Abstract

In today’s global society, the development of information technology prompts the speed of communication and strength of conflicts tremendously. In this paper, I try to analyze foundations of intercultural communication and consider ethics in the global society. For instance, one of the foundations is “overlapping structure” by R.A.Mall, one of the representative philosophers of intercultural philosophy. I think the overlapping structure is a clue to avoid conflicts of intercultural communication and seek for ethics in the global society. Therefore, my paper is structured as follows. Firstly, features of the overlapping structure are explained. They are denials of autonomy, mixture, and incommensurability. Secondly, the structure is compared with other philosophical concepts, such as “family resemblance” by L. Wittgenstein, and “overlapping consensus” by J. Rawls. They have partly common elements with an overlapping structure. Thirdly, I try to consider that the structure could be applied for Japanese culture. On the consideration, basic features of a paradigm of Japanese culture, based on S.Katō’s theory, are explained. He was not only a great scholar of Japanese culture, but also had a profound knowledge of western culture. Additionally, he was a Christian. Finally, I try to examine whether there are overlapping parts between Japanese cultural features and values such as liberty, equality, fraternity which are originally from western cultures or not.
Introduction

In today’s society, people can communicate not only in the field of economics, but also in the field of science, culture, philosophy and so on, while many social problems such as international trades and refugees are happening. They are based on conflicts among nations, tribes, religions and cultures. The development of information technology prompts the speed of communication and strength of conflicts tremendously. I think the start of global communication was, for example, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). From that time, inter-religious communication began. After the cold war in the 1990s, the ideological conflicts between capitalism and communism seemed to disappear. In place of this, secular societies which are economically value-centered and abandon religions, are expanded all over the world. Similarly, information about minorities, LGBT and women who are discriminated from societies, are spread through the internet. Although there are many methods of communication, one-sided opinions by SNS and Twitter are occupied in the internet society. I am afraid that the foundation of the democratic society in which people make a decision in a process of communication and agreements, is in danger of disintegration in today’s national and international politics. In such a confusing society, who can we communicate with, and where should we go?

1. Background of “overlapping structure”

In general, we tend to avoid communicating with foreigners, even though there are many opportunities to do so today. Because we are nervous about foreigner’s languages, thoughts, customs, religions, cultures, and so on. If we believed at first, that there were no “universal worth” such as what philosophers say, or we cannot understand each other at all, it is originally impossible to find the meaning of communication. Then, should we accept “incommensurability”? In this position, people believe that there is no absolute worth which everyone can understand, and it is no problem if everyone can believe anything he/she
wants to believe and its belief has no common values. At the result of this, the attitude and the way of thinking could lead to split peoples’ relationships, spread indifference and deepen conflicts.

In my opinion, it is important to develop an attitude toward respect, understanding and corporation with other people who belong to a different culture at first. To develop that attitude, a philosophical approach is more useful than a religious one. Because a religious approach is easy to commit with religious groups and religious foundations. Additionally, religious people tend to assert their religious rightness of their doctrine which shows each religious essence, inviolability and sacredness. Probably, they could not discuss about the issue rationally.

In terms of the theory of communication among different cultures, various studies are progressing. For example, “Diskursethik” by Jürgen Habermas, “Moral argument at home and abroad” by Michael Walzer, and “global ethics” by Hans Küng. Although they are very interesting studies, each of them has also been criticized in its own view.

In fact, the issue has been discussed since the 1990s in the field of the intercultural philosophy. I would like to explain the idea of “overlapping structure” by Ram Adhar Mall who is one of the main scholars of intercultural philosophy in order to consider of the way of communication, especially about ethics in modern global society today. Regarding the overlapping structure, I have already mentioned it on my presentation in ISREV (International seminar on Religious Education and Values) 2018. The title was, “A Study on the communication between a religious person and a non-religious person: a critique of methods of an intercultural philosophy.” However, I could not explain it enough. So, firstly, I would like to add the analysis of the overlapping structure.

