



## When Business, Spirit and Culture Collide

by Linwood Fredericksen

**Editor's Note:** Linwood Fredericksen is an associate editor for the 15th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and has long been an executive at Rotary International.

Akio Matsumura, who holds a chair at the World Business Academy, and Linwood Fredericksen have been in contact with each other since 1990-91, when the late Rotary International President Paulo V. C. Costa of Brazil and Linwood Fredericksen visited the United Nations to discuss the concept of the Green Cross environmental disaster recovery program and suggested meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev. Akio Matsumura addressed the 1991 Rotary International Convention in Mexico City on environmental issues and also on the Global Forum of Parliamentary and Religious Leaders.

Some time later Akio Matsumura requested some thoughts from Linwood Fredericksen on a new concept of religious-cultural advice to leaders in business, perhaps with emerging business leaders. During the initial discussions, it was suggested to Akio that he consider a concept that was promoted by the U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in the early 1950s, namely, that business leaders needed to have the advice of ethical counselors in the context of expanding national and global interests. President Dwight Eisenhower had highlighted the growing power of the military-industrial complex, and, in consequence, the suggestion by John Foster Dulles made sense. It has taken more than 50 years for that suggestion to reach even the stage of prominent possibility.

**A**kiyo Matsumura has presented a possibility that has been in my mind for the past half century.

The [interview of Akio Matsumura](#) by Nancy Roof published by the World Business Academy in April is ripe with many key concepts in the first three paragraphs: competition, destiny, value, individual, society, culture, and religion. Akio believes that international businesses manifestly need advice or guidance on cultural matters that transcend politics and anthropology. In most non-Western civilizations, these considerations inevitably cross the boundary into the realm of "spirit." While the precise name of the position is less important than its ultimate creation, these comments are to provide background and information for the use of the term "spiritual-cultural advisor" or another term that might include the word "ethical" in the title and a rationale for the position.

For the past 200 or more years, ever since the Enlightenment, Western civilization has moved away from its spiritual and cultural underpinnings.

The first word that stands out is *culture*. In the United States, knowledge and understanding of cultures other than its own is negligible in government, business, education, and in public culture, except for a few individuals. This has long been a major detriment to strategic planning and marketing.

In my own and my family's career, we have been blessed with opportunities for relating to and with both historical and contemporary cultures. From our educational learning experiences, university teaching and administrative experiences, relationships with the world's cultures, peoples, and leaders have compelled me to be cognizant of the ultimate significance of culture. In his interview Akio speaks of the absolute need for cultural understanding. And, key to cultural understanding is, to a great extent, "who you know," in addition to "what you know." Akio's international background is almost unique in this respect. He can help "bridge the gaps" through his knowledge of worldwide spiritual, political, and economic leaders.

Myths and spiritual underpinnings comprise an integral part of culture. Myth is a literary genre, just as the essay, novel, poetry, and apocalyptic writings and films are genres. It is not something that is false. The function of myth is to express, in imaginative and often dramatic terms, answers to the most significant questions asked by man: Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going? In other words, What is my Identity, my Origin, my Destiny? For the past 200 or more years, ever since the Enlightenment, Western civilization has moved away from its spiritual and cultural underpinnings. Or, has it only thought that it has advanced beyond its origins?

Just take for example the Myth of the America Dream. Every child is told that he or she can become the President of the USA, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a successful entrepreneur. The basis is the cultural myth undergirding American society. A young boy or girl of humble origins can, through determination, ambition, education, and effort, attain great goals. And, what is the spiritual basis of the American Dream? It is *Freedom* and *Liberty*. When President J.F. Kennedy was assassinated, he was compared with Abraham Lincoln, both of whom were said to have "sacrificed their lives on the Altar of Freedom." Freedom and Liberty are American spiritual, cultural ideals. Sacrifice for a goal also is a spiritual, cultural concept. We just try to avoid



# Global Reconstruction

recognizing these terms or ideals as such. Other spiritual values associated with the American Dream are trust, respect, and individual equality. Perhaps two to three hundred years from now as a new civilization develops, people will wonder why and how we in the 20th and 21st centuries so denied our spiritual, cultural roots.

When Western civilization began approximately 2,000 years ago, as the Greco-Roman Civilization began to crumble, the early Christians used a business term that was associated with respect for another person in business dealings. The Greeks had four words for four kinds of "love." They were: *eros*, the love between a man and a woman; *philia*, the love between friends; *storge*, the love between members of a family; and *agape*, mutual respect between two or more individuals, often in business relationships. The early Christian writers took the last word and associated it with what was called "Christian love." What was different about this term was its disassociation from emotion. Writers of the Middle Ages called it "disinterested love." It connoted respect for people whom an individual might possibly dislike, as well as for people whom one liked. *Agape* essentially had three elements: 1) recognition of another person as equal to one's self before God; 2) consideration of that person's needs (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual), and 3) caring for those needs. This concept is very much like the Hebrew term *chesed*, or "covenant love." There is a business or legal element in such terms. Thus, in addition to freedom, or liberty, as bases for Western Civilization, *love* in the sense defined above is another foundation. This definition of love becomes the basis for the founding of hospitals, orphanages, the Geneva Conventions, Social Security, equality before the law, and equality of opportunity, etc. Such spiritual elements also are a part of the Myth of the American Dream.

