

## The Road to a Theology of *Soku*

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*Like many of the participants in the Symposium, Honda Masaaki addressed the question “What can Christianity learn from Buddhism?” by recounting the personal experience of recovering Buddhist ideas from within a Christian faith embraced later in life. In particular, he focuses on a reconstruction of theological explanations by means of a logic of correlation, the logic of “soku.”*

The overall theme of this symposium is, “What can Christianity learn from Buddhism?” If the symposium were limited to the experiential reality of Christianity and Buddhism then—as pointed out at the beginning of Odagaki’s paper—we would not be able to compare and learn from each other since both “faith” and “enlightenment” are realities that transcend concepts. My sentiment, however, is with Nishida Kitarō’s words in the preface to *An Inquiry into the Good*: “I want to explain all things on the basis of pure experience as the sole reality.”

I have been interested in the theme of this symposium for some time, as I believe it is a matter that has great significance and international importance today for articulating a philosophical explanation of the truth latent in the realities of “faith and enlightenment.” In this paper I will limit myself within the overall theme of the symposium to the subject of what, and how, we as Japanese Christians can learn from Buddhist philosophy. Although my work on this subject is still not complete, I would like to give a simple report on my progress on the road to “a theology of *soku*.”

### My Encounter with *Soku*

As a Christian believer the first time I felt I had to learn about Buddhism was more than ten years after I converted. I secretly had to confirm that the workings of the same God were pulsating in the Buddhist world. During my

encounter with Buddhism I soon began to feel that the rearticulation of traditional Christianity was a personal mandate from Christ.

My conversion to Christianity was a blessing whose immediate stimulus was the *Confessions* of Augustine. However, my being born again, that is, my so called “conversion,” actually occurred earlier than this when, after a long period of being fascinated with Nietzsche, I was miraculously saved from a depressing and hopeless nihilism and awakened to a whole new world. Since then faith and enlightenment have been one for me.

Why as a Christian did I come to be compelled to learn about Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism? One reason was that while studying abroad I was driven to try to understand myself as an Asian and a Japanese; but this was not the only reason. After my conversion Nietzsche’s merciless condemnation of the history of Christianity, by way of nihilism, as a Western historical and secular form, came back to me with renewed force. In the eyes of Nietzsche, traditional Christianity was “Platonism for the masses” and nothing but a “sacred lie.” By myself I came to see in the traditional Catholicism I was starting to learn, however, a mere object of logical construction that, I felt, was gradually confining me. As I subconsciously started to feel a resistance to this I started to think of Nietzsche’s view of Christianity again. Indeed, before my conversion, when I was fascinated with Nietzsche, I resisted Christianity as a “secular form” based on my ignorance and misunderstandings. My resistance, however, was just an act I put on, as I had not yet met Christ of the New Testament.

It was the summer after my twenty-fourth birthday that I found Christ, and came to believe in God without question. Half a year later I was baptized a Catholic. The ceremonies of the Church and the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) nourished my soul. Three years later I entered the Dominican order and went abroad to study. During my time as an exchange student I studied primarily Western medieval scholasticism and subconsciously continued to search in vain for a logic that would allow me to explain my conversion experience in a way that would correspond with the truth. Scholasticism, however, being grounded entirely on the formal logic of Aristotle, was not in itself a logic of faith, nor did it in any way mediate Eastern thought. I became frustrated by the tendency to make a separation (a two-tiered split) between the theological explanation and the awareness of faith on the one hand, and the spiritual and intellectual life on the other. It was during this time that I gradually began to realize the urgency of the problems concerning my own ethnic background. I began to ask myself, What is Japan? What does it mean to be Japanese?

Of course, at first I was not clearly aware of any problem. In the name of

faith I desperately tried to take in everything I was taught. My mind was fascinated with the exact systematic analytical thought that took the formal logic of Aristotle to its limits. But, as formal logic is not the logic of faith nor a logic for living, the conscious efforts I was making in my studies gradually came into deeper conflict with my subconscious, as well as my existential and physical being.<sup>1</sup> After a few years my body started to speak to me. I started to suffer from excessive gas, a swollen abdomen, nausea etc.—symptoms of a psychosomatic disease that I think could be called “logic shock.”

When I returned to Japan I left the Dominican order. I stopped doing research for a few years, and I devoted myself to teaching high school students. One day, however, after an encounter with an elderly farmer I realized that deep within me there was an undercurrent of Buddhist sensibility. This enlightening encounter gradually led to Buddhism becoming an inescapable topic of study for me. In 1967 I moved from Kumamoto to Kōbe and, putting my head right into the lion’s mouth, I knocked on the door of the long-time Buddhist philosopher Nakayama Nobuji. For ten years I received instruction from Nakayama on Buddhist texts based on the logic of *soku* (即), and was immersed in a topic I had never even heard of before: “theology of *soku*.”

