

Introduction: the Universalizable and the Universalizing

What is the universal in comparative thought? While this is an engaging question, it contains a dangerous echo. To wit, the method of comparison itself constitutes a kind of warning against the establishment of the universal. Having said that, there is no way that comparative thought can ignore the universal. Rather, it is the form of the universal or the way of approaching it that requires questioning.

In his *De l'universel, de l'uniforme, du commun et du dialogue entre les cultures*, published 2008, François Jullien differentiates between the potential for making things universal – “l'universalisable” – and the process of universalizing – “l'universalisant.”¹ In other words, the forms of things as much as their possibility may be at issue. Thus, where the former belongs to the dimension of truth, legitimacy and representation, the latter concerns the process of creating the universal. This is indicated by its linguistic form: In French, it is in the present participle; in English, it is a gerund.

The universalizable is based on finding things that are comparable and establishing a realm of comparison where their similarities and differences can be judged. The relationship between class and species, for instance, is emblematic of such as comparison, as it manifests the highest instance of universality and the extremes of potentiality. However, on this point it is difficult to make assumptions about things that may lack potentiality. It is hard to traverse the road which leads to comparing things that are not comparable.

In contrast, the approach of the universalizing reveals a different relationship to the universal. The example that Jullien gives is that of “human rights.” In short, the two concepts of “humanity” and “rights” in Europe have been “abstracted” and, moreover, combined, giving birth to a new universal concept of “human rights.” In the first place, the possibility that the concept of “human rights” could be made universal was intrinsic

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1 The following is taken from Jullien 2008, 183–190.

to European and American thought. The process by which this occurred was a different one, however. In other words, unless European thought itself underwent a transformation in history – it was elaborated and challenged out of Europe and America –, the universalization of “human rights” would not occur. It then follows that the universalizing process was not a smooth one but always entailed a resistance with *status quo*.

Universalizing thus always involved transposition, transformation, and translation. It involves a horizontal reaching across, as indicated by the prefix *trans-*, while the universalizable, by contrast, involves a vertical line of force. If the latter kind of universal proposed by Jullien concerns heavenly universality, it may be said that the first pertains to earthly universality.

In this paper, East Asia is the *topos* of Western philosophy’s acceptance and development. In short, East Asia is the site of the *trans-*, a space where the philosophies of the modern West were translated, transformed, and transposed. How did East Asian thoughts develop there with regard to the universalizable and the universalizing? To answer this question, I would like to take up the case of Christianity in modern and contemporary East Asia, including China, Japan, and Korea. Christianity played a great role in modern East Asia as a representative discourse of Western universality, but at the same time, East-Asian intellectuals tried to transform and universalize it in their own unique ways. In other words, I would like to elaborate what Chinese, Japanese, or Korean Christianity could be. Each of them is not simply indigenized Christianity. Rather it requests to put Christianity in the universalizing process through Chinese, Japanese, or Korean experience.

1 Cultural Christians:

Liu Xiaofeng and Contemporary Chinese Christian Theology

In recent years, the intellectual community of China has often discussed the concept of “cultural Christians.” This term refers to literati who neither adhere to the Christian faith nor belong to churches, but who nonetheless respect the cultural framework of Christianity.² Liu Xiaofeng 刘小枫 (*1956) of Renmin University is frequently held up as a leading representative of the cultural Christians. In his essay on “Xiandai yujing zhong de hanyu jidu shenxue” 现代语境中的汉语基督神学 (The Modern Context of Chinese-Language Christian Theology), published 1995, he writes:

Cultural Christians are by no means a phenomenon unique to China’s Christians, but a group created from the modern context of Christianity. After the enlightenment move-

2 For a discussion on Chinese-language Christian theology, see Sun and Liu 2002, especially Chapters 10 and 11.

ment, both at the level of society and of thought, the context in which Christianity existed underwent considerable changes. In brief, the social structure and intellectual resources available in Christianity's early period and its medieval period, amidst the modernization process after modernity set in, were always undergoing changes, and became manifested in a new kind of Christian lifestyle and framework of thought. This was a phenomenon as a historical fact. At the level of thought, religious philosophy appeared, preaching the neutrality of faith; and at the level of lifestyle, individualistic elements in Christians' lives became apparent. Simone Weil refused baptism and criticized the church [as the institution]. This is by no means an infrequent phenomenon in the modern context. The emergence of cultural Christians can be seen in Russia of a century ago, where it persisted until the 1940s. There, even though Christians in intellectual groups differed in their degree of transformation, they developed Christian thought, culture, and scholarship from a neutral position to the Church. If the Cultural Christians in mainland China are considered to be a particular manifestation of a phenomenon that cuts across the modern Christianity as a whole, it becomes not an isolated thing, but one whose specifics can easily be compared.³

The appearance of "Cultural Christians," who adopt a neutral stance toward faith and the Church and have emerged in the context of modernity, is not unique to modern China. The important elements in the context of modernity are the secularization that resulted from the separation of church and state and the individualization of belief, and also the marginalization of the church as public space, on the one hand, and the wide acceptance of educational institutions like universities, on the other, as conduits for spreading the culture, thought, and scholarship of Christianity.

What, then, is Liu trying to do? Clearly, one of his goals was to ensure the establishment of Christian culture, thought, and scholarship as a humanities discipline at China's universities. In other words, he wanted to create a field of "Chinese-language Christian theology." It should be noted, however, that Liu Xiaofeng does not problematize the issue of how Christianity might be indigenized (*bense hua* 本色化) and Sinitized (*Zhongguo hua* 中国化). He thus writes:

In contrast to the ideal and historical forms of Christian theology, which exist in a vertical, top-down form (as related to faith), Chinese-language theology stands in a horizontal, side-by-side relationship with the other historical forms of Christian theology. When listening to the way [*dao*], there is no distinction between before and after, but only cases in history where various kinds of Christian theology are the outcomes which have been produced by intellectuals based upon faith. It thus follows that the construction of Chi-

