

The Heart of *Wa* and Christian Ethics

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For Japanese people what is the meaning of being a Christian or living the Gospel? Or, indeed, is it possible to live as Christians here in Japan? If so, how can we do it? In order to consider these questions we would like to try to approach them from the two points of view by using some “virtues” as key words because they are central concepts to not only the Japanese ethical view but also Christian ethics.

First, we would like to refer to *wa*, which is one of the most important virtues for Japanese, from both the historical and the philosophical point of view. Secondly, we would like to refer to the Gospel of Jesus as the origin of Christian ethics and virtue ethics based on it. By so doing, we would like to reconfirm that the “heart of *wa*” and Christian ethics do not essentially exclude each other, but rather there is something in common between them.

1. The Heart of *Wa*

1.1. The Word of “*Wa*”

The word of “*wa*” is one of the words which is so familiar to Japanese in daily life. Though *wa* is used separately on one hand, it is also used in some phrases or idioms, such as *nyūwa* (sweetness), *wakai* (reconciliation), *chōwa* (harmony), *waon* (chord). Also, *wa* represents

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Japan itself, therefore, *wafû* means typical Japanese style or something Japanese. The word of *wa*, in the first place, contains the meanings as follows:

(1) ① softness, comfort, mildness, calmness, peacefulness, quietness, moderation, gentleness. a② comply, accord, tune, conform, humor.

(2) *wa* is, in Chinese character, composed of two Chinese characters: *kuchi* (mouth) and *ka* (assemble). Therefore, *wa* means harmony.

In sum, *wa* has basically a good meaning and is indispensable to not only the natural world but also human beings. Therefore, we are able to say that *wa* is one of the most important virtues for our growth as human beings. Virtues are not merely abstract ideas or a system of learning, but rather that by which a human being can become a good human person. These virtues are those which human beings should nourish and embody in their life through their consistent experience.

1.2. “*Wa*” as a Virtue

From the above consideration, as we can understand, one of the typical characteristics of *wa* is *chôwa*, i.e., harmonizing or agreeing. According to KUROZUMI Makoto,¹ *wa* is a virtue of harmony and/or appeasement of others.² In other words, *wa* is also concerned with more internal and realistic matters than merely social harmony such as social justice and equity.

Wa is also pointed out as one of the important virtues in oriental thought such as Taoism and Confucianism. For example, we can find the following phrases in the *Lao Tzu* or *Tao-te Ching* (Classic of the Way and its Virtue):

Tao is empty (like a bowl),
It may be used, its capacity is never exhausted.
It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things.
It blunts its sharpness,
It unites its tangles.
It softens its light.

¹ Japanese names normally consist of two elements, a family name and a given name – in that order. I capitalize the family name to designate it.

² KUROZUMI Makoto, *Plurality in Japanese Thought*, Tokyo: Perikan-sha, 2006, 489.

It becomes one with the dusty world.
 Deep and still, it appears to exist forever.
 I do not know whose son it is.
 It seems to have existed before the Lord (n. 4).

In other words, the wise soften and hide the light of knowledge and assimilate and communicate with ordinary people. This is famous as a proverb "*Wakôdôjin*," which means Tao or the Way dulls all the sharpness and untangles all the tangle and softens all the brightness and to become one with all the dust.

There is also the following in the *Analects*: "Confucius said, 'The superior man is conciliatory but does not identify himself with others; the inferior man identifies with others but is not conciliatory' " (13:23).

As we can understand by these phrases, we cannot precisely grasp the exact meaning of *wa* as far as we apply "prescriptive duty" by conventional ethics to each case.

1.3. The Seventeen-Article Constitution of Prince Shôtoku

The word of *wa* reminds us *Jûshichijô-Kempô* (The Seventeen-Article Constitution) of Prince Shôtoku. (574-622)

Harmony is to be valued, and an avoidance of wanton opposition to be honored. All men are influenced by class-feeling, and there are few who are intelligent. Hence there are some who disobey their lords and fathers, or who maintain feuds with the neighboring villages. But when those above are harmonious and those below are friendly, and there is concord in the discussion of business, right views of things spontaneously gain acceptance. Then what is there which cannot be accomplished (Article 1).