2. **Features of the “overlapping structure”**

According to Mall’s explanations, the overlapping structure is based on
the analogical thinking of intercultural hermeneutics. In other words, it cannot be explained by the analysis of a structure of something real. A complicated substance could be simplified. As the result of it, it becomes an understandable model. So, the first feature is that the overlapping structure by itself does not exist independently. In short, it is not autonomic. It is in our daily life. Therefore, it is both impossible to take it out and to show “this is the structure!”.

In general, it is rare that one culture exists independently. In fact, many different cultures are mixed in our recent daily lives. For instance, Japanese language was originally consisted of Chinese letters and then, our ancestors changed the letters and created Hiragana and Katakana as Japanese original letters. In the modern age, Japanese contains some foreign languages, changing their letters and pronunciations, to use them comfortably in our lives. Mall says that the mixture of cultures are at degrees and how deep they are involved with each other. This is the second feature of the overlapping structure.

At that time, the problem is how correct can people translate other cultures into their own culture. Essentially, translation has a limitation. It is impossible to exchange culture A to culture B perfectly. Normally, some omissions or transformations occur. Then, a sprout of incommensurability results from the impossibility of the perfect translation between A and B cultures. On the process of transformation of other cultures after the absorption and the translation of them, people make their own culture which consists of different elements of original cultures which are absorbed and translated. We have repeated the same process in our human history to form our culture.

The third feature is to give up the final agreement between cultures, because they are formed with a mixture of various elements and their originalities come from the process of translation. On the contrary, it is not impossible that people perfectly have neither discussion nor agreement nor connection. There are no 100 percent agreements nor 100 disagreements. In fact, they can achieve partial agreements and on the other side, partial disagreements. In this sense, people
who have different cultures can communicate with each other in the view of the overlapping structure.\(^5\) It is not easy to say, but communications with their partial agreement in political discussion among nations are the same as in conversation with parents and children in principle. In a view of education, a conversation at home shows conflicts between different cultures based on generation gaps. It is necessary for children to grow up. These conflicts are a common place in which parents and children can communicate in a sense. As children grow up, the place becomes smaller and smaller, but it still remains and never disappears.\(^6\)

Above all, I explained three features of the overlapping structure: denial of autonomy, mixture, and incommensurability. I wonder if they are original features of the intercultural philosophy by Mall. He mentioned “Familienähnlichkeit”\(^7\) by Wittgenstein and “overlapping consensus”\(^8\) by John Rawls are similar concepts of his overlapping structure. So, I will conduct the next explanation of the common points between Mall’s overlapping structure and the concepts of Wittgenstein and Rawls in order to make clear the features of the structure.

3. **Overlapping structure and family resemblances**

As an example of the “overlapping structure”, especially focusing on languages, Mall admits that “the consciousness of overlapping” (Bewußtsein der Überlappung) is like “the family resemblances” (Familienähnlichkeit) by Wittgenstein.\(^9\)

What is the family resemblance that Wittgenstein says? Generally, it is the important concept in the explanation of “language-game (Sprach-spiel)”\(^10\) in his theory. It is not only a feature of a philosophy, but also it could overturn a tradition of history of philosophy which goes back to Plato. Concretely, the concept of the family resemblance would be totally against the view of western philosophers which have asked for an essence of things through a question such as “what is it?”\(^11\) In his book, “Philosophical Investigations”, Wittgenstein
told them who criticized him because he does not ask for “general forms” of propositions and languages, namely, an essence. He answers as follows:

   And this is true. — I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all.— but they are related (verwandt) to one another in many different ways.\textsuperscript{12}

I think that the relationship such as culture A and culture B means the family resemblance. The resemblance does not have to be all the same, such as A being equal with B. It is enough that the essence of A and B is common. As far as they are “somewhat” common, and connected with each other “generously”, their relationship stays communicable and they can make a good relationship enough to enjoy games together. The relation is a “relationship” in which people can permit diversities of other cultures and they can connect with them at a common point, even though the point is not exactly the same. Such a similarity brings a connection of different cultures.\textsuperscript{13}