3 Liu 2010 (1995), 15–16.

nese-language Christian theology is not a problem of Sinicization. The Sinicization of Christian theology is only a problem when the argument is based on the understanding of Christian theology as a Western theology. Although this perspective predominated in China's intellectual and theological communities for a long time, it reflects a fundamental misunderstanding. The so-called problem of Sinicization is merely a product of the cultural context in which the nation-state emerged in the process of modernization. In the development of Chinese-language Christian theology, the problem that needs to be considered is above all the vertical relationship between one's own self and the ideal form of Christian theology. In short, it is necessary to inquire about the ways in which the linguistic experiences of Chinese thought may accept and speak of the event of Christ. This might also entail reflecting on Christ as witness. Accordingly, Chinese-language Christian theology should consider the problem of re-contextualizing that particular discourse. In other words, it is imperative to directly confront the event of Christ and to escape from the intellectual framework of indigenization and Sinicization.⁴

Here, Liu tries to "directly confront the event of Christ" by transforming the "linguistic experiences of Chinese thought." While this is a reflection on the vertical relationship of faith, he defines "Chinese-language Christian theology" as something that can stand horizontally alongside other Christian theologies, apart from ethnocentrism, but still be based on the previously redefined "linguistic experiences of Chinese thought." It is a challenge to rethink the relationship between vertical and horizontal universalities. This is also true for reconsidering the *trans-* of transcendence and transforming it as an ideal for the universalizing process based upon the horizontal transformation of universality. What is emphasized here is the "intercourse of linguistic experiences in historical Christian thought." These phenomena are manifested in tandem with horizontally constituted interactions, and thus give rise to particular Chinese-language variants. This is precisely what the present essay seeks to investigate: a universalizing tendency that aims for earthly or horizontal universality based upon the common people or the multitude instead of a heavenly or overarching universality presupposing a vertical hierarchy within the intellectual context of Chinese thought.

2 Hu Shi and the Acceptance of Christianity in Modern China

Liu astutely opposed the indigenization and Sinicization of Christianity. When we look back at the history of modern Chinese philosophy, however, the *Christianization* of Chinese thought had in fact already been underway. Consider the case of Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), a standard bearer of the May 4th New Culture Movement and a philoso-

4 Liu 2010 (1995), 24–25.

pher who sought to create a new strain of “Chinese philosophy” from the pragmatism he learned as a student of John Dewey. To Hu Shi, a proponent of modernity, Christianity was not an enemy of enlightenment that had to be expelled. Rather, he thought its cultural framework had to be accepted and, moreover, that China needed to establish a “new religion” that could compete with it.⁵

As Hu reflected:

In the summer of 1911, I attended a symposium held by students of Chinese Christianity at Pocono Pines in Pennsylvania, and almost acquired the determination to become a Christian myself.⁶

Christianity, as he had experienced it, appeared to be a vital element that supported European modernity.

Summed up, the Christianity of today amply takes civilization into account, so that even if we hold that modern civilization does not bear the sign of Christianity, Christianity accepts and also utilizes the good traits of modern civilization. The two are thus already commingled and inseparable.⁷

Modernized Christianity had left the religion of old behind. It established itself instead as a new religion that was part of modern civilization and made a vital contribution to the nation-state and capitalism:

From something that had only sought the emancipation of the individual, it has now takes the course of fulfilling a social function.⁸

Hu subsequently concluded that China, in the name of enlightenment, had to create a new religion that could compete with modern Christianity. Toward this end, he proposed a “new morality” for this “new religion.”⁹ This new religion would expunge the irrational parts of religion and become a social as well as moral form of belief.

Ultimately, Hu once again reaffirmed Confucianism, which he had earlier tried to eradicate. His aim was to attempt to recover the original moral character of Confucianism.¹⁰ Hu was heading in the direction of making Confucianism like Christianity. In *Shuo Ru* 说儒 (On Confucianism), he interpreted the change in Confucianism between the Yin and Zhou dynasties as resembling that between Judaism and Christiani-

5 For details on this entry, see Nakajima 2011.

6 Hu 1998 (1931), 16.

7 Hu 2003d (1925), 178.

8 Ibid, 177–178.

9 Hu 2003a (1926), 9–10.

10 Hu 2003c (1933), 78–79.

ty. He viewed Laozi as a Confucianist who had protected traditional Confucianism, whereas Confucius was similar to Christ in the sense of being a messiah who sought to revolutionize traditional Confucianism. And, as such a messiah, Hu expounded on Confucius as one who rebranded traditional Confucianism into a “new Confucianism” that was the equivalent of a “new religion.”

“Fulfill one’s duties with *ren*” (*Analects*, “Taibo”) means that one should see all humanity as one’s responsibility. On the top of a mountain, Jesus saw the masses of the people come forth in waves, and moved, he said, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37). Zengzi had expressed the same sentiments in the phrase “The duties are heavy and the way is far” (*Analects*, “Taibo”).

Confucius stemmed from the clerical class of a ruined state and became the master of a culture that harmonized three generations [of Chinese]. Confucius’ humanistic spirit made him say that “I will obey the Zhou” (*Analects*, “Bayi”) and shoulder the absolute mission of “fulfilling his duties with *ren*.” This is Confucius’s new Confucianism.¹¹

The “new Confucianism” here is based on the individual’s independence and equality, as well as the duty of supporting all humankind. This is no different from the modern “new religion” in modern Europe, which fulfills the social role of enlarging the person’s imagination and empathy towards others and manifests a “new morality.”

For Hu, then, Christianity was self-evidently universal, as much as modern culture was, and Chinese thought, especially Confucianism, had to be re-interpreted in order to approach that ideal. Here, we have the *Christianized* Confucianism that Liu Xiaofeng criticizes, or, in other words, an idea within Chinese thought that is universalizable. Hu did not think of the transformation of “linguistic experiences of Chinese thought.” He did not attempt to re-conceptualize or transform Christianity from Chinese experience. Informing Hu’s viewpoint is the “shallowness” of Hu’s enlightenment – in short, an enlightenment that rejected the apparatus of metaphysics that sought the cultivation of personal depth. Consequently, even though he accepted European modernity, his “shallowness” paradoxically relativized it.¹² It therefore might even be said that Hu’s Christianized Confucianism illustrated in an exaggerated manner the limits of Christianity’s universality.

11 Hu 2003b (1934), 62–63.

12 Nakajima 2011, 126–127.

3 Christianity and *Yōmei-gaku* (1): Inoue Tetsujirō

Modern Japan had a similar confrontation with the kind of universality represented in Christianity. On the one hand, Japanese intellectuals re-established Confucianism; on the other hand, they tried to create a new type of Christianity on the basis of Japanese experiences.

