

From Stereotyped Images to Oriental Complementarity

Japan's Particularism and Christianity's Universalism Questioned

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CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICA, where I taught during the last three months of 1994, is of course a world totally apart from the modern (postmodern?) hustle and bustle of Japan. After a time, though, one starts to discover several interesting similarities between the deeper cultural layers that sustain the African world and those that characterize the Asian world. The Philippines, where I spent the first three months of 1995, proudly affirms in different ways its image of being the only Christian nation in East Asia, although its Christianity is no doubt heavily influenced by elements that link the country to its Asian neighbors. The ongoing fascination of Japan with "internationalization" and the role of Christianity in this process, and the consideration of these themes from outside the country, creates more challenges than an examination from the inside could offer.

Japan is, in a sense, omnipresent in Cameroon. Its "internationality" manifests itself in the thousands of cars, mostly second-hand taxis, and other "made in Japan" products that hide the misery of the common people, and in the sacks of rice donated by the Japanese government to alleviate that misery—the Thai rice that Japanese people were reluctant to eat in the wake of their poor rice harvest in 1993. On the other hand, except for a few instances of church people who have volunteered for Africa,

Japanese Christianity is, understandably, almost totally absent from the region.

Unmistakably an East Asian country, the Philippines clearly reveals that East Asia is very much Japan's backyard. Not only is a fairly large proportion of that country's attention directed toward attracting the Japanese presence, but many Filipinos also seem genuinely interested in adopting Japanese cultural elements, from food (Japanese restaurants run by Filipinos and catering for a Filipino clientele abound) to the management style and work ethic that sustain Japanese society. Although the recently celebrated fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Manila from Japanese occupation reminded the Filipino people that history should not be forgotten, the goodwill mood of the annual Filipino-Japanese Friendship Month in February took final precedence. This year's event was further strengthened by sympathy for the victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake. Contacts between church people of both countries are steadily increasing, and the active role of Japanese Christian youth delegations at the World Youth Day in January, honored by the presence of Pope John Paul II, is only one token of this growing neighborly spirit.

With their limited numbers, Japanese Christians tend to concentrate their international presence in the countries they perceive as closest to their particular concerns,

but the globalization process has very clearly put Japan on the world map everywhere, for better or worse. This reality urges new reflection on what it means to be international, both for Japan, as one of the world's leading nations, and for Christianity in Japan, as a numerically small minority that is quite influential in Japanese society.

STEREOTYPES

Japan

Internationalization has a fairly long history of usage in Japan, and in a country where old terms are easily discarded and new ones created as quickly as consumer products, it is rather strange that the term still describes both a present reality and an orientation for the future. Admittedly, other related terms have also gained currency in that discourse. Globalization is one of them, and this term might carry a far more powerful appeal, especially for those who like to stress the element of universality as a requirement for the survival of our planet. It refers to the process in which the global dissemination of cultural forms occurs without immediately causing the distortion of local cultures. Could it be that in Japan the awareness of the nation as an essential part or even substratum of internationalization is after all much stronger in the ongoing discussion?

In recent years there has been a tremendous increase of literature on the internationalization of Japan. International conferences have been held on the subject. There apparently exists a generally accepted consensus on the reasons for its importance: the international community demands that Japan make a greater contribution to international society as well as make changes in its domestic structures that would facilitate more openness and foreign access. However, when it comes to defining what all this means or entails, opinions tend to diversify again. How could it be otherwise? Inter-

nationalization, both as a concept and as a reality, possesses such a multidimensional character that it would be quite hazardous to subsume all the different aspects it exhibits under one common denominator. Yet, is there any other solution?

Internationalization is said to refer first to Japan's penetration of other countries, whether by the proliferation of Japanese goods in the world market or by the increasing outflow of people and ideas. This is quite an asymmetrical process. In Europe and the United States this might at times elicit admiration for the energy shown by the Japanese, but more often it evokes fear with some racist undertones leading to Japan bashing. In East Asia—and to a certain extent in Africa and other regions as well—this side of Japan's internationalization seems to be more highly valued. Japan is often seen as a model for modernization, although the past fifty years have not totally erased the negative image of the old Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

Internationalization might also refer to Japan's penetration by the wider world—that constant feature of Japanese culture that uses selective adoption and adaptation of alien influences to create a (unique?) constellation of apportioned harmony in which existing conflicts have been systematically minimized or ignored, if not overcome. However, when, as is now increasingly the case, this sort of penetration is accompanied by a vast influx of living persons, alien migrant workers and others, who by the very fact of their alien nature disturb the traditional, sacred harmony of the nation, internationalization becomes more of a challenge than ever before in history. The outcome, though, is as yet far from certain.

