BECOMING GOD, BECOMING THE BUDDHA: THE RELATION OF IDENTITY AND PRAXIS IN THE THOUGHT OF MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR AND KŪKAI

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by
Steven E. Pustay
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Examining Committee Members:

Shigenori Nagatomo, Advisory Chair, Department of Religion
Vasiliki Limberis, Department of Religion
Lucy Bregman, Department of Religion
Aryeh Botwinick, External Member, Department of Political Science

ABSTRACT

My dissertation investigates the concept of 'divinization', or becoming like (or identical to) God or the Buddha in the thought of two early medieval monk-philosophers from radically different religious-philosophical traditions, Maximus the Confessor (580-662 CE) and Kukai (774-835 CE). I use this as a means of comparing the relationship between understandings of identity and praxis advocated by these two thinkers. Maximus was a Christian monk who lived during a period of great theological and political turmoil in the Byzantine Empire and participated in the theological debates of his day. Kukai was a Japanese monk who studied esoteric Buddhism in China and returned to establish an esoteric lineage in Japan, allowing it to survive after its demise in China.

In the first half of my dissertation, I investigate their philosophical understandings of *identity*, what makes a thing what it is and not something else. I consider this their metaphysic (using the term in the broadest sense of an account of reality). I begin by looking at their religio-philosophical contexts which informed their thought and then on texts written by my principles themselves. Maximus' understanding, shaped by Greek philosophy and early Christian theologians, is embodied in a triad of concepts – *logoi*, divine ideas and wills which bestow being on created things and hold them in existence; *tropoi*, the modes of existence of particular creatures and *hypostasis*, the individual existent or creature which exists in the tension between *logoi* and *tropoi*. The core of Kukai's understanding is *funi* (不二) or non-duality, a doctrine that has both epistemic and ontological implications. It is grounded in the experience of meditation as well as the esoteric Buddhist teaching of *muge* (無礙), the mutual interpenetration and non-

obstruction of all things. It is a doctrine central to esotericism but also has roots in *prajnāpāramitā* ("perfection of wisdom") literature, important to many schools of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. How they understand 'identity' is central to their philosophy and will reflect in both the practices they advocate and the rationale for them

After establishing and explicating their understanding of identity, in consequent chapters I look at the praxes that they advocate and their *metapraxis* or reasoning behind these practices. I focus on regimes of self-cultivation, such as meditation, prayer, virtuous behavior, various ritual activities and how they lead to the ultimate goal of divinization. In Maximus, this process of divinization is called *theosis* (θέωσις), 'deification'. He follows in a long line of Christian thinkers who hold that God created human beings in order to make them like himself, to become by grace what God is by nature. In Kūkai, this process is known as *sokushin jōbutsu* (即身成仏), 'becoming a Buddha in this very existence'. He is the heir to an esoteric tradition that holds that all sentient beings are originally enlightened, they have Buddha-mind or already are the Buddha, but this reality is obscured by a profound miscognition of the reality which gives rise to egoistic craving.

In the final section, I look more closely at these respective accounts of divinization, to show the profound parallels and divergences found in their thought and elucidate the source of these differences in their respective metaphysic, their accounts of identity; how does identity shape practice? What informs this understanding of identity? This is the larger question I am seeking to address. In doing so, even though my research is limited in focus to two particular thinkers, they do act as representatives of two larger traditions, Early/Eastern Christianity and Japanese Buddhism. The answers they give to this question reflect the insights and positions offered by these larger traditions.

DEDICATION

To Marilyn and Edward Pustay, my parents and my foundation

To Andy and Frankie, my brothers and friends.

To Aidan, Cole, Madeline and Michael, my nephews and niece and hope for the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

> *Dicebat Bernardus Carnotensis nos esse quasi nanos, gigantium humeris insidentes, ut possimus plura eis et remotiora videre, non utique proprii visus acumine, aut eminentia corporis, sed quia in altum subvenimur et extollimur magnitudine gigantea.*
>
> - John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 1159 CE.

An ancient Chinese saying holds that it is impossible to imagine a landscape without a man and a man without a landscape. This wisdom can be applied to academia as well – especially in a project like a dissertation, which cannot happen in a vacuum. I would like to thank all of those who were part of my ‘landscape’, who set me on my path and allowed me to be the scholar that I have become.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT ii

DEDICATION v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS x

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION 1
    - Introduction 1
        - Significance of Topic 1
        - Approach 6
        - Overview and Summary of Argument 11
        - Methodology 17
    - Avenue of Inquiry: Ontology and Identity 18
        - Identity, Similarity and Difference 22
        - The Priority of Substance in Ontology, Language and Epistemology 25
            - Language, Logic and Grammar 27
            - "Common-Sense" Ontology 32
            - Substance and Epistemology 34
    - Buddhist and Christian Responses to Substance Ontology 34
2. 'PERSON' AND 'INDIVIDUAL EXISTENT' AS CENTER-POINT OF MAXIMUS' THOUGHT 39
    - The Life and Significance of Maximus the Confessor 39
    - 'Person' and 'Individual Existent' as Axis of Maximus' Theology and Philosophy 45

Logos and *Logoi* in Maximus 49

Identity and difference – *Logos* and *Tropoi*....................64

The Relationship of *Logos* and *Tropos* 67

Hypostasis and *Tropoi*....................74

3. NON-DUALITY: INTERPENETRATION AND MUTUAL NON-OPPOSITION AS CORNERSTONE OF 'IDENTITY' IN THE THOUGHT OF KŪKAI....................83

The Life and Significance of Kūkai....................83

Non-duality, Non-obstruction and Mutual Interpenetration....................93

Non-duality as Non-difference and Non-plurality....................100

Kūkai's Thought 103

The *Dharmakāya* and the Cosmos....................105

The Holographic Universe 121

4. MAXIMUS' METAPRAXIS 131

Maximus' Eschatological Anthropology: Incarnation and Deification....................134

The Passions, *Apatheia* and Love 143

Self-Cultivation and Divine Philosophy....................147

The First Stage: The Life of Virtue (*pratikē*)....................154

The Second Stage: Meditation (*physikē*) 158

The Third Stage: Contemplation (*theologia*)....................161

5. KŪKAI ON PRAXIS 171

Practice and Contemplation in Kūkai 172

Soteriological Aspects of Non-Duality....................184

The Three Mysteries....................193

Mandalas....................196

Mudrās......201

Mantras 204

6. CONCLUSION......211

Transcendence and Immanence 214

Logoi, transcendentally-oriented humility and worship 219

Deity Veneration – *Upāya* and/or Consummation?......223

Intimacy and Integrity......228

Individual and Communal Dimensions of Liturgy and Ritual......234

“Centrism” and “Directionality”......238

Conclusion 253

BIBLIOGRAPHY......264

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration Page

1. Bhutanese Cosmos Mandala, "Indra's Net" 119

2. Holographic Whole 125

3. Womb Realm (*taizōkai*) Mandala 200

4. Diamond Realm (*kongōkai*) Mandala 201

5. *Chiken-in* (智拳印); "Wisdom Fist Mudra" 203

6. *Tenbōrin-in* (転法輪印); "Turning of the Wheel of Law Mudra".... 203

7. Mahāvairocana performing the *Tenbōrin-in,* "Turning of the Wheel of Law Mudra" 203

8. The mantra *namo Amitabah*, "Hail to Amitabha" 204

9. Neoplatonic Declension of Being with the One at the Summit.... 216

10. Neoplatonic Declension of Being with the One at the Center.... 216

11. Celestial Hierarchy according to Pseudo-Dionysius.... 217

12. *Kakudai-hō* (拡大法), "expansion meditation"; also called *gachirinkan* (月輪観), "moon disk meditation".... 227

13. *Yogen-hō* (預言法), "image-manifesting technique" 227

14. The Self of Integrity.... 230

15. The Self of Intimacy.... 230

16. The Buddhist Self 231

BECOMING GOD, BECOMING THE BUDDHA: THE RELATION OF IDENTITY AND PRAXIS IN THE THOUGHT OF MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR AND KŪKAI

In a quiet forest, sitting alone
in a grass hut at dawn,
"Bup pou sou!" [1] I thought
I heard a bird cry.
Was it a bird's cry?
I heard it in my mind.
The sound, stream, clouds, and mind
diffuse brightly in the morning rays.[2]

For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father, through the features of men's faces.[3]

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Significance of Topic

As the study of comparative religions has shifted focus in the past four decades from major, foundational figures to less well-known ones, scholars are uncovering the enormous contributions and subtle influence exercised by these men and women. Furthermore, while scholars have concentrated on comparisons of Asian thought and western European Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, very few have looked at the thought of the Early Church Fathers, particularly those most influential in the Christian East.

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[1] *Buppōsō* translates literally as "Buddha, dharma, sangha" , traditionally the three refugees taken by a professed monk or nun in the Buddhist tradition. The bird's call sounds like this, thus its name. Roszer identifies it as the broad-billed roller, *Eurystomus orientalus*. Paul Rouzer, "Early Buddhist Kanshi: Court, Country and Kūkai". *Monumenta Nipponica* 59, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 459.

[2] Kūkai, KZ III, 552, cited in Hakeda, 100.

[3] Maximus, *Ambigua 71* (PG 37.624) 1408c, citing St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *To the Virgins* 2 (*PG* 37:624) in Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 162.

In investigating these figures further in a comparative study, I believe they offer us insight into the underlying values and thought processes at work in these larger traditions. Although they have long since passed, their thought has decisively shaped the beliefs and practices of respective spiritual and intellectual communities. The insights they raise, when faced honestly, interrogate the scholar as well.

In this dissertation, I will investigate the relationship between the understanding of *identity* and *praxis* (that is, practices of self-cultivation, meditation, liturgy and so forth) in the thought of the seventh century Christian writer, Maximus the Confessor and the ninth century Japanese master of tantric Buddhism, Kūkai. As I explore their thought more deeply, I hope to show that the reader there are certain fundamental themes or understandings which decisively shape the thought of each and each person understands the relationship between identity and praxis.

For Maximus, it is *person* (from the Greek *hypostasis,* ὑπόστἄσις). For Kūkai, it is *emptiness* (from the Sanskrit *śūnyatā* and written as 空 or *kū* in Japanese). Broadly speaking, hypostasis refers to the concrete reality of a particular. Person represents a special kind of hypostasis, marked by an intellect and the ability to choose. All creaturely hypostases are brought about by the will of God whose providence secures their abiding identity, even when it eventually passes away. Emptiness refers to the lack of an abiding, substantial 'self'. As all things are characterized by emptiness (even emptiness itself), they are subject to constant transformation and mutual causation. All things lack an essence or permanent 'seat' of identity in the sense used by contemporary western thinkers. This leads Kūkai to understand the world as non-dual (*funi,* 不二), which in many ways is opposed to Maximus' understanding.

What is significant about these two ‘principles’ is their universality – they shape the entire cosmological and praxiological view of their bearers. The universe, for Maximus, is revealed in terms of *person*, an understanding only comprehensible in the Incarnation of the Logos, and has implications for all things. The Incarnate Logos, is not only the interpretive key for the whole arc of human history,[4] but of the entire cosmos. True understanding can only be gained through encounter with the person of the Incarnate Logos. While there is no explicit parallel in the thought of Kūkai, I argue that his understanding of *emptiness* provides an interpretive key. In this worldview, all things are *empty* (persons, things, even the concept of emptiness itself). Emptiness pervades all things and is an insight experientially gained, and so naturally cannot be limited to theorizing or academic study, but has universal applicability.

This central insight shapes their understanding of practice and the goal of religious or spiritual life. For Kūkai, the aim of practice is *sokushinjobutsu* (即身成佛), the realization of Buddhahood in this present existence. It is the attainment of something already present in all beings, sentient and insentient, made possible by the non-dual relationship between the *dharmakāya* Buddha and the phenomenal world on the basis of their emptiness. For Maximus, *theosis* (θεωσις), the goal of all practice is deification or becoming God – but it is not a metaphysical assimilation or absorption into the Godhead.

The reason this is an important task is because both thinkers emerged at times of stress and transition in their respective traditions and helped steer a path for their communities through their writing and scholarship**.** Not only were they intellectuals, but both partook actively in the ritual and devotional life of their communities, and proposed means of self- cultivation. Both establish a path of "transformative experience" which "requires a profound personal commitment".[5] They participated fully in their respective traditions, gaining a reputation for holiness and sanctity. They lie within the mainstream of their traditions (Early/Eastern Christianity and Japanese Buddhism), and so reflect the assumptions and insights each carries, even if their thought has been historically overlooked by scholars eager to analyze more prominent figures in these Christianity or Buddhism.

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[4] Cf. Thomas Cattoi, *Divine Contingency: Theologies of Divine Embodiment in Maximus the Confessor and Tsong kha pa* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008), 15 n.29. Cattoi here is specifically speaking of writers like Ireneus and Justin Martyr. Maximus has a greater cosmological focus, but with them, he shares the belief that Christ is the center point and interpretive key for human history.

As such, my method will be both comparison and contrast throughout. My work will contribute to scholarly knowledge of just how much of so-called 'east' and 'west' can be compared and what remains vitally distinctive to each.

While living a life of apparent sanctity in a monastic environment, Maximus (580-662 CE) gained notoriety through his stand for orthodoxy and fierce debates with heterodox interlocutors. On the other hand, Kūkai (774-835 CE), was a "larger than life" figure throughout his life. According to legend, he developed *kana*, the vernacular written form of the Japanese language. He was also a poet and a civil engineer, building many dams and bridges, especially for poorer communities. According to legend he carved wooden images of the Buddha which did not burn, and was able to etch sacred characters into the face of rocks using only his finger nails.[6]

Maximus was a monk, bishop and later martyr who was instrumental in articulating a Christology which would become the standard for Christian orthodoxy.

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[5] *Ibid.,* 10. Cattoi is writing this of Maximus and the Tibetan esoteric Buddhist Tsong kha pa, but it applies equally well to Kūkai.

[6] Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity – Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

Little is known of his early life, but he probably was born to a noble family in Constantinople around 580 CE. As a young man, he served as a personal aid to the emperor Heraclius. For unknown reasons, he left political life to take monastic vows. He became an abbot of a number of monasteries and later was drawn into the Monothelite controversy. There he became a forceful voice for the position which would become Christian orthodoxy, asserting Jesus Christ, as incarnate *Logos* had both two wills and two natures. He would later die in exile, after undergoing mutilation and torture, having his tongue tongue ripped out and right hand cut off. He was driven from the empire because his steadfast adherence to orthodox doctrine concerning the identity of Christ.

More than a century after the martyrdom of Maximus, Kūkai was likewise born into lesser nobility in south-western Japan. He was raised in Shikoku, the smallest of the main islands of Japan. He was given a rigorous education in the Confucian classics to prepare for a career of government service. Disillusioned with the study of the classics and troubled by the suffering he saw in society, he fled to mountains in search of solitude. As his reputation as a monk and wonderworker grew, he received permission (and a stipend) from the imperial court to journey to China in order to study esoteric scriptures. He intended to stay for twenty years, but returned after two. He was invested as the eighth patriarch of a lineage of esoteric Buddhism, and returned to Japan with a mission to establish it there. After several years of enduring controversy and ill-relations with the Tendai school which had become politically powerful, he established his lineage, which came to be called *Shingon* (真言宗, lit. “Word of Truth school”; *Shingon* is the Japanese word for the Sanskrit term *mantra*).

Both men entered the world of sancity on their deaths. Early Christians recognized Maximus as a saint shortly after his death and attributed miraculous powers to him.[7] Likewise, many attributed miraculous abilities to Kūkai, but even while he was still alive.[8] After his death, he was hagiographized as the *Kōbō-Daishi* (弘法大師, *The Grand Master Who Propagated the Buddhist Teaching*) by the emperor and later in Japanese history achieved the status of a semi-messianic figure among many Japanese Buddhists.[9]

Approach

I will begin my dissertation by investigating how Maximus and Kūkai understand *identity* (and by implication, *difference*) as the theme appears in the course of their philosophizing. In the next section I will look at how their understanding of identity informs their praxis, methods of self-cultivation, meditation, prayer, asceticism and so forth. Their understanding of identity shapes how they understand the ends of practice and the paths they offer to arrive at it.

In looking closely at their texts, we will find some general congruencies in their world views, most notably in their mutual understanding of the universe as fundamentally hierophanic.[10] I use this term to mean that the cosmos in some way manifests a spiritual or divine reality; it furthermore plays a role in the redemptive or restorative process.[11] They furthermore share an understanding of human beings as having an originally good or enlightened nature, implying that the process of cultivation is simultaneously, in a way, a process of retrieval or return.[12] Kūkai's understanding of original enlightenment is all-inclusive, lacking the anthropocentric focus of Maximus: all things are originally enlightened and are synonymous with the cosmic body of the Buddha, the *dharmakāya*.[13] They both move towards a desired end-state, either realizing Buddhahood in this very existence (*sokushin-jobutsu*, 即身成仏) or *theosis*, becoming a partaker in divine nature. There is a strong emphasis on relationality, they do not propose practices of "religious individualism", instead a path for either recognizing or achieving a deeper communion with a noumenal principle such as Buddha or God and the totality of the cosmos. In neither case, does transformation involve withdrawal or isolation of one into self-sufficiency and indifference; these visions of transformation do not share the ideal of the *kevala* or "splendid isolation", sought by *Tīrthaṅkaras* or Jain saints or the mystic following in the footsteps of Plotinus, *phygê monou pros monon.*[14]

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[7] For example, see the account given at: http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=100249

[8] For example, see the accounts at: http://www.asunam.com/kukai_page.htm

[9] Instead of dying he is said to have entered a state of perpetual *Samadhi* (meditative absorption) in 835 CE, hidden away on Mount Kōya, awaiting the coming of the Maitreya (the future Buddha, a messianic figure) when he will awaken to serve at his side.

[10] The term seems to have been first used, or at least popularized, by Mircea Eliade. It comes from the a conjunction of two Greek terms, ἱερος (divine) + φαίνω (to manifest or shine). He uses it to refer to the in-breaking of sacred into the mundane world. I use it in a more general sense to refer to the mundane world to manifest or 'carry' the sacred, that it has a sacred dimension. For more on Eliades' use, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1989), 7-10.

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[11] On the other hand, the earliest strands of Indian Buddhism as well as schools of pre-Chalcedonian Christianity which were influenced by Gnostic or Neo-platonist thought (as represented by Origen and Evagrius) seem to have a parallel ethic of *fugit mundi* (Lat. "fleeing the world"). Maximus and Kūkai represent a different perspective, one that sees the sacred as something present in the world, not as something that must be escaped to from the world. In Maximus' case this is in large part the result of his understanding of the significance of the embodiment and Incarnation of God's Logos. For Kūkai, it is, at least in part, a result of his understanding of non-dualism and the *dharmakāya*'s embodiment in and as the world of phenomena.

[12] In Kūkai's case, this is a result of his acceptance of the esoteric doctrine of "original enlightenment", *hongaku* (本覚). In Maximus it lies in his distinction between the gnomic will (θέλημα γνωμικών) and natural will (θέλημα φυσικὸν). These will be discussed at some length in following chapters. In regards to Maximus, cf. Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1995), 208-230.

[13] For his identification of one with the other, see John Krummel, "Kûkai", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Accessed March 4, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kukai/.

[14] Φυγή μόνου προς μόνον. *Enneads*, VI.ix.11.

To assist in mapping out how they their understanding of identity reflects in their praxis, I will use three polarities. The first is *transcendence* and *immanence*, a common typology in the study of religion. The second is found in Thomas Kasulis' concepts of *intimacy* and *integrity*[15] as well as Brook Ziporyn's contrasting concepts of *omnicentrism* and *unicentrism*.[16] We will see that Maximus, shaped by the conciliar struggles that began in earlier centuries continued until his own, will struggle to balance aspects of transcendence and immanence, identity and integrity, concerned to protect the difference between Creator and creation as well as between individual creatures while providing for a kind of intimate union that does not obliterate difference.[17] These are achieved through

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[15] Thomas Kasulis, "Intimacy: a general orientation in Japanese religious values". *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 4 (October 1990), 443. He later developed into a full length book, which we will draw from: Kasulis, Thomas P. *Intimacy or Integrity – Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

[16] Brook Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity and Value Paradox in Tiatai Buddhist Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asian Center, 2000).

[17] These boundaries and their fixity are important to Christianity. When contrasting the staunchness of traditional Christian opposition to abortion with the more permissive Japanese attitudes, William LaFleur, argues that it the Christian attitude is ultimately rooted in two things. The first is an understanding of human beings as uniquely bearing the *imago dei.* Coupled with the first, Christianity emphasized strict divisions and demarcations, in this case between 'life' and 'non-life', but for many other things as well.

> This was no doubt due to the Christian teaching that the line separating humans and God was itself a strict one and, except for the unique case of the God-man Jesus, a line that absolutely disallowed all notions of mixture, process, or graduate progress from one rubric into the other. The very uniqueness of Christ, the one and only combination of deity and humanity, prohibited envisioning any other instances. The early Christian Church poured immense energies into getting doctrinal precision on this matter and went through great ecclesiastical struggles for it. But this development, it is insufficiently noticed, had vast implications for what could be allowed both as ideas and as social practice – within the Christian culture that subsequently developed. Christianity became a religion showing a decided preference for the hard distinction, the fixed boundary, and the precise demarcation between X and Y. (p.38)

His book provides an insightful, I think, a contrast between fixity (or fixedness) and fluidity; the former characterizing 'western' and more specifically Christian culture, the latter characterizing Japanese (and more generally East Asian) understandings of life and death, sentient and insentient beings, one and many, and even cosmos and divinity. LaFleur's twin notions of *fixedness* and *fluidity* do have some significant overlap with Kasulis' understandings of *integrity* and *intimacy*. LaFleur does not specify definitions for the two as such, but we see from his comments on Christianity above, *fixedness* includes a preference for hard distinctions, fixed boundaries and precise demarcations between two or more things, those which Kasulis would consider characteristics of *integrity*. *Fluidity* is the opposite, it is associated with freedom of movement as well as porous or fluid boundaries as well as notions of gradualism and process. We can see the Logos (the second person of the Trinity) who holds all things together. Kūkai on the other hand, drawing from Tantric Buddhist tradition and his own meditative insight, will be much freer to see the entire cosmos in terms of intimacy and mutual interpenetration. What follows from Maximus' view correlates roughly with Ziporyn's *unicentrism*,[18] whereas from Kūkai, *omnicentrism*.[19]

For the Buddhist, identity is not an absolute, yet thinking in terms of it provides a convenient conceptual framework to help one to differentiate beings, seeing them at a particular time and place in a particular network of relationships and, in the case of sentient beings, a particular karma-stream. In this case, identity cannot be separated from temporality or spatiality. Identity is only what a thing is at a particular moment. Furthermore, as Kūkai, was influenced by Tantric tradition's understanding of emptiness, he holds that any one existent contains within it all other existents; it serves as a gateway, as it were to the entire cosmos.

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overlap (but not identity) with Kasulis' understanding of intimacy; it does not fully capture interrelatedness as does Kasulis' *intimacy*, but does convey dynamism that is not as apparent in Kasulis and which is a hallmark of the Buddhist worldview. William LaFleur, *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 38.

[18] Unicentrism, "holds that the true meaning of the collection lies only in the whole as such; the source of all error lies in mistaking a part for the whole. Epistemologically, the ability to comprehend or see this whole may or may not be possible from within the system, from the viewpoint of a particular privileged part. (Such a point may also be asserted, in a given case, to lie outside the system as a whole.) This point – which sees the whole, is directly connected to all parts, and can in some sense control the whole – we call, metaphorically, the center. It is a part that is also in some sense the whole or may legitimately and adequately represent the whole, just as all radii of a circle are extensions of the center. There is only one center, which is unique and irreplaceable. The power of determination flows unidirectionally from this center to the other parts, creating, at least ideally, a single unambiguous whole with clear borders." Brook Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity and Value Paradox in Tiatai Buddhist Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asian Center, 2000), 36-7. In fact the relation of the center of the circle to its radii is found throughout the writings of Maximus as an illustration for the relationship of Christ to creation. Maximus takes the imagery from Pseudo-Dionysius who borrowed the imagery from Plotinus. Maximus would add however, that not only in the Logos the center of the circle, but also its boundary or furthest extent, which encompasses the entire universe.

[19] Omnicentrism, "holds that the identity and significance of any entity is so thoroughly a function of its relationships to other entities – so completely 'holistic' – that every identity is a sliding identity whose significance is always susceptible to grounding in something else, always ambiguous, changeable and instrumental. However, *since this is also true of all other entities in which it is so grounded,* ever entity equally can and must itself serve as a ground, as a center, as a master signficer…", Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good,* 38.

I will argue that each has an insight central to their thought that causes it to diverge, with profound implications. For Kūkai, it is *emptiness;* for Maximus, it is *hypostasis* (which, depending on context, can mean 'individual existence', or more concretely, 'person'). These fundamental understandings will shape how they do their philosophizing, how they explain the cosmos, how they envision Christ and the Buddha respectively, and finally how they define the practices for their communities. Kūkai's practices will reveal the fluid nature of reality and undermine our conventional western assumptions about having an enduring, stable identity. This is the fundamental definition of Kūkai's position. Maximus's on the other hand, will at least reinforce his understanding of a kind of ontological divide between creation and Creator while permitting differing kinds of communion. Maximus also has an eschatological dimension – creation is purposive and oriented towards a future consummation, thus our practices prepare us for a future state that is only hinted at in scripture. However significant our experience of God in the present, he believes it is but a reflection of a state of greater communion with God at the end of time, after the final judgment, where God intends to gather all the parts of creation together in an "unconfused unity", like that of a body,[20] in which differences and individual existences are preserved, recapitulated as it is in Christ the Logos.[21]

Kūkai will assert a kind of identity between *dharmakāya,* the all-encompassing "dharma-body" of the Buddha and thing-events. Things are empty and therefore have no abiding self-nature, so there can be the kind of overlap which, according to Kasulis, is involved in *intimacy*; this is what makes *sokushinjobutsu* possible. In the view of Maximus, although Christ is immanently present within the world and creatures through the *logoi* (divine ideas and wills), there remains an ontological distinction between Creator and creation. He will call it *diairesis* (διαιρεσις, difference), *diaphoron* (διάφορον, distinction), *diastasis* (διάστασις, distance). This 'gap' is important for Maximus in order to preserve the vital category of 'personhood'.[22] *Theosis*, as we will see, is understood not as absorption into undifferentiated divinity, but rather in terms of God's respect for a creature's *logoi* and the actualization of potential given to them, reflected in their *mode of existence*.

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[20] Tollfesen, 103; cf. *Mystagogia*, PG 91: 664d-665a.

[21] *Ibid*.; cf. Ambigua 41, PG 91: 1312a-b, trans. Louth (1996), 160. Christ recapitulates all him himself, "showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being, completed by the gathering together of its parts one with another in itself." His model is that of the Church, which is the body of Christ. Cf. Gal. 3:28, Col. 3:11.

Overview and Summary of the Argument

In the first part of my dissertation, I will do two things – I will provide a summary and overview of the argument I wish to make and then provide an introduction and overview of the two thinkers I will be covering. Following the introduction, the dissertation will be divided into three subsequent parts. In the second part, I will first look at the way Kūkai and Maximus understand identity and difference, by drawing from their teachings of *non-dualism* and *logoi* (divine ideas and wills) respectively. In doing so, I will touch on other things, such as how they constitute the relationship between one and many, whole and parts and "unity in difference".

I will begin by laying out the historical context of their approaches. I will examine the concepts of non-dualism and *Śūnyatā* in Buddhism and the triad of *logoi, tropoi* and *hypostasis* in Platonism and early Christianity before proceeding to each man's thought. Turning to Kūkai, we must first look at the implications of the Buddha's experience of *anātman* (non-self) and *anicca* (impermanence). From the insight gained in the course of meditation the Buddha rejected both the static monism of the Upanishads as well as the substance dualism found in other schools Vedantic philosophy as well as *Sāṃkhya*. This understanding is further developed in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature as it more fully works out the implications of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination). *Prajñāpāramitā* plays an important part in most forms of later Buddhism, including East Asian esoteric Buddhism. From his esoteric master Hui-kuo, Kūkai received initiation into the *Hua-yen (Flower Garland)* Buddhism. Flower Garland Buddhism shaped Kūkai with further insights into the nature of identity, with its doctrines of *mutual interpenetration* and *non-obstruction*.

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[22] Indeed, for Maximus, distinctions are necessity to preserve the identity of a person, whether human or divine. A kind of distinction can be said to be essential to Godhead itself: each of the three persons of the Trinity is a distinct *hypostasis*. The distinction here is relational and not ontological. A paradox arises here: each person of the Trinity fully interpenetrates the other two, yet retains the unique identity of their person. In Kūkai's Buddhism, this kind of interpenetration is in the nature of the universe itself.

Turning to Maximus, I will show that it would be natural for Christians raised in a Hellenistic culture to interpret Jewish-Christian scripture in a Platonic fashion, through the theory of *logoi* (λογοι)*,* divine ideas. Maximus, however, drawing from an interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius seems them primarily in terms of divine wills.[23] He first articulates them as a critique of Origenist thinkers, intellectual descendants of the Church Father Origen, whose thought led them to assert an identity between God (styled τό ἕν, "the One") and the multitude of rational minds, *logikoi* (λογικοι), which would later "fall" into embodiment. Unlike the Origenists, Maximus affirms creation. He thus further develops his understanding of "person" as the central, most important focus in his cosmology, which unites the *logoi* and *tropoi*, principles and modes of being. He further explores these in his meditation on Christ's incarnation, delving into an explanation of how it is that God can become man.

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[23] His interpretation was likely influenced by Stoic and Peripatetic thought.

For Maximus it is important to navigate carefully between ontological and 'moral' difference. The first is a *sine qua non*, in his Christian eyes, of the cosmic order - the difference between the persons of the Trinity, between Creator and creation, the difference between creatures within creation. This requires us to understand both modes of Kasulis' *integrity* and *intimacy* as it has aspects of both. The 'moral' difference referred to in all these cases is the separation within the realm of the created cosmos, as exacerbated by sin, ego, pride and so forth which alienates human beings from God, from each other and the whole of creation. Maximus, drawing from his reflections on the nature of the Trinity as well as the incarnate *Logos*, wishes to preserve what scholar Torstein Tollefsen calls "unity without annihilation",[24] to allow for the communion of Creator and creature without the dissolution of the one into the other. Such a form of union would undermine the Creator's transcendent uniqueness as well as identity of beings created and sustained in their uniqueness.

The Church in its early years poured a great deal of energy into developing doctrinal precision which necessitated sharp demarcations. Kūkai, on the other hand, was steeped in the non-dualistic tradition of esoteric or *Vajrayāna* Buddhism.[25] Distinctions, like identity, were empty and therefore of no true lasting significance. The esoteric tradition holds that in some way, everything is simultaneously itself while also containing everything else, what Paul Williams considers a non-monistic identity without confusion.[26] It tries to walk a middle path between eternalism and nihilism, emphasizing an underlying unity and interconnectedness while acknowledging the reality of individual thing-events as experienced in daily life.

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[24] Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 65.

[25] It is also known as Tantric Buddhism, after the 'Tantra' a class of scripture. Tantric Buddhism traditionally has seen itself as a distinct development from earlier forms of Buddhism such as Theravāda and Mahāyāna. It represents the "third turning of the wheel of Dharma", representing the highest or most profound articulation of the Buddha's teachings. It is found in the *Srimala* and *Samdhinirmochana* sutras. This division seems to have originated in the Yogācāra school, but soon became a popular way of distinguishing the three traditions.

On a more general level, we can see Kūkai and Maximus as representatives of the philosophical projects of respective communities. Thus to some degree how Kūkai and Maximus answer this question reflect the fundamental distinctiveness and seminal significance of the orientations and positions within larger East Asian (or at least Japanese) Buddhism and Greek Christianity.

The assessment of identity's translation into praxis will require us to a brief analysis of their cosmologies. We will see how these are reflected in their cosmology, which for purposes of this paper, includes their Christology and Buddhology. For both men, the 'divine' (here referring to Buddha or Christ) embodies or manifests itself in the cosmic order. Remarkably, both Kūkai's theory of the multiple bodies of the Buddha, as well as Maximus' understanding of the 'three embodiments' of the *Logos* reveal that some kind of 'embodiment' of the 'divine', correctly understood, is 'natural' to the cosmic order.

In this section, I will show how their metaphysic (Kūkai's understanding of the emptiness and nonduality of *Mahāvairocana*, expressed as the "mutual interpenetration and non-obstruction" of all things, and the "relational ontology" of Maximus) is reflected in their *metapraxis* (how they understand their praxis – the practices they espouse and the rationale for them) – ritual, liturgy, contemplation, meditation, virtuous action, methods or paths by which the undesirable separation or difference is overcome. To borrow a phrase from liturgical scholars, what I seek to understand is how their *lex credendi* is reflected in their *lex orandi*. How, the *lex orandi* that concerns this dissertation is not prayer (as such a category of activity does not apply in many forms of Buddhism, including that of Kūkai), but their programs of self-cultivation and self-development.

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[26] Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 140.

Philosopher William Vallicella says of the Buddha's therapeutic praxis that it is not a "mere" practice, but one that is embedded with an understanding of *anātman*, non-self.[27] I contend that this holds true in regards to both to the therapeutic praxes of both Maximus and Kūkai. They rest on understandings of *person/independent existent* and *emptiness/non-duality* respectively, which is expressed in their understandings of identity.[28] Vallicella makes a case for the validity of such a study, even given the objections that might be raised against it from a pragmatic or practice-based standpoint:

> We therefore see that, although metaphysical discussions such as the one to follow are not conducive to salvation in one sense—they may distract from meditation and moral ascesis and contribute to the ego-bloat found everywhere in the world but especially in academe—they are essential to understand what one must do to achieve salvation, and therefore essential to salvation in another sense.[29]

We will find for both of them that *mimetic* action plays a key role. Kūkai recommends cultivation of *samādhi*, a highly focused form of concentration, in imitation of the blissful meditation of Mahāvairocana. As one deepens their *samādhi*, they become aware that the entire universe is the preaching of the Great Buddha. He calls this, *nyûga ga nyû*, "I enter the Buddha, the Buddha enters me". Going further still, the meditator realizes their identity as Mahāvairocana.[30] Mimetic action transforms one's being; this is not so much a matter of becoming something one is not (as in a final end-state different from one's starting point), but of recovering the truth of what one already is. For Maximus, praxology begins with the practice of the life of virtue, which imitates the intra-Trinitarian love of God, as well as the love God has for creation; it is not only foundational but transformative of the person in its own right. It also includes the practice of payer and theological contemplation, an infused gift which mirrors God's own contemplative activity and reveals God's presence within creation (though the contemplation of a being's *logoi*).[31] This eventually leads one to a deeper level of communion with God himself, although at no time leaving creation or creaturely status behind. Mimetic action marks a process of interior transformation (μετάνοια, *metanoia*) that opens a person to God by uniting their will to his; a transformation which occurs for Maximus at the level of a being's *tropos*, or mode of existence, one never ceases in being human, but does so in a divine manner**.**

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[27] William Vallicella, "No Self?: A Look at a Buddhist Argument". *International Philosophical Quarterly* 42, no. 4. (2002), 456.

[28] Emptiness is a near-cousin to *anātman*.

[29] Vallicella, "No Self?", 456.

[30] See Hakeda's comments in *Kūkai: Major Works*. Trans. Yoshito Hakeda. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 98-9.

In either case, the mimetic act is in keeping with their understanding of identity and is transformative. It de-centers the practitioner, removing them from their egocentricity and re-centering them. For Maximus, the Christian is to be re-centered on Christ; what follows from that is an openness to all other creatures, expressed in the ideal of loving others as God loves them. Following Kūkai, the practitioner will come to understand the illusory nature of the self; it is not however, a flight into non-existence, as it sometimes seems in early Buddhism, but rather an expansion of the self until it is identical with the cosmos, and the recognition there is simultaneously one center (the cosmos) and many centers (every contingent being). Kūkai's method of cultivation places an emphasis on the transformation of consciousness, Maximus on the transformation of the will. In each case, there is a pround change in cognition, a "new way of seeing", as the Christian begins to recognize and contemplate the *logoi* inherent in all things, which leads them to the eventual infused contemplation of the Trinity and as the esoteric Buddhist recognizes the simultaneous identity of *Dharmakāya* and the cosmos.

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[31] The divine likeness in mankind is cultivated through the practice of wisdom gained through contemplation (θεωρία) and virtue (αρετή). Cf *Amb*. Io. 10; PG 91, 1140A.

In the final section of the dissertation, I will bring their thought together in a contrast and comparison through the lens of transcendence-immanence, intimacy-integrity and unicentrism and omnicentrism to help better understand how their 'metaphysic of identity' reflects in their practice and its goal in divinization. I will show that 'person' or 'individual' is the shaping characteristic of Maximian thought and non-dualism is the defining characteristic of Kūkai's thought.

Methodology

I will explore the positions of Kūkai and Maximus using a philosophical/analytic methodology, analyzing their major works. These include Kūkai's most significant philosophical works, the collection known as the *Sanbu-shō* (三部章, "Three Works"). They serve as an exposition of Shingon doctrine, explain his understanding of the body, ritual and his "metaphysical linguistics", the latter describes the non-dual interrelationship between the world of phenomena, its "sounds" as "letters" and the meanings they convey, which is reality itself. I will also have recourse to his smaller works, such as the *Benkenmitsu nikkyōran*, "The Difference between Esoteric and Exoteric Buddhism", which lays out the distinctiveness (and apparent superiority) of Shingon Buddhism vis-à-vis earlier forms. Among the works of Maximus, I will look closely at the *Ambigua* (Disputed Questions) and *Mystagogia* (Commentary on the

Eucharistic liturgy), and the *Scholia* (Commentary) *on Pseudo-Dionysius* and secondarily his *Centuries on Love* which describe the Christian life of perfection and his treatise on asceticism. In order to help interpret their thought and how their understanding of identity carries over into praxis, I will use the categories of transcendence and immanence, Kasulis' notions of *intimacy and integrity* and Ziporyn's notions of *unicentrism* and *omnicentrism* as a heuristic. I find significant overlap in their thought, and when combined together, these can can help illuminate the relationship of metapraxis and metaphysic in the thinkers I have chosen to explore.

Avenue of Inquiry: Ontology and Identity

This section focuses on why ontology is important for understanding Maximus and Kūkai's conceptions of identity. I will argue that Christianity and Buddhism both emerged in the context of cultures operating with an ontology of substance, both explicit and implicit. As evidenced in the dominant schools of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism in the Greco-Roman world and in the orthodox *darśana* of the Indian), there was an explicit metaphysics of substance in operation. The second context is implicit, in the linguistic and epistemological framework found in conventional language and structures of everyday experience.

While their explicit philosophies might have great differences, both Christianity and Buddhism drew from, modified and/or repudiated these operative ontologies in order to suit their needs. Buddhism offered a radical repudiation while Christianity adapted it during early doctrinal controversies only to refine it further, embedding in it a "relational ontology”[32] in order to express the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. I will furthermore raise a Buddhist caution about investigations such as this project.

We begin our investigation by looking into the *ontological* dimensions of the understandings of identity operative in Maximus the Confessor and Kūkai. They come from disparate traditions, which I posit, in their responses to the theological and philosophical contexts from which they emerged, reacted to a metaphysics or an ontology that can be considered broadly ‘substantialist’ in character. Though beginning from a perspective that is western (that is, reflecting assumptions and viewpoints typical of western philosophy) and analytic in character, we will, however, note some differences that typify Indian thought below.

The word itself, *metaphysics*, first used to refer to a collection of fourteen chapters or books written by Aristotle, is not Aristotelian in origin; Aristotle in fact never used the word. It appeared about a century after his death, used by an editor of his writings (most likely Adronicus of Rhodes) to refer to these treatises which came after his work on the natural world known as the *Physics.* The editor simply called it τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ βιβλία, the works which follow the *Physics*.[33] For purposes of this work, I take metaphysics to refer to the discipline, which, in the words of Aristotle, investigates “being as being (τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὂν) and what belongs to it”.[34] Being as such however is only comprehensible when arranged into systems of entities, which is the subject matter of ontology.[35]

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[32] See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*: *Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, edited by Paul McPartlan (New York: Continuum Books, 2006), xiii.

[33] Peter Van Inwagen, "Metaphysics", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 4, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaphysics/.

[34] *Metaphysics*, 1003a.

[35] Noa Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The making of a philosophical tradition* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 3.

Ontology, derives from the Greek ὄντος (*ontos)*, and refers to the study of being. In the discpline of philosophy it is a broad subfield of metaphysics, which in its primary sense, according to scholar of Buddhism Noa Ronkin, "captures the question of the extension of being, or 'the population question' that is, 'What are the beings?' or 'What does exist?'"[36] In a related, but secondary sense, one may use the term to describe the set of existents which any particular philosophy acknowledges, thus we can speak of a Platonic ontology, or an Aristotelian ontology, etc. Metaphysics is much broader than ontology; it broaches questions about the relation between mind and matter, the existence of God(s), survival after death and so on. It is tenable to say that aspects of both Greek and Indian thought fall under these categories.[37] The first portion of my dissertation is concerned with what I call the question of identity, but it is approach from (what I think) is an ontological perspective ,"what makes a thing to be what it is, and not something else?" – a question raised quite frequently, especially in western philosophy. I am not asking about the 'stuff' from which things are made, but rather *what*, if *anything*, goes into ontologically marking them as a particular 'thing' distinct from another. As will be discussed below, this is relatively easy to speak of in a linguistic environment that presupposes a *substance ontology*. In Buddhism it is more difficult to do as it rejects the substantialistic ontology that is at least implicitly operative in Indian and Greek thought. From the Buddhist perspective, this kind of conceptual language (used here, and by these traditions) could be used, in a conventional setting, with the awareness that it does not and can never adequately reflect reality, which is a constant state of interdependent co-arising. We will discuss in depth the Buddhist understanding of identity in the chapter on Kūkai.

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[36] *Ibid*.; for a more comprehensive discussion of ontology and the limitations with such a definition, see the entry on "Logic and Ontology" at the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Thomas Hofweber, "Logic and Ontology", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 4, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-ontology/.

[37] "… Metaphysical or ontological thinking is not Greek in origin: a certain variety of it is." Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought*, 152.

One notable difference between Greek and Indian philosophies is that Greek philosophies, at least since Plato, begin with metaphysics while Indian thought tends to start with epistemology.[38] Even so, both are concerned with ontology. In the Indian milieu it is important because insight into the nature of reality is central to knowledge, ethics and attainment of *moksha*, liberation from suffering that characterizes all of existence.[39] Knowledge has a strongly soteriological dimension. William Vallicella notes that its famous parable of the poisoned arrow makes clear that Buddhism itself is "first and foremost" a soteriology,[40] meaning that it primarily concerned with the practice of salvation or liberation rather than metaphysical speculation.

It was Plato's theory of forms that clarified the distinction between physics and metaphysics in Hellenistic thought.[41] While *being* is a central theme in Indian thought, there is no parallel to the Aristotelian understanding of metaphysics as the study of *being qua being*.[42] In Indian thought, being is most certainly thematized, for instance, in some of the philosophical debates concerning certain entities, such as nature of the *devas* (divinities) and the *ātman* (self or soul), as well as in linguistic analysis, by Indian grammarians, of Sanskrit terms such as *as* and *bhu* which roughly mean the same as the English 'to be'.[43] Mohanty argues that Indian thought, or at least a large portion of it, operates within a subject-object distinction as does Western philosophy.[44] I wish to go no further here than to recapitulate something that Ronkin says, that the axiomatic assumptions of Indian philosophies such as Vaiśeṣika, the intellectual sparring partner of many Buddhist thinkers throughout the ages, are marked by a "pluralistic realism", and are roughly on par with those of Aristotle.[45]

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[38] Cf. Ronkin, 2-4. Western thought until Descartes started with metaphysical presuppositions and as a secondary matter, tried to generate means by which to attempt to confirm these presuppositions, thus metaphysics first and epistemology second. Indian thought generally proceeds from the opposite direction, starting with epistemology because of the foundational concern for 'right cognition' (*pramāṇa*, fundamental categories of knowledge). Once that is established, their philosophers can then investigate metaphysics or ethics.

[39] David Ambuel, "Ontology in Indian philosophy", in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. Craig. (London: Routledge, 1998), accessed March 22, 2013, http://www.rep.routledge.com.libproxy.temple.edu/article/F063.

[40] Vallicella, "No Self?", 455.

[41] Ronkin, 2.

[42] Halbfass, 21.

Identity, Similarity and Difference

I use the term *identity* to refer that which makes a thing what it is and not something else, specifically what is referred to as "numerical identity".[46]

> A distinction is customarily drawn between *qualitative* and *numerical* identity or sameness. Things with qualitative identity share properties, so things can be more or less qualitatively identical. Poodles and Great Danes are qualitatively identical because they share the property of being a dog, and such properties as go along with that, but two poodles will (very likely) have greater qualitative identity. Numerical identity requires absolute, or total, qualitative identity, and can only hold between a thing and itself.[47]

Qualitative identity involves a high degree of identity similarity between two or more distinct items.[48] *Difference* or *distinctness* then is the negative correlate of identity (the opposite of sameness). Difference distinguishes one thing from another in some fashion.

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[43] *Ibid*.

[44] Mohanty, "Reason and Tradition…", 289-90. He concludes by saying ,"…it is, in my view, far from the truth to say that Western thought is objectifying while Indian thought is non-objectifiying and non-representational." (290)

[45] Ronkin, 55.

[46] As we will see below, any discussions of identity in Buddhism must also add a temporal dimension. From the Buddhist perspective, numerical identity is a convenient conceptual fiction, but lacks grounding in empirical reality.

[47] Harold Noonan, "Identity," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 4, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity/.

[48] Keith E. Yandell, "Some reflections on Indian Metaphysics," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 50, no. 1/3 (December 2001). 171. He provides a list of eight criteria which establish metaphysical distinctness.

Maximus' axiomatic understanding of identity, embedded in the principles of *logoi*, *tropoi* and *hypostasis*, is *ontological* and *relational* in nature. It is ontological in that it deals with the being or *ousia* of a thing, relational in that all created things are what they are in relation to the *Logos*, but also each other, since the *logoi* arrange creatures into harmonious communities or families; furthermore, they are relational by virtue of their *hypostasis*. In relation to God, things are marked by a participatory metaphysic; they are not self-existent, unlike God. Into this conversation, Master Kūkai, as a good Buddhist, might interject that we are making a dangerous assumption about the 'nature' of 'being' (as if *beings*, which are really ***thing-events*** in Buddhist thought, have a fixed nature.) However, these intellects are able to engage one another in scholarly discussion because Buddhism realizes the existence of the conventional world as well as our (insufficient) ways of perceiving and expressing it, but denies these any ultimacy. That does not mean that it does not exist or that it is purely illusory, as in the thought of Parmenides or later Advaita.[49]

Any such discussion then, such as this work, in Buddhist understanding, is something that takes place at the level of language or in a linguistic realm that is abstract and artificial; at best, it is a frozen image of a fluid reality, or a photograph in comparison to a motion picture. It is not without value, but cannot be assigned any ultimacy.[50] "This linguistic fiction or illusion surfaces in the use of language when the speaker substantialises A [any given thing] in the conceptual space created by language, which entails the appearance of atemporality."[51]

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[49] Adi Shankara (fl. 8th c. CE) characterized the empirical world as *māyā*, a conjurer's trick or magician's creation. It does not mean it is an 'illusion' in the strictest sense, but that interpretation is position taken by some later Advaitins. For more information, see Thomas O 'Neil. *Māyā in Śaṅkarā: Measuring the Immeasurable* (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980).

[50] For an excellent discussion of this point from a critical, Buddhist perspective, see Nagatomo, Shigenori. "The Logic of the *Diamond Sutra*: A is not A, therefore it is A," *Asian Philosophy* 10, no. 3 (2000): 213-244, especially pp.224ff. We will discuss this below in the section detailing the Buddhist understanding of identity and draw from Professor Nagatomo's article.

In this regard Buddhism is much more open to the utility of language as opposed to Cratylus, who in the eponymous Platonic dialogue reduced himself to finger-pointing and gesture-making after realizing the entirely arbitrary nature of language that cannot adequately reflect a world constantly in flux. The wisdom of Zen cautions us that the finger pointing at the moon is not to be confused with the moon.

While I will be engaging issues of identity and difference in the following chapters, we will see that these can carry with them a number of other issues, some implicitly, some explicitly, which will become clear in the following pages – issues such as the relation between unity and plurality, one and many, even immanence and transcendence.

Aristotle's response to the question of identity over time was to divide every being into two aspects – its essence and its accidents. In the essence of a thing lies its core characteristics, what makes it uniquely it and not something else. Accidents represent changeable features (such as the length of a person's hair, for instance). Accidental changes are those which do not corrupt a thing's identity (such the color of a house when it receives a new paint job). On the other hand, essential change is possible, such does change the essence of a thing (for example, when a house catches fire and is burnt down), making it no longer what it once was.[52] Although writing in the context of theological and Christological disputes, Maximus adapts a similar (but not identical) approach.[53] Vallicella contrasts the first, which he calls *alteration* with the second, *existential change*. He defines *alteration* as "a self-same thing's having incompatible properties at different times."[54] Alteration requires there to be a substance lurking beneath the alteration. Existential change occurs when a thing is brought into being or destroyed. Without an underlying substance, as Buddhist posits, any change "cuts deeper", altering existence and identity, and not only properties and states of a thing.[55] Any change like this is existential change; in Buddhism *all change* is existential change.[56]

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[51] Nagatomo, 228.

[52] Andrew Gallois, "Identity Over Time," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 4, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-time/.

The Priority of Substance in Ontology, Language and Epistemology

Ronkin notes that we implicitly use a substance metaphysics to explain our "common-sense" perception of the world, which axiomatically holds for the existence of individual, enduring objects.[57] Such is required for what we might call 'numerical identity' or 'diachronic identity' in the strong sense. Substance has a three-fold priority in common culture – ontological, epistemic and logico-grammatical.[58]

Hoffman calls it the "folk conceptual scheme", and points out that it has a second class of entities – those things other than substances, such as events, places, times and properties.[59] Aristotle attempted to organize and arrange the entities found in this folk schema into kinds which he called 'categories'.[60]

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[53] *Amb*. 42, 1341d, *Amb* 42:1329a; 1345b; *Amb* 31:1280a; *Amb* 15:1217a, *Amb* 36:1289c; see Tollefsen's discussion of Maximus' *logoi* as principles of a porhyrian tree, 81-89.

[54] Vallicella, "No Self?", 453.

[55] *Ibid*., 454; he develops this distinction between the two in "Can the Chariot take us to the land of No-Self?" *The Proceedings of the Twenty-First World Congress of Philosophy*, vol. 9, edited by Stephen Voss (Ankara, Turkey), 2006: 29-33; a much longer and more fully developed version of the article can be found here: http://maverickphilosopher.typepad.com/maverick_philosopher/2011/03/can-the-chariot-take-us-to-the-land-of-no-self.html.

[56] Vallicella, "Can the Chariot take us to the land of No-Self?", online version, accessed May 9, 2013.

[57] Ronkin, 52.

[58] *Ibid*., 52-54.

[59] Hoffman, Joshua. *Substance among other categories* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

[60] *Ibid*., 1.

Aristotle gave two definitions of ‘substance’ in his *Categories*. These can be considered distinct characteristics rather than two mutually exclusive accounts as they are compatible with each other. The first is that a substance is that which is neither said *of* a subject nor *in* a subject.[61] Such a definition can be used for what are called *primary substances*. These are individual objects and are not predicable of anything else. Things ‘said of’ objects characterize a thing as a whole; things ‘in an object’ focus on a particular feature that is, in a logical (though not necessarily physical) way, part of or in the individual.[62] The second is that substance is that which persists through change.[63] This somewhat broader definition would include both individual objects and classes or kinds of individual object; these are known as ‘secondary substances’.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes substances as those which are alone capable of existing independently.[64] Yandell puts it succinctly saying, “A full-blown substance is an item that has properties, is not itself merely a collection of properties, has a nature or essence, and endures over time.[65]” Typically the temporal “parts” of an object, that is, its existence in temporal phases, are not considered objects, whereas temporal parts of events are typically thought of as events themselves.[66]

A *substance ontology* is closely connected with a “realist” epistemology and the correspondence theory of truth.[67] It is marked by the belief that reality exists “out there” in the world beyond us. It is object-oriented and holds that these objects exist in the world which have an enduring and abiding core. Substance is that core and underlies all change, allowing it to remain the same over time, despite any changes a thing may undergo. The term 'substance' refers to this fundamental kind of being which endures the changes of its non-essential properties, characteristics or qualities (called "accidents" in Aristotelian thought). The world is characterized by two kinds of entities – substances and non-substances or accidents – the latter of which is metaphysically or ontologically dependent on the former.[68] Non-substances exist in substances and not vice-versa. In this way, substances are the "ontological foundations of what there is", the most basic of all things.[69] [70] In addition to the ontological priority, substance is also given an epistemological and logico-grammatical priority.

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[61] Aristotle, *Categories* 2a13.
[62] Robinson, Howard, "Substance," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 4, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/substance/.
[63] Aristotle, *Categories* 4a10. His actual description is that it is “numerically one and able to receive contraries”.
[64] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1070b30 (bk 12, ch. 5).
[65] Yandell, “Some reflections…”, 174.
[66] Robinson, “Substance”.
[67] It should be noted that a correspondence theory of truth and a ‘realist’ epistemology are usually found in the integrity orientation and not so much that of the intimacy orientation. See Kasulis, *Integrity or Intimacy,* 72-84.

Language, Logic and Grammar

At this point, we must distinguish between the implicit worldviews conveyed in East-Asian and Indo-European languages. Of East Asian languages, I will address primarily Chinese because the tantric Buddhism of Kūkai, although with roots in India, was received through the Chinese Hua-yen school, I will also briefly mention something about the Japanese language. The Sinification of Indian Buddhism was a massive hermeneutic undertaking that profoundly shaped East Asian Buddhism. Here we will address only issues related to the 'host' languages – Greek, Sanskrit and Chinese, but not to other issues concerning the Sinification of Buddhism.

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[68] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1003b5-10; Ronkin, 53-4.

[69] Ronkin, 54.