The understanding of *wa* explained here is also found in Confucianism though we cannot say it is traditional. In other words, it is said that it is important to cooperate harmoniously in the community. Therefore, what is demanded there, is not the pursuit of interest and partisanship but the feeling of respect and reverence and the heart of confidence. People do not obey the leaders not because they have the authority and charisma but because they have the heart/mind of humanity and righteousness.³ According to KUROZUMI, the sovereignty is in the character of the ritual king who serves to the

³ In East Asia the concept which corresponds closest to conscience in the West is *ryôshin*. Mencius (372-289 B.C.) is the first person who explicitly used this term. His basic idea of morality is based on *ryôshin*. *Ryôshin* is thought of within the context of both morality and philosophy, especially

rituals but not in the character of the absolute monarch who embodies the divine rights.⁴

The Seventeen-Article Constitution aims at the realization of *wa* not by the demand of obedience by the superior to the follower based on a paternalistic power system, but by both parties exercising self-restraint. At the same time, it is also aimed at belonging to the community life-style though it allows that personality and diversity can be allowed.

According to MATSUDA Ichirō, the “thought of *wa*” was created by Prince Shōtoku based on Buddhism and Confucianism conveyed from China as morality which was the public policy adapted to the Japanese society.⁵ Also, according to WATSUJI tetsurō (1889-1960), the thought of *wa* affects the whole of the Seventeen-Article Constitution and it is said as follows: “The notable thing is here that *wa* is not merely obedience. Discussion should be held in the mood of good and comfortable atmosphere to make sure the problem is properly discussed. Therefore, the most important thing is to make the discussion coherent.”⁶ It is notable here that Prince Shōtoku uses *wa* as a Confucian term though his thought is basically based on Buddhism.

It is Buddhism that Prince Shōtoku regards as a basic idea of the Constitution. “Be respectful to the three treasures sincerely. The three treasures, Buddha, (Buddhism) commandments and priests, are the final refuge for all the people, and are the ultimate doctrine in all countries” (article 2). He says in the first article that “*wa* should be valued.” This is based not only on Buddhism, which we can confirm by consulting the *Analects*:

Confucianism. *Ryōshin* is equivalent to “a heart/mind of humanity and righteousness” (*jin gi no kokoro*). *Jin* is the first of the four cardinal virtues (*jin*: humanity, *gi*: righteousness, *rei*: propriety, *chi*: wisdom) which are innate in human beings. In general, *jin* is translated as humanity, benevolence, and kindness. *Jin* prompts us to do good to others as well as to ourselves. *Gi* is also one of the four inborn virtues. According to Mencius, *gi* means doing what we should as citizens of the universe, while Confucius (551-479 B.C.) interprets it as doing what we should purely for its own sake. In any case, *gi* is a selfless condition of oughtness or obligation.

⁴ Ibid., 497.

⁵ MATSUDA Ichirō, *The Note of Bio-medical Ethics*, Tokyo: Nihonhyōronsha, 2004, 32.

⁶ WATASUJI Tetsurō, “Nihon Rinri Shisō-shi [The History of Japanese Ethics], WATSUJI Tetsurō Zenshū [the Complete Works of WATSUJI Tetsurō], Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1962, vol. 12, 116.

Yu Tzu said, "Among the functions of propriety (*li*) the most valuable is that it establishes harmony. The excellence of the ways of ancient kings consists of this. It is the guiding principle of all things great and small. If things go amiss, and you, understanding harmony, try to achieve it without regulating it by the rules of propriety, they will still go amiss" (1:12).