I have no time to explain the Wittgenstein’s “language-game”. But I would like to say that “the generous connection” along with the degree of similarity, without seeking for a strict similarity of the essence, is a common feature with “organic elements”\textsuperscript{14} and “the degree of mixture” in the overlapping structure. Especially, the difference between religions is obvious in their dogmas. If people regard them as the essence of religions and their ethics are based on the essence, it might be ethically something common among religions. For example, “a global ethic” by Küng. People in different cultures might be possible to connect with them “generously”, depending on their degree of the similarity. I think that religious people and non-religious people can also make a connection on an ethical level. More or less, they can communicate themselves as playing a “game”, if they have no question about the essence of religions. It seems that the rule of games depends on how much they are connected.
In the overlapping structure by Mall, nobody can decide whose opinion is perfectly right or perfectly wrong. The most important issue is to understand each other, i.e. “to enjoy by themselves”.\textsuperscript{15} It does not matter with victory or defeat in a game.

4. Overlapping structure and overlapping consensus

Mall introduces another example of the resemblance with the overlapping structure. That is an “overlapping consensus” by John Rawls. This word, “overlapping consensus” is in part II of his representative book, “A Theory of Justice”, 1999. As you know, he is one of the famous scholars of philosophy of politics in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. His theory succeeded to the traditional thoughts of social contract such as Lock, Rousseau and Kant. Besides that, he criticized utilitarianism and plans for “justice as fairness”.

As a clear expression, the overlapping consensus is a conduct that people who have different cultures have a same judgement in the presence of the situation under the reciprocal conditions.\textsuperscript{16} The point is that the “same judgement”, i.e. “the consensus” is not “the strict consensus”.\textsuperscript{17} If their own aims are achieved, they are satisfied with the overlapping parts, even though they stand on different propositions. The concept is so different from the standpoint of traditional philosophies which are based on strict definitions of words, so it is closed to the Wittgenstein’s language philosophy in which people can enjoy games with “generous” connections.

It would be premature to think that the overlapping structure is the same as the overlapping consensus. Because Rawls regarded the people who did “overlapping consensus” as “citizens” who were members of “a nearly just society with a public acceptance of the same principles of justice”\textsuperscript{18}. He simulated the social model which was limited in the framework within his famous “two principles of justice”.\textsuperscript{19} Basically, the principles hypothesized “the original position”\textsuperscript{20} and they were defined by strict rules. On the contrary, each
person’s standpoints are not known and are covered with the veil of ignorance in this situation. In a sense, I think that people could easily make a “generous” relationship without their own strict standpoints. Rawls assumed his principle of justice as thinking in a view of “individual”, except conditions to believe a specific religion and to speak a specific language. This assumption is surely a model of a simulation. However, if we could begin to think of an individual who is based on modern values such as liberty, equality and fraternity, the overlapping consensus as Rawls said could become a foundation of communications in our modern society.

5. A trail for applying the overlapping structure for Japanese culture

Now, I would like to consider the possibility of “consensus” by the overlapping structure in other cultural areas, except western countries, such as Japanese culture. In order to understand the structure of Japanese culture, I would like to give an example of the thesis by Shūichi Katō (1919-2008), “Basic Features of Japanese Society and Culture”. He is one of the famous thinkers in Japan. I would like to analyze his concept of “a paradigm of Japanese culture” and consider about the overlapping between Japanese culture and modern western culture especially in terms of ethical values: liberty, equality and fraternity (charity, humanity).

The reason why I chose Katō in this case, except for Takeshi Umehara (the first head of international Japanese culture research center) and Masao Maruyama (scholar of politics) and other famous scholars, is that he had not only lots of knowledge of Japanese classical culture and arts, but also lots of experience to research in western countries. Besides that, he was a Christian. The representative person who can explain about cultures of both Japan and western countries in view of them, was Inazō Nitobe (1862-1933). He published his book, “Buhidō” (1899) in English in the U. S. I think Katō could be a notable person instead of Nitobe these days.
5.1 A paradigm of Japanese culture

Katō mentioned three basic features of a paradigm of Japanese culture: competitive groupism, this-worldliness, and national amnesia. Briefly saying, the first element is concerned with space and the second and the third are related with a concept of time. Additionally, he pointed out rules of a group inside: formalism and subjectivism (or sentimentalism). I will explain about features concerned with concepts of space and time as follows.