[70] More specifically, it is the primary substance qua particular (as opposed to the secondary substance qua universal) that can become a subject and never a predicate. We will discuss the significance of this distinction more in chapter on Maximus' theory of the *logoi*. Cf. Yasuo Yuasa, Shigenori Nagatomo and Jacques Fasan, "Image-Thinking and the Understanding of 'Being': The Psychological Basis of Linguistic Expression". *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 2 (April, 2005), 197.

Although Greek and Indian philosophies diverge in their fundamental orientations (the Indian foundational emphasis on epistemology as contrasted with the Greek foundational emphasis on metaphysics), at the very least, their languages, Sanskrit and Greek, as Indo-European languages, are bound by a common syntactic structure.

> As Indo-European, Sanskrit also is in some measure 'metaphysical,' as distinct from the languages of the Far East, with the notions of Being embedded in it grammatically and conceptually. It is metaphysical in being representational, concept-generating, and in being productive of ontological speculation about Being as the ground of all that is…[71]

I'd like to briefly talk about two other thinkers who have offered insight into how our linguistic grammatic-syntactic structure can shape our visions of the world. In such cases, the implicit structure of our languages shapes our ontologies.

Leslie Dewart. American theologian Leslie Dewart in *Evolution and Consciousness* notes the uniqueness of Indo-European languages, as well as ancient Sumerian,[72] lies in their apodictic nature.[73] He says that scholars have divided languages into two categories based on grammatical differences, those whose grammar (and speech) is apodictic and those whose grammar is depositional in nature. Indo-European languages are apodictic while East Asian languages, among others, are despositional. These refer to differing 'ideas' of the meaning of speech, that is, how people speak and what they do when they make a meaningful assertion.[74] The differences center around the role of the verb 'to be' (and equivalent copulas) which is found in Indo-European (apodictic) languages, but is largely absent from non-Indo-Euoropean (despositional) ones. In Indo-European languages it serves a double function, acting as both a cupola ("X is Y"), and as an existential or signifier of objective existence ("X is"," X exists").[75] At the heart of apodictic language is the assumption that language mirrors reality.

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[71] Mehta. J.L., "Heidegger and Vedanta", in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, edited by Graeme Parks (Honolulu, 1987), 27, cited by O'Leary, "Heidegger and Indian Thought", 183.

[72] Sumerian has a grammatical structure strikingly similar to Indo-European languages, but scholars are uncertain as to whether it is truly an Indo-European language.

[73] Dewart, Leslie. *Evolution and Consciousness: the Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature*. (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

[74] *Ibid.*, 261-2.

> Apodictic speakers assume that the subject is the ground, the active cause, or performer of what the verb signifies, whereas the verb is that which is attributed to the subject as its own, having proceeded from, or been caused or performed by, the subject.[76]

Accordingly, in Dewart's view then, since the language gives us a subject as an active ground of whatever action the verb signifies, we (as speakers of an Indo-European language) are lead to believe there is in reality a structure to reality which matches those of languages, a condition he calls "ontic consciousness". The primary consequence of this linguistic pattern is to elevate substantiality as the "paradigm for reality".[77]

> …the reality of real things is that which separates them from each other. Whatever is real is, as such, isolated, atomic, monadic and independent. By the same token, things are deemed to be lacking in reality to the degree they lack self-sufficiency; if anything is finite, contingent, or changeable, it must be lacking in reality.[78]

Another result is that we contrast reality 'as it is', with our experience of that reality; the experience is something diaphanous and flimsy; our experience is given a lesser status (in contrast to 'reality').[79] The speaker of an apodictic language is "absent minded", speaking as if his assertions were the repetitions of what reality asserts to us.[80]

The speaker of despositional language on the other hand, is "mindful of his own asssertive nature as a speaker and experiencer and does not project his own experience into the world"[81] and operates in a *phenomenal* paradigm.[82] In despositional grammar, the objects do not have priority over our experience of them; reality is disclosed in our encounter with the world.[83] The reality of a thing is judged by its relationship to other things.[84] The syntax of apodictic language requires predication, that is, the assignment of verbal predicates in relation to subjects of verbs, in order to make meaningful sentences. "To be" verbs have a double function, acting as cupola and existential signifier.

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[75] *Ibid.*, 260-1, fn #3.
[76] *Ibid.*, 260-7.
[77] *Ibid.*, 309.
[78] *Ibid.*, 309.
[79] *Ibid.*, 310-11.
[80] *Ibid.*, 314.

Yasuo Yuasa. Japanese philosopher Yasuo Yuasa notes that in East Asian cultures, while there did arise something akin to metaphysics, which investigated the nature of reality, it did not assume the form of the investigation of being.[85] Logic and ontology arose out of the attempt to distinguish *essentia* (essence, "what a thing is") from *existentia* (existence, "that a thing is"). According to the argument he makes, East Asian languages, such as Chinese, deny the ideational character of things in its language; language itself cannot truly be separated from experience. The phonetic nature of western languages means that words are comprised of sounds (phonemes) which do not, in themselves, have inherent meaning. The alphabetical character of such (Indo-European) writing systems arbitrarily assigns sounds and letters to one another.

Chinese language lacks a concept such as 'being' as an abstract predicate. It is said to be more closely connected to thing-events. It is likewise in Japanese, where the term *aru* ("to be") does not distinguish between "that there is" and "what it is", existence and essence.[86] He argues that Chinese, as a language, gives primacy to visual perception, such that every ideogram has a distinctly concrete character.[87] No native word in Chinese or Japanese shows 'being' in the abstract sense apart from a particular context. According to Yuasa, it is in the struggle with the distinction between *existentia* and *essentia* in western philosophy that the disciplines of ontology and logic developed.[88] [89]

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[81] *Ibid.*, 262.
[82] *Ibid.*, 262.
[83] He does not limit it to the human encounter with the world; any being's experience of the world discloses the world; it is the human experience that concerns him. Cf. 314-5.
[84] *Ibid.*, 315.
[85] Yasuo Yuasa, *Overcoming Modernity*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 69.

The "to be" verb in Indo-European. Both Dewart and Yuasa have pointed out the importance of 'to be' in Indo-European languages for the development of ontology in the western sense (Yuasa) and epistemology (Dewart); we have noted elsewhere the connection between the "common sense ontology" which marks Aristotelianism and much of subsequent western philosophy and epistemic realism. It seems that without the cupola, languages such as Arabic and Chinese are not easily able to thematize being. [90] Furthermore, Indo-European languages have a marked ability to coin abstractions, which may in part have contributed to the development of abstract, speculative thought in early Greek and Indian culture.[91] Unique to philosophical traditions within the Indo-European

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[86] *Ibid.,*71.

[87] It should be noted that this is similarly true of Japanese *kanji.* However, Japanese has two other syllabic writing systems (collectively called *kana*) which are derived from elements of kanji. Kana more closely Indo-European alphabets in as much as they are non-representational and the sounds assigned to them are arbitrary.

[88] Yuasa, *Overcoming Modernity*, 69.

[89] This is not to say that East Asian cultures did not develop disciplines of logic (such as that of the "Thousand Names School" or the Mohists in China), but these disappeared under the weight of the doctrine of the Confucian and Legalist doctrine of "rectification of names", which sought to establish the correct relationship between name and its referent. This was a practical concern, and connected with ethics and political thought, not with more abstract disciplines. Buddhist logic systems too, such as *hetuvidya* ("knowledge of causes"; 因明 or *yinming* in Chinese) were of secondary importance, or even derided as a "trifling matter" by Chinese Buddhists in favor of wisdom gained through experiential insight. Cf. Yuasa, 81-83.

[90] John May, "On Questioning Back," accessed March 4, 2015, http://josephsoleary.typepad.com/my_weblog/2011/07/john-may-on-questioning-back.html

[91] George Alexander Kennedy, *Comparative rhetoric: an historical and cross-cultural introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 172. Also see his comments on pages 173-4,

> Indo-European and Sumerian had a greater need than other languages to specify attribute and similarity when existence and identity were not [to] be predicated and at an early time developed the grammatical means to do so. The birth of simile would seem to be

language family is a concept of being which combines existence (that X is) and essence (what X is *per se*). By contrast, in the two philosophical traditions which evolved apart from Indo-European ones, the Chinese and Arabic, the respective terms *wujud* [92] and *yu* (有) refer to 'existence' and not 'being' as such.[93]

> In Indo-European languages, a thing simply *is*, without implying outside it, and it is the most abstract entities which the Platonic tradition most willingly credits with being. But in Chinese one approaches the object from outside, from the world which has it, in which there is it.[94]
>
> But a deeper reason is the impossibility in Indo-European languages of discussing a verbal or adjective concept without nominalising the word grammatically, with the danger of assimilating it to nouns…Westerners sometimes have the impression that the Chinese cannot form abstract concepts; but what the Chinese do find difficult is to Platonise, to talk about abstractions as though they were rarefied things.[95]

"*Common-Sense*" *Ontology*

Let us turn to the logico-grammatical priority given substances in the "common sense" worldview:

> …building on the logical notion of a subject, by 'sensible substances' Aristotle intended fundamental objects of predication, things that are neither predicated (said of) a subject nor in a subject. Contrarily, what needs to have a subject included in its definition is not a subject in the primary sense, and hence cannot be a substance. This primacy of substance is, then, characterized by a priority in definition: the definition of any non-substantial being will include the definition of a substance, but not vice-versa.[96]

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one of the stages in the development of rational and abstract thought."

[92] It is interesting to note Dewart's observation about the Arabic word *wujud*. It lacks the objectivity of 'to be'. He claims *that it is used* describe what is "real" in Arabic and comes from the 'verb' *wajada* which means 'to find' and 'to lie in one's path', suggesting that it effectively means 'availability' or 'findability'. Nothing can be found without a finder. Nothing can be available without someone or something to avail itself of it. See pages 315-6 for a discussion of this.

[93] A.C. Graham, "'Being in Linguistics and Philosophy," *Foundations of Language* 1 (1965), 223-231.

[94] A.C. Graham, "'Being' in Classical Chinese," in *The Verb "Be" and Its Synonyms*, edited by John W.M. Verhaar (Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing, 1967), 16.

[95] *Ibid.,*17.

[96] Ronkin, 54.

This common-sense ontology, even if not codified by Aristotle, is even reflected in our languages (at least in Indo-European ones), which have a subject-predicate arrangement. Such an arrangement expresses a “two category ontological scheme”.[97] The subject of a sentence refers to a particular object while the predicate to attributes and properties said of the subject. Such a syntactic arrangement privileges the subject, making it the center of meaning.[98] Shigenori Nagatomo explains the epistemological implications of this, which is known as the “every day perspective” or “conventional perspective” (*samvṛtisatya*) in Buddhist parlance, and its connection with the ontological:

> In the everyday standpoint…a subject stands ‘here’, while a material thing exists ‘out there’ as an object, wherein a spatial distance separates them. In coming to know a material thing, the subject must objectify it and thus distance itself from the object…the distinction between ‘here’ and ‘there’ is established in the subject as a referential point from the side of the subject, and as such this distinction is relative to the subject.[99]

The danger for the unwitting (unenlightened, or in the words of the Diamond Sutra, “foolish, ordinary”) person is that their minds are quick to seize individual *dharmas* and reify them. In this context, *dharma* (pl. *dharmata*) refers to any existing thing, which can include beings, selves, material objects and psychical events. The act of conceptually seizing leads to a “metaphysicalization” of the thing seized upon, leading to the creation of a substance ontology.[100] For the example, the experience (sight) of a red ball in our senses may lead a sentient being to believe there exists in a reified way a small red sphere which exists independently of the rising and fall and interrelations of the causal matrix.

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[97] *Ibid.*, 52.

[98] Of course, this also means that if language and metaphysics are tied together, that languages with different syntactic schemes may produce different “metaphysical” insights. “…if common sense owes its metaphysical insight into the structure of one’s language (in this case Sanskrit), then this insight is not sacrosanct, and, given another linguistic schema (such as that of the Hopis) one may find support for reduction of substance to events.” Mohanty, J.N. *Classical Indian Philosophy.* (New York: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 43-4.

[99] Nagatomo, “The Logic of the Diamond Sutra…”, 221.

[100] Dewart, Leslie. *Evolution and Consciousness: the Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

Substance in Epistemology

The third aspect of the prioritization of substance, apart from language and ontology, is epistemic in nature. Ronkin argues that traditionally in western epistemology, knowledge of a thing requires knowledge of its underlying substance. In short, the definition of a substance is necessary, at least in the western tradition, in order to know what a thing is.[101] Knowledge of a thing requires us to be able to explain its essence, the very definition of a thing,[102] rather than its accidental properties such as size or color or place.[103]

> …to state what makes it the kind of thing it is, in other words, its essence. And to state this essence was to state the thing's definition. In other words, the definitions philosophers looked for were not entirely definitions of *words* but of *realities*…Knowing such definitions was held to be basic to knowing at all. In order to know something as beautiful… one must know the essence of beauty.[104]

In western thought in particular, this threefold priority given to substance is tied to epistemological realism, which holds that we have the ability to attain knowledge of the world outside of us because our beliefs and categories fit with the features of mind-independent reality.[105]

Buddhist and Christian Responses to Substance Ontology

Christianity and Buddhism each emerged in dialogue with a substance ontology and the dualisms embedded within it. As a matter of fact, one could argue that if the

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[101] Ronkin, 54.

[102] Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew. *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3. The principle dates back at least to Socrates as depicted in *Euthyphro* 6e.

[103] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1028a31-b2. Cf. Ronkin, 54.

[104] Radde-Gallwitz, 3.

[105] Ronkin, 55.

Bodhidharma had not gone to the east, Buddhism, still locked into a worldview structured by Sanskrit, would never have developed as deeply and thoroughly its critique of conventional, dualistic ways of thought and language.

Thus Buddhist philosophy, as it developed in India, was still governed by a fundamentally dualistic linguistic structure, even if it had cultivated intuitions about the limits and dangers. As I hope to have shown above, even if it had rejected epistemological dualisms of subject and object and ontological dualism of being and non-being, Buddhism was still to some degree bound by the Indo-European subject-object syntactic structure and a dualistic framework which substantialized and reified the subject as the center of meaning and reality. This is based fundamentally on its roots in an apodictic linguistic context.

> The focus on pictorial correspondence led [Indian] Buddhists, like the Greeks to give reality (like logic) a subject-predicate form. The subject corresponds to things and the predicate to features, attributes, properties, essences and characteristics. They assumed, as the Greeks did, that using a word presupposed the existence of permanent substances. When an ordinary object changes we use different predicates with the same subject.[106]

Subsequent generations of Buddhist philosophers and practitioners (such as Nāgārjuna) were attentive in slowly, but consciously, weeding Buddhism from its influence.[107] It is with the transmission to China (and later to the rest of East Asia) that the inherent limits placed on it by Sanskrit were more fully overcome with the adoption of a completely new language which lacked the implicit substantialism of Indo-European languages.

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[106] Hansen, Chad. *A Daoist Theory of Chinese thought: a philosophical interpretation*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 16.

[107] Yuasa identified Zhiyi (538-597), the third patriarch of T'ien-t'ai (Tendai) Buddhism as the one responsible for establishing the foundation for Buddhism's Sinification in China. In attempting to explain the insight of the Heart Sutra that "form is emptiness", he drew from the standpoint of practical experience (as found in meditation) rather than the logical argumentation found in Indian thinkers, such as Nagarjuna. Cf. Yuasa, 192.

On the other hand, the language and ontology of substance permeates throughout Christianity. Theologian Donald MacKinnon argues that any attempt to speak meaningfully of Christ's relation to the Father obligates Christians to use categories of ontology such as those explored by Aristotle in his metaphysics:[108]

> …the person of Christ thrusts upon our attention the question how one identifiable historical individual shall be at once e.g. 'one thing' with the Father and yet subordinate to that Father in that the Father is greater than he…The use of the concept of substance in Christology makes possible the over-coming of the seeming contradiction between two propositions one asserting Christ's dependence upon the Father, the other his equality with that Father which sent him.[109]

If Christianity is committed to logical consistency (and abiding by the principle of non-contradiction) some attempt must be meaningfully made to reconcile the seemingly disparate claims of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as the claims of the Trinity as both one and three. Aristotle's metaphysical inquiry, "trespasses" into the philosophy of logic: when he discusses differences in substance, quality and accident, we find the differences involve the way that subject and predicate are related. [110] As noted above, with the metaphysical aspect of a substance ontology, there is also a logical and a grammatical or linguistic dimension wrapped up in it as well.[111]

Beyond what are fundamentally issues of dogma, the use of categories of substantialist ontology allows the Christian faithful to see what confronts them in the person of Christ,[112] to more clearly see where the scandal or paradox of the incarnation lies.[113] The traditional understanding of Christ would not be possible without an ontology of substance, which makes Christianity (as traditionally understood) incompatible with philosophical systems, such as Buddhism, which engage in a radical critique of the substance ideology.[114]

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[108] Donald M. MacKinnon, "'Substance' in Christology: A Cross-Bench View" in *Philosophy and the burden of theological honesty* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 244-5.

[109] *Ibid.*, 245.

[110] *Ibid.*, 240.

[111] La Matina argues that in order to express Christian doctrines concerning God, the Cappadocians found it necessary to make a logico-syntatic move of privileging the sentence over other parts of grammar. Cf. La Matina, Marcello. "Analytic Philosophy of Language and the revelation of Person. Some Remarks on Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor," *Studia Patrstica Vol .XLVII.* Edited by J. Baun, et al. (Louvain, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2010), 77-83.

While not denying the importance of a substantialist ontology for Christianity, particularly for the early Christological debates, more recent scholars of the Neopatristic school, such as John Zizioulas and Nickolaos Loudovikos, point out the limitations of such thinking in the Trinitarian debates[115] which led the Cappadocian Fathers[116] to utilize what is variously called an "ontology of *tropoi*", an "ontology of *hypostasis*" or a "relational ontology",[117] which Maximus cultivates.

Essence or substance never manifests itself except in a particular mode or modality. These ontologies, instead of focusing on substance (*ousia*), which they identify with principle (*logos*) or derives from it, incorporate the modes of being (*tropoi*). The *tropoi* adjust the being of a thing "to an intention or purpose or manner of communion",[118] while leaving the *logos* of a thing fixed. *Tropoi* are not merely accidents in the Aristotelian sense, but account for the changeable aspects of a being, including those aspects which (in rational beings) can be changed through exercise of the will. The *tropos* is a means by which beings relate to one another. Every being has a *tropos*. Maximus is even prepared to call that every existing thing a *hypostasis*.[119] Even God himself has a *tropos* which is altered at the moment of the Incarnation.[120]

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[112] MacKinnon, 249.

[113] *Ibid.*, 245.

[114] "To be sure, if we accept the Buddhist ontology of the emergence of phenomena in radical interdependence, there can be no fixed substance of the humanity, divinity, person, or nature of Jesus Christ." Joseph O'Leary, "The Significance of John Keenan's Mahāyāna Theology," *The Eastern Buddhist* 30, no.1 (1997), 127.

[115] For example, see Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology* and Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*.

[116] It is interesting to note that both Zizioulas and Loudovikos are scholars associated with the Eastern Orthodox church. It seems to be Eastern Christian scholars who have devoted the most attention and time to this aspect of Cappadocian (and subsequently Maximinian) thought.

[117] Leontius of Jerusalem also utilizes a "hypostatic ontology" in order to explain Christ's incarnation, to reconcile his being a specific person while sharing common human nature in order to redeem it. Cf. Kenneth Paul Wesche, "The The christology of Leontius of Jerusalem monophysite or Chalcedonian?," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 31 no. 1 (1987), 65-95. It is not clear to me if this is an innovation on the part of Leontius or if he is using categories common to Byzantine thinkers of his era.

[118] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 24.

While these concepts of substance or *ousia* and *logos* are fundamental to the thought of Maximus and the Cappadocians before him of no less importance is the *hypostasis*, for understanding the nature of a being. *Hypostasis*, as Maximus uses it, means 'independent existence' and represents a fusion between a thing's *ousia* or *logos* and its *tropoi*. The doctrine of *logoi* then accounts for the otherness of beings (at its most individual level) while *tropoi* accounts for the changeability of created things as well as their relationality on different levels. *Tropoi* then in this view are as fundamental (necessary) as a thing's essence. What happens in salvation history, and occurs at level of soteriology and redemption occurs at the level of *tropoi*. The danger with 'objective ontologies', that is, those marked by substantialism, is that they are reductionistic – they point to a thing, isolate it and describe it "in itself". "Personal identity is totally lost if isolated for its ontological condition is relationship."[121]

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[119] *Epistle* 15: PG 91, 549bc; Zizoulas, *Communion and Otherness,* 25.

[120] *Amb*. 5: PG 91, 1056; *Amb*. 41: PG91, 1038c, also Zizoulas, p.24.

[121] Zizoulas, *Communion and Otherness,* 112.

CHAPTER 2
'PERSON' AND 'INDIVIDUAL EXISTENT' AS CENTER-POINT OF MAXIMUS' THOUGHT

The Life and Significance of Maximus the Confessor

Little is known of the life of St. Maximus before his emergence as a young man. One biography places his birth and childhood in the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople. Another places him in Palestine.[1] Scholars know with some certainty that he was born around 580 CE. Although two early biographies of Maximus are extant, neither is fully trustworthy. The first is the Greek *Life of St Maximns*, written about four hundred years after his death by the monk Michael Exaboulites and the *Syriac Life of Maximus*, a polemical work composed by his contemporary, a Monothelite named George Reshaina.[2]

The first clear information about his life places him, as a young man in his early thirties, as the first secretary to the Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius, the same Heraclius who would later intervene in significant ways in the affairs of the Imperial Church. Maximus would later argue against the theological-political policies advocated by the emperor as well as his embracing of heterodox doctrinal positions.

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[1] Paul Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 3.

[2] Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 4-6, especially p.6:

> Exaboulites' account is a patchwork of anecdotes pieced together from diverse sources. Apparently not knowing the details of his early life, Exaboutlites' simply copies the details from the biography of the eighth century monastic figure, Theodore Studite. The Syriac *Life*, on the other hand, has the advantage of being written by a rough ontemporary, but is shaped by its polemical intent. It has him born in Hefsin, Palestine, a town a short distance from the Sea of Galilee. It depicts him as the illegitimate offspring from a union between a Samaritan man and a Palestinian serving girl. Upon growing into adulthood, he flees to a monastery where he receives tenure from a "wicked Origenist". The Syriac *Life* provides more details about his early life and his initial encounter with Sophronius, but fails to explain his either his ease of access to the Byzantine court or his breadth of knowledge; he received an education in both theological and secular subjects far beyond what could be expected from the monks of his time.

Maximus' position as secretary suggests several things. First, he must have been from a wealthy Byzantine family, this job as secretary was a position that traditionally only nobility took. It also suggests something of his education, as employment in the Byzantine bureaucracy required a host of cultural and political skills, similar to what would have been required for Kūkai, who initially sought a position in the imperial court.

We know that Maxmus later left the political world of the Imperial Court for the monastic life, entering a monastery at Chrysopolis (modern day Turkish *Üsküdar*), across the Bosphorous from Constantinople. One biography gives us two possible reasons for this change in vocation - his dismay at the irreligiousness of the Byzantine Court as well as his love of solitude and contemplation. Shortly after entering that monastery, he became chief abbot there but left it afterwards due to its vulnerability to attack by the Persians, national enemies of the Byzantines.

When the last pre-Islamic Persian dynasty, the Sassanids, were poised to conquer Anatolia (modern day Turkey), Maximus fled first to nearby Czicus in 628 and then to Carthage about three years later. Large numbers of foreign monks had travelled there, refugees from the Persian invasion, establishing monastic colonies. Northern Africa was a flourishing Byzantine province that was relatively peaceful.[3]

In his letters, he remarks that he spent time with the ascetic Sophronius (560-638) among a community of monks called the *Eukratades*. They were disciples of a Palestnian monk named *John Eukratas Moschus*. Sophronius was a gifted philosopher and master of rhetoric who would later become Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634 and Maximus' staunch ally in the Christological controversies until the former's death several years later. Under the tutelage of Sophronius, whom he considered his spiritual master, father and teacher, he studied the writings of the Origen, the Cappadocians (particularly Gregory of Nazianzus) as well as Pseudo-Dionysius.

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[3] Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy,* 3.

In July 645, Maximus gained notoriety for his conservative stance in the Christological controversies when he debated the deposed Patriarch of Constantinople Pyrrhus in Africa. Pyrrhus had been deposed for political reasons and fled to northern Africa. Maximus and Pyrrhus held a public debate in which Maximus led Pyrrhus to (temporarily) accept the Dyothelite position that Maximus advocated which remained dominant in northern Africa and in the western (Roman) lands.

Maximus served as one of the leaders of ecclesial resistance to Monothelitism in the Christian East while Pope Martin I, in Rome, lead resistance to it in the west. The latter assembled the First Lateran Council in October 649 and anathematized Monothelitism as well as the Emperor's edicts, earning Pope Martin the ire of the Emperor.

Maximus was arrested in 653 along with Pope Martin I, on orders of Emperor Constans II. Pope Martin died in exile before he could be put on trial. Maximus however was tried for treason, accused of attempting to undermine the Emperor, and exiled to Thrace. He refused to keep silent in the face of the emperor's advocacy of Monothelitism, so was taken back to Constantinople for another trial. There officials brutally interrogated and mutilated him, cutting off his tongue and right arm. He was exiled to Lazica, along the Black Sea and subsequently died there on August 13th, 662.

Shortly after his death, members of the Christian community began to venerate him. Miracles were reported to have happened at his tomb.[4] Both Eastern Orthodox and

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[4] "St Maximus the Confessor", accessed July 24, 2013, http://oca.org/saints/lives/2013/01/21/100249-st-maximus-the-confessor.

Catholic Churches commemorate his martyrdom as a yearly feast day. The *troparia* (verses of a hymn sung in the honor of a saint on special occasion) of the Eastern Churches call him, "herald of the faith", "teacher of purity and true worship" and even "enlightener of the universe".[5]

His education. If he received the complete academic formation of his time, which his tenth century biographer claims, the course of education would have taken close to fifteen years. He would have started at age six with basic literacy and grammar, then working through rhetoric and philosophy until the age of twenty-one. He would have been introduced early on to classical authors such as Homer, Ovid and others. His education in philosophy would have included math, astronomy and music as well as logic, ethics and metaphysics. Polycarp Sherwood identifies this philosophical curriculum as focusing on the writings of Plato and Aristotle as well as the commentaries of Proclus, Iamblichus, Aphroisiensis, Ammonius and Porphyry and possibly the Stoic and Neoplatonic tradition.[6] Tollefsen notes we cannot say with certainty what he texts or authors was acquainted with by reading through his writings. Maximus could have come by many of the important concepts, such as the meaning of *ousia*, through Christian writers rather than directly through Greek non-Christians. His collection of works includes at least two treatises that were likely pseudo-epigraphically attributed to him, including a compendium based on Aristotle's *Categories* and an *enchiridion* (handbook) detailing the nuances of Neo-Platonic (particularly Porphyrian) logic. This at least suggests he was familiar with such or the compilers of his works thought they were important for understanding his thought.[7] He was later introduced to the Pseudo-Dionysius and the Cappadocian Fathers under the direction of his spiritual father Sophronius and seems to have been very familiar with the work of the theologian Origen.

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[5] "St. Maximus the Confessor – Troparian and Kontakion", accessed July 24, 2013, http://oca.org/saints/troparia/2013/01/21/100249-st-maximus-the-confessor.

[6] Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008): 15-16, citing Polycarp Sherwood, "Notes on Maximus the Confessor", *The American Benedctine Review* 1, no.1 (1950): 347-56.

His writings: According to Andrew Louth, the writings of Maximus fall into three principle genres: *Centuries* (*hekatontas*), *Question and Answer* (*erotapokriseis*) and *Commentaries*. Each genre has a fundamentally conservative character, meaning that it does not claim to be presenting anything new, but rather re-presenting the wisdom of previous generations (usually of spiritual or theological masters), and sometimes giving new explanation or clarification of an unclear text.

The first two have their origins in the monastic tradition. *Centuries* are a collection of paragraphs, each quite short (sometimes only a sentence or two long), typically arranged in groups of a hundred (hence its name), often around a central theme, for example, his *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnation* or *Four Centuries on Love*. It was a genre best suited to the slow contemplative reading of a monk. The contents are not presented as something new or novel, but as summarizing the wisdom of previous generations of monks, Church Fathers and so on. In the *Question and Answer* format, the monastic writer responds to questions raised to him by others. It often involves the interpretation of ambiguous or unclear passages from scripture or spiritual writings. His *Ambigua* are an example of this genre. The third genre is the commentary, whose use is not limited to the monastic environment. It focuses typically on scripture, but other sources as well, such as the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius as well as in Maximus' case, the Divine Liturgy (*Synaxis*), which represents his theological-philosophical interpretation of the central act of Christian worship.[8]

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[7] *Ibid.*, 15-16.

His significance. He is perhaps unique in all of Christian thought in his understanding of the theological, philosophical and spiritual implications of the Incarnation of the Logos. Though he is less well known in Western Christianity, the thought of Maximus is as deep and influential as Augustine of Hippo. Maximus leant his authority to Pseudo-Dionysius, providing an interpretation in keeping with Christian orthodoxy of the time (for there are passages in Pseudo-Dionysius that seem to be Monothelitist in spirit),[9] thus paving the way for his acceptance throughout the church and his use for ascetic and mystical theology. Maximus is considered to be the last of the Fathers to write on the Incarnation[10] and one of the last to be considered a "Father of the Church" by both Christian east and west. Apart from the attention given him in the writings of John Scotus Eriugena (815-877 CE), Maximus was largely overlooked in the Western churches until the twentieth century. He was always greatly revered in the Eastern churches; his writings were influential in thought of figures like Simeon the New Theologian (949-1022 CE) and Gregory Palamas (1296-1359 CE). He also gave the orthodox doctrine of *theosis* (deification) a secure foundation, basing it firmly on the Christology of Chalcedon and the writings of Cyril.[11] His teachings on the freedom of the will are profound. His synthesis of theology and spirituality played a formative role in shaping Eastern Christian spirituality; his works on self-cultivation occupy a prominent place in the collection known as the *Philokalia*, taking up more space than those of any other spiritual writer.[12]

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[8] Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 20-21; cf. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology*, 4-6.
[9] Namely his reference to *theandric operations* (θεανδρικαὶ 'ενέργειαι) in *Epistle 4*, written to the monk Gaius.
[10] John Chapman, "St. Maximus of Constantinople," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), accessed May 1, 2012, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10078b.htm.
[11] John Meyendorff. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 37.

‘Person’ and ‘Individual Existent’ as Axis of Maximus’ Theology and Philosophy

In this section, I will argue that Maximus’s understanding of *hypostasis* is central to appreciate his understanding of identity. A close look will reveal how tightly it is wrapped up in theological questions, concerning the nature of God and of God’s *Logos*, Christ. The word itself has two meanings. The first is one used by Hellenistic philosophers and theologians to mean, an “individual existence”. The second meaning is that of “person” and emerged out of theological controversies in the early Christian church. Christians struggled to understand how God could be both one and three, a truth considered divinely revealed. The term *hypostasis* was used by theologians such as the Cappadocian Fathers to explain God’s three-ness, in contrast to *ousia* which described God’s one-ness. In this capacity the word *hypostasis* takes on additional shades of meaning. Maximus uses the term *hypostasis,* aware of the significance of the word.

In order to understand *hypostasis*, I will first examine two other concepts, *logos* (pl. *logoi*) and *tropos* (pl. *tropoi*). The distinction between them bears a passing resemblance to the the distinctions Aristotle makes between *substance* and *accidence* as well as between *primary* and *secondary substance*.[13] In the context of Maximus’ thought, *logos* refers to the idea of a thing that a craftsman draws on while creating something, an

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[12] The Philokalia, (φιλοκαλία, “Love of the Beautiful”) is a collection of texts on the spiritual life written by Eastern Christian writers from the fourth through fifteenth centuries. It was compiled by Macarios of Corinth and Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain for the purpose of training monks in contemplation. Cf. Brock Bingaman, “Becoming a Spiritual World of God: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor,” in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, edited by Brock Bingamin and Bradley Nassif (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 137.

[13] “Primary substance” refers to a particular individual, such as a dog, *Fido*. “Secondary substance” refers to the species *dog*, a substantial kind.

"intellectual blueprint," so to speak. In the neo-platonic milieu, there was some debate as to the location of the ideas – whether inside the mind of God or the One, the mind of the demiurge or external to both, and existing independently of them. It is not identical with a creature, but bestows its *ousia*. Maximus, drawing from Pseudo-Dionysius, argues these *logoi* are not primarily *ideas* but rather *providential wills* of God towards a thing he will create.

Tropos refers to a thing's *mode of existence*. If the *logoi* of a thing serve as its blueprints, they effectively provide a set of parameters that define the thing. It can be only be "thus and such". *Logoi* serve as the "what?" of things. *Tropoi* answer the question "how?" *Tropoi* are variable, how a thing exists within the parameters provided by its *logoi*. Rational beings have great freedom to harmonize with or turn against their *logoi*. Together the *tropoi* and *logoi* of a thing make up its *hypostasis* or individual existence. In his development of these doctrines, Maximus elevates the status of the particular even beyond that of Aristotle, because for Maximus (and others, such as Pseudo-Dionysius) particulars are directly willed by God and the subject of his providence. Rooted in the will of God, all existent things are anchored by an ontological stability.

The terms first rose to prominence in the Christian milieu during a series of theological controversies. In an attempt to understand the paradox of God who is simultaneously three and one, thinkers had advanced a number of mutually contradictory positions. Among the most extreme were the Eunomians, and the Sabellians who sought to protect God's unity at the expense of his three-ness.[14] Sabellians in effect claimed that

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[14] Eunomians were seen as Arians. Influenced by Origenist thought, Arians denied the Trinity as such and insisted on a subordinationist Christology. Without beginning (*agennetos*), God (the Father) alone could be

God had one *hypostasis* as he had one *ousia.* At the other extreme were those, in effect, embraced tritheism, who emphasized the uniqueness of each member of the Trinity at the expense of their unity.[15] Likewise, these seemed to be arguing that each *ousia* can only be connected to one *hypostasis.* In either case, it seems that they implicitly accepted equating *ousia* and *hypostasis*. Looking at this, we can see their essentially conservative character – to protect some aspect of teaching about the nature of God – but did so by flattening out the paradoxical nature of divinity.

The Cappadocians, representing the orthodox position, had to explain the doctrine of the Trinity in such a way as to respect the completeness and ontological integrity of each of its members, which they felt was in keeping with scripture and Christian tradition. The Cappadocians argued that the three persons were entirely alike in terms of *ousia,* that is substance or essence, but differed in their "mode of origination" (*tropos hyparxeos*),[16] a concept which I will explain below. If the Cappadocians had not disconnected the two

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truly called God. The Word of God or *Logos* had a beginning in time and was a creation of God, destined to serve as a mediator and intermediary between God and the created world. He could rightfully be called the "Son of God" as God the Origen believed in the hypostatic and substantial reality of Father, Son and Spirit, but ranked them in a declining order of power and honor, with the Father first, followed by the Son and then Spirit. Father created him directly, while all other things he created through the instrumentality of the Son. Reacting against heterodox movements such as Arianism, which failed to acknowledge the divinity of Christ, Sabellians, followers of the priest Sabellius, held for the full divinity of Father, Son and Spirit as well as the oneness of God. To argue so, they taught a form of modalism, holding that God was only one *person*; "Father", "Son" and "Holy Spirit" were but 'modes' or 'roles' assumed by God in salvation history. Their understanding of God however was difficult to reconcile with scripture and led to some unpalatable (for the Christian orthodox) conclusions; according to their logic God the Father suffered on the cross. To paraphrase Tertullian, they "put to flight the Paraclete" and "crucified the Father". (*Adversus Praxeas*, ch.1) Furthermore scripture depicts Christ in a reciprocal dialogue with the Father, praying to him and so forth. Sabellianism in effect reduces this to a matter of pretending. Cf. Zizioulas, *Being and Communion*, 157.

[15] Such as represented by John Philoponus (490-570 CE), a Christian apologist and disciple of Proclus, who was condemned posthumously, about a century after his death, for tritheism. He was a monophysite who held that each member of the Trinity is its own separated substance; using language above, we might say that he failed to distinguish between *ousia* and *hypostasis* in the manner of the Cappadocians. He strictly held to a particularlist reading of Aristotelian substance; only primary substances exist; secondary substances are a conceptual creation of the mind. Cf. Philoponus, *Arbiter*, ch.7; see Erismann, 284, fn#25 for an explanation of the connection between monophysitism and tritheism. In sum, tritheism extends to the Trinity the monophysite axiom that all natures are necessarily particular.

[16] Stead, 184-5. Cf Basil, *Epistle 236*, 6.1-22 Turcescu, 387-8.

terms, *ousia* and *hypostasis* in order to avoid Sabellianism, they would have had to take a tritheistic stance. Cappadocians argued that *hypostasis* is the only way that the God can be known or experienced. God, in his essence (*ousia*) cannot be grasped, experienced or communicated.

The reading I provide of these concepts in Maximus is strongly influenced by a strain of interpretation found in the writings of a handful of contemporary Orthodox Christian thinkers, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Nikolaous Loudovikos and Brian Turescu. Drawing from these scholars I will identify two important implications of these ideas which will help us to grasp Maximus' understanding of *identity*. In the centuries leading up to Maximus, these concepts were articulated by early Church Fathers in the creedal debates. Probably the finest articulation of them can be found in the Cappadocian Fathers.

According to Zizioulas, the first implication is God's *ontological freedom*. This refers to the ability to create freely according to his will, without either inner necessity or external constraint, in contrast to something Plotinus' One. Zizioulas argues that if there is no necessity in creation, creation does not share God's nature, it is thus non-monistic, otherwise creation would have been by necessity and identical to God. "The absence, therefore, of freedom in the act of creation would amount automatically ot the loss of ontological otherness, for both the Creator and his creation."[17] Creation loses its integrity and becomes merely an emanation or phantom of its source.

The second, flowing form the first, is *God's otherness*. God's otherness is both *ontological* (with regards to creation) and *hypostatic* (in regards to the persons within the Trinity). Ontological otherness differentiates God from creation, it is the fundamental gap (χάσμα or *chasma*, to use a Maximian term) between something which exists necessarily and that which exists contingently. Hypostatic otherness refers to the difference between persons in the Trinity whom are of the same substance. The doctrines Maximus articulates about created things reflect these principles and furthermore, show how all existents reflect, to some degree, the Trinity.

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[17] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 16.

Even the Trinity, which does not exist as we do, is characterized, in a way, by these three marks. Everything does. Thus the identity of created things is in some way rooted in the nature of the Trinity itself. And therefore it is through this triad of concepts – *logoi*, *tropoi* and *hypostasis* (the 'what' of a thing, it's 'how' and 'who') – that we can fully understand how Maximus conceives of identity.

Logos and logoi in Maximus

The first step to understanding how Maximus conceives of identity ontologically is to investigate his doctrine of the divine *logoi* (λόγοι) and their relationship with the Divine *Logos*. Connecting logoi with Logos, results in two consequences important for him: it allows him to preserve both *identity* of *existents in their individuality* as well as provide *unity among them*. His theory of *logoi*, while present at least implicitly throughout his works, is most clearly enumerated in *Ambiguum 7*. It is a response to an Origenist account of the creation of the world, which is ultimately tragic in nature: multiplicity is a result of a fall from a primal unity. The Origenists present a heterodox interpretation of Gregory of Nanzianzus that Maximus is at pains to confute.

His doctrine of *logoi*, the 'what of a thing', can be classified as a kind of exemplarism and rooted in Platonic and neo-platonic metaphysics. Doctrines of exemplarism can be found throughout the Church Fathers, most famously (in the

Christian West) in Augustine of Hippo.[18] Although implicitly influenced by Platonism, Maximus, on the other hand, draws his ideas from Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius and the Cappadocian Fathers. Some of his understanding reflects Christian appropriations of Aristotle and the Stoics.[19] As we will see, one chief difference of great significance between Maximus and the Platonic tradition is that Maximus' understanding of *logoi* cannot be reduced to static nature of the world of forms. *Logoi simultaneously express God's creative and providential wills for created things, his presence immanent within it as well as its telos or final goal.*[20]

At its most basic level, exemplarism holds that God or a similar being (*Nous*, demiurge, etc.) is the *causa exemplaris*, formal cause, which contains in his Mind the ideas or patterns of all things that go to make up the created world. It is helpful here to include in this term the traditional Platonic description of the forms as a paradigm independent of the demiurge's mind.[21] It is a doctrine Platonic in spirit, but not completely alien to Christian sensibilities or scripture. As in the case of Christianity then, we must not only understand the *logoi*, but also the *Logos* who contains them all, as the former cannot be understood without reference to or outside of relation to the latter.

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[18] Cf. *Diverse Questions,* 83.46.1–2. *Unfinished Works*, 1.2; 4.14, *Against the Manichees,* 1.6.10; *Literal* 1.14.8-1.15.29; *Confessions*, 12.7.7; *City of God*, 12.1. One feature that distinguishes Augustine's theory from Maximus' is that for Augustine, creation happens in three stages – the divine plan, the creation of the seminal principles (roughly equivalent to Maximus' *logoi*) and then the act of creation within time.

[19] Although I will briefly cover this below, for a fuller picture, see Tollefsen. *The Christocentric Cosmology*, 26ff, for a discussion in some detail on this point.

[20] Elizabeth Theokritoff, "Creator and creation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, edited by Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 66.

[21] I am following Tollefsen here; Cf., 21-2. Note that Kenny considers these two doctrines – exemplarism and "divine ideas" – to be significantly different from one another and to have quite different implications. John Peter Kenny, *Mystical Monotheism* (Hanover, NH: Brown University Press, 1991), 16ff.

Exemplarism finds its origins in the writings of Plato, particularly in the creation story given in the dialogue *Timaeus*.[22] In it, Timaeus argues that all things subject to becoming must have a cause, whether it is called god, craftsman (demiurge), father or creator.[23] It is a living being with intellect and seems be anthropomorphized, which Tollefsen notes is quite different than the Aristotelian depiction of thought thinking itself.[24] Because of its goodness, the demiurge wishes to create and to create as good a universe as possible by focusing on these divine ideas as an eternal paradigm which he simply calls, "the Living Thing".[25] This paradigm exists outside of the demiurge and is also distinct from matter. The demiurge uses pre-existent material, seemingly a material substratum which Plato calls *the receptacle* (*hypodochê*) and space (*chôra*).[26] The demiurge imposes order on something initially chaotic, fashioning it in something orderly, harmonious and beautiful.[27] The demiurge however does not directly create human beings, preferring to leave the task for lesser divinities.[28]

Aristotlelian[29] and Stoic[30] philosophy indirectly contributed to the rise of later exemplarist doctrines as they reached their peak in Neo-platonic thought. By the time of the philosophical movement known as “Middle Platonism” (c. 100 BCE-300 CE), we begin to see a merging of Platonic, Stoic and Aristotelian thought within the Academy. Middle Platonic thinkers tended to utilize a triadic model of Monad-Idea(s)-Matter.[31] In this system, the middle principle, however defined as *Logos*, Rational principle or demiurgos, served as the intermediary between a transcendent divinity and the material cosmos. Some held that the intermediary was a separate divine being “under” God, or craftsman while others postulated that it was thoughts in God’s mind. They generally saw the intermediary as a paradigm of the Monad, its exemplar or image, making the world a copy, twice-removed, of the Monad.[32] Antiochus of Ascalon (c.130-68 BCE), the traditional “founder” of Middle Platonism, held that the *logoi*, sum total of the Stoic *rationes seminales*, were contained within the demiurge or *Logos*, the mind of God. Plutarch (c.45-125 CE) and Alcinous (fl. second century CE) offered similar, though not identical, views.[33]

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[22] *Timaeus*, 29d7–92c9.
[23] *Ibid.*, 28a-d.
[24] Tollefsen, 24-5.
[25] *Timaeus*, 29e-30ab.
[26] *Ibid.*, 49a1–4, 52a8, d2–4.
[27] *Timaeus*, 30a.
[28] *Ibid.*, 41d.
[29] Whereas Plato held Ideas as causes distinct from the phenomena itself, Aristotle thought that the essence of a thing contains within itself the *dynamis* or potency for a particular phenomenon. Note however the lack of a "purposive, designing causal agent that transcends nature" in contrast to Plato. The teleological functioning of *physis* is immanent to it in its forms. Donald Zeyl, "Plato's *Timaeus*", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed April 24, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/plato-timaeus/.
[30] Stoics, like the Aristotelians and Platonists, posited some kind of divine power or force as well as an enduring material substratum, like Plato's *chora* or Aristotle's *prime matter*. The Stoics considered the divine force and material substratum the two *archai* (originary principles) and identified divine power or god as an immanent quasi-material force acting within matter or nature. God is *divine reason* or *intelligent fire* which shapes the world by its activity within it. God contains within itself the "seminal reasons" (*rationes seminales* or *logoi spermatikoi*) which make things happen and seems fatalistic. These are

Neoplatonism has its origins in the thought of Plotinus (206-267/270 CE) and is characterized by a much clearer doctrine of the three levels of reality or three *hypostases*. Neoplatonists did not conceive of the One as an intellect in any way, as did many of the

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unifying forces. Thus God is seen as a “living heat” or “seed” from which all things grow. The Stoic conception of God is different than Plato’s demiurge in this respect – the demiurge shapes the world from outside. Regarding Aristotelian prime matter, see Tollefsen, 26; Cf. Long and Sedley, 1: 274/2: 271, A Aetius; 1:275/2: 273, D Stobaeus; I: 276/2: 274 G Aristocles. Regarding the Stoic concept of God, see Dirk Baltzly, "Stoicism", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed April 24, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/stoicism.
Regarding the *logoi spermatikoi,* cf. Martzelos: “To Hellenic philosophy – and more especially to the Stoic school – the word “*logos*” does not have a theoretical inference only, but a practical one also. In other words, it is not merely the internal mental function of innate reasoning (logic); it also comprises the **volitional** (**voulé**, from the Greek root «βουλή», = will), determining cause of things when manifested outwardly, as an action, or as a practical or creative *logos*.” D. Martzelos, “The Begetting of the Son and the Freedom of the Father According to 4th Century Patristic Tradition”, accessed September 24, 2012, http://www.oodegr.com/english/theos/father/gen_yiou_elefth_patros1.htm; cf. Tollefsen, 26-7.

[31] Cf. Hägg, 85ff.

[32] Ronald Cox, *By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 352-3.

[33] For Plutarch, see Alcinous’ *Handbook*, XIV. For Alcinous’ own thought, see *Handbook*, IX.3.

Middle Platonists who were influenced by Peripatetic and Stoic philosophers. The One is perfectly simple and transcends all predication, including being itself.[34] Plotinus, like those before him, held that everything has its origin in the One as the supreme principle but was not created by the One *ex nihilo*. The One is characterized by an activity "out of essence" which results in the hypostasization of the *Intellect* or *Nous* (νοὐς), as the sun emits rays.[35] What follows from this are not separate entities, but rather can be said exist in the One or make the One able to be known or experienced.

Contrary to Middle Platonism, the Nous contains the Ideas and "encompasses" them, as a whole does its parts or a genera its species.[36] In a sense, it could be said that the Nous as a whole *is* all the Ideas,[37] which are *not* a paradigm of the world in the mind of its maker. The act of thought and its *noemata* are not separable as subject and object, instead there is an identity between the act of thought and the *noemata*.[38] This means that there is a fundamental continuity between the maker and the things made, the thinker and object of thought, there is equivalent of no *ex nihilo* to separate them.

Plotinus used the language of emanation to describe the relation between the One and the many. It is important to note this language is used to describe "atemporal ontological dependence" rather than temporal procession or an unfolding of complex unity. The multiple must issue from the one, the complex from the simple on the pre-Socratic assumption that "ultimate explanations of phenomena and of contingent entities can only rest in what itself requires no explanation."[39] Ultimately then, all explanations must lead to something absolutely simple and non-complex, a principle that Dominic O'Meara calls, "the principle of prior simplicity."[40]

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[34] *Enneads*, V.5.6
[35] *Ibid.*, V.1.7
[36] *Ibid.*, V.9.6; Tollefsen, 29.
[37] John Zizioulas seems to be arguing that according to the Neoplatonic understanding, if the Nous can be equated with the Ideas, there is an ontological continuity between them. The Neoplatonic interpretation would pose problems for Christian orthodoxy, as it seems to reduce the ontological difference between Creator and creation. Cf. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 14-31.
[38] *Enneads*, V.9.8; Tollefsen, 29.

While earlier schools of Platonism held that there was a previously existing material substratum from which the demiurge fashioned the visible cosmos, Neoplatonists accounted for it in terms of emanation. As we will see below, Christians believed God created the world *ex nihilo*, as something *other*. Thus, to borrow a concept from Eric Lott, we may say the relationship is marked by an "ontological discontinuity".[41] God exists as a necessary being whereas creation is contingent, leaving a divide between Creation and creator. In Christian worldview, creation is marked by its contingency, temporality, by "categorical limitation" and "essential determination".[42] These limitations and determinations are reflected in the *logoi* God has for each created thing.[43] It is these limitations, described by the *logoi*, that distinguish created beings from one another and from God, who is beyond essence and outside of time, as essence implies limit, and with that, beginning, middle and end.

Logos in Christianity and Philo. Heraclitus, a philosopher of the fifth century BCE, was the first Greek thinker to reflect on the necessity of *logos* as an organizing principle. He considered it as the organizing pattern or principle that was identifiable within the flux of the world, though most people could not see it; this organizing pattern was also in some way present in all people as well.[44] Change was not merely chaos, but guided by an invisible wisdom. It would be the Stoics, drawing from Heraclitus, who made it a central part of their system.

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[39] Lloyd Gerson, "Plotinus," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed April 25 ,2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/plotinus/.
[40] Dominic O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the 'Enneads'* (Oxford: Clarenon Press, 1993), 44.
[41] Eric Lott, *Vedantic Approaches to God* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1980), 26. Lott contrasts 'ontological discontinuity' of western religions with 'ontological continuity', which describes the relationship between Brahman (or Vishnu) and cosmos in Vedantic theologies.
[42] Tollefsen, 62-3.
[43] "The whole world is limited by its own principles…". *Chapters on Knowledge* I.70, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. George Berthold (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 140.

The Hebrew wisdom tradition was far less speculative than Greek thought; it tended to see God's *logos* as his creative and efficacious speech which calls everything into being as in the creation story of *Genesis* 1. The portrayal of God's wisdom in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (also called the *Book of Wisdom*), written between the first and second centuries BC, evinces parallels with Stoic *logos* and Platonic *nous*,[45] while at the same time maintaining a strong focus on wisdom's activities within history, a uniquely Hebrew emphasis.

Philo. The philosopher Philo of Alexandria (20 BC-50 CE) was a Hellenized Jew living in Alexandria; he wrote fundamentally as an apologist, attempting to reconcile Greek thought to his Jewish faith, stressing their fundamental compatibility. He recognized a strong division between God and the world, rooted in Hebrew scripture, yet also paralleled in Middle Platonist thought in the distinction between the Monad and matter. With the Stoics, he held that the *Logos* was immanently present within the cosmos.

Influenced by all three philosophical Hellenistic philosophical traditions, his view of the *Logos* is multifaceted. He seems uncertain as to its nature, but certain as to its function. Drawing from scripture, he sees it as the creative Word of God, or his revealer.

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[44] Cf. Heraclitus' fragments, DK22B1-2.

[45] The Book of Wisdom is considered apocryphal in the Hebrew and Protestant canon of scripture, but canonical in the Catholic and Orthodox canons. The book was written in Greek and not Hebrew suggesting that it was produced in the Jewish diaspora, possibly Alexandria, where a large population of Jews lived side-by-side with their Greek neighbors. Alexandria was also known as a center of learning in the Hellenistic world. Francis Gigot, "Book of Wisdom," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 15 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), accessed June 6, 2012, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15666a.htm.

With Platonic speculation, he holds that the *Logos* is totality of Ideas and the intelligible world. With the Stoics, he sees the *Logos* as the bond that holds the world together, the principle that assures orderly development qua rational principle. Thus every created thing is an ectype of the *Logos*, which is the archetype of creation and the prototype of every created thing, and God's "eldest", "firstborn son".[46] The *Logos* is fundamentally impersonal and not to be confused with the Deity.[47]

Philo's influence on Christian thinkers, from the time on Origen onwards is profound. His synthesis of Hellenistic and Hebrew thought helped lay a foundation for the development of Christianity in both the east and west.[48] Scholars have argued that his teaching may have even influenced the Johanine understanding of the *Logos*.[49] Philo creates a bridge between Middle Platonism and Hebrew thought, allowing Middle Platonism to be used to philosophically explain the Torah.

The Johannine Prologue. Within several decades of the death of Philo, the *Gospel of John* was written in Palestine. It reflected knowledge of the Hebrew wisdom tradition, found in writings such as the eighth chapter of the *Book of Proverbs*, as well as the *Wisdom of Solomon*.[50] The author seems to have at least some familiarity with the writings of Philo Judeaus and Stoic *logos*-doctrine.[51] He seems to be drawing from passages in the Old Testament which personify the word of God, suggest its independent existence, and yet are the means by which God acts decisively within human history.[52]

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[46] *De Conf. Ling*. 14 (63) – "For the Father of the universe has caused him to spring up as the eldest son, whom, in another passage, he calls the firstborn; and he who is thus born, imitating the ways of his father, has formed such and such species, looking to his archetypal patterns."; no translator or edition information given; translation found here: http://cornerstonepublications.org/Philo/Philo_On_The_Confusion_of_Tongues.html

[47] It is instead, the "shadow of God", a power or idea which is often personified in scripture as an angel.[47] With God as the efficient cause of the world, the *Logos* is the instrumental cause through which he works, preserving him from contact with the material world. Furthermore, the *Logos* is the means through which humans come to know God and pray to him and even acts as intercessor, represented metaphorically in scripture as the high priest. Cf. Lebreton, Jules. "The *Logos*," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), accessed April 28, 2012, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09328a.htm.

[48] Marian Hillar, "Philo of Alexandra," in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed 9 August 2013 http://www.iep.utm.edu/philo/.

[49] *Ibid.,* accessed 10 August 2013, http://www.iep.utm.edu/philo/.