It is these two types of penetration and their specific forms that point to the deeper layers of the internationalization problematic, namely the attitudes of people toward the reality of growing interdependence, the cross-cultural cross-fertilization it entails,

and the mutual responsibility it demands of people. There is a consensus among many, if not most, observers of Japanese society that Japanese people remain ill-prepared for a more active role in global affairs. They remain xenophobic at heart because they too readily subordinate the universal to the particular in endless repetition of the *wakon-yōsai* (“Japanese spirit and Western technique”) principle of Meiji times, when outside influences were pragmatically accepted only for strengthening the harmony of the nation. In a word, the modernization of the Meiji period and the internationalization of the present-day are a means, not an end in itself.

This is a critical judgment of Japan; however, there is an increasing number of people who strive for a more positive interpretation. Moreover, it influences the view of the future. Apprehension about the obstacles that inhibit the internationalization of the Japanese mind is fairly strong in many places, although not everyone agrees with the so-called revisionists who claim that sooner or later Japan’s traditional particularism will bring it into collision with other, more universally-minded nations. Still, others try to minimize the importance of the many trends pointing to a continuation or resurgence of neo-nationalism. However interdependent it might actually have been, the image of Japan as a nation and culture born and nurtured in sacred aloofness from the outside world, and therefore not sufficiently prepared for shouldering the responsibilities required in a globalized world of equal partners, is not necessarily a stereotype in the strictest sense of the term. Nevertheless, the strength of this image should not be underestimated either. It is reinforced by the concept of Christianity as a system of thought, attitudes and practices that offers the opposite image: the guardian and promoter of universality.

Christianity

Christianity in general and in Japan have firm international credentials. With the proclamation of a message of universal love that transcends the narrow limits of national and social borders and the prophetic witness of opting for all those who fall outside the structures of established harmony, the Christian churches project an image that runs counter to the particularistic ethos allegedly characterizing Japan. The image of Christianity prevalent among many Japanese is that of a religious tradition that is not only foreign in origin but also incongruous with Japanese culture. Whether this is an asset or a burden, if not a hindrance, is a moot question. Although Christianity’s foreignness and heterogeneity prevent an easy implantation into the soil of Japan, they increase its visibility in the wider society. Most people, claiming to defend their own particularistic Japaneseness, keep a safe distance from the churches—at least as far as direct commitment is concerned—but at the same time find the universalist image of Christianity a source of respectability and interest.

There are, no doubt, problems with this image. Christianity’s universality is intrinsically linked to the particularity of Western culture. It is precisely in this respect that ambiguities arise, both from the average Japanese person and from Christians themselves. Catching up with the West and overcoming it was for a long time a slogan that revealed a sort of inferiority complex. It functioned, however, as a stimulus and motivation for the Japanese endeavor to modernize, now supplanted by the pride of having become number one. Nevertheless, the Western world does remain for many Japanese the prime referent for evaluating their own position of rank in the order of nations. As the agent of the Western world that Christianity is thought to be, it cannot be disregarded in this

comparison. This seems to be especially true with regard to the Roman Catholic Church because many Japanese, particularly those active in non-Christian religions, see in it the international standing of the Vatican with its global religious and political influence. Interreligious dialogue in Japan, for example, characterized as it is by a sort of rivalry among Japan's religious groups to be on good terms with the Roman Catholic Church—and especially with the Vatican rather than with the tiny Roman Catholic Church in Japan itself—attests to this.