During this time it occurred to me that the real Christian aspiration is to discover or invent a concrete logic that can explain the truth of conversion as truth, and to immerse itself deep into the ethnic roots of the places where it is taught. I thought to myself, “Is it not urgent as someone who works with ideas that you respond to this historical mission and formulate an Eastern theology?” To do this I knew there were some powerful theoretical weapons that I could not ignore: the Buddhist logic of *soku*; Nishida’s logic of locus that philosophically clarifies the logical structure of *soku*; and Dr. Nakayama’s “contradictory correlation” (矛盾的相即). To use the logic of *soku* as a medium to reinterpret and rearticulate the traditional worldview of Christianity, I believed, was a providential mission not easily avoided by Christians in Japan, a Mahayana Buddhist country. To develop the logic of *soku* in both an academic and religious context, and to do creative scholarly work to achieve this,

<sup>1</sup> For details concerning the logical dispute between these two, see my 「超越者と自己：滝沢・阿部論争について」[The self and the transcendent: The Takizawa-Abe debate] (Tokyo: Sōgensha 1990), 20–7. Also see my chapter in the book that I coauthored with Abe, Akizuki, and Yagi 『仏教とキリスト教：滝沢克巳に問う』[Buddhism and Christianity: Questioning Takizawa Katsumi]. The first paper was given over two days at The Seventh Conference for the Academic Exchange between Eastern and Western Religions held in Kyoto, 25–27 July 1988. The second paper is part of a recorded debate on Abe’s thesis between the four coauthors of the book. For a more general discussion see my 「心身症から東洋神学へ」[From psychosomatic disorders to Eastern theology], serialized in three parts in 『柏樹社』 (October–December 1994, January 1995).

I believed to be a special task for Japanese Christians.

After a long period of struggling with ideas, I decided, at least temporarily, that the basic concepts for coincidence theology could be expressed, albeit somewhat awkwardly, as “irreversibility-in (*soku*)-reversibility”; and the “not-two” coincidence of “Father God in Heaven and Mother God on Earth.”

How I felt at this time can be summed up by Inoue Yōji’s poignant recollection: “I came to realize first hand that Catholic theology is absolutely useless for transmitting the Gospel to Japanese.”<sup>2</sup> Space does not permit me to give all the details of the intellectual struggle that led me to the formula of irreversibility-*soku*-reversibility through an expanded reinterpretation of Nishida’s logic of locus. Here I will simply give an explanation of Nakayama’s “coincidence of contraries” in order to clarify the logical structure of *soku* and suggest the wide area in which it can be developed today.<sup>3</sup>

According to Nakayama there are three types of relationships. First, there is a relationship in which two or more things are united as one, such as beans and rice being cooked together to make one meal. This is a logical, objective, and a common-sense way of thinking that is also processive. This position is fundamentally dualistic or pluralistic, as it views two things becoming one: the union of two things that are in essence separate.

Instead of the example of beans and rice we could easily give a list of other things that demonstrate this relationship: objective and subjective; you and I; self and other; East and West; male and female; Christian and Buddhist; the one God and the yin-yang principle of cosmic dual forces; ascent and descent; a center point (circle) and two focal points (ellipsis); religion that speaks and religion that listens; reversibility and irreversibility; straight and curved; intellect and emotion; conscious and unconscious; ego and self; analysis and intuition; mind and body; human beings and the ecosystem; particles and waves (N. Bohr); skillful means and true teaching (Buddhism); manifest and hidden (*Kegon-kyō*); continuity and discontinuity; dualism and monism; life and death; object logic and concrete (Nishida’s logic of locus); and so on.

The second relationship is the opposite of the first. It is a relationship in which something essentially understood as one is in some way separated into two or more parts. For example, perceiving all things as not yet being separated into their principal and auxiliary parts. This position is essentially monistic as it is a way of thinking that divides what is viewed as one. It is, however, one-sided, just like the first relationship, and cannot avoid being abstract.

I would like to add one superfluous point to Nakayama’s schema. If from

<sup>2</sup> 井上洋治 Inoue Yōji, 余白の旅 (Tokyo: Kirisutokyō Shuppankyoku, 1980), 138.