In any case, there is no doubt that this Constitution is highly appreciated. In this respect, TAMAKI Kôshirô says that "This Constitution has a remarkable characteristic in the following points such as Prince Shôtoku has perspective on the future of Japan in the world, foresees the national character and presents the way that Japanese should take."⁷

MATSUDA also evaluates The Seventeen-Article Constitution as follows:

The thought of *wa* which Prince *Shôtoku* described is not merely an "imported idea" but a unique Japanese thought which presented "the way of life and what the community should be" considering the social agreement. He places *jihî* (mercy/compassion) in Buddhism or *jîn* (humanity/ benevolence) in Confucianism at the center and deals with mutual reliance, mutual understanding, solidarity, and fairness by basing on harmony.⁸

The "thought of *wa*" is not merely an eclectic idea of Buddhism and Confucianism, but rather it has something new and original. We would like to refer to *jihî* in Buddhism and *jîn* in Confucianism.

1.4. "*Jihî*" in Buddhism and "*Jîn*" in Confucianism

Jihî is explained as follows: "1. Compassion. The mind or mental condition of being compassionate or sympathetic toward human beings. 2. *Ji* (*maitrî*), which means giving happiness, and *hi* (*karnâ*), which means saving sentient beings from sufferings."⁹ Let us look into it more in detail. *Ji* comes from *tomo* (friend) in Sanskrit and means "friendship/dearness" and gives profit and ease. As against this, *hi* comes from *dôjô/awaremi* (pity/compassion) in Sanskrit and means get rid of disadvantage and pain. The word which corresponds to *jihî* is *jîn* (humanity/benevolence) in Confucianism.

⁷ TAMAKI Kôshirô, "The Structure of Japanese Buddhism Thought," in *Kôza Nihonshisô 2 Intellect*, ed. SAGARA Tôru, Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku University Shuppankai, 1983, 55.

⁸ MATSUDA, 46.

⁹ "*Jihî*," *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, rev., Tokyo: Daitô Shuppansha, 1991.

“Fan Ch’ih asked about humanity. Confucius said, ‘It is to love men.’ He asked about knowledge. Confucius said, ‘It is to know man’ “ (the *Analects*, 12:22). The word “love” is, however, something ambiguous. For instance, in the Greek version of the New Testament, there are three kinds of love in Greek: *erôs*, *philia*, and *agapē*. Generally speaking, *erôs* means desire; *philia* friendship; *agapē* self-giving unconditional love. It seems that *agapē* is fairly close to *jin*.

HAYASHIDA Shinnosuke tells the difference between “*jin*” and “*ji*” as follows: “The difference between ‘*jin*’ and ‘*ji*’ is almost the same as that of between paternity and maternity. The mercy of maternity is similar to the gentle and flexible quality of water. This is different from humanity of paternity based on social system. There is a resonance of *ji* which praises freshness and tenderness of the heart.”¹⁰

On the basis of Chinese thought, F. Julian points out that human beings can become true human person through the relationship to others and says as follows:

The concept of *jin* has been translated into humanity by the Jesuits. The Chinese character of *jin* is composed of the two Chinese characters: *hito* (human being) and *ni* (two). There is no other addition. Virtue of human being is at the center of human person and it appears when two human beings meet. The center of the teaching of Confucius is to cultivate *jin*. The experience of *jin* is common and familiar to ordinary person.¹¹

1.5. *Wa* and *Rei*

“The superior man is conciliatory but does not identify himself with others; the inferior man identifies with others but is not conciliatory” (the *Analects*, 13:23). Conciliatoriness does not mean an identity which is merely an indifferent mixture but a characteristic of a person who has autonomy and harmony. To be sure, it is demanded to know the importance of this kind of conciliatoriness and realize it. But at the same time, conciliatoriness should be moderated by *rei* (propriety). In other words, when we pursue propriety, *wa* is required. Also, *wa* includes the thought of mutual support in addition to harmony.