> [1] In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was with God in the beginning. [3] Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. [4] In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it…[14] The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Thus the prologue to the Gospel of John gives a new picture of the *Logos* which bears some parallels to *Logos* doctrines extant at the time. The *Logos* is identified with God, yet is also differentiated from God. Secondly, the *Logos* is the means by which God creates; it is also a savior figure. Thus the creator is no mere *deus absconditis* (or *deus otiosus*), who creates and then withdraws from activity in the world. Furthermore, the redeemer figure is intimately related to both God and creation.[53] The Logos as divine and personal is something Philo could not accept as it would compromise his radical monotheism.

Radical to Platonic sensibilities is verse 14, "…the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."[54] The Incarnational claim of John's Gospel would seem in some way to challenge the Platonic dualism which deems the body (and all matter more generally) to be of little value. This *Logos* is present within creation not only through divine immanence, but has entered into concrete particularity, taking a bodily form in the flux of history. The material world and the historical process are shown to have particular value not only for the human community, but for God as well. The cosmos (or created world) in no way stands "opposite" God as seems to be implied in the thought of later Platonists. There is no need for an intermediary or lesser deity to stand between God and the world, to protect God's transcendence from association with the impurity of material being.[55]

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[50] Nash feels the evidence is ambiguous. Cf. Ronald Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Phillipsburg, NJ: R&R Publishing Co., 2003), 73-75.

[51] Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks*, 73-75.

[52] Passages such as Psalms 33:6; 107:20; 147:15,18; Isaiah 9:8; 55:10ff. Cf. Nash, 75-76.

[53] This is important in light of claims by certain gnostic sects operative at the time which paint the redeemer as either as a divine figure fundamentally alien to the world or solely as a human thaumaturge and teacher.

[54] Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. bk. 7, ch. 14. Augustine of Hippo claimed that this one of the two verses in the Johannine Prologue that he could no parallel to in his studies as a Platonist. The other one is v.11-13: "[11] He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. [12] Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — [13] children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." This concerns both the historical circumstances of the Incarnation as well as its soteriological dimension. Cf. *Confessions*, bk. 7, ch. 13.

As Christianity held the *Gospel of John* to be divinely inspired, the Gospel's influence is profound and widespread. It established a trajectory for Christian philosophy to follow through Philo's appropriation of Middle Platonism, its employment of language used by Hellenistic philosophers helped to pave the way for later Christians to critically engage non-Christian thought.

Christian Exemplarism. Both Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and Origen (184-253) were among the first Christian thinkers to seriously take up exemplarism which posits that the visible universe is the sensible image of an intelligible paradigm. This paradigm is in the Mind of God, which is the *Logos*. The *Logos* is simultaneously the image of the Father and the archetype of creation, uniting all the ideas as well as the efficient cause of creation.[56] For both Clement and Origen, God himself is above reason and no quality can be predicated of him, but attributes can be assigned to the *Logos*.[57]

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[55] This is a common theme, not only in the thought of Middle Platonists, also Gnostics and some heretical Christian sects that were influenced by them, such as the Eunomians and Origenists.

[56] *Stromateis*, V

[57] Stockle, §69.17.

The Cappadocian Fathers, in their polemical writings grappled with the doctrines of the Origenists. In their thought, they are critical of Platonic exemplarism. Basil (329-379) criticized the Platonic doctrine of uncreated matter[58] and held that before God created the world he had a plan in the logical, not temporal sense.[59] Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) taught that God creates and unites all of creation in himself. Christ the *Logos* possesses all thoughts (*noemata*) in himself "before" the creation of the cosmos.[60] Their friend, Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390), held that God contemplated the Ideas of the salvific economy in the divine mind before creating the sensible and intelligible cosmos.[61]

Maximus on the Logos and logoi. Maximus engages the implications of the Origenist doctrines of creation and cosmos that he finds deeply troubling. These include the *status of the created world* as well as the status of *multiplicity* and *movement* both of which Maximus holds are natural to the created world and part of God's providential design. For Maximus, *materiality* is neither accidental nor punitive in nature and in fact has a sacramental character, that is, it makes the divine present in some way. *Movement*, closely connected with *potency*, is not evil as in Origenism where it represents the fall,[62] but a fundament of created things, and in rational beings, it is the condition of their freedom. In their created purity, all natures were oriented towards God as the highest good. *Multiplicity*, other than being a sign of falleness, sin or alienation from the One, is itself is part of God's plan for the cosmos. As multiplicity is intrinsic to the Godhead itself, creaturely multiplicity in some way serves to image or mirror divine multiplicity. By contrast, according to Neoplatonism, multiplicity falls short of the singularity and unity of the One.

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[58] *In hexaemeron* 2.2, PG 29:29ff; Cf. Tollefsen, 37.
[59] *Exegetic Homilies*, 24; Cf. Tollefsen, 37.
[60] *In hexaemeron* PG 44:72b; Cf. Tollefsen, 37.
[61] *Poemata Arcana*, 20.67-100. Cf. Tollefsen, 39-40.
[62] According to the Origenists, all movement has its origin in a primordial movement away from God and is cause of the fall, thus the Origenist triad of *stasis-kinesis-genesis*, which Maximus reverses.

The Confessor holds that all of God's activities have as their ultimate goal the unification of creation with Himself. As we will see, the creation and ordering of the cosmos is an embodiment or manifestation of the *Logos* through the *logoi*. The *logoi*, the Word's hidden immanence, are like divine ideas, blueprints for the cosmos which secure the identity of things, but more, serving not only as God's acts of knowledge of creatures and creation, no less importantly, his will or providence (προνοια) for them. Maximus' designation of them as wills has several important implications. McIntosh calls them, "the whispers of the Logos, the divine word", who speaks all things into being.[63]

Tollefsen notes that the *Logos*/*logoi* conception forms the backbone of the Maximian worldview.[64] Von Balthasar considers this to be part of Maximus' great synthetic understanding of Christ, which,

> …became a theodicy for the world, a justification not simply of its existence, but of the whole range of its structures of being. All things, for him, had become organic parts of the of ever-more-comprehensive syntheses, had become themselves syntheses pointing to the final synthesis of Christ which explained them all.[65]

To the Hellenistic understanding of God as Reason, Mind, Intellect, Christianity brought the strongly Semitic understanding of God as Will. This will be reflected in Maximus' interpretation of the *logoi*.

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[63] Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 57.

[64] Tollefsen, 2.

[65] Hans Ur Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy: The University According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 66. Interestingly enough, Von Balthasar remarks that Hegel is in some ways a successor to Maximus' synthetic Christological vision.

In his essence, God transcends relation to creation; his eternal activity is independent of all relations to creatures.[66] Borrowing from the Neoplatonists, Maximus holds that it is *proper* for the Good to diffuse itself in creative activity, but is under no compulsion to create anything outside of himself. Thus God freely chooses to create the world, prompted neither by inner or outer necessity.[67]

Maximus transforms the Hellenistic conception of *logoi* as ideas into a uniquely Christian one by adapting Pseudo-Dionysius' own doctrine of them as divine wills. As wills of God, they are distinct from his essence or *ousia*; they represent providential intentions which God will act upon in time, thus also establishing a relational dimension as well in that God is acting towards and for something, through creating and sustaining it.

Logoi as acts of Intellect and/or Will. One thing that separates Maximus' doctrine of the *logoi* from that of a non-Christian Neoplatonist like Plotinus is that he understands *logoi* to represent acts of the *will* of God, not only acts of knowledge. He turns to Pseudo-Dionysius, who says of the divine ideas,

> But, we affirm that the exemplars are the methods in God, giving essence to things that be, and pre-existing uniformly, which theology calls predeterminations, and Divine and good wills, which define and produce things existing; according to which (predeterminations) the Superessential both predetermined and brought into existence everything that exists.[68]

In the *Seventh Ambiguum*, where he more fully develops his theory of *logoi*, he says that God possesses the *logoi* of all things before they come to be.[69] To say that God possesses them, Tollefsen notes, is the same as saying that God knows them.[70] As God is eternal, so too are the *logoi*.[71] As acts of God's will, however, they are *neither* identical with God, *nor* with created things. Thunberg sees in this to an anti-pantheistic tendency, which avoids equating the divine with creation itself, giving it an independent existence which does not interfere with God's sovereignty over it.[72] *Logoi* represent "the divine *intentionality* outside God, i.e., how God becomes a God *for the world*, in other words, a God *in the world*."[73]

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[66] Tollefsen, 61. Contrast this with the Buddhist understanding of *pratītyasamutpāda*, dependent origination which holds that nothing is outside of causal flux.

[67] *Inner necessity* refers to an 'internal need' that prompts God to create. In Plotinus' thought, the principle of the diffusion of the good means that the One *necessarily* diffuses itself into the other hypostases and then overflows into the material cosmos. *External necessity* refers to a reason or need external to God that forces him to create, such as the case in detailed in Zoroastrianism.

[68] *Divine Names* 5.8, PG 3; 834c, referenced at *Ad. Thal.* 13, CCSG 7:95.6-13; cf. Tollefsen, 66.

[69] *Amb.* 7, PG 91: 1080b; cf. *Jeremiah* 1:5a: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you…"

However, since created beings only come into existence at a particular time, we must note that there is in God a distinction between knowing and willing (that is, the willing that results in the creation of a thing.) We might say then that until their creation, creatures exist as mere potentialities in contrast to the actuality of God. Creation is dependent upon the will of God who creates it at an appropriate time. The *logoi* then are providential or *pronoetikoi* (προνοητικόι) and not part of his intellect, but rather his will and love.[74] The *logoi*, as providential wills of God are simultaneously neither identical with God nor with created beings, ensuring an ontological gap between Creator and creation.

Logoi as origins and protections of difference. Thus in Maximus' view diversity or multiplicity is part of God's intention for creation and acknowledges its unconditional value *pace* Origen. We must also then consider particulars. For Maximus, the difference between things (ἀνισότης or *anisotes,* lit. "inequality" or "disparity"), [75] *diaphora* (διάφορα, "difference"), or their "mutual non-identity", as Von Balthasar calls it, represents one of the great themes of God's creative will. For Maximus, non-identity both distinguishes beings from one another and serves as something constructive which builds up the world.[76]

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[70] *Tollefsen*, 70.
[71] *Chapters on Love*, 4.4, PG 90: 1048d.
[72] Thunberg, 77.
[73] Loudovikos, .212. Perhaps this represents a Maximian parallel to Philo's understanding of the *logos prophorikos*, "*extrinsic logos*", the outward expression of Divine ideas in the created order. See Philo, *De Migratione Abraham* 83; cf. the discussion at Albert Stockle. *Handbook of the History of Philosophy*, translated by T.A. Finlay, S.J. (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1887), §49.18.
[74] Zizilouas, *Communion and Otherness,* 23. Maximus, *Amb* 7, PG 91, 1081a-c; *Amb* 42, PG 91, 1329c

> [It is] by means of these *logoi* and even more so because of them, that the different beings differ from one another. For the different beings would not differ from one another, had the *logoi* by means of which they have coming into being no difference.[77]

Difference is an ontological characteristic; a thing's *logos* gives it a particular identity; absent it, a thing would neither be itself nor even exist. "Without *diaphora* there is no being, for there is no being apart from beings." [78] God preserves each being, giving it, "the ability to endure and remain both in existence and in intelligible being."[79] Once a being comes into existence, in the core of their being, it "cannot turn back to non-existence". Their *logoi* then are "solid and unchangeable", anchored in God's wisdom. God's will is changeless in regard to them.[80]

What then is the relationship between *logoi*, God's providential wills for and towards a created being and the *essence* of a being? Is the *logos* of a thing its essence? It is important here to note the meaning and significance of *ousia* (οὐσία), or essence, for Maximus. *Ousia* is not an abstract universal, but represents *common* or *particular* natures which make a thing what it is. *Ousia* is that which makes created things exist qua created. *Ousia* separates created things both from non-existence and from God. Following Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus holds that God is *hyper-ousia*, beyond being. To have *ousia* is to be the recipient of a *logos* of creation, to have being and definite parameters, to be defined.

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[75] The term is from Pseudo-Dionysius' *The Divine Names*, ch.8; PG 4, 368d. Pseudo-Dionysius actually says that God's righteousness protects the ανισότης of beings.

[76] Von Balthasar, 121; cf *Ambigua*; PG 91, 1400c.

[77] *Ambig*. 22 PG 91: 1256d, cited in Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 130.

[78] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 23ff.

[79] *Opuscula*; PG 91, 36d, cited in Von Balthasar, op cit. 121.

[80] *Ambigua*; PG 91, 1329bc, quoted in Von Balthasar, 120. Cf. *Wisdom* 11:24-25. Also *Scholia on the Divine Names*, PG 4:320b-d.

In a sense Gregory began the process of "concretizing" the Platonic *Idea*, at least in reference to human beings. He transformed the idea of 'totality' into a principle of created being which exists in concrete things. He did so by interpreting *Idea* in terms of Aristotelian and Stoic universals, using it to refer to that which unites and grounds the being of all the individuals which fall under it, effectively causing the world of ideas to 'disappear',[81] replacing it with what Richard Cross calls "indivisible immanent universals."[82]

Maximus made a general principle of Gregory's idea and extended it to all of created being. The whole cosmos is, in his thought, characterized by a dynamic and creative tension between universal and particular, taking away, "…from the category of the universal the other-worldly halo that it had had as a divine idea and root of the world's being." [83] He gives prominent emphasis to the positive role of particular existences, rather than emphasizing the ideal order as did the Platonists.

Identity and difference – *Logos* and *Tropoi*

The axis of Maximus' understanding of identity lies in his twin concepts of *logos physeos* (λόγος φὑσεως, "principle of nature") and *tropos hyparxeos* (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως "mode of existence" or "mode of origination"). I have explained in some detail the nature of *logoi* above; we must now turn our attention to the modes of existence. In fact, his understanding of *logoi* cannot be fully grasped without reference to *tropoi*, τρόποι (singular: *tropos*, τρόπος). The pair *logoi-tropoi* is well established in Cappadocian theology, used frequently by the Fathers in their discussion of the Trinity. As is typical of Maximus, he takes this Cappadocian doctrine much further, giving it new meaning as well as applying it to discussions not only of the Trinity, but also Christology, aretalogy (study of the virtues), philosophical anthropology and other topics as well.

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[81] Von Balthasar, 116.

[82] Richard Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals". *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 4 (November 2002), 380. Gregory of Nyssa developed his theory out of a need to explain the relationship between the One and Many within the Trinity, between *physis* (or *ousia*) and *hypostasis*.

[83] Von Balthasar, 116.

The distinction, if not using the precise terms, between *logos physeos* and *tropos hyparxeos*, can be found many of the early Church Fathers. It featured prominently in the writings of the Cappadocians in their debates with Arians and other heterodox groups, such as the Eunomians and Sabellians. These held that if God was absolutely simple as Christian tradition maintained, then God should be completely comprehensible.[84] Basil in particular makes use of this distinction, as found in his *Against the Sabellians,* arguing that God cannot be known in his *ousia* but only in his *tropos*.[85] This means that God cannot be known (or experienced) in his essence, but only in his activity outside the Trinity (i.e. activity in the world).

We spoke before of how the λόγος-τρόπος distinction is applied to God and said that it referred to the distinction between the "what" of God, *ti estin* (τί ἐστιν), the "nature" of God and *hopos estin* (ὅπως ἐστίν), the "how" of God.[86] Basil here uses the term *tropos tes hypostaseos* (τρόπος τῆς ὑποστάσεως), kin to *tropos hyparxeos*. He says that the *tropos* shows *how God is*, not *what he is*. In the case of God, it does not describe his nature; in the case of humans, it does not describe their material substrate.

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[84] There was more to their position than this, but it is not relevant to the argument presented here. For instance, they tended towards subordinationism and seemed to be implicitly Arians.

[85] Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 157. cf. Turcescu, 378.

[86] Basil, *Contra Eunomius* 1,15; 545b. Basil is consciously invoking Aristotle here. Cf. Turcescu, 378. See *Metaphysics* Z, 4 for an example of Aristotle's usage.

The basic sense of *tropos hyparxeos* is "reality" but can also mean, "real property".[87] In time it came to include meanings of 'existence' and 'otherness'.[88] In several writings by the Cappadocians, it is used synonymously with *hypostasis* (ὑπόστᾰσις) or 'person'.[89]

It is Maximus however that the *logos-tropos* pair take their final form as "principle of essence" and "mode of existence" respectively. He applies the distinction prominently to the Trinity itself, echoing the Cappadocians, and yet going beyond them, applying the language to Christology, during the debate with the Monophysites.[90]

> The same unity and trinity has a unity without composition or confusion and a distinction without separation or division…The Holy Trinity of persons [*hypostases*] is an unconfused unity in its essence…and in its simple nature [*logos*/*ousia*]; and the holy unity is a trinity of persons and in its mode of existence [*tropos*].[91] [brackets are mine]

In another place he writes, "…first they [contemplatives] are illumined as to the principle of its [sc. The Trinity's] being and thus they are enlightened as to the mode whereby it subsists…"[92].

We can see from the first quote that Maximus very consciously includes within the idea of *hypostasis* or person within his understanding of *tropoi*, making it part of his central teaching concerning the "inner principles" of things.[93] He will apply the *logos*-*tropos* distinction in his teachings on created beings.

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[87] Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua,* 156.
[88] Loudovikos, 94; cf Sherwood, 155-64.
[89] Sherwood, Polycarp, *The Earlier Ambigua,* 158-9; interestingly enough it is in separate works by Basil and Gregory each titled *Contra Eunomium*.
[90] Von Balthasar, 214.
[91] *Mystagogia* 23, PG 91:701a; trans. Berthold, 205.
[92] *Amb*. 2: PG91, 1036c, cited in Loudovikos, 119.

Sherwood Polycarp notes that the *logos*-*tropos* distinction of Maximus, "makes operative a whole range of Aristotelian doctrine in the service of theology" and has profound implications for Christology, anthropology and economy.[94] However, as per Loudovikos, more important is his "eschatological revision of Aristotelianism" which realigns *physis* with the *eschata*, "last things" and no longer makes it a given.[95] Aristotelian *telos* accounted for purpose, it did not account for the culmination or fulfillment end for which beings were created in Maximus' Christian understanding. This will become clearer in chapter 4, when I touch on the role of the *logoi* and *tropoi* in *deification*, the culminating purpose for which all things were created.

The Relationship of *Logos* and *Tropos*[96]

Adam Cooper's explanation of the difference of the two is quite useful:

> *Logos* has to do with 'what' a thing is at the level of being (*ousia*). *Tropos* has to do with 'how' a thing is at the level of *hypostasis*—its actual state or mode of existence. This distinction between 'being' and 'existence' is not a distinction between abstract and actual reality, but a grammatical, logical distinction between the universal, structural makeup of a thing and its existential modality at the level of the particular and concrete. They are theoretical terms expressing two logically distinct dimensions of a single entity.[97]

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[93] Loudovikos, 94.

[94] Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 161; 'economy' here refers to the divine economy, the unfolding of God's saving action in history, not economicsin the modern sense, which is the study of monetary exchange.

[95] "From the philosophical point of view, this is literally a revolution, because it dismantles philosophical metaphysics in its entirety." Loudovikos, 118, fn. 102.

[96] It is interesting to note here that in my research of the use of these terms (*logos*, *tropos*, *hypostasis*), I have found very little that covered the development of the concept of *tropoi* prior to the thought of the Cappadocians. Of the historical usage of *logos*/*logoi* and hypostasis from the time of the Greek philosophers until the Cappadocians (and beyond), much has been written.

[97] Adam Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 134.

The relationship between the *logoi* and *tropoi* is not the relationship between substance and accidence, as in Aristotelian metaphysics. It also recalls the relationship between second and primary substance in Aristotelian thought;[98] these are able to be distinguished conceptually, but cannot be separated in concrete reality.

Primary substances are so fundamental that, according to Aristotle, "if they did not exist, it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist."[99] A primary substance refers to a thing that can neither be attributed to nor said to reside in a subject. A secondary substance (as well as non-substances, such as color, wisdom, judgment, etc.), on the other hand, is predicated of or attributed to a primary substance.[100] For instance, "Socrates is a man." In this way of thinking, "humanity" can be predicated of Socrates, but not vice versa. Secondary substances cannot survive independently of their particular instantiations, here lies one important point of divergence between Aristotelian and Platonic metaphysics. On the other hand, there is no primary substance that exists completely "in itself" without reference to a secondary substance "Steve" can only exist as a particular person, "Fido" as a particular dog. "Steve" and "Fido" do not exist in the abstract apart from reference to their secondary substance.[101]

It is vital to understand here that Aristotle's approach represents a reversal of the traditional Platonic view which gave priority to the Forms as independent existences. Particulars were dependent upon them, having their identity only to the degree in which their participated in them.[102] Plato's famous rule of thumb for positing the existence of a

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[98] Cf. Loudovikos, 94.
[99] *Categories*, 2b5.
[100] *Ibid.*, 2a34-2b7.
[101] Cf. Gareth Matthews and Marc Cohen, "The One and the Many", *The Review of Metaphysics* 21, no. 4 (June 1968), 633.
[102] *Parmenides*, 130e; *Phaedo*, 102b; cf. Aristotle 990b13; 1079a9.

Form whenever the same name is used in many instances, “one Form for each ‘many’”.[103] By contrast, in Aristotle’s system *individuals* have greater ontological priority. But such priority comes at a cost; it means they are no longer relational entities as are the participants in a Platonic ontology. For Plato, individual beings must bear a relation to their universal.[104] Furthermore, in Aristotle’s case the priority of the particulars is contingent, what survives the destruction of any particular is the substratum from which it arose.[105] Aristotle spoke of a *genos hypokeimenon* (γένος ὑποκείμενον), something which “lies below”, a substratum from which particulars emerge. Plato in contrast spoke of a universal like human nature as *genos hyperkeimenon* (γένος ὑπερκείμενον), something which “lies above”, an ideal form which shapes all its particulars.[106]

The relationship between the *logoi* and *tropoi* represents the dynamic tension between necessity and freedom, found especially in human beings, as human beings are the only beings to have the freedom to choose. This is an especially prominінet theme in Maximus. Just as a being cannot exist without their *logoi*, it seems that neither can they exist “in itself”, without a concrete mode of being (as manifest in their *tropoi*).[107] In fact the *tropos hyparxeos* as an individuating principle is not merely extrinsic, but “a perpetual fact…integral to being”.[108]

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[103] *Republic* 596a.
[104] *Metaphysics* 1034a 5-8.
[105] *De Gen. et Corr.* 320a2f; cf. Zizioulas, 15.
[106] Zizioulas, 163.
[107] Loudovikos, 94.
[108] Stead, 185.

According to Maximus, "…*tropos* adjusts being to an intention or purpose or manner of communion…without change of what (*logoi*) each thing is."[109] Change, or innovation, as Maximus calls it, occurs at the level of *tropos* and not *logos*, otherwise change in a thing's nature would lead to a fundamental corruption of its identity. Such a doctrine has important implications for how we are to understand the effects of the Fall of Adam and Eve, as well as the redemption of humankind. Human beings were corrupted in the Fall, not at the level of *logos*, their principle of being, but rather *tropos,* their mode of existence, in this case, the movement of their will. Likewise, the restorative effect of the Incarnation occurs at the level of the *tropoi* and not *logoi*. If a thing were to change at the level of nature (by the corruption of its *logos* – either by sin or by deification), would 'it' still be the thing or person being redeemed? Redemption and deification require ontological and, it would seem, something like numerical identity.

> Generally speaking, all innovation is manifested in relation to the mode of the thing innovated (τρόπος), not its natural principle (λόγος). The principle, if it undergoes innovation, corrupts the nature, as the nature in that case does not maintain inviolate the principle according to which it exists.[110]

Similar comments are made at least a half dozen times in the Maximian corpus.[111] In a comment on the Incarnation in *Ambiguum 5*, he suggests that the *logoi* in their constancy preserve the *tropoi*, the principles of a thing's being preserve its mode of existence. They set and provide the parameters in which a thing can be what it is.[112]

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[109] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness,* 23ff. One of the implications for this is that a human cannot exist without taking a particular "stance" in regards to their nature – either living according to it to a greater or lesser degree or not.

[110] *Amb*. 42, 1341d; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 90.

[111] *Amb* 42:1329a; 1345b; *Amb* 31:1280a; *Amb* 15:1217a, *Amb* 36:1289c; cf. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 165.

[112] *Amb*. 5, 1052a; translation in Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 179. He applies this specifically to Christ in the context of a discussion about an ambiguous passage from Pseudo-Dionysius. Much of what he says of the incarnation has implications for understanding his broader philosophy of the human person.

Among created things, *tropoi* have two manifestations. The first is in the domain of physical order, where they represent the changeable features of being as opposed to their unchanging essence.[113] This would seem parallel to the Aristotelian understanding of a substance's *accidental* properties. The second is the domain of the moral order, where the *tropoi* represent something akin to the changeable features of the physical, but are here in the domain of a human being's free ability to act in accord or discord with God's *logoi* for them.[114] In persons, *tropoi* are manifested in habits, choices, acts and even the kind of life one lives. Virtue and sin are a manifestation of *tropos*, a result of the "application" of one's *logos*,[115] how one uses those qualities that make them distinctively human. A virtuous life results from choosing to live in accordance with one's divinely given *logos*.[116]

> In such a person is the apostolic word is fulfilled: *In him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28). For whoever does not violate the *logos* of his own existence that pre-existed in God is in God through diligence; and he *moves* in God according to the *logos* of his well-being that pre-existence in God when he lives virtuously; and he *lives* in God according to the *logos* of his eternal being that pre-existed in God a human being's freedom to act within the parameters of their human.[117]

The willful action described here – a person's choice not to violate the *logos* of their existence – represents their choice of *tropoi*, how they live in response to the *logoi* given them by God and reflects a fundamental freedom of human beings.

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[113] Cf. *Amb*. 15:1217a.

[114] Cf. *Amb*. 42:1329a-b7; cf. *Amb* 7:1084bc.

[115] Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 28.

[116] *Amb*. 7, 1084c.

[117] *Ibid.,* 1084b; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 59.

> Of all things that do exist or will exist substantially…the *logoi*, firmly fixed, pre-exist in God, in accordance with which all things are and have become and abide, ever drawing near through natural motion to their purposed *logoi*. These things are rather constrained to being and receive, according to the kind and degree of their elective movement and motion, either well-being because of virtue and direct progress in regard to the *logos* by which they are, or well being of the vice and motion out of harmony with the *logos* by which they exist.[118]

His reflections on *tropoi* occur primarily in the context of writing on the Incarnation and human nature. Tollefsen however argues that it can, to some extent, be applied to non-sapient beings. Only angels and humans have the intellectual and volitional capacities such that they can choose between alternate ways of being. The higher animals seem to lack those capacities of self-awareness. However, observation allows us to see that, "plants, animals and natural phenomena generally do not behave 'normally' or 'naturally'",[119] though this presupposes we know what is 'normal' and 'natural'. Given Maximus' understanding of the Fall, we can say that *predation* in the animal kingdom, *illness*, *death*, *natural catastrophe*, things that we take for granted, were not part of the original state of harmony. The chaos and disorder found in the natural world means that things do not act in accord of their *logoi* (although within the parameters they establish). The *tropoi* or modes of behavior of beings have been affected by the fallen nature of our cosmos – shortages of food, natural catastrophes, fighting for scarce resources, and even the fear of death.[120] These catastrophes can ultimately be traced back to the consequences of the Fall of the first humans in the idyllic garden of Eden.

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[118] *Amb*. 42, PG 91:1329a; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 60, fn. 42.

[119] Tollefsen, 133.

[120] *Ibid.*, 134.

All creatures possess *tropoi.* In the Maximian reckoning, they have both an *ousia* (given by their *logos*) in addition to their *tropoi.* He therefore uses the term *hypostasis* of everything that exists, not reserving it for 'persons' (humans, angels and members of the Trinity) as the Cappadocians had used it.[121] In this context, it means something closer to 'individual existence', but when predicated of humans, angels or God, it has a deeper dimension.

Loudovikos points out that Maximus' understanding of *logoi* is fundamentally eschatological in character, one thing that separates it from more traditional philosophical understandings. It is eschatological in character because *logoi* consist of divine *wills* for a created being; they are not merely "immovable archetypes", ideas in the Platonic schema or even forms as in the Aristotelian worldview. The essence of beings lies not in their 'origins', but rather their 'end' at the consummation of the world where they shall be as they truly are.[122] The *logoi* of things represent not only divine intentions in regards to a thing's creation, but also its fulfillment or destiny, which ultimately is to unite with God, "becoming god" through participation.[123]

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[121] *Ep*. 15, PG91:549 bc; cf. Zizioulas, 24-25.

[122] Loudovikos, p.4; Cf. p.104, where he discusses Maximus' theological psychology in contrast to more secular approaches:

> For in any philosophical or psychological approach, the powers of the soul take their meaning, their ontological weight and function from the starting point from which they proceed: the unconscious psychological center (according to Freud...), the thinking subject (according to Descartes), the transcendent Ego (according to Kant, Fichter and Husserl)…In Maximus, however, the powers of the soul, manifested in a body, have their very foundation in the *eschaton* toward which they are directed; only if this movement is freely actualized do the powers of the rational soul have an ontological foundation, because then and only then can they be existential manifestations of the essential principles of being.

[123] J.C. Larchet, *La divinization de le l'homme selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Cerf 1996), 119; cited by Dragos Bahrim ,"The Anthropic Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor," *Journal for Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Science* 3 (July 2008), 15.

Hypostasis and Tropoi

Hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) literally means 'standing under' and was a term used in early Greek philosophical and scientific literature to designate an "individual" or "real substance".[124] Aristotle used it to refer to an individual being which bore its substance and underwent accidental change without losing its essential nature, in short, an underlying reality as opposed to appearance. Plotinus used it to refer to the *One*, the *Mind* and the *Soul*. The Stoics taught that nothing was real unless it existed materially**.** They considered all embodied things – those which truly existed – as *hypostases*. Later Platonists would seize the term to refer to the intelligibles, defending their reality against the materialism of the Stoics.[125] Porphyry, Neoplatonist, used the term to refer to the One, Mind and Soul of Plotinus.[126]

In colloquial speech, it referred to something which settles at the bottom, such as sediment, something which lies in concealment, such as an ambush or refuge, or what stands beneath and supports something, such as firm ground. Continuing in this trajectory, it was abstracted by philosophers to imply such things as hope, a plan or task undertaken.[127] It came to represent "objective reality" as contrasted with "illusion"[128] and is used five times in the New Testament with roughly this range of colloquial meanings.[129]

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[124] Karl-Heinz Uthemann, "Hypostasis," in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, edited by Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); cf. Pseudo-Aristotle, "De Mundo", IV, 21.

[125] Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 176-7.

[126] *Ibid*., 177.

[127] *Ibid*., 175.

[128] "Hypostasis," in *Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by E.A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[129] *Hebrews* 1:3, 3:14 and 11:1 as well as *II Corinthians* 9:4 and 11:17.

Maximus follows the Aristotelian usage: "*Hypostasis* is being that stands apart, consisting on its own. For one defines *hypostasis* as the essence plus its individuating characteristics, distinguished from other (things) of the same essence through number"[130].

We have seen that *logos* answers the question, "what?" and *tropos* answers the question, "how?" *Hypostasis* is what answers the question "who?", but as Von Balthasar cautions, it does so in a broad sense. It is the subject of "ontological ascription of an essence", but does not refer to consciousness of the subject, as in modern existentialism.[131] It cannot be the "existential I" as Maximus ascribes *hypostasis* to animals, plants and even inanimate objects. [132] Universal essences are hypostatized in individuals of the species through their nature,[133] thus *ousia* represents the common or universal while *hypostasis* is what is most unique.[134] The *hypostasis* is said to possess its nature as a property. [135]

Zizioulas argues that the Cappadocians, from their understanding of the personhood of God, realized that the person is not secondary, but a "primary and absolute notion in existence".[136] A *hypostasis* cannot exist without a nature (and therefore,

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[130] *Epistle* 15; PG 91, 557d, cited by Von Balthasar, 225.

[131] Von Balthasar, 223.

[132] *Epistle* 15; PG 91, 549c.

[133] Von Balthasar, 233.

[134] Zizioulas claims there is a twofold consequence of the Fall of Adam and Eve: that the self becomes "ontologically primordial" (though this was not the case in their state of innocence) – it marks a rejection of the other and otherness which had been constitutive of human personhood. Secondly hypostasis was subjected to nature and the relationship between particular and general (for humans anyway) was experienced as a conflict. In humans, nature precedes the person because human beings are born particular beings as the result of natural laws common to every human being. In the west, this was understood at the level of individual psyche thanks to the influence of Augustine, but in the Christian east, it was understood at the level of ontology – thus experienced by all beings by virtue of the extension of hypostasis to all. The conflict is experienced psychologically by humans and to some degree by other animals which possess consciousness. Cf. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness,* 55ff; also *Being as Communion*, 50ff.

[135] Von Balthasar, 224.

[136] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 166.

logos),[137] and there is no nature without a *hypostasis*.[138] However, it is rooted in *tropos* and is therefore relational in nature.[139] As I hope to have shown here, this understanding continues into the thought of Maximus, where it is applied more expansively, to all things that exist, even to God who is otherwise "above existence".[140] Louth notes, "But what it is to be a person is not some thing, some quality, that we do *not* share with others – as if there were an irreducible somewhat within each of us that makes us the unique persons we are."[141] Nature is what is shared with others, while a being's uniqueness lies in its mode, what it has made of its nature. This is consisted with what we have said earlier, that the *logoi* form communities together of all of those who share the same particular *logoi*.

As mentioned earlier, *hypostasis* is determined by the limits set forth in its nature. The nature, given by the *logos*, determines what it is. A man cannot become a cat, for instance, nor can he fly unaided. A created being can never become God by nature. On the other hand, some creatures have great freedom in regards to their modes of activity, which is of *tropos*.[142] This freedom does not apply to all creatures equally. In visible creation only humans have the greatest freedom to move in accord with (παρα φύσις) or in opposition (κατα φύσις) to the nature given in their *logos*; such movement is a tropic activity. It is through this 'how', this capacity for choice, through which a human being act like a beast or a god, can debase themselves or become deified; no matter their activity, in their *hypostasis* they remain human.

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[137] *Opuscula*; PG 91, 264a; Cf. Von Balthasar, 226.
[138] *Opuscula*; PG 91, 205ab; Cf. Von Balthasar, 227.
[139] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 186.
[140] *Capita theologica* 2,1.
[141] Louth, "Maximus…", 57-8.
[142] See Zizioulas, 53.

Conclusion. In this section, we have explored triad of concepts – *logos*, *tropos* and *hypostasis* – that provide the key for how he understands not only the Trinity and the Incarnate *Logos* (as did the Cappadocians before him), but saw the implications of the Cappadocian, and Chalcedonian, logic for all created beings. His vision was far more catholic than his predecessors. His doctrine of the *logoi* is a kind of divine exemplarism which provides a theory of identity and difference, an explanation of how the one can be said to be many (and vice versa) in the *Logos*. It also serves as a way to articulate a distinctly Christian dialectic (allowing for Neoplatonic and Stoic influence) of transcendence and immanence, God's presence and "absence" within creation. By considering them divine wills rather than ideas, as had the Neo-Platonists, he avoided the monism and pantheism that characterized earlier Greek philosophy. In doing so, he preserved both the ontological distinction between Creator and creation as well as the sheer gratuity of the act of creation, and the freedom it implies.

In the Judeo-Christian narrative God freely chooses to create the world but not from any necessity either inner or external.[143] Furthermore, the beings created are dependent and contingent and other-than-God. This ontological 'gap' between Creator and creation is a manifestation of what John Zizioulas calls *ontological freedom,* a state where acts cannot be axiomatically attributed to being itself, but instead to something "other than being itself which causes things to be".[144] From the beginning of the earliest theological disputes, the Church Fathers maintained that God must not be identified with the world ontologically and so utilized a vocabulary that stressed his unlikeness to the world. He was described as *agennetos* (unbegotten) and *agenetos* (unmade).[145]

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[143] Cf. Eph 1:11 – God, "worketh all things according to the counsel of his will." (Douay-Rheims).

[144] Zizloulas, *Communion and Otherness,* 16-19.

If the world is real only to the degree that it participates in the being of something else, as in the thought of Platonists and Neoplatonists, whether it be God, the One, Mind, etc., Ziziloulas argues that it follows that "Creator" and cosmos are connected by ontological necessity and some degree of identity which he calls *suggeneia* (συγγενεια) or *ontological affinity*, because the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* means the world is "totally other" to God and vice versa.[146]

It is useful to summarize the function of the *logoi*. Tollefsen notes that these are not 'laws of nature' in the modern sense, but 'laws of the cosmos':

> laws to be understood as divine efficient-formal-final causality binding together created beings horizontally and connecting them vertically with the Creator without transcending the basic difference between them or violating the border that has to remain between created and uncreated orders.[147]

The *Logos* is the source of differentiation within the cosmos and yet is also the principle which holds all things together. Each being has its *logoi* from God. For Maximus, the image of the *Logos* as the center of the circle is an expression of a profound cosmic truth – the *Logos* is the center of *everything* both at the macrocosmic and microcosmic level, in the organization of the vast cosmos as well as in core of each and every being.[148]

The *logos* of each being bestows on it an essence and a nature. Nature, in the created realm, is characterized by activity and motion. All things have a *telos*, or purpose, that exists outside themselves. They only find rest in God. The doctrine of *tropos*, bearing something of a resemblance to Aristotelian *accidens*, accounts for the change a created being undergoes, including motion which is in accordance with its nature, preserving intact the integrity of the being's unchanging *logos*. Rational beings have the freedom to move in accord with their *logos* or to act contrary to it. Their *tropos* has a uniquely moral dimension which that of other beings lacks. It is through alterations to this *tropos* that rational beings are capable of self-transcendence, which is only achieved with the help of God. *Tropoi* represent concretizations of a particular nature in place and time. In rational beings, these are "concretely manifested actualizations" of the person's nature, which can include opinions, habits and acts.[149]

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[145] *Ibid.*, 254. Arguably the vast majority of disputants in the theological debates agreed on the transcendence of God the Father and his ontological difference from the world. For the most part, the disputes centered on the nature of the other two persons of the Godhead: Were they divine? If so, in what way? It seems the ontological difference between the world and God was not in question.
[146] Zizloulas, *Communion and Otherness,* 16; cf. 180.
[147] Tollefsen, 81.
[148] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 163.

Inseparable from the *tropoi* is the doctrine of *hypostasis*. No *logos* exists 'naked', he says; not even the Godhead is excused from this 'nakedness'. All *logos* exist only in companionship with that which exists in the tension amid *logoi* and *tropoi*.[150]

We can say then, in Maximus' thought, that while nature, and the *logos* that causes or gives it, precedes *hypostasis* in created things, *hypostasis* is in no way subordinate to it, even if partly dependent on it. Nature and *hypostasis* may be in conflict as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, but it was neither the intent of the Creator nor will it be the state of deified creation at the *eschaton*, the "long eighth day".[151] This Maximian emphasis on *hypostasis*, which anchors *ontological otherness*, makes it constitutive (συστατικὴ) of the cosmos[152] and is ultimately grounded in Christology.[153]

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[149] See Tollefsen, 131.
[150] *Ibid*.
[151] Ray Bradbury, "Christus Apollo" in *I Sing the Body Electric* (New York: Harper Collins, 1946), 315ff.
[152] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness,* 31; cf Maximus, *Theol. Pol.* 21 (PG 91, 249c); *Amb*. 67 (PG 91, 1400c).
[153] *Ibid.*; cf. Maximus; *Amb*. 33 (PG 91, 1285c-1288c)

In the thought of Maximus and his Cappadocian predecessors, *hypostasis* is not a superfluous "add-on" to *ousia*, but rather a central ontological category in its own right.[154]

A particular created being bears the *logos* of the species, as well as those of the higher, more general categories, such as genus and family, while the *hypostasis* has the *logos* and as well as that which properly belongs only to itself. Thus the *hypostasis* is the 'guarantor' or 'protector' of particularity.

> Since, according to Maximus, things come into being through God's creative initiative, they are a materialisation of their 'ideas' which are held in the 'mind' of God. It is thus not only God's miraculous activity in the world that is a theophany, but the very existence of the world and history itself. 'Natural revelation', therefore, cannot be sharply distinguished from 'supernatural revelation', as in the medieval West.[155]

If, as Maximus realized, the personhood of God has profound implications for how we understand human beings, as well as the entirety of the cosmos, it follows that humans must look to God in order to understand their own personhood as well as the 'personhood', used in Maximus' sense, of all of creation. It is 'person' which is the "authentic locus and mode of existence" of the cosmos.[156]

All creatures possesses a *hypostasis*, yet only humans are gifted with the freedom to relate this *hypostasis* to the divine mode of being. "Unlike the animals or other creatures, therefore, the human being can be properly called a *person, as it is*

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[154] I am paraphrasing here a comment Groppe makes regarding Zizioulas' thought, but I apply it to Maximus himself as I follow Zizioulas' reading of Maximus and the Cappadocians whom he feels are exemplars of this paradigm. Cf. Elizabeth Groppe, "Creation *Ex Nihilo* and *Ex Amore*: Ontological Freedom in the Theologies of John Zizioulas and Catherina Mowry LaCugna", *Modern Theology* 21, no.3 (July 2005), 468.

[155] Athanasios Papthanasiou, "Some key themes and figures in Greek theological thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, edited by Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 223.

[156] Loudovikos, 150.

endowed with the freedom to reflect divine personhood in creation. And it is *divine* personhood alone that can be the model of true personhood."[157]

To borrow a saying from Athanasius, "God became man that man might become God."[158] As noted in the introduction, Maximus' understanding of the purpose and role of the Incarnation is unusual in its cosmic vision.[159] In the next section, we will see the how his understanding of identity is mapped into his praxology, particularly contemplation and liturgy, the means by which deification is achieved, simultaneously the vocation of humankind and the entire cosmos. In this chapter, we will find also that Maximus theory of the *logoi*, creation can be separated from neither the economy of redemption nor from the Incarnation of the *Logos* into history. We will see that mankind has a vocation or a sacred calling to mediate the differences and divisions within the cosmos, to himself be a mediator between God and the rest of creation, something that mankind is uniquely suited to do given its status as a microcosm of the universe. It is not something humankind is capable of on its own but only through the Incarnation of the *Logos* does it become possible, especially after the fall of the primal couple.

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[157] Zizioulas, 95.

[158] "Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπισεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν." *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*., 54.

[159] Contrast the view of Maximus with the Thomistic view as described in Michael Meilach, O.F.M.'s *The Primacy of Christ* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1964), 27-29, which sees the Incarnation narrowly, only in terms of its function within salvation history. Maximus has far more in common with the Scotist view, as described on by Meilach, 30-32. Maximus' view was not uncommon within the Eastern churches. For more on this, see Bogdan Bucur, "Foreordained from all Eternity: The Mystery of the Incarnation According to Some Early Christian and Byzantine Writers," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 62 (2008), 199-215.

CHAPTER 3
NON-DUALITY: INTERPENETRATION AND MUTUAL NON-OPPOSITION AS CORNERSTONE OF ‘IDENTITY’ IN THE THOUGHT OF KŪKAI

The Life and Significance of Kūkai

> Most sigifnicant and profound is the teaching of the ultimate path
>   of Mahayana.
> It teaches the salvation of oneself and of others;
> It does not exclude even animals or birds.
> The flowers in the spring fall beneath the branches;
> Dew in autumn vanishes before the withered grass.
> Flowing water can never be stopped;
> Whirling winds how lconstantly.
> The world of senses is a sea in which one may well drown.
> Eternity, Bliss, the Self and Purity are the summits on which
>   we ultimately belong.
> I know the fetters that bind me in the triple world;
> Why should I not give up the thought of serving the court? [1]

We know more about the early years of Kūkai than those of Maximus. The former makes a number of biographical statements and self-references in his writings, particularly in his early work, a fable called *The Indications of the Three Teachings* which some have taken as a *apologia* for his abandonment of Confucian studies and his pursuit of an eremitical, Buddhist life;[2] several versions of biography, collectively called *Memoirs of Our Master*, were written by immediate disciples. Furthermore, other aspects of his life were recorded in the registers of noble families and documents of the royal court.[3]

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[1] The argument of *Kamei-Kotsuji* in *The Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings* by Kūkai, *Kūkai: Major Works*, translated by Yoshito Hakeda (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 139.

[2] See William Matsuda’s comments, in *The Founder Reintpreted: Kūkai and Vraisemblant Narrative*, his 2003 thesis for his Master’s Degree at the University of Hawai’I, 13-22. It can be found here: http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/handle/10125/7110/uhm_ma_3075_r.pdf?sequence=2; cf See also Joseph Kitagawa. “Master and Savior,” *Studies of Esoteric Buddhism and Tantrism*, edited by Nakana Gishō (Kyoto: Naigai Press, 1965), 3.

[3] Matsuda argues that the biographical details of his life are the result of careful crafting (by him and his immediate disciples) in order to present a convincing justification to the reigning Nara Buddhist establishment for his abdandonment of government service to take up the practice of Buddhism as well as to establish his credentials as a legitimate transmitter of the dharma. See his *The Founder Reintpreted:*

The man who would become Kūkai was born around 774 to a noble family at Byōbugaura (modern Zentsūji) on Shikoku. Shikoku is the smallest and most sparsely populated of the four main islands of Japan, located in the south-east corner. Kūkai's family belonged to the Ōtomo clan, whose history stretches into the mythological times of the island-nation.

Little is known about his youth, save that he went by the given names of either *Tōtomono* ("Precious One") or *Mao* ("True Fish"). At age thirteen or fourteen[4] he began to receive instruction in the Chinese classics under the direction of his maternal uncle, the tutor of the crown prince. This included the *Five Classics*, the writings of Confucius and so forth. Around his seventh birthday, he travelled to the capital to enter the imperial academy, the *Daigakuryō* (大学寮), where according to his biographers, he deepened his study of the Classics as well as history. Enrollment was limited to the sons of noble families and was intended to prepare its students for careers in the Imperial government.

At some point after that, he left the academy. As with Maximus, we do not know the exact circumstances or timing of his departure. As with the former, their biographers identify a profoundly spiritual motivation. Kūkai's earliest biographer, Shinzei (780-860), writes:

> He read widely in the classics and in history, showing interesting especially in Buddhist scriptures. He constantly told himself, however, that what he was learning was only dregs derived from the men of old. They benefited him little at the time; how much less would they benefit him after death when his body had decayed? He then thought it essential to learn the ultimate Truth.[5]

Kūkai and Vraisemblant Narrative, referenced above. Cf. Kitagawa, "Master and Savior", also Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra* regarding the establishment of Kūkai's credentials as a legitimate master of the dharma.

[4] Japanese biographies give his age as fifteen, but Japanese and western ways of counting one's years differ because in the former, upon birth, one is considered to be one year old. Hakeda, *Kūkai: Major Works*, 15.

[5] Kūkai, "The Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings", *Kūkai: Major Works*. Trans. Yoshito Hakeda. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 102.

In the introduction to his work, *Sangō Shiiki* (三教指帰, “The Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings”), he remarks:

> Whenever I saw articles of luxury – light furs, well-fed horses, swift vehicles – I felt sad knowing that, being transient as lightning, they too would fade away. Whenever I saw a beggar, I lamented and wondered what had caused him to spend his days in such a miserable state. Seeing these piteous conditions encouraged me to renounce the world.[6]

After leaving the academy, he became a Buddhist, possibly an *upāsaka* (dedicated layman), or *shidosō* (non-ordained monk) and took up ascetic practices in mountains and forests, having been introduced to the practice of the recitation of the mantra of the Bodhisattva Akāsagarbha (*Kokūzō gumonji no hō).* His biography describes several supernatural events that occurred to him after taking up practice of the mantra recitation, during his days of meditation – he saw visions of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.[7] Between his twentieth and twenty-fourth year, he was ordained a Buddhist monk. The dharma name he took upon monastic profession is quite suggestive: the *kanji*, Chinese characters, for Kūkai, 空海, can be read as “Sea of Emptiness” or “Sky and Sea”. In a later poem, he saw clearly a significance of his name:

> You ask, ‘Teacher, why do you go into that deep cold –
> That difficult place among the deep, steep peaks
> Where the climb is painful and the descent dangerous
> That place where the mountain *kami* and tree spirits
> make their home?
> …This teacher of the great void (*kū*), this child of [Shingon’s]
>   milky sea (*kai*)
> Does not weary of seeing Mount *Kōya*’s rocks and pines,
> And is continually moved by its clear-flowing streams,…
> Taking up the secluded religious life, one quickly enters

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[6] Kūkai in Hakeda,16, quoting *Kōbō daishi zenshū,* Shukan, I.

[7] *Ibid*.

> the realm of the *dharmakāya*.[8]

He remained restless and dissatisfied with the Buddhist schools and doctrines that existed in Japan. In response to his prayers before a statue of a Buddha, a man in a dream told him to seek his answers in the *Mahāvairocana Sutra*, one of the foundational texts of Chinese esoteric Buddhism. At age thirty-one, this relatively unknown monk requested permission from the government to go to China to study the sutra and to promote esoteric Buddhism upon his return.

In 804, he made his way across the sea in a government convoy of four boats; he received imperial sponsorship along with a stipend enough to last him for twenty years of study there. Along with him on his trip was Saichō (767-822), another monk destined to introduce Chinese esotericism into Japan and to become a rival of sorts to Kūkai. Kūkai journeyed to Ch'ang-an, the cultural center of China.[9]

After studying with a number of masters, he finally had the opportunity to meet the acknowledged master of esotericism in China, Hui-kuo (746-805), its seventh patriarch. Hui-kuo had been initiated into esotericism by the Indian Amoghavajra (705-774) who translated the *Mahāvairocana Sutra*, which had so vexed Kūkai, into Chinese. Their encounter was intense; Kūkai described it as follows:

> I called on the abbot in the company of five or six monks from the His-ming Temple. As soon as he saw me he smiled with pleasure and joyfully said, "I knew that you Would come! I have waited for such a long time. What pleasure it gives me to look upon you today at least! My life is drawing to an end, and until you came there was no one to whom I could transmit the teachings. Go without delay to the altar of *abhiseka* with

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[8] *Kōbō daishi zenshū* 3:406-7 (Kōyasan daigaku mikkyō buka kenkyūjo, 1978) cited in Thomas Kasulis, "Truth Words: The Basis of Kūkai's Theory of Interpretation," in *Buddhist Hermeutics*, edited by Donald Lopez (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988), 258.

[9] For a much fuller description of his trip, including partial translations of the ambassador's letter to the emperor and Kūkai's own letter to the governor of Fukein, see R. Borgen, "The Japanese Mission to China 801-806", *Monumenta Nipponica* 37, no.1 (1982), 1-28.

> incense and a flower." I returned to the temple where I had been staying and got the things which were necessary for the ceremony. It was early in the sixth month then that I entered the altar of *abhiseka* for primary initiation.[10]

Three months after receiving his first initiation Kūkai received the final one, ordained as the eighth patriarch of the esoteric lineage at the age of thirty-two. Shortly before his death, Hui-kuo charged him with propagating the teachings in Japan.

> Hasten back to your country, offer these things to the court, and spread the teachings throughout your country to increase the happiness of the people. Then the land will know peace and people everywhere will be content.[11]

He returned to Japan at the age of thirty-three, landing at Kyushu in 806, bringing with him sutras, mandalas and ritual implements. Unable to return to the capital due to political unrest, he remained at Kyushu for the next three years. Upon the accession of Emperor Saga in 809 he was permitted to enter the capital (Kyōto) and reside at the Takaosan temple where he would stay for the next fourteen years. It was there, under the patronage of Saga, that he was to write most of his philosophical works, establish a new temple complex at Mt. Kôya (高野山) and begin a series of esoteric rituals for the protection of the nation, which gained him further credibility and support, as this was a major concern for all forms of Japanese religion, Shinto or Buddhist.[12] Clergy were expected to be able to wield theurgical powers for the benefit of the nation and so many began to look towards tantric practices which offered such powers.

Shortly after the groundbreaking ceremonies, he was called away to act as advisor to the minister of state. He remained active in fundraising money for the construction project, entrusting its actual oversight to a senior disciple. In 821 he was charged with completing repairs to a reservoir, Mannoike, in the Sannuki Province of Shikoku. It had burst two years before, but the government officials had been unable to repair it. Two years later, he was asked to finish construction on a temple complex at the heart of Kyōto, Tō-ji (東寺, "Eastern Temple").

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[10] Kūkai, in Hakeda, 31-2, quoted from *Kōbō daishi zenshū,* Shukan, I, 99. The *abhiseka* (Jap. *kanjō*; 灌頂) is a ritual used esoteric initiation rites. The initiate is anointed with water and chooses a tutelary divinity (in this case, a guardian bodhisattva,) by throwing a flower onto a mandala.

[11] *Ibid.*, quoted from *Kōbō daishi zenshū,* Shukan, I, 100-1.

[12] Cf. Matsunaga, Alicia and Daigan. *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism* (Los Angeles: Buddhist Books International, 1974), 111-12.

After Emperor Saga retired, the new Emperor, Junna (r.823-833) granted official recognition to Kūkai's esoteric doctrine, using the name *Shingon-shū* (真言宗 "Word of Truth School") for the first time. He was given exclusive use of Tō-ji and allowed to ordain monks there, a rare privilege, as the imperial government tightly controlled the numbers of ordinands. Meanwhile, in view of his learning and spiritual accomplishment, he was assigned to be the tutor to the crown prince. In 827, he was then promoted to the rank of *Daisōzu* (大僧都) or Senior Director of the *Office of Priestly Affairs*, the imperial bureaucracy in charge of overseeing religious matters throughout the country, giving him authority to preside over religious services on behalf of the state.

Between 830 and 831, he finished his greatest work, the ten-volume *Jūjūshinron* (十住心論, "Treatise on The Ten Stages of the Development of Mind") and followed it with a three-volume summary, *Hizō Hōyaku* (秘蔵宝鑰, "The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury"). As his health began to fail in 831, Kūkai retired to Mt. Kôya. As his death drew near, he began to spend longer periods of time deep in *samādhi* (meditative absorption), refraining from eating and drinking. He died on 23 April 835 at age 62.

