamic language of "the responsiveness of human engagement." Gilligan suggests that a relational ethic can be affirmed as

> ...a conviction that one is able to have an effect on others, as well as the recognition that the interdependence of attachment empowers both the self and the other, not one person at the other's expense. The activities of care—being there, listening, the willingness to help, and the ability to understand—take on a moral dimension, reflecting the injunction to pay attention and not to turn away from need (Gilligan, Ward, and Taylor 1982, 16).

In light of this larger moral vision, theories of human development are currently undergoing serious reconstruction.

This concern for responsibility and an ethic of care in relationships was heard over and over in the interviews with Japanese students. Seen from a traditional developmental perspective, the mawari is an oppressive hindrance, anchoring the emerging self inextricably to conventional centers of meaning. By the time one reaches Fowler's stage four, he or she should begin to be conscious of a self that is "no longer defined by the composite of one's roles or meanings to others (Fowler 1981, 182). But is it appropriate to impose such Promethean Western conceptions of the self on a culture with a definitively different way of construing the self? What if, as Gilligan's work suggests, the centrality of mawari in Japan points to another, equally valid vision for identity formation that is more concerned, even in maturity, with the maintenance of caring relationships of interdependence rather than asserting an independent world view even when it means sacrificing community? Could it be that, in a we-centered culture like Japan, the emergence of the human self cannot be adequately accounted for by the I-centered approach of Western developmental psychologies?

AMAE

This is precisely what psychiatrist Doi Takeo has suggested in his now famous book entitled *The Anatomy of Dependence.* Doi analyzes certain peculiar linguistic structures of the Japanese language that are revelatory of a phenomenon called *amae.* The psychology of amae has striking parallels to the web of interdependence that Gilligan sees as a kind of root metaphor for Western women's experience of the world. In the introduction to Doi's book, John Bester writes that amae is defined as

> ...the feelings that all normal infants at the breast harbor toward the mother—dependence, the desire to be passively loved, the unwillingness to be separated from the warm mother-child circle and cast into a world of objective "reality." It is Doi's basic premise that in a Japanese these feelings are somehow prolonged into and diffused throughout a person's adult life, so that they come to shape, to a far greater extent than in adults in the West, his or her whole attitude to other people and to "reality" (Doi 1973, 7-8).

The mother/child prototype for symbiotic involvement is replayed over and over in a lifetime of amae relationships, whereby one person seeks to attain and maintain identity *with* (not against) another or others by the reciprocal indulgence of the primordial need for dependence.

The amae phenomenon helps to explain why the concept of freedom (*jiyū*), defined as the ability to behave as one pleases without first thinking of others, is often viewed negatively in Japan. Doi sees the roots of the Western concept of freedom in the ancient Greek distinction between the freeman and the slave.

> Freedom meant an absence of the enforced obedience to another implied in the state of slavery; it is precisely because of this that in the West freedom became tied up with ideas such as the rights and dignity of man, and came to be seen as something good and desirable. Parallel with this, the Western-style idea of freedom also serves for a basis for asserting the precedence of the individual over the group (Doi 1973, 85).[8]

In Japan, however, where amae necessitates a high level of emotional dependency within the context of the group, the individual is not "free" to assert his or her will when it differs from the consensus of the group.

What then becomes of the self in the we-centered culture of amae? We have already explored the inability of Western psychology (as in Fowler's theory) to adequately address the self/other dialectic in Japan. In an attempt to expand psychoanalytical theory to encompass the we-centered cultures of India and Japan, Alan Roland has suggested a helpful distinction between what he calls the *familial self*, which would be more typical of Asian cultures, and the *individual self* more common in Western cultures.[9] Notably, Roland asserts that Western women tend to manifest the *familial self* more than Western men.[10]

Underlining some of the complexities of how the self/other dialectic takes shape in a we-centered world, Doi speaks of the existence of a pathology called *jibun ga nai* (absence of self).

> If the individual is submersed completely in the group, he has no *jibun* (self). But even where he is not completely submersed in the group—though he may be aware of himself as part of the group and may even, on occasion, recognizes with discomfort the existence of a self whose interests do not coincide with those of the group—he does not necessarily have a *jibun* (self). If he suppresses the discomfort not because of physical compulsion from the group but because his own desire to belong to the group is stronger than the suffering or if—which comes ultimately to the same thing—his blind loyalty to the group leads him to keep quiet concerning his differences with the group, then again he must be described as *jibun ga nai* (lacking self).... An individual is said to have a *jibun* (self) when he can maintain an independent self that is never negated by membership of the group. What is important here is that the real essence of the conflict situation just described lies within the individual himself (Doi 1973, 134).