On the side of the Christian churches in Japan, the relationship between the universal nature of their own religious tradition and Western culture seems to have increasingly become a bone of contention. Here also the Roman Catholic Church in Japan may serve as an example. While its relative remoteness from the center in Rome might enhance independence, its small size has apparently influenced Japanese Catholicism's repeated emphasis on its membership in the universal church and its obedience to directives from the center. It is precisely this deep awareness of belonging to a broader entity with worldwide dimensions that has given Japanese Catholicism its strongest foundation and safeguarded its identity. Lacking self-confidence as a local church, it has found its strength in the universal church. This borrowed identity, coupled with an occasional tendency to withdraw into a ghetto mentality, has certainly strengthened the church's image among the Japanese as a sort of *Fremdkörper* in their culture.

In recent times, however, another factor has entered the picture, compounding the problem of universalism and particularism. Notwithstanding the reality of the increasing Vatican tendency towards centralization, official church policy since Vatican Council II has been one of emphasizing the role of the local churches, the importance of incultur-

ation, interreligious dialogue and other related movements. Can it be said then that this official policy has given Japanese Catholics a stronger sense of self-respect and self-confidence and led to a wider awakening and a firmer resolution to move forward in a more independent way?

This does not seem to be the whole story. On the one hand, the church is increasingly asked and willing to become more Japanese, establishing an identity no longer borrowed from the outside, but grounded in the soil of its own culture. On the other hand, however, contrary tendencies remain quite strong, and ultimately these still define the general image of Christianity in this country.

Apparently, no one in the church objects to a greater role for the local church, but opinions differ greatly on what this means. Specifically, the term inculturation, widely used in Catholic circles, does not arouse everyone's sympathy. Many Catholics seem to fear that inculturation will Japanize their religious life, that is, subordinate it to the supreme value of harmony that is fundamentally particularistic as it puts one's nation above everything else. Still others interpret inculturation as a step backward, expressing a kind of romantic idea of a static Japanese culture at odds with a society undergoing rapid change, still questioning its own role in a world growing ever more international and interdependent. It is feared that a deeper identification with Japanese culture and its particularism will inhibit the prophetic function the gospel demands. To what extent can inculturation make room for prophetic criticism of culture? Doesn't the church have an obligation to challenge particularistic values in the name of its own universality? (In this connection, it is no exaggeration to say that the influence of the ecumenical movement in Japan has been a major factor in conscientizing Catholics to this prophetic dimension of their faith. Another major factor is the

protection and maintenance of a firm identity as a minority group, which demands strong symbols differentiating it from its cultural environment, as mentioned above. The more radical involvement of many Protestant churches, especially with social and political issues, has greatly influenced some sectors of Japan's Roman Catholic Church, implying as it does a critical stance towards government policies and other values embedded in Japanese traditional culture.)

This image of Christianity as a religious tradition that espouses values that are quite radically different from those of traditional Japanese culture performs a function in society with rather unexpected implications. For one thing, the foreignness and heterogeneity of Christianity clearly exert a certain fascination for people that the churches themselves fail to appreciate at times. The general popularity of church weddings among non-Christians and the massive adoption of Christmas Eve celebrations in society at large are phenomena that show how the Japanese are able to use even foreign elements—that, moreover, are kept foreign—to contribute to the harmony of their personal and social life. Generally speaking, the Christian side is not alone in abstracting and overemphasizing the differences between the Western Christian tradition and the Japanese one as a means of strengthening its own identity. Non-Christian Japanese also seem to find these opposing images helpful for the same reason. Non-Christian Japanese, imbued with and cherishing an image of Christianity intrinsically linked to Western culture, find it difficult to locate an inculturated Christianity. Particularly in the present atmosphere of regained confidence in their own traditional values, many people regard Christian attempts to become more Japanese as a subtle Western campaign to undermine those values from within. In this sense, the images both sides hold of Japanese culture

and (Western) Christianity as different, if not opposite, reinforce each other, but haven't these images become too stereotypical, thus hindering correct understanding?