He was not cremated, but rather entombed in a shrine on Mt. Kôya. Several years after his death, his body was found to have been mysteriously preserved, almost like a mummy.[13] A legend grew around this, that he had not actually died, but had merely reached the highest states of *samādhi* and would return upon the arrival of the future Buddha, Maitreya (called Miroku in Japanese). Less than a century later, in 921, he was posthumously awarded the title, *Kôbô Daishi* (弘法大師, "The Great Teacher who propagated the Dharma") from reigning Emperor, Daigo.

Kūkai was clearly a man of great charisma and ability. He was able to accomplish projects that others could not, motivating and directing others. The words of the governor of the Sannuki province give some indication of his magnetism: "The farmers yearn for him as they do their parents. If they hear that the master is coming, they will fly to welcome him.[14] That charisma was also undoubtedly the source, or one of the sources, of the many legends of his supernatural powers as well as his near legendary ability to get civic works projects done.

Popular piety insists that he has never died. One recent pilgrim to Mt. Kôya remarked at the prevalence of this belief; at numerous places throughout the pilgrimage route, he saw the following poem written:

> Let us give thanks
> For in the shadows
> On the high plain of Mount Kōya
> Daishi even today
> Is alive.[15]

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[13] This may have been the result of a practice of auto-mummification known as *nyūjō* (入定) with the intent on becoming a *Sokushinbutsu* (即身仏), or "living Buddha". The idea was for one's corpse to become a "whole body relic". The process lasted several years and involved a slow reduction in the intake of food, eating a diet of seeds, nuts, roots and bark as well as consuming *urushi* tea, made from the toxic sap of the Chinese lacquer plant.

[14] An entry in the *Abbreviated Chronicles of Japan* from 821, cited in *Shapers of Japanese Buddhism*. Yusen Kashiwahara and Koyu Sonoda, *Shapers of Japanese Buddhism*, translated by Gaynor Sekinori (Tokyo: Kōsei Publishing Company, 1994), 26.

[15] Masahide Haresaku, "Encounter with an empathic, personal god: a seminar on Shingon Mikkyō," *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture* (1987), 34, accessed November 19, 2013, http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/1844.

Education and Intellectual Formation. Like Maximus, Kūkai began his intellectual formation at a very young age for his time. Like the other, he seemed destined for a career in service to a ruler. The purpose of the Imperial Academy (*Daigakuryō*, 大学寮) was to prepare students for a career in the Imperial Court or the Civil Service, modeled as it was on the Chinese court and bureaucracy of the T'ang Dynasty. The Education was centered on the "Five Classics"[16] as well as the writings of Confucius. Following the model of China, the curriculum was designed to create a common culture, transforming regional to national loyalties as well as creating an ethical/moral consensus. As a nobleman, he may have also been educated in the "Six Arts" as was the custom in China, which included rites, music, charioteering, calligraphy, mathematics and archery. His writings, such as *Jūjūshinron (Treatise on the Ten Mindsets)* and *Hizō hōyaku (Precious Key to the Secret Treasury),* reveal at least a passing familiarity with Hinduism and Daoism.

He was well versed in the sutras as the primary focus of six denominations of Nara-era Buddhism (*Nanto Rokushū*, 南都六宗, the "Six Nara Schools")[17] was the study of sutras and their commentaries. His original tradition, *Tendai*, was founded upon the Lotus Sutra (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*) along with the *Nirvāṇa* and

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[16] The five classics were five books, traditionally thought to have been written by Confucius, used as the basis of educating nobility and creating a common culture. These five included the *Book of History*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of Rites* as well as the *Spring and Autumn Annals.* The Book of Rites provided the blueprints for the Imperial and regional Academies. Cf. John Tucker, "Japanese Confucian Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed April 12, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/japanese-confucian.

[17] The character *shū,* 宗 is often rendered as 'tradition' or 'denomination'. Rambelli notes that in medieval Japan, it referred "essentially to a textual corpus associated with a transmission/foundation lineage in the Three Lands (India, China, Japan)" which imply both orthodoxy and legitimacy since they are recognized by the emperor. See Fabio Rambelli, "True Words, Silence and the Adamantine Dance: On Japanese Mikkyō and the Formation of the Shingon Discourse", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 4 (December 1994), 373-405, 375.
Given that, one can also see the significance of the Emperor referring to Shingon as "Shingon-*shū".*

Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras as well as the commentaries of the Indian monk Nāgārjuna. Upon arriving in Chang-an in China, he went to study Sanskrit under the likes of Prajna and Munisiri, pandits from northern India. Knowledge of Sanskrit was essential to mastering esoteric Buddhism. It was in China that Kūkai was introduced to the study of the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* which would continue to inspire him for the rest of his life.

Writings of Kūkai. Kūkai left many writings which span many genres, from administrative correspondence to poetry, lists and explanations of sutras and mandalas that he brought home from China, commentaries on sutras as well as philosophical treatises. Some of them, such as the portions of the *Hizō Hōyaku* and the *Sokushin jōbutsu gi* are in a question-and-answer format, a common arrangement in Buddhist scholastic texts and akin to a similar genre found in Christian monastic writings. Others, such as the *Sangō Shiiki* ("The Indications of the Three Teachings"), are dialogues between interlocutors arguing over which doctrine is superior, in this case, which doctrine will be able to reform a corrupt and wicked youth ruled by his passions.

Kūkai's philosophical works are marked primarily by two themes. The first is polemical in nature – he makes a philosophical critique of the inadequacy of other thought systems and as well as presents the superiority of his esoteric doctrines, such as in the *Benkyō kenmitsu ron*. The second type, exemplified by a work like *Shōji jissō gi*, is to probe the relationship between reality and Shingon ritual and practice.[18] One thing that makes these works significant, is they are able to provide theoretical grounding for esoteric practices.[19] Some of these had been adopted earlier by Tendai monks, but without a clear rationale, leading to an unreflective eclecticism. Furthermore, the Six Schools of the Nara period did not place great emphasis on practice or ritual and so would not have concerned themselves with this.

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[18] Thomas Kasulis, "Kūkai," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998).

Significance of Kūkai. Kūkai is important in the history of Japanese Buddhism for introducing and popularizing esotericism. A handful of others before him, such as Saicho, had some small success in this matter, but Kūkai's combination of philosophical insight, political acumen and personal magnetism contributed greatly to the success of his project. He preserved and propagated a form that would disappear from China under the weight of the great Daoist persecution of 844-5. Esoteric Buddhism, once it gained a foothold, in Japan, would deeply shape the future course of Japanese Buddhism, influencing other traditions, such as Zen and Pure Land. He is one of the most comprehensive and systematic thinkers in Japanese Buddhism, if not in all of East Asian Buddhism.[20] His contributions are not limited to the sphere of philosophy or religion, but include civil engineering, calligraphy, literature and poetry. Legend attributes to him the power of a thaumaturge, particularly the ability to summon rain.[21] He has acquired a semi-legendary status among many Japanese who expect him to return at the advent of the Maitreya, a figure similar to a Buddhist messiah.

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[19] John Krummel, "Kûkai", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed April 13, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/kukai/.

[20] Krummel, "Kûkai." Retrieved March 5, 2015.

[21] For more on this, see Brian Ruppert, "Buddhist Rainmaking in Early Japan: The Dragon King and the Ritual Careers of Esoteric Monks", *History of Religion* 42, no. 2 (November 2002), 143-174.

To this day, there is a significant public cult attached to him,[22] devotees call him by the honorific *O-daishi-sama* (お大師様). There are apocryphal tales and legends associated with him which live on (such as his encounter with the wealthy Emon Saburō), encouraged and propagated by Shingon monks throughout the ages.[23] Contemporary pilgrims can follow a pilgrimage route he is said to have established.[24] Legends claim that he still wanders the route in disguise, helping pilgrims who have lost their way.[25] Pilgrims traverse the route with hiking staves inscribed with 同行二人 (*Dōkō ninin*), meaning, "Two persons, same journey" or "Two persons, travelling together" symbolizing their awareness of his legendary presence.

Devotees pay him on the 21st of each month, but especially March 21st, the anniversary of his birth. They also chant a special mantra, the *Gohōgō Mantra*, "*Namu Daishi Henjô Gongô"* (南無大師遍照金剛) which honors both him and *Dainichi Nyorai*, the Great Sun Buddha.[26]

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[22] Contrast that with Maximus who never developed a public cult after his death nor has any special devotions attributed to him.

[23] Cf. Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Honolulu Press, 2005), 42ff.

[24] Called by terms such as *Shikoku Hachijūhachikasho Meguri* (四国八十八ヶ所巡り), *Shikoku Henro* (四国遍路) or *Shikoku Junrei* (四国巡礼), it involves visiting eighty-eight temples on the "pilgrimage island" of Shikoku. According to legend, Kūkai established this route after his return from China. Some accounts date its origins nearly six hundred years later. For more information, see: Reader, Ian. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu: University of Honolulu Press, 2005).

[25] Ashley Wright, "Experiencing the Shikoku Pilgrimage," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 1977, accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.davidmoreton.com/echoes/wright.html.

[26] *Daishi* used here refers to Kūkai as *Kôbô Daishi* (although the term itself is a general honorific applied to different Buddhist figures in Japanese history). *Henjô Gongô* refers to the great Mahāvairocana who is known as the Great Sun Buddha or *Dainichi Nyorai* in Japanese. He embodies *Śūnyatā* or emptiness. *Henjô Gongô* was also the dharma name Kūkai was given when initiated into the esoteric lineage by Hui-kuo. The identities of Kōbō Daishi and Mahāvairocana began to be conflated by the mid-Heian era. On the significance of *Henjô Gongô*, and its use in devotion to Kūkai and Mahāvairocana, see Hinonishi Shinjō, "The *Hōgō* (Treasure name) of Kōbō Daishi and the Development of Beliefs Associated with It." Trans. William Londo. *Japanese Religions* 27, no. 1 (2002), 5-18.

Nonduality, Non-Obstruction and Mutual Interpenetration

In this section I will investigate the understanding of identity which is *mostly implicit* in the thought of the Shingon Buddhist master Kūkai. His thought reflects the influence of the Indian schools of Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra, as well as the Chinese esoteric traditions of T'ien-tai and Hua-yen. The trademark of East Asian Buddhism, particularly in its tantric forms, is the emphasis on *non-dualism*, known as *advaya* ("not two") in Sanskrit and *funi* (不二) or *muni* (無二) in Japanese. Kūkai is particularly indebted to Hua-yen, with its doctrines of *mutual interpenetration* and *non-obstruction*. Hua-yen took as its ground the historical Buddha's teachings of *emptiness* and *dependent origination* as well as a later class of literature known as *Prajnāpāramitā*, 'perfection of wisdom'. Thinkers such as the Indian sage Nāgārjuna argued that the all things were empty, including Buddha, *dharma* and even emptiness itself. If all things were empty and without substantial self, then they could not be truly separate from one another, except in the realm of logic and grammar, both artificial constructions. Hua-yen interpreted these doctrines in a more positive light, seeing in them not a negation of all existing things (as some have criticized the Mādhyamaka tradition of doing), but rather as an affirmation of their existence in inter-relationality, a characteristically Chinese concern.[27]

Identity and the Empty Self in Early Buddhism. In order to grasp the overall understanding of 'identity' operant in early Buddhism, it is valuable to look at their discussion of the nature of 'self'. There are a number of reasons for this. In Buddhism,

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[27] On this point generally, see Robert Gimello, "Apophatic and kataphatic Discourse in Mahāyāna: A Chinese View," *Philosophy East and West* 26, no. 2 (April 1976), 117-136.

'self' and 'sentient being' are probably the closest equivalent to 'person'. One reason is that my argument focuses on, at least implicitly, the 'person', however understood, as it is the 'person', whom in the thought of each of these salvific or liberatory paradigms, engages in praxis, whether it is meditation, recitation of mantra, liturgy, asceticism and so forth. Secondly, , in contingent (samsaric) existence, 'world' and 'a being' are equivalent in Buddhist thought, 'a being' and 'self' are also equivalent.[28] They are all constituted from the six internal sense organs, their corresponding external objects (together called the *saḷāytana* or 'sense bases') as well as the six types of consciousness. They are all equivalent to *dukkha* and therefore not-self.[29]

Having attained enlightenment, Siddartha Gotama, now Shakyamuni Buddha, realized that all phenomena are empty (*sūnya*) of 'self' or anything related to 'self'.[30] They are characterized instead by the three "marks of existence" (*trilakṣaṇa*), three qualities all things (including the 'self', whatever its composition) share in common. These three characteristics are *annica*, *dukkha* and *anātman*: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self.

Annica, impermanence, and *anātman,* not-self, are closely related. All things that exist are conditioned; that is, they are in some way affected by other things. They do not exist of themselves, are not "independent" or "absolute" in any sense; they are contingent beings subject to change, deterioration, arising and passing away. *Anātman* is said to follow as a corollary from the first two. The connection becomes clearer in an old Pali proverb, *Yad aniccam tam dukkham, yad dukkham tad anatta* - where there is impermanence, there is suffering, where there is suffering, there is not-self.[31] Shakyamuni Buddha realized that all things which exist, when grasped with attachment, cause suffering. Suffering emerges from the discrepancy between that which we desire (continual existence, continuing pleasure) and the reality (existence and pleasure pass). Thus to say that something lacks self-nature is not only to describe it, but to evaluate it.[32]

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[28] Harvey, 30, #1.28.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought*, 134.

Rather than having permanent essence(s), the Buddha taught that all things are composites of five *skandhas*, 'aggregates' or 'heaps', psycho-physical components. These five include form or matter (*rupa*), sensation (*vedana*), cognition (*samjnā)*, mental formations (*samskāra*) and consciousness (v*ijñāna*). Only the first of the five is physical in character; the rest are mental. None is a 'self', but all are capable of being mistaken for such.[33]

The view of early Indian Buddhism defines things in terms of relations rather than substance. They are 'contingent' and 'emergent', defined by interactions with their environment.[34] Despite the relationality of this view, it falls short of the relationality we will find in East Asian Buddhist views, where the understanding of *sūnyatā* (emptiness) is worked out much further. As articulated in Sanskrit, this Buddhist doctrine of emptiness is locked into a grammatical structure which prioritizes the subject, as noted in the introductory chapter.

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[31] *Salayatana Samyutta* 4; cf. Vallicelli, "No Self?", 461.

[32] Vallicelli, "No Self?", 463.

[33] Kūkai calls them "temporary and borrowed". See ch. 10, "Secret Gāthās on the *Suvarnapaprabhāsa-sutra*", (*Konshōō-kyō himitsu kada*). *Kūkai on the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijō Dreilein (Tokyo, Japan: Keio University Press, 2010), 248 (T 665:16.450c ff.).

[34] Joanna Macy, *Mutual causality in Buddhism and general systems theory: the dharma of natural systems* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 108.

The "ontology" of no-self is *negative* in character; it is both a statement of what 'self' is not, as well as a claim that the no-self does not exist as a discrete entity.[35] However, it is not clear that early Buddhism could fully live up such an ideal. The Indian view is strongly introverted and subject-focused, allowing a strong polarity to develop between the 'self' and the environment. There is a binary opposition at work: the 'self' is identified as an axis of organization and "nexus of experience" which is in a complex interrelationship with surrounding environment from which it is distinct.[36] In the Indian view, an atomistic self is still at the center of things and even though the core of a person is non-substantial, it functions as an "essence-substitute" by permitting a person to be identified with a distinct and individuating perspective and orientation.[37]

Emptiness in later Indian Buddhism. While Kūkai's understanding of emptiness has as its foundation the views articulated by Buddha, it was further shaped by several streams prominent in *Mahāyāna* and esoteric thought, such as those represented by the *Mādhyamika*, and *Yogācāra* schools and the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition. Here I will summarize these streams of thought. I will cover the contributions of *prajnāpāramitā* and Hua-yen in some detail below.

Nāgārjuna (c.150-250 CE), the founder of the *Mādhyamika* ("Middle-path") school,[38] sought to steer a clear path between the same extremes of eternalism and nihilism. Eternalism held for the self-existence of permanent objects, while nihilism permitted them only an illusory existence. He firmly articulated the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, developing in a more systematic way insights contained in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.

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[35] King, 265.
[36] Hershock, 686.
[37] *Ibid*.
[38] His importance to *Shingon* thought is reflected in the high status given him there; he is considered the third patriarch of the *Shingon* lineage.

In his opus *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, "Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way", he argues that if any given thing-event is the result of causes, its existence is contingent and extrinsic to it; it does not have self-existence (*svabhāva*),[39] but rather existence is given to it by its "cause". Therefore there is a contradiction between causation and inherent existence.[40] Anything that can be considered a cause is the effect of something else; one implication is that there can be no "uncaused cause" in the Aristotelian sense.[41] What exists then is a product of perpetually continuing cycles of causation. Taken further, it could be said that what exists only exists in a state of mutual causation, simultaneously the effect of and cause of all other things in the matrix of existence. An important corollary to this, is that in asserting that all things are empty, *sūnya*, of self-existence, this means that even emptiness itself is *sūnya*.

Yogācāra ("Yoga-practice"), the school of thought established by the Brahmin half-brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu (fl. 4th century CE) aimed to provide an account of the experience of consciousness, strongly focusing on epistemic rather than ontological concerns. The *ālaya-vijnāna* or storehouse consciousness represents the most primal layer of an eightfold matrix of awareness which is non-dual (and pure) by nature, but also the source of epistemic bifurcation and impurity. It retains experiential impressions from the other more surface layers, as seeds (*bija*) for manifestation in the future (i.e. the ripening of karma). Meditative practice purifies it from these seeds, bringing the mind to a quiescent state, returning the storehouse consciousness to its pristine state.[42] They understood *sūnyatā* to mean the absence of subject-object dualism. In contrast to *Mādhyamika,* they held for the primary existence of the "non-dual flow of experience".[43]

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[39] *Svabhāva* in *abhidharmist* terms refers to a specific kind of existence wherein a thing lacks component parts, that is, it is incomposite. *Mādhyamika* argues that there are no "primary existents" or substratum (incomposites) out of which all things are made as some early Buddhist philosophers, the Sarvāstivādin *abhidharmists*, thought. Cf. Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought*, 143-5.

[40] Paul Williams, "Buddhist concept of emptiness", in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), accessed August 9, 2012. http://www.rep.routledge.com.libproxy.temple.edu/article/F057SECT3.

[41] Aristotle infers the existence of an unmoved mover (*ou kinoúmenon kineî*, οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ; cf. *Physics* VIII, 4-6 as well as *Metaphysics* XII.6) based on empirical observation. The prime mover as described in *Metaphysics* XII seems primarily to act as a final cause, serving as a goal of loving and striving for the rest of the cosmos. The unmoved mover of *Physics VIII* does seem to act as an efficient cause, particularly of the concentric celestial spheres which shroud the earth according to Greek cosmology of the time.

Tathāgatagarbha thought, which emerged no later than the third century CE, as found in the texts such as *Mahāparinvanā-Mahāsutra* and *Ratnagotravibhāga,* by contrast, has a more specifically soteriological concern. *Tathāgatagarbha* is a Sanskrit term which means 'the matrix (or womb) of the Tathāgata', the '*Thus Come One*', an epithet of the Buddha. It reflected a growing trend towards docetism in *Mahāyāna*, which denied the historical Buddha's reality as an ordinary human being, instead insisting that he only appeared as such as a matter of *upāya*.[44] Instead the Buddha is depicted as *dharmakāya* or *vajrakāya*, unconditioned, imperturbable and enlightened; rather than in the Buddha's mother, Queen Māyā, the womb that carries the Buddha is said to reside within the body of every sentient being. Here *tathāgatagarbha* and *dharmakāya* are connected and equated.[45]

Such texts raised the question: how is it that a sentient being can be enlightened? It held for the existence of *Buddhadhātu*, Buddha-nature, at the heart of every sentient being.[46] *Śūnyatā,* emptiness, in this case refers to freedom from defilements (*klesa*). In the midst of impurity and defilements of samsaric existence, the Buddha-nature inherent in all sentient beings shines forth as something pure and free of defilement and makes enlightenment possible.[47] The logical implication of emptiness that all of these philosophies reach towards is *nonduality*.

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[42] For example, see Vasubandhu's *Trimsikakāavinjaptikārika.*

[43] Though *Mādhyamika* sought to steer between extremes of eternalism and nihilism, their position, to some Buddhists of their time, seems to verge on nihilism itself. See Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought*,161-2.

[44] In part this was over concerns of impurity. The texts sought to protect the Buddha as a pristine figure and rejected any portrayal that depicted weakness, suffering or experiences of impurity. See for instance *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāna Sutra,* II. See the comments of Radich, Michael. *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra and the Emergence of Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine* (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2015), 105-106.

[45] In part this was over concerns of impurity. The texts sought to protect the Buddha as a pristine figure and rejected any portrayal that depicted weakness, suffering or experiences of impurity. See Michael Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra…*, 133.

Nonduality in Brief. What then is nonduality (sometimes 'nondualism')? According to the *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, nondualism (Skt: *advaya*, Jp: *funi*) refers to:

> …one of the common synonyms for the highest teachings of Buddhism and one of the foundational principles of the Mahāyāna presentation of doctrine. Nonduality refers to the definitive awareness achieved through enlightenment, which transcends all of the conventional dichotomies into which compounded existence is divided (right and wrong, good and evil, etc.). Most specifically, nondual knowledge (*advayajñāna*) transcends the subject–object bifurcation that governs all conventional states of consciousness and engenders a distinctive type of awareness that no longer requires an object of consciousness.[48]

The Sanskrit *advaya* means "not two". [49] The term *Advayavādin*, one who holds the doctrine of *advaya*, is one of the epithets of Shakyamuni Buddha.[50]

There are three kinds or aspects of nonduality which are thematically present in Buddhism, "negation of dualistic thinking", "nonplurality of the world", and the

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[46] For example, *Ratnagotravibhāga,* I.7, *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāna Sutra,* XII. At times, *Tathāgatagarbha* thought can give the impression of eternalism or substantialism – that is, it seems to assert the existence of something with an unconditioned existence, the *Buddhadhātu*. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* goes so far as to use the term *ātman* to refer to it. The term *ātman* in Hindu thought refers to the eternal self, but that is not what is meant by its use in the *sutra.* See Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought*, 163-4.

[47] For example, *Ratnagotravibhāga,* I.

[48] "*Advaya*," in *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr., Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[49] Although sounding similar to Sanskrit *advaita*, which usually refers to a doctrine of Ādi Śaṅkarā's school of Vedanta, Gunther and Trungpa argue that *advaya* has a meaning distinct from the former. *Advaita*, is "one without a second", or less poetically, "non-difference". Herbert V. Guenther and Chogyam Trungpa, *The Dawn of Tantra*. (Berkley, California: Shambala, 1975), 74.

[50] Bhattacharya, 102.

"nondifference of subject and object".[51] There are two other nondualities which are closely related to these – the identity of phenomena and Absolute, which is expressed in *Mahāyāna* as the equation of *samsara* and *nirvana*", also expressed as "nonduality of duality and nonduality" and finally the mystical unity between God and man.[52]

Non-duality as Non-difference and Non-plurality

The term itself, *advaya,* is principally epistemic in character and not ontological or metaphysical. Citing a traditional Sanskrit formula, V. Bhattacharya characterizes it as *grāhyagrāhakarahita*, "one free from both perceiver and perceptible",[53] that is, it denies subject-object dualism. Thus in the act of perception there is no distinction experienced between the experiencer and the experienced, between mind and world. In Buddhist epistemology, this is known as *nirvikalpa-jnāna* (Skt: "undifferentiated cognition"). It refers to a kind of awareness freed from the "conceptual overlay" placed on our experiences of the world by the ego-consciousness. The opposite condition is known as *savikalpa-jnāna. Vikalpas* refers to the "intellectual process which leads to formation of concepts, judgements [sic], views and opinions", and refers to deluded thinking which is contaminated by craving and ignorance. It represents the inability to grasp the true nature of things.[54] Traditional 'realist' epistemology, found throughout Greek and Hindu thought, ensconced in the "ordinary worldview", posits objects as existing "out there", beyond the subject, so positing an epistemic distance between them.

While the distinction between observer and observed or thinker and object of thought is perhaps the most insidious or primal form of dualism at the epistemic level, a more common form is encountered within the contents of thought itself – these are the intellectual and moral judgment and valuations made by the calculating mind – absolutizing and prioritizing perceived differences, good and evil, being and non-being.[55] This critique is carried to its logical conclusion in *prajnā-pāramitā* ("perfection of wisdom") literature where the distinction between duality and non-duality must be expressed in self-negation and paradox.[56]

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[51] David Loy, *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1998), 17.
[52] *Ibid*.
[53] Bhattacharya, 34.
[54] "*Nirvikalpa-jnāna*," in *A Dictionary of Buddhism*, edited by Damien McKeown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Due to the superimpositions which occur in dualistic thinking, sentient beings encounter the world as a series of discrete objects, extended in space and time and interact causally with one another.[57] From the nondual vantage point, all beings in the world are not distinct from one another, but are an integral whole.[58]

While critical of dualistic thinking, early Buddhist scriptures did not explicitly assert the non-duality of subject and object.[59] The explicit doctrine was developed by later Buddhist philosophers who reflected on the teachings of the Buddha as well as their experience in meditation. Loy argues that the seeds of this non-duality may be implicitly found in Shakyamuni Buddha's understanding of *anātman* or non-self;[60] however it is something that can only be fully "understood" in meditative experience. The term *advaita*, although primarily associated with monistic Vedantism,[61] was also used by early

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[55] See for instance, Hui Hai, *The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai: On Sudden Illumination*, trans. John Blofeld (New York: Rider, 1962), 43.
[56] David Loy, *Nonduality,* 19.
[57] *Ibid.,* 21.
[58] For example, see the homilies of Huang Po. "The Buddha and all sentient beings are One Mind and nothing else." *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On The Transmission of Mind*, trans. John Blofeld (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 29-30.
[59] Bhikkhu Bodhi, a representative of *Theravāda* Buddhism, the earliest surviving strand, explicitly denies that the thought of Shakyamuni Buddha or early Buddhism (exemplified by the Pali Canon) is nondualistic in character. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, "Dhamma and Non-duality", *Access to Insight* (Legacy Edition), April 4, 2011, accessed February 25, 2015, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_27.html.
[60] David Loy, *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1998), 23.
[61] In Śaṅkarā's Vedantism, the term denotes identity between *ātman* and *brahman*, self and universal-being. At its most basic, it is a form of monism, and yet it conjures a "dualistic fiction"; in positing the one, as in

Indian Buddhists to describe their own (non-monistic) 'ontological' stance,[62] one which denies the independent existence of any being. When the logic of *advaya* is fully worked out, *advaita* (in its non-monistic sense) seems to flow from it.

If the true nature of awareness is non-dual, it would seem to follow that this non-dual awareness can be approached through praxis that is itself non-dual,[63] and that collapses perceived dualities. I will discuss Kūkai's non-dual regime of practice, especially its relation to his end goal, *becoming a Buddha in this very body* (*sokushin-jobutsu*, 即身成仏) in a subsequent chapter. Kūkai's regime involves the cultivation of the *three mysteries* or *san mitsu* (三密) through which one realizes their own Buddha-nature as already enlightened. In cultivating these meditative practices of body, mind and speech, the adept becomes aware that their three mysteries simultaneously interpenetrate the three mysteries of the Buddha. The background of this approach differs from traditional Indian Buddhism inasmuch as the latter assumes the practitioner is not already enlightened, thus moving from one incompatible status to another.

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asserting a monism, we implicitly define it against a second. Cf., Herbert V. Guenther and Chogyam Trungpa, *The Dawn of Tantra* (Berkley, California: Shambala, 1975), 74; also See also Kopf's summary of Nishida's criticisms of philosophical monism, which are applicable here. Gereon Kopf, "Between identity and difference: three ways of reading Nishida's non-dualism". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 31, no. 1 (2004), 75.

[62] Bhattacharya, 102; Richard King notes however that the term is not unique to the Vedantins; it had been used by Indian Buddhists to refer to their own "ontological" stance. Cf. Richard King, "Early Advaita and Madhyamaka Buddhism: The Case of the '*Gaudpādiyakārikā*'," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 2, no. 1 (April 1998), 77

[63] This reasoning did lead some Tantric practitioners to approach the non-dual state by detaching themselves from dualistic categories of purity and impurity, thus they would eat meat, drink intoxicating beverages, both of which were traditionally forbidden to nuns and monks. Cf. Paul Williams and Anthony Tribe, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000): 213, 236; also cf. John Stevens, *Lust for Enlightenment* (New York: Shambhala Press, 1990), ch.3.

Kūkai's Thought

In the following section I will investigate his non-dual identification of the phenomenal world and the 'Absolute'[64] in the hopes of elucidating how he understands 'identity'. I hope to show that *advaya*, or non-duality, is a key for understanding how he conceives of identity. Therefore we should be able to see it in his cosmology, how he describes the nature of the cosmos as well as the relations of things which constitute the cosmos. He characterizes this by the overlapping themes of *mutual interpenetration* and *non-obstruction* (*muge* 無礙), drawn from Hua-yen Buddhism. Looking at these which will help us understand how Kūkai understands emptiness and therefore identity. Drawing from his knowledge of esotericism and Hua-yen philosophy, he managed to forge an identity between the phenomenal world and the "Absolute" expressed as the harmony of the six elements which comprise Buddhas, sentient beings and everything in the cosmos.[65]

Turning now to Kūkai, I will draw primarily from two main works written when his thought had matured, the *Sokushinjôbutsugi* (即身成佛義), "On the Meaning of 'Attaining Buddhahood in this Very Body' as well as the *Shôjjissôgi* (聲字實相**義**), "The Meaning of Sound, Word and Reality". In the first he lays out his theory of the elements and their relation to the universal body of the Buddha. The second stands out as his most mature reflection on the nature of nonduality, showing his profound understanding of

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[64] Kūkai would no doubt protest the choice of 'Absolute' to refer to the *Dharmakāya*. The term 'Absolute' derives from the Latin compound *ab* + *solvere*, meaning to 'be freed from'. In western metaphysics the term Absolute (note the capital 'A' which emphasizes its uniqueness and transcendental status) is frequently applied to God who, at least in the Judeo-Christian tradition, stands apart from creation. The entire point of Kūkai's philosophy is that nothing is ontologically free or separate from anything else; the *Dharmakāya* does not stand over and against the cosmos, as Creator to creation. That said, several scholars such as Shaw, below, have used the term to refer to the *Dharmakāya.*

[65] Miranda Shaw, "Nature in Dōgen's Philosophy and Poetry", *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 8, no. 2 (1985), 111-132.

śūnyatā, emptiness and *pratītyasamutpāda*, dependent arising. A close perusal of it will show how he builds on the insights of Hua-yen and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.

These are the first two of a triad of works known as the "Three Writings" (Sanbu-shô, 三文章), written between the years of 821-824.[66] *Shôjjissôgi* follows the *Sokushinjôbutsugi* and precedes *Unjigi* (吽字義), "On the Meaning of the Syllable Hûm". In these works, a reader will see that Kūkai has moved from justifying the esoteric tradition to working out his own esoteric doctrines and explaining the *san mitsu* (三密), the *Three Mysteries* (*mitsu* can also be rendered as "intimacies"), meditative practices of the body, mind and speech. While I will focus on *Sokushinjôbutsugi* and *Shôjjissôgi,* I will touch on some of his other writings as well, such as his poetry and commentaries on the *gathas*, Buddhist poetry or verses, in order to help elucidate non-dualism and emptiness. Some of what he says in *Shôjjissôgi* differs from what he said earlier in the *Sokushinjôbutsugi*, at least regarding the specifics of his theory of the elements, but his appropriation of Hua-yen themes and imagery can be most clearly seen and his thought remains consistent. From differing perspectives, they detail the relationship between the interrelationship between the phenomenal world and reality itself, which is ultimately nondual, illustrating the Shingon doctrine of *hosshin seppo*, the Dharmakāya's preaching through the thing-events of the cosmos.[67]

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[66] Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 278. The idea of the universe as a sūtra is not unique to Kūkai. Cf. Luis Gomez, "The Whole Universe as a Sūtra," *Buddhism in Practice*, edited by Donald Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 107-111.

[67] Krummel, *Kûkai*, accessed March 1, 2015.

The Dharmakāya and the Cosmos

In this work, “Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence” (*Sokushinjôbutsugi*),[68] Kūkai establishes a theory of six elements and their connection to the *Dharmakāya*, the “dharma body” of the Buddha. He draws the five great ‘elements’ (Jp: *godai,* 五大) from classical Chinese thought[69] – fire, metal, earth, wood, water – and adds a sixth one as well – consciousness or mind – something not unknown in Buddhist theories of the elements (Skt: *dhātus*). The sixth element serves to keep the other five in harmony.[70] He uses it to explain the orderliness in cosmos. The traditional five represent that which is observed or known, mind represents the knower or observer.[71] Its presence furthermore serves to collapse the distinction between mind and matter, common in many philosophies, and prevents absolutization of any such dichotomy between them as found in Cartesian metaphysics or Indian *Sāṃkhya*. Contrary to these, mind is not distinct from matter, observer from observed.[72] Observer or mind does not inhabit a privileged position in this schema.

Sad-dhātava; Rokudai (六行; the Six ‘Elements’). As with many of his other works, most of his philosophizing is done while commenting on poetry.[73] He introduces some verses that succinctly summarize a theme and then proceeds to unpack them in work. "Attaining Enlightenment" begins as a series of questions and answers, wherein Kūkai explains the shocking claim that enlightenment is something that can be attained in a single lifespan. He buttresses his claim by citing esoteric scriptures as well as explaining the hidden presence of this doctrine in exoteric sutras. Midway through "Attaining Enlightenment", we find these verses:

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[68] *Shin* (身), according to Krummel, does not refer only to the physical body but, “one's lived embodied existence of body-and-mind as one whole.” Krummel, “Kukai” http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kukai, accessed September 30, 2013.

[69] Earliest Indian Buddhism, following the traditional Indian model assumed only four elements - earth, water, fire, air. The Chinese however traditionally held for five. Called *wŭ xíng* in Chinese and written 五行, the term is translated literally as the “five goings”, suggesting a dynamic rather than static identity, underlining the Chinese preference for fluidity. The elements are in a constant state of transformation from one element into another.

[70] In the work which chronologically follows this, the *Shôjjissôgi*, he removes the mind as an element, suggesting instead a ‘primordial vibration’ which results from the elements joining and separating.

[71] Krummel, “Kukai” http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kukai, accessed September 30, 2013.

[72] “Attaining Enlightenment in This Very Existence,” in Hakeda, 229.

[73] He was an accomplished poet; most of the time the verses he cites (as in the case here) are his own original compositions.

> The Six Great Elements are interfused and are in a state of eternal harmony; the Four Mandalas are inseparably related to one another; When the grace[74] of the Three Mysteries is retained, [our inborn three mysteries will] quickly be manifested. Infinitely interrelated like the meshes of Indra's net are those which we call existences.[75]

In this dense text, he summarizes both how his understanding of reality as well his program of practice. What concerns us here is his depiction of reality in the first and last lines; I will delve more deeply into the middle lines (which detail his practice) in a future chapter.

One way he differentiates the esoteric tradition from the exoteric is in its theory of the elements. He points out that in the exoteric tradition, the elements are simply constituent parts, the building blocks, of the universe.[76] In the esoteric tradition these same elements are the *samaya* body (*sanmayakai*, 三昧耶身) of the Buddha.[77] *Samaya* can be translated as 'symbol' or 'representation' and reflects his idea that any object which represents a thing can at the same time be a part of it.[78] In tantric meditation, the *samaya-sattva* is a representation of a deity used as a focal point for worship.[79] In Kūkai's tantric worldview, the material elements are the means by which the *Dharmakāya* manifests itself, and apart from which it cannot exist.[80] Each element pervades the dharmas and is pervasive throughout the dharma-realm to the point of penetrating completely the other elements (Jp: *rokudai-muge;* 六行無礙).[81]

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[74] The term *kaji* (加持) is often translated as 'grace' or 'empowerment.' It is a composite of two Japanese words, *ka* (加), meaning 'to add' and *ji* (持), meaning 'to retain' or 'to hold'. Called *adhisthâna* in Sanskrit, it is frequently rendered as 'blessing'. In esoteric practice, it represents the mutual cooperation of the Buddha's compassion and the practitioner's devotion. It is characterized by mutuality and is not to be thought of in the strict sense of 'other power' as it would in Christianity, particularly Protestantism. See section 3.10 in: Krummel, "Kukai" http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kukai, accessed September 30, 2013. See also the entry for "kaji" in the *Dharma Dictionary*, http://archive.thebuddhadharma.com/issues/2004/spring/dharma_dictionary.htm; accessed 30 September 2013.

[75] "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence," in Hakeda, 227.

[76] The implication here seems to be that the exoteric tradition still is shrouded in a kind of dualism if it admits to a distinction between the Buddha (or sentient beings more generally) and insentient matter.

[77] Hakeda, 89.

There are differences between mind and matter, yet they are the same in their "essential nature". They interpenetrate and do not obstruct one another.[82]

> Differences exist between matter and mind, but in their essential nature they remain the same. Matter is no other than mind; mind no other than matter. Without any obstruction they are interrelated. The subject is the object, the object, the subject. The seeing is the seen, and the seen is the seeing. Nothing differentiates them.[83]

This statement covers a multitude of apparent binaries - subject and object, seeing and seen. Even creating and created fall under the same. Although we speak of them as distinct, there is in reality neither as separate metaphysical or ontological realities; they are but "symbolic expressions" (*monji*, 文字).[84] Steve Odin notes that Hua-yen vision does not negate or deny the binaries, but affirms them as *non-oppositional*, that is, non-obstructive and interpenetrative.[85]

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[78] "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence," in Hakeda, 229; cf. Hakeda's comments, 89.

[79] Cf. Damien Keown, "Entry for *samaya-sattva,*" in *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2004). *Samaya-sattva* is contrasted with *jnāna-sattva*, the latter describing the actual presence of the divinity. For more on the role of the tutelary deity in tantric ritual (*yidam* or *honzon*), see chapter 6.

[80] Even though scholars use the word 'participation' to describe the relationship between symbol and reality represented and participated in, one key difference between this and Platonic theories of participation is that in Platonic theories, the reality of the symbol/participant is entirely subordinate to the symbolized or participated. The reality which is symbolized or participated in has a reality apart from the symbol or participant and exists without them and in a more perfect way. In the case of Tantric thought, the reality which is symbolized or participated cannot manifest or exist apart from its manifestations.

[81] Adrian Snodgrass, "The Shingon Buddhist doctrine of interpenetration," *Religious Traditions* 7 (January 1, 1986), 60.

[82] This corresponds to the "horizontal interpenetration" of phenomena with phenomena (事事無礙), known as in *shishi wuai* in Hua-yen and in Kegon, *jiji-muge*.

[83] "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence" in Hakeda, 229-30.

[84] *Ibid*.

We should note here that these statements flow partly from his understanding of *pratītyasamutpāda* and prevent the *Dharmakāya* from being transcendentalized as something apart from the cosmos, it pervades through all thing-events and they it.[86] *Dharmakāya* itself, when perceived in the meditative state, is "undifferentiated oneness like infinite space".[87]

Hosshin, Dharmakāya (法身; the 'Dharma-Body'). Kūkai's buddhology reworks the traditional *trikāya* doctrine of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, which holds that the Buddha has three modes of embodiment: the *dharmakāya*, "dharma-body" (*Hosshin*, 法身), the *nirmanakāya*, "manifestation body" (*Ōjin* 応身) and *sambogakāya*, "bliss body" (*Hōjin* 報身). In earliest Buddhist thought, the term 'Buddha' referred only to the historical personage of Siddartha Gotama, and was an honorific given to him after his enlightenment. It was this Buddha who preached the dharma in India in the fifth century BCE. In ancient Buddhism, the figure of the historical Buddha was paramount; he was one of the three figures or institutions (along with the *dharma,* his teaching, and *sangha,* the monastic community) in which early adepts 'sought refuge', that is, joined the Buddhist community to see freedom from rebirth. In the tantric reading of Buddhist history however, Siddartha was a *nirmanakāya*, an avatar-like localized manifestation of the universal dharma body. Tantric Buddhism, on the other hand, claims to receive its doctrines directly from the *dharmakāya,* whose preaching can be 'heard' only after cultivation in appropriate meditation disciplines. In traditional *Mahāyāna*, it is thought impersonal and does not preach.

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[85] Steve Odin, *Process Metaphysics and Hua-yen Buddhism: A Critical Study of Cumulative Penetration vs. Interpenetration* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982), 13.

[86] This corresponds to the "vertical interpenetration" of phenomena and principle (理事無礙), known as *lishi wuai* in Hua-yen and in Kegon, known as *riji-muge*.

[87] "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence" in Hakeda, 231.

Over the centuries, the term *buddha* was applied to the truth (*dharma*) taught by the Buddha, which included impermanence (*anicca*), no-self (*anātman*) and emptiness (*sunyāta*), a truth universally valid and present in the cosmos.[88] It was gradually applied to the impersonal dharma which was non-dualistically identified with the cosmos itself. The historical Buddha became one of many temporal manifestations (a "manifestation body" or *nirmānakaya*). The concept of *sambogakāya* is thought to have developed as an intermediary between the two, and is "the instrument through which the historical person realizes *dharmakāya*."[89] *Sambogakāya* is explained as celestial Buddhas (manifesting the "bliss body" or *sambogakāya*) who appear in states of meditation to unfold deeper truth to highly advanced adepts or beings residing in the Pure Lands.[90] One important effect of "multiple bodies theory" was to relativize or trivialize the importance of the historical figure of the Buddha. Esoteric traditions typically claimed that they received the dharma directly from the *dharmakāya* rather than through intermediary figures such as a *nirmanakāya*, such as the historical Buddha. Thus their teaching is more lofty and subtle as it not clearer than the dharma preached by the *nirmanakāya*. The latter make use of *upāya*, expedient pedagogical means, to reach less spiritually-accomplished audiences.[91]

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[88] The Buddha himself seems to have encouraged this line of thinking, at least indirectly. According to some of the earliest sutras of the Pali canon, disciples of the Buddha venerated his body while he was still alive. According to the *Digha Nikaya* 16.5, the Buddha redirected their fervor, saying that the highest homage is given by the person who,

> …keeps practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, who keeps practicing masterfully, who lives in accordance with the Dhamma: that is the person who worships, honors, respects, venerates, and pays homage to the Tathagata with the highest homage.

In another story at *Samyutta Nikaya* 22.87, the Buddha encounters an ailing monk who wishes to see him before the Buddha passes. The Buddha tells him, "Why do you want to see this filthy body? Whoever sees the Dhamma sees me; whoever sees me sees the Dhamma."

This important distinction was made early in Buddhist history, between the *rupakāya* (the physical body of Shakyamuni Buddha) and *dharmakāya,* here a metaphor for his teaching. The distinction can be found in *Prajnāpāramitā* literature as well as the *Saddhamapundarikia-sutra.* Over time this led distinction to complex elaborations of 'bodies' of the Buddha. Cf. Sharf, Robert. "Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons". *Living Images: Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context*, ed. Robert Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 13.

[89] Kwangsoo Park, "A Comparative Study of the Concept of Dharmakāya Buddha: Vairocana in Hua-yen and Mahāvairocana in Shingon". *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture,* 2 (February 2003), 311.

[90] While a three-body theory is the most commonly encountered, Buddhist thinkers have offered theories of multiple Buddha bodies, with bodies ranging in number from two to ten. Cf. Sharf, "Prolegomenon…", 13;

Kūkai identified the *Dharmakāya* with a specific Buddha named *Dainichi Nyorai* (大日如来) or *Mahāvairocana*[92] who was nothing less than the totality of the cosmos and all reality itself.[93] According to David Gardiner, Kūkai criticized the exoteric traditions for suggesting an utterly transcendent realm of "ineffable ultimate reality".[94] He seems to have been aware and suspicious of a transcendentalizing tendency, present even in some esoteric traditions, such as those of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, to transcendentalize the *dharmakāya*.[95]

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for a much more detailed account, see chapters 4-6 in Paul Griffiths, *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood* (Albany: SUNY Albany Press, 1984).

[91] Kūkai cites the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* in support of this distinction; "On Encouraging those with a Connection to Buddhism" (*Kan'en no sho*), *Kūkai on the Philosophy of Language*, translated by Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijō Dreilein (Tokyo, Japan: Keio University Press, 2010), 312 (T671:16.525c). Unfortunately, no information is given on the location of the quote within the sutra.

[92] *Vairocana* derives from the Sanskrit root *viro*, which means "shining upon", "brightening" or "illuminating". The name *Vairocana* means "associated with light" and refers to sun and fire. Cf. Kwangsoo Park, "A Comparative Study…", 306, fn#2.

[93] Hua-yen makes the same association, although there are differences between Hua-yen and Shingon. See Park, Kwangsoo, "A Comparative Study…".

[94] Daniel Gardiner, "Transcendence and Immanence in Kūkai's Vision of Shingon". *Esoteric Buddhist studies: Identity in Diversity: Proceedings of the International Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies*. Koyasan University Press, 2008, 21-9; 21. However, see Gardiner's comment #41 on p.28. Here he seems to feel that Kūkai is exaggerating the tendency to transcendentalize in these other traditions. Other scholars, such as Krummel, (above) have also noted tendencies to transcendentalize in some traditions. Snodgrass seems to be saying the same thing, see his remarks on the dualism inherent in exoteric traditions in how they envision *suchness* and their depiction of the *Three Universals*. See also his article, "The Shingon Buddhist doctrine of interpenetration", 56ff.

[95] For example, in the *gzhan stong pa* school of Tibetan tantrism. Cf., Tom J.F. Tillemans, "Tibetan philosophy", in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998). Accessed September 19, 2013, from http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/F003SECT1. Cf. Christopher

In Kūkai's fourfold schema, the *hosshin* includes the celestial buddhas as well as historical manifestations, which in traditional teaching tended to be separated, with the former being abstract and impersonal. In this case, they are aspects of the *hosshin* itself.[96] The *hosshin* in its absolute sense (*jishô hosshin),* is engaged in perpetual Samadhi, engaging in a cosmic monologue, revealing itself through the cosmos through its infinite forms. In *juyû hosshin*, it enjoys its own bliss under two aspects. In its "self-oriented embodiment" (*svasāmhoga-dharmakāya*; *jijuyûshin)*, it enjoys the bliss of its quiescence. In its "other-oriented embodiment" (*parasāmhoga-dharmakāya*; *tajuyûshin*), bodhisattvas and celestial buddhas direct the fruits of Samadhi for the benefit of others. In *henge hosshin*, it manifests itself in historical personages, such as Shakyamuni Buddha. Finally, in *tôru hosshin,* its universal emanation, it 'preaches' through the universe and all it contains.[97]

Kūkai equates the *Dharmakāya* (Jpn: *hosshin*) with the cosmos itself, including its materiality. The transience of thing-events within the cosmos as well as the cosmos itself, comprised of these thing-events in their inter-relationship and impermanence, is an embodiment of truth. Furthermore he equates *Dharmakāya* with Dainichi Nyorai (Skt: *Mahāvairocana*), the Great Sun Buddha. This Buddha is the embodied personification of *buddha-nature*, universal which is inherent in all sentient beings. The *dharmakāya* is not

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Kelley, "Eye to Eye: Transcendence and Immanence in Kūkai's Vision of Shingon." *Buddhist Studies Weblog*. Accessed March 2, 2015. http://www.cbs.columbia.edu/weblog/2007/05/transcendence_i.html.

[96] For example, "The three bodies [of the Buddha] are not different….The *nirmānakaya* and the *sambogakāya* are not apart from each other. They are identical with the *dharmakāya*." – ch.3, "Secret Gāthās on the *Suvarnapaprabhāsa-sutra*", (*Konshōō-kyō himitsu kada*). *Kūkai on the Philosophy of Language,* translated by Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijō Dreilein (Tokyo, Japan: Keio University Press, 2010), 256 (T665:16.408b ff.).

[97] Krummel, *Kûkai*, accessed 21 October 2013.

something abstract which transcends the mundane world.[98] Shingon insists that the connection between Buddha and cosmos is 'concrete' and 'personal'.[99] This identification of the cosmos with Dainichi's body-and-mind signals the Buddha's immanent presence within and as the body-and-mind of sentient biengs.[100]

Kūkai identifies the *Dharmakāya* with *all* phenomena and thing-events. All objects of vision are the body of the *Dharmakāya,* while sounds are *dhāraṇī*, the sounds of the *dharmakāya* preaching the dharma.[101] In their impermanence, they are individually manifestations of that truth, and together in their interdependence, the cosmos itself becomes a manifestation of truth. At the cosmic level, the universe is the act (*yū*) of Dainichi, enacted through his envisioning reality mentally (*mandala*), sacred sounds (*mantra*), and gestures (*mudrā*); every creature is a "direct manifestation of Dainichi's self-expression for Dainichi's enjoyment."[102] The entire universe is an expressive symbol (*monji*, 文字) of *Dainichi*.

The last verse explains, he says, the interfusion and interpenetration of the Three Mysteries. "Existence is my existence, the existences of the Buddhas, and the existences of all sentient beings." He says all existences interrelate as mirrors reflect into other mirrors, echoing Fazang's visual metaphor to Empress Wu Zhao.[103] Existences are in one another, and as such, they are "not identical but nevertheless identical", "not different but are nevertheless different”.[104] “One is within many, and many are in one, yet no confusion arises.”[105] In order to explain these statements, I wish to briefly discuss the Heart Sutra and then turn to Hua-yen, which provides the intellectual core of Kūkai’s thought. Afterwards, I will turn to Kūkai’s second major work, the *Shôjjissôgi.*

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[98] *Ibid*., accessed 19 September 2013.
[99] Thomas Kasulis, "Truth Words: The Basis of Kūkai's Theory of Interpretation" in *Buddhist Hermeutics,* edited by Donald Lopez (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 262.
[100] Krummel, *Kûkai*, accessed 19 September 2013
[101] *Hizōki*, KZ 2:40-41.
[102] Kasulis, "Truth Words…", 263.
[103] In explaining Hua-yen doctrines to a pious Chinese Empress, Wu Zhao (c.625-705 CE), who was supportive of Hua-yen, but not academically inclined, he made use of a famous "performative metaphor". He built a circle of eight mirrors, placing an additional one above and one below the center in which he placed a statue of the Buddha. Lighting a lamp, he showed how each of the mirrors reflected the Buddha-image as well as the other mirrors, creating an infinite regression. Each image contained the entirety of the Buddha.

The Heart Sutra. The *Heart Sutra*, which was written between the fifth and eight centuries CE, several centuries after the *Diamond Sutra*, is one of the shortest of *prajnāpāramitā* texts (about five paragraphs or sixteen sentences long in translation), but serves well as a summary of *prajnāpāramitā* literature. It dwells on non-dual nature of emptiness (*sūnyatā*), a reflection on the Buddha’s teaching on dependent origination. To be empty (*sūnya*) is to be without self-nature (*svabhāva*; literally, “own-being”), to be unable to exist independently or on one’s own.

Unusual for a sutra, the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni is absent from the text. Instead we find the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in dialogue with the monk Sariputra, whom is depicted as Sarvāstivādin in this text. In Buddhist tradition, Sariputra is regarded as one of the two highest monk disciples of Shakyamuni (along with Mahāmaudgalyāyana) and is considered to be the founder of *Abidharma*, Buddhist philosophy. In Mahāyāna literature, he was used didactically and polemically to symbolize earlier Buddhism and its limited insights.

Sarvāstivāda was a school of early Buddhist Abi*dharma* which held for the actual existence of *dharmas*, in this case, fundamental units of existence, like atoms, but not primarily physical in nature. The composite objects which they make up do not have an independent existence, but their constituent *dharmas* do. Thus the Sarvāstivādins held for an underlying psycho-material substratum.

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[104] Kūkai, “Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence” in Hakeda, 232.
[105] *Ibid*., 233.

However, Avalokitesvara, in the course of meditation, achieves realization that even these *dharmas* are empty.

> Śāriputra, form is not different from Emptiness, and Emptiness is not different from form. Form itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is form. Sensation, conception, synthesis, and discrimination are also such as this. Śāriputra, all phenomena are empty: they are neither created nor destroyed, neither defiled nor pure, and they neither increase nor diminish. This is because in emptiness there is no form, sensation, conception, synthesis, or discrimination.[106]

In their speculation on the nature of the world, the Sarvāstivādin has missed the mark, seemingly (at least implicitly) denying that all things are without self (*anātman*) and impermanent (*anicca*), two of the three marks of existence which characterize all things. The Sarvāstivādin also seems to suggest that things first exist (have inherent existence, that is *svabhāva*) and then enter into relationships with other things. This denies the fundamental and foundational reality of dependent origination.[107] The *Heart Sutra* argues instead that interdependent arising is the way that everything actually exists and that change is the principle reality. A person is made up of the five *skandhas* which are themselves processes. This emptiness (*sūnyatā*) of self-existence makes interrelationship with all things possible.[108] Personal existence is no different than emptiness and vice versa. If the *dharmas* are marked by emptiness, their coming-to-be and passing-away is neither the production of something new nor its total destruction, but rather a transformation that depends on other transformations.

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[106] *Taishō Tripiṭaka* volume 8, number 251.

[107] It may be that the *Sarvāstivādins* feared that by acknowledging the full logic of dependent origination that they would be forced to accept nihilism, the belief that nothing is 'real' in any way. If the 'constitutive processes' are not real, persons are not real. If persons are not 'real', then can Buddhism be 'real'? At any length Buddhism would cease to serve a purpose.

[108] Kūkai, in his commentary on the sutra, "The Secret Key to the Heart Sutra" (*Hannya shingyô hiken* 般若心経秘鍵), identifies the first two lines of this verse as representing the fundamental insight of Hua-yen; he identifies subsequent lines with other influential schools, such as Yogācāra, Mādhyamika, T'ien-t'ai and *Hīnayāna*. "The Secret Key to the Heart Sutra" in Hakeda, 268.

As with the *Diamond Sutra* the implications are startling. If nothing is independent of everything else, and in some way dependent on everything else, then nothing can be said to be completely 'pure' or 'impure', 'good' or 'bad'. *Dukkha*, *nirvāṇa* and the practice which leads to enlightenment (*marga*), and even the Buddha must be understood in these terms as well. They have no separate, independent existence.