In terms of the relationship between *wa* and *rei*, we can read it in the *Analects* as follows:

¹⁰ HAYASHIDA Shinnosuke, *The Thought of Tao* (Tokyo: Kôdan-sha, 2002), 55-56.

¹¹ F. Julian, *Basing Morality*, Tokyo: Kôdan-sha, 2002, 135.

Yu Tzu said, "Among the functions of propriety (*li*) the most valuable is that it establishes harmony. The excellence of the ways of ancient kings consists of this. It is the guiding principle of all things great and small. If things go amiss, and you, understanding harmony, try to achieve it without regulating it by the rules of propriety, they will still go amiss" (the *Analects*, 1:12).

In order to grasp the thought of *wa* more precisely, we would like to consider it by following MATSUDA. He enumerates the meaning of *wa* as follows: symphony, harmony, conciliation, concord, unity, reconciliation.

According to him, the word of *wa* contains "the process of mutual understanding and agreement based on harmony, and collaboration to achieve, a series of actions contains mutual support." Still more, he says, "*wa* is a concept which is composed of solidarity, collaboration, consensus."¹²

For example, according to the Oxford Dictionary, solidarity is explained as follows: 1. Solidarity is "a unity of feeling or action, especially among individuals with common interest. Mutual dependence." 2. "Support of one group of people for another, because they agree with their aims."

At the same time, solidarity is willing to make the effort toward unity while sharing a readiness for limited restriction. Therefore, MATSUDA summarizes the concept of *wa* as follows: "The basis of the thought of *wa* is to collaborate and solidify basing on the consensus at the end of the discussion."¹³

1.6. *Chung-yung*

In order to understand *wa* more deeply, it is very meaningful to consider the thought of *chung-yung* which is developed in detail in the *Chung-yung*.¹⁴ There are two key terms in this book: *chung-yung* (the Mean, centrality-commonality) and *ch'eng* (sincerity). The former is described in the first half of the book and the latter in the second half. *Ch'eng*

¹² MATSUDA, 38-39.

¹³ MATSUDA, 40.

¹⁴ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, 96. "In the *Analects*, *chung-yung*, often translated the 'Mean,' denotes moderation but here *chung* means what is central and *yung* means what is universal and harmonious. The former refers to human nature, the latter to its relation with the universe." Tu Wei-ming, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness*, rev. ed., Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, 16.

gives *chung-yung* a philosophical ground. In other words, *chung-yung* as a virtue is completed by *ch'eng* as the noble nature of the human person.¹⁵ Based on this understanding, one can point out two characteristics of *Chung-yung*. First, *Chung-yung* has "mystical" aspects, which are adopted from Mencius' heritage. Second, in contrast to general Western thought, there are no dichotomies in *Chung-yung* such as that of self and society or that of ethics and religion.¹⁶

The emphasis in *chung-yung* is principally on *chung*.¹⁷ KANAYA Osamu gives a detailed etymological explanation of *chung-yung*.

In point of fact, an old form of the character *zhong* [*chung*] took the form of a single straight line with a circle in the middle, and there was also another form with marks of streamers added to both ends of the straight line, thus indicating that *zhong* does indeed denote the point midway between two extremes. The first meaning of the Mean is, therefore, 'the middle between two extremes, inclining neither to the left nor to the right.'¹⁸

The important thing is that this middle does not only merely "a single central point," but rather is "an approximate middle that moves while maintaining a balance between two extremes." In other words, the middle "implies avoiding any proclivity toward either of these two extremes and adhering to the approximate middle."¹⁹ Though *chung* was not explained precisely in the logical world, it was realized in the practical world.²⁰ Along this line, one can see that the idea of

¹⁵ The relationship between *chung-yung* and *ch'eng* is integrally analyzed in the *Chung-yung chan-chü* of Chu Hsi (1130-1200).

¹⁶ Tu, 3.