ALTERING IMAGES

Forming images of present reality is an epistemological process necessary for acquiring a correct understanding of that reality. However, because these images are abstractions and mental constructs—ideal images, to use the sociological term—their limitations must be taken into account. The possible negative effects must be recognized, especially when images become stereotyped, i.e., standardized mental pictures held in common by members of a group and representing an oversimplified opinion, affective attitude or uncritical judgment about others. This is also true of the understanding of Japan and of Christianity with regard to the particularism and universalism they are said to exhibit. The characterization of Japanese culture as particularistic, ultimately oriented toward glorifying and enhancing its own nationalistic goals above its relations with and responsibilities to other nations, and of Christianity as universalist, appealing to an audience beyond national and other borders and proclaiming mutual equality and co-responsibility, might indeed be expressive of an undeniable reality. Serious errors could result if this becomes so strongly emphasized that it is taken to be the sole existing reality and posed in terms of opposition to each other—Japanese nationalism *versus* Christian internationalism. It is noteworthy that those prone to think in such antithetical terms are very often, if not always, Westerners, Japanese Christians and other Japanese critics of their own society educated in Western patterns of thinking. Could this be the influence of an Aristotelian dichotomous, antinomic reasoning?

A culture shock I repeatedly experience when in Africa and in the Philippines is the lavish use of the term nationalism and its positive valuation. This shock might be partly due to the cultural programming I myself have undergone, and am still undergoing. This is based on my own life experiences both in Europe (the Flemish part of Belgium, my native country) and in Japan (my host country). In those parts of the world, the slogan "my own people first" smacks of ethnocentrism, an ethnocentrism of a fairly dangerous kind. The present nationalistic trends in Europe (the success of political parties with outspoken ethnocentric, anti-immigrant platforms, for example, not to mention the ethnic cleansing going on in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere) and similar trends in Japan exemplified and stimulated by the popularity of all sorts of *nihonjinron* (theories about Japaneseness) are phenomena that cannot and should not be ignored. On the other hand, this shock is somewhat softened by reflecting upon other, equally valuable, life experiences. For one thing, I was born and raised at a time when national or ethnic pride was a crucial element in the struggle of my own Flemish people against the devastating impact of centuries of cultural oppression. Witnessing the present plight of African peoples and of the people of the Philippines, whose roots are in histories of colonization, I cannot help but feel solidarity with them in their efforts at nation-building. However, if I conclude that nationalism is a laudable endeavor in their case but is pernicious in Europe and Japan, do I not also fall into the trap of a dichotomous thinking that oversimplifies, if not distorts, reality? Don't these images, especially stereotyped ones have to be broken?

Japan

As mentioned above, the topic of Japan's internationalization is far from new. In the

past two decades especially, it has increasingly become a buzz word in the mass media and one of the most widely discussed issues in wider society as well as among specialists in various disciplines. This broad-based discussion expresses an acute awareness that something needs to be done about the phenomenon. In other words, it indicates an awareness that Japan is not yet sufficiently internationalized. At the same time, it reflects a positive willingness to deal with the problem. In comparison to attitudes evident in other parts of the world, the Japanese have certainly done their homework. Indeed, although many trends in Japanese society and the very process of internationalization can be criticized, problem consciousness on this and related issues is very high in comparison with other countries. One only has to be absent from this country for a period of time to be struck by this.

The internationalization issue refers, first of all, to an existing reality: the de facto globalization process by which the interdependence of nations and cultures is increasing on a daily basis. It is not necessary to indicate here the many factors that have created and further enhanced this process. One thing is certain. More than the smaller countries of the world, the greater powers are at the center of this global trend. Even if Japan has not consciously sought to be at the center, it has become utterly impossible for the country to ignore this trend. It can no longer maintain the splendid isolation in which it long thought it had found safety and security. Perhaps a small country can still be permitted to somehow go its own way. For a leading power like Japan, however, this has become increasingly difficult. The stronger it becomes, the more it loses its freedom to act independently. It is for this reason that most observers of Japanese society, while acknowledging the existence of reactionary movements in the country, have come to the conclusion that the very fact of having

become a strong nation has, paradoxically, rendered Japan more susceptible and vulnerable to foreign criticism and consequently no longer free to act independently of what world opinion expects of it.