<sup>3</sup> See “The Self and the Transcendent,” 34–55.

two or more, an original “one” is supposed, and from the one unifying abstract concept of two opposing objects, two or more are attempted to be explained by manipulating concepts, then it is merely monism transformed into dualism or pluralism.

The third relationship is not grounded in either unity or separation: one is simultaneously two, and two is simultaneously one. In other words, it is a relationship in which one is two and two is one; a thesis that has a viewpoint of “not one, not two.”<sup>4</sup>

This “not one, not two” viewpoint does distinguish and mediate. It is a perspective in which something contradictory is neither one nor two—an idea not found in the history of Western philosophy. Moreover, the third position is not a creation of mankind, but a viewpoint that tells us what is real. It is an understanding of a natural truth that is concrete and unique to Buddhism.

The first and second perspectives are only abstract conceptualizations of the third perspective from two different angles. This third perspective of Nakayama is—just as it appears—based on a logic that is mediated by intuition. It is a perspective that radically wipes out objective logical and rationalistic explanations. This logic, called “coincidence of contraries” or simply “coincidence,” is fundamental and working in consciousness, and therefore not completely separate from “non-coincidence.”<sup>5</sup>

I must add, however, one more important fact about “coincidence”: “not one, not two,” or “two as one, one as two,” as stated above, is not simply a surface-level nonmediated “not one, not two” but a contradictory “not one, not two.” The truth of “not one, not two” is the complementary principle of “simultaneously latent and manifest.”<sup>6</sup>

For example, in the case of transcendence-*soku*-immanence, when manifest is transcendent, the immanent has a “hidden” relationship with the manifest. In this way the two are mutually intertwined. Therefore the assertion that the world, at the most basic level, is irreversible, or reversible, is a type of elemental reductionism since both of these are fundamentally abstract and one-sided views of the world. Both irreversible and reversible aspects, if seen as

<sup>4</sup> 中山延 : Nakayama Nobuji, 『現実存在の根源的究明』 [A fundamental clarification of actual reality] (Tokyo: Hyakkaen, 1971), 17–31. See also my essay, 「仏教的即の論理とキリスト教」 [The Buddhist logic of *soku* and Christianity], 『カトリック研究』 23 (1973), 17–31; and my book 『神の死と誕生: 「即」の展開を求めて』 [The birth and death of God: In quest of the unfolding of *soku*] (Kyoto: Kōronsha, 1992), 142–6. In these works I undertake a critique of the “not two” found in the 『不二門指要』 (T.47.707ff), and argue that for the critical development of Nakayama’s argument and from an original Buddhist perspective, “non-duality” needs to be logically complemented by the “not one.”

<sup>5</sup> Nakayama Nobuji, 『現実の具体的把握』 [A concrete grasp of reality] (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1968), 160–9.

<sup>6</sup> Nakayama Nobuji, 『華嚴経哲学素描』 [A sketch of Hua-yen philosophy] (Tokyo: Hyakkaen, 1978), 10, 65, 73; 『華嚴一乘十玄門』 (T. 45.515c, 『五教章』 (T. 45.505a, 「秘密隠顯俱成門」).

two sides of the coexistent latent and manifest, are appropriate for expressing the concept of God.

In the words of Dōgen, “if you see only one side the other is dark”;<sup>7</sup> this is how it is with the coexistence of the latent and the manifest. If, as Dōgen also says, “through the mind and body we entirely comprehend form,” then “it is not like the reflection of a shadow in the mirror.” If all heaven and earth are a peach blossom (manifest), then the self does not exist (latent). Darkness, like the shadow reflected in the mirror, does not hold the self as a shape, it hides and disappears completely in the peach. This is the latent as the absolute negation of the manifest.<sup>8</sup> Simultaneously the manifest also must be understood as the absolute negation of the latent. This being the case, when reversibility is seen irreversibility is hidden and, vice versa, when irreversibility is seen reversibility is hidden.

This view of mine, irreversible-*soku*-reversible and reversible-*soku*-irreversible, although quite different from traditional Christian views, is the Buddhist philosophical logic through which I have come to rearticulate the truth of my conversion experience. The perspective from which I see the debate between Abe and Takizawa is also based on this view.

Next I would like to lay out the reasons governing my viewpoint, and reiterate some points I have made in previous publications. After my conversion I felt only the irreversibility of God. Years later, however, I encountered Buddhism and through the logic of *soku* I recognized that irreversibility is not simply irreversibility, but is inextricably linked with reversibility. In other words irreversibility is not just a one-way irreversibility (simple irreversibility) that evokes a feeling of awe, it is simultaneously an irreversibility that creates a relationship of trust, love, and freedom. Since, however, the relationship of trust, love, and freedom are the flowers that bloom in the ground of reversibility, irreversibility must be said to be the cause of this reversibility. On reflection this sense of irreversibility is a fact that came to life the moment I encountered God and at a high level was wrapped in a loving relationship of reversibility. Therefore, reversibility can be understood as the actual cause of irreversibility.