Contrary to what one might think, the amae culture has a way of preserving the integrity of the individual self. Instead of defining oneself over and against the group, the key is to be able to reach an equilibrium between personal and group identity, without sacrificing either one to the other. Still, the group clearly exercises a rather pronounced marginal control over the individual in Japan that can be very destructive. The *jibun ga nai* pathology has its roots in the individual's loss of ability to maintain a private self.

Recent anthropology is trying to reimage the self of we-centered cultures like Japan in terms of an interactive and relational model that is in sharp contrast to the Western dualistic approach, which has tended to pit self against society. In this view,

> ..."self" is a cyclical process that takes form and meaning from its position in relation to other people within changing contexts, groups and ideologies (Rosenberger 1992, 88).

Here self is pictured as moving back and forth along a continuum between poles expressed by such Japanese words as *soto/uchi*, *omote/ura*, and *tatemae/hone*. Whereas the image of the mature self in the West centers around the self's distinctness *from*

others, the Eastern image portrays the mature self in terms of identification *with* others.

BEYOND I AND WE

In light of the cross-cultural analog between Gilligan's analysis of the experience of Western women and the amae/mawari dynamic of Japanese culture, might we suggest that the I-centered and we-centered approaches to cultural reality be envisioned in terms of their complementarity?[11] Couldn't a moral vision that emphasizes relationality serve as a needed corrective to an unbalanced view that sees individual autonomy as decisive and vice versa? What if being human has to do with something more profound than the particular asymmetries of the I and we cultures? What if human spirit is understood, not as a helpless prisoner of cultural determinism but, as Pannenberg suggests, as an open process? In an expanding universe in which even natural scientists are forced to confess the contingencies of our present understanding of nature, why should psychology cling to a static determinism that is ultimately destructive of human spirit?

In the final chapter of *The Silent Language*, Edward Hall writes about our complicated resistance to the concept of culture. He says, "Oddly enough it is not the differences between cultures that breed resistance" (Hall 1973, 186). Since culture has to do with "the very deepest personal concerns," perhaps this resistance has to do with our unwillingness to be known. To be known is to have the mask of uniqueness removed, to begin to know ourselves as those who stand in solidarity with people of other cultures.

My personal experiences in the South Pacific and Japan for nine years have convinced me that, in spite of the complexities of cultural diversity, what joins us is much greater than what distinguishes us. In this centerless moment in history, we find ourselves in desperate need of a nurturing language and ethos that will encourage us to rejoice in our common humanity without sacrificing the rich wonders of our diversity. Such a vision must have the stamina and imaginative power to confront and undermine the tyrannical proclivities of both we and I.

The comparison of Gilligan's work and analogous realities in Japan is meant to show that belonging is not specifically Asian, nor is autonomy specifically Western. On the one hand, the problem is not belonging, per se. It is when the we becomes the center of truth and value, eclipsing and diminishing the I. Nor is the problem autonomy, per se. It is when the I becomes the measure of all things, rejecting the community. Both extremes are destructive of human spirit since, in the former, the we is exalted over the I while, in the latter, the I is exalted over the we.

THE COMMON NEGATIONS OF HUMAN LIFE

Though the self/other dialectic finds a variety of expressions across cultures, what actually unites the human family may be the reality that none of us escapes the cataclysmic events of birth, separation from our mothers and fathers, the painful process of identity formation, the machinations of power politics, the inevitable losses of loved ones, sickness, and finally death. These inescapable negations define our common humanity. It is also significant that it is in the midst of these very negations that we are often led to ask ultimate questions about life's meaning and God.

Again, depending on our particular cultural experience, we seek ways to understand and overcome these negations that threaten us with the specter of total meaninglessness. In this way, the Japanese phenomenon of amae may be understood as a lifelong attempt to deny the existential pain involved in the process of individuation.