The core of the problem is, of course, to what extent this *de facto* internationalization is accompanied by a change of mentality among the Japanese people. International openness supposes knowledge, attitudes and skills with regard to internationality. Japan's deep problem consciousness mentioned earlier relates to such knowledge. Admittedly, much more can and should be done, especially because so much attention is still directed toward the so-called advanced nations of the West. Who can deny, however, that public opinion in Japan—even that part of it that feels apprehensive about greater openness—is quite deeply conscientized to the challenges that the present world situation offers? Some may argue that foreign pressure is the root of this conscientization process. Certainly Japanese history teaches that most of its sociocultural changes were the result not so much of policy changes built upon universal principles but rather of adjustments to particular situations that demanded a face-saving, pragmatic answer for both its own population and the outside world. But the fact is that the Japanese do respond to these demands; though belated at times, the response is not necessarily less radical. The Japanese are masters at learning by doing, even if it is far from clear what the means and ends are.

As far as the required attitudes and skills of internationalization are concerned, the Japanese response does seem to be much slower. Again, one can forcefully argue that the Japanese are deeply imbued with an island mentality and that they continuously manifest this by discriminating against those who are different, whether inside the country itself or in their relations with the outside world. Yet, a comparative perspec-

tive somehow modifies such assertions. Without doubt, the lingering effects of its geographical location and its historical past have not prepared Japan for the openness of mind and the practical skills required for true internationalization. Nevertheless, when one sees the many expressions of ethnocentrism elsewhere in the world—and not only in the form of nationalistic movements in countries striving to establish their self-identity as a nation—one cannot help admiring the efforts made by Japanese to overcome the narrowness of mind they are purported to possess. In my own experience of teaching and directing workshops in various parts of the world on Intercultural Communication, the differing reactions of my audience always strike me. In countries where multiculturalism is more or less an established reality, most students claim to be better prepared for intercultural communication precisely because of their experiential background in this respect. Yet, in most cases, such a self-image proves to be wrong. Those students, often the products of a ghetto-like environment within the multicultural world of which they are a part, frequently possess a mentality that is far different from what they claim. Their openness to the knowledge, attitudes and skills required for intercultural communication is deeply flawed, for they think they already know. In contrast, in a much more culturally homogeneous country, such as Japan, the reaction is totally different. Japanese students know that they are inexperienced, and most want to learn. To be sure, this does not mean that overnight they become ideally open-minded toward the concept of otherness. They have to experience many culture shocks, not the least of which is learning that, after all, Japan itself is not as homogeneous as they had thought. In spite of this, their desire to learn is more likely to produce an openness to change than a conviction that one is already internationally-

minded. Unquestionably, some images have to be altered.

Christianity

It is not very difficult to develop an argument against the allegedly universal character of Christianity. There is, of course, the undeniable link between Christianity and Western culture. The current emphasis on inculturation (or contextualization) in the Christian churches is, no doubt, the fruit of reflection on this linkage and on the Western image Christianity has traditionally projected. An awareness of the value of cultural diversity and historicity, and the recognition that religion can only exist in particular cultural and historical forms, seem to be predominant trends in present-day Christian circles. However, this has certainly not ended the discussion. On the contrary, after Vatican II, for example, inculturation was a loud battle cry in the Roman Catholic Church, and this continues to be so at the local level around the world. Nevertheless, as recent events and directives from Rome clearly show, while recognizing the need for inculturation, universality has to be safeguarded by all means, and this is once again being done by claiming that one particular model has universal value. A case in point is the papal encyclical, *The Splendor of Truth* (1993), which deals with questions of ethics. It firmly defends the universal validity of ethical norms. When this is read from an Eastern perspective, however, universality is far from self-evident. Is this another instance of universalizing something that, in fact, is very particular and very Western?

The controversy about the universal validity of human rights reveals that this discussion has ramifications that transcend the confines of Christian claims, although there is a link. Cultural relativism in one form or another is generally accepted with other issues. In dealing with human rights,

however, the Western world tries to impose its own understanding upon others and is itself reluctant to accept the fact that the concepts of self and the way the self relates to others are culturally conditioned and do indeed create different ideas about what human rights are. How is it possible to hold a calm discussion on these and other fundamental questions for humankind today, and to seek common ground, when political considerations enter the picture on both sides of the divide? A case in point is the Philippines, where the question is being vehemently debated. Contrary to what one might expect in a country that extols the virtues of Filipinization, in almost all domains involving the issue of human rights, including individual liberty and democracy, their universally human character is always emphasized. Witness the furor created a few years ago when Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore, visited the Philippines and openly chided the naivete of Filipinos by saying that economic development cannot start from the Western conception of democracy and freedom. It is difficult to gauge whether the Philippine reaction to his remarks came primarily from Christian convictions about what it means to be human or from the Philippine experience of the suppression of human rights under the Marcos regime. Nevertheless, when a politician known for his authoritarianism says something similar to what many cultural anthropologists and other scholars affirm, the discussion becomes more complicated and delicate.