¹⁷ Osamu KANAYA, "The Mean in Original Confucianism," in *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture: Nivison and His Critics*, ed. Philip J. Ivanhoe, Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Trade and Academic Books, 1996, 84. See Tu, 16-17. Tu cites both Ch'eng I (1033-1107)'s and Chu Hsi's understanding of *chung* and *yung*. According to Ch'eng I, "By *chung* is meant what is not one-sided, and by *yung* is meant what is unchangeable. *Chung* is the correct path of the world and *yung* is the definite principle of the world." According to Chu Hsi, "*yung* signifies that which is 'ordinary' and 'common.' " Tu himself thinks that "It should become clear in the course of our discussion that *yung*, which we will translate as 'commonality,' must be taken to include such connotations as 'practicality' and 'unchangeability.' "

¹⁸ KANAYA, 84.

¹⁹ KANAYA, 85. See also *ibid.*, 88. One may be able to see a similarity with an idea of Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64). One of his famous doctrines is the *coincidentia oppositorum* (coincidence of opposites).

²⁰ Mencius thinks of Confucius here as an ideal embodiment of *chung*. See *Mencius*, 4B:10. Cf. *Analects*, 7:37.

chung-yung is closely related to the concept of "harmony." As a matter of fact, in Chinese thought, they have traditionally been conceived as supplementary concepts.²¹

Traditionally, and even now, harmony is one of the most precious virtues for Japanese. In order to establish and keep harmony, people try to listen to others positively and avoid conflict negatively. In keeping harmony, people find "order," "calm," and "beauty." Harmony is a key not only for the individual but also for the community or society. A person of harmony is one whose life is based on sincerity and of integrity as a human being. A community which is based on harmony is a peaceful society, in other words, a society where social justice prevails. However, on the other hand, there sometimes is a negative proclivity, that is, people easily come to accept compromise or ambiguity in order to keep harmony.

Chung-yung might be paraphrased as *chung-ho* (equilibrium and harmony).²² *Chung* means "impartial equilibrium" or a balanced state that neither goes beyond nor falls short. *Ho* means "harmony" or harmonious state that embraces variety. While *chung* is "the ultimate ground of existence," *ho* is "its unfolding process of self-expression."²³ The relationship between *chung* and *ho* has been one of the key issues in Confucian philosophy.²⁴ In fact, one can see the compatibility of these concepts in the text of *Chung-yung*.²⁵

According to KANAYA, both concepts of *chung* and *ho* were originally the same, but differed only in their description.²⁶ Though I am a bit reluctant to accept his interpretation unconditionally, there are, as he points out, very few ways to specify exactly what *chung* is. However, it does not mean that people in ancient China were lacking in logical thought, but that they had a different mode of thinking based on their unique view of the universe.

²¹ Ibid., 13:23. Cf. KANAYA, 90.

²² According to Chu Hsi, while *chung* is a nature of *t'ien-ming* (Mandate of Heaven) and a substance of the Way, *ho* is a normal affection and an action of the Way.

²³ Tu, 19-20.

²⁴ Tu, 8. Tu translates *chung-ho* into "centrality and harmony." According to Tu, there is another, but similar understanding of *chung* and *ho*: *Chung* is the 'just rightness' of things, while *ho* is everything in proper proportion.

²⁵ *Chung-yung*, 1.

²⁶ KANAYA Osamu, "*Chū to Wa* (equilibrium and harmony)," in KANAYA Osamu, *Collection of Essays of Chinese Thought by KANAYA Osamu [middle volume]: Confucianism and Taoism*, Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppan-sha, 1997, 129-149.

2. Christian Ethics

If Christian ethics is truly catholic, it should have something applicable to all. In this sense, one can approve the thesis "Christian morality is in essence identical with true human morality." Human morality is essentially autonomous and in fact should be. However, it does not mean to deny the dependence to the Absolute, but rather, speaking more precisely, it could be said that it is the heteronomous autonomy to the Absolute. In this sense, it is said that Christian morality is essentially true human morality.