Likewise, in the United States, the sacralization of *independence* and *self-reliance* may be understood as lifelong attempts to avoid the pain and sacrifice necessary for committed relationality. The former can be seen as a "functional negation" (Loder 1989, 159) of autonomy and the latter as a functional negation of belonging. But the functional negation is destined to fail in both cases since "the necessary double negation does not occur" (165). Loder describes this necessary movement of "double negation" as

> ...the intervening and confrontational work of mediation in *Transformational Logic*. The existing conflict (negation) must be confronted (negation of negation) by an intervening mediational figure or insight; the confrontation is made within the terms of the conflict, not as a radical removal of the conflict. As distinct from pure cancellation, double negation keeps the original negation, or conflict, in focus, yet alters its elements and significance to suit the nature of the mediator and the outcome of transformation (223).

In the early part of this century, existentialism brought the issues of universal human despair to center stage in the intellectual world. If Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* as "being toward death" formed the inescapable question in the early twentieth century, Barth's theology of the Word of God responded to that challenge with the *No* of the God who, as Judge, is judged precisely "in our place." Christian faith interprets all existential negations vis-a-vis the cross of Jesus Christ. Luther called the cross the "death of death," the only place where the "double negation" Loder speaks of is effective.

PRO NOBIS AND *PRO ME*: NURTURE IN KOINONIA

We now turn to a theological framework for understanding how both the strengths and potential negations of we and I can be transformed in the light of the Christological center. In his treatment of "The Holy Spirit and Christian Faith," Karl Barth speaks of a new relationship between the individual (I) and the community (we) in the light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

> He can believe only in and with the community, only in the sphere and context of it, only in the limitation and determination set by its basis and goal. The royal freedom of his faith is the freedom to stand in it as a brother or sister, to stand with other brothers and sisters in the possession granted to it and the service laid upon it. If faith is outside the Church it is outside the world, and therefore a-Christian....There are no saints without the fellowship, but there is no fellowship without the saints (Barth 1956, IV/I:751).

A Christocentric understanding of faith preserves both the particularity and integrity of the individual and the community. The community must not swallow up the individual, and the individual must not thumb his or her nose at the community. Here, I and we are linked within the larger context of the underlying relationality of Christ to humanity.

Inasmuch as I and we dimensions are constitutive of cultural particularity and identity, the tension must be preserved and respected at all costs. However, both sides of the I/we tension are in constant need of critique. For example, inherent in Barth's analysis is a radical critique of the enlightenment tradition of the autonomous individual that was a major influence on liberal theology.[12] Still, Barth never denied the importance of the individual dimension in Christian faith. In "serious agreement" with Luther and Kierkegaard, he supports the *pro me* aspect of faith, defending the I-hymns, psalms, and the first person baptismal confession.

> It will be acknowledged that Christian faith is an "existential" happening, that it is from first to last I-faith, which can and should be sung in I-hymns. But there will take place the necessary "demythologization" of the "I" which Paul carried through in Gal. 2:20: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (757).

He is very critical, of course, of a faith in which the personal dimension becomes the central focus. For Barth, faith as a private enterprise is an expression of the ultimate in human hubris.

> It cannot happen that the pro me, the relationship of the activity and will of God to the individual, is made as such the basis and measure of all things, as though at bottom we were dealing with the relationship of the individual to the activity and will of God, as though the value, truth, and actuality of God were to be found only in what thou and I, the individual see to be of value, truth, and actuality for him, only in what he acknowledges and confesses to be "existentially" relevant to him (757).

Just as the autonomous individual dare not stand in judgment over the community of God's people, the community of faith as "one feeble organism with others" (151) is also in constant need of demythologization. A church that censures all traces of individuality is as potentially demonic as one that revolves around the private religious experience of charismatic individuals.

What is needed then is an understanding of faith that simultaneously embraces and decenters both the personal and corporate dimensions of Christian life. We have already explored the unintentional cultural bias toward the individual in Fowler's work. However, in James Loder's analysis of the transformational logic of faith, we find a broader basis for understanding the I/we dynamics involved in Christian nurture across cultures. Emphasizing the mediational role of Christ, Loder's view is in sharp contrast with the ego-centered dynamic that underlies Fowler's theory of faith development.

In transformation, the relationality of human spirit and Holy Spirit is central, thus the issue of culture is important but not decisive. Faith experiences in I-centered or we-centered culture follow the same general patterns. In the United States, where the I is clearly at the center of identity, faith experiences will preserve the integrity of the I while simultaneously displacing it as the center of world composition. With Paul, faith says, "I, yet not I, but Christ." Similarly, in Japan, where a we (*wareware nihonjin*) identity prevails, a parallel displacement takes place in transformational experiences of faith. An appropriate paraphrase of Paul for the Japanese context would be, "We, yet not we, but Christ." One is freed from the prisons of autonomy and belonging only when the I and we are liberated for purposes that transcend the self or the group.