The image of Christianity in Japan as a beacon for universal values, coupled with a certain apprehension about an inculturation policy that risks obscuring this role, certainly corresponds to the reality I have tried to indicate above. Yet in this respect also, the reverse side of the coin cannot be ignored. The fact that Christianity in Japan bears the mark, if not the stigma, of a foreign religion extraneous to Japanese society and

culture does not prevent it from being influenced by what happens in that society at large. If Japan as a whole finds itself at the center of global changes that urge it to become more internationally-minded, this trend also corresponds to the image of Christianity as a religious tradition with universal credentials. How many Christian pastors have been asked to give inspirational talks for all kinds of Japanese groups and organizations on what it means to become internationally-minded?

However, this trend also has a reverse concomitant, that of a rediscovery of the country's own particular self-identity. Given that some movements over-emphasize this to the extreme, the trend is not without its repercussions on the Christian presence in Japan. Admittedly, the first Christian reaction is critical. In several cases the reaction has been extreme in the eyes of some, and has led at times to a refusal to give serious thought to inculturation efforts because of the misunderstanding about how to reconcile inculturation with a critique of culture. Despite this, an extreme Christian reaction can be interpreted not only as being typically Japanese but also as evidence of the strong self-confidence and undercurrent of suspicion of foreign ideas that exists in Japanese Christian churches. This is due to the impact of a general trend in Japanese society of restored confidence in its own traditional heritage, conspicuous since the oil shock of 1973. Even apart from these present-day trends, religion never exists or functions in a void. No matter how much Japanese Christianity claims to be universalist or is so termed by others, Japanese people who become Christians cannot possibly change overnight either their cultural identity or the particularistic features that this identity necessarily entails. They may certainly stress their conversion, their rebirth in Jesus Christ, but putting on new clothes does not necessarily change the body underneath. In other words, enough evi-

dence exists in Japanese Christianity to prove that its claim of universality also carries particularism on its reverse side. Examples include the tendency of local churches to become a sort of in-group and the relationship between pastors and faithful, which is patterned along traditional Japanese relationships. Beneath the image of universality, the particularistic facet of inculturation is already very present, although many people seem to have trouble accepting this. Interestingly enough, even in countries where inculturation is fully accepted as church policy and strongly promoted with accusatory rhetoric against a too Western form of Christianity—as is the case in Africa and the Philippines—one often comes to a similar conclusion: beneath the Westernized forms, traditional culture is still very much alive. There might have been alienation, but at the depth of the human psyche there always remains something of the old nature which seems to be essentially particularistic. Indeed, they are two sides of the same coin.

INTEGRATION, CONFLICT OR COMPLEMENTARITY?

What I have described in the sections above could be expanded much further. More arguments could be given in favor of both standpoints—the one that emphasizes the view that Japanese culture is basically particularistic and Christianity basically universalist, and the other that modifies this view by pointing out the existence of the opposite element in each of them. It might even be possible to turn the whole discussion around and to argue, for example, that the Japanese have proven to be much more open-minded than the Christians. In fact, this is not very difficult when a broad historical comparison is made of Western and Oriental cultures, particularly the attitudes of Western and Oriental religions toward the issue of war and peace, which closely

relates to internationality. What does all this mean? First of all, it means that various views are possible on the integrated or non-integrated nature of any given culture. Second, it indicates that cultural change can easily complicate our considerations and judgments. Third, it shows that anyone's view or judgment is nothing more than approximations that are relativized both by the nature of culture itself, by the changes occurring in it and by the person's cultural programming.