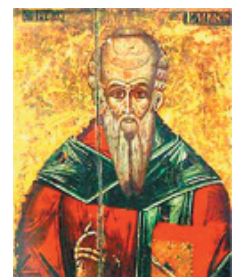
In the 1950s, C. P. Snow, a scientist, novelist, and member of Parliament in Great Britain wrote a book named *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* that distinguished between the culture of science and the literary culture of intellectuals. The problem, according to Snow, was that they could not communicate with each other. This also is a problem for businesses that try to communicate with businesses of cultures other than their own. From that book I best remember Snow's statement that Western scientists and intellectuals walk in a pair of shoes that are from two different pairs —the Greek and the Hebrew. From the Greek element in Western consciousness, knowledge comes from seeing (episteme is measurable, according to the senses); from the Hebrew element in Western consciousness, knowledge comes from hearing (knowledge is relational, ethical from God). The first understands knowledge from within; the second understands knowledge from without. The first is rational; the second is spiritual. Both cultures inform the intricacies of the Myth of the American Dream.

American business also needs to understand other cultures in addition to its own. Clement of Alexandria (180-200 A.D.), the second known head of the Christian school of higher education in that cultural, economic capital of the Roman Empire (sort of like New York City today), stated that human minds contain themselves in three areas: knowledge, opinion, and ignorance. Thus,

Western scientists and intellectuals walk in a pair of shoes that are from two different pairs —the Greek and the Hebrew.

Eros  
Agape  
Filia  
Storge

חסד



Clement of Alexandria



C.P. Snow

# Global Reconstruction

Human minds contain themselves in three areas: knowledge, opinion, and ignorance.



**Immanuel Kant**

a person can be an expert in knowledge, an expert in opinion, or an expert in ignorance. The vast majority of people are content to occupy themselves with opinion or ignorance. That is what helps the print and broadcast media, as well as political groups, to maintain such a hold on the public. In today's globally connected economy, individuals with knowledge will be of great help to business leaders in their decision-making processes.

Knowledge of other cultures is essential for global business leaders. This goes beyond the surface workshops that are held to acquaint people with etiquette, gestures, etc. that may or not be offensive to persons of other cultures. Just take, for example, Japanese culture. When the Rotary International President considered the annual theme some years ago, he suggested "Rotary's Destiny: Serving to Unite Mankind." The convention was going to be in Tokyo. The Japanese advisors counseled against using the term "Destiny" because it had been used by the political parties supporting the Pacific War and had caused great harm to the Japanese people. The word "Destiny," with its cultural, spiritual connotations for Japan, would have been improper at that time. I suggested that the imperative be used and delete the concept of "destiny." So, the theme was revised to "Serve to Unite Mankind," which was acceptable. A cultural-ethical advisor, with an understanding of the spiritual bases of various cultures, would be a great defense and educator for global business leaders.

The origins of the major civilizations and cultures have a definitive influence on intercultural relationships. For example, the Chinese civilization arose in the great river valleys of China, rivers that flooded periodically and disrupted the growing communities along the river banks and plains. Nature was viewed as a force with which the budding civilization had to contend. The people had to work together to survive. Thus Chinese civilization became socially cohesive and consensus-driven. The family, community, and central authority survived and thrived because society grew to become the bulwark of the culture. In India, along the Indus River Valley, nature was viewed in a friendly fashion because of the lush agricultural benefits. Thus, the Indian culture was able to concentrate on the spiritual life of individuals and the community. Indian psychology probably is 2,500 years in advance of Western psychology. Western civilization arose in the Mesopotamian and Nile River Valleys, where nature was viewed as an entity to be used and domesticated. Nature was viewed neither as a foe nor a friend, but as an object to be utilized, and over which man and culture would dominate. It is no historical accident that modern empirical sciences arose in the West, though inventiveness and the sciences certainly were significant enterprises in the Chinese and Indian civilizations. This may be very simplistic, but it does help to inform a cultural-ethical advisor of something about the consensus-driven aspects of Chinese and Japanese cultures, the psychologically progressive advantages of Indian culture, and the goal-driven significance of Western culture.

Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher, stated that the categories of the human mind are: time, space, and cause and effect. These three categories are viewed differently in the various cultures. Take "time," for example. A few years ago my wife and I looked down from the second floor of the lobby of

# Global Reconstruction

the Silla Hotel in Seoul, Korea, and saw some American businessmen meeting some Korean businessmen. The Americans kept raising their wrists to look at their watches. Americans are dominated by time. The Asians were not. This cultural difference could become a business difference.