2.1. The Gospel of Jesus

We have deliberated so far that *wa* (harmony) is at the central point in the Oriental ethical thought. Also, in the Christian ethics, virtue has functioned as a central point though sometimes people did not pay enough attention to it. The thought of harmony is a central ethos in Japanese. This thought is not irreconcilable to the original point in the Christian ethics, but rather they affect each other.

The original point of Christian ethics is in the Gospel of Jesus. What is then the good news of Jesus? "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk 1:15). Jesus proclaimed this in the beginning of his mission. The time of fulfillment presents that of salvation in eschaton. The kingdom of God (*basileia*) means that God governs the whole world as a king (*basileus*). St. Paul says that "When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will [also] be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). This is what Israelites had longed for for a long time in their history. It became reality in Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel of Jesus as the original point of Christianity.

One may be able to point out the two points about the impression and the understanding of Christianity which ordinary Japanese have. First, most Japanese understand Christianity as one of the Western cultures rather than that of the religions. Second, most people understand Christianity as a religion of ethics. Of course, the Gospel of Jesus does not deny the importance of ethics, but it surpasses it. To be sure, historically Christianity has developed under the influence of Western culture. Although we cannot deny this, we cannot claim that Christianity has achieved its full potential. The Gospel of Jesus does not come from the system which is constructed by learning but from the narrative of Jesus.

2.2. The Son of God Who Became a Human Being

“Christ is the end of the law for the justification of everyone who has faith” (Rom 10:4). Therefore, Christians are thought to be under the law of Christ (cf. Gal 6:2) and understood as connected to Christ’s death and resurrection. In other words, Christians are new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).

What we want to confirm first is that Scripture does not present an ethical system. It is said that the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7 chapters) is, as it were, a Magna Charta of Christian ethics, but it does not mean that the whole Christian ethics is told completely. The essence of Christian ethics rises from the story of Jesus Christ.

Christian charisma surely occupies the important position (Rom 12-13 chapters; 1 Cor 13). One can confirm this in the following four points. First, the dignity of a human being is praised. The basis of it is that a human being is created as the image of God (Gen 2:16), and still more, is newly created in the life of Jesus Christ. Second, the invisible Son of God came to the world as a human being, i.e., the incarnation of God (cf. Jn 1:14). Based on this, one can confirm that the whole human beings are equal and brothers and sisters (Phil 2:6-8). Third, God presented himself to us who he is in Jesus Christ, i.e., self-presentation of God. By this, a history of human beings acquired a new quality. Lastly, death is conquered by the death and resurrection of Jesus and that gave a new meaning of life to human beings.

2.3. The Gospel and Virtue

2.3.1. Old Testament

In Christian ethics virtues occupy an important position although sometimes they were not paid enough attention in some eras. In the following section we would like to consider how Scripture tells about virtue.

In the Old Testament virtues are not told by some particular words, but rather by some expressions such as wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, fear of the Lord (Is 11:2), moderation, prudence, justice, and fortitude (Wis 8:7). Faithfulness to God is expressed by the love of God (Dt 6:4) and the love of neighbor (Lev 19:13-18). So conversion is needed for the unfaithful people.

Therefore, one can say that virtuous person is one who enjoys a right and just relationship to God (cf. Gen 18:19). In other words,

they open their hearts to the words of God and respond to them willingly (cf. Ex 19:5). Or, they are said to be those who walk with God (Gen 5:22; 6:9). The following tells directly which kind of people they are who are right and just before God. "You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6:8).

The basis of virtue is wholly in the love of God. "Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Dt 6:5). The people who live this are also the one who love the teaching of God and study it day and night (Ps 1:2). Virtues are also told in the deep relationship to wisdom. "Or if one loves justice, the fruits of her works are virtues; For she teaches moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful for men than these" (Wis 8:7).