The point I am trying to make is that the realization of irreversibility is the unaffected start of reversibility and, simultaneously, without the absolute union (reversibility) in the encounter with God it is not possible to realize the separation (irreversibility) between God and man. Therefore within the reality of faith, the relationship between reversibility and irreversibility is a cause

<sup>7</sup> See the *Genjōkōan* chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*.

<sup>8</sup> See my 『比較思想論』 [Comparative thought] (Kyoto: Hōritsu Bunkasha, 1979), 76.

and effect relationship that is mutual and simultaneous. For example, although one of these can be emphasized more than the other (as reversibility is in Buddhism, and irreversibility is in Christianity), when each is totally split off from the other making one absolute, then both become an imagined closed realm that is abstract and confined. I have therefore attempted to establish the logical structure of reality as “irreversibility-*soku*-reversibility, reversibility-*soku*-irreversibility.” Perhaps the workings of the absolute being must be seen as completely negating antecedent irreversibility, and as continually manifesting a simultaneous and mutual cause and effect, that consequently prevents the absolutization of our relative self-will.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, with my limited abilities I have been trying to reinterpret and expand the logic of the Buddhist concept *soku*, while wrestling with the problem of reconstructing and rearticulating the fundamental concepts of traditional Christianity—an important problem for this century that I alone could never complete. Although the fruits of my labor are still few, I would like in the next section to give my current views from this new logical position on the ego, self, body, and the natural ecosystem, as well as the workings of God that permeate each one of these transcendently-*soku*-immanently, ascending-*soku*-declining, paternally-*soku*-maternally.

### **In Pursuit of the Theological Development of *Soku***

According to Jung, despite the ancient Church’s expulsion as heresy any feminine features from the Trinity, the fifteenth-century Swiss mystic Nicholas of Flüe (canonized 1947) saw in a vision God in two forms: one was as a King father figure, the other was as a queen mother figure. St. Nicholas was painfully confused as his vision of the Trinity was not the traditional image of God, but a heretical image of the Trinity as father, mother, and child. Jung praised this unorthodox vision by this extraordinary mystic and fellow countryman. Jung concluded that by the grace of God St. Nicholas was able to glimpse deep into the sacred soul and thereby see a vision that unified in a symbolic archetype: the convictions of all human kind that for a long time had been split by the dogma of the Church.<sup>10</sup>

Man’s encounter with God, I have long thought, is an archetype experience of unified maternal and paternal love. Therefore this type of experience in which maternal and paternal love are united is quite common amongst

<sup>9</sup> See my review of Takizawa Katsumi’s 『続・仏教とキリスト教』 [Buddhism and Christianity: A continuation] (Tokyo: Hōzōkan, 1979) in 『日本の神学』 20 (1981), 131–2.

<sup>10</sup> See *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), vol. 11, 322–3.

nuns and priest, who want to live by the grace of God and properly perform the duties of their religious vocation.

We can see, however, when we compare the general traditional tendencies of the West and East, that the West has tended to emphasize the “father in heaven” aspect of God while the East has emphasized the “mother on earth” aspect of God. Of course for us both aspects are implicitly contained in the other and, therefore, we must reinterpret their relationship as one of “coexistence of latent and manifest.” Essentially, there is paternal nature because there is a maternal nature, and vice versa.

Therefore the concept at the beginning of the famous Lord’s prayer taught by Jesus, “Our father, who art in heaven,” must be reinterpreted to implicitly include the concept “Our mother, who art on earth.” In a patriarchal society there is a tendency to establish the propriety of the rights of the father in a way that is abstract and transcends time and space. Despite this, however, as it is impossible to completely separate the human heart from its desire for maternal love, there has continued to exist implicitly a maternal aspect even in the different religions of Western ancient patriarchal society. As Erich Fromm has stated, the matriarchal elements have been hidden as mysticism in Judaism, as the Mother Church in the veneration of the Holy Mother in Catholicism, and even in Protestantism as *sola fide* that is the absolute trust of children in their mother.<sup>11</sup>

There are two focal points in our religious transcendence: “paternal ascending transcendence” and “maternal descending transcendence.” These two opposing points exist in a way that is simultaneously latent and manifest, and exist because of the power relationship between the self and ego. Traditionally, the former point is more characteristic of the West while the latter is more characteristic of the East. Today, however, as international exchange between East and West is rapidly increasing, we should not understand “East” and “West” as simply geographical concepts. Rather, it would be more practical to reinterpret these terms as new concepts for the human sciences in which the two are complementary principles each contained in the other and in every individual person.