It is natural and even necessary that Christian faith will find various expressions across cultures. Even Karl Barth, the theologian who has had perhaps the greatest influence on the Japanese mainline church, recognized this need for variety.

> ...Christian faith can and should be varied.... Although its object, the Jesus Christ attested in Scripture and proclaimed by the community, is single, consistent and free from contradiction, yet for all His singularity and unity His form is inexhaustibly rich, so that it is not merely legitimate but obligatory that believers should continually see and understand it in new lights and aspects. For He Himself does not present Himself to them in one form but in many—indeed, He is not in Himself uniform but multiform (763).

If we are to proclaim the Center that holds

us together, we must flee, at all costs, from a cultural imperialism that speaks of I-centered or we-centered culture as inherently more Christian than the other. Christ is in deep solidarity with each of us individually and with all humanity.

In the Christian vision of *koinonia* we find a language that embraces the I and we but moves beyond autonomy and belonging toward integrity and relationality. Christian ethicist Paul Lehmann writes of koinonia as

> a laboratory of maturity in which, by the operative (real) presence of the Messiah-Redeemer in the midst of his people, and through them of all people, the will to power is broken and displaced by the power to will what God wills.... Maturity is the full development in a human being of the power to be truly himself in being related to others who also have the power to be truly and fully themselves (Lehmann 1963, 155).

Here maturity is seen as an ego-decentering movement in which both I and we are reinterpreted in the new context of God's will as revealed in Jesus Christ as Lover of the whole world. We may picture the koinonia using the familiar symbol of the Celtic cross with a circle (Fig. 2).

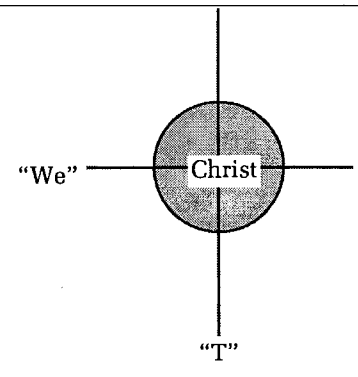

Fig. 2. The "I" axis represents the individual dimension of faith; the "we" axis represents the communal dimension.

In this new situation in which God's will in Christ is envisioned as the nurturing center, we can move beyond the destructive polarities of both autonomy and belonging. I and we cultures are simultaneously held and transformed in the gracious embrace of this center.

NOTES

[1] It is worth noting that precisely in 1919, a young Swiss pastor named Karl Barth, who had been bitterly disillusioned with the liberalism of his seminary professors, was hard at work on the second edition of his *Romerbrief*, which changed the theological landscape of the twentieth century.

[2] Please try to disregard the "she." Bonhoeffer's use of "she" should be understood in terms of the traditional reference to the church as feminine (i.e., mother). However, one wonders if that usage does not betray an echo of Adam's passing of blame to the woman.

[3] This methodology accounts for the biographical notes above.

[4] Loder and Neidhardt define the "strange loop" as "a bipolar, asymmetric, relational pattern in which two distinct conceptual levels are bound together through dynamic-asymmetric relationship. Such an interrelationality creates a complex yet unitary whole that is differential in character, i.e., the asymmetric character of the relationship preserves the distinctiveness of each level.

[5] *Bōsōzoku* refers to the groups of young people who cruise the city streets of Japan in the middle of the night in cars and on motorcycles without mufflers, creating deliberate, high decibel disturbances. *O'taku ningen* refer to young people who, for a variety of psycho-social reasons, cut themselves off from significant human contact and often become obsessed with such pastimes as video games and role-playing games. Gakkōkyohi refers to students who, often as a result of being bullied, ridiculed, or ignored by other students, refuse to go to school.

[6] James Loder's analysis of "transformational logic" is another major influence on this paper. Loder proposes a five-step process by which the human spirit confronts, seeks, and finds resolutions to the conflicts that present themselves during the course of human development. The five steps are 1. Conflict-in-context; 2. Interlude for scanning;

3.Insight felt with intuitive force; 4. Release and repatterning; and 5. Interpretation and verification.