I would first like to focus on the modern Japanese Confucianism that was constituted in the confrontation with Christianity. It tried to establish a universality of morals that goes beyond the universality of the Christian religion. Paradoxically, however, such a morality inspired more religiosity than the religion itself. As Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835–1901) pointed out, Confucianism as morality “stepped into the inner parts of people’s hearts” and turned into a “spiritually fettered thing.”¹³

In the *Chokugo engi* 勅語衍義, published 1891, an exegesis on the Imperial Rescript on Education, Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856–1944) established a foundation for modern Japan’s national morality 国民道德. At this time, Confucianism, especially *Yōmei-gaku* (Chin. *Yangming xue*) 陽明学, was making great progress toward this end. Inoue is known for a trilogy of works on Edo Confucianism. This first of these was *Nihon Yōmei-gakuha no tetsugaku* 日本陽明学派之哲学 (Philosophy of the Wang Yangming School in Japan), published 1900. It was then followed by *Nihon Kogakuha no tetsugaku* 日本古学派之哲学 (Philosophy of the Japanese Ancient Study School), published 1902 and the *Nihon Shushi-gakuha no tetsugaku* 日本朱子学派之哲学 (Philosophy of the Japanese Zhuzi School), published 1905. The preface to the first volume describes as follows:

If one desires to understand what the national morality of our country is like, he must reach comprehension of the spirit 精神 of the moral teachings that have fired and smelted our national personality. Thus, since this treatise is a place to describe the philosophy of Japan’s *Yōmei-gaku*, it also tries to contribute to that. If one were to validate the manifestation of our people’s national morality by visible realities, they only have to observe the actions of our army in China. Indeed, what is it that radiates so conspicuously amidst the united forces of the various nations – that refrains from arbitrary plunder, from wanton violence, keeping strict observance of military discipline, and is never motivated by the desire for private gain? What indeed is it, if not the manifestation of our people’s national morality?¹⁴

13 Fukuzawa 1960 (1883), 279–280.

14 Inoue 1900, 3.

Here, Inoue argues that Japan's *Yōmei-gaku* had in fact forged modern Japan's "national morality," and he speaks proudly of how it was clearly displayed by the actions of the Japanese army, fighting in the Eight-Nation Alliance, to suppress the Boxer Rebellion that had taken place in June of the same year. Furthermore, the preface closes with the statement that

The people's national morality is nothing but the universal virtue of mind, and the universal virtue of mind can be said to be precisely the essence of Oriental morality.¹⁵

For Inoue, Japan's *Yōmei-gaku* possessed universality through having a national character.

The universality of the morality embodied by modern Confucianism thus had to surpass that of religion, and that of Christianity in particular. Inoue explicated this in his essay "Shūkyō ijō no dōtoku" 宗教以上の道徳 (A Morality Above Religion), published 1908:

Religion also carries a variety of preferences. Alternately, it might be said that to believe in Christianity is truly the private matter of individuals, and people cannot be allowed to go about exhorting others to believe in either Buddhism or Christianity, if those others do not have such faith. For even as there are those who believe in a certain faith, there are those who do not believe in any. Both of these groups, however, must still act morally. Morality is not something that can be enacted according to one's preference. What it means to be a person who is also a human being is not, finally, a matter like religion, which can be decided by one's likes or dislikes. Morality is something that the public cannot do without, and mutually protecting this is a basic duty which everyone should take care not to neglect. It may already be understood from this point of view that morality must hold a higher place than religion.¹⁶

Regarding the notion that morality is higher than religion, Inoue also wrote:

In other words, it is because morality exists that religion can be constituted as religion, and religion is formed with morality at its core.¹⁷

Similarly putting morality before religion, he stated the following:

From today's standpoint, the ideal of morality encompasses Christianity and Buddhism, and religion arose as a means to the end of realizing the ideal of morality; the origins of religion are after all in the final ideal, which we have to see as the ultimate source that gives birth to all things.¹⁸

15 Inoue 1900, 6.

16 Inoue 2003 (1908), 298.

17 Ibid, 299–300.

18 Ibid, 306.

However, the morality that Inoue espoused here did not refer to the externalities that Fukuzawa spoke of. It was precisely a “virtue of the heart” that entered people’s interiority, and which supported modern *Yōmei-gaku*. Inoue, although a “cultural Christian,” also sought to establish a morality that was much more religious than religion itself. National morality was not just a custom or normative condition that determined how people should behave in society. It also needed to embrace and shape people’s minds so that they were directly connected to Japan as a modern nation state. It thus followed that Inoue would criticize the incident of 1891, in which Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 (1861–1930) was accused of not paying sufficient respect to the Imperial Respect on Education with Meiji Emperor’s signature, as the “clash of education and religion”. In fact, however, the episode was primarily a religious conflict. Uchimura had no choice but to confront the issue of national morality qua religion.

4 Christianity and *Yōmei-gaku* (2): Yamaji Aizan, Uchimura Kanzō, and Nitobe Inazō

Yamaji Aizan 山路愛山 (1865–1917), author of “Gendai Nihon Kyōkaishi ron” 現代日本教会史論 (Modern History of the Japanese Church), published 1906, appears to be dissatisfied with the state of the Hirosaki feudal domain’s 藩 teaching of *Shushi-gaku* (Chin. *Zhuzi xue*) 朱子学 principles and its overly scholastic pedagogy. This motivated him to read the works of *Yōmei-gaku* in secret, such as the *Yōmei bunshū* (Chin. *Yang-ming wenji*) 陽明文集, the *Denshūroku* (Chin. *Chuanxi lu*) 伝習録 and the works of Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山 (1619–1691) as a scholar of *Yōmei-gaku*.¹⁹ This clandestine reading further hints at the reason why he adopted the Christian faith in his later years.