The sutra ends with the Bodhisattva telling the monk:

> Because there is no attainment, the bodhisattvas, supported by the perfection of wisdom, find no obstacles for their minds. Having no obstacles, they overcome fear, liberating themselves from illusion and realizing *nirvāṇa*.[109]

One can see here that beings attain enlightenment through the cultivation of this wisdom. They must come to experiential awareness that nothing has self-existence, not even *nirvāṇa*. Paradoxically, it can be said that they attain *nirvāṇa* by coming to the realization that there is no permanent, separate state called *nirvāṇa*.

With the rise of Mahāyāna, the newer form of Buddhism, which emerged parallel with the *prajnāpāramitā* texts, the remnants of Indian substance thinking were slowly cast away. Gone are things as substances with hard edges and definite boundaries, instead they are seen as thing-events, simultaneously themselves as well as, in some way, all other things as well, because of the ever changing interrelation in the causal flow.

Hua-yen and the Flower Garland Sutra. Though first educated in the *T'ien-t'ai* or *Tendai* (天台, lit. "Heavenly Terrace") tradition at Mt. Hiei, Kūkai owed his to intellectual framework to *Hua-yen* or *Kegon* (華嚴, lit. "Flower Garland") Buddhism, which he encountered in his pilgrimage to China. While his thought was heavily influenced by Hua-yen, he moved beyond it, convinced that while it had the highest insight into the nature of reality, it lacked a practical experiential correlate.

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[109] "Heart Sutra," translated by Thich Nhat Hanh, accessed March 7, 2015, http://heartsutrascience.com/wp/archives/14

Kegon (Japanese) or *Hua-yen* (Chinese), along with T'ien-t'ai, forms the basis of much of East Asian Buddhism and plays an important role in the development of Chan/Zen as well as various forms of esoteric Buddhism. It developed around the same time as T'ien-t'ai, between the sixth and seventh centuries of the Common Era. It takes the *Avatamsaka* ("Flower Garland")[110] *Sutra* as its central scripture.[111] While Hua-yen would not survive in China as a separate school past the anti-Buddhist persecutions of the ninth century, only a few decades after the monk Fazang's instructions to Empress Wu Zhao, the Japanese Emperor Shōmu would himself would use Hua-yen teaching as the basis of his reign.[112]

Because of emptiness, that is a lack of ultimate separateness, characterized as it is by self-nature, independence and permanence, all things can be said to exist together as one. Whatever exists does so only in relationship to all others, that is, to the whole set of relationships that constitute the universe. One can already see this in *prajñāpāramitā* literature which worked out the implications of *pratītyasamutpāda* or dependent origination. Furthermore, because all elements interpenetrate each other (due to lack of permanent substance), their existence is nothing other than their interpenetration, an insight implied in the *Heart Sutra*. The elements are, then in an important way, identical with each other, while at the same time, preserved in their individual uniqueness. The Bodhisattva or enlightened being comes to understand that everything contains in itself, in a way, everything else, thus with William Blake, an enlightened being might indeed see the universe in a grain of sand.[113]

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[110] The significance of the title, "Flower Garland" lies in the miracle of *Buddhavātamsaka*. According to Sarvāstivāda tradition only a true Buddha could perform this miracle. They held that the Buddha can cause a large multitude of Buddhas to manifest, each seated on a lotus blossom and whom manifests another host of Buddhas seated on a lotus blossom et al. filling up the cosmos until it reaches *akanistha* heaven, one of the pure abodes in the realm of forms (*Rūpadhātu*). See Imre Hamar, introduction to *The Reflecting Mirrors: Perspectives on Huayan Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), xiii.

[111] Scholars believe the sutra to have originated in China or Central Asia close to a half a millennium after the death of the Buddha. Only two chapters of the sutra exist in Sanskrit; these are dated to the second century CE and are thought to have existed as independent sutras before being redacted as part of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. See Francis H.Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977); 21-22.

[112] Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989), 140.

The sutra offers the tower of Buddha Vairocana as a metaphor to describe the *dharmadhātu*, the *realm of dharma*, that is, the universe seen through the eyes of an enlightened being. Like the Tardis, the time machine of the television hero *Doctor Who*, the tower of Vairocana is far larger on the inside than outside. It is as wide as the sky, containing within it hundreds of thousands of towers. Inside this Buddha's tower is the dwelling place of the Buddha wherein all Buddhas live peacefully, where each moment of time encapsulates all others without losing its own uniqueness, where one each land permeates every other land without the loss of its own uniqueness and where each sentient being permeates the others and they it without having their identities swallowed up. It is a world "with no hard edges, the world of luminous flow without shadows…Inside everything is everything else. And yet no things are confused."[114]

As in one atom,
So in all atoms,

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[113] "To see a World in a Grain of Sand/And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,/Hold infinity in the palm of your hand/And Eternity in an hour." "To See the world in a Grain of Sand" by William Blake, 431; quoted by Matthieu Ricard in Ricard Matthieu and Trinh Xuan Thuan, *The Quantum and the Lotus* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2001), 74.

[114] Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, 136.

All worlds enter therein—
So inconceivable is it.[115]

Hua-yen: Fazang (法藏) (643-712 CE) and Chengguan (澄觀) (738-839).

Fazang's *Treatise on the Golden Lion* attempts to describe Hua-yen's concept of universal causation of all elements and how this makes possible the harmony of all penetrating things. Interpenetration and harmony arise from the six qualities that each element (*dharma*) possesses: universality, specialty, similarity, difference, integration and disintegration. He uses the *Theory of Ten Mysterious Gates* to account for the total interpenetration and mutual identity of all things, explaining how these seemingly opposite aspects – truth and falsity, visible and hidden, general and specific, and so on not only complement and coexist with one another, but mutually penetrate, are mutually inclusive, interwoven, while retaining their own distinct identities.[116] Among the metaphors used is the most-well known one, that of Indra's jeweled net, which he uses to illustrate how all things can penetrate each other without losing their own identities. Another metaphor is a lion made of gold or a house made of lumber.

The god Indra has an infinitely large net made up of shiny jewels. Each jewel reflects all of the others, their images penetrating each other over and over. As a single jewel carries within it the clear images of all the others, so too in each thing can be found all things.

> This one jewel consists of the connections of many jewels to form the net. Why is this? It is because one is an aspect of the whole, and it is formed by containing the many. Without the existence of one, all cannot exist: therefore this net is formed from this one jewel…

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[115] *Avatamsaka Sutra: The Flower Ornament Scripture*, translated by Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 959; quoted by Matthieu Ricard in *The Quantum and the Lotus*, 74.

[116] Norman Harry Rothschild, "Fazang". *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed March 27, 2013. http://www.iep.utm.edu/fazang/.

> …Along this line of reasoning you should be able to understand how everything enters into one thing.[117]

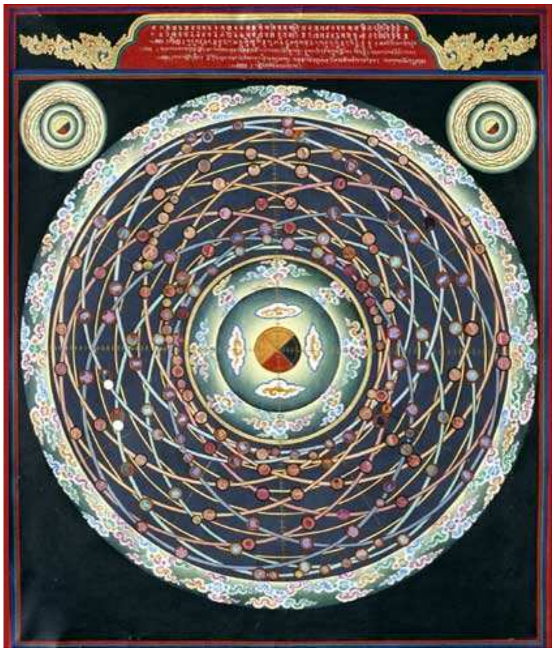[118]

Illustration 1: Bhutanese Cosmos Mandala, “Indra’s Net”.

Fazang uses a house as a metaphor for the universe in the *Treatise on Five Teachings*. The sum total of the relationships between structural members of the house (roof, walls, etc.) is contained in a single rafter. The infinite in some way can be seen in the infinitesimal as well as the interdependence of each part and the whole.

In another place, he uses the example of a golden lion (a statue which guarded the entrance to the Empress’ palace) to illustrate Hua-yen’s doctrines. Gold, representing *li*, principle, lacks self-existence and comes into being as the result of other causes. Because of its emptiness, it can be fashioned into an object like a statue. The shape of the lion, representing *shi*, things, exists only as a result of conditions or causes, but the gold always exists in some form. It is important to note that the gold does not refer to a principle (*li*) that stands above or beyond phenomena (*shi*). The gold cannot be said to be "behind" the lion, nor can it be said that the lion is an "emanation" of the gold. Gold only exists in a particular form. Phenomena is principle in its phenomenal form.[119]

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[117] Fazang, “On the Golden Lion,” trans. Garma C.C. Chang in *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 229.

[118] See: Bhutanese Cosmos Mandala, “Indra’s Net”. *Dharmapala Thangka Centre.* Accessed March 2, 2015. http://www.thangka.de/Gallery-3/Cosmos/9-1/Kosmos1.htm

Fazang explains it this way:

> In each of the lion's eyes, in its ears, limbs, and so forth, down to each and every single hair, there is a golden lion. All the lions embraced by each and every hair simultaneously and instantaneously enter into one single hair. Thus, in each and every hair there are an infinite number of lions... The progression is infinite, like the jewels of Celestial Lord Indra's Net: a realm-embracing-realm *ad infinitum* is thus established, and is called the realm of Indra's Net.[120]

Li and *shi* were commonplace in Daoist and Neo-Confucian philosophy of the time.[121] Earlier Buddhist thinkers in China identified *li* with the original, pure Buddha mind, thus all phenomena thing-events are the Buddha-mind in its phenomenal form. Shades of Kūkai's understanding of the relationship between *dharmakāya* and elements can be seen here.

Cheng-guan, the fourth patriarch, utilizes the four *Dharmadhātus* ("*dharma*-realms"), which describe successively deeper or more thorough ways in which to experience the world. The first is *shi* (事) meaning "thing" or "affair", wherein the world is experienced in terms of discrete items. The second is *li* (理), principle, in this case referring to *sunyatā*. The third is the realm of non-obstruction of *li* against *shi* (理事無礙), of the non-obstruction of principle and phenomena. Unlike in the first two realms, one neither ignores principle (*shi*) for events (*li*) or events for principle. The practitioner now sees events as manifestations of principle and principle as the order by which events relate. The most penetrating vision is the fourth, the non-obstruction of *shi* and *shi* (事事無礙)*,* the non-obstruction between phenomena, wherein a person sees the non-obstruction and mutual penetration of all things and events.[122]

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[119] Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, 140.
[120] Fazang, *Treatise on the Golden Lion*, trans. C.C. Chang. Accessed March 2, 2015. http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Miscellaneous/Treatise_on_Golden_Lion.html.
[121] On the role of *li* and *shi* in pre-Buddhist Chinese thought and its connection to Hua-yen, see Kang-nam Oh, "The Taoist Influence on Hua-yen Buddhism: A Case of the Sinicization of Buddhism in China," *Chung-Haw Buddhist Journal* 13, no.2 (May 2000), 94-5.

We thus see in Hua-yen a vision that reconciles Buddhist non-dualism with a respect for the reality of a thing's identity; it preserves not only unity and multiplicity, but a kind of universality as well. Buddhism reacted against the apparent monism of the Upanishads (and later *Advaita*) which tended to reduce multiplicity and the uniqueness of individual things to the status of a conjurer's trick. Each self (*ātman*) was in fact identical with the whole (*Bráhman*); any apparent uniqueness was simply a result of delusion or ignorance. Other schools of Hindu philosophy held a more dualistic approach (*Sāmkhya*), arguing for the eternal existence of two substances (*prakrti* and *purusa*), understanding a plurality of individual selves (*purusa*), but with no unity. A clear theme in *Mahāyāna* literature is that the realization of this truth is not something attained through discursive reason, but rather the direct experience of non-dual reality.

The Holographic Universe

Shôjjissôgi. Having said that, I now return to Kūkai, and his monumental work, *Shôjjissôgi*, "The Meaning of Sound, Word and Reality", written roughly a year after *Sokushinjôbutsugi*. In what is central chapter of the *Shôjjissôgi*, he writes these verses:

> The five great elements have vibrations;
> Each of the ten worlds has its language;

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[122] Dan Sthaus, "Buddhist philosophy, Chinese," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1989), accessed March 27, 2012, http://www.rep.routledge.com.libproxy.temple.edu/article/G002SECT8.

> The six kinds of objects are expressive symbols;
> The *Dharma*kaya Buddha is the Reality. [123]

We need to unpack these terse verses because they reveal, at their core, Kūkai's fundamental insights into the nature of identity. Abé identifies the third verse as the key.

The First Two Lines. The first line references the five 'elements' (*gogyō*, 五行) – fire, metal, earth, water, wood, which in East Asian tradition are not static element units as are those of the Greek tradition. Their name is suggestive, meaning literally, "the five goings". In their primal state, they vibrate (what Abé calls a "primal pulsation" - *kyō*), driving them into one another and making them bind together, giving rise to voices which express the names (*ji*) of things which "evoke" objects.[124] Voice gives way to writing which gives birth to speech. The interplay of the five elements themselves is differentiation, which makes possible articulation into writing and then speech.

In non-tantric forms of Buddhism, the elements are simply the physical constituents of the universe. In tantrism, each of the five elements represents one of the five sacred syllables, one of the five Buddhas[125] as well as a different aspect or quality of emptiness – original non-arising (earth), transcending designation (water), purity (fire), without primary cause (wind), being formless as space.[126] Danichi's enlightened activity is revealed in resonances or vibrations which coalesce into various arrangements – the five elements, the five sounds at the root of every language and even the five Buddhas.[127]

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[123] "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality" (part 3) in Hakeda, 240; it is also a theme found in his poetry. For instance, in "Climb the Mountain to Contemplate the Hermit", Kūkai writes,
(Mahāvairo)cana sits in the center
(Mahāvairo)cana, ah, who is invoked?
Originally (it) is the master of my heart.
(It) pervades the earth with Three Mysteries.
(It) adorns the pure land (or maṇḍala) of space.
The mountains as (its) brushes dot the vast ink of the oceans.
Heaven and earth is (its) sūtra box.
The myriad phenomena are embodied by one dot.
Comments in parenthesis were added by the translator for clarity.

- Translated by Ronny Green in *The Mysterious Mirror of Writing: Kūkai's Poetry and Literary Theory,* unpublished manuscript, accessed March 3, 2015, http://ww2.coastal.edu/rgreen/kukaipoetry.htm.

[124] Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra,* 282.

[125] "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality" (part 3b) in Hakeda, 240.

The Third Line. To understand the third line ("The six kinds of objects are expressive symbols"), he turns to the visual field and objects of sight as examples. He presents another summary in verse:

> The objects of sight are colors, forms and movements,
> Endowed with them are both sentient and nonsentient beings.
> Of them are conditioned and unconditioned aspects.
> They delude some and induce others to attain enlightenment.[128]

Colors are those of the five great elements. Forms refer to physical qualities, such as length, shape, etc. Movements refer to various kinds of motion. All beings, sentient and insentient are endowed with these characteristics. These beings are not independent but interrelated. The objects of sight, as conditioned are manifestations of the Body and Mind of the *Dharmakāya,* the unconditioned. Seen from the relative perspective, these things are marked by their distinctive qualities, but from the "absolute" (meaning unconditioned perspective of the enlightened ones), they are "undifferentiated One." All sentient beings are identical to the Buddha and are the already enlightened *Dharmakāya*.[129] In another location, he says "…The *Dharmakāya* of the Tathagatas and the essential nature of sentient beings are identical; both are in possession of the principle of primordial quiescence (*honrai jakujô*, 本来寂静).”[130] Brickman explains *jakujô* to mean a state of freedom from delusion; nirvāṇa.[131]

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[126] Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra,* 281.
[127] "Truth words…", 563.
[128] "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality" (part 3b) in Hakeda, 241-2.
[129] *Ibid*., 245.

One can conceptualize it this way: differentiation is the “heart of signification” and is embodied in individual characters or letters which fix that differentiation.[132] In the world-text, a letter or character (*ji*, 字) is anything which is able to differentiate itself from any other thing by its pattern (*mon*, 文).[133] Letters are defined by their difference from every other letter. They have no essence which provides them with a “positive” definition (positive here meaning ‘positing’; philosophically speaking, we might say ‘intrinsic nature’ or *svabhāva)*, nor do they have an existence prior to their relation to other letters. Without ontological grounding, things cannot self-present, “except for their infinitely regressive reference to other things in their mutually referential network.”[134] Letters then are not *primary existents,* but rather, *secondary existents*. They are embodiments of emptiness. In fact, language is made possible only because of emptiness.

The Fourth Line. If we return to the first poem, we find its concluding line simply reads, “The *Dharmakāya* is the reality.” Citing the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, Kūkai says,

> …The Body of the Buddha is suprational in that all lands are in it…[the Buddha, of whom] each hair contains many lands as vast as oceans, pervades the entire World of *Dharma*…in a follicle of [the Buddha’s] hair, there are unimaginable as many as particles of dust, in each of which Vairocana Buddha is present, revealing the sublime *Dharma* in the midst of an assembly…[135]

He adds his own comments:

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[130] “Attaining Enlightenment in This Very Existence” in Hakeda, 233; cited in John Brickman, “Harmony, Attribute of the Sacred and Phenomenal in Aquinas and Kūkai”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 15 (1995), 106.
[131] *Ibid.*, 107.
[132] “The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality” (part 3b) in Hakeda, 242.
[133] Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 15.
[134] *Ibid.,* 280.
[135] “The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality” (part 3b) in Hakeda, 244-5.

> The Body of the Buddha can be regarded as having the magnitude of the World of *Dharma*, as vast as infinite space, or as having ten Buddha lands or one Buddha land, or as having the size of a particle of dust. Thus the Body of the Buddha, the body of each sentient being, and each land, small and large, are interrelated and interdependent. All of these sentient beings and the worlds of nonsentient beings are provided with the objects of sight – colors, forms and movements. [136]

We see here his use of Hua-yen's principles of "vertical interpenetration", that of phenomena and principle (理事無礙; known as in Chinese as *lishi wuai* in Hua-yen and in Japanese Kegon as *riji-muge*) as well as "horizontal interpenetration" of phenomena with phenomena (事事無礙; known as in *shishi wuai* in Hua-yen and in Kegon, *jiji-muge*), marking what Steve Odin calls "experiential transparency" in which all thing-events are "within-each-other".[137] The body of the Buddha contains all other things within it and all things contain the body of the Buddha. This does not differ much from the image of Indra's net, where the metaphor of the net focuses on the constituent nodes of the net, rather than on the net itself. Holographic in character, every node, or thing-event, contains, in a way, every other node. Without an abiding self, every node in its nature is a reflection of every other node.

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[136] *Ibid*., 245.

[137] Steve Odin, *Process Metaphysics and Hua-yen Buddhism…,* 13.

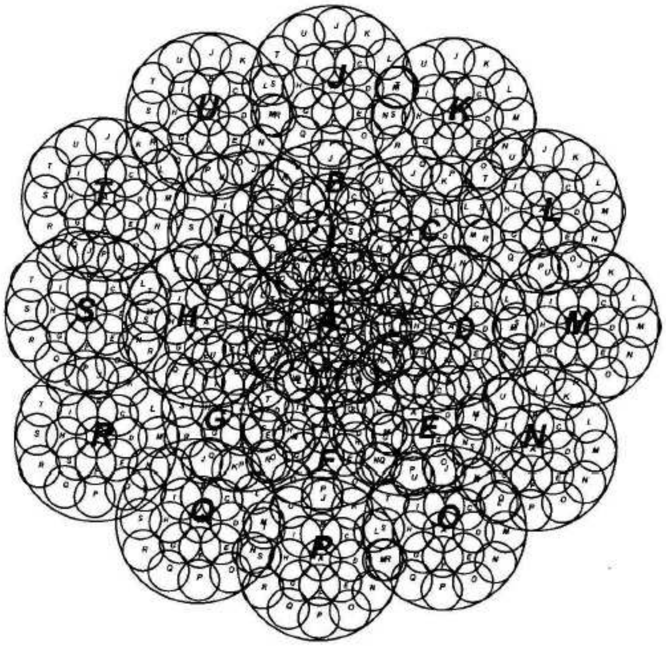

Illustration 2: The Holographic Whole

[138]

The difference between the *dharmakāya* and the myriad sentient beings is one primarily of perspective, as seen from the relative perspective and as seen from the 'absolute' (that is, unconditioned) perspective. Correspondingly, all thing-events have two aspects – the conditioned and the unconditioned. Seen from the conditioned perspective, all things have their distinctive qualities, measurements and so on. Seen from the unconditioned perspective, that is, with the enlightened eye, all the objects of sight are provided with the three qualities (color, form, movement) and are interrelated.[139] In seeing this, we should note his implicit use of Fazang's concepts of *identity* and *interdependence* from Hua-yen. The former refers to thing-events seen in their conditioned aspect, the former to them in their unconditioned aspect. We also see his own appropriation of Cheng-guan's understanding of the *dharmadhātus*, in his description of the fourth level, the mutual interpenetration of *shi* and *li*. Any one thing-event can be an entry-way into the whole; each carries in it the whole. The two, whole and part are inseparable.

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[138] See: Thomas Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 24.

[139] "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality" (part 3b) in Hakeda, 245.

Conclusion. From this discussion I hope to have shown that emptiness or *sunyatā* is at the heart of Kūkai's understanding of reality. Emptiness makes it possible for all things to be what they are. All things are what they are only in view of their interrelationship with causal matrix, *pratītyasamutpāda*. Nothing exists apart from it, independently of it, therefore one can say that in a certain way, the causal matrix is all things. Because they lack the "solid" ontological boundaries that concepts like Maximus' *logoi* provide, identities are far more fluid. The consequence of this *sunyatā* is that all things are characterized by *advaya*, nonduality, all thing-events are marked by a nondual relationship with one another. It is a comprehensive understanding, based on experiential insight that penetrates into all fields of ontology, epistemology and practice. The result of this is an awareness of nonduality, the 'being' and activity of all things are not different from those of all other things and from the 'being' and activity of the *dharmakāya.*[140] *Saṃsāra* is not different from *nirvāṇa*; they interpenetrate one another.

Based on his orthodox understanding of *sūnyatā*, all things are impermanent and lack substantial self, they are characterized by *anicca* and *anātman*. They have no abiding reality; with Nāgārjuna, Kūkai can deny they have *svabhāva* or "self-existence"; thing-events are not things that enter into the causal flow, but rather, they have no reality outside the causal flow. Any notion of an abiding nature (or identity) is an artificial construct of language that provides a "snap shot", as it were, of a being only at a certain point in its flow. Emptiness itself is empty, it is not a category that stands transcendentally above the causal matrix. In the *Heart Sutra* (and Hua-yen), he realizes a fuller implication of *sūnyatā*, that of mutual non-dual identity. Its famous verse reads, "Emptiness is form and form emptiness", which read through the lens of Nāgārjuna, leads to the development of a non-dual philosophy.[141]

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[140] "Comments on Questions on the *Shixiang bore jing*" (*Jissō Hannya-kyō tasshaku*). *Kūkai on the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijō Dreilein (Tokyo, Japan: Keio University Press, 2010), 328; "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality" (part 3b) in Hakeda, 245.

Nāgārjuna's method was intended primarily to negate, and the symmetrical identity was only used in special cases, posited to the "whole of wholes", such as *nirvāna as samāra, nāma-rūpa as sūnya*, in order to critique dualism operant in *Hinayāna* thought. The Chinese applied it in a more positive function, soon saying that the "one is many", "the cause is the effect", "the part is the whole" and so on, making claims that Indian logicians would find extravagant.[142]

Hua-yen, characterized as a syncretic school which drew from several major traditions, such as *Mādhyamika, Yogācāra* as well as *Tathāgatagarbha*. It sought to harmonize these understandings of emptiness, an understanding of reality as ultimately non-dual in nature, epistemologically, ontologically and (at least in theory) praxiologically. As nature is holographic in reality, any single-thing event is the gateway and manifestation of the whole, which Hua-yen identifies with the *dharmakāya*, the dharma-body. Furthermore, Hua-yen identifies this with *Vairocana*, the great Buddha of the *Mahāvairocana* and *Avatamsaka Sutras*, whose body is as wide as the sky and co-extensive with the universe. *Vairocana* describes the way things exist, in interdependence and mutual non-obstruction.[143] Hua-yen, and Shingon following it, could be described as forms of "pan-Buddhism", holding that everything can be considered the Buddha because all things are empty. 'Buddha' is thus not a substance, nor the material or sufficient cause of the universe.[144]

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[141] Kumārajīva, in his fourth century CE translation of the *Heart Sutra* into Chinese deliberately chose a very strong word, *chi-shih*, as copula for the phrase, "Form is emptiness and emptiness form", a word not required by the Sanskrit text itself. *Chi-shih* implies "symmetrical identity" and introduced into Chinese philosophical thought a strong form of identification of one thing with another that was not present in Confucian and Daoist thought. Whalen Lai, "Chinese Buddhist causation theories: An analysis of Sinitic Mahāyāna understanding of Pratitya-samutpāda". *Philosophy East and West* 27, no. 3 (July, 1977), 253.

[142] *Ibid.*, 254.

Kūkai adds to this an understanding of the elements; all things are made of the five elements, from the smallest to the greatest, from the meanest dharma to the *dharmakāya*. Those elements themselves are not substantial in nature, they are not incomposite substrata as earlier abidharmists had thought. This makes possible the non-dual relationship between individual thing-events, characterized as "horizontal interpenetration", as well as their mutual relationship with the *dharmakāya,* which is "vertical interpenetration".

While Maximus can speak of the Logos becoming embodied (σωματωθηναι) in the world through the *logoi* of things,[145] this can only be understood in a metaphorical way.[146] The embodiment is but the providential wills that the Logos has for individual creatures and for the cosmos as a whole; the Logos remains ontologically distinct from creations, as well as his own wills. Kūkai, however, took the embodiment of the *dharma* quite literally – all thing-events by virtue of their impermanence are embodiments of truth, as is the cosmos itself.[147]

By their mutual lack of self-existence and emptiness, any thing-event cannot be ontologically separated from any other, or a part apart from the whole. An enduring, stable identity is a fiction, to Kūkai's thinking, it is at best, an (possible useful) abstraction, at worst, a misleading imposition by a deluded mind. Kūkai expresses this in one of his tantric poems:

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[143] Cook, Francis H. "The Meaning of Vairocana in Hua-yen Buddhism". *Philosophy East and West* 22, no. 4 (October, 1972), 413.
[144] *Ibid.*, 414.
[145] *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1084c-d; cf. Tollefsen, 66-7.
[146] Tollefsen, 66-7.
[147] Krummel, *Kûkai*, accessed November 11, 2013.

> A shadow in the round mirror in the tower of a millionaire,
> Or a silhouette in the square mirror in the palace of the Emperor of
> Chin:[148]
> Who knows where they have come from?
> They are temporary figures made from the chain of causation.
> They are neither existing nor nothing and are detached from any theory.
> They are unreachable by human thought.
> Do not speak of self-cause, cause by self and other, cause by other.
> People of false doctrines are entangled in fantasies.
> Buddha in the mind is not the same as we nor is different from us,
> For he comes out of the chain of causation like echoes from a voice.[149]

We will see however where Kūkai's genius truly lies, in his understanding of the implications of non-dualism for practice; there are a number of non-dual relationships that will inform how he shapes his regime of self-cultivation – the non-dual relationship of body and mind, of *nirvāṇa* and *samsara*, of individual being and *dharmakāya.*

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[148] According to the translators' notes, the round mirror refers to an Indian legend where a vain wealthy man, upon gazing in a mirror, discovered that he was not handsome and so thought himself a goblin. According the Chinese legend, the Emperor of Chin judged people as good or evil by studying their silhouette in a mirror. See *Tantric Poetry of Kukai*. Trans., Morgan Gibson and Hiroshi Murakami (Fredonia, NY: White Pine Press, 1982), 27.

[149] "Singing Image of a Phantom in a Mirror", *Tantric Poetry of Kukai*, 27.

CHAPTER 4
MAXIMUS' METAPRAXIS

> …God who is above all leads us through the historical nature, so to speak, of the appearance of created things to amazement and a kind of ascent through contemplation and knowledge of them…and then introduces the contemplation of the more spiritual meaning [*logos*] within these things, and finally leads us by way of theology up to the most hidden knowledge of himself, so far as this is possible, in the early stages purifying us from everything that has form…so that we may reach the goal of contemplation…[1]

> When a man has been purified and humbled, when his eye is single, and he is his own real self, then the *logoi* of things jump out at him spontaneously.[2]

Having spoken of the nature of identity in the thought of Maximus and Kūkai, their "metaphysics", I now turn to their understandings of praxis, their "*metapraxis*". Let us first look at what constitutes *metapraxis*.

Metapraxis is a type of questioning or theorizing that emerges from concerns about the rationale for and effectiveness of various religious practices, it enquires "into the purpose or efficacy of the practice in terms of…participatory and transformative functions."[3] *Participatory* refers to how a particular practice allows a community to participate in the numinous, while *transformative* reflects how it spiritually transforms the community or person involved.[4] *Metapraxis* evaluates what is that happens in these rituals. It can also be understood in a simpler way: while metaphysics is "philosophical theorizing on the nature of reality", religious *metapraxis* is theorizing "on what lies behind particular forms of religious praxis”,[5] they “reflect on and make sense of practices”.[6] It need not be abstruse; even can do it children do it whenever they ask “why?” of a particular religious practice: why it is they go to church on Sundays? Why do some cultures venerate deceased ancestors?, why do Jewish people observe *kosher*?, and so forth. In this regard, my challenge is to see how Maximus and Kūkai understanding of identity influences the “why” of their schemas of self-cultivation and ritual praxis – how does the triad of *hypostasis-logoi-tropoi* influence Maximus’ understanding of *divine philosophy* as the means of attaining divinization? How does *non-duality* influence Kūkai’s practice of the *three mysteries* in attaining the realization of Buddhahood in this very existence? In the following two chapters, I explore their metapraxis and in the culminating chapter, I contrast their metaphysic-metapraxis relationship.

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[1] *Amb.* 71, 1413c, in Louth, 165.

[2] Thomas Merton, *Introduction to Christian Mysticism: Initiation into Monastic Spirituality 3*, edited by Patrick F. O'Connell (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2008) 132.

[3] Thomas Kasulis, "Philosophy as Metapraxis," in *Discourse and Practice*, edited by Frank Reynolds and David Tracy (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), 178.

[4] Kasulis, "Philosophy as Metapraxis…", 178.

I first turn to the thought of Maximus, and begin by describing the culminating goal of his regime of cultivation: *theosis* or deification, that is, becoming like God *in as far as possible as it is for a created being*. If one knows what Maximus’ aims at, his praxis will make more sense. As I review his practices and his program of cultivation, arranged as it is in three stages, I will show how his understanding of identity, reflected in the *logoi-tropoi-hypostasis* triad, shapes and is echoed within these.

My reading of Maximus and the tradition of the Cappadocians whose thought he followed is influenced by the interpretation of contemporary Eastern Christian scholars such as John Zizioulas and Aristotle Papanikolaou. They see in this tradition an elevation of an "ontology of the particular", [7] which gives significance to difference, otherness, and particularity. It raises particularity and communion to ontological priority, rather than sameness[8] anchored, as it is, in the revelation of a Triune God, as expressed in the ideas of *tropos hyparxeos* as well as *hypostasis*. In one sense, the concept is anthropocentric,[9] that is to say that *person* is the central category for understanding cosmology. As noted earlier, Maximus extends this category to all beings; in this regard *hypostasis* must be understood as more broadly as *individual existence*; when speaking of God, angels or humans, the term can more specifically be understood as 'person'.[10]

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[5] Shlomo Biderman, “Discourse and Practice by Frank Reynolds; David Tracy, a review,” *The Journal of Religion* 74, no. 1 (January 1994), 112.
[6] Robert Neville, “Discourse and Practice by Frank Reynolds; David Tracy, a review,” *Philosophy East and West* 45, no. 1 (January 1995), 117.

If we turn to *theosis,* we must observe a caution: dependence on a "language of essence", as typically understood, cannot adequately express the Christian understandings of divine-human relations. Aristotle Papanikolaou notes that substance language can lead to two undesirable positions – either pantheism or a distant God with whom communion is impossible.[11] This is why Maximus and Cappadocians turn to a relational ontology, emphasizing *hypostasis* and *tropos* instead of *ousia*; I will show this is the case in Maximus' understanding of deification.

His metapraxis, which I identify with his tripartite program of cultivation, I will show, has as its purpose the re-training of the passions, the cultivation of love, turning it from the self-involvement and narcissism of *philautia*, translated literally as 'self-love'. In this context, 'self-love' refers to the ordering of the entirety of one's life and indeed of the entire cosmos around oneself rather than the Trinity. For Maximus, cultivation is principally the cultivation of virtue, of all virtues, which find culmination in the theological virtue of love or charity, which leads to the infused gift of *theologia*, divine contemplation.

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[7] Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 132.
[8] *Ibid*., 131-2.
[9] Maximus might argue that it is not anthropocentric as much as theocentric, since the tri-personal God is the model of existence for all things.
[10] In the medieval Christian west, philosophers distinguished between *suppositum* and *persona*. The latter refers to 'persons' in the more specific sense Maximus typically uses while the former refers to any individual existent which includes persons when he uses *hypostasis* in a more general sense. The closest Greek term to *persona*, *prosopon* was rejected in the East because of its modalist connotations.
[11] Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, 126.

Maximus' Eschatological Anthropology: Incarnation and Deification

Loudovikos considers the *tropoi* to be dialogical in character: while the *logoi* are given, their modes of existence are "talked about".[12] The dialogue is between the human *logos* and the *Logos* himself via the uncreated divine *logoi* of things. It is constitutive of the human openness to the uncreated.[13] The human *logos* as used here Loudovikos considers an admixture of "desire" and "existential reasoning".[14] What this means is that humans are capable of relating to God through their usage of human *logoi* as manifested in their *tropoi*.

In his understanding of Fall of Adam and Eve, Maximus says that it did not alter the *logos* of human beings. Corruption enters into the *tropos*. Maximus is evocative in his description of the disastrous effects of the primal fall: the fateful choice of Adam lead to the "fashioning of a living death" that that stretches from the dawn of humanity to the present day.[15] This death functions as the "corruption of 'coming to be'".[16]

As noted earlier, God respects the integrity of created beings and will not allow their *logoi* to become altered. Thus in the Incarnation Christ takes on the fullness of human nature in its entirety without giving up the fullness of his divinity, neither merging the two into a chimera nor making a composite of them.[17]

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[12] Loudovikos, 4.
[13] *Ibid.*, 5.
[14] *Ibid.*, 11, note #8.
[15] *Ambigua* 10, 1156d, Louth, *Maximus,* 123.
[16] *Ibid.*, 1156d, Louth, *Maximus,* 123.

> And what could be more amazing than the fact that, being God by nature, and seeing fit to become man by nature, he did not defy the limits of either one of those natures in relation to the other, but instead remained wholly God while becoming wholly human?[18]
>
> The *Logos*, in taking flesh, 'showed the innovation of *tropos* with regard to both natures (divine and human) in the fixity of the natural *logoi* which are preserved, [and] without which none of the beings is what it is.'[19]

In the Maximiman understanding, God's *logos per se* is incommunicable, allowing for no possibility of ontological "communion" (as John Zizioulas calls it), as *communion at the level of being* would change the 'what' of a thing.[20] Such a state would seem to violate the Maximus' understanding of *logoi* as divine wills which represent God's irrevocable intentions for created beings, which includes each thing's distinctive and enduring identity.

God takes the initiative and bridges the gulf of ontological otherness not by adjusting the "what" of himself (as in the Incarnation) but by his "how", which subsequently also adjusts the "how" of created beings (redemption, deification).[21] There is a *communion at the level of tropoi* (which could also be considered a *hypostatic communion*); it allows for communion with each other's being without a change of the 'what' of things.[22] In the Incarnation, the *Logos* unites hypostatically the inconceivable, unnamable divine *logos* as well as the human *logos*. God does not enter into communion with humans as a *substance*, but rather as a *person*, through the person of the *Logos*.

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[17] *Amb*. 5, 1052a, Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 172.
[18] *Amb*. 42, 1320c, Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 84.
[19] *Amb*. 6, PG 91, 1052a; cited by Zizioulas, 24, fn #35.
[20] Zikzioulas, 25.
[21] *Ibid.*, 24.
[22] *Ibid.*, 25.

Théōsis or deification, is the purpose for the Incarnation.[23] It marks not only the state of salvation, but the original purpose, according to Maximus, for which human beings and indeed all of creation was brought into being – the union of Creator with creation.

> …it was for us that the Word of God in his incarnation descended into the lower parts of the earth and ascended above all the heavens, while being himself perfectly unmoved, he underwent in himself through the incarnation as man our future destiny.[24]
>
> For [the Fathers] say that God and man are paradigms one of another: God is humanized to man through love for humankind to the extent that man, enabled through love, deifies himself to God; and man is caught up noetically by God to what is unknown to the extent that he manifests God, who is invisible by nature, through the virtues.[25]

Incarnation and *theosis* mark two sides or two dimensions of the Dionysian and Neoplatonic doctrine of procession and return. *Theosis* in this case represents the willed choice on the part of rational creatures, not simply the automatic re-turning of created beings towards their source.

Following the assertion of Athanasius, that we are to become by grace, what God is by nature, Maximus argues that it occurs at the level of *tropoi* and not at level of *logos*. Only God is God by essence. Human beings become God by grace, by participation, sharing in God's divine life.[26] Although deification is only possible in light of the Incarnation of the *Logos*, deification represents a kind of re-embodiment of the incarnate *Logos*:

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[23] The doctrine derives from two passages in scripture. The first is a single line from *Psalm 82*, v.6, "I have said you are gods, sons of the Most High" which is repeated in the New Testament, at *John* 10:34. A more suggestive passage comes from *2 Peter* 1:4 – "…by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."
Athanasius of Alexandria has articulated the orthodox understanding of the phrase, "The Son of God became man that man might become god." He explains this in *De Incarnatione*, 54,3 (NPNF2-4) saying that men become by grace what God is by nature. He makes frequent references to it as well in his *Four Discourses Against the Arians* (I,16; II,70; III,24-25; III,34; III, 53; all NPNF2-4) and identifies the means as participation through the Holy Spirit (*Discourses Against the Arians*, I, 37).

[24] *Chapters on Theology*, II.24, Berthold, *Maximus*, 152.

[25] *Amb.Io.* 10 (PG 91.1113BC); cited by Adam Cooper, "Maximus the Confessor on the Structural Dynamics of Revelation". *Vigiliae Christianae* 55, no. 2 (2001), 161. He does not credit the translator, so it appears to be his own translation.

> The deification of the human person is directly proportionate to, and constituted by, the humanisation of the divine Word, who became incarnate historically in Christ. Deification takes place when the invisible God again takes on visible contours in the virtues, thereby becoming manifest in the world in an ongoing, escalating cycle of revelation. Love (ἀγάπη), which on the divine side is enacted in the form of φιλανθρωπια, constitutes the essential ingredient that makes this transformative, unifying, and revelatory process possible.[27]

Deification represents the "intimate intercourse of man with God, in which the entirety of human existence is permeated by divine presence".[28] The Church Fathers thought in terms of personal communion and encounter, not in terms of ontology. In fact, the principle can be "embarrassing" if it is thought of in terms of ontological categories.[29]

Humans (and subsequently all of the cosmos) will become divine by participation or sharing in God's divinity.[30] In the language of Maximus, this sharing is at the level of *tropoi*,[31] yet is written into their *logoi*, the "*logoi* of well-being", by God.[32] For Maximus, while the *imago dei* (Grk: εἰκόνα θεοῦ), resides at the level of the "what" (nature) of the person; the *similtudo dei* or likeness of God (Grk: ὁμοἰωσιν θεοῦ) however lies at this level – the level of the "how" of a human being (human personhood) – not at the level of the "what" of humans (human nature).[33] He writes that, "Every intelligent nature is in the image of God, but only the good and wise attain [God's] likeness."[34] εἰκόνα θεοῦ is an "endowed gift", while ὁμοίωσις is a "dynamic vocation of assimilation to God's virtues".[35] Furthermore, while the rational and intellectual soul is made in God's image, likeness to God can only be achieved by the soul in union with its body.[36]

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[26] Maximus uses a number of terms: *metousia* (μετουσία), *methexis* (μὲθεξις), and *koinonia* (κοινωνία), which are typically rendered in English as *participation*. For an overview of the role of *participation* in the thought of Maximus, see Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor,* ch. 5, 190-224.

[27] Cooper, "Maximus the Confessor on the Structural Dynamics of Revelation", 161-2.

[28] , George Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers," *Sobornost,* 4, no.4 (1961), article unpaginated, accessed November 20, 2013, http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/florovski_palamas.html.

[29] Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers", accessed November 20, 2013.

[30] Norman Russell, *The doctrine of deification in Greek patristic tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 262.

[31] "…it is in his mode of existence that man has received a deifying renewal in Christ.", Thunberg, 426. He further points out that it is affected in humans under conditions similar to those of the hypostatic union in Christ, that is, at the level of *tropos*, not *logos*. Cf. Thunberg, 430.

[32] Benevich, "God's *Logoi*…", 151.

The likeness of God in humans is only actualized through the cultivation of moral and spiritual practice, but one that is the result of cooperation with divine grace. Maximus provides a capsule summary of what this cultivation entails in his commentary on the *Our Father*:

> The Logos bestows adoption on us when He grants us that birth and deification which, transcending nature, comes by grace from above through the Spirit. The guarding and preservation of this in God depends on the resolve of those thus born: on their sincere acceptance of the grace bestowed on them and, through the practice of the commandments, on their cultivation of the beauty given to them by grace. Moreover, by emptying themselves of the passions they lay hold of the divine to the same degree as that to which, deliberately emptying Himself of His own sublime glory, the Logos of God truly became man.[37]

Maximus here notes the necessary connection between the deification and the Incarnation. On its own, human nature cannot achieve this, as God transcends creation in every way.[38] Especially after the fall of the first parents, the original harmony and graced relationship between humans and God was damaged.

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[33] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 165.

[34] *Chapters on Love* III.25.

[35] Paul Blowers, "Aligning and Reorienting the Passible Self: Maximus the Confessor's Virtue Ethics," in *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26 (August 2013), 333-350.

[36] Adam Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 109; cf. *Amb.Io.* 7 (PG 91. 1092b).

[37] Maximos the Confessor. "On the Lord's Prayer". *The Philokalia,* Vol. II. G.E.H. Palmer; Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware (London, England: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1981), pp.285-305; p.287

[38] For instance, see *Chapters on Theology*, I.1-10, II.28; *Chapters on Love*, III, 27-28

> Nothing in *theosis* is the product of human nature, for nature cannot comprehend God. It is only the mercy of God that has the capacity to endow *theosis* unto the existing…In *theosis*, man (the image of God) becomes likened to God, he rejoices in all the plenitude that does not belong to him by nature, because the grace of the Spirit triumphs within him, and because God acts in him.[39]

> The soul would never be able to reach out toward the knowledge of God if God did not allow himself to be touched by it through condescension and by raising it up to him. Indeed, the human mind as such would not have the strength to raise itself to apprehend any divine illumination did not God himself draw it up, as far as it is possible for the human mind to be drawn, and illumine it with divine brightness.[40]

One of the most striking features of Maximus' thought is the energy with which he distinguishes between the image and likeness, reflecting the influence of the ancient Alexandrian tradition.[41] However, I think we could say that all the cosmos *in some broad way* bears something of the image of God inasmuch as it possesses the *logoi-tropoi-hypostasis* triad. That said however, only rational beings fully possess the *imago dei* and are capable of reflecting it in their likeness.

> Surely then, if someone moves according to this *logos*, he will come to be in God, in whom the *logos* of his being pre-exists as his beginning and cause. Furthermore, if he moves by desire and wants to attain nothing else than his own beginning, he does not fall away from God. Rather, by constant straining towards God, he becomes God and is called a 'portion of God' because he has become fit to participate in God.[42]

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[39] Maximus, *Ad Thal*. 22; quoted by Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom: The Christian Tradition, vol. 2* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 11; for a discussion on deification and its status as a gift, cf. Pelikan 10-13.

[40] *Chapters on Knowledge*, I.31, Berthold, 134. Cf. Cooper, "Maximus the Confessor on the Structural Dynamics of Revelation", 172.

[41] Thunberg, 120. Historically, it was Irenaeus of Lyons (130-202 CE) who offered the first sustained reflection on the meaning and significance of *imago dei*. He differentiated between 'image' (Grk: *eikon*; Heb: *tselem*) and 'likeness' (Grk: *homoiosis*; Heb: *demut*) as given in Gen 1:26. *Image* was taken to refer to certain qualities in the ontological composition of human beings (reason, free-will) while *likeness* was seen as moral and relational qualities. Cf. *Adversus Haeresesm* V.6.1, V.16.1-2. Also cf. IV.3.7. The weight of scholarly opinion no longer distinguishes between the two as separate states or distinct realities. In the Masoretic text of *Genesis* the distinction between 'image' and 'likeness' seems to be an example of Hebrew parallelism where a second word or phrase is used to repeat or emphasize the first rather than to present a second reality or state. Parallelism is a common literary device found in Hebrew scripture, in particular the psalms.

[42] *Amb*. 7; 1080BC; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, pp.55–6. Cited in Törönen, 131.

Aquino describes the state of deification as “the graced state of experiential knowledge”. [43] In deification, there is established a dialectic between a continuation of the created order along with simultaneous transcendence of it. The seeming passivity is in fact “perfection of the active faculties” which are oriented towards communion with God.[44] It involves “real perception” by “active experience”, attained by “supra-intellective participation”.[45]

The Human Faculties. Human beings are created by God to find fulfillment in him and not in created beings. Before the fall, humans were characterized by a united will that freely sought this good which was found outside of the realm of created things. Maximus holds, with the weight of scripture and Christian tradition that God himself did not cause the fall of humankind. It was a result of both the devil’s seduction[46] as well as the consent of the first parents to it.[47] One of the most important aspects is the freedom of the human will; freedom is part of the “image character” of human beings, but can be used to their destruction.[48] Human are ruled by a dialectic of pleasure and pain; God intended human beings to savor the divine presence in creation; this divine enjoyment or pleasure (ἡδονή, *hēdonē*) was perverted with the human acquiescence to the devil’s temptation.[49] The primal humans turned their capacity for enjoyment to created things themselves, placing their very own selves and these created things above God.[50] With this re-orientation of the will, human beings become marked by an avaricious search for new pleasure and a desire to avoid pain (ὄδυνή, *hodonē*) conditioned and governed by man's self-love (φιλαυτία),[51] which he characterizes as the root of all vice,[52] as well as "sinful isolation from one's neighbor".[53] Vices simultaneously serve to dis-integrate both the human person as well as the human race while virtues achieve the opposite.[54]

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[43] Aquino, “The *Philokalia* and Regulative Virtue Epistemology…”, p.244

[44] *Ibid*.

[45] See *Centuries of Various Texts*, IV.32, *Philokalia,* Vol. 2. He explicitly contrasts this kind of experiential knowledge gained by participation and direct perception with intellection, which he characterizes as knowledge about God gained through analogy to created beings.

[46] It is interesting to note in relation to the theme of *theosis* that Satan tempts humans (in *Genesis* 2) by promising them that they will become gods by partaking of the forbidden fruit.

[47] For instance, see *Ad Thal. 61*

[48] Thunberg, 155; cf. Maximus’ comment, “If man is the image of the divine nature and if the divine nature is free, so is the image.” *Dialogue with Pyrrhus,* PG 91 col. 324D, quoted in John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*. Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1987, 137.

[49] *Ad. Thal* 61 (CCSG 22:85*); cf. Amb.* 42 (PG 91:1321).

As a result of the fall, the volitional activity of humans has been fractured. The natural will, characterized by a certain mode (*tropos*) of will that was harmoniously aligned with the desire implanted in it by nature. It has God as its final goal and inclines us naturally towards him and finding fulfillment in him. However, the fracture gives rise to the *gnome* (γνόμη) or gnomic will, a situation in which the will was "modified existentially" (i.e. the level of *tropos*).[55] Maximus defines it as "a qualified act of willing, in relation to some real or assumed good".[56] The relationship between created being and the *logoi* of the world was perverted.

As a consequence of the original fall, humankind is ruled by three interlocking vices, ignorance (ἀγνοία), self-love (φιλαυτία) and tyranny (τυραννισ). He defines ἀγνοία, ignorance, "…lack of knowledge of God as the good Cause of all things, and implies entire absence of divine perception and of the healthy movement which is connected to virtues."[57] Ignorance only serves to strengthen self-love, the root of all vices. Through the senses, subject to many different sensations and his will is torn in many different directions, searching for satisfaction which he cannot find. Tyranny has two dimensions, it refers to the internal control exerted by the passions and lower appetite over the individual[58] as well as the exterior control exerted in an unjust manner of one person over another who all share the same nature.[59]

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[50] See *Ambigua* 10, 1156c-1157a for his account of the fall.

[51] Cf. Thunberg, pp.154-59; the patterning of the ηδονη- οδυνη dialectic is Stoic in origin.

[52] *Chapters on Love,* II.8, II.59; Cf. *Ad Thal prol*.-256; also Thunberg, 232; Thunberg notes general parallels between Maximus' *philautia* and Augustine's *concupiscentia*, see 238-9.

[53] Thunberg, 283; Cf. *Chapters on Love*, IV.37.

[54] *Ibid.*, 284-5.

[55] Tollefsen, 133.

[56] *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, PG91:308c. Tollefsen, 134.

[57] Thunberg, 161.

As a result, mankind's original serenity was sundered by the passions which turn against it and leads it astray. Such a will is not evil, but because it is out of alignment with nature, and therefore "eccentric", it is likely to confuse selfish or false ends with those which are more natural, those oriented towards God. In the gnomic will, the *self* replaces the divine plan inherent in the creaturely *logos*, which utterly in harmony with God, as the center of value and meaning and must therefore be purified and cultivated by the practice of the virtuous life, prayer, asceticism and contemplation. On the other hand, it is by the use of this will that humans can choose to harmonize themselves with the divine *logos* present within them. Willing is a property of nature, according to Maximus, how to will is a characteristic of the *hypostasis*.

Zizioulas sees in this a fundamental freedom given to human beings, a freedom to respond to the call offered to them in their *logoi*. As long as there is freedom, there is history, he says. Human beings emerge as historical beings in a unique way because of their freedom to relate their mode of being or *tropoi* to God and every other being.[60]

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[58] *Chapters on Love*, II.30, PG 90:993b; *Philokalia* 2:70.

[59] Maximus' comments on tyranny in his commentary on the *Our Father*; he specifically says that tyranny violates the divine image in humankind. Maximos the Confessor, "On the Lord's Prayer," in *The Philokalia,* Vol. II. Translated and edited by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1981),297; Cf. Thunberg, 161.

[60] *Opuscula*; PG 91, 37bc; Von Balthasar, 226.

The Passions, Apatheia and Love

At the root of all vices (in the Maximian and more generally Byzantine monastic spiritual psychology) are situated the passions, in this case *spiritual* or *intellectual passions* rather than bodily ones (such as hunger or thirst). Maximus defines a passion as, "…a movement of the soul *contrary to nature*…"[61] Maximus' anthropology posits an originally good nature in human beings, one that endures in humanity's current alienation from God. A passion is focused, "…either toward irrational love or senseless hate of something or on the account of something material."[62] The source of their aberrant passions lies in the misuse (παράχρησις) of internal faculties as well as external objects.[63] Following the Evagrian schema, he identifies eight primary "unnatural" passions: gluttony, lust, avarice, grief, anger, listlessness, vanity and pride. Maximus notes that the beginnings of passion are marked by chains of thought called *logismoi*. They can be explained as, "moods or desires that come upon us, often obsessively, and disturb or distract us."[64]

The passions are what connect the soul to the physical world.[65] Neil notes that there are two spiritual or psychological faculties which are influenced by the passions, the incensive faculty (*thumos*, θυμός), which is the seat of the soul's energy, and the desiring faculty *(epithumia*, ἐπιθυμία), concupiscence. Passions are not in themselves evil, contrary to Origen and Evagrius. Prior to the Fall they were oriented towards God.[66] When the intellect is filled with God and the passions are "dilated" by the incarnational grace of the Logos, **[67]** concupiscence or strong desire is transmuted into *érōs* (ἔρως), desirous love for God, while incensiveness is transformed into divine love (*agápē,* ἀγάπη).[68] Maximus is keenly aware (unlike Evagrius) of the interpersonal dimension of the passions; they are provoked by and effect our relationships with other people.[69]

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[61] *Chapters on Love*, II.16, Berthold, 48.
[62] *Ibid*.
[63] Paul Blowers, "Hope for the Passible Self: The Use and Transformation of the Human Passions in the Fathers of the *Philokalia*," in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, edited by Brock Bingamin and Bradley Nassif (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224; See Maximus, *Chapters on Love* 2.17; 2.73; 2.78; 3.3; 3.86 (PG 90:989A-B; 1008A-B; 1009A; 1017C; l044B), *Philokalia* 2:67-68,77, 78, 83, 97; *Chapters of Various Texts* 1.31; 3.87, *Philokalia* 2:171, 232).
[64] Louth, *Maximus*, 36.
[65] *Chapters on Love*, III.56, Berthold, 69.

The intellectual focus of Evagrius and Origen is replaced by a focus on love. The final goal is *not* to purify the human of his passions as in the Evagrian schema, and return him (as far as possible) to his disembodied primal state, so that he may practice unadulterated intellectual contemplation of God.[70] For Maximus, the spiritual ladder is firstly a training in *how to love*, decentering the self and reorienting oneself towards God. The story of the fall of the first parents is ultimately the story of humankind's refusal to move in love towards God, the unmoved mover who draws all things in movement towards himself. [71]

> Since then human kind has not been moved naturally, as it was fashioned to do, around the unmoved, that is its own beginning (I mean God), but contrary to nature is voluntarily moved in ignorance around those things that are beneath it, to which it has been divinely subjected, and since it has abused the natural power of uniting what is divided, that was given to it at its generation, so as to separate what is united, and in this way piteously endangering itself by moving almost into non-being, therefore 'natures have been instituted afresh', and in a paradoxical way beyond nature that which is completely unmoved by nature is moved immovably, if I might so say, around that which by nature is moved, and God becomes a human being, in order to save lost humanity. Through himself he has, in accordance with nature, united the fragments of the universal nature of all,

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[66] Bronwen. "'The Blessed Passion of Holy Love'", 4.
[67] Blowers, "Hope for the Passible Self", 225.
[68] *Chapters on Love*, II.48, Berthold, *Maximus*, 53-4.
[69] Louth, *Maximus*, 48.
[70] *Ibid.,* 38.
[71] Andrew Louth, "Virtue Ethics: St Maximos the Confessor and Aquinas Compared," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26 (2013), 357.