The first topic is a feature in terms of space. According to Katō’s opinion, Japan is a society which consists of groups whose model is “mura” (village). A “mura” has four characters. The first one is conformism which has a standpoint in which everyone wants to be the same when it comes to behavior and a situation. The second one is not to respect minority’s opinions because the conformism as the first character is precondition of the mura. The third one is that groups are composed of strict hierarchical relationships. It is called “vertical order”. On the other hand, there is a “horizontal” relationship in a mura. In short, the order of a mura is made of vertical and horizontal relationships. The fourth one is a competitive character. Katō said that the reason is that the mura is a goal-oriented group. The group should be effective in terms of group’s aims, therefore, it is necessary to arrange “the right person in the right place”. So, a kind of meritocracy is born within a group. He also mentioned that modern Japanese groups are sometimes “active” and “aggressive” because of competitions. (The characters 1 to 3 are similar with “Nihon-kyo” by Ben-Dasan.)

Another feature of the concept of space is “partial emphasisism” in which people tend to emphasize a part of things and recognize the part, but they cannot recognize all of it.

Katō said, “there is no principle in Japanese culture to order all things, departing from the things.” He showed the example “the story of Uzuho” in Heian period. The story was naturally constructed in a whole structure without intentions, piling up many short stories.
The other example was a floor plan of a daimyo, i.e. feudal residence in the beginning of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{29} It is said that a room in the residence was built at first and people added more rooms gradually.\textsuperscript{30} All of the building which nobody could imagine, finally appeared. Because of these examples, Katō thought that Japanese people have no idea to make a whole image at first. And they find “a value of beauty” in an individual and concrete situation. The way of thinking in which people do not transcend the frame of the space is a characteristic of Japanese culture.\textsuperscript{31}

The next feature is concerned with the concept of time. He described it as this-worldliness and national amnesia. The common point is that they are no views of transcendence which he mentioned in terms of partial emphasisism.\textsuperscript{32} It means that Japanese people live at the view of a real daily life. Basically, their interests are limited in daily things and they forget the past things “as early as possible”. It is the way of not thinking about the future.\textsuperscript{33}

Katō also took examples of horizontal picture scrolls which were made around the 12\textsuperscript{th} to 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries. A whole scroll is not looked at at once. Then, the present scene is shown, separating with the parts of the former and latter stories. Therefore, people do not know the next scene until the following part comes. He mentioned that its feature is “a continuity of quick reactions against unanticipated changes”.\textsuperscript{34} According to Katō’s example, “Zatō-ichi”,\textsuperscript{35} is a Japanese samurai film whose hero is a blind but very strong man. The man cannot recognize someone coming to him. But when an enemy comes in his reached area, he can incredibly quickly react to the enemy. Additionally, Katō criticized that Japanese diplomacy happens in “shocking” cases a lot because of short-minded people with no perspectives.\textsuperscript{36}

5.2 Formalism and subjectivism

In the paradigms I have mentioned, the role of groups in Japanese culture is relatively important. Katō explained two features as inner rules of groups in
Japanese culture. The first one is a radical formalism. He said that the feature is seen as the unique ritualism and the custom of respect for names. Typical examples of rituals in Japan are customs of an exchange of gifts and stamping a document. The radical formalism is a thought that a name in itself is prior to a reality. Good shape and formalities, such as a word or a symbol, are more important than the real content.