In the first place, there is the problem of the nature of culture as an integrated whole. This is a very old discussion, and quite a range of interpretations have been put forward to explain how a society or culture functions. Defenders of the integration model stress the need for a commonly shared world view or ethos sustaining a given society or cultural system. They put the emphasis on the role of basic value orientations shared by the vast majority of the people. If other opposite values do exist, they are thought to be ultimately subordinated to the dominant ones that give direction to the form the culture is supposed to take. In this view, Japan is firmly integrated; most of what happens in Japan can be related to a few basic value orientations that almost force its people in a certain direction. The image, or perhaps stereotype, of Japan as a culture built upon values that are essentially particularistic is heavily dependent on such an integration model of culture and society. Moreover, the image, or stereotype, of Christian culture as essentially espousing the opposite value, that of universality, belongs to a similar integration model. The advantage is that it offers clarity and makes the comparison of cultures much easier because these are defined in clear-cut opposite categories: the West versus the East, Christianity versus Oriental religiosity, universalist (international) religions versus particularistic (nationalistic) traditions. It is noteworthy that despite the focus on the

element of integration within cultural systems, this model presupposes a dichotomous, antinomic way of thinking because it readily places the integrated cultural systems in opposition to each other.

Proponents of the conflict model of society and culture, on the other hand, believe that a society functions precisely because of the existence of opposing forces within it. While not denying the possible existence of a common ethos, the primary focus is on the inevitable occurrence of conflict and the possibilities of change this entails, even if the direction of change is not easy to predict. In this view, Japanese culture is characterized by an ongoing struggle between the opposing forces of nationalism and internationalism. The outcome of this struggle is far from certain. As a cultural value system, Christianity, too, is inherently subject to constant inner strife and change. A value orientation, such as universality, might claim dominance at one point, but sooner or later the opposite trend will prevail in turn. The advantage of this model over the integration model is that it allows for change. Nevertheless, both models rely on dichotomous, antinomic thinking, but proponents of the conflict model are not as readily prepared to concede that one of the opposites will ultimately attain predominance. Conflicts continue to arise; when one is resolved, new ones arise and propel society in new directions.

The element of change that is especially, but not exclusively, emphasized in the conflict model is a reality that warns against a static image of the fundamental values that sustain a given culture or society. Applied to Japan and Christianity, the implications are clear; however, the wider discussion continues as to the extent to which change should be stressed. Are sociocultural changes as radical as often asserted? Some cultures are much more open to change than others. Who can deny that fundamental cultural values are not as

readily subject to change as social institutions? The theory that Japanese culture resembles a doll that regularly is given new clothes, but only clothes, cannot simply be dismissed. Opposed to this theory, however, is the claim that for the first time in history, Japan has had to make radical decisions on internationalization that it has never been urged to make before. In the opinion of many, this radical cultural change is simply a matter of survival, not only for Japan but also for every single nation in the world.

My final point follows from the preceding ones. Whatever is affirmed about questions concerning the nature and structure of culture and possible changes in it, the relativity of those and other affirmations must be acknowledged. In today's highly paradoxical situation, an explosion of knowledge is mirrored by a deep epistemological crisis. Modernity might have brought a growing technological control. Yet, more and more doubts arise in the so-called postmodern age over the supremacy of reason and its capacity to acquire certainty. This crisis extends to the debate on culture. Here, also, a paradigm shift is occurring from certainty and clarity to uncertainty and ambiguity. This shift is a difficult one, especially for people raised in a cultural environment in which the attainment of certainty and clarity are highly appreciated values. Western Christian culture, with its clearly defined teachings and ethical principles and its concomitant efforts for protecting orthodoxy against heresies, might be a prime example. Images and stereotypes fit very well in such a model. Surely our age is one of growing openness, and Christian churches have jumped on the bandwagon, finding a rationale for it in their own teachings. In addition, openness toward other religious convictions is presently encouraged, but how often does this end with the expression of appreciation and respect for the rays of truth that can be found in the other reli-

gions? A few questions about this positive attitude might be helpful. Who defines what this truth is? We ourselves or our partners in dialogue? Isn't this the appreciation of what we have in common, of sameness? What about the appreciation of otherness? Should not dialogue, intercultural communication, internationality and the like be based upon the acceptance of and respect for each other's differences *as* differences? Or do we fear otherness because this seems to counter what we think of as the unity of truth? In order to answer these questions, much more is needed than a traditionally Western Christian approach based upon a dichotomous way of thought that tends to see reality in terms of opposites.