> manifesting the universal λόγοι that have come forth for the particulars, by which the union of the divided naturally comes about, and thus he fulfils the great purpose of God the Father, to 'recapitulate everything both in heaven and on earth in himself', 'in whom everything has been created'. [72]

Though this account may sound like overly Aristotelian-sounding, Louth notes that it is really a story about love. Self-love replaces love for God and leads to inordinate love for what is beneath man, turning "the whole metaphysical scheme of things" upside down. Man was created with the vocation to act as the bond of the cosmos, holding things together in contemplation, but having failed to do so, drifts towards non-being and extinction. God, the "unmoved mover" moves and becomes incarnate. In the humanity of the incarnate Logos, God takes on man's vocation and restores the cosmos to its original harmony.[73]

Maximus sees Christianity, and of spiritual practice more generally, primarily in terms of training in love, a love that is oriented first towards God and then towards one's neighbor. Such a love requires detachment from created beings, not allowing one's self to be mastered by one's love for them.[74]

> Love is a good disposition of the soul by which one prefers no being to the knowledge of God. It is impossible to reach the habit of this love if one has any attachment to earthly things. Love is begotten of detachment….[75]

The schema of the spiritual life. In his typological reading of the transfiguration of Jesus on Mt. Tabor, Maximus provides a breakdown of his understanding of the three stages of spiritual life.[76] Upon seeing Christ transfigured and flanked by the Jewish prophets Moses and Elijah, the apostle Peter remarks, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."[77] Maximus sees in each shelter, a stage of the spiritual life. Each stage has a particular attribute and task associated with it.

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[72] *Amb.* 41: 1308CD; unknown translation; quoted by Louth, "Virtue Ethics…", 357.

[73] Louth, "Virtue Ethics…", 357.

[74] Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 39-41.

[75] *Chapters on Love*, I.1-2, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. Berthold, p.36

[76] It should be noted, at least according to *Chapters on Theology*, II.16, there are further stages, which he does not specify. These however take place only after the resurrection. "They were called tabernacles, or temporary dwellings, because beyond them there are other still more excellent and splendid stages, through

> These tabernacles represent three stages of salvation, namely that of virtue, that of spiritual knowledge and that of theology. The first requires fortitude and self-restraint in the practice of the virtues: of this the type was Elijah. The second requires right discernment in natural contemplation: Moses disclosed this in his own person. The third requires the consummate perfection of wisdom: this was revealed by the Lord.[78]

He offers a similar symbolic interpretation of Psalm 22 (23).[79] The three stages are Neoplatonic in character and characterize the thought of Church Fathers who were influenced by Neoplatonism, including Evagrius (Maximus' primary source), Origen and Augustine. The three stages are *not entirely sequential and have significant overlap between them*, also allowing for regression along the spiritual path.[80] This contrasts with the schema of Evagrius who saw a strict linear progression. When the first stage, the *vita practica* was finished, the life of virtue, ethics, altruism, played no part in further spiritual growth.

Maximus differs from Evagrius in that he does not accept Evagrius' dualistic disregard for the body. For Evagrius, the goal is a return to the originally disembodied state.[81] According to Evagrius, passions, the result of the body's contact with the

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which those found worthy will pass in the age to be." (*Chapters on Theology*, II.16), quoted by Louth. *Maximus the Confessor*, p.45

[77] Matthew 17:4 (NIV).

[78] *Chapters on Knowledge*, II.16, Louth. *Maximus the Confessor*, 45.

[79] *Chapters on Love,* III.2.

[80] Neil, "'The Blessed Passion of Holy Love'", 5. Cf. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 351-2.

[81] Evagrius was strongly affected by Origen's theology, which assumes an initial disembodied state of rational souls, existing in a primal *henad* with God. Drawing from Neoplatonic influence, the souls were said to have fallen after boredom with the beatific vision. In falling, they gain a body as a simultaneous

material world, are to be discarded and transcended in a quest for "pure prayer". As we will note below, according to Maximus the passions themselves are not inherently evil, but after the Fall have become warped. Maximus argues for the transformation of the passions,[82] which leads one to contemplation of God.

Self-Cultivation and Divine Philosophy

The ecclesial dimension. Maximus, like the other early Fathers of the Church, can be said to have a 'spiritual program' or a 'method of cultivation', a method of praxis, but cannot be said to have *techniques* as such – for instance, specific types of meditative postures, rituals for attaining *Samadhi*, etc. The method he proposes is not "technique driven" *per se* and cannot be separated from the life of the Church. However, a legitimate distinction can be made between the sacramental praxis and ascetical praxis in that the latter is "something each man can and must do for himself, a work cut to teach man's measure."[83] This close integration of personal asceticism, communal sacramental and ecclesial practice is typical of the entire Byzantine tradition, including his spiritual predecessors, Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius.[84] Therefore I will briefly address the ecclesial and sacramental side before turning my attention to the ascetical side.

For Maximus, the Church is an instrument of deification, the "milieu in which salvation is apprehended".[85] The approach and spirituality of Maximus are unshakably ecclesial in character. He stands in a long line of Church thinkers who saw participation

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punishment and means of escape (through purification from the body). There are obvious parallels with the story of mankind's fall from the heavens as discussed in Plato's *Phaedra*.

[82] Neil, "'The Blessed Passion of Holy Love'", 4.

[83] Sherwood, Polycarp, "Introduction", *Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life and the Four Centuries on Charity*. Polycarp Sherwood, trans. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press 1955), 80.

[84] *Ibid*., 80.

[85] *Disputatio Bizyae* 28-165A; Sherwood, Polycarp. "Introduction", Maximus the Confessor. *The Ascetic Life…*, 74.

in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church as essential to deification.[86] The Holy Spirit animates the church,[87] a doctrine which is intended not in an abstract spiritual sense, but in the concreteness of ecclesial life, in all its ritual and hierarchical reality.[88] Baptism is a *sine qua non* for progression in the spiritual life, as is communion with the church. In his debate at Bizyae with the envoys of Constans II, he specified that a person is sanctified by the correct profession of faith.[89] He urged a community of nuns who have become apostate to return to communion with the church.[90] At baptism, God bestows on the believer the grace of well-being, [91] a gift of the will,[92] it is tropic in character (having to do with human *tropos*), meaning it is within the power of human will to actualize or not actualize this good. This grace of well-being is a restored relationship to Christ. Reception of the sacraments and participation in the *synaxis* (liturgy), particularly the Eucharist, is important itself to the process of deification:

> By holy communion of the spotless and life-giving mysteries[93] we are given fellowship and identity with him by participation in the likeness, by which man is deemed worthy from man to become God.[94]

The grace bestowed through participating in the *synaxis*, Divine Liturgy, transforms each participant and “remolds him in proportion to what is more divine in him”.[95] Most are unable to see the graces at work, as they are still “children in Christ”, however the process of deification is still worked within them.[96] The liturgy itself, in a compact way, leads one through the stages of spiritual growth that are described below, from the ethical life, to the contemplation of divine principles in the nature of things, to communion with God. While symbolic, it is, for those with a developed spiritual eye, it is also the culmination of the spiritual life and the means by which it is made possible. [97]

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[86] Cf. Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 299-300.
[87] *Amb.* 7: 1088, 1097, 1100.
[88] Sherwood, Polycarp. “Introduction”, *Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life…*, 74.
[89] *Ibid.,* 77.
[90] *Epistle* 18, 584d.
[91] *Amb*. 42, 1325bc.
[92] *Chapters on Love* III.23-25 PG 90:1024 a-c.
[93] His language here – “spotless and life-giving mysteries” – is taken directly from a liturgical prayer recited before receiving communion in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, celebrated throughout the Eastern Christian world.
[94] *Mystagogia*, ch. 24, Berthold, 207.
[95] *Ibid*.

The ascetic dimension. Maximus does not give a specific name for his program of self-development and self-cultivation other than 'philosophy',[98] though at commentary on the Transfiguation mentioned above, he does refer to it as the "three stages of salvation." [99] For ease of reference I will borrow the term *divine philosophy* to refer to this, a term used by scholar Frederick Aquino.[100] The term *philosophy* was used by Greek and Roman thinkers to refer not only to abstract speculation, but a way of life, a method of living in pursuit of wisdom. Thus early Christian thinkers, such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria call Christianity a 'philosophy'[101] as does Maximus.[102] I prefer the term 'divine philosophy' to distinguish it from the term's more generic use as an academic field of study.

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[96] *Ibid*. He describes the state of those who are 'children in Christ', as a kind of spiritual childhood. The description of spiritual childhood in *Chapters on Love*, I.94-96, seems to parallel his descriptions of those in the first stage of spiritual development, *vita practica*.

[97] *Ibid*.

[98] *Chapters on Knowledge*, II.96 (*Philokalia*, Vol. II).

[99] *Chapters on Knowledge*, II.16, quoted by Louth. *Maximus the Confessor*, 45.

[100] Aquino does not use the term, but strives to show how Maximus' divine philosophy shapes his account of the three-fold path to deification. (Aquino, Frederick. "The *Philokalia* and Regulative Virtue Epistemology: A Look at Maximus the Confessor", *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, edited by Brock Bingamin and Bradley Nassif (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 241.

[101] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch.1-6, 35, also *The First Apology*, ch. 3, 12, where he associates philosophy with piety; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* VI.7.

[102] Maximus speaks of the faithful as Christian philosophers in his comments on the verse, "Give us this day our daily bread". See *On the Lord's Prayer* (*Philokalia*, Vol. II). He seems to be echoing Socrates here, saying that their purpose is to make life a practice for death. One can also see a rich Pauline dimension to this.

Divine philosophy has as its goal, the perfection of the *divine likeness* within the human person; deification is the culminating point and represents God’s activity within the person; that is, at that point, the person has opened themselves up to such a degree that God can work an interior transformation without hindrance; the person is no longer an active agent in the transformation, apart from their willing consent. The fullness of deification can only happen after this life.[103] Deification is not something that can be achieved on one’s own, though it does depend on the exercise of the human will.

Contrary to Aristotle,[104] Maximus holds that virtues are *natural* to human beings.[105] Virtues, moral excellences, are part of humans nature, they are not something ‘super-added’ or imposed from without; ‘nature’ in this case should not be understood as something opposed to ‘supernatural’ in a more modern sense, but rather as something intended by God in the creation of human beings.[106] Thus the practice of virtue is restoring or cultivating what is inherent in human, but which became corrupted after the fall of the first parents. Maximus, in the tradition of the other Church Fathers, makes frequent use of the term *askēsis* (ἄσκησις) to refer to the project of moral cultivation. Louth translates it as “disciplined training”, [107] I will use this term (*askēsis*) rather than its English *asceticism* as contemporary usage can at times seem too much focused on penitential activity; while such is important for Maximus, in the context of his spiritual program, it serves more other, constructive purposes. *Askēsis* functions analogously to habituation in Aristotle, but not to internalize something from the exterior, but as a kind of purification which prevents deception.[108]

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[103] Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 22.141.
[104] See *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.1103a.18-20.
[105] Maximus the Confessor, *Dispute with Pyrrhus,* 309c-312a.
[106] Merton, *Introduction to Christian Mysticism*, 125.
[107] ἀσκησις comes from the Greek root ἀσκέω which, according to Louth means, “to work with raw materials”. Louth prefers it because it can be understood to mean to work with the raw materials of our humanity, shaping it so that humans can attain the likeness of God. Louth, “Virtue Ethics...”, 355.

The purpose of *askēsis* is to separate the soul from “deceit infecting it through the senses”, [109] the removal of what is “contrary to nature” (παρὰ φύσιν) so that what is natural or in harmony with nature (κατὰ φύσιν) will emerge.[110] Without the grace of intimate union with God, and no longer able to see the world as God sees it, post-lapsarian humans were overcome with selfish passion and became deluded by what their senses perceived.[111] The program of deification is to reverse this orientation and through spiritual growth, attain to relational knowledge of God which is transformative in nature. “Progress towards divine likeness includes practice of the virtues, contemplation of God in and through nature, and direct perceptual knowledge of God.”[112] Maximus considers this program to be one of self-emptying and self-death. At each stage along the way, the practitioner is crucified with Christ in an ever-deepening way.[113]

The refinement of humility is an extremely important part of Maximus’ program of cultivation, it is the essential accompaniment to *askēsis*. Commenting on Psalm 24, he writes that humility frees a person from passions of the soul.[114] *Askēsis*, joined with the practice of virtue, when done in humility, causes inordinate passions to "dry up".[115] Humility is the "form of the virtues *par excellence*"[116] and again, the "foundation of the virtues".[117] When cultivated, humility becomes a "firm safeguard" against temptations,[118] leads us to self-knowledge and overthrows pride,[119] and trains us in a spirit of gratitude towards God, aware of one's own shortcomings as well as God's forgiveness and compassion towards the individual.[120]

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[108] Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology…*, 121. Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Dispute with Pyrrhus,* 309c-312a.

[109] In *Questions and Doubts*, no. 30, in a complex interpretation of the story of the Biblical patriarch Jacob and his wives Leah and Rachel (found in *Genesis* 31-35), he notes that the role of *askesis* is to remove the “idolized form” found within created things. They are not present in the nature of created things, but placed there by the devil for “the purpose of deception”. *St. Maximus the Confessor’s Questions and Doubts,* translated by Despina D. Prassas, (Dekalb, Illinois: Northiern Illinois University Press, 2010), 59.

[110] *Dispute with Pyrrhus,* 3096-312a; also *Amb* 10, 1112b.

[111] *Amb* 10, 1112b; note his description is quite Neoplatonic – “For the cloud is the fleshly passion darkening the pilot of the soul, and the veil is the deceit of the senses, causing the soul to be overcome by the appearance of things perceived by the senses, and blocking the passage to intelligible reality, through which it is overcome by forgetfulness of natural goodness and turns all its energy to sensible things and also discovers in this way angry passions, desires and unseemly pleasures.” –*Ambigua* 10, 1112b, Louth, *Maximus,* 96; cf. see *Centuries of Various Texts*, IV.33, *Philokalia,* Vol. 2.

[112] Aquino, “The *Philokalia* and Regulative Virtue Epistemology”, 241. Note that as used here, ‘nature’ refers to the created world.

[113] *Amb*. 47; PG 91, 1360CD; cf. Tollefsen, 352-355.

One thing further to note is the importance of stillness or quiet for the practice of self-cultivation and philosophy. The quiet and stillness achieved is largely attained through control of one's lifestyle and environment.[121] In his commentary on the verse from Psalm 46, "Be still and know that I am God", he describes six "stillnesses".[122] He does not, however, seem to have specific techniques to lead one to "neutralization of thetic positings".[123] The simplification of thoughts occurs in the process of growth in virtue and seems to be a matter of grace but also of removing oneself from distracting kinds of stimuli.

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[114] *Chapters on Love* I.76.

[115] Question #97, *St. Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts,* translated by Despina D. Prassas (Dekalb, Illinois: Northiern Illinois University Press, 2010), 95.

[116] *Ambigua* 10, 1205a, Louth, *Maximus,* 151.

[117] *Epistle* 2, 396a, Louth, *Maximus,* 83.

[118] *Ambigua* 10, 1205a, Louth, *Maximus,* 151.

[119] *Epistle* 2, 396a, Louth, *Maximus,* 83. On humility's role in self-knowledge, see *Chapters on Love*, I.47.

[120] *Chapters on Love*, I.48.

[121] Prassas notes in her introduction that these may have been part of a memory device to help monks understand how to live a monastic life in a practical manner. Introduction to *St. Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts,* translated by Despina D. Prassas, 30.

[122] In his explanation of Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God", he explains that there are six "stillnesses". These six are: restraint from immorality; stillness from an exciting way of life; withholding from the intermingling with the reckless; withdrawing from an unsuitable life according to God; avoidance of a slanderous existence and disruption of the *nous* (mind) and finally, in regards to willfulness and disobedience. Question I.45, *St. Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts. St. Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts,* translated by Despina D. Prassas, 148.

[123] See David Shaner, *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism: A Phenomenological Study of Kūkai and Dogen* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), 102-109. I will return to this in the concluding chapter.

Following the *anabasis* or path of ascent established by Pseudo-Dionysius, his 'ladder' involves movement from the material to the spiritual, from material symbols to the spiritual realities that are symbolized and represented; it has Platonic as well as Pauline dimensions.[124] He says of the saints, the holy men and women of scripture and even the scripture writers, that they,

> …do not acquire blessed knowledge of God only by the sense and appearances and forms, using letters and syllables, which lead to mistakes and bafflement over the judgment of the truth, but solely by the mind, rendered most pure and released from all material mists.[125]

Maximus' method is an *anagogy*, looking beyond the text for the deeper meanings within, while the Logos' involvement is a form of *pedagogy*. The Logos becomes "thickened", taking on flesh so that the human being may begin to come to comprehend him and hold fellowship with him.[126] In the subsequent *anabasis,* the Logos is "thinned"; the spiritual person begins to look beyond the "letter" and the "material", to know the Logos as the Son of the Father. In being thinned, the Logos leads the believer to communion with God the Father.

> The beginning of religious discipleship for men is directed at the flesh. For in our first acquaintance with religious devotion we approach it in the letter not the spirit. But gradually going on in the spirit we strip off the grossness of the words to find finer meanings and so arrive purely at the pure Christ, insofar as human beings are able to with the apostle….by means of the simple encounter with the Word without the veils of the mind covering him, we progress from knowing the Word as flesh to "his glory as the only-begotten of the Father."[127]

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[124] These are not identical, but do overlap somewhat. Keep in mind however that for Maximus, deification involves the transformation of both body and soul and does not involve a true *fugit mundi* into an ethereal mist. See Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor*, 75-78.

[125] *Amb.Io.* 10 (PG 91.1160B, cited by Cooper, "Maximus the Confessor on the Structural Dynamics of Revelation", 175. He does not credit the translator, so it appears to be his own translation.

[126] *Chapters on Knowledge*, II.60.

[127] *Ibid.*, II.61, Berthold, *Maximus*, 160; cf. *Questions and Doubts*, No. 29.

Yet, even though the Logos is "thinned" in the spiritual ascent, as I have noted before, the Logos is subsequently "re-embodied" in the practice of the virtuous and deified person.[128] At each level or stage of cultivation, the Logos is an active principle of transformation.[129]

The First Stage: The Life of Virtue (*pratikē*)

Maximus, borrowing from Evagrius calls the first stage, *pratikē*, practice, and refers to the ascetic struggle of self-cultivation and mastery.[130] While it does have certain negative connotations, especially in Evagrian thought, Maximus introduces a strong focus on cultivation of love, an element missing in the Evagrian and Origenist synthesis. The latter approach is marked by a strong negativity, aiming to produce, "…an emptiness of the soul which is established for the sake of the mind, the divine element in man." [131] This emptiness takes the form of dispassion or serenity similar to equanimity (*apatheia*) or self-mastery (*ataraxia*) of the Stoics. For Maximus, these are necessary but far from sufficient. In his view what is most necessary is the cultivation of love of God. The two are not opposed, but go hand in hand.

> …just as passion-free thought of human things does not compel the intellect to scorn divine things, so passion-free knowledge of divine things does not fully persuade it to scorn human things. For in this world truth exists in shadows and conjectures; that is why there is need for the blessed passion of holy love (τὸ μακάριος πάθος τῆς ἁγίας ἀγάπης), which binds the intellect to spiritual contemplation and persuades it to prefer what is immaterial to what is material, and what is intelligible and divine to what is apprehended by the senses.[132]

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[128] *Ibid.*, II.37, Berthold, *Maximus*, 156.
[129] *Ibid.*, II.66-68.
[130] Louth, *Maximus,* 35.
[131] Thunberg, *Microcosm,* 303-4.
[132] *Chapters on Love*, III.67, Louth, Maximus, 40. We should also note here the strongly Neoplatonic nature of his language, his choice of images and vocabulary.

Ascetic cultivation purifies the mind of "impassioned fantasies"[133] and severs the practitioner's relation with the flesh (*sarx*), which in this context refers to "fallen and sinful human nature". 'Impassioned' refers to that which is selfish, possessive, or egoistic, in a world, sinful. 'Fantasies' refers to the "phantasms" or sense-images produced by the encounter of our senses with the phenomenal world. Maximus does not include the body (*soma*) as a component of sinful human nature per se, but the body can become an avenue of temptation.[134]

Maximus connects the development of the *likeness of God* in the human person with the *vita practica* and the cultivation of virtue (good over evil). He connects *the image of God* in man to contemplation and truth (truth over falsehood).[135] Self-determination characterizes man's *imago dei* but its use manifests the likeness of God.[136] We will see that in order to attain to the image of God in man and the practice of contemplation, we must first begin cultivating the likeness through virtue.

The aim of the ascetic struggle is the development of *apatheia*, detachment from created things (ultimately including one's self), but not for its own sake. It is sometimes (misleadingly) interpreted among western scholars as 'passionlessness', but this is not the case. Louth prefers the term 'dispassion' which is simultaneously an accurate literal translation and one that does not convey the sense of something robotic or inhuman. The meaning, in the context of Patristic thought, is *serenity*, freedom from the disruptions to the spiritual life caused by our attachments to created goods,[137] and this freedom is connected with other monastic virtues, such as ἐγκράτεια, self-mastery.[138] It requires a disciplined life of prayer, fasting and vigilance over one's thoughts and actions, [139] as well as the cultivation of humility,[140] love of one's brethren, forgiveness, which frees the believer from anger, sadness, and a desire for revenge. It requires them to imitate the love of God for others which includes willing their salvation.[141]

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[133] *Ibid.*, II.56.

[134] Stephen James Juli, *The Doctrine of Theosis in the Theology of Maximus the Confessor*. STL Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1990, 78.

[135] Cf. Thunberg, 127-128.

[136] *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, PG 91, 304c, 324d.

[137] *Chapters on Love*, II.2; *Chapters on Knowledge*, I.36.

In detaching one's self from the irrational part of the soul, one purifies the appetite and returns to what is natural. "*Apatheia*, then, is the restoration of what is natural (that is, what is in accordance with unfallen nature)".[142] Going further than this, Maximus holds the purpose of detaching one's self from the irrational passions is so they can be reintegrated, after purification, into the human person, now enflamed by the love of God. "It is not detachment so much as sublimation."[143] Maximus, in a passage reminiscent of Pseudo-Dionysius, describes the state of re-integrated passion this way:

> For the mind of one who is continually with God even his concupiscence abounds beyond measure into a divine desire and whose entire irascible element is transformed into divine love. For by an enduring participation in the divine illumination it has become altogether shining bright, and having bound its passible element to itself it…turned it around to a never-ending divine desire and an unceasing love, completely changing over from earthly things to divine.[144]

This is an active rather than passive state. In a more modern voice, we might say that it involves the radical, fundamental reorientation of the self towards God, towards other persons and the whole created universe. The path of self-mastery leads from self-love (*philautia*) to the love of others, brotherly love (*philadelphia*); it is the "acid test" of our interior transformation and a great sign of spiritual progress.[145] The greatest demonstration of this is the love of enemies, in which one loves as God loves.[146] We must note here that for Maximus the imitation of God is through imitation of his actions – loving others (and ourselves) as God loves us.[147] In the culminating moment where love and dispassion intertwine,

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[138] Louth, "Virtue Ethics…", 355.
[139] *Chapters on Love*, I.42, I.45.
[140] *Ibid.*, I.47, I.48.
[141] *Ibid.*, I.55-61.
[142] Louth, *Maximus*, 40.
[143] *Ibid.*, 41.
[144] *Chapters on Love*, II.48, Berthold, *Maximus*, 53-4; Louth cites a different translation in his work on p.41.

> …there is no difference between his own or another's, or between Christians and unbelievers, or between slave and free, or even between male and female. But because he has risen above the tyranny of the passions and has fixed his attention on the single nature of man, he looks on all in the same way and shows the same disposition to all. For in him there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, slave nor free, but Christ who is "all in all".[148]

One other notable way in which Maximus' approach to praxis differs from Evagrius is that according to the latter, once detachment is achieved, the stage of *vita practica* is to be discarded. For Maximus it is an ongoing affair; the practices of the prior stages are 'taken up' in the future stages, never left aside.[149] The habit of virtues gives bodily existence to contemplation.[150] There is an integrative unity between asceticism (represented by the first stage) and contemplation (represented by higher stages) that is mutually fortifying.[151] He says that while action can give rise to contemplation, it is also the case that contemplation gives rise to action.[152] The practice of virtue becomes a form of contemplation and contemplation becomes a “divinely initiated” practice.[153]

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[145] Louth, *Maximus*, 40; cf. *Epistle 2*:405a.
[146] *Chapters on Love*, I.61.
[147] See *Chapters on Love*, IV.90: "Only God is good by nature, and only the one who imitates God is good by his will."
[148] *Chapters on Love*, II.30 (PG 90:993b; *Philokalia* 2:70) cited by Paul Blowers, "Hope for the Passible Self…", 229. In the last line Maximus quotes *Colossians* 3:11; cf. *Colossians* 3:28.
[149] Cf. Aquino, "Maximus and Regulative Virtue Epistemology", 243.
351-81.
[150] Question #130, *St. Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts*.
[151] *Amb.Io*. 10 (PG 91.1145AB); *Amb.Io*. 57 (PG 91.1380D-1381B); *Ad Thal*. 3 (CCSG 7, 55.17-22); *Ad Thal.* 58 (PG 90.596A).

The disciplined cultivation of *apatheia,* detachment and growth in love, leads to the appearance of “mere thoughts” in both are waking and sleeping lives; this marks the stirrings of natural contemplation, the second stage.[154] ‘Mere thoughts’ are ‘passionless’, that is, free of possessiveness and self-orientation as they are caught up in God. Such allows us to see things as they are, free of calculating self-interest, possessiveness or even utilitarian considerations.[155] In summation, virtuous practices can remove distractions, both emotional and epistemic, allowing the person to, “refocus, perceive and embody the deeper realities in the world, in the self and in liturgical practices.”[156]

The Second Stage: Meditation (*physikē*)

The second stage, borrowing from Evagrius, he calls *physikē*, meaning ‘natural’, and refers to natural contemplation or contemplation of the natural world.[157] Through contemplation, God’s intentions and meaning is glimpsed and experienced in the natural world, as well as in other aspects of the created order, such as scripture and liturgy. For Maximus, as most of the early Church Fathers, the universe has a profound symbolic dimension. He likes the universe to a church, and a church to the universe.[158] Maximus says that,

> For the whole spiritual world seems mystically imprinted on the whole natural world in symbolic forms, for those who are capable of seeing this

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[152] Question #130, *St. Maximus the Confessor’s Questions and Doubts*.
[153] *Centuries of Various Texts*, IV.32, *Philokalia,* Vol. 2. Cf. Juli, *The Doctrine of Theosis in the Theology of Maximus the Confessor*, 41.
[154] *Chapters on Love*, I.93.
[155] Louth, *Maximus*, 42; Cf. Neil, 6.
[156] Aquino, “Maximus…”, 113.
[157] Louth, *Maximus*, 35.
[158] Maximus, *Mystagogia*, ch. 2

> and conversely the whole sensible world is spiritually explained in the mind in the principles it contains.[159]

This is the awareness that emerges in the second stage. We learn to see the world as God sees it.[160] In the fallen, self-involved state, we do not see God's meaning in the world, but rather see the world in reference to our own desires. Purified from the disruptions of fallen passions we can see it as God intends it to be.

> To see the *logoi* of the natural order is to see it as it is and to be freed from our private prejudices, which are rooted in the disorder created in our hearts by the passions. It is also to understand the providence and judgment of God…[161]

The practices of the first stage, which result in stability, the leaving behind of all false notions and the cultivation of "holy passion", lead to the thorough integration of intellect, will and senses.[162] This seems to be what Maximus refers to as the "Kingdom of God", in *Chapters on Knowledge*, which he describes as possessing the knowledge of the essences of things as through perceiving things as they exist in God.[163] The result of this contemplation is knowledge of corporeal and incorporeal beings as well as being able to see God's providence at work in all things.[164]

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[159] *Ibid.*, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. Berthold, p.189

[160] Of this stage, Neil writes, "Learning to see creation as God sees it, or seeing the *logoi* in the natural order, amounts to the same thing as the Buddhist notion of insight (*vipassana*)." See Neil, "'The Blessed Passion of Holy Love'", 6.

[161] Louth, *Maximus*¸ 37.

[162] Aquino, "Maximus and Regulative Virtue Epistemology…", 243; cf. Maximus, *Chapters on Theology*, II.94 (*Philokalia*, Vol. II)

[163] Maximus, *Chapters on Theology*, II.90 (*Philokalia*, Vol. II); it may also refer to infused knowledge that occurs in the final stage of *theologia*. The context makes it clear that the "Kingdom of Heaven" and the "Kingdom of God" are two ways of looking at the same state, one that is achieved after the stilling of the passions and perfection of virtue. The latter is the "imparting through grace of those blessings which pertain naturally to God." (II.90, *Philokalia*, Vol. II, 161) In this case, I believe he is compressing the second and third stages, which could be considered the contemplative life, with the first stage, which is the practical life.

[164] Neil, "'The Blessed Passion of Holy Love', 6.

It is a gift of grace and cannot be separated from the interpretation of scripture; meditation on scripture is in fact part of 'natural contemplation'.[165] It aims at knowledge of God as the cause of all things, but nothing more than that.[166] Natural contemplation "sees" the *logoi* of things both in their differentiation according to their natures and in their relationship to the Logos. Their differentiation is an indicator of God's purpose for each nature. The Logos holds them all together. Furthermore, in natural contemplation, one sees them in a hierarchical, symbolic relationship which points to the attributes of God and his providence.[167] Recall that Maximus holds that the Logos is embodied in the *logoi* of the natural world as well as the *logoi* of scripture.[168] In this stage, we learn to see Logos immanent to and at work in creation.

There is a continuing purification taking place here, roughly equivalent to Pseudo-Dionysius' journey of unknowing, or "flight upward".[169] According to Maximus' schema, there is a "spiritual crucifixion" that occurs in the first stage. Through the cultivation of *apatheia,* one becomes detached from the temptations offered by the sensible world. In the second stage, the "spiritual crucifixion" involves the slow abandonment of "symbolic contemplation".[170] Here, one is experiencing "symbolic reflection" of divine realities,[171] and yet learns to leave language and concepts of God behind, akin to the *anabasis* of Pseudo-Dionysius. "Symbolic reflection" refers to seeing the realities symbolized or conveyed through the *symbolon*. This is, in part, a reflection on the individual’s level of spiritual maturity at the time, but also a more general reflection on the creaturely status of humans vis-à-vis a transcendent God.[172]

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[165] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 349.
[166] *Ibid.*, 350.
[167] *Ibid*., 350.
[168] *Amb.* 33, PG 91:1285c-1288a.
[169] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology*, ch.3, 1033c.
[170] See *Amb*. 47; PG 91, 1360 cd; cf. Thunberg, 353-4.
[171] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 354.

As one progresses spiritually, the Logos leads the contemplative to the divine *Nous* (i.e. God the Father) who supplies the contemplative mind with representations of divine things, proportionate to the person’s knowledge of visible things.[173] “Representations of divine things” refers to graced and infused nature of this knowledge. Maximus is ever aware that unaided, the human mind cannot even begin to grasp divine reality. The stage of natural contemplation or *physikē* leads to this transformative vision, further purifying the human mind, preparing it for non-conceptual communion with God (*theologia*).

> For being all in all, the God who transcends all in infinite measure will be seen only by those who are pure in understanding when the mind in contemplative recollection of the principles of beings will end up with God as cause, principle, and end of all, the creation and beginning of all things and eternal ground of the circuit of things.[174]

The Third Stage: Contemplation (*theologia*)

The final stage is *theologia*, which signals not academic study about God, but transformative contemplation of God,[175] one that is non-discursive in nature and is capable of transforming the knower into the likeness of what is known. It is rooted in Christian scripture.[176] Maximus characterizes it as a state of “pure prayer”, also “undistracted prayer”, which can only be prepared for by the life of virtue and contemplations. Virtue frees the mind of “incontinence and hatred”. Contemplations, relieve it of “forgetfulness and ignorance”.[177] The state achieved resembles that of the first parents before the Fall who lived in “simplicity of knowledge”.[178]

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[172] *Ibid.*, 354.

[173] *Ad Thal.* 25; cf. Blowers, Paul. *Exegesis and spiritual pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor,* 210.

[174] *Mystagogia*, ch. 1, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. Berthold, 186-7.

[175] Louth, *Maximus¸* 35.

[176] Note the connection with purification found in the scriptural source as well: “But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” 1 John 3:2b-3 (NIV).

> The God who transcends all in infinite measure will be seen only by those who are pure in understanding when the mind in contemplative recollection of the principles (*logoi*) of beings will end up with God ascause, principle and end of all…”[179]

Maximus envisions the process as kind of deepening spiritual communion, returning to the imagery of sacramental communion or communion or Eucharist. In Christ’s address to the disciples at the Last Supper, he tells them to eat his body and drink his blood.[180] Maximus sees in this a metaphor for divine philosophy, particularly the latter two stages, which involve the act of contemplation. The flesh of the Logos is the λογοι of sensible things; the λογοι of intelligble things is the blood of the Logos. The bones of the Logos represent the divine λογοι, the incomprehensible principles of his Divinity remain unbroken and unconsumed.[181] The ‘bones’ of Christ ‘hold together’ his body and blood, thus likewise, *theologia* holds together *pratikē* and *physikē*. The bone of the Logos represent *vita contemplativa*, the inexhaustible contemplative union which organizes and unites the earlier stages.[182]

Maximus describes the cognitive dimension of deification:

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[177] In the scriptural source, note the connection with purification as well: “But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” *1 John* 3:2b-3 (NIV) “Contemplations” as used in the plural does not refer mystical contemplation, but rather more discursive practices, such as meditation on the Gospel. In any case, with virtue and contemplations, he is talking about human effort required for contemplative union with God.

[178] Louth, *Maximus¸* 35; for a description of the pre-Fallen state of humanity, see *Centuries of Various Texts*, V.97-98, *Philokalia,* Vol. 2. It is interesting to note that Maximus says that in this primal innocence, nothing that had to be learnt interposed itself between human beings and God. Primal humans were furthermore free from the delusional fantasies brought on by a quest for sensual pleasure.

[179] *The Disputation With Pyrrhus of Our Father Among the Saints Maximus the Confessor*, translated by Joseph P. Farrell (Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1991), xxxvi.

[180] *Mk*. 14:22-24, *Lk*. 22:19-20, *Mt* 26:26-28.

[181] *Ad Thal.* 35, CCSG 7; cf. Blowers, *Exegesis and spiritual pedagogy*, 147.

[182] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 352-3.

> When the mind receives the representations of things, it of course patterns itself after each representation. In contemplating them spiritually it is variously conformed to each object contemplated. But when it comes to be in God, it becomes wholly without form and pattern, for in contemplating the one who is simple it becomes simple and entirely patterned in light.[183]

At the highest level of contemplation, the mind is stripped bare, free of all shape and form, so that it becomes "deiform".[184] The process of deiform transformation includes both body and soul.[185] The Sabbath, which typologically refers to the final contemplative, theological communion with God is described as 'rest', which Maximus says is a state of "both soul and body", and is "the immutable condition in which tranquil in virtue and peaceful." [186] Brock describes this stage as, the "active participation in the realities of the divine world and the realization of spiritual knowledge." [187] At this level, the contemplative gaze, while turned towards God, also includes the view of all of creation.

> The perfect mind is the one that through genuine faith supremely knows in supreme ignorance the supremely unknowable, and in gazing on the universe of his handiwork has received from God comprehensive knowledge of his Providence and judgment in it, as far as allowable to men.[188]

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[183] *Chapters on Love,* III.97, Berthold, 75.

[184] Polycarp Sherwood, Introduction to *Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life…*, 89. Cf. Maximus, *Chapters on Love* II.61, 62; also *Liber Asceticus*, 19-928a.

[185] *Chapters on Theology,* I.46, Berthold, 136.

[186] *Ibid.*, II.64-5, Berthold, 160-1.

[187] Brock Bingaman, "Becoming a Spiritual World of God: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor," in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, edited by Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 151; cf. *On the Lord's Prayer, ET* 2, 289. By 'active participation', Brock here stresses that this does not simply involve a passive reception of this grace, but rather requires continuing human assent. This seems to contrast with Maximus' words – which stresses the restful character of this contemplation. Maximus inherits from Gregory of Nyssa a belief that the human journey to God, even post-mortem, is asymptotic in character. After death persons are in an "evermoving rest" in the *apeiron kata theou*, the infinity surrounding God, ever reaching towards him. Human faculties are at rest inasmuch as the discursive and phantasmal faculties have now reached fulfillment, but mind (the intellects or *nous*) is still active in this infused contemplation. Though Brock does not mention this, 'active' is also suggestive of activity. As those contemplatives are now aware of being participants in the heavenly liturgy, so this contemplative gaze has a doxological character.

[188] *Chapters on Love,* III.99, Berthold, 75.

At this juncture, it is wise comment on the cosmological dimensions of *theosis*. Mankind, according to God's providence, was created to unify the cosmos in contemplation, bridging differences inherent in creation without obliterating the differences, bringing them into greater harmony.

Soteriology and cosmology. Maximus' schema of *theosis* stands in contrast the Origenistic-Platonic synthesis of Evagrius. For Evagrius, spiritual progress seems to be measured almost entirely in terms of simplification.[189] This strongly resembles the Neoplatonic model of spiritual journey: to return to the One (to the degree it is possible), the philosopher must become like the One, unified and simplified, without unnecessary multiplicity or plurality. Therefore one must flee from the many to the One, from the physical or material plane to the spiritual. This is necessary because we cannot comprehend the unity of the One, who is beyond subject and object, with multiplicity of thoughts characteristic of discursive reasoning. In Evagrian and Neoplatonic cultivation, spiritual development is measured primarily by purification of the intellect. For Maximus, it is measured by purification of love.[190]

Conclusion

> Curb the irascible soul with love, weaken its concupiscible with self-mastery, give flight to its rational element with prayer and the light of your mind will never be eclipsed.[191]
>
> In the Logos of God, the complete fullness of divinity dwells bodily. In humans, the fullness of divinity dwells, by grace, whenever humans through virtue and wisdom, imitate and reproduce the Logos, who is their archetype.[192]

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[189] See *Amb*. 45, PG 91, 1356b; Cf. Thunberg, 351.
[190] Louth, *Maximus,* 41.
[191] *Chapters on Love,* IV.80, Berthold, p.84.
[192] *Chapters on Knowledge*, II.21, Berthold, 152.

Maximus' program of self-cultivation is influenced by an understanding of God as ultimately simple; the objective of self-cultivation is to prepare the individual practitioner for communion with God. Thus his praxis is one of cultivating simplicity. Unlike the non-Christian Greek Platonists, whether Middle or Neo-platonists, and certain Christian thinkers who were strongly influenced by Greek pagan thought, such as Origen[193] and Evagrius, the simplicity to be cultivated is not one that consists entirely of, or even primarily noetic in character. Furthermore, their flight to the One culminates in a rejection and overcoming of the visible, created world, as the multiplicity and particularity of creation is dialectically opposed to God's simplicity and universality.[194]

Based on his (mis)interpretation of the creation narrative in Genesis, Maixmus argues that human beings are created in a double similitude to God: they are created in the *imago dei,* the image of God, which is ontological in nature; they are also created *similltudo dei*, the likeness of God which is moral and relational in nature. The *imago dei* cannot be changed without the destruction of the creature, meaning it becomes something it is not. It was not diminished after the fall of the first parents. However, the *similtudo dei*, as a consequence of the ancestral sin of Adam and Eve, was lost or diminished, but can be recovered.

The *imago dei* is constituted by the *logoi* which God bestowed on human beings. The *logoi*, the providential wills of God which bestow being and are constituent of every created being, serve as "an eternal calling of God to each creature".[195] In addition to bestowing an *ousia,* the *logoi* also provide the parameters in which a thing's nature can be fully lived out, their *tropos hyparxeos* or mode of existence. In the case of human beings, this includes the freedom to live according to or in defiance of one's nature as well as the potential for deification. Humans are called to become like God tropically, that is, through the cultivation of their *tropos hyparxeos*, which is through the exercise of the will. This is rooted in scriptural maxims, for example, the faithful are called to be holy as God is holy,[196] and perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect,[197] in this way, humans are called to imitate or mirror God.

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[193] For example, Origen, *On the First Principles*, I,1,5-6.

[194] Joseph P. Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor* (South Canan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1989), 51-55.

[195] Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor,* 139.

> …one zealously traverses one's course toward the beginning and source without deviation by means of one's good will and choice. And through this course one becomes God, being made God by God. To the inherent goodness of the image is added the likeness acquired by the practice of virtue and the exercise of the will.[198]

Holding to the tradition of the Eastern Fathers as well as scriptural maxims, Maximus holds that the *telos* or purpose and goal of human existence is deification, but deification is not something that occurs at the level of a thing's nature. Humans are capable of 'transcending' their nature insofar as they can rise above their present *mode of existence* and share in the divine *mode of existence*. In doing so, however, we do not cease in being human, but rather fulfill human nature. In fact, Maximus could easily agree with the words attributed to Augustine of Hippo, "Become who you are."[199]

As it is, the *logoi* occupy a middle ground between God and creation; the difference between the two is infinite.[200] This ground cannot be overcome with a metaphysics of substance, but instead, in an ontology of relationship, which is what Maximus' teaching on *tropos hyparxeos* concerns. Thus the transformation that is deification does not happen at the level of *ousia* bestowed by the *logoi* – human beings and indeed creation, does not become God, but is changed at the level of *tropos*. To describe how the process of *theosis* changes believers, he uses the image of pure gold (representing the saints) made molten by divine fire, or air wholly suffused with light.[201]

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[196] *Lev*. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26; 1 *Pet*. 1:15, 16.

[197] *Mat* 5:48.

[198] *Amb*. 7, PG 91:1084B, Blowers and Wilken, 59.

[199] The quote is attributed to St. Augustine and is said to be from an address to new catechumens. See Jeffrey Vanderwilt, *A Church Without Borders: The Eucharist and the Church in Ecumenical Perspective* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 123. The closest thing I could find to this quote in his writings comes from his *Sermon on the Eucharist*, #229.1, "If then, you are the body of Christ and his members, it is your sacrament that reposes on the altar of the Lord…be what you see, receive who you are."

[200] *Amb*. 7, PG91:1977A. cf. *Amb*. 10; PG:91, 1172A.

Maximus presents a method of cultivation, a divine philosophy, to attain towards this goal. He tempers what might be considered the "negative" aspects of self-cultivation – asceticism, detachment, removal of the passions, with the positive – the cultivation of love, reorientation of the person towards God and towards others. His entire spiritual psychology is focused on the cultivation of love, as love is (according to Neil) the "absolutely universal relationship."[202] It involves the re-ordering of a disordered psyche; aided by grace, the psyche is re-directed to the love of God and neighbor. "Training in Christian spiritual practice amounts to a training in love."[203] This insight separates Maximus from his predecessors, such as Evagrius and Origen, for whom it is principally a matter of training the intellect as well as detaching it form a sinful (i.e. embodied) existence.

Thus his method is a matter of training the will to love, and in so doing, it lays the foundations for epistemic and cognitive transformation as well. "Perception, refined by virtuous and contemplative practices, moves the intellect towards the ultimate goal of immediate awareness of God (θεολογία)."[204] Again, drawing from scripture, holiness, understood as the simultaneous cultivation of love of neighbor (through virtuous behavior) and love of God (through prayer and contemplation), prepares (and in fact is a *sine qua non*) for the practitioner for the culminating and transforming union with God that is described as the *visio dei*.[205]

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[201] *Amb*. 7; PG91:1076C.
[202] Bronwen, 1.
[203] Louth, *Maximus*, 38.
[204] Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor", *Perceiving God*, 112.

In the first stage of divine philosophy, the believer attempts to "incarnate" Christ or become "another Christ" through virtuous life, through perfection of love of God and humans. As *apatheia* is cultivated, the person begins to contemplate the presence of God within creation. She or he contemplates the immanence of the Logos, God's presence in creation, made present in the logoi. In the third stage, the contemplative moves to the wordless and imageless contemplation of God in his transcendence, a feat only possible through the gift of grace made possible in the Incarnation and redemption.[206]

The practical life, the cultivation of virtues which express the *logoi* of commandments, as laid down by Maximus, is not a stage to be surpassed, as it is in the thought of Evagrius, but continues to undergird, express and shape the person's experience of later stages; the embodied practice of the virtues the process of deification also involves the transformation of both the body and soul.

> When [the soul] receives through this food [i.e. divine contemplation] eternal blessedness indwelling in it, it becomes God through participation in divine grace, by itself ceasing from all activities of mind and sense, and with them the natural activities of the body, which become Godlike along with it in a participation of deification proper to it. In this state only God

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[205] For example, see *Heb* 12:14, "without holiness no one will see the Lord…", *Matt* 5:8, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God", also the dialectic of purity and impurity, entrance and denial of entrance into the New Jerusalem in chapters 21 and 22 of the *Book of Revelation*.

[206] Because Maximus denies that God lies within any traditional ontic continuum with creatures, he is beyond both affirmation and negation, it also can be said that he transcends the conventional opposition of transcendence and immanence.

> shines forth through body and soul when their natural features are transcended in overwhelming glory.[207]

The deified person becomes a means of God's embodiment or manifestation in the world. The body, as Cooper notes, becomes a medium of God's manifestation in the transformation from sensible to intelligible means of apprehension.[208] In addition to God's embodiment or manifestation in the world through the *logoi* of scripture, the *logoi* of creation and the natural world, and the historical Incarnation, the Logos manifests itself in the virtuous person.[209] Those who participate in (i.e. practice) virtue, participate in God.[210]

I think the importance of love for Maximus cannot be stressed enough. Love, as described as charity (Lat. *caritas*; Grk. ἀγάπη) is the linchpin of Maximus' system. It is not only the starting point, but also the means (through the practice of virtue, which is love to one's fellows) and contemplation and prayer (love towards God). It is this love itself, which imitates divine love; it opposes self-love, itself the perversion of natural desire, which destroyed the intimate union of God, humanity and creation, as well as the unity and harmony of the faculties within human beings. It is this love, made possible to humans through the incarnation of the Logos, which restores that intimate communion.[211]

Even though he divides the process of spiritual cultivation into three stages following the Neoplatonic model, Maximus is of the opinion that not everyone need go through all three. He says that since deification takes place through love, it is possible for it to take place purely through the *vita practica*. In that case, a person of the world the *pratikos* (such as a non-monastic layperson), and the contemplative, *gnostic*, must begin with the practice of disciplined cultivation and the practice of virtue. Both end in *theologia* or pure prayer.[212] Maximus sees in the keeping of the commandments (central to the *vita practica*) as communication with the Logos through the *logoi* of the commandments and the Logos' subsequent incarnation in a person of virtue.[213]

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[207] *Chapters on Knowledge*, II.88, Berthold, 167. Cf. Cooper, "Maximus the Confessor on the Structural Dynamics of Revelation", 185-6.

[208] Cooper, "Maximus the Confessor on the Structural Dynamics of Revelation", 185. The natural characteristics are, according to Cooper, those "characteristic features of empirical life bordered by mortality and penetrated by corruption."

[209] *Amb.Io.* 10 (PG 91.1113BC); cf. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 349.

[210] *Amb.Io.* 7 (PG 91.1081d).

[211] Polycarp Sherwood, Introduction to *Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life…*, 93. Cf. Maximus, *Chapters on Love*, I.71, II.30.

Maximus differentiates between two "supreme states" of pure prayer, one for the actives, the other for contemplatives. The first arises from "fear of God" and an "upright hope". The second from "divine desire and total purification". The first is characterized by "the drawing of one's mind away from all the world's considerations" and being able to pray without disturbance. At the very start of prayer in the second form, "the mind is taken hold of by the divine and infinite light and is conscious neither of itself nor of any other being in it. Then, when it is concerned with the properties of God, it receives impression of him which are clear and distinct."[214]

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[212] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 348-9.
[213] *Ibid*., 349. Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *The Disputation With Pyrrhus* ….xxxii.
[214] *Chapters on Love,* II.6, Berthold, 47.

CHAPTER 5
KŪKAI ON PRAXIS

By removing the mist we see the Light;
And we find the inexhaustible Treasury open to all to enjoy,
Shining forth ever more fresh day by day.[1]

Maximus' understanding of divine philosophy and its aim of *theosis* is implicitly undergird by his ontology, the rooting of his thought in the significance of persons and individual existence, displayed in his concepts of *logoi, tropoi* and *hypostasis*. In the same fashion, Kūkai's project of self-cultivation and its goal *sokushin jō butsu,* becoming a Buddha in this very existence, is grounded by his own understanding of reality, characterized as it is by non-duality, and mutual interpenetration. Until his time, Kūkai probably has one of the most thorough and consistent understandings of non-dualism and its implications – the inseparability of 'self' and 'Self' (sentient being and Mahāvairocana), mind and body, path and goal, even compassion and wisdom.[2] I will examine the implications of non-dualism as reflected in his praxis below.

In either case, for Maximus or Kūkai, *mimesis* or imitation, is a crucial part of the strategy of self-cultivation. Maximus' ontological commitments preclude the possibility of becoming God in the most literal sense: one cannot be as God is, however one can act as God acts. One loves in imitation as God loves, but also one learns to contemplate creation and the Trinity, in a way, partaking in God's own contemplative activity. Likewise, for Kūkai, one emulates Mahāvairocana. He emphasizes imitation of

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[1] K.Z., I, 419; cited by Hakeda, 97.

[2] This is not to say that Kūkai is entirely without dualism. As will be noted below, there is some tension in his thought between 'originary enlightenment' and 'acquired enlightenment', between the original state and the practice that leads to realization of it. Perhaps the single most consistent non-dual thinker is Dōgen (1200-1253) who held that 'sitting' (i.e. meditation) is enlightenment and that all beings are budda-nature (rather than merely possess it).

Mahāvairocana's *samadhi*, his meditative absorption, through the practice of the *Three Mysteries*. In these symbolic actions of speech, body and mind, one loses awareness of the process of imitation; the gulf between subject and object is overcome, though initially only during the time of practice.[3] The final goal is for this absorption to become a lasting state – in doing so, one attains permanent realization of their *bodhicitta*, inherent identity as Mahāvairocana.

Practice and Contemplation in Kūkai

Hakeda notes that Kūkai's program of practice has two aspects, the observance of *precepts* (Jap. *kai*, 戒; also *kairitsu* 戒律), as well as practice of sitting in meditation (*jō*).[4] We see here a rough parallel to the regimen of Maximus the Confessor, with his understanding of two aspects of cultivation: *pratikē*, the practical life (*vita pratica*), on the one hand and *physikē* (meditation) and *theologia* (the final state of graced contemplation) representing the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) on the other. As with Maximus, contemplative or meditative practice has as its foundation the observance of the virtuous life. I will attend to the moral foundations of Kūkai's practice before talking about his complex regimen of meditation. I will further show that for Kūkai, the "practical side" does not only concern itself with virtuous behavior, but also with other aspects of monastic and esoteric life as well. We will see that the dialectic between contemplative and practical works differently in Kūkai since the primary goal of his path is not the cultivation of love, but rather the development of wisdom, a cognitive rather than volitional attribute. The adept, however, is not left with a hardhearted or compassionless wisdom; the reality is quite the opposite. For Kūkai, along with the

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[3] Hakeda, 98-9.

[4] *Ibid.*, 94.

Mahāyāna and *Vajrayāna* traditions more generally, as one cultivates nondiscriminatory wisdom (Skt: *prajñā*; Jpn: *hannya*, 般若), compassion naturally arises. The virtuous life, so important for Maximus, plays a foundational and integral role in for Kūkai, but its ultimate significance is somewhat different.

In his farewell address or last will and testament (*Nijugokajō go-yuigō*) to initiated monks, Kūkai writes, "Observe these precepts faithfully and practice the *samadhi* of Mahāvairocana.[5] He warns them, "…carefully guard them [the precepts] as you protect your eyes. Forsake your lives rather than violate them."[6] He holds the precepts in great esteem, and does not account them as insignificant. Now let us turn to the moral virtues and precepts which serve as the foundation for his practice.

While Maximus' regimen of self-cultivation puts a great emphasis on virtuous behavior (I treat this as synonymous with ethics and moral conduct), for Kūkai, it is of foundational importance, but does not constitute the "acid test" which Maximus claims that *philadelphia,* love of others, does for the contemplative. Kūkai also stresses the importance of virtuous behavior, although it does not play the same exact role. He holds his monks to a rigorous moral standard which in no way encourages, exults in or condones behavior that would be regarded as unvirtuous or unethical. Activities, such as murder or theft, would generally be seen as contrary to the Buddha's teachings of *metta,* loving-kindness, and *karuna,* compassion. In fact, the practice of morality, *sila*, and compassion seem to mirror the activity of the *dharmakāya*.[7]

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[5] K.Z. II, 861-2, Hakeda, 95.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] I interpret this to mean that if we act virtuously that we are imitating (or expressing?) the compassion of the Dharmakāya who is the One Mind. This kind of reasoning is explicitly the case in Maximus; there is a very clear sense of *imitatio dei.* The closest I see in Kūkai is in the three mysteries, where the adepts attempt to mirror the *samadhi* of the Dharmakāya, in which case they realize that their activity is the

In traditional Buddhism, The *Eightfold Noble Path*, the fourth of the *Four Noble Truths*, is the one directly concerned with providing the remedy for suffering. It is the antidote for the three *kleśas* (obstructions) which plague all sentient beings: ignorance, attachment and aversion.[8] Ignorance is the root cause of the afflictions of sentient beings; it gives rise to the other two. In traditional lists of the *nidanas,* ongoing chain of twelve factors which make-up a karmic cycle and trap sentient beings within the realm of *samsara*, it is usually listed as the first factor which sets the entire chain in motion.[9] *Tanha*, or craving, is the eighth link in the chain.[10]

For the sake of cultivation, the eight practices are traditionally arranged into three groups, Moral Discipline (*silakkhandha)*, Concentration (*samadhikkhandha*), and Insight or Wisdom (*paññakkhandha*). They are arranged according to the final goal, which is the overcoming of ignorance (*avidja*),[11] as ignorance conditions or roots unhealthy craving (*tanha*) and as well as other cognitive obstructions (*kleśas*) which are the root of suffering or dissatisfaction (*dukkha*), according to the *Second Noble Truth*. Bhikkhu Bodhi explains the rationale for the traditional arrangement this way:

> Since the final goal to which the path leads, liberation from suffering, depends ultimately on uprooting ignorance, the climax of the path must be

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activity of Dainichi (because of nonduality) . K.Z., II, 152; cited in Hakeda, 94; "These ten precepts can be reduced to one mind. The essential nature of our mind is not distinct from that of the Buddha; no difference exists between our mind, the mind of all beings, and that of the Buddha. To abide in this mind is to practice the Way of the Buddha."