Katō took an example of the radical formalism. A Japanese tourist was proud of a picture which was taken in the Mont Blanc, even though the family picture was not clearly taken, nor beautiful because of the bad climate. “This is a picture I took in the Mont Blanc!” As for the tourist, the name “Mont Blanc” is valuable. It does not matter to be a good picture or not. This is a feature of the “name-ism” which is a sort of Japanese formalism.\(^{37}\)

The second feature of the rule is subjectivism which typically shows the Japanese unique way of communication. Briefly speaking, what one person feels (Kokoro 心) is the most important value in communications. According to “Nihonkyō”, i.e. Nihonism by Shichihei Yamamoto, it is incredibly super-subjectivism in which one person’s mind becomes reasonable evidence for satisfaction with group members, even though there are no objectives and reasonable bases in one’s mind. It corresponds to a unique way of Japanese communication, such as “Ishin-denshin” (以心伝心: communication of heart to heart) or “Kūki” (空気: atmosphere).\(^{38}\) It is natural that the form of communication likewise could not be functional in international modern societies. Because, Katō also said that it is only useful “among inside same cultural members in a small group”.\(^{39}\) Therefore, people who are outside the group, are regarded as “Gaijin” (外国人: foreigners) who are difficult to communicate with the group members.

In general, Japanese are not good at learning foreign languages because they grew up in islands and they are so shy because they cannot speak with foreigners.
As Katō mentioned, the main reason is not the issue of foreign languages, but their awareness that it will be hard to deal with foreigners as the other people. (He named it “Sakoku-shinri”\textsuperscript{40}: consciousness of national isolation). The main reason is that Japanese people are “extremely” incorporated into groups and they are accustomed to subjective communication.\textsuperscript{41}

5.3 Overlapping with ethical values

I am wondering if there are overlapping parts between Japanese cultural features such as competitive groupism and this-worldliness, and values such as liberty, equality, fraternity which are originally from western cultures. It is sometimes said that Japanese society is characterized as a collectivism. Or especially in a business field, Japanese business style is based on pragmatism.\textsuperscript{42} You know, it is apparently different from collectivism such as communist society in China and Russia. And it is not the same as pragmatism in the U. S.. It seems to me that difficulty and complexity of Japanese language would prevent other foreign people from understanding our culture. On the contrary, Japanese pop culture, like Anime or costume playing (dressing up as a favorite character from a comic), got familiar with young generation people in Asian and European countries in the 1990s.

Regarding the view of ethical values, Katō said that Japanese people already have a sense of equality and fraternity traditionally.\textsuperscript{43} A sense of equality, for example, has been in Japanese society for a long time. It does not mean that the value of equality was widespread by General Headquarters which transplanted a principle of democracy in Japan at the end of World War II.\textsuperscript{44} The sense of equality had already existed in a Japanese social structure, a community like a village, which had a strong horizontal relationship. Katō thought that it was an important fact.\textsuperscript{45} Additionally, he mentioned that a sense of fraternity is also a value of horizontal relationship and that it has “so much” in Japanese society because our society tends to emphasize “a national spirit of unity”. School
students in Japan are often taught a value of sympathy in moral education and in Japanese (Kokugo). In a case of Japanese test, a question is like “How did the main character feel at that time?”. There are many questions in tests which ask for one’s feelings. So, most of us Japanese people have improved the ability to speculate other person’s feelings since young ages in public education.

On the other side, regarding a view of liberty, it is a very important agenda today. For example, liberty of an individual, respect for minority, human rights, and so on. However, Katō said that the value of liberty could not be established in Japanese society because of a lack of traditional foundation. What is the traditional foundation of liberty? In my opinion, human beings as individuals are the original assumption of liberty. Liberty of individuals is a human right. In other words, human beings should not be exchanged as things and human beings have one’s own character. It is clear to distinguish between oneself and others. Both of them have to keep respectable relationship as persons. But how human being should be in Japanese society is rather relationships as human beings than as a “person”.

About the concept of “human beings” by Tetsurō Watsuji, one person and the other person are already related, before one person exists. In the relationship, the person is like a man, a father, or a student. In short, human beings in a society are just only beings which are perfectly organized in it. The person’s own existence above the society was not thought even in the modern age.