And I was delighted that *Yōmei-gaku*, far more than *Shushi-gaku*, is filled with an abundance of the natural 自然なる. When I became a Christian, I was told by a domain elder that I had fallen prey to an evil faith and to heterodoxy, which was clearly caused by my reading of *Yōmei-gaku*’s books. For the same reason, I fell prey even more to Christian teachings.²⁰

Yōmei-gaku had become increasingly popular since the end of Edo period, and in the Meiji period it took on its modern incarnation. As the scholarship of Ogyū Shigehiro 荻生茂博 (1954–2006) lays out in detail, it became a national philosophy.²¹ At this point, I only

19 Yamaji 2002 (1906), 373.

20 Ibid, 373–374.

21 See especially the third section of Ogyū 2008.

want to establish that Christians like Yamaji and Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930) also accepted the teachings of modern *Yōmei-gaku*, and combined them with Christian ideas.

Uchimura's *Daihyōteki Nihonjin* 代表的日本人 (Representative Men of Japan), published 1895 and revised 1908, examines five men in depth. The first is Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1828–1877), a central figure of the Meiji Restoration, who is lauded as the bearer of *Yōmei-gaku*'s spirit. Uchimura further observes about Saigō that

His [his way of thinking] was Cromwellian, and only for the lack of Puritanism, he was not a Puritan.

He, moreover, compared this follower of *Yōmei-gaku* to a Christian.²²

His attention was early called to the writings of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), who of all Chinese philosophers, came nearest to that most august faith, also of Asiatic origin, in his great doctrines of conscience and benign but inexorable heavenly laws. Our hero's subsequent writings show this influence to a very marked degree, all the Christianly sentiments therein contained testifying to the majestic simplicity of the great Chinese, as well as to the greatness of the nature that could take in all that, and weave out a character so practical as his. [...] So unlike the conservative Chu philosophy fostered by the old governments for its own preservation, it (Yangming philosophy) was progressive, prospective, and full of promise. Its similarity to Christianity has been recognized more than once, and it was practically interdicted in the country on that and other accounts. "This resembles Yangming-ism; disintegration of the empire will begin with this." So exclaimed Takasugi Shinsaku, a Choshu strategist of revolutionary fame, when he first examined the Christian Bible in Nagasaki. That something like Christianity was a component force in the reconstruction of Japan is a singular fact in this part of its history.²³

This passage demonstrates that Uchimura was trying to connect Christianity to Japan via *Yōmei-gaku*, specifically, by means of his reading of Saigō as a Christian-like adherent of *Yōmei-gaku*. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that this reading was undertaken in the context of Inoue's paradigm of *Yōmei-gaku* as a motivating force of the Meiji Restoration. It therefore follows that even Uchimura's deep understanding of Christian teachings cannot surpass the framing of *Yōmei-gaku* as official learning.

Kojima Tsuyoshi 小島毅 (*1962) has a concrete example of this connection between Christianity and *Yōmei-gaku* that involves the relationship between Inoue and Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸稲造 (1862–1933).²⁴ The stage for this episode occurred at a

22 Uchimura 1908, 50.

23 Ibid, 7–9.

24 Kojima 2006, 114–117.

meeting of the Yōmei Gakkai 陽明學會, an academic society of *Yōmei-gaku*, that was hosted by the publisher of the periodical *Yōmei-gaku* 陽明學. The Yōmei Gakkai's first lecture event was held on March 21, 1909. Both Inoue Tetsujirō and Nitobe Inazō attended. Nitobe lectured on the topic of “An Amateur’s View of *Yōmei-gaku*”:

Nitobe actually ascended to the same lectern as Inoue Tetsujirō. At the time, Nitobe had already assumed the post of principal of the First Higher School, which he held from 1906 to 1913. The same school that had ousted Uchimura for “disrespect” had ended up appointing his close friend and fellow Christian as its head. The previous year, Nitobe's *Bushidō* 武士道 had been translated into Japanese by Sakurai Ōson 桜井鷗村 (1872–1929), and it is thought that this was why he had been invited to speak at this lecture event. It is unclear when he joined the Society, but it is certain that he was a regular member of the Yōmei Gakkai.²⁵

After the Russo-Japanese War, Christianity became incorporated into the religious policies of the Meiji government. Inoue, perhaps softening his own stance towards Christian thought, also did not take Nitobe's lecture to be a critique of *Yōmei-gaku* as official learning.

Assuming that was indeed the case, the observations by Yamashita Ryūji 山下龍二 (1924–2011) in the following excerpt are not necessarily defensible:

This same Inoue used *Yōmei-gaku* in the manner of an explanatory manual for the Imperial Rescript on Education. He praised the notion of “national morality,” offering the view that *Yōmei-gaku*'s activist approach could be useful for the purpose of controlling the influence of various kinds of European-style ideologies and guiding the people towards “virtuous actions.” This carried the premise that statist morals allowed no criticism, and resulted in *Yōmei-gaku*'s inherently anti-authoritarian and anti-institutional tendencies to be abandoned. The face-off between Inoue and Uchimura over the Imperial Rescript on Education was also a contest over how to interpret *Yōmei-gaku*. It was a contest between a statist moral perspective and an individualist moral perspective; a contest between the interpretation of morality and the interpretation of religion, and also a contest between Japanism (*Nihon shugi* 日本主義) and cosmopolitanism (*Sekai shugi* 世界主義). And it goes without saying that Inoue's stance became the orthodoxy in the *Yōmei-gaku* studies that followed thereafter.²⁶

Yamashita's conclusion that “*Yōmei-gaku*'s inherently anti-authoritarian and anti-institutional tendencies” in Uchimura Kanzō, and his view that these tendencies to have been oppressed by Inoue Tetsujirō's “statist morals” – a conclusion that manages to ignore how Uchimura, in fact, shared the paradigm of Inoue's thought.

25 Ibid, 115–116.

26 Yamashita 1964, 59–60.

5 The Bible: Uchimura Kanzō and Japanese Christianity

Nonetheless, Christianity, especially Uchimura's version of it, was not completely absorbed into Inoue's moralistic paradigm. Here, the kind of universalizing process to which Jullien alludes remained. By resisting the discourse of national morality, which incorporated Christianity into Confucianism, Uchimura tried to create a new type of Christianity that appealed to the mass of the Japanese population and to define it as a universal Christianity.