[7] The following is a list of the questions I used with the numbers corresponding to Fowler's research interview as described in *Stages of Faith,* 310-312. Since the interviewer had access to the students' biographical data, there was no need to ask those kinds of questions (Fowler I, 1). Notice the striking emphasis on the I dimension in these questions, which may represent an unconscious bias against the we dimension.

1. Thinking about yourself at present: What gives your life meaning? What makes life worth living for you? (Fowler I, 4)
2. At present, what relationships seem most important for your life? (Fowler II,1)
3. Are there other persons who at earlier times or in the present have been significant in the shaping of your outlook on life? (Fowler II,3)
4. What experiences have affirmed your sense of meaning in life? What experiences have shaken or disturbed your sense of meaning? (Fowler II, 7)
5. Can you describe the beliefs and values or attitudes that are most important in guiding your own life? (Fowler III, 1)
6. What is the purpose of human life? (Fowler III, 2)
7. Do you feel that some approaches to life are more "true" or right than others? Are there some beliefs or values that all or most people ought to hold and act on? (Fowler III, 3)
8. What relationships or groups are most important as support for your values and beliefs? (Fowler III, 5)
9. Is there a "plan" for human lives? Are we—individually or as a species—determined or affected in our lives by power beyond human control? (Fowler III, 8)
10. When you think about the future, what makes you feel most anxious or uneasy? (Fowler III, 10)
11. What does death mean to you? What becomes of us when we die? (Fowler III, 11)
12. Why do some persons and groups suffer more than others? (Fowler III, 12)
13. What feeling do you have when you think about God (god)? (Fowler IV, 2)
14. Do you consider yourself a religious person? (Fowler IV, 3)
15. If you pray, what do you feel is going on when you pray? (Fowler IV, 4)
16. Do you feel that your religious outlook is "true"? In what sense? (Fowler IV, 5)

[8] Pannenberg sees the roots of freedom a little differently from Doi, saying: "The fundamental secular idea of the autonomy of the individual is certainly anchored in the Christian idea of freedom....At the same time, the secular world of the modern state and its culture is alienated from these roots." *Anthropology in Theological Perspective,* 482.

[9] "The familial self encompasses several important suborganizations: symbiosis-reciprocity that involves intensely emotional intimacy relationships, with their emotional connectedness and interdependence, in relationship-centered cultures where there is a constant affective exchange through permeable outer ego boundaries, where a highly private self is maintained, where high levels of empathy and receptivity to others are cultivated, and where the experiential sense of self is of a "we-self" that is felt to be highly relational in different social contexts; narcissistic configurations of we-self regard that denote self-esteem derived from strong identification with the reputation and honor of the family and other groups, as well as with the others in hierarchical relationships, from nonverbal mirroring throughout life, and from culturally encouraged idealization of elders; a socially contextual ego-ideal that carefully observes traditionally defined reciprocal responsibilities and obligations, and through a public self the social etiquette of diverse hierarchical relationships, in complexly varying interpersonal contexts and situations, a superego that structures aggression and sexuality according to the exigencies of hierarchical extended family and grouped relationships, with congruent unconscious defensive functions; modes of communication that are always on at least two levels; and modes of cognition and ego functioning that are highly contextual and oriented toward symbols, signs, and influences." *Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 7-8.*

[10] This confirms our association of Gilligan's analysis of American women with the Japanese emphasis on relationality. However, Gilligan's assertion that women's experience of relationship "provides a nonhierarchical vision of human connection" may be naive in light of Roland's assertion that reciprocal dependence actually serves to reinforce hierarchical relationships. See *In a Different Voice,* 62.

[11] Polkinghorne defines complementarity as follows: "The quantum mechanical insight which recognizes that there are alternative, mutually exclusive, modes of description, each complete in itself" (*One World,* 106). Since we are dealing with dimensions

of culture and personality and not light particles, it is inappropriate to draw a direct correspondence between Bohr's view of the complementarity of light and particle and I and we cultures. But the metaphor of complementarity has a powerful potential to liberate us from a view of the human self that, at least since the age of exploration, has tended to assume that the ethos of the pioneer-spirited autonomous individual would ultimately triumph over all opposing visions.

[12] The demythologization of the autonomous individual may be one of the reasons for Barth's longstanding popularity in we-centered Japan.

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