(Surprisingly, Buddhism has been secularized since the 17th century.) In this society, it is impossible for an individual to be beyond a group and to assert one’s opinion freely. Surely, a “seken” (people in a society) accuses the individual who has his or her own opinion. In today’s internet-society, situations such as “born out!” sometimes happen because groups attack an individual’s opinion together. This is a typical example which shows features of competitivism and subjectivism as I mentioned.
I am afraid that Japanese could hardly take a leadership in international society. Because we, Japanese, are grown up in such a society which people do not respect for individual liberty nor minority opinions. Although there are people who are internationally one of the leading figures in sports, also Japanese space pilots, also novel prize winners who are able to use their rich talents and work hard, most of them did not stay in Japan. They went abroad and they developed their potentiality and trained their possibilities.

After considering these features of Japanese culture, “generously overlapping” in the parts of equality and fraternity seems to be possible because these foundations in Japan have already existed, as Katō said. The features of denial of autonomy and mixture in the overlapping structure are friendly with Japanese culture. I have already mentioned that the first priority “relationship” is a typical feature of Japanese society and culture. On the other hand, regarding liberty, a view of a human being as an individual is not developed, “there are no traditional foundations” in Japanese society. Therefore, a view point of transcendence which could be “work” liberty in an individual, did not grow up. Because an individual had been already organized in a society perfectly before an individual as the individual.

**Conclusion**

What a person needs to realize one’s liberty is firstly to be beyond a horizontal relationship which is protected with equality and fraternity. And courage with adventure spirit and perspective in the future are necessary. Additionally, it seems to need great values such as gods, ideologies, philosophies, and thoughts, supporting with one’s being from the bottom. Established religions traditionally have improved the values. In my opinion, Mall’s overlapping structure means that they are partly contained in various ethics beyond religions. In a sense, it is required for efforts to understand others and to jump up established framework of religious values with courage, aiming at overlapping.
Nobody can have the courage only with equality and fraternity. To realize to get it, putting one’s weight on one’s thought and belief as one’s pivot foot, raising the other foot widely, and put on other values freely. To be free, I think seeking for freedom could be a hint for intercultural communication.

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<W Japanese>


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Notes

1 cf. Mall (1999b), S. 151
2 Mall (1998), S. 6-7
3 Mall (1999), S. 125
4 Mall (2000c), p. 14
6 Mall (1995), S. 50
7 Mall (1999), S. 124
8 Mall (2005), S. 115
10 Wittgenstein (1963), p. 26
12 Wittgenstein (2013), p. 61
“And this is true. — I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all. — but they are related to one another in many different ways.” (p. 31e)
14 Mall (1995), S. 47
15 Mall (2000c), p. 100, “the desire to understand and the desire to be understood go hand in hand.”
16 Rawls (2013), p. 509
“In these remarks I have assumed that in a nearly just society there is a public acceptance of the same principles of justice. Fortunately this assumption is stronger than necessary. There can, in fact, be considerable differences in citizen’s conceptions of justice provided that these conceptions lead to similar political judgments. And this is possible, since different premises can yield the same conclusion. In this case there exists what we may refer to as overlapping rather than strict consensus. In general, the overlapping of professed conceptions of justice suffices for civil disobedience to be a reasonable and prudent form of political dissent. Of course, this overlapping need not be perfect; it is enough that a condition of reciprocity is satisfied.” (Rawls, p. 340)
17 ibid.
“The first statement of the two principles reads as follows.
First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.
Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.” (Rawls (1999), p. 53)

To begin with, it is clear that since the differences among the parties are unknown to them, and everyone is equally rational and similarly situated, each is convinced by the same arguments.

The idea of fraternity is sometimes thought to involve ties of sentiment and feeling which it is unrealistic to expect between members of the wide society. And this is surely a further reason for its relative neglect in democratic theory. Many have felt that it has no proper place in political affairs. But if it is interpreted as incorporating the requirements of the difference principle, it is not an impracticable conception. It does seem that institutions and policies which we most confidently think to be just satisfy its demands, at least in the sense that the inequalities permitted by them contribute to the well-being of the less favored.” (Rawls (1999), pp. 90-91)


Katō (2014), p. 21

ibid., p. 22

ibid., pp. 25-26

ibid., p. 31


ibid., p. 32

ibid., p. 31, 33

Maruyama (1987), pp. 20-21

ibid., p. 19

ibid., p. 35


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Katō, p. 40
ibid., p. 45
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