I would like to present a new model that gives a unifying view of God, human beings, and nature through the mutual inclusion of ascending and descending religious transcendence: the coexistence of the manifest and latent. My model will be based largely on the psychological reverse directional nature of self and ego.

As is often pointed out, the workings of the ego (or consciousness) make

<sup>11</sup> E. Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper, 1957), 65–8.



it possible to think in a way that is: rational, abstract, individual, independent, discontinued, irreversible, partial, binary, objective, and scientific. Aristotelian formal logic clearly has the conscious ego as its first principle, as can be seen, for example, in the law of contradiction (A is not not-A ) and the law of identity (A is A). We can summarize this and call it the domain of discontinuity—a domain that is usually associated with the function of the left side of the brain (the linguistic side or logos side of the brain). This being the case we can also say that the seat of the nerve center of modern scientific thinking that takes reductionism as a prerequisite is situated on the left side of the brain.

In contrast to this, the workings of the self (or unconscious) can be understood as a way of thinking that is: intuitional, mutually dependent, continuous, holistic, all-inclusive, and nondiscriminative. From the standpoint of formal logic this is clearly an illogical domain. If this domain does have a logic, however, it is the logic of intuition, or continuity. Its distinguishing characteristics are usually associated with the functions of the right brain (the music side of the brain).

My idea is to offer a reinterpretation of God, human beings, and nature, by locating the above ego and self as well as the two sequences of continuity and discontinuity as two sides of the coincidence of contraries and the coexistence of the latent and manifest.

The relationship between the conscious and unconscious is similar to the relationship between *forma* and *materia* in Aristotelian philosophy.

As the *materia prima* becomes *materia secunda* (a real object) through the determination of *forma substantialis*, so do the treasures buried in the unconscious become valuable and practical powers through the light of the conscious.<sup>12</sup> The unconscious, however, is not a *pura potentia* like the *materia prima*; its relationship with the conscious is one in which there is a simultaneity of the latent and manifest.

While the *materia* is unilaterally determined by the *forma*, the unconscious is not unilaterally and irreversibly restricted by consciousness. Rather, it is the unconscious that gives the conscious its restricting power. Since the latent has within itself a hidden working that causes it to be constantly manifested,<sup>13</sup> it is the unconscious that is prior to the conscious in terms of both ontogeny and phylogeny. The unconscious is the womb from which conscious action is born. The unconscious can be understood as the consciousness of the right brain that compensates the functional distortion of the left brain, and encour-

<sup>12</sup> Ignace Lepp, *Clarté et ténèbres de l'âme: Essai de psychosynthèse* (Paris: Aubier, 1956), 50. I published a Japanese translation of this work in 1975.

<sup>13</sup> Nakayama, *A Sketch of Hua-yen Philosophy*, 73.

ages a natural psychic correction by promoting exchange between the conscious and unconscious, the ego and self, the left brain and right brain.<sup>14</sup>

So, comparatively speaking, the relation of *forma-materia* is still unilateral and irreversible, while the relation of unconscious-conscious is more mutual and reversible. It is not difficult to see, therefore, that the theology based upon the *forma-materia* schema is more patriarchal in character while the theology of the “ego-self” scheme is more matriarchal. The logic combining both of these must be the theological perspective of irreversible-*soku*-reversible, and paternal-*soku*-maternal.

#### THE LOGIC OF THE JAPANESE LANTERNS

The reality-expressions “A-*soku*-B” and “coincidence of contraries” can be understood as universal expressions of general actual existence. The expressions of “A-*soku*-B,” such as Nishida’s “transcendence-*soku*-immanence” and “immanence-*soku*-transcendence,” and the expressions of the coincidence of contraries such as “paternal-*soku*-maternal” and “maternal-*soku*-paternal,” make possible an endless descent from “transcendental immanence” to “immanent transcendence” (or in my schema “ascending transcendence” to “descending transcendence”), and also at the same time an endless ascent from the latter to the former.

The correlation between the two is just like a Japanese paper lantern. The upper part ascends (toward heaven) and the lower part descends (toward earth). When the lantern is completely folded the upper part (heaven) and lower part (earth) might appear as one, but the distinction between the two is not lost. On the other hand, when the lantern is completely open, the upper-part is higher than the lower part, but it is not superior to or more important than the lower part. The lantern represents the world of the coexistence of latent and manifest joining together heaven and earth.