[8] Skt: *moha* (ignorance), *raga* (attachment), *dvesa* (aversion). These together are known as *triviṣa* or "three poisons"; it is from ignorance that the other two arise.

[9] For example, the *Paticca-samuppada-vibhanga Sutta*, SN. 12.2; in the commentarial tradition these causative chains are depicted as extended over a period of three lives. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *In the Buddha's Words* (Somerville, Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 314.

[10] On their relative positions, see Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 65.

[11] Bhikkhu Bodhi, "The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering". *Access to Insight*. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/waytoend.html#ch2 Accessed 5 March 2014.
See also Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 111-13. Keown notes that the moral discipline (*sila*) facilitates intellectual discipline (*prajna),* however, the Eightfold Path begins with *sila* and ends with *prajna and sila*.

> the training directly opposed to ignorance. This is the training in wisdom, designed to awaken the faculty of penetrative understanding which sees things "as they really are." Wisdom unfolds by degrees, but even the faintest flashes of insight presuppose as their basis a mind that has been concentrated, cleared of disturbance and distraction. Concentration is achieved through the training in the higher consciousness, the second division of the path, which brings the calm and collectedness needed to develop wisdom. But in order for the mind to be unified in concentration, a check must be placed on the unwholesome dispositions which ordinarily dominate its workings, since these dispositions disperse the beam of attention and scatter it among a multitude of concerns. The unwholesome dispositions continue to rule as long as they are permitted to gain expression through the channels of body and speech as bodily and verbal deeds.[12]

He notes that these do not represent steps to be followed as such, but in the early phases of growth, there is a certain order based on the goal, which is the overcoming of ignorance. Immoral conduct can be ultimately attributed to ignorance, which at the core involves a belief in the reality of a 'self'. This in turn fosters an emotional investment made on the basis of that, giving rise to attachment to self.[13] Shakyamuni Buddha himself, according to *Kimathi Sutta,* found in the oldest collection of sutras, says that the practice of the virtues leads, through a chain of successive qualities. For example, virtue leads to freedom of remorse which leads to joy, which leads to serenity and so on, one ultimately develops meditative concentration, which leads to dispassion and finally to knowledge and release, that is, *nirvāna*.[14]

Keown citing Richard Gombrich, notes that the breakdown of the precepts into three categories seems to mirror the Brahmanical breakdown of self-cultivation into three distinct paths – action (*karma-yoga*), austerities (*tapas*), and wisdom (*jnāna-yoga*).[15]

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[12] Cf. *Samyutta-nikāya* XII 46; XIII 15; Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* VII.8, XVII.2, XVII.5, XVII.18.

[13] Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 67.

[14] *Kimathi Sutta* (*Anguttara Nikāya* 11.1).

[15] Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 43; Cf. Richard Gombrich, "Notes on the Brahmanical Background to Buddhist Ethics," in *Buddhist Studies in Honor of Hammalava Saddhativa*. Dhammapala,

Hindu thought traditionally saw the paths of action and wisdom as two alternatives,[16] but early Buddhism synthesized them into one; they are simultaneously aspects of the Buddha-path towards enlightenment and the experience of it as well.[17] It is important to note that the precepts do not function in the same way as commandments do in Christianity, as these are not divine mandates or juridical rule in the strict sense, but rather guidelines and aspirations which serve to guide the adherents to enlightenment.[18]

One of the characteristics of *Mahāyāna*, the "large vehicle" or "large raft", the later form of Buddhism, is its conscious emphasis on the cultivation of compassion, an active concern for the well-being of others and a desire to bring an end to their suffering. It is one of the primary motivating factors for becoming a Bodhisattva, and the presence of which distinguishes one from the *Pratyekabuddha*, one who attains enlightenment on their own, without concern for others, vilified in *Mahāyāna* literature. Virtue or ethical behavior is traditionally listed as one of the six *pāramitās* or perfections required to attain the status of Bodhisattva according to *Prajñāpāramitā Sutras*.[19]

Mahāyāna introduced a terminological change; for *Hinayāna, sila* (virtue) and *prajnā* (wisdom), are the two foundational values, where *Mahāyāna* prefers *karunā*,

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edited by Richard Gombrich and K.R. Norman (Nugegoda, Sri Lanka: University of Sri Jayawardenepura), 91-102.

[16] *Chāndogya Upanishad*, v.10.1-7. There are orthodox *darśana*, schools of Hindu thought, which solely embrace the path of wisdom, such as Nyāya and Sāmkhya. According to Mircea Eliade, for the latter, morality, "leads to nothing decisive". The only means for decisively escaping from the realm of rebirth and suffering is metaphysical knowledge. Mircea Eliade, *Patanjali and Yoga*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), 42.

[17] Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 43.

[18] These precepts are undertaken voluntarily by the committed Buddhist. Violations of these precepts will not necessarily bring external sanctions. However, karma is believed to be at work, and so the fruits of these deeds, for good or ill, will be experienced either in this life or a life to come. Such karma may hinder or accelerate the quest for enlightenment. See Stewart McFarlane, "Making Moral Decisions" in *Buddhism* (*World Religions: Themes and Issues*), edited by Peter Harvey (New York: Continuum, 2001), 187.

[19] *Pāramitā*, usually translated as 'perfection', means 'crossing over to the other shore'. The six *pāramitās* as traditionally given are *dāna* (generosity), *silā* (ethical conduct), *kshānti* (patience), *vīrya* (diligence), *dhyāna* (single pointed concentration), *prajñā* (wisdom).

compassion or *upāya*, skillful means, to *sila*. This does not rule out the importance of *sila* as it is the second of six *pāramitās,* perfections, in traditional accounts. However, the new importance given *karunā* reflects an understanding of moral virtue as "a dynamic other-regarding quality", rather than one concerned primarily with self-control as found in *Theravāda*.[20] The Tantric tradition placed a similar emphasis on the perfection of the *pāramitās*.[21] The difference is that the traditional sutra-path of *Mahāyāna* requires the practice of the perfections over countless aeons, while the according to the tantra-path, the length of time is much shorter because it involves practices, such as deity yoga, where one visualizes oneself as having body and mind similar in aspect to a Buddha.[22]

Nonduality and compassion – some implications. The eighth century Indian *arhat* Santideva made an argument regarding the necessary connection between non-duality and compassion. One consequence of emptiness and non-dual identity is that the dividing line between suffering of 'self' and 'other' disappears. Santideva argued that suffering is therefore 'ownerless', no ultimate distinction can be made between pain experienced by myself and others. It makes no sense for one to ignore the suffering of others, as the other is non-different from one's self.[23]

Kūkai seems implicitly to recognize this logic. The aim of Kūkai's practice is to lead one to realize their innate *bodhicitta*, in doing so, the person's 'I' is not obliterated so much as it is expanded to be universal in scope. In a poem, he writes, “The notion of I and thou will be erased and lost. When the sea of our mind becomes serene through *samadhi* and insight.[24]”

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[20] Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics,* 131.

[21] Jeffrey Hopkins, "Tantric Buddhism, Degeneration or Enhancement: The Viewpoint of a Tibetan Tradition". *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 10 (1990), 89.

[22] Hopkins, "Tantric Buddhism…", 89.

[23] *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8.97-98. He notes further that we wish to end our own suffering, even though one's self is comprised of a changing series of states, yet we consider it an 'I'. We will not be the same over time, yet we still wish to end our suffering and avoid future pain, all as if there is a substantial 'self' underlying the *skandhas*. If this is the case, one can, and should, expand the 'I' to include others. See Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 125. For an analysis of Santideva's argument, see Paul Williams, *Altruism and Reality: Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra* (New York, Routledge, 2013), especially chapter 5, 104-176. He offers a strong critique of it as well. Santideva's argument is not entirely unique/ For instance, see Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* IX for a *Theravādin* argument for expanding one's self interest to all sentient beings.

‘I’ and ‘thou’ are lost in the sense that they are understood to be empty. Within esoteric Buddhism, ‘I’ and ‘thou’ interpenetrate and are inseparable from one another. Such terms are revealed to be mere conventions, albeit useful ones. The later traditions of Buddhism, *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna*, seem to understand *anātman* in a different or at least more nuanced way than earliest schools did, where ‘self’, even if empty, was still a central organizing principle, as the center of experience, and as something distinguishable and distinct from the world at large.[25]

Drawing from the East Asian tradition, Hershock writes,

> …a fully Buddhist articulation of who we are as persons entails nothing short of removing the very presumption of ontological difference, of the distinction of ‘self’and ‘other’ – in short of relinquishing all of the horizons by means of which we identify our own ‘selves’ and those of ‘others’. [26]

Kiyota notes that the *Mahāyāna* concept of compassion derives from its understandings of the ontological implications of non-duality. If all forms of existence are interwoven and interdependent than there can be no self-enlightenment without the enlightenment of others. Thus the *Mahāvairocana* sutra can assert that *upāya* is ultimate.[27]

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[24] K.Z., III, 402, cited in Hakeda, 91.

[25] On the Indian Buddhist understanding of *anātman* see: Joanna Macy, *Mutual causality in Buddhism and general systems theory: the dharma of natural systems* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 108. On the contrast with East Asian Buddhist understanding of ‘self’ and *anātman,* see Hershock, 686.

[26] Hershock, 692.

[27] Minoru Kiyota, “Shingon Mikkyō's Twofold Maṇḍala: Paradoxes and Integration,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10, no. 1 (1987), 108.

Another point to consider is that one can argue that, as *Mahāyāna* does, that *prajnā* and *karunā* are non-dual.[28] If reality is ultimately non-dual, then these two attributes or qualities or virtues are two aspects of the same reality. There is an order of cultivation that must be followed, in order to progress, but this does not mean they are truly separate. The cultivation of the *bodhicitta*, the Buddha-mind innate in all sentient beings, is essential for unleashing the great compassion which serves as the root of enlightenment and *upāya* its perfection or culmination.[29] When *prajnā* is itself realized, "unconditional compassion radiates forth all inclusively as a spontaneous expression of the mind's deepest unconditioned nature."[30]

Christmas Humphreys describes this enlightened state as one where the sense of wholeness is so strong that action becomes motiveless: there is consciousness that something needs to be done and coupled with appropriate circumstances and the means to do it, the action is done without either a sense of purpose or desire for reward.[31]

Upāya. Turning to Kūkai' s thought, one can see the foundational status he assigns ethical behavior by looking at the schema of doctrinal classification found in his work, *Hizō hōyaku (Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*). He classifies ten extent moral-religious-philosophical systems according to their insight into truth and their ability to liberate the practitioner from ignorance and suffering.[32] Once past the earliest stage which is self-enclosed and marked by almost complete ignorance and egoism, *Bodhicitta* begins to permeate within the aspirant and they begin to perform spontaneous acts of charity and altruism towards others. At earlier stages they are still driven by some form of egotism, but this diminishes as they grow in insight. As a general trend, we can see that spiritual development primarily involves the development of insight into the nature of reality, and secondarily to the practice of compassion, the latter of which emerges as an indicator of deepening spiritual insight, as compassion and sympathy – products of the realization of non-self – manifest themselves.[33] Furthermore, due to Kūkai's understanding of non-duality, self-enlightenment cannot be separated from enlightenment of others or of the entire universe,[34] thus in attaining realization of one's innate Buddha-nature, it is in some way mirrored through the cosmos and benefits others in the cosmos.

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[28] See Douglas Mikkelson, "Who is Arguing about the Cat? Moral Action and Enlightenment According to Dōgen", *Philosophy East and West* 47, no. 3 (July, 1997), 386.
[29] *Mahāvairocanā-Sutra* (also known as the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-Sutra*) I.ic.
[30] John Makransky, "Compassion in Buddhist Psychology," in *Compassion and Wisdom in Psychotherapy,* edited by Christopher K. Germer and Ronald D. Siegel (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 71.
[31] Christmas Humphreys, "Buddhist Principles," *Samadhi: The Journal of the London Vihara* 18 (May 2001), accessed March 13, 2015, http://londonbuddhistvihara.org/samadhi/May2001.htm.
[32] The stages are as follows:
First Stage: *The Mind of Lowly Man, Goatish in Its Desires*
Second Stage: *The Mind that is Ignorant and Childlike, Yet Abstemious*
Third Stage: *The Mind that is Infantlike and Fearless*

The cultivation of skillful means (Skt: *upāya,* Jpn*: hōben*, 方便) arises in conjunction with deepening cultivation of wisdom. *Upāya* refers to Buddha's teachings as expeditious means used to bring sentient beings to liberation. It allows Buddhists to justify seeming innovations in doctrines as adaptions to the spiritual and intellectual

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Fourth Stage: *The Mind that Recognizes the Existence of Psychophysical Constituents Only, Not That of a Permanent Ego*
Fifth Stage: *The Mind Freed form the Seed of the Cause of Karma*
Sixth Stage: *The Mahayana Mind with Sympathetic Concern for Others*
Seventh Stage: *The Mind That Realizes that the Mind is Unborn*
Eighth Stage: *The Mind That is Truly in Harmony with the One Way*
Ninth Stage: *The Profoundest Exoteric Buddhist Mind that is Aware of Its Nonimmutable Nature*
Tenth Stage: *The Glorious Mind, the Most Secret and the Most Sacred*
See Kūkai, "Precious Key to the Secret Treasury", in Hakeda, 157-224, especially 163-4.

[33] It is also important to consider the good merit (*punya*) or karma that altruistic acts generate; in earlier stages the good karma is desirable in itself; it means the practitioner can be reborn as a monk or nun in a future life, a wealthy person or a god. As one develops, the accumulation of karma is not so much concerned with attaining a favorable rebirth, but of helping other sentient beings; the merit can be transferred for the sake of one's deceased relatives or for all sentient beings. See Dhammananda Maha Thera, "The Significance of Transference of Merits to the Departed," accessed 14 April 14, 2014, http://budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbeliev/307.htm.
One of the great examples of this among the Bodhisattvas is Amitabha's generation of the Pure Land from the good karma he accumulated as a monk in previous lives as detailed in the *Longer Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*.

[34] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed July 9, 2014.

capacities of their audiences.[35] In his characterization of *Mahāvairocana*, Kūkai writes that because *Mahāvairocana*'s wisdom is infinite and enlightenment is without equal, his skillful means are without parallel.[36] Buddhas of great compassion guide *arhats* through the use of skillful means to esoteric yoga and the practice of *Samadhi*.[37]

The purport of esoteric sutras, such as the *Vajrasekhara* and *Mahāvairocana* sutras is to demonstrate three propositions, that "the enlightened mind is the cause, great compassion is the root and the [use of] skillful means is the ultimate."[38] The basic character of this wisdom is its capacity for compassion and its measure is its ability to help others (through skillful means) to attain liberation.[39] According to Krummel, "enlightened wisdom cannot remain aloof from the realities of unenlightened life. Skillful means thus embodies wisdom in concrete phenomenal activity."[40] As the insight of arhants deepen, they realize that *upāya* and *prajñā* are not truly separate.

> All I can see is a phantom.
> All comes from the chain of causation.
> One basic ignorance and all karmic acts,
> Neither inside nor outside, lead astray ordinary mortals.[41]

Ignorance. At the heart of all forms of Buddhism is the struggle to overcome ignorance. As noted before, its regime of practice is oriented towards this. Ignorance,

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[35] The doctrine is found in early *Mahāyāna* sutras, such as *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra*, the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. It forms a key part of *Mahāyāna* polemics against earlier forms of Buddhism. These earlier forms are depicted as forms of *upāya*, suited to the lesser spiritual capacities of their audience. The concept of *upāya* is central to the development of doctrinal classification schemes (*p'an-chiao*), found in Chinese Buddhism, primarily in *T'ien-t'ai* and *Hua-yen* which sought to reconcile a very diverse and apparently contradictory mass of teachings while also asserting the superiority of their own.

[36] Kūkai, "A Memorial Presenting a List of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items", in Hakeda, 146.

[37] Kūkai, "The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury", in Hakeda, 219.

[38] *Ibid*., in Hakeda, 262; the quote is from chapter 1 of the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* (T181b-c).

[39] Hakeda, 87.

[40] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed June 3, 2014.

[41] "Singing Image of a Phantom", *Tantric Poetry of Kukai*, translated by Morgan Gibson and Hiroshi Murakami, (Fredonia, NY: White Pine Press, 1982), 23.

avidya (無明; Chin: *wú míng;* Jap: *mumyō*),[42] as identified in Buddhist literature, is not simply the lack of knowledge, as if a "filling up" with appropriate knowledge, would lead to the end of suffering. Instead, it is lack of knowledge of the true nature of self (i.e. not-self), the workings of *karma*, the Four Noble Truths and the Three Jewels,[43] even a mis-cognizing of the nature of reality and the self. Harvey, drawing from early *sutras*, notes that it even has dimensions of "ignore-ance", an unwillingness to know or deliberate obfuscation of the truth.[44] The cure, as noted above, is the development of insight, "seeing things as they really are, the *sine qua non* of, *nirvana*, enlightenment, the cessation of moral obscurations and ignorance."[45]

Dan Lusthaus notes that while suffering was mentioned in Chinese Buddhist texts of the period, suffering itself was de-emphasized as the "root problem". Instead the focus shifted to ignorance, not merely as the cause of suffering, but as the primary problem itself, thus a dialectic was established between ignorance and wisdom, its opposite, which crowded out suffering and dissatisfaction. Enlightenment was not a matter of unearthing the root causes of suffering (as in the Four Noble Truths), but discovering the nature of the mind.[46] This was a different understanding of causation present in Chinese Buddhism which moved it beyond the causal chain model (*twelve nidanas*) of early Indian Buddhism.

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[42] Pronounced *mumyō* in Japanese, it comes from two Chinese characters, 無 and 明. The first, 無, *mu*, represents a negation or privative. The second, 明, *myō*, can mean 'wisdom', but also 'brightness' or 'clarity'. The character is a compound of the radicals for sun (日) and moon (月), indicating something luminous or bright.

[43] Cf. Damien Keown, "Avidya", in *A Dictionary of Buddhism Online Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

[44] Peter Harvey, "Freedom of Will in Light of Theravāda Buddhist Teachings," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 14 (2007), 73.

[45] Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, 2.

[46] Lusthaus, "Buddhist philosophy, Chinese," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998).

I surmise the difference in the understanding of causation as expounded in Chinese Buddhism is at least in part attributable to the influence of the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* sutra (Chin: *Dashasheng Qixin Lun*, 大乘起信論).[47] The sutra was written around the 6th century CE, although the authorship is uncertain. The Hua-yen patriarch Fazang's commentaries on the sutra became immensely influential, particularly within his own school.

It uses a wave model to explain the emergence of the phenomenal world. A calm sea represents the one pure mind. It is equated with *tathata* or suchness (Chin: Zhēnrúm 真如) and principle (Chin: *li*, 理), which is naturally quiescent. It is important to recall here that *li* in Chinese Buddhism is used synonymously with *sunyatā*, emptiness. *Tathata*, suchness, refers to the nature of reality as unconditioned, without conceptual overlay. It presents a more positive side of *sunyatā*.

However when buffeted by the winds of ignorance, the phenomenal world, regarded as phenomena (Chin: *shih*, 事) arises.[48] According to *The Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*, the wetness of the water remains unchanged, whether in its static mode, the quiescent sea, or more dynamic, represented by the waves. Fazang interpreted this to mean that cause and effect, *noumena* and *phenomena* coexisted with, and were present within one another. The wetness of water, *principle*, was fully present in the waves, the

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[47] According to legend, it was written by Asvaghosa (80-150 CE) and translated by Paramartha (499-569 CE) into Chinese. Scholars now believe it was written by Paramartha or one of his disciples. As such, no original manuscript in Sanskrit is extant. Its name in Sanskrit is hypothetical, but translated from the Chinese, it would be *Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda Śāstra*.

[48] The metaphor is found in *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* sutra. The metaphor first appeared in an earlier sutra, the *Lankavatara Sutra*, where it has a different meaning, illustrating how the wind of phenomenal forms causes waves in the corresponding six senses. It has a strong *Yogācāra* influence. It does not speak to the co-identity of *nirvana* and *samsara*. See Whalen Lai, "Buddhism in China: An Historical Survey," accessed March 31, 2014, http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/HistoricalZen/Buddhism_in_China.pdf,; his article comes from an unspecified original publication, but no further information is given on it.

phenomena. Their relationship was fluid and non-dual. It has no explicit parallel in Indian thought, and contrary to Indian Buddhists, holds that *Tathatā*, suchness*,* is generative of the phenomenal world and not merely supportive of it.[49]

Soteriological Aspects of Non-Duality

Hongaku (本覚). We have spoken of nonduality at the cosmic or macrocosmic level, this truth however has profound implications at the more mundane level of individual sentient being. Put another way, we have spoken of it at a cosmological level, but it also has implications at the level of individual soteriology. The aim of Kūkai's praxis, *sokushin jō butsu*, becoming a Buddha in this very existence, serves as the rough equivalent to Maximus' aim of *deification*. It is underwritten, made possible, by his understanding of non-duality, expressed in soteriological terms in his understanding of *hongaku* (本覚),[50] "original (or intrinsic) enlightenment" (also "original mind"). In brief, it means that all beings are intrinsically enlightened, that is, they are Buddhas from the outset.[51] Such rhetoric collapses hard-and-fast distinctions between ordinary sentient being and Buddha, between delusion and enlightenment, the phenomena of the world and suchness.[52] As described in esoteric texts, this includes: words and referent, signifier and signified, study and practice, sign and reality.[53] There however still remains an "experiential divide" between ignorance and knowledge that all dharmas are the Buddha dharma.[54] It is evident that liberation achieved through gaining enlightenment, called *satori* (覚り or 悟り) or *kakugo* (覚悟) in Japanese, involves the acquisition of a special kind of wisdom. Significantly, it is a cognitive state and not a mystical experience, the "full understanding of the interdependence of language and reality", where the consciousness turns from a "discriminative ideational device into the 'pure mind', a clear mirror of the universe…".[55] In the case of *Shingon* and esoteric Buddhism more generally, the goal is to "know your mind as it is".[56] It is appropriate here to recall that mind and body are not separate realities, but are two aspects of the same whole. "Matter is no other than mind; mind no other than matter. Without any obstruction they are interrelated."[57]

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[49] Whalen Lai, "Chinese Buddhist causation theories: An analysis of Sinitic Mahāyāna understanding of Pratitya-samutpāda," *Philosophy East and West* 27, no. 3 (July, 1977), 250-1; it seems to mirror a difference between Indian concepts of *Brahman* and Chinese concepts of *Dao*.

[50] The significance of original enlightenment thought (*hongaku shisō*, 本覚思想) was brought to the attention of scholars by the work of *Shimaji Daitō*, a Buddhologist, at the turn of the twentieth century. In a broad way, he meant it to refer to those tendencies in Buddhist, particularly East Asian thought, which saw enlightenment as the starting point (inherent to sentient beings) rather than the endpoint of a long struggle of self-cultivation. See Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism…*, 3-4; also Fumihiko Sueki. "Two Seemingly Contradictory Aspects of the Teaching of Innate Enlightenment (*hongaku*) in Medieval Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22, no. 1-2 (1995), 1-5.

[51] One implication of this seems to be that the practice of the *pāramitās*, along with compassion and skillful means, is not so much the method to attaining enlightenment (since all sentient beings already have latent *bodhicitta*) but instead serve to manifest it.

[52] See Stone, 358.

The doctrine of *hongaku* has its roots in the apocryphal treatise *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, which attempted to reconcile the belief of the mind's original purity with pervasive reality of ignorance. *Tathagata-garbha* thought*,* influential in Chinese Buddhism, attempted to explain the innate capacity for enlightenment of all sentient beings. It held that all minds were originally pure and therefore held the potential for enlightenment, and were considered the "womb of the Buddha" (*tathagata-*

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[53] Fabio Rambelli, "Lecture No. 5: A Semiotic Soteriology", 4, accessed April 26, 2014. http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/ram5.pdf.
[54] See Stone, 358.
[55] Fabio Rambelli, "Lecture No. 5: A Semiotic Soteriology", 14, accessed April 26, 2014. http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/ram5.pdf.
[56] The quote is from the *Mahāvairocana Sutra*, T.18, n.848, 1c. Cf. Fabio Rambelli, Fabio Rambelli, "Lecture No. 6: The Status of Mind in Esoteric Buddhism", 1, accessed April 28, 2014. http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/ram6.pdf.
[57] Kūkai, "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence" in Hakeda, 229-30.

garbha). But adopting such a position led to difficulties in explaining the current state of deluded sentient beings.[58]

The text posits that the mind has two inseparable aspects, the mind as *suchness* (paralleling *Madhyamika*'s concept of ultimate truth, *paramārtha-satya*) and the mind as *arising and perishing* (paralleling *Madhyamika*'s concept of conventional truth, *samvrti-satya*). The mind, as arising and perishing, has its grounding in mind as *suchness* or *dharmakāya*, and therefore possesses inherent enlightenment. Delusion results from the inability to recognize the identity with suchness. The practice of cultivation allows one to realize that delusory thoughts are empty; they are none other than suchness.

We have already addressed the significance of Hua-yen for Kūkai, and its understanding of the non-dual relationship of principle and phenomena, as water and waves. Tamura notes that it was in Hua-yen, with Fazang's commentary on *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, the *Ch'i hsin tun i chi* (起信論義記), that the concept of original mind first took on special significance.[59] Kūkai himself had a special fondness for the *Awakening* as well as the text *Shih ma ho yen tun* (釈摩訶衍論, Jap. *Shaku-maka'enron*, "The Explanation of the Speech of Overflowing Discourse"), a commentary on the *Awakening* which connected original enlightenment with non-duality.[60]

It is a significant observation that despite the optimism of intrinsic enlightenment doctrine, something of the notion of 'acquired enlightenment' remains: the question remained of how one was to actualize intrinsic enlightenment.[61] Kūkai effectively located *Tendai* (T'ien-tai) and *Kegon* (Hua-yen) in the penultimate position in his scale of realization.[62] He held that what separated them was a lack of embodied praxis that would allow them to attain to full realization. Essentially they were still haunted by duality having neglected embodiment.[63] These other forms do make a contribution, they "sweep away the dust covering the surface of the mind and dispel its delusions,"[64] but their practitioners will take up to three incalculable aeons to attain realization,[65] while an adept of esoteric practice will attain the "sixteen spiritual rebirths" in this life, attaining enlightenment.[66] Shingon alone has the key to open the inner treasury.

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[58] *Awakening of Faith* adopted several aspects of *Yogācāra* thought, subsuming the *alaya-vijnāna* as the pure mind, but seen through the eyes of the unenlightened. See Stone, 5-6.

[59] Yoshirō Tamura, "Japanese Culture and the Tendai Concept of Original Enlightenment," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14, no. 2-3 (1987), 206.

[60] Tamura, "Japanese Culture and the Tendai Concept of Original Enlightenment", 206.

[61] See Stone, 358.

The Preaching Universe. One teaching which is key to Kūkai's understanding of the cosmos as well as his regime of practice is *hosshin seppō* (法身説身), the assertion, surprising to traditional Buddhism, that the *Dharmakāya* (Jpn: *hosshin,* 法身), the dharma-body of the Buddha, preaches.[67] As mentioned in a previous chapter, he acknowledged, as did other forms of *Mahāyāna* (and by extension, *Vajrayāna*), the preaching activity of the *nirmāṇakāya* or "form body" in historical incarnations of Buddhas as well as manifestations of the s*ambhogakāya*, or "enjoyment body" to advanced practitioners in the course of meditation, dreams and so on. The Dharma-body preaches through the ceaseless flow and myriad fluctuations of the universe; his (its?)

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[62] Kūkai, "Precious Key to the Secret Treasury", in Hakeda, 211.

[63] Snodgrass, Adrian. *The Matrix and Diamond World Mandalas in Shingon Buddhism*, Vol. I (New Delhi, India: Aditya Prakashan, 1988) , p.14

[64] Kūkai, "Precious Key to the Secret Treasury", in Hakeda, 161.

[65] For example, Nāgārjuna, *Discourse on the Greater Pranj*ā-*P*ā*ramit*ā *Sutra*, ch.4; Abé, notes the Sanskrit typically used is *asamkyeya* (*asamkhya*); it is translated as *asōgi* (阿僧祇) meaning, "innumerable" or "unable to be counted". See Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 93.

[66] Exoteric *Mahāyāna* holds for anywhere from ten to fifty-two stages (*bhūmi*) on the Bodhisattva path. The *Avatamsaka Sutra* lists ten; Hua-yen places forty-two stages prior to the first *bhūmi* presented in that sutra. For Kūkai, the sixteen spiritual rebirths are aspects of enlightenment or insights that are achieved in this life. Cf. Kūkai, "A Memorial Presenting A List of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items", in Hakeda, 150.

[67] 法身説身 reads, "the Dharma body (*hosshin*, 法身), preaches (*setsu*, 説) the dharma (*hō*,身)".

discourse is the adumbrations (*kyō*), which on the microscopic level, make up not only the sounds that comprise language, but the five elements which make up the elements of phenomenal world. On the macroscopic level, these vibrations make up whole languages as well as world itself. As we will see below, enlightenment or realization involves learning to hear (that is, becoming aware of) the preaching of the cosmic Buddha.

Sokushin jōbutsu (即身成仏). Flowing as a natural consequence from his acceptance of *hongaku*, he understands the possibility of attaining enlightenment in the "here and now". He vigorously rejected the idea that one must practice for three aeons before attaining enlightenment.[68] His understanding of non-duality leads him to a reject multitude of dualities, such as Buddha and foolish person, *nirvāna* and *samsara*, even enlightenment and foolishness.

This concept is not found explicitly in either the *Mahāvairocana* or *Vajrasekhara Sutras*, instead depending on a commentary to the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* written by the Chinese monk I-hsing (683-727 CE).[69] There is some evidence which suggests that Hua-yen patriarchs Amoghavajra and Hui-kuo shared the same view. Similar views are present in Tendai and Kegon; Kūkai's contemporary Saicho taught a similar doctrine. Prince Shotoku, almost a century before Kūkai and Saicho, held something very close to it.[70]

Sokushin-jobutsu (即身成仏) translates as "becoming a Buddha in this very body", or "becoming a Buddha in this body immediately". Kūkai himself reflects on the significance of the terms,[71] saying that it sums up the entirety of the Buddha's teaching.[72] Hakeda notes that the word *shin* (身) does not refer to the body in opposition to the mind or apart from it as if he were talking about the transformation of one aspect of the person but not the other. In the context of Kūkai's work, *shin* refers to 'existence' or 'body-mind-being'.[73] Consequently Hakeda renders to the phrase, "Becoming a Buddha in this very existence". Kūkai himself has noted that there is no essential difference between mind and matter,[74] therefore we can say there is no difference in essence between mind and body as would be found in Cartesian thought, a kind of disjunctive dualism, or Aristotelian hylomorphism, conjunctive dualism. There seems to be a lingering dualism in the other esoteric traditions. Kūkai claims that Kegon, Tendai, and others see the body as a hindrance to attaining the final state of enlightenment, "highest perfect awakening" (Skt: *anuttara samyak sambodhi*; Jpn: *anokutara sammyaku sambodai*, 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提); for these schools the mortal, corruptible body needs to be transcended.[75]

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[68] Cf. "A Memorial Presenting A List of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items", in Hakeda, 150.
[69] Kitagawa, "Master and Savior", 16.
[70] See Shaner, *The Bodymind Experience*, 212, note 25.

The transformation effected in pursuit of attaining *sokushin jōbutsu* is not a transmutation, the transformation of one substance into another, but rather, the realization of what one is at a primordial level, a coming into true being. Kūkai's preferred approach is through the practice of the “three mysteries”, or *sanmitsu* (三密) which we will investigate below.

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[71] According to Kūkai, each term has four aspects. *Sokushin*, translated as "this very body", means, that its essence is that it is mutually unhindered and harmonious, that there is mutual agreement and penetration, that it is not separate and that its function is achieved through the Three Mysteries. *Jōbutsu* refers to attainment to the Buddhahood of *Dharmakāya* (that is, all beings are already endowed with Buddhahood), innumerableness, perfection, as well as 'reason' or 'wisdom' as it functions like a mirror. Cf. "The Principle of Attaining Buddhahood with the Present Body," in Inagaki, 18.

[72] "The Principle of Attaining Buddhahood with the Present Body", in Inagaki, 18.

[73] Hakeda, 78

[74] "Differences exist between matter and mind, but in their essential nature they remain the same. Matter is no other than mind; mind, no other than matter. Without any obstruction, they are interrelated." - "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence", in Hakeda, 211.

[75] Snodgrass, *The Matrix and Diamond World Mandalas in Shingon Buddhism*, Vol. I, 14.

In one version of the text *sokushin jōbutsu gi*,[76] the author lays out three kinds (*san shu*, 三種) of attainment of Buddha-mind which correspond with the beginning, middle and end of the project of cultivation. The middle stage is what concerns us here, and to which we will turn in great detail below.[77] The first is *rigu jōbutsu* (理具成仏), the state of inherent or incipient principle. The sentient being is inherently enlightened by the sheer fact of its existence. The bodies of sentient beings have the qualities of the five material elements while their minds possess the innate wisdom of the Buddha’s mind. They also have the merits of the *Vajradhatu* (Diamond Realm) and *Garbadhatu* (Womb Realm) mandalas.[78] Though already enlightened, sentient beings are afflicted by obscurations (Skt: *kleśa*; Jpn: *bon’nō*, 煩悩); the function of practice is to remove these obscurations. The second step is *kaji jōbutsu* (加持成仏), the synergistic working of sentient being and enlightened Mind towards realization. At this level, the practitioner understands Buddha and his or her ‘self’ dualistically, but begins to achieve a state known as *nyūga ganyū* (入我我入)*,* “I enter into Buddha, Buddha enters into me.” The practitioner is identified with Mahāvairocana as long as they remain in the *samadhi* of union. They resume their identities as ordinary beings, those beset by the three poisons, ignorance, avarice, and aversion[79] upon ceasing the tantric practice.

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[76] This text is known as *Ihon* [異本] *Sokushin jōbutsu-gi*. *Ihon* simply means ‘variant’ or ‘different’. Inagaki, with many other scholars, doubts it was written by Kūkai himself, but says that the “three kinds of attainment” are widely used in Shingon. Sanford notes that some Shingon thinkers viewed the variant manuscript as a later rewrite by Kūkai, while others thought it was written after his time. See *Kukai´s Sokushin-Jobutsu-Gi* (Principle of Attaining Buddhahood with the Present Body), translated by Hisao Inagaki (Kyoto: Ryukoku Translation Pamphlet Series, 1975), 12. For a detailed discussion of this text and other variant texts, see See James Sanford, “Wind, Waters, Stupas, Mandalas. Fetal Buddhahood in Shingon,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, no.1-2 (1997), 1-38, especially footnote #14.

[77] The ‘ten minds’ (ten stages which include non-Buddhist, *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna* schools of thought) would seem to fit within the second step.

[78] *Kukai´s Sokushin-Jobutsu-Gi*, in Inagaki, 12.

Regarding *kaji*,[80] Kūkai writes,

> …[it] indicates great compassion on the part of the Tathagata and faith (*shinjin*) on the part of sentient beings. The compassion of the Buddha pouring forth on the heart of sentient beings like the rays of the sun on water, is called *ka* [adding], and the heart of sentient beings which keeps hold of the compassion of the Buddha, as water retains the rays of the sun, is called *ji* [retaining]. If the devotee understands this principle thoroughly and devotes himself to the practice of Samadhi, his three mysteries will be united with the Three Mysteries, and therefore in his present existence, he will quickly manifest his inherent three mysteries.[81]

Seen from the perspective unenlightened, "foolish, ordinary person", who sees at the level of "conventional truth" (Skt: *samvriti-satya*; Jpn: *zokutai*, 俗諦), *kaji* appears to be a "reciprocal relationship", one based on "increasing and supporting" as the characters for *kaji* suggest. As adepts undertake the ritual practices, they are "increased" by the Buddha's power and in turn "support" the power as like a seat.[82] At the level of ultimate truth (Skt: *paramārtha-satya*; Jpn: *shintai*, 真諦), seen from the perspective of the enlightened *Bodhisattvas*, *ka* and *ji* mutually interpenetrate and so can be thought of as almost synonymous with *yuga*, "union", derived from the Sanskrit *yoga*.[83]

In describing one meditation from the ritual practice known as *Jūhachido* (十八道), *nyūga ganyū*, the mutual entering of self and Buddha into each other, is explained in the following way:

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[79] The three poisons are the *klesas* or obscurations which force sentient beings to remain in samsāra.

[80] *Kaji* is the Japanese approximation of the Sanskrit *adhisthāna*, which can mean 'blessing', 'benediction' or 'empowerment'. For a detailed discussion of the concept of *kaji* and practices associated with it, see Pamela Winfield, "Curing with Kaji: Healing and Esoteric Empowerment in Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32, no. 1 (2005), 107-130.

[81] Kūkai, "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence", in Hakeda, 232.

[82] Snodgrass, *The Matrix and Diamond World Mandalas…,* 35.

[83] *Ibid.*

> Contemplate [as follows]: The principle deity sits on a mandala. I sit on a mandala. The principle deity enters my body and my body enters the body of the principle deity. It is like many luminous mirrors facing each other, their images interpenetrating each other.[84]

One can recognize in this, echoes of Hua-yen philosophy, such as in holographic imagery used in Fazang's *Treatise on the Golden Lion*. In the meditation on the *Kongōkai* (Diamond World Mandala), it is described this way:

> Contemplate [as follows]: Facing the principal deity I have now become the body of Tathāgata Mahāvairocana. The principle deity enters my body empowering me. I enter the body of the principle deity taking refuge in him. We are of one body, not two.[85]

According to commentators, the body of the *honzon* (本尊), principle deity, does not actually "enter" the practitioner as there was never any duality between them.[86] This is according to the *ordo essendi,* the order of being. In terms of *ordo cognescendi*, order of knowledge, such exercises as this are key in helping the *ajari* to attain this realization. According to Toganoo, the union brought about through *kaji* is called *yuganaddha* (unification) and *ahamkāra* (identification) in Sanskrit.[87]

Continual practice establishes a dialectic of revealing (*ken*, 顯) and acquiring (*toku*, 得) which culminates in the final stage, *kendoku jōbutsu* (顯得成仏). Here one attains full and abiding realization, a permanent condition, not one temporarily brought about by ritual praxis. Sanford notes that this stage represents the union of the first two stages, the originary enlightenment of the first and the acquired enlightenment of the second.[88] This transformation affects both body and mind, unlike in *Hua-yen/Kegon*. Snodgrass notes that this state does not involve the withdrawal of senses from their objects.[89]

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[84] Sharf's translation of Miyano Yuchi and Mizuhara Gyoei, *Shidokekyō shidai*, "Nyoirin", 27-28. Sharf, Robert. "Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism". *Living Images: Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context*, ed. Robert Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 181.

[85] Sharf's translation of Miyano Yuchi and Mizuhara Gyoei, *Shidokekyō shidai*, "Kōngokai", 59. Sharf, Robert. "Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism", 181-2.

[86] Robert Sharf, "Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism", 181.

[87] Shozui Makoto Toganoo, "The Symbol-System of Shingon Buddhism (3)," *Mikkyō Bunka* (Journal of Esoteric Buddhism) 1972, no. 99 (June 1972), 78.

Following the three principles or steps of *sokushin jōbutsu*, three readings of those *kanji* (即身成仏) were developed which parallel these three principles. Regarding intrinsic enlightenment, it is read as *sunawachi mi narareru butsu* (輒み成られる仏), one's body, is in itself, an actualized Buddha. In the second case, when realized through *kaji*, the characters are read as *mi ni sokushite butsu to naru* (身に即して仏と成る), with the present body one becomes a Buddha. In the final stage of realization, the reading becomes, *sumiyakani mi butsu to naru* (速やかにみ 仏と成る), quickly one's body becomes the Buddha's.[90]

The Three Mysteries

From the endless cycle of samsara how can we be freed?
The only way is to practice meditation and correct thinking.[91]

The term *sanmitsu* (三密) refers to the three practices which are meeting points, as it were, between sentient being and enlightened Buddha. The term *mitsu* (密) has a number of interrelated meanings and can be rendered in a number of ways. Inagaki calls them 'mystic practices', [92] Hakeda translates it as 'mysteries'.[93] Kūkai says that the *mitsu* are so profound and so subtle that not even the bodhisattvas and those almost equal to the

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[88] Sanford, "Wind, Waters, Stupas, Mandalas…", 12.
[89] Snodgrass, *The Matrix and Diamond World Mandalas…*, 37.
[90] *Kukai´s Sokushin-Jobutsu-Gi*, translated by Inagaki, 12-13.
[91] "Secret key to the Heart Sutra", in Hakeda, 230.
[92] *Kukai´s Sokushin-Jobutsu-Gi*, in Inagaki, 11.
[93] "Secret key to the Heart Sutra", in Hakeda, 230.

Buddha can grasp them.[94] Shaner notes that *mitsu* may also be rendered ‘intimacy’ or ‘intimacies’ because these practices are transmitted orally from master to disciple.[95] Speculatively, I would add that it could also refer (in the sense of ‘intimacy’) to the reality of these points of intimate identity of *Dharmakāya* and sentient being.

The three mysteries are the “secret language” of the *Dharmakāya* through which he reveals his enlightenment, the mysteries of his mind (*imitsu*, 意密), his speech (*gomitsu*, 語密) and his body (*shinmitsu*, 身密),[96] which, like the actions of any person, can be analyzed in terms of thought, word and deed.[97] These are also known as his “three activities” (Skt: *trikarma*) which are responsible for shaping the universe itself; they are the function or act (*yu*) of the *Dharmakāya*. The universe is his symbolic embodiment (*samayashin*). His mental contemplations (Skt: *mandalas*; Jpn: *mandara*, 曼陀羅 or 曼荼羅)[98] shape reality. His chanting of sacred words (Skt: *mantras*; Jpn: *shingon,* 真言) cause the universe to echo in vibration; his expression of physical gestures (Skt: *mudras*; Jpn: *ingei*, 印契) produces patterns of change and movement in the universe. Each *dharma* or being then is a symbolic expression (Jpn: *monji*, 文字) of his enlightened activity. To the deluded, this cannot be discerned. Sentient beings, as products of Dainichi’s activity, are also characterized by the three mysteries (the activities of the sentient being are known as *triguhya* in Sanskrit and *sangō*, 三業 in Japanese) and thus are capable of coming to actualize their inherent *bodhicitta* (Jpn: *bodaishin*, 菩提心),

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[94] “Attaining Enlightenment in This Very Existence”, in Hakeda, 230.

[95] Shaner, 74.

[96] Abé, “The Weaving of Mantra”, 129.

[97] Thomas Kasulis, “Kūkai,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998).

[98] What is especially important is the visualization and contemplation on the *mandala* itself. This practice is known as *kansō* (観想) in Japanese.

through ritual practice. Sharf considers Shingon practice as the "enactment of Buddhahood".[99] The categories of body, mind and speech, "…structure all possible sources of human activities, in particular those aimed at salvation."[100]

Describing the details of a mandala, Kūkai notes the interpenetration of the three mysteries of the *Dharmakāya* and all sentient beings:

> As manifestations of the *Dharmakāya*, each and every one of the divinities[101] who fill the mandala is endowed with the three mysteries. As a result, the three mysteries of the divinities intertwine with one another, multiply and permeate the universe. The permeation as such is also true for the three mysteries that inhere in the body, speech, and mind of every sentient being. Therefore the three mysteries of *Dharmakāya* and sentient beings correspond, making it possible for sentient beings to be blessed and empowered by the *Dharmakāya*. When, having observed this meaning, the practitioners of *Mantrayāna* form *mudrās* with their hands, recite mantras with their mouths, and fix their minds in *samādhi* then their three mysteries become immersed in those of the *Dharmakāya* and resulting in the attainment of great perfection.[102]

This echoes a claim made in the the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* that the performance of *mudras*, recitation of *mantras* and the visualization and contemplation of *mandalas* allows the practitioner to replicate the activities of *Dharmakāya* in a ritual fashion.[103] In another place, Kūkai notes while there is a distinction to be made conventionally between the three mysteries of the particular practitioner, the mysteries of others (Buddhas who have yet to be awakened) and the mysteries of awakened Buddhas, yet they are "equal, not-two, mutually interpenetrate, [and] are not different in characteristics."[104] Upon attaining the *sanmitsu-kaji*, communion of the three secrets, the "dharma treasury" opens wide and the adept can directly experience the preaching of the *Dharmakāya*.[105]

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[99] See Sharf, "Visualization and Mandala…", 195.

[100] Fabio Rambelli, "Lecture 3: *Gomitsu* and the Structure of Esoteric Signs: Mantric Linguistics and Shittan Grammatology", 1, accessed April 26, 2014, http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/ram3.pdf.
He further notes that esoteric practice inverts the traditional *Mahāyāna* understanding, which holds the same three activities as the source of karma and therefore suffering or dissatisfaction and rebirth.

[101] By 'divinities', Kūkai is referring to celestial Bodhisattvas and Buddhas.

[102] This is Abé's translation of KZ 1:513, Abé, "The Weaving of Mantra", 129.

[103] T 18:4a-5a; Cf. Abé, "The Weaving of Mantra", 129.

> In each instance, ritual establishes a special context such that one becomes more directly aware of the pure act (which is physical-mental-verbal). Through the pure act, one is aware of the fundamental vibrations constituting the universe. In linguistic terms, these are the five seed mantras-A, Va, Ra, Ha, Kha-out of which language itself is said to arise …More precisely, through the mantric practice, one knows directly the "true words" (shingon) which are inaudible to ordinary hearing. These true words are the resonances of the five elements constituting the entire universe.[106]

We now turn to the methods used for each of the three activities which allow sentient beings to recognize their union with Buddha and their Buddha-mind, *mandalas*, *mudras*, and *mantras*. We begin by noting that these are not suitable for all people, nor are all people suitable for them. Their effectiveness is in part determined by a practitioner's spiritual abilities. Even so, even the shallowest practice of the mysteries can have immense benefits and soteriological effects.[107]

Mandalas

Mandalas are abstract circular diagrams that feature geometric designs and figures and which can depict deities, demons, bodhisattvas and buddhas. Etymologically, the word derives from *manda*, "essence" and the suffix *–la*, meaning "to support" or "to complete", thus a *mandala* is that which supports (i.e. depicts) the 'essences' of things.

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[104] Kūkai, "Comments on Questions on the *Shixiang bore jing*" (*Jissō Hannya-kyō tasshaku*). *Kūkai on the Philosophy of Language*, translated by Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijō Dreilein (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2010), 328.

[105] Toganoo, "The Symbol-System of Shingon Buddhism (3)", 75.

[106] Thomas P. Kasulis, "Reference and Symbol in Plato's 'Cratylus' and Kūkai's 'Shōjijissōgi'," *Philosophy East and West* 32, no. 4 (Oct., 1982), 402.

[107] See Fabio Rambelli, "True Words, Silence and the Adamantine Dance: On Japanese Mikkyō and the Formation of the Shingon Discourse", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 4 (December 1994), 392.

They act as a kind of visual depiction of the larger cosmos in symbolic form, in effect a microcosm. In Shingon practice, *mandalas* serve to channel the cognitive intentions of the Shingon adept, aiding them in their quest to understand the mystery of the mind, and allow them to "penetrate" to deeper levels of awareness.[108] They are "graphic illustrations of a doctrine", in this case, *sokushin-jobutsu*.[109] Mandala, per Kiyota, "refers to the state of enlightenment illustrated by a graphic representation."[110] Krummel says that they are a "vehicle for the transformation of vision, whereby one *envisions* the world *as a mandala*."[111] If one were to see the mandala as it is, Kūkai claims that the obstructions covering their eyes would be completely removed.[112]

The *Dharmakāya,* co-extensive with the entire cosmos of space and time, appears in the form (*sō*, 相) of a cosmic mandala. Snodgrass notes that mandalas, as circular diagrams, represent completion, finality and totality, in this case, the perfection and achievement of Buddhahood. The Dharma body encompasses the world of forms, an "all-encompassing totality" (*rinen-gusoku*, 輪圓具足) which encompasses all the forms found within the universe, the mandala of his qualities as well as the mandala of the dharmas which make up the dharma world.[113] The practitioner attempts to realize the non-duality of his mind, in itself a mandala at the microcosmic level, of the macrocosmic mandala of the *Dharmakāya.*[114] Every esoteric mandala portrays the *Dharmakāya*, the Dharma Body of *Mahāvairocana*. While the deity who is the central focus of the mandala, the *honzon* (Skt: *Ishta-devatā*) may differ, they represent one aspect or attribute of the *Dharmakāya*. Every other deity depicted in the mandala, arranged around the central figure, represent other aspects or virtues.[115] The *Dharmakāya* is simultaneously the center and the circumference of the mandala.[116]

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[108] Shaner, 92-4.
[109] Kiyota, "Shingon Mikkyō's Twofold Maṇḍala", 95.
[110] Kiyota, "Shingon Mikkyō Mandala", 32.
[111] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed June 3 2014.
[112] "Precious Key to the Secret Treasury", in Hakeda, 160.
[113] Snodgrass, *The Matrix and Diamond World Mandalas…*, 22.
[114] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed 3 June 2014.

The use of mandalas applies to the mystery of the mind (*imitsu*, 意密) and involve visualization and contemplation of the "four knowledge seals", corresponding to four kinds of mandalas, seals of great knowledge (*daichi,* 大知 or 大智), which involve anthropomorphic imagery. The universal mandala of Dainichi's body has four aspects or attributes, each identified with a particular kind of mandala, collectively known as the "Four Mandalas" (Skt: *Catur-Mandala*; Jpn: *Shisu-mandara*, 四種曼荼羅). Each mandala depicts deities who represent attributes of the *Dharmakāya* in some fashion[117] and represents it (or him) as seen from differing perspectives.

There are two other mandalas, ones which are important to the praxis of Kūkai and his school of Shingon; like the other ones, both depict the *Dharmakāya,* but in differing ways. These are the Diamond (or Thunderbolt) Realm mandala (Skt: *Vajradhātu*; Jpn: *kongōkai,* 金剛界)[118] and Womb (or Matrix) Realm Mandala (Skt:

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[115] Snodgrass, *The Matrix and Diamond World Mandalas…*, 23.

[116] Snodgrass' observation recalls imagery used by Maximus (drawing from Pseudo-Dionysius and Plotinus) of God as simultaneously the center and circumference of a circle, which represents all of creation.

[117] The Great (Jpn: *Dai*, 大) Mandala depicts the divinities or *Bodhisattvas* in human form in the five colors; it represents the physical extension of *Mahāvairocana* . The *Samaya* (Jpn: *Sanmaya*,三昧耶) Mandala, depicts the *Bodhisattvas*, according to the ritual symbols associated with them. These *samayas* represent their vows to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment. This represents the omnipresence of *Mahāvairocana* through his intention. The *Dharma* (Jpn: *Hō,* 法) Mandala represents the deities according to the Sanskrit letter (called a 'seed', *bija* in Sanskrit, *shuji*, 種子 in Japanese) associated with them; it represents the revelation or preaching of *Mahāvairocana*. The *Karma* (Jpn: *katsuma*, 羯磨) Mandala is the "action mandala", and is the only one of the four that is a three-dimensional sculpture, signifying all the actions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, leading sentient beings to enlightenment. It represents *Mahāvairocana* working towards the liberation of all sentient beings. For a detailed description of each mandala, see Snodgrass, *The Matrix and Diamond World Mandalas…,* 22-28. For their depiction of *Mahāvairocana*, see Hakeda, *Kūkai: Major Work*s, 90-91.

[118] The *Vajradhātu* mandala is introduced in the *Vajrasekhara Sutra*. In it, the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni is depicted as unable to attain enlightenment without the help of esoteric practices, taught by

Garbhakhosadhātu; Jpn: *taizōkai*, 胎蔵界),[119] which together are considered the *Mandala of the Two Worlds* (両界曼荼羅 *Ryōkai mandara*). According to Kiyota, the *Vajradhātu* represents the knower, which in elemental theory is represented by the sixth element, mind (Skt. *Citta*, Jpn. *Chi*, 知 or 智). The five physical elements, considered 'form' or 'principle' (Skt. *rūpa*, Jpn. *ri* 理), are represented by the *Garbhakhosadhātu*, and signifies the manifestation of the *Dharmakāya* in the material world and the potential for enlightenment therein.[120] The Womb Realm mandala represents truth *per se*,[121] the union of the two mandalas, as depicted in the *Mandala of the Two Worlds*, represents enlightenment.[122]

Mahāvairocana, including the use of the Diamond-World mandala, the chanting of mantras and certain visualizations and meditations. This mandala plays an important role in the initiation rites of esoteric students; the student is blindfolded and a flower is thrown onto the mandala; whichever bodhisattva the flower lands on will determine the particular tutelary deity and devotional practices the student will adopt. According to Hakeda, the Diamond-World mandala is hung on the western wall of Shingon meditation halls, to represent the final realization of *Mahāvairocana* (i.e. attainment of enlightenment). See Hakeda, 87.

[119] The *Gabrakhosadhātu* is introduced in the *Mahāvairocana* sutra where *Mahāvairocana* reveals it to his student *Vajrasattva*, saying it comes from his womb of compassion. According to Hakeda, the Womb Mandala is hung on the eastern wall of Shingon meditation halls to represent the youth and early career of *Mahāvairocana.* See Hakeda, 87.