In defining "Japanese Christianity", Uchimura wrote the following:

When speaking of Japanese Christianity we are of course not referring to what changed Christianity as a religion of the Japanese people. We speak instead of what illuminates Christian truths via the unique perspective of the Japanese people. Because Christianity is a world religion, it is that which will only be fully revealed to the world through the gifts and contributions of the people of the various countries. **The Christianity which is revealed by way of the Japanese people is precisely Japanese Christianity.**²⁷

This argument is the essentially same as Liu Xiaofeng's. Uchimura did not problematize the issue of an indigenized or Japanized Christianity when he tried to construct the framework for "Japanese Christianity," but only probed the sophistication of "Japanese-language Christian theology." His concern here was to preserve the universality of Christianity.

We must not be independent from missionaries by being hand in hand with Buddhist and Confucian followers. Our Christianity must be thoroughly evangelical; a Confucian or Buddhist Christianity is never the Christianity of Christ. Christianity is an absolute religion, one not created by mingling with other religions. We must break with the assistance of foreign missionaries, and we must also reject the help of Buddhism's monks and Shinto's priests.²⁸

As this quote clearly indicates, Uchimura avoided seeking a path in which Christianity could potentially be reconciled with Confucianism and Buddhism – in other words, he shunned the prospect of the universalizable.²⁹ Instead, Uchimura placed Japan in an in-

27 Uchimura 1953c (1908), 12.

28 Uchimura 1953e (1901), 76.

29 This attitude was expressed in attempts to separate Christianity as a religion from Confucian morals. Uchimura 1953d (1905), 65: "**Christianity is further not about morality**, although Christianity produces morality. It does not aim to teach morals, and does not particularly desire to instruct people that they should be loyal to their masters and filial to their parents. [...] If you see Christianity as something larger than Confucianism, you have completely misun-

ternational context, touched on the need to directly encounter the “event of Christ” within Japan, and argued that a new kind of Christian theology needed to be established.³⁰ What conditions, then, were required to achieve this? At this point, Uchimura calls on the Bible and the common people.³¹

Regarding Uchimura and the Bible, a highly revealing entry can be found in his “Summary of the Conference at Korean Young Men’s Christian Association in Tōkyō on May 30th”, 1915. Uchimura states that, in the countries of the East,

[E]ven if churches disappear, the countries into which the Bible has been propagated will have been transformed.³²

To explain the reason for this transformation, he further remarks:

[E]ven though we have no temple built to consecrate Confucius, the spirit of the writings on his teachings governs us, because we are made to learn them; we are good disciples of Confucius. Now Confucius has left and Christ will take his place.³³

In fact, Uchimura studied the Bible instead of the Confucian classics, which caused him to believe that it was crucial to directly confront the spirit of Christ. This act, in his view, would not only save Japan, but also Korea:

I fervently urge all of you to study the Bible. Although this requires broad scholarship and deep experiences, it is not difficult for anyone to understand its spirit. In fact, the profundity of the Bible outstrips that of the Confucian classics, and of course that of the Eucken and Bergson of Western philosophy. I hope that you will not engage in shallow contemplation of the profundity of the Bible, but aspire to deep study and the cultivation of your individual faith. At the same time you do this, you will save Korea by means of the waters of life, and not only that, you will also save Japan and the world if you embrace this large aim, for there is no bigger task. The fate of one, of a family, of the states and human-kind – all these things are at stake. The question of how Korea should be saved has produced multiple paths, but the only way to fundamentally rescue it is to rely on the Bible, and **for that salvation to be based on its deep study, which should also be the root of everything in the world.** A certain missionary previously wrote an article that compared the situations of Christianity in Japan and Korea, in which he noted that Korea’s Chris-

derstood its spirit.”

30 Uchimura (1954, 1899, 314) did not require Christianity as a “religion of foreign countries,” but instead wished it to be something that infused Japan with a new vitality.

31 As for the discussion of Uchimura Kanzo’s relationship of the Bible and the commoners, see Kozyra 2001, 66–88.

32 Uchimura 1982 (1915), 367.

33 Ibid.

tianity was Biblical while Japan's was social. This is something that should be celebrated for Korea's sake, and mourned for Japan's.³⁴

The universality that would save Korea, Japan, and even the world was not to be attained through the church or social works of charity, but the study of the Bible. It was with this premise in mind that in 1900 Uchimura began publishing his series *Seisho no kenkyū* 聖書之研究 (Study of the Bible).

6 Commoners: Uchimura Kanzō's Japanese Christianity

The other locus of salvation was the common people. Just as Jullien speaks of human rights as a concept, so, too, did modern Japanese thought need to be newly abstracted on a theoretical level through the concept of the common people. Indeed, Uchimura located Christianity in this very group of people:

Christianity is not a religion of the aristocracy, but of the commoners; it is not a religion of the wealthy, but of the impoverished; it is not a religion of the scholars, but of the fools; not of the monks, but of the laity. Through Christianity society will be turned upside down; the high shall be lowered, the rich made poor, the wise made foolish, and we should wait and anticipate a large social revolution that comes out of this faith.³⁵

Perhaps in an attempt to seek a path towards universality, Uchimura introduced the *topos* of the common people and situated Christianity within it. Even so, Christianity founded on this commonerism (*Heimin shugi* 平民主義) assumed a form that best suited "national religion." Immediately following the passage just quoted, Uchimura wrote the following:

Christianity does not speak of politics, but even so a great nation-state is built on its foundation; it speaks not of the fine arts, but even so the splendid, stately paintings and carvings spring from it; it speaks not of philosophy, but even so the search for truth is facilitated by none other than Christianity. And even if it does not bear that name, by wielding the truth there is no national religion that is superior to Christianity, nor any art or science more deserving of encouragement.³⁶

Uchimura was an avowed patriot, and, by talking about two Js (Jesus and Japan), he situated Christianity amongst the common people, but within the framework of the modern

34 Uchimura 1982 (1915), 368–369.

35 Uchimura 1953^a (1901), 16.

36 Uchimura 1953b (1901), 16.

Japanese nation-state. Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 (1914–1996), who views this move as a certain kind of “upturned” contradiction, makes the following remarks:

Uchimura in this way increasingly tried to grapple with the currents of “the *denationalizing* influence of Western culture” as a “patriotic Christian believer on the *extreme Left*” (Meiji 21, letter to Bell, *Chosaku shū* old version, Vol.18, italics from original). That “*extreme Leftness*” broke the stereotyped commandments issued from the prophets of ancient Israel in order to breathe new life into them. Thus it shared the same internalized foundation with the radicalism that had no choice but to oppose the *everyday* overseers of the sacraments and rites, the priestly class, for the sake of detaching itself from the extant strata of the social classes and *values* and of *directly* releasing the latent energies of the masses. Uchimura’s “second religious revolution” was the upturning of a certain religious *routine*, of upturning values, and, as this implied, his “patriotism” could only be considered as an elevated form of patriotism, one that went against the vulgar world’s everyday meanings. This opposition was both internal and external, and eventually the internal opposition crystallized in the guise of commonerism, whereas the external opposition into an absolute denial of war and militarization.³⁷

These were the inherent contradictions that resulted in this “patriotic Christian believer on the *extreme Left*.” However, “the keynote sound that stubbornly resonated throughout all these contradictions” was precisely what the project by a “Japanese Christianity” undertook in the universalizing process.