#### THE VANISHING POINT

In order that we may meet the true transcendent being, either the ascending transcendent or the descending transcendent, we must pass through a vanishing point. At the vanishing point the dualistic separation between “ascending transcendence” and “descending transcendence” disappears, and a true “not one, not two” world appears. The key word here is “vanishing point.” In order to meet the God of ascending transcendence (God the Father) we must completely root out the idea of a direct ascending ego that says we might be like God. In other words, we have to realize the relationship

<sup>14</sup> R. M. Restak, *Brain: The Last Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), part 4.10.

between “coincidence of contraries,” such as “*rūpa-soku-śūnyatā*” and “ascent-*soku*-descent.” Even such an ego that dichotomizes *rūpa* (mutable, physical) and *śūnyatā* (immutable, metaphysical) and then becomes attached to *śūnyatā*, needs to pass through the vanishing point and negate *śūnyatā*. In Christianity the vanishing point is the miraculous event, the “not one, not two coincidence,” of Christ’s death on the cross (descent) and resurrection (ascent).

For Christians it is possible to understand Christ as the Christian archetype of *rūpa-soku-śūnyatā*. Thus true affirmative theology that has concrete meaning and is not abstract, is only possible if it is combined with negative theology as the “manifest” aspect in a relation of “coexistence of manifest and latent.” On the other hand, a simple affirmative theology based on objective logic cannot in essence escape from being a one-sided abstract theology.

#### CRITIQUE OF ASCENT WITHOUT DESCENT

From the “ascent-*soku*-descent” position, ascent without descent and descent without ascent must be rejected as an abstract one-sided view. Here, however, since my main point is to reflect on, and rejuvenate, traditional Christianity, I will not examine the problem of descent without ascent, but will concentrate on examining the nihilistic nature of ascent without descent.

What exactly is this “ascending transcendence” seen from a simple everyday perspective in which the ego has not yet passed through the vanishing point mentioned above? Usually it is rationalized initially as faith’s response to the historical revelation of God the Father. If ascending transcendence, however, is only a personal belief attached to a concept that has been translated into everyday language and formed into a theology, then it probably will not have any of the vitality of a personal response similar to conversion. This is just the obstinacy of formal logic and intellectual abstraction. Therefore, to push the issue a little further, the idea of straight ascendance that says “the ego might be like God,” inevitably becomes mixed in with the “sacred lie” that makes us bend our knee in front of a warped image of God. From this develops a nihilistically perverse and artificial religious life, that in many cases takes on a form of reverence to endure an internal emptiness.

According to the law of contradiction in formal logic (A is not not-A), God’s attributes are determined by totally disregarding the negative aspects of all that has been created (duration, mutability, incompleteness, termination, substance, etc.), then God is discussed by putting all opposite concepts in abstract terms. As this method is a reversal of concepts centered on intellectual ego-awareness, it is not an absolute denial of ego. God is affirmed as a purely eternal, immutable, complete, infinite, nonmaterial entity. This

affirmative theological perspective, however, cannot avoid being relative and abstract. It is clearly no more than a dichotomy caused by the ego that closes its eyes to the truth. The ego apotheosizes its own conceptual creation and kneels before its vowing submission. God the father becomes a mere projection of the ego.<sup>15</sup> Thus this incorporeal ego is expected to rise to God in an intelligent form separate from the body and become one with the father. In other words for the incorporeal ego perfect ascending transcendence is expected to be reached largely by the process of being pulled upward to heaven. It is for this very reason that among monastic priests there are many pseudo-ascetics with a surprisingly strong desire to advance and have power in this world. This misguided view, to quote Dōgen, is “trying to realize the Truth in the myriad beings carrying forward only our own ego” and is no different from Nishitani Keiji’s “masked nihilism.”