[120] Kiyota, "Shingon Mikkyō Manadala", 37.

[121] Kiyota, "Shingon Mikkyō's Twofold Maṇḍala…", 96.

[122] Kiyota, "Shingon Mikkyō Manadala", 37.

Womb Realm (*taizōkai*) Mandala

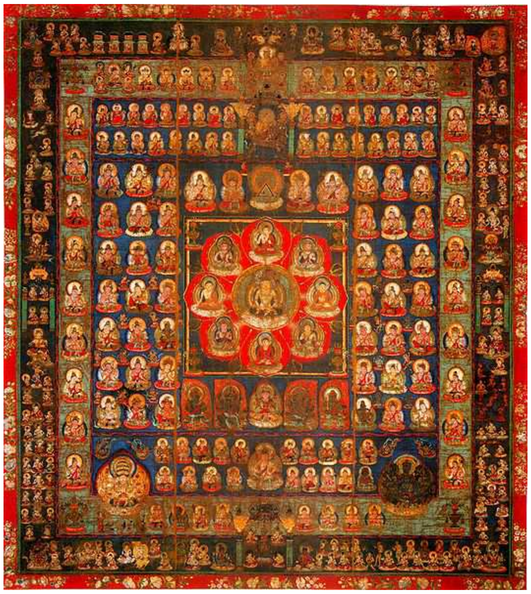

Illustration 3: Womb Realm (*taizōkai*) Mandala

The *taizōkai* is comprised of a number of rectangular blocks called “mansions” or “halls” which are arranged as concentric square frames which, moving from the center, represent the *Dharmakāya,* the *Sambhogakkāya,* and the final, outermost layer, the *Nirmana*kāya. The innermost frames represent aspects of the *Dharmakāya* which is *bodhicitta*. The middle ones, *Sambhogakkāya* which is *karuna* (compassion) and finally, *Nirmana*kāya*,* which represents *upāya*. It is meant to display the dynamic nature of wisdom, which spreads into and permeates the phenomenal world and improvises expedient means in order to liberate sentient beings, drawing them back in a reciprocal movement towards itself (i.e. enlightenment).[123] It depicts *Mahāvairocana* at work, manifesting himself (itself?) through the interplay of the five elements. *Dainichi* simultaneously sits in *samādhi* at the center, surrounded by a myriad of deities, buddhas and bodhisattvas while pervading the mandala (representing the universe *in toto*) in its entirety. It is a graphic presentation of the truths found in the *Mahāvairocana Sutra.*

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[123] Kiyota, “Shingon Mikkyō's Twofold Maṇḍala…”, 98.

Diamond Realm (*kongōkai*) Mandala

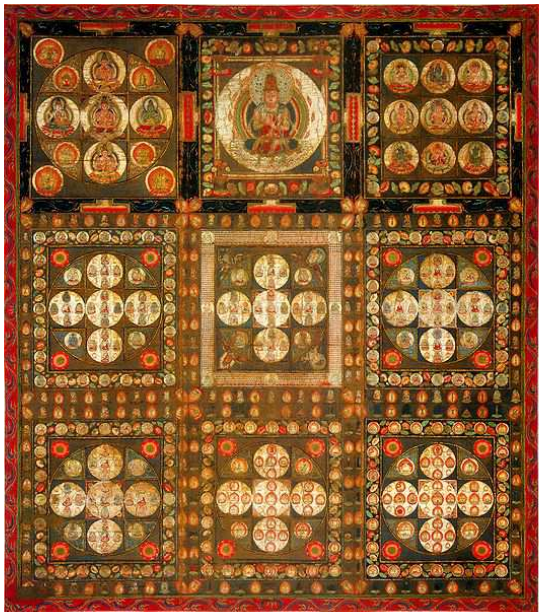

Illustration 4: Diamond Realm (*kongōkai*) Mandala

The Diamond Realm (*kongōkai*) mandala, is a composite of nine smaller mandalas arranged in a three by three pattern. They represent a spiraling a movement out from the center which represents the movement of the Buddha's enlightenment mind towards the mundane world, simultaneously with a centrifugal movement inwards, representing the spiritual progress of sentient beings, from the margins towards enlightenment at the center.[124] It presents, in a graphical way, the message of the *Garbhakhosadhātu* sutra, depicting the nature and truth of inherent enlightenment of all beings.

Mudrās

Mudrās are symbolic, ritual gestures used in dharmic religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism; they usually involve only the arms and hands, but can extend to postures of the entire body as well as the handling of ritual instruments, such as bells or *vajras*.

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[124] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed March 14, 2015.

The term itself means ‘seal’ in Sanskrit. In Buddhism, it has connotations of truthfulness or verity. In this case, *mudra* refers to an impression attached to an object to show that it is genuine.[125] The preferred term in Shingon is *ingei* (印契) or *gei'in* (契印).[126] As a kind of non-verbal language, they are meant to communicate certain ideas or impressions and have apotropaic value, able to ward off evil and error as well as ensure the power or effectiveness of particular rites.[127] Richard Payne, an initiated Shingon priest, notes that historically *mudra* and *mantra* have accompanied one another; mudra is considered more secretive as it makes the mantra effective.[128]

A commentary on Kūkai’s beloved *Mahāvairocana Sutra* notes that mudras are symbols of the *dharmadhātu* (the realm or world of the dharma),[129] the *dharmadhātu* is equated in Shingon thought with *Mahāvairocana*, the totality of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds.[130] The interpenetration of the three mysteries of the *Dharmakāya* and the sentient being means that the latter’s mystery of the body, as enacted through the *mudrās* in some way allows the adept to enact and evoke the cosmic activity of the *Dharmakāya Buddha* whose *mudras* are expressed in the rhythm of flow and change in the universe. In Shingon, these complex gestures are combined with the chanting of *mantras* and visualizations of *mandalas*. The figures depicted in *mandalas* engage in the practice of the very mudras, such as depicted below, performed by the aspirants themselves.[131]

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[125] Toganoo, “The Symbol-System of Shingon Buddhism (3)”, 62.

[126] Saunders notes that the kanji 契, pronounced *kei* or *gei* means ‘contract’. *In* (印) means ‘seal’, so he argues that *ingei*: a contract (*kei*) sealed (*in*) by the worshiper, who by reciting the ritual words and by forming the correct *mudra*, unites himself with the divinity.” See Dale E. Saunders, “Symbolic Gestures in Buddhism,” *Artibus Asiae* 21, no. 1 (1958), 51.

[127] Cf. Saunders, “Symbolic Gestures in Buddhism”, 49.

[128] Richard K Payne, “Burning with the Fire of Shingon,” *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner’s Quarterly* (Summer 1998), accessed July 14, 2014, http://archive.thebuddhadharma.com/issues/2008/summer/burning.php.

[129] *Taisho*, vol.39, 714a.

[130] Kūkai, “Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence”, in Hakeda, 211.

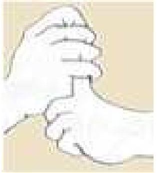
[132]

Illustration 5: *Chiken-in* (智拳印); “Wisdom Fist Mudra”, also “Vajra Mudra”; associated with Dainichi Nyorai and is depicted in the Diamond World Mandala; the mudra represents the converting of ignorance into wisdom.

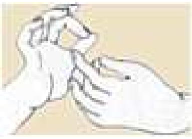
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Illustration 6: *Tenbōrin-in* (転法輪印); “Turning of the Wheel of Law Mudra”; associated with Dainichi Nyorai and represents *hosshin,* the Dharma-body as it preaches.

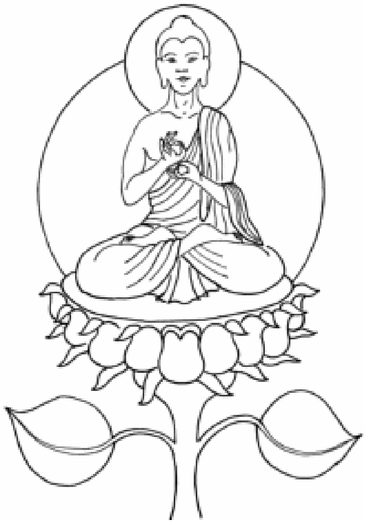
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Illustration 7: Mahāvairocana performing the *Tenbōrin-in,* “turning of the wheel” mudra. He is the central figure depicted in the *taizōkai*, Womb Realm Mandala. Buddhas and bodhisattvas are traditionally depicted sitting on a throne of lotus petals.

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[131] For an extensive study of the mudras typically found in esoteric Buddhist art, which are those used in mudra practice, see Dale E. Saunders, *Mudrā - A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

[132] Image source: http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/mudra-japan.shtml.

[133] Image source: http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/mudra-japan.shtml.

134 Image source: “Vairocana or Mahāvairocana”, accessed March 14, 2015, http://www.visiblemantra.org/vairocana.html.

Mantras

The term derives from a Sanskrit phrase (*man*, 'mind' and *tra* which can mean 'tool', 'device' or 'container') which can mean 'container of thoughts'. It refers to a short verbal formula that is recited in a repetitious manner. It is comprised of syllables which may or may not have an intelligible meaning.[135] For Kūkai it represents a teaching inexpressible in ordinary language. In a broad sense, *mantra* is the language of the cosmos, it in some way makes up all perceptible phenomena and all mental phenomena, the primal speech of *Dharmakāya*.

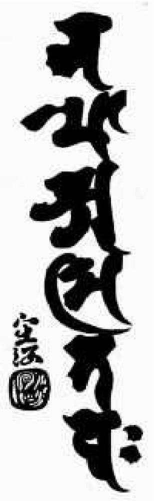
[136]

Illustration 8: The mantra *namo Amitabah*, "Hail to Amitabha", a salutation to the bodhisattva, written by Kūkai in the Siddham script. Amitabha, *Amida* in Japanaese, is central to several forms of Buddhism, such as Pure Land.

One of the primary forms of meditation advocated by Kūkai involves the incantation of the primal syllables uttered by *Dainichi* such as: *A*, *Va*, *Ra*, *Hum*, *Kham*, all of which are five basic sounds of the Sanskrit language and are identified by Kūkai with the five great elements.[137] Each of the five syllables also stands for one of the characteristics of emptiness (apparently based on a similarity of their sounds) – unborn, unable to be communicated by language, free from defilements, transcending causality and empty, like space.[138] They are also associated with a particular Bodhisattva or Buddha.[139] Mantras have three aspects – voice (*shō*, 聲), letter or word (*ji*, 字) and reality or true aspect (*jissō*, 実相). 'Voice' refers to the sound produced when mantras are recited. As 'word', it refers to the name of the Buddha or Bodhisattva it is associated with. As 'reality', it brings evokes a particular aspect of reality, for example, the letter *A* of the Sanskrit alphabet represents the *Dharmakāya* who stands for the uncreated quality of all reality.[140]

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[135] For example, phrases such as *om* (*aum*) or *hum* do not have a specific meaning. There is a class of syllables, *bija* (seed) *mantras*, which though meaningless in themselves, can be combined to create phrases thought to have great spiritual or transformative power.

[136] Image source: "Kūkai:空海 - Kōbōdaishi: 弘法大師," accessed March 14, 2015, http://www.visiblemantra.org/kukai.html.

[137] On the basis of fascicle 5, chapter 16 of the *Mahāvairocana Sutra.* See Abé's translation of T 18:38b-c, Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 298. Cf. Hakeda's translation, "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence", 229, and also "The Meanings of Sound, Word, and Reality", 240. Furthermore, Abé notes that

Mantras serve as a kind of remedy to language as it is ordinarily used by the common person. As Dainichi preaches and articulates the dharma, it generates the cosmos in its entirety including the ten realms, their inhabitants as well as the languages they employ.[141] Seen side-by-side, one can say that all the languages are true inasmuch as they are "emanations" of *Mahāvairocanai*'s primal mantra. They take on specific patterns which become names. When names are uttered, the objects signified are articulated and "assume the place of things to be represented by signs."[142] Among the

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the elements and syllables are correlated not as signs, but because the sounds of the syllables when spoken "resonate respectively with the vibrant movements of each of the five great elements." Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 298.

[138] Kûkai, "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence", in Hakeda, 228.

[139] The practice of associating divinities with letters or syllables is Indic in origin; the practice is called *Varnasamjnā*. From this, individual letters or syllables were seen as embodiments of particular divinities. They may be found in such non-Buddhist works as the Daksinamurti's *Uddharna-Kosa*, the *Rāmapurvatāpanyiya Upanisad* as well as the *Agni Purāna*. For more information see Bill Mak, "Magical Alphabet in the Indian and Chinese Minds," *Brahman and Dao: Comparative Studies of Indian and Chinese Philosophy and Religion*, edited by Ithamar Theoor and Zhihua Yao (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 209-230, especially 213-15.

[140] "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality", in Hakeda, 239.

[141] The ten realms are the worlds of *Buddha*, *bodhisattvas*, *pratyekabuddahs*, *srāvaka*, *devas*, *asuras*, men, beasts, hungry ghosts and hell-beings. See "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality", in Hakeda, 240-1, but the list originates in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

[142] "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality", in Hakeda, 240-1.

common persons however, there is a kind of amnesia at work, which sees language or signs in an entirely conventional way, that is, as designating something that is "already there", self-existing, assuming a "common sense ontology".

He opines,

> Whenever people hear a language spoken, they hear the sound *A*.[143]In the same manner, whenever people see all sorts of things, they see there the originally nonarising…Yet ordinary people of the world fail to see this as the source of all things.[144]

When see however from the Buddha's perspective, only the language of the Buddhas can reveal suchness, the true nature of reality.[145] This language is the language of *mantra* or in Japanese, *shingon*, 'words of truth', because they alone are "capable of denoting the Reality of all *dharmas* without any error or falsehood."[146] Although there are, according to Kūkai, a countless number of mantras, all of which can denote reality, they are all contained in the mantra uttered by *Mahāvairocana* while absorbed in the

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[143] The sound 'A' is the "mother of all letters", the "essence of all sounds" and stands for the "fountainhead of all-inclusive Reality". It also stands for emptiness and relative-being; it is the *bija* of *Mahāvairocana*. It is also a privative or negative prefix which negates whatever it precedes. See Kūkai, "The Meanings of the Word Hum", in Hakeda, 247-249. One can also find the association of letters or syllables with particular Buddhist doctrines, especially regarding emptiness in mainstream *Prajnāpāramitā* literature, for instance in the use of the alphabet known as *arapacana* in the *Great Wisdom sutra* where it functions, in part, as a mnemonic device. See the entry entitled "Mystical Arapacana Alphabet" for details, accessed 8 July 2014, http://jayarava.blogspot.com/2007/03/mystical-arapacana-alphabet.html.

[144] Abé's translation from *Shōji jissō gi* (KZ 1:538) cited in *The Weaving of Mantra*, 297.

[145] "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality", in Hakeda, 240-1.

[146] *Ibid.*

sāgaramudrā samadhi.[147] Knowledge of the truth of mantra leads one to bliss; false knowledge or knowledge of a false language leads to suffering and rebirth.[148]

Mantras serve as a "wedge driven into the vicious cycle of semiological amnesia and the reification of the signified."[149] The purpose of chanting the mantras is to attune the practitioners to "interresonances" of the basic elements, allowing them to hear Dainichi's preaching.[150] In the narrowest sense, that is as phonemes intoned by the practitioner, they are the "focused condensation" of the vibrations which make up the cosmos. The aspirant realizes that the 'truth words' are both the "elemental ontological constituents" of the universe.[151] The mantras, as recited, are not meant to be understood intellectually; many of them have no real intelligible meaning. Mantras, according to Abé, through their very incomprehensibility, bring about a shift in paradigm. They force the practitioner to look beyond the surface of language (reality) to look at what constitutes it. "True words", as found on the macrocosmic level, self-deconstruct and "dissolve into the inaudible mystery of the resonance (*kyō*) characteristic of the microcosmos."[152] The aspirant becomes attuned to the microcosmic level while the macrocosmic level is experienced as the surface level of a far deeper verbal and linguistic reality, the self-expression of Dainichi's own enlightenment.[153]

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[147] *Ibid.* Also see 213, fn.201. According to Buddhist lore, Shakyamuni Buddha entered into s*āgaramudrā*, "Ocean Imprint" s*amadhi* (Jpn: *kai'in zanmai*, 海印三昧) twenty-seven days after his enlightenment. It is while in this state that he gave the discourse that is the *Avatamsaka sutra*. In this state, the mind functions like a vast and serene ocean which shows all things as they are, without distortion. It shows the interconnectedness of all dharmas and their interdependent arising. For a discussion of the significance of the s*āgaramudrā samadhi* to Hua-yen, see Ronald Y. Nakasone, "Mapping the Ascent to Enlightenment," *Unifying Buddhist Philosophical Views.* Academic Papers presented at the 2nd IABU Conference, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Ayutthaya, Thailand; 3-12, accessed October 30, 2013, http://www.youblisher.com/p/631786-Unifying-Buddhist-Philosophical-Views/

[148] "The Meanings of Sound, Word, and Reality", in Hakeda, 240.

[149] Abé, "The Weaving of Mantra", 297.

[150] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed May 2, 2014.

[151] Paul Ingram, "The Power of Truth Words: Kūkai's Philosophy of Language and Hermeneutical Theory," *The Pacific World*, New Series, no. 7 (1991), 18.

[152] Kasulis, "Truth Words…", 271-2.

Conclusion

In the course of diligent practice, under the direction of one's master, an *ajari* moves from the condition of unrealized originary enlightenment (*rigu jōbutsu*, 理具成仏) to the final stage of *kendoku jōbutsu* (顯得成仏), the stage of revealed and acquired realization of *bodhicitta*, realizing Buddhahood in this very existence. The process requires careful cultivation, the middle stage known as *kaji jōbutsu* (加持成仏). The identification between practitioner and Buddha occurs only during the space and time of ceremonial practice, carefully demarcated by ritual boundaries. Safeguards present ensure the aspirants are not overwhelmed and lose themselves in the infinity of the *Dharmakāya*. Thus the transformation or realization that occurs is considered to be *usō* (想 or 相), with form. It is, "the repetitive re-experiencing of a resent reality, the true identity of the practitioner and the Buddha."

As one's practice matures, the identity achieved no longer depends on the rituals and praxis for attaining the state, nor does one require ceremonial safeguards. In this case, one's practice is said to be musō, without form (無想 or 無相). All actions within daily life intentionally reflect Dainichi's body-and-mind. Every thought, every word a mantra, every action a mudra, every thought, samadhi.[154] Krummel notes, "it is in this culmination of bodily practice, that all of Kûkai's major concepts, *hosshin seppô,*

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[153] Ingram, "The Power of Truth Words", 18.

[154] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed July 9, 2014.

hongaku, sanmitsu, sokushinjôbutsu, *nyûga ganyû* converge in the attainment of Buddhahood.[155]"

Whereas Tendai and Kegon intuit the microcosmic reality as a "transcendental, logically *apriori* reality" through analysis of the macrocosmic realm, the practice of Shingon effects an experiential, *aposteriori* knowledge of microcosmic correlativity.[156] In the ritual practice, the aspirant experiences their own identity as *Mahāvairocana*. One can see it as a kind of remembering – not of making a past event present, but of reconstructing -- literally re-membering -- a person's identity. The ever-present reality, the identity of practitioner and *Mahāvairocana*, is made present through ritual repetition.[157] One may also see it as a kind of "pre-enactment" wherein one acts as if possessing a certain quality, so that the quality (which is already present in one) emerges.[158]

Kūkai posits no sharp ontological distinction between verbal, physical and mental experience – the constituents of the Three Mysteries; their practice is interconnected and one mystery cannot be isolated from another. Furthermore, as we have seen earlier, he denies any sort of "otherness" (ontological or epistemological) to *Mahāvairocana*, it represents the "enlightened quality of the practitioner's own consciousness".[159] Any apparent otherness is a matter of mis-cognizing by the unenlightened, or as an *upāya*, an expedient means used to draw mis-taken sentient beings towards enlightenment.

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[155] *Ibid*., accessed July 9, 2014.

[156] Kasulis, "Truth Words", 269.

[157] Richard Payne, "Realizing Inherent Enlightenment: Ritual and Self-Transformation in Shingon Buddhism," *Religious and Social Ritual: Interdisciplinary Explorations*, edited by Michael B. Aune and Valerie DeMarinis (New York: Suny Press, 1996), 74-5.

[158] Payne, "Realizing Inherent Enlightenment…", 74-5.

[159] *Ibid*., 75.

The non-dual identity of sentient beings and *Mahāvairocana*, as understood by the doctrine of *hongaku* held by Kūkai, means that there is no need to achieve or reach towards anything outside or apart from what one already 'is', but to come to the realization of it. The practices, mimetic in character, allow one to become experientially aware of the *Dharmakāya's* preaching at the microcosmic level, the fundamental building blocks of reality. In doing so, one becomes aware that as the building blocks are constituted by adumbrations (*kyō*) of Dainichi's voice, the entire universe at the macrocosmic level (comprised of those vibrations) is his own self-expression, a symbolic expression of Dainichi's own enlightened activity.[160] Such knowledge (or vision) is transformative in character, bringing about an intra-psychic change. In enacting this knowledge, through the practice of Shingon rituals, the aspirant allows their own bodhicitta to 'surface' as it were, in doing so, realizing that it is not other than Dainichi's Buddha-mind.

I have shown that the *via practica* and *via contemplativa* are tightly tied together in the thought of Maximus and Kūkai, meditation or contemplation goes hand-in-hand with the practice of altruism and ethics though the relationship is not identical in both thinkers. Maximus' practice of divine philosophy is shaped by his understanding of identity, with its emphasis on the importance of *hypostasis* or person. On the other hand, Kūkai's program of self-cultivation is grounded by his understanding of the emptiness of all things, characterized by non-duality and interpenetration. He calls for the cultivation of the three mysteries, meeting points of sentient being and *Dharmakāya* Buddha. These practices allow one to cultivate their inherent Buddha-mind and realize their non-dual identity as the *Dharmakāya*.

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[160] Kasulis, "Truth Words…", 270.

Chapter 6
CONCLUSION

“Existence has meaning when life becomes relation…”[1]

In the previous chapters I have sought to explain how Maximus and Kūkai understand identity by introducing a troika of concepts – for Kūkai, *non-duality* in terms of *interpenetration* and *non-obstruction*, for Maximus, *hypostasis* in terms of *logoi* and *tropoi*. Following this, I explained their understanding of self-cultivation in pursuit of their goal, which in either case is a kind of divinization, becoming like God or Buddha in some way. Kūkai wishes to attain realization of inherent enlightenment, “becoming a Buddha in this very existence”, primarily through the practice of the *Three Mysteries*, *mudrā*, *mantra* and *mandala*, ritual activities where aspirant and Buddha ‘meet’. Maximus seeks deification, becoming by grace what God is by nature through the practice of divine philosophy, which combines asceticism, the love of one’s neighbor, prayer and liturgical activity. In either case, the process can be seen as a sort of ‘return’ to one’s true being – both hold that nature of humans (or sentient beings more generally) was in some way originally ‘good’ (that is, enlightened as in Kūkai or oriented towards God as in Maximus).

As one pursues the path of cultivation, a significant epistemic or cognitive shift occurs, involving a re-attunement or re-orientation which disrupts egoistic valuations and activities, allowing the practitioners to see the world as it ‘really is’. Implicit is the realization that our intentions and attachments shape our perceptions of the world and prevent us from see it in its truth.

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[1] Christos Yannaras, “Logic begins with Eros,” translated by Nick Trakakis, accessed January 19, 2015, http://modeoflife.org/logic-begins-with-eros/. The original article can be found in Η Λογική Αρχίζει με τον Έρωτα (Athens: Ikaros Press, 2007).

The transformation involves a *mimesis* or emulation, acting as the *Dharmakāya* or God does. Their understanding of identity is reflected in the process they advocate. As ontological identity between creator and creation is impossible in the Maximian/Christian sense, one instead acts as God would act, out of love for one's neighbors and strangers; it reflects a training of the volition. On the other hand, the sentient being is already the *Dharmakāya*, therefore it is not the will that needs to be trained as much as cognitive awareness.

Furthermore, the knowledge gained through cultivation is ultimately experiential, beyond discursive reasoning as the object of the knowledge, whether God or *Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana* is beyond ratiocination. There are practical consequences of this knowledge, contemplation involves a change in how one lives one's life, it has a profound ethical dimension. In each case, the aspirants can become a conscious participant or agent in the embodiment of the divine within the phenomenal world.

In this chapter I will evaluate their philosophies by looking at three pairs of polarities. Readers will see that though these first seem to obtain primarily to their understanding of the ontology of identity, but these reflect in and have implication for their praxis. In doing so, the differences that underlie the seeming parallels will be clarified.

The first is the transcendent-immanent axis, a polarity commonly used in the study of religion or philosophy to see a general orientation or world-vision. In my definitions of the terms, I will draw principally from philosopher Chin-Tai Kim's distinction between immanence and transcendence which provides useful clarity of the terms and the assumptions underlying them.[2] Though useful, these terms only allow us to see a "certain part of the story". That is, transcendence and immanence are used to help us understand the relationship between a 'divinity' or principle and the contingent or conventional world. It assumes that these two aspects can be clearly distinguished. On the other hand, it does not tell us how beings within the phenomenal realm relate to one another.

The second polarity provides us a lens to analyze things on a more horizontal level. *Integrity* and *intimacy*, are twin concepts introduced by a Thomas Kasulis, a philosopher specializing in East Asian traditions.[3] The axis upon which this hermeneutic operates is more inclusive than the transcendent-immanent dialectic, but tends to obscure the more 'vertical' dimension that the former discloses. It provides us a way of looking at how all the beings in a particular cosmology or worldview relate or are related to one another.

The third way is through the concepts of *omnicentrism* and *unicentrism*, introduced by Brook Ziporyn, a scholar of Tientai Buddhism.[4] This polarity provides a way of analyzing worldviews in terms of reference and meaning. It does so by asking the question, how does something in the world gain value or significance? Things typically gain meaning in worldviews either through reference to themselves or reference to something or someone else. Maximus' *logoi* are a clear example of this. It is present in Kūkai's thought in terms of emptiness and non-duality.

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[2] Chin-Tai Kim, "Transcendence and Immanence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 3 (Autumn 1987), 537-549.

[3] Thomas Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity – Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); "Intimacy: a general orientation in Japanese religious values". *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 4 (October 1990): 433-449.

[4] Brook Ziporyn, *Being and Ambiguity: Philosophical Experiments with Tiantai Buddhism* (Chicago: Carus Publishing Company, 2004); *Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity and Value Paradox in Tiatai Buddhist Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asian Center, 2000).

All three of these polarities involve a question of relationality. The first two sets of polarities complement one another, together they provide us a more "three dimensional" view of the realms of the "spiritual" and phenomenal, how various aspects interrelate with one another. The first polarity tells how the "spiritual" or "divine" relates to the phenomenal world, the third on the other hand, tells us something of the reverse – how the visible, contingent or conventional realm relates to the "spiritual", at least in terms of significance and meaning.

Having done all of this I wish to more generally look at the paths laid down by Maximus and Kūkai. I raise it in the context of trying to answer the question: why are their methods so different? Maximus places a great deal of emphasis on altruistic activity (expressed as love of neighbor) but has very little in terms of *technē.* Altruistic activity plays an important role for Kūkai as well, but it must be understood alongside his focus on the practice of the three-fold mysteries.

Transcendence and Immanence

In an article for the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, philosopher Chin-Tai Kim writes that *transcendence* and *immanence* are the "two fundamental polar modalities" for attempting to explain the idea of an unconditioned ground of conditioned beings. As such transcendence and immanence are "relational notions that relate[d] the ground to the grounded beings." [5] Kim distinguishes two types of transcendence, the first ontological and the second epistemological. In this paper, I am concerned primarily with ontology. He notes that many of the ontological qualities ascribed to that which is transcendental are also predicated of what is immanent.[6]

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[5] Chin-Tai Kim, "Transcendence and Immanence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 3 (Autumn 1987), 545.

However, one of the key differentiations between the two is the aseity of a transcendental being vis-à-vis contingent beings and in contrast, the mutual dependence of what is immanent. What distinguishes the transcendent and the immanent thus is a "…the radical asymmetry of dependence the former affirms but the latter denies between an ultimate being and the rest of reality."[7] In this usage, an immanent ultimate being is not independent of the contingent beings in which it inheres as the latter are its manifestations and concretions. Any distinction made between the 'essence' of the immanent being and manifestations are notional and not real.[8]

One of the most frequent used metaphors used to describe the relationship of a transcendental with other beings is a hierarchy, depicting a transcendent divinity at the apex and beneath that, beings arranged according to descending levels of being, goodness and reality.[9] In western philosophy, this is typically envisioned as "the Great Chain of Being" or *scala naturae* (Lat: "Ladder of nature"). On the other hand, imagery to describe immanent ontologies includes a web or net, a matrix, network, pattern, fabric. In this view, the manifest and unmanifest are not separate realities, but one complimentary reality. "Everything that exists is part of Ultimate Reality, equal in degrees of being and reality."[10]

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[6] He gives as examples, "absolute," "infinite," "necessary," and "self-caused" which have been used to describe both a transcendent and an immanent divinity. Kim, "Transcendence and Immanence", 537-8.
[7] Kim, "Transcendence and Immanence", 538.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Maximus attempts to balance transcendence and immanence in his philosophy. He dispenses with the complex hierarchical ontology depicted in Middle and Neoplatonist writings and also found (in a modified way) in Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy.* In the Neoplatonic worldview, the reality of a thing is based on its nearness to the source of being; those which are closer, have a greater amount of being, and are "more real". This greater 'realness' is depicted as a higher place in the metaphorical hierarchy. The implication is that those which are further away are somehow less real. Furthermore the presence of God is mediated through the hierarchy, so those further away have less or no direct access to God. The *logoi* dispense with an emanationist hierarchy and make God present to each one through his providential wills for it. Maximus says that the Logos is entirely present in each creature according to its capacities.

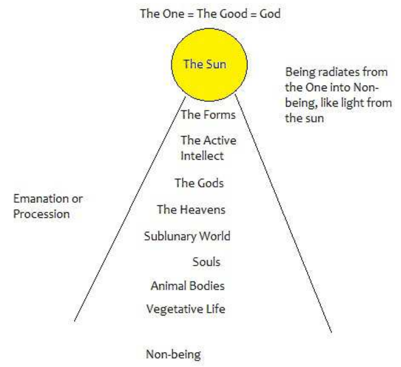
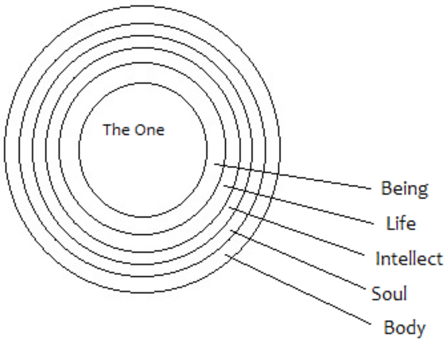

The One = The Good = God
The Sun
Being radiates from the One into Non-being, like light from the sun
The Forms
The Active Intellect
The Gods
Emanation or Procession
The Heavens
Sublunary World
Souls
Animal Bodies
Vegetative Life
Non-being

Illustration 9: Neoplatonic Declension (Hierarchy) of Being with the One at the Summit

[11]

Illustration 10: Neoplatonic Declension (Hierarchy) of Being with the One at the Center


The One
Being
Life
Intellect
Soul
Body

[12]

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[10] Linda E Olds, "Integrating Ontological Metaphors: Hierarchy and Interrelatedness". *Soundings*: *An Interdisciplinary Journal* 75, no. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 1992), 403-4.

[11] Inspired by image at: "Sources of Spinoza's Metaphysics", accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Spinoza/Texts/Sources.html

[12] Inspired by image at: "Sources of Spinoza's Metaphysics", accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Spinoza/Texts/Sources.html

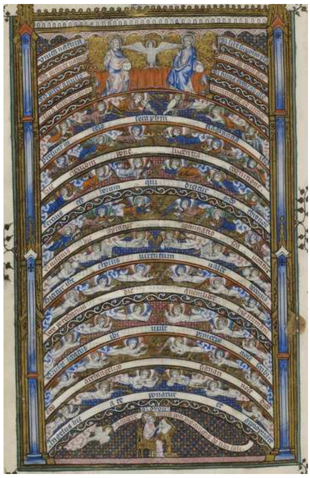
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Illustration 11: The celestial hierarchy according to *Pseudo-Dionysius*. Notice the distance between the Trinity and humankind (represented by the bishop figure at the bottom who is said to be Dionysius the Areopagite.) Nine ranks or choirs of angels separate humans from

One of the first things to be visible is the "transcendent-immanent" orientation provided by Maximus' concept of *logoi*, that is, it acts simultaneously to ensure transcendence of the *Logos* but also his presence within the world without making him identical to it. Reading through Kūkai on the other hand, one finds that he never holds for an aseitical transcendence of Mahāvairocana in the same way that Maximus does for God.[14] There is no parallel creator-created dialectic. When the cosmos is seen with the enlightened eye, one sees immanence of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana and his (its) identity with the cosmos. This is established by the mutual emptiness which pervades all things.[15]

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[13] Source: *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, Manuscript BNF Fr 2090, accessed March 11, 2015, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8447296x/f220.item. The caption beneath it identifies the figure as the Bishop Dionysius a fourth century martyr who is the patron saint of Paris. In the medieval Christian west he was conflated with Pseudo-Dionysius, most likely a fifth century Syrian monk. Several manuscripts depict him along with the celestial hierarchy.

[14] There is an element of transcendence within Shingon thought, as it does not have a flattened "purely horizontal" cosmology. One can speak of a "self-transcendence" at work, which lifts one outside of their normal egoistic self. On this concept of self-transcendence, see Shigenori Nagatomo, "The Japanese Concept of Self," in *Science and Comparative Philosophy: Introducing Yasuo Yuasa*, edited by David Edward Shaner and Shigenori Nagatomo (New York: Brill Academic Publishing, 1989), 126-188.

[15] Cf. For example, "Even though we speak of the creating and the created, there is in reality neither the creating nor the created." "Attaining Enlightenment In This Very Body", Hakeda, 230.

The doctrine of *logoi,* which assumes creation *ex nihilo*, is an example of a transcendentally-oriented philosophy.[16] God is not constrained in any way by an external need to create; he does so freely.[17] *Logoi* also serve as agents of immanence as these represent wills which preserve and sustain the cosmos and even represent God's providential working within it.[18] They represent both presence and absence. His providential guidance extends from the level of universals to the level of particulars. Perhaps the strongest kind of immanence in Maximus' view is the Logos' self-incarnation.

Kūkai is deeply critical of exoteric Buddhism (in this case meaning any form of Buddhism other than Shingon) for claiming to have discovered an ineffable transcendental realm, but in fact what they have done is merely reified it.[19] The Mahāyāna doctrine of *dependent origination* as well as the insights of *prajnāpāramitā* literature, two sources of Kūkai's non-dualism, rule out any sort of independent transcendental being or realm.[20] Likewise the interpenetration of *li* and *shih* as found in Hua-yen and Shingon. Kūkai himself writes "…both the Buddhas and all sentient beings are abiding on the same ground of deliverance. There is no distinction between this and that; they are nondual and equal."[21] In a memorial list of objects brought from China back to Japan, he writes, "The Dharma is beyond speech, but without speech it cannot be revealed. Suchness transcends forms, but without depending on forms it cannot be realized."[22]

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[16] William Dembski argues that there are any philosophy which upholds a transcendental creator must be able to simultaneously give creator and creation their respective dues; I believe Maximus' doctrine of the *logoi* does this. See William Dembski, "Transcendence," in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, edited by W.C. Campbell-Jack, et al. (New York: IVP Academic, 2006); accessed January 29, 2015. http://www.designinference.com/documents/2003.10.Transcendence_NDOCApol.pdf;

[17] Cf. *Chapters on Knowledge*, 1.7, PG 90: 1085b. Cf. the entire sequence at 1.1–7, PG 90: 1084a ff.

[18] Gersh interprets the immanence provided by the logoi in terms of motion. Thus the teleological motion inherent in all things represents divine immanence. cf. Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (New York: Brill Academic Publishing, 1977), 209, 243.

[19] Daniel Gardiner, "Transcendence and Immanence in Kūkai's Vision of Shingon" in *Esoteric Buddhist studies: Identity in Diversity: Proceedings of the International Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies* (Koyasan University Press, 2008), 21.

[20] For example, one of the opening verses from the *Heart sutra*, "Form does not differ from emptiness, nor does emptiness differ from form." (色不異空 空不異色), deny the separate existence of *rūpa* and *sūnyatā*, and therefore *samsāra* and *nirvāna.*

He offers a set of ritual practices which allow an understanding of the 'ever-present nature of ultimate reality'. These practices reveal the 'secret intimacy' of this seemingly ineffable transcendent realm.[23] All exoteric schools agree that the highest truth cannot be communicated; Kūkai, on the other hand asserts that the *dharmakāya* does preach, through the three secrets, and that this 'transcendent realm' can be communicated through mandala, mantra and mudra.

The sharp transcendence of God as disclosed by the *logoi* in Maximus' thought as well as the immanence of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana and the sentient being's non-dual identity with it (him) play out in the practices these men advocate. In Maximus it is disclosed in the act of liturgical worship which is doxological in character. In Kūkai, it is disclosed in the "deconstruction" which follows the ritual practices, and unique to the Japanese tradition, is quite explicit when compared to Indo-Tibetan or even Chinese practices.

Logoi, transcendentally-oriented humility and worship

There is a close link between the *logoi*, the virtue of humility and what Maximus calls 'terror' or 'awe'. As noted in chapter four, humility is a fundamental virtue for Maximus; it is the 'good twin' of pride, the primal sin that caused the fall of the first parents from the paradise of Eden. Maximus interprets the cause of the fall, the pride shown, as a desire of human beings to become like God apart from God, to take for themselves a divine prerogative. It turns the differences natural in creation, both from God and from other beings, into distance or division.[24]

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[21] "The Meanings of the Word Hūm", Hakeda, 252.

[22] "A Memoral Presenting a List of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items", Hakeda, 145.

[23] Gardiner, "Transcendence and Immanence in Kūkai's Vision of Shingon", 21.

In the journey of the soul towards God, humility is essential. Humans are given only a partial knowledge of God, but such can easily become a source of pride or be lost due to fluctuations of the passions.[25] Apart from the prophylactic benefits of humility for the spiritual life, it represents the natural attitude of a finite creature towards an infinite creator, one who creates *ex nihilo*. The *logoi*, as God's providential and creative wills, call things into being from nothing and give them their definite form. Recall that the *logoi* form a buffer between Creator and creation, preventing a monistic συγγενεια.

Brought into existence and situated by the *logoi*, all creatures are bound by and determined by common idea of non-being, what Von Balthasar calls "the law of created existence": creatures become what they are only through distinctiveness from other things; as creatures they are defined by non-being which both distinguishes and holds them apart from God.[26] This "law of creation" is also the foundation for the highest creaturely relationship to God, love.

This love for God is a mingling of fear and longing, reverent hesitation and attraction which interpenetrate each other.[27] Fear without yearning becomes loathing; yearning without fear becomes contempt.[28] This fear, which Maximus calls "chaste fear" is "rooted essentially in God…and his relationship to creation, through which he manifests all his natural claim on our attitude of humility…"[29] It is distinctly not the servile "fear of Gehenna", that is, of everlasting punishment.[30] This chaste fear can be characterized as awe or wonder.

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[24] See Douglas Farrow, "Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialect in John Zizioulas", 113.
[25] *Centuries on Love*, IV.57-8; Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 306.
[26] *Ambigua*; PG 91, 1312B; see Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 328.
[27] *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, CCG 23, 27, 9ff.; PG 90, 873a; see Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 328.
[28] Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 328.

> The first act of the mind is an act of wonder, when it becomes aware of the sheer unmeasurability of God, like an uncrossable sea one has been yearning to gaze on. After this, however, it wonders at how God is able to bring existent things into being from nonbeing. But just as there is no end to his greatness, so you will find no end to his wisdom. For who would not be shaken with terror at contemplating that boundless sea of goodness, which exceeds all our capacity for wonder? And how could one help but be moved, when he begins to reflect on how reasonable, thinking mind has come to be and from, what source it comes, along with the four elements that form the body, if there was no matter that preceded their creation? What can this power be that is at work here, giving existence to these things?[31]

Rudolf Otto, in a lecture given in 1913, noted something similar about Christianity. I do not mean to argue here that Otto's "experience of the holy" is identical to what Von Balthasar identified in Maximus' works as the "act of wonder".[32] The latter seems to reflect a more gradual awareness of an intellectual or contemplative character. That said, both point out the importance of some kind of awe to Christianity in response to an experience or understanding of God's transcendence, where transcendence refers to being set apart or above, discontinuous with or other than creation. Otto claimed that an experience of this transcendence distinguished Christianity from Buddhism. He considered it the "essential moment" of Christianity; and was not primarily connected to

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[29] *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 10; CCG 7, 85, 57-87, 67; PG 90, 289 BC; ted in Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 329.

[30] On the distinction between servile and reverent fear, see *Centuries on Love*, I.81-2. Servile fear can serve as a starting point, but at least according to *Quaestiones ad Thalasium* 10, it is not strictly necessary. One can come to love of God through pure awe and wonder at his majesty and transcendence. This awe endures even after this life, whereas the fear of hell disappears among the saved in heaven.

[31] *Centuries on Love*, IV.1-2; PG 90, 1084BC; Trans. Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 330.

[32] On this point more generally, see Williams' criticism of Otto, *The Unexpected Way*, 74; Otto is influenced by Kant's turn to subjectivism and so his account of awe-filled experience is subjective and individualistic and ignores the more communal and ecclesial nature of traditional Christian experience.

God's moral perfections. This kind of awe, while not absent from Buddhism generally, was not one of its "determinative elements", as it was for Christianity.[33] Insofar as Maximus is concerned, it is the awareness of God's transcendence as creator and wholly other[34] and subsequent awareness of one's own smallness and creatureliness.

Chastened fear or awe and yearning together comprise love. Maximus defines the love of God as preferring nothing to the knowledge of him.[35] Following Pseudo-Dionysius, he says that it is ecstatic in character; it experientially moves the lover outside of themselves towards the beloved.

> This ecstatic love for God further leads to an experience of divine transcendence: When through love the mind is ravished by divine knowledge in going outside of creatures has a perception of divine transcendence then, according to the divine Isaiah, it comes in consternation to a realization of its own lowliness...[36]

This love then leads a creature in an ever-escalating spiral, realizing its own nothingness at the contemplation of divine immensity and infinity, which leads it to an ever increased yearning and "stretching out" of itself towards God,[37] which takes place in the context of human *tropos.*[38] Maximus, echoing passages from Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*[39] speaks of the soul's desire stretching out (συμπαρεκτεινειν, επιτεινειν) towards God's infinity (απειρια).[40] Their natures secure in the unchanging *logoi*, it is their mode of existence (*tropoi*) in which they grow and change, in which deification happens.

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[33] Rudolf Otto and Philip Almond, "Buddhism and Christianity: Compared and Contrasted," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 4 (1984), 97.

[34] Cf. Augustine of Hippo's description of God as *totaliter aliter, aliud, aliud valde*. *Confessions* vii.10.16

[35] *Centuries on Love*, I.1. Bertholde notes that 'knowledge' has a strongly experiential character. See Bethold, note #5, 87.

[36] *Centuries on Love*, I.12, Berthold, 36-7. Maximus is citing a passage from Isaiah 6:5 where the prophet while in the Temple experiences a vision of YHWH amidst angelic hosts.

[37] *Amb*. 13 (PG 91:1209B); *Amb*. 15 (PG 91:1220C); *Amb*. 16 (PG 91:1221C-1224A).

[38] Blowers, "Dialectics and Therapeutics of Desire…", 433.

[39] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, book 1.

[40] See for instance, *Amb.* 7 (PG 91:1089B).

Deity Veneration – Upāya and/or Consummation?

In an earlier I mentioned liturgical praxis only in passing, but I wish to address the issue here, because their understanding of identity, which is essentially a commitment to a particular ontology, is reflected in how they employ the liturgical-ritual action and what it is supposed to achieve. For Kūkai, it is another *upāya*, an expedient means, through which the end-goal of allowing the *ajari* to realize his non-dual identity with Mahāvairocana is accomplished. For Maximus, while a means of deification, liturgy is fundamentally an act of worship of God and participation in an ongoing cosmic worship; it represents the culmination of divine philosophy.

For a transcendent God, an appropriate expression of this love is in the act of worship and prayer, particularly the liturgy. Von Balthasar claims that sacramental worship, such as the liturgy, is "naturally suited to train us in this ultimate 'distancing' of love".[41] Such prayer is not purely contemplative in nature: prayer is made real through action, which means service to the world,[42] offering the world to God for the sake of redemption.

For Kūkai, this kind of worship seems to have a lowly place. In the third stage or state of mind in his developmental hierarchy[43] (called "The mind of the child composed and fearing nothing") the veneration or worship of deities plays a prominent role. The goal of such practice is to achieve favorable rebirth in the next life or a blissful afterlife. He assigns to this level, Hinduism, Daoism and those forms of Buddhism which teach rebirth in a Pure Land. Kūkai's tradition of practice does involve veneration of deities (in

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[41] Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 329.

[42] *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 57; CCG 22, 23, 11; PG 90, 589D; cf. Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 330.

[43] "The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury", Hakeda, 170-174.

Sanskrit, called *puja* or in Japanese, *kuyoū* 供養), there is a strong difference from the liturgical worship found in Maximus' Christian milieu. This kind of *puja* is a *homa* (Jpn; *goma*, 護摩), a votive offering made into consecrated fire.

Rita Gross notes that veneration found in tantric deity-yoga cannot properly be called 'worship' as the term is used in Christianity. Worship in the Christian sense, "implies a real Other rather than practice of skillful means – meditative practice to bring about meditative states of mind."[44] The *yidam* [venerated deity; Jap: *honzon*, 本尊] of deity yoga is not a "reified other."[45] Thus Tathāgata Mahāvairocana and other celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are not treated as reified or hypostasized when invoked in the *goma* and other ritual activities. Shingon ritual practice does not center on Mahāvairocana in the same way that Christian liturgical life is centered on Christ; they are not parallels of one another.[46]

The ritual-liturgical practice of Shingon, especially *goma*, plays a role in the cultivation of the aspirant's three mysteries. It is used during the stages of initiation as a priest and afterwards as well.[47] Although the various *pujas* have many functions, including the expiation of negative karma, or more worldly aims, such as wealth and favorable weather,[48] but especially within the context of self-cultivation, they have another, more important dimension. Structurally, they follow older Indian Vedic practice and include elements of evocation and sacrifice (symbolically welcoming and feasting the deity as a guest). However they have a uniquely tantric aspect, known as identification (Skt: *ahamkāra*) which some consider "the minimum defining characteristic of Tantra."[49] This explicit identification of aspirant and deity separates the Japanese Shingon *homa* (*goma*) from *homas* found in other tantric Buddhist traditions, especially Tibet.[50] The purpose of this part of the liturgy is to abolish, "…any preference for 'I' or 'you'",[51] through:

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[44] Julia Ching, "Response to Jeffrey Hopkins," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 8 (1988), 145.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Richard K. Payne, "The Shingon Subordinating Fire Offering for Amitābha," *Pacific World* Third Series, no.8 (Fall 2006), 191.

[47] See chapter 5 of Richard K. Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan: Feeding the Gods: The Shingon Fire Ritual* (Connaught Circus, New Delhi: Adtya Prakshan, 1991), 64ff.

[48] Payne also notes that the *goma* has a practical effect of expiating negative karma. See *The Tantric Ritual of Japan*, p.69. These were traditionally classified into four kinds in Shingon: *soku sai* 息災 (pacifying), *sō yaku* 增益 (increasing), *kei ai* 敬愛 (subjugating), *gō buku* 降伏 (destroying). Yamasaki notes explains the four aims as "to avert misfortune, to increase benefit, to subdue negative influences, and to bring about harmonious relations…" In some typologies, a fifth kind is known, *goshuhō*, 五種法 (acquisition). Outwardly these are all concerned with secular benefits, but their underlying meaning "derives from the

> …infusing the mind into the dynamic modes of the cosmic preacher (Mahāvairocana) – delivering penetrating, and manifesting modes – the practitioner transforms self-made Karma into universal Karma, discrimination into non-discrimination, and egoism into altruism. Thus, man extinguishes the self-existing character, realizes the universality of self, and discovers the sameness (equality) of all existing beings.[52]

Thus one of the primary functions of *puja* is to help the practitioner understand his inherent enlightenment, a kind of "visual soteriology".[53] I quote Robert Sharf at length as, as I believe he provides central insight into the paradox of deity veneration in esoteric Buddhism:

> …the liturgy culminates in a deconstruction of the central deity of the rite. In Japanese Esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*) this occurs in a sequence known as the "contemplation of the syllable wheel" (*jirinkan*; 字輪觀), in which the liturgy leads the practitioner through a dissection of the core mantra of

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goal of esoteric union." Taikō Yamasaki, *Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism,* translated by Richard and Cynthia Peterson (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1988), 152.

[49] Michel Strickmann, "The Homa in East Asia," *Agni*, edited by Frits Staal (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), 418.

[50] The key word is 'explicit'; identification of the practitioner and *yidam* maybe be implicit in rituals of other tantric traditions. See Richard K. Payne, "A Comparison of the Tibetan and Shingon *Homas,*" *Pacific World*, Third Series, no. 11 (November 2009), 429.

[51] Taisen Miyata, *A Study of the Ritual Mudrās in the Shingon Tradition* (Sacramento: Northern California Koyasan Temple, 1984), 90, cited by Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan*, 90.

[52] Miyata, 90, cited by Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan*, 90.

[53] See Michael Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra and the Emergence of Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine* (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2015), 136.

> the deity. The practitioner is instructed to break the deity's mantra down into its constituent syllables and to contemplate the root meaning of each syllable in turn. However, the liturgy explicitly states that since the significance of the syllables can be grasped only in the context of the aggregate, the meaning of the syllables in isolation is "unobtainable" (Sanskrit *anupalabdhi*; Japanese *fukatoku*; 不可得). And since the individual syllables cannot be grasped, the same is true of the mantric utterance as a whole. The analysis of the mantra thus has the effect of emptying it of its illocutionary significance. Moreover, since the mantra is held to be cosubstantial [sic] with the deity—much as the Eucharistic wafer is cosubstantial [sic] with the flesh of Christ—the syllable-wheel contemplation constitutes the emptying or deconstruction of the deity itself.[54]

Aspirants visualize a being whose "symbolic form represents ultimate reality and one's own true being". Later in the course of ritual and liturgical practice,

> …that being dissolves into light and space…so whatever existence is attributed to this being, it is not a conventionally existing, solid being. Even more mysterious to outsiders, the visualization practice involves visualizing oneself as this being…In fact, in an odd way, one is addressing oneself in these practices – one's true being and not one's private ego, of course.[55]

Tantric practices, liturgical and ritual, no matter what their form, emphasize "ultimate theological nonduality".[56] There is a dialectic between form and emptiness in these practices which prevents adepts (whom are advanced practitioners and therefore specially prepared) from misidentifying the beings addressed as a permanently existing deity.[57] On the following page are illustrations inspired by those found in Taikō Yamasaki's work, *Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*, which depict two types of visualization techniques commonly used inside and outside of liturgical practice.

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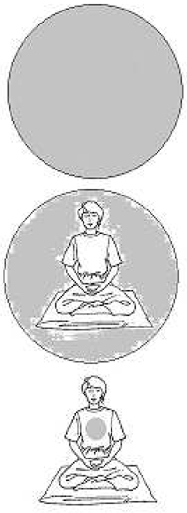
[54] Robert Sharf, "Ritual," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 258-9.

[55] Rita Gross, "Meditation and Prayer: A Comparative Inquiry," *Christians talk about Buddhist Meditation, Buddhists talk about Christian Prayer*, edited by Rita Gross and Terry Muck (New York: Bloomsburg Academic, 2003), 84.

[56] Gross, "Meditation and Prayer: A Comparative Inquiry", 84.

[57] *Ibid*., 85-6.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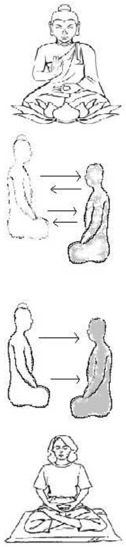
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Illustration 12: *kakudai-hō* (拡大法), "expansion meditation"; also *gachirinkan* (月輪観),"moon disk meditation". Adept visualizes his mind in the shape of a moon disk (bottom), self becomes the moon disk (center), moon disk expands to fill universe (top).

Illustration 13: *yogen-hō* (預言法), "image-manifesting technique". Adept (at bottom) visualizes deity entering his body (above bottom), the practitioner enters the deity (center), self becomes deity (top). An example of *nyū-ga'nyū*.

In contrast to these practices which end in the affirmation of the non-dual identity of the practitioner with the cosmos or a deity, worship, prayer, in Maximus' thought, "simply imitate the fundamental structures of the world's existence and its relationship to God", at the basis of which is that reverent awareness of the transcendent majesty of God. Love is expressed in service, worship, dependence and self-abandonment.[60] In the thought of both Maximus and Kūkai, the rituals and liturgical aspect mirror and/or participate in the fundamental nature of the cosmos.

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[58] Illustration based on Yamasaki, *Shingon*, 157; see this text for a more thorough explanation.

[59] Illustration based on *Ibid*., 155; see this text for a more thorough explanation of this method of visualization.

[60] Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 330.

Having spoken of the “vertical” dimension of their thought, I wish to turn now to a more “horizontal” dimension. Here, the distinction between intimacy and integrity utilized by Thomas Kasulis, may be of help in better understanding and more clearly articulating certain aspects of their thought. Their understandings of identity solidly embed them in these traditions and will also help explain their differing emphasis on altruistic activity, which is part of their programs of cultivation.

Intimacy and Integrity

The polarity of immanence and transcendence is limited insofar as (in its typical use) it focuses on the relationship between persons, principles or beings considered to be mutually distinct categories – phenomena and noumena, divinity(s) and mundane creatures. It is inadequate as a more holistic tool for analyzing relationships between things on the same plane – multiple phenomena, creatures, in Buddhist terms, *dharmas* – that is, beings within the world. Kasulis’ concepts allow for this kind of analysis.[