In fact, Christianity may not have been the decisive factor here. For instance, Ishizaki Tōgoku 石崎東国 (1873/1875–1931) of the Osaka Yōmei Gakkai 大阪陽明学会, which has also been called a bastion of “Red Yōmei-gaku,” tried to give Yōmei-gaku a religious character (*Yōmei-shū* 陽明宗), upheld a version of commonerism, and took the side of the common people.³⁸ With regard to this Osaka Yōmei Gakkai, Ogyū Shigehiro locates the potential for a popular Confucianism that could oppose the “official learning” of Inoue Tetsujirō. Quite different from Inoue’s thinking, this “popular foundation” is clearly delineated as a different universality.³⁹

In closing, I wish to ascertain that although Tōgoku declared that he was cutting ties with the movement to revive Chinese Learning [a government-sanctioned movement aimed at molding national morality], he continued to value the spiritual connection with Confucianism of the Edo period. Along with his companions in the Osaka Yōmei Gakkai, the modern heterodox thinkers such as Iwano Hōmei 岩野泡鳴 (1873–1920),

37 Maruyama 1992, 282.

38 Kojima 2006, 132.

39 Ogyū 2008, 411.

Matsumura Kaiseki 松村介石 (1859–1939), and Miyatake Gaikotsu 宮武外骨 (1867–1955), he supported regional scholars who followed of Bakumatsu-style Confucianism. And it is especially interesting is that the most left-wing member of the Osaka Yōmei Gakkai, who positioned himself as stridently against Chinese learning and caused the society to be divided over his criticisms of Takase Takejirō 高瀬武次郎 (1868–1950), was none other than Ikeda Shisei 池田紫星 (1896–1956), the step-grandchild of Ikeda Sōan 池田草庵 (1813–1878), the Bakumatsu-era Yōmei scholar also known as the “sage of Tajima.” Against the new forces of modern *Yōmei-gaku* espoused by men like Inoue [Tetsujirō] and Takase, who had been educated in the intellectual vein of the modern West, traditional learning was brought into the modern *Yōmei-gaku* of the people, suggesting a kind of “universal” characteristic that runs to this present day.⁴⁰

Ishizaki Tōgoku’s Osaka Yōmei Gakkai was different from the national Confucianism built upon the nation-state. It aspired towards an earthly, not a heavenly, universality that was based on the people. On the one hand, we might say, morality and nation constituted heavenly universality; on the other hand, the Bible and people constituted earthly universality in modern Japan. Ishizaki and Uchimura were two of the intellectuals in Japan who tried to achieve about the latter.

However, Ishizaki’s discourse is, again, like Uchimura’s insofar as it is constituted in the framework of a religion informed by modernity and Christianity. Uchimura’s aim was to question the universality and particularity of modern Japan, even though he sympathized with attempts like Ishizaki’s.

7 The Acceptance of Christianity in Modern Korea: Ham Sök-hön’s Ssi-al Thought and Spirituality

Ham Sök-hön 咸錫憲 (1901–1989), a Korean Christian who was strongly influenced by Uchimura, adopted the Christian faith after comparing it with the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi, and with the popular thought of Korea.⁴¹ Even more than Uchimura, he sought to derive an earthly universality from the people. In this instance, it was by means of *ssi-al* 씨알 thought, a Korean term which means both “seeds” and the “masses”.

In the spring of 1923, Ham Sök-hön went to Tōkyō to study, and witnessed both the Great Kantō earthquake and the Korean massacre that happened in its wake.⁴² The

40 Ogyū 2008, 409–410.

41 On Uchimura Kanzō and Ham Sök-hön’s relationship, see Park 2004.

42 Ham Sök-hön did not realize the significance of this tragedy in its immediate aftermath; the following year, Yu Yōng-mo, the principal of the P’yōngan High School that Ham had attended, sent him a letter, and it was only then, in Ham’s own words, that he became aware of

following year he entered the Tōkyō Kōtō Shihan Gakkō 東京高等師範学校 (Tokyo Higher Normal School), where he met his lifelong friend, Kim Kyo-shin 金教臣 (1901–1945), and with whom he began attending Uchimura Kanzō's Bible study group. There he came into contact with the twin concepts that Uchimura espoused, that of the Bible and the commoners, and he

[...] came to understand how *genuine* faith is in fact the way by which our fatherland and our people should live.⁴³

Even so, similar to Uchimura's experiences, Ham and Kim's version of "Korea-produced Christianity" was not readily accepted.⁴⁴ Kim, with Han's support, published the periodical *Sōngsō Chosōn* 聖書朝鮮 (*Bible Korea*) where they appended a eulogy in honor of Uchimura's passing. They drew criticism for supposedly showing a lack of Korean ethnic spirit. Furthermore, after Korea was liberated, members of *Bible Korea* held a symposium to commemorate Uchimura. They were consequently branded heterodox thinkers who were allegedly from the Non-Church Movement.⁴⁵ It seems, unsurprisingly, that the concept of a Korea built on the Bible and the common people itself was viewed to be dangerous.

How are we to understand Ham's commonerist philosophy, – his so-called *ssi-al* thought? Crucially, it consisted of "writings" (*mun* 文, 文):

From the beginning, written characters have been of the people. They come from the people and they return to them. All the things of human creation – civilization, culture, literary artefacts – are in the end reduced to one word: the writings. It is the people who are precisely the fundamental spirit and the inner soul of those writings. This is not only true for literature, but also for politics, education, fine arts and religion – all these things are ultimately patterns embroidered on the silk cloth that is the people. Through the establishment of institutions and artefacts, the people grow ever more radiant. And it is they who also wear these patterned silk raiments.