2.3.2. New Testament

It is only four times that the word of virtue (*aretē*) is told in the New Testament (Phil 4:8; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Pet 1:3, 5). Instead, there are, so to speak, some lists of virtues (Gal 5:22-23; Col 3:12; Eph 4:2; 1 Tim 6:11). The remarkable point is that virtue is told in the relationship to the Spirit. According to St. Peter, it is required that one should make effort to supplement faith with virtues (2 Pet 1:5-7).

We confirmed that the original point of Christianity is in the Gospel of Jesus. He tells about himself "meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). He presents this in the last supper by the example of washing the feet of the disciples (Jn 13:1-21) and gives a new commandment: "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (13:34). Jesus also speaks of the righteousness which surpasses the law of the Old Testament in the famous Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-10). And he invites the people through conversion to faith and speaks of humility, prudence, and the love of neighbor (25:31-46) by the notification of eschatological salvation.

St. Paul tells the importance of faith, hope, and love again and again (1 Thess 1:3; Rom 5:1-5; Col 1:4-5). Love, which is the most important, is the fulfillment of the law and virtues are understood as the various aspects of love (1 Cor 13). The following tells how love occupies the center of the virtues in human beings and that they could be one in Christ through it.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful" (Col 3:12-15).

2-4. Ethics Centered on Virtue

Aretology is composed of *aretē* (virtue) and *logos* (discourse or study), and refers to the study of virtue. Virtue here is considered in the relationship to the good, in particular the good of human beings.²⁷ Virtue is also indispensable to the formation of human beings and it is pursued by habits. Human action is set in the objective sphere of ethics, but primarily is ordered to the *telos* or the ultimate end of human beings. It is beatitude, that is, the unity with God. Every ethical action aims at it. Virtue plays an important role in this process.

As James F. Keenan and Daniel Harrington say, the important thing for us is not *What should I do?* but *Who should I become?* Therefore, the following three important questions are presented. 1. Who ought we to become? 2. Who are we? 3. How do we get there?²⁸

As St. Thomas Aquinas says, all the questions about ethics are in brief reduced to the consideration of virtues. The fundamental execution in the moral life is to make an effort to get to the ultimate end. One of the characteristics of virtues is moderation. Virtue is said as the second nature. In this sense, all the actions of human beings is thought to be moral actions. Virtue is not merely to make good the disposition of individual, but to make good the relationship to others. Therefore, one is required not only to be right but also to deal with others rightly.

How can the concept of *wa* and Christian concept of virtue be integrated or how they are complementary? As we mentioned above, virtue is, first of all, indispensable for the formation or cultivation of human beings and it is embodied by habits. In other words, virtue is the second nature. This process is not carried out through the individual but rather through the community. *Wa* on the one hand plays a very important role in the context of Japanese ethos or social

²⁷ S. T., I-II, 55. 4.

²⁸ Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. and James F. Keenan, S.J. *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology*, Lanham: Sheed and Ward, 2002, 35-76.

system. Virtue on the other hand also has basically played an important role in the Christian community. In this way, we may be able to say that there is a common sphere between *wa* and Christian virtues.

Conclusion

Wa (harmony), as one of the most important virtues, has played an essential role not only in the individual cultivation but in the formation and the preservation of society and community. Though on the one hand there is surely an influence of Buddhism and Confucianism in the background of the thought of *wa*, there is also something original in it.

On the other hand, the original point of Christian ethics is in the Gospel of Jesus. It is that the time of salvation of human beings by God is directly realized in Jesus. Therefore, those who accept this imitate and follow his words and deeds. "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34) -- this is the new commandment which Jesus gave us. Though the word of *wa* is not used, this means that one should be one in Christ, in other words, nothing other than all the people should live out the peace of Christ.

One may be able to understand that the "heart of *wa*" and "Christian ethics" do not exclude each other, but rather have a common central point. That is, the more one can cultivate and master the heart of *wa*, the more one can embody the Gospel of Jesus here in Japan.