It is clear that this eternal and immutable God, which is a product of the ego, if only thought of in terms of formal or objective logic, has nothing in common with the true Christian God. If God were as such there would be no love or forgiveness of sin. Despite this, great Christian saints from the past have believed and praised such an eternal and immutable God. For example, St. Augustine—because he could not completely free himself of Neo-Platonic influences—affirmed the eternal, immutable, and completely immaterial God as another name for the inscrutable God. Augustine’s faith we can see went beyond this logic when he confessed, “Thou wert more inward to me, than my most inward part, and higher than my highest” (*Tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*).<sup>16</sup> The depth psychologist Ignace Lepp makes the following comments on this quote by St. Augustine:

“Thou wert more inward to me, than my most inward parts” means that God is in the deepest part of our soul, and existentially necessary for us.... The immanent does not contradict or negate the transcendental, it takes as a given and demands the transcendental. God is “more inward to me than my most inward” and at the same time also unquestionably means “higher than my highest.”<sup>17</sup>

This brings to mind Dōgen’s phrase “The depths of the dewdrop can contain the heights of the moon and sky.”<sup>18</sup>

For Augustine, however, as a philosopher there was clearly an inherent tension between faith and logic. How could he combine God as completely

<sup>15</sup> See my “The Buddhist logic of *soku* and Christianity,” 18–19.

<sup>16</sup> *Confessions*, 3.6.11.

<sup>17</sup> Lepp, *Clarté et ténèbres de l’âme*, 280, note 3.

<sup>18</sup> From the *Genjōkōan* chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*.

immaterial and immutable, with Christ's incarnation, and the sacraments that are signs of the Church's sensitivities? As Gilson has pointed out, St. Augustine was unable to find a philosophy or logic that corresponded with his theology. Augustine simply used Neo-Platonic philosophy as a convenient tool until he gradually became troubled by the feeling that it was inconsistent with his faith.<sup>19</sup>

We can also see a similar problem in the way Thomas Aquinas used Aristotelian philosophy. The Aristotelian God was the primal entity that was the subject, not the predicate, and therefore Aristotle conceived of God only as irreversible. According to Nishida, the concept of God in traditional Christianity was, for a long time, based on this Aristotelian logic of God as subject, and thus has often been only a ruling God. Aquinas states that God "loves without passion" (*sine passione amat*)<sup>20</sup> and "does not have a real relationship (*realis relatio*)"<sup>21</sup> with the world He created. For Japanese, who in general find it difficult to completely separate knowledge and emotions, it is hard to accept God as a being without passion or emotion. In addition, Japanese do not see the association between God, who has an irreversible relation with the world and is a frightening ruler, and the image of Christ who embraces all sinners. Aquinas's concept of God, in short, is too patriarchal.

God the ascending transcendent (God the Father) is of course a one-sided abstract concept of God, separated and isolated from God the descending transcendent (God the Mother). God as such would be like a stiff old man with only animus and no anima. To put it in Buddhist terms, such a God would be with only *śūnyatā* and no *rupa*. He is a God referred to in the third person ("He"), out on top of an isolated mountain sitting with legs crossed. He is never a companion for us common sinners (God as "We" or "Us"); and absolutely never the transcendent subject of the self (God as "I"). Plato's "Idea of Good" and Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover" are in essence also the same God of *śūnyatā* without descending transcendence. The theology of both Aquinas and Augustine, despite their personal mystical experiences and negative theological background, could not escape from Greek intellectualism, and from a logic oriented toward the ego.

Seen in this way, the Western traditional concept of God, as claimed in process theology, is a masculine God that reflects the patriarchal social structure. To borrow the words of J. B. Cobb "God is totally active, controlling, and independent, and wholly lacking in receptiveness and responsiveness.

<sup>19</sup> E. I. Watkin, "The Mysticism of St. Augustine," in *A Monument to St. Augustine* by M.C. D'Arcy et al. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930).

<sup>20</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I, q.20, al, resp.

<sup>21</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I, q.20, 7c.

Indeed, God seems to be the archetype of the dominant, inflexible, unemotional, completely independent male.”<sup>22</sup>

### A Schematic Summary

I have tried to capture my critique of the traditional concept of God and offer a more unifying concept by means of figure 1. It shows how I reject the simple patriarchal and ego-affirmative concept of God that takes immutability and impassibility to be essential attributes of God. It instead shows how I affirm God as both Mother and Father in a relation of “simultaneously latent and manifest.” Most of the terms should be clear from the foregoing pages, but a number of terms bear brief comment.<sup>23</sup>

#### THE WISDOM OF THE BODY AND THE WHISPER OF NATURE

Our concept of self, according to Eastern philosophy, is built on our awareness of physical sensations. As our bodies, however, are in direct contact with nature and ruled by it, the concept of self rooted in the body prompts us to be constantly aware of physical sensations and the laws of nature working inside us (our internal nature). This type of clear awareness is qualitatively different from the cognitive conceptual understanding of nature. From the standpoint of human ecology, which studies the relationship between biological environments and human beings, contemporary civilization’s defiance of nature is linked with the defiance of the body, and is the source of ill-health and crises in the world today. East Asians think it is best to obey the laws of nature (the hidden order). This in a sense is similar to the obedience to the word of God in Western civilization. The Eastern way of thought does not fundamentally conflict with the ideas of the natural sciences or the direction in which they are heading.<sup>24</sup>

#### MOTHER GOD ON EARTH

In the West, there was not only the Heavenly Father but also the idea of the Heavenly Mother from the earliest times. Traditionally it is difficult for those in the West to be comfortable with “earth,” while in the East “God” presents a similar problem. As mine is an attempt at an entirely new Eastern theology,

<sup>22</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), 9–10, 61–2.