CONCLUSION

One result of the globalization process in our contemporary world is a greater insight into cultural diversity and a greater appreciation of its possibilities for mutual enrichment. Not only do languages and non-verbal behavior differ from culture to culture but also the values people hold also differ. Their ideas on what it means to be human and on how to live one's humanness are diverse. Moreover, it has become increasingly obvious that an immense cultural variety exists even in the logic involved in the reasoning process. I have learned through my own experience, for example, that Japanese students possess different values and reason according to a different logic than African or Filipino students. It has indeed become clearer to me that my own Western (Christian?) way of reasoning is far from universal.

In the sections above, I have frequently mentioned the strong tendency of perceiving and judging in terms of opposites. None can deny the influence of this Aristotelian way of thought on much of our thinking. Either/or is the dominant principle, and the clarity of this logic has certainly promoted

the progress of science and other areas of life. I also mentioned in passing, however, how a certain malaise has arisen with regard to this basic model of modern Western culture. There are many different aspects of postmodernity, and not everyone agrees on what it really encompasses. Yet in all its forms, there is a certain dissatisfaction with the rationality and idea of progress long hailed by the Western world as almighty and salvific. Ecological concerns, to name only one example, have clearly shown the limits of power and development. It is no wonder that the postmodernists turn to the richness of other cultures and explore—not always with success—what these cultures have to offer. Increasing attention to Oriental thinking is but one characteristic of our new age.

In this connection, it might be instructive to remember how Chinese thinking, and its versions in Japan and other Asian countries, views the problem of seemingly opposite values, including those of universalism and particularism. A certain dichotomy seems to be recognized, but it is certainly not a dichotomy that becomes antinomic or opposed to the other. According to Chinese *yin-yang* philosophy, what counts is the dialectic, not the conflict, between the two poles, and this conflict is necessarily accompanied by alternation and complementarity so that harmony is born. It is the cooperative function of yin and yang that makes the universe a harmonious cosmos.

The applications of this view of the complementarity of seemingly opposite values—not either/or but both/and—are endless. It is a principle that can be applied to interpersonal relationships in that a healthy relationship should be based upon the complementarity of maintaining one's personal identity and that of being open and prepared to give up something of oneself in order to be united with one's partner. It can be applied to intercultural and interreligious relationships in that in these relation-

ships, one needs to affirm the value of one's own cultural and religious identity while being flexible enough to accept that the encounter with others ought to influence and change oneself as well. Along the same lines, nationalism and internationalism, particularism and universalism, can be seen not so much as opposite values that mutually exclude each other, but as two sides of the same reality that need and complement each other.

This view might bring a needed corrective to the Western and Christian way of thinking that tends to see and judge reality in either/or terms of opposites, or at least of tension. Even these different views—those based on one or the other form of the either/or principle and those of the both/and variety—relate to each other in a similar complementary way. This may overly relativize each view and ultimately the very possibility of attaining true knowledge and insight. Surely Oriental thinking, as such, tends toward relativization, while Western Christian thinking develops in the direction of absolutization. It is precisely this that should bring the two together. If after all, it is relative truth that Japanese culture is characterized more by particularism than by universalism, and Christianity more by universalism than by particularism, what of the proposal that Japan try to learn something from Christian universalism and Christianity something from Japanese particularism? Which of the two, Japan or Christianity, has been more willing to open itself up to this complementarity?

I spend part of every year in Africa and the Philippines, where nationalism is a necessary condition for development, and the remainder of the year in Japan, where the prophetic voices of the Christian churches denounce its danger. I have gradually come to doubt that these two stances are either a problem of semantics or that they should be judged solely in terms of the particular situations they represent. Should we not

broaden our vision to accept that such questions as the theme of this *Japan Christian Review* issue must be complemented by what is happening, and how it is interpret-

ed, in other parts of the world? Perhaps this is the true internationalization all of us should strive for.