Global business leaders today would be remiss in protecting and advancing their enterprises if they did not become intimately aware of the cultural-spiritual conflict that has been going on for some time. Every 500 years or so, there is a cultural-population eruption out of the Middle East that affects the Western world, and this has been occurring for the past 4,000-5,000 years. The last time was in the early 16th century in Europe. Many historians surmise that Holy Roman Emperor Charles V convened the Diet of Worms in 1521 to deal with the renegade Augustinian monk Martin Luther. He did not. The main reason was the onslaught of the Muslim Ottoman Empire against the gates of Vienna. When Martin Luther stated on April 18, 1521 that

"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience,"

a major spiritual-cultural movement began that changed the West. It is claimed by some that capitalism arose from the Protestant Reformation; if so, it influenced and still influences the business world.

In 1529, Suleyman conquered Budapest and moved on Vienna. Had the heavy rains not fallen late that year, he could have brought his Ottoman heavy artillery across the Hungarian plains; the walls of Vienna would have been breached, and there was little to stop the Muslim armies until they reached the Atlantic Ocean.

That was 500 years ago. It is happening again. We can expect that a Muslim religious-political leader may claim the title "al Mahdi," the "rightly-guided one," who arises in times of crisis to usher in justice, equity, and true religion. One such "Mahdi" took control of the holy site at Mecca a few years ago and tried to overthrow the Saudi royal family. Because the Qur'an and the Hadith do not mention or allude to the "Mahdi," most Sunni Muslims question such beliefs, but many Shi'a Muslims uphold beliefs in the coming "Mahdi." They expect that he will rise in the time of need. Among the Druzes of Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, the founder, al-Hakim, a caliph of the Fatimid dynasty in Cairo, was viewed as the incarnation of God in 1017. He is expected to return after 1,000 years (2017-2021).

In the 1880s, another Mahdi arose in the Sudan and established an empire. Because he was a religious leader, the British sent the evangelical Christian General Charles "Chinese" Gordon who had helped put down the Tai Ping (Gate of Heaven) rebellion in China in 1864. In the 1870s, he had worked in the Sudan against the Arab slave traders raiding the villages of the darker-skinned Sudanese (an oppressive relationship that continues in Darfur today). The British government did not support Gordon until it was too

Every 500 years or so, there is a cultural-population eruption out of the Middle East that affects the Western world, and this has been occurring for the past 4,000-5,000 years.



**Signature of Suleiman**



**General Charles "Chinese" Gordon**

# Global Reconstruction



late—two days too late. The Mahdi had defeated Gordon and beheaded him. The point is, business leaders need to recognize the rising significance of the spiritual-cultural movements in the Middle East as well as elsewhere. Thirty years ago in a speech to some international business and professional leaders, I warned that a rising conflict arising in the Middle East might last for a hundred to two hundred years. Cultural myths command tremendous allegiance.

We merely have to recall the cultural myths of the West—the impact of the spiritual-cultural concept of the myth of "Third Rome." The first Rome lasted for a thousand years. The second Rome of the West (the Holy Roman Empire, 800-1806 A.D.) and the second Rome of the East (the Byzantine Empire, 313-1453 A.D.) lasted for "a thousand years." Both Germany and Russia appealed to their status as the Third Empire, the "Third Rome," with Berlin as the capital of the Third Reich and Moscow as the New Constantinople. Each of their political leaders was called Caesar (Kaiser and Tzar). Adolf Hitler appealed to the spiritual-cultural myth of The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa asleep in a cave, waiting for the time to come to the rescue of the German nation. The invasion of Russia was called "Barbarossa."



All this may seem to be of little consequence to the business world with its emphasis on profits—the bottom line. Such neglect may very well be the pride that comes before the fall, which has happened many times before. Akio notes that spiritual issues are invisible. It may be that they are just neglected. He adds that the intangible is "hidden" by the tangible. The values of business are profit, competition, customer acquisition and retention, public image of a company, reputation of a business leader, continuity, attitude, "knowledge is power," etc.

A business leader... cannot "not decide," for to decide not to decide is to make a decision. And, that is ethical, as well as spiritual and cultural.

I could make many other comments in response to the statements in the interview. The element of "ethical," which is what we initially discussed in this response, is central to the position of a spiritual-cultural advisor to business leaders—because decision is the very essence of "ethical." A business leader must make decisions based upon an array of knowledge and facts. He or she cannot "not decide," for to decide not to decide is to make a decision. And, that is ethical, as well as spiritual and cultural.

**About the Author:** Linwood Fredericksen is an associate editor for the 15th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and has long been an executive at Rotary International responsible for international assistance programs, international meetings, leadership development programs, the Rotary Foundation programs, the global eradication of polio program, and executive assistant to the Rotary International president.

Copyright © 2005, World Business Academy, 428 Bryant Circle, Suite 109, Ojai, CA 93023  
Academy Phone 805 640-3713 Fax 805 640-9914 Website [www.worldbusiness.org](http://www.worldbusiness.org)  
Senior Editor, David Zweig, [davidz@worldbusiness.org](mailto:davidz@worldbusiness.org) Phone 510 547-3223