<sup>23</sup> The original Japanese version of this figure can be found in 『産業医科大学雑誌』7/3 (1985), 335–44.

<sup>24</sup> 池見西次郎 Ikemi Torijirō, 『セルフ・コントロールと禅』 [Self-control and Zen] (Tokyo: NHK, 1981), 135–6.

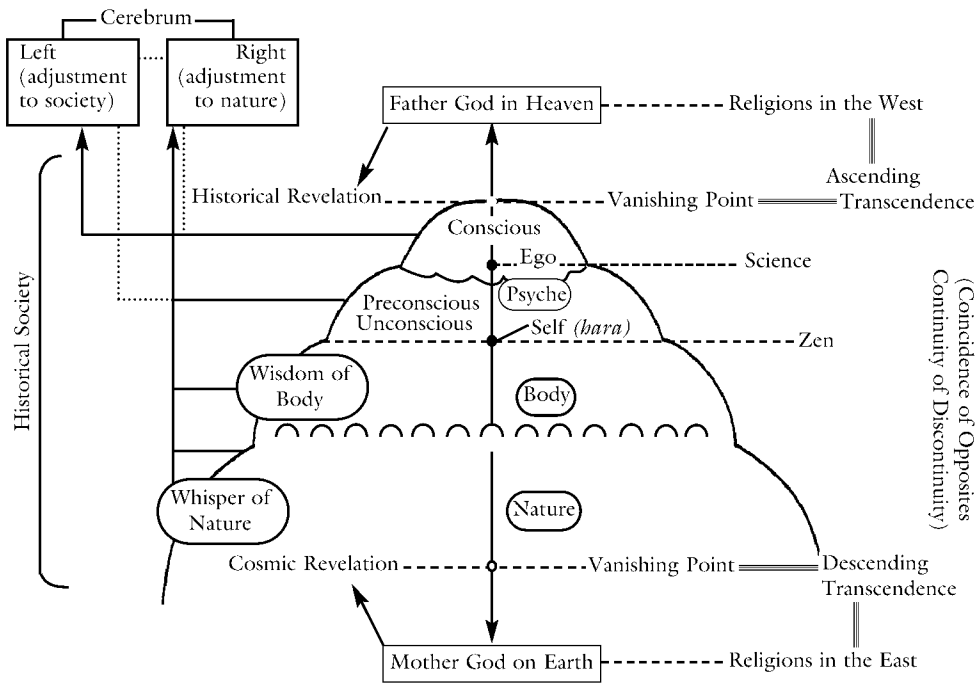


Figure 1. Towards A New Theology and a New Anthropology

I use the expression “Mother God on Earth” as a new concept to point to the hiddenness of the concept of God as “simultaneously latent and manifest.”

#### COSMIC REVELATION

Biblically, as pointed out by Paul, the special characteristic of “cosmic revelation” is knowing God through what one can see (Romans 1:20). Or in Psalms, “The Heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.” In the Pseudo-Dionysius, “God is the sun, stars, fire, water, wind, dewdrops, clouds, stones, and rocks; that is, God is all that exists and nothing that exists.”<sup>25</sup> This expresses, I think, the same logical structure as Dōgen’s statement, “all beings have the Buddha-nature” hence “all beings do not have the Buddha-nature.” As absolute truth transcends the relative perspective of “being” and “nothingness,” it can simultaneously be seen as “absolute being” and “absolute nothingness.” Truth transcends all things while at the same time is present in all things. In ancient times, when asked “What is the Buddha?” some monks gave rather witty answers: Jōshū

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De divinis nominibus*, c.1.6.25.

answered “An oak tree in the garden”; Tōzan answered “Three pounds of hemp”; and Enshō said, “What is the Buddha? That which is not the Buddha.” We can see the reception of the cosmic revelation when we come into contact with the life of a single flower that is a symbol of God as “not one, not two.”<sup>26</sup>

*[Translated by Clark Chilson]*

<sup>26</sup> See my *The Birth and Death of God*, 225–7.