A writing is the cry of seeds; it is the voice of the people. It is a word that the people insists be talked about. Nay, it is their very prayers. Prayers are a plea to God to listen, but they are also one's voice, for one is asked to confront oneself in prayer. If you cannot listen to yourself, will God listen to you? In the depths of my ears, I hear the voice of God.

the theological meaning of the incident. (Ham 1991 (1983), 199–200).

43 Ham 1991 (1983), 203.

44 Kim 2004, 128.

45 Ham 1991 (1983), 204. Furthermore, Ham Sök-hōn and Kim Kyo-shin co-authored and published the book *Uchimura Kanzō sensei to Chōsen* in 1940, where they defended Uchimura's Non-Church Movement. (Ham and Kim 1940, 1).

Without my ears, I would not be able to hear Him. Prayers made while asleep are not prayers; God will not hear them. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus said these words. Do you remember them? “Awake and pray!” The prayers of the people are exactly like that: They must be made in full awareness. The people must properly hear their voices as their own, and offer prayers that resound in their own ears. For whatever laments, proclamations, struggles, or praises must be made in regard to their own selves, it is through themselves that they can face God.

When I say the “people,” to whom do I refer? What are these “seeds”? They are, in short, my own self. Myself, just as I was created. They are people who have cast off all their garb; they are naked beings.⁴⁶

What is expressed here is a kind of translation – not only of Uchimura’s thought, but also with the purpose of allowing readers to encounter the Bible and East Asia’s “writings” in the context of *ssi-al*, where the people are seeds. The writings had to be written on the great earth first, which then point towards heaven. In the Dazongshi chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, there is an entry on the “true person”: “The true person breathes with his heels, while the masses breathe with their throats.” By radically transforming this idea, Ham touched upon the heart of “Korean-produced Christianity”:

The heel goes into the great mother earth. If going to the extent of breathing with one’s heel, then one will naturally touch upon the breathing of the mother; if one goes through the great mother earth, then one will naturally also pass through the breathing of the heavenly father. As the mother’s navel faces that of the father’s, the way to heaven emanates from people’s hearts through the heart of the great earth, and from thence breaks through to the heart of heaven. If one wishes to look upon heaven, one must first look upon the great earth, and if one wishes to look upon the great earth, one must first pass through one’s heart. Having said as much, when humans become perfect beings, has it not been said since ancient times that “that person lives looking only at the earth”? Those who look at the great earth also look at heaven. Did not astronomical research start from geological research? [...] Jesus himself, the same Jesus who received the words of God, and who yet feverishly kept looking downwards to compose things on the earth! O, why is there not one amongst us who will birth the writings of the great earth? Will not some truly great literature come sooner rather than later?⁴⁷

Ham thus considered “Korean-made Christianity” to be “writings of the great earth – or, in other words, based on the *ssi-al*. However, those “writings of the great earth” had yet to be born. The constitutive elements of such writings were not extant religions like Bud-

46 Ham 1991 (1983), 304–305.

47 Ham 1991 (1983), 302.

dhism and Christianity, but a “personal religion” that could serve as a medium for the self to directly encounter God.⁴⁸

The greatest being is only one, and that is God; the greatest one is myself. I, whose breath and heartbeat are linked to God, am also *han* – in short, greatness – and that direct connection forms an axis around which the world can be changed. For that reason, a religion that does not penetrate my core, which does not allow me to confront God, is no true religion.⁴⁹

Here, Ham is speaking of an earthly spirituality. It recalls Suzuki Daisetz’s 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) “spirituality of the *myōkōnin* (the faithful)” in Jōdo (Pure Land) Buddhism:

In *Nihon teki reisei* 日本的靈性 (*Japanese Spirituality*), Suzuki makes the following remarks about the great earth and spirituality:

Religious consciousness with regard to heaven, quite simply, will not be brought forth by heaven alone. When heaven descends to earth, man can feel it in his hands; he has knowledge of heaven’s warmth because he can actually touch it. The potential in cultivated land derives from heaven’s light falling to earth. For this reason, religion bears its greatest authenticity when it appears among peasants and farmers who live and work on the soil.⁵⁰

Spirituality may appear to be a faint and shadowy concept, but there is nothing more deeply rooted in the earth, for spirituality is life itself. The depth of the earth is bottomless. Things that soar in the firmament, and things that descend from the sky, are wonderful, but are nonetheless external and do not come from within one’s own life. The earth and the self are one. The roots of the earth are the roots of one’s own existence. The earth is oneself.⁵¹

First of all, the “potential in cultivated land” by the farmers would give rise to a “religious consciousness with regard to heaven”. *Reisei* (Spirituality) was embodied by those who ploughed the earth. Those farmers who possessed such spirituality were *myōkōnin*, and one of them – a man called Saichi 才市 – was in fact the Amida Buddha in the guise of this person.⁵²

This spirituality, moreover, also had to be a “Japanese Spirituality.” Nonetheless, it was not a Japanized one. Rather, it had to be a universal spirituality that emerged via Japan:

48 Ibid, 303.

49 Ibid.

50 Waddel 1972 (Suzuki 1944), 42.

51 Ibid, 43.

52 Ibid, 183–188.

One can understand that because of this, spirituality has universality and is not limited to any particular people or nation. To the extent the Chinese, Europeans, Americans, or Japanese possess spirituality, they are similar.

Following the awakening of spirituality, however, they each have their respective differences in the patterns or forms in which the phenomena of *seishin*'s activity manifest themselves.⁵³

Such a universalist conception of spirituality was surely present in both Uchimura Kanzō's "Japanese Christianity" as well as Ham Sök-hön and Kim Kyo-shin's "Korean-produced Christianity." This spirituality was not concerned with establishing a heavenly universality, nor did it seek to internalize the unique particularities of either Japanese or Korean society. Rather, it wished to transform Japan and Korea themselves, and identify a path towards an earthly universality.

8 Ethnocentrism, the Nation-State, and Accepting Heidegger in Modern Korea: Park Chong-hong

Just as we compared the relationship of Uchimura Kanzō and Inoue Tetsujirō, we may consider the case of Park Chong-hong 朴鐘鴻 (1903–1976) in contrast to Ham Sök-hön. Park studied philosophy at the Keijō Imperial University, and graduated from the philosophy department in 1935. In the same year, he had already published his dissertation on "Heidegger ni oke ru chihei no mondai" ハイデッガーに於ける地平の問題 (The Problem of Horizon in Heidegger) in a special issue of the journal *Risō* 理想 (vol. 54, April 1935) on Heidegger's philosophy.

According to Kim Hang 金杭 (*1973), in the 1950s, Park Jeong-heon introduced the concept of *minjok* 民族, the "ethnic people" as a community founded on the self-realized concept that they shared a world of language and lifestyle.⁵⁴ This was not a universal concept like the modern nation; it was a thoroughly Korean idea that overcame modernity. Around the time Park proposed the idea of the *minjok*, the April Revolution of 1960 occurred. Park thought that the Park Chung-hee 朴正熙 (1917–1979) cabinet created a New Order and sharply opposed Ham Sök-hön, who immediately rejected the April Revolution and the government that succeeded it.⁵⁵ Soon after, Park Jeong-heon began cooperating with the Park Chung-hee regime. He helped

53 Ibid, 17.

54 Kim 2014, 97–102.

55 As Ham Sök-hön himself said, "The April 19th revolution [In English typically: the April Revolution] was a failure" (Ham 2001, 32), and he also joined the voices critical of the *minjok* movement represented by Park Chong-hong (Ibid, 441).

promulgate a constitutional document on national education (1968) that echoed the rhetoric of the Imperial Rescript on Education in Meiji Japan. By doing so, Park came to support the government as a Special Presidential Officer for Education and Culture, a post he held for 6 years.

The problem here was with the concept of *minjok*, which derived from a program of overcoming Western modernity, but also tried to establish a uniquely Korean idea. Insofar as this was true, it could be linked to Ham Sök-hön's concept of *ssi-al*. As Park Pae-yöng 朴倍暎 (*1967) has pointed out,⁵⁶ Park Jeong-heon's thought is not only informed by Western philosophy, but also of Confucian thought that centers on the teachings of Zhu Xi (Jap. Shu Ki) 朱熹 (1130–1200), *Shushi-gaku*. However, Park's thought merely uses the framework of Confucian thought, which remains eclipsed by modernity. By being different from Ham Sök-hön who incorporated the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi to include the people of the land, Park was able to conceptualize the modern subject. And just as Inoue Tetsujirō's national subjects were linked with the Meiji restoration and Japan as a nation-state, Park Jeong-heon's *minjok* was also bound together with the New Order and the Korean nation-state.

Park Pae-yöng asks: "Why must the object of that 'creation' [through *minjok*] be the nation-state?" He further points out that the answer by Park is by no means clear.⁵⁷ In responding to this question, Park could not consider a universality that goes beyond the nation-state in a way that did not also presuppose heavenly universality. As much as he urged that modernity should be overcome, he also put tentatively forward the notion of conditional universality.

A passage from his article "Sae ryöksa üi ch'angjo" 새 歷史의 創造 (Creation of New History), published 1973, reads:

Today, we wish earnestly for a new history, which, simply put, is a revival of a history centered around ethnicity. Toward this end, it is a history of restoration. It is not wrong to consider this modernization, although it is not actually modernization; rather, it is modernization of the present time. It is, first of all, necessary to give some thought to the concept of modernizing the *uri* (a collective "us") that will be different from the traditions of Western Europe.⁵⁸

Here, the same question is repeatedly asked: Who on earth could this *uri* be?⁵⁹

56 Park 2010, 201.

57 Ibid, 206.

58 Park 1998, 551. The translation of this piece was supervised by Ryu Chung-hee 柳忠熙, a project researcher at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at the University of Tōkyō.

59 Ogura Kizō 小倉紀藏 (*1959) concluded the limits of Park Jeong-heon's philosophy as follows: "The trajectory of Park Jeong-heon's philosophy began in colonial times with 'ethnic

Perhaps we are expected to imagine an *uri* that does not simply return to the nation-state that Park invented with the *minjok* concept? This must be relevant to the people being put through the universalizing process.

Conclusion: Toward Trans-East Asian Experiences

Comparative thought is a philosophical movement. That said, it is not a unified movement. The universalizable and the universalizing are two different approaches to universality that have small yet significant differences. On the one hand, thinkers try to build a system of thought designed on certain principles. One method of doing this is to search for the potential to universalize amongst multiple differing systems of thought. But if the ability to be critical is lost, then it easily falls into dogma and an affirmation of the present conditions. On the other hand, there is a path toward earthly universality, which seeks to clarify specific cases and histories with local character. It plumbs their depths to trace the vertical arc of their underlying ideas. Comparing what cannot actually be compared opens up another kind of universality.

The universalities that are pointed to by Christianity and Western philosophy, depending on which approach one adopts, brings us face-to-face with comparative thought in a different guise. This paper has tried to extend the discussion at this point by taking up the cases of China, Japan and Korea. Through a critical comparison of concepts such as “Chinese-language Christian theology” of Liu Xiaofeng, “Japanese Christianity” of Uchimura Kanzō, and “Korean-made Christianity” of Ham Sök-hōn and Kim Kyo-shin, it has been possible to illuminate the struggle to think of universality by way of the perspective of East-Asia Christianity. They could be an endeavor of universalizing. However, we cannot ignore the negative aspect of this endeavor, for it gives rise to the potential criticism that such a comparative study permits the construction of an East-Asian modernity similar to modern Japan’s Great East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Even so, there are compelling reasons to consider the experiences in places like China, Japan and Korea alongside each another. One reason is that the very possibility of trans-East Asian experiences is questioned. This is due to the difficulty of sharing experiences, a thorny issue that this paper might have addressed more directly. But it is also likely that if we do a fundamental examination of comparative thought itself, the difficulties of having communal experiences will need to be touched upon. The present author will be very pleased if this essay can be of any service to such efforts.

thought’ and ‘ethnic philosophy,’ but its conclusion came to reach a compromise with the idea of ‘nation.’ This was due to the restrictions of his time, but Park’s own thought itself had had it in an embryonic stage.” (Ogura 2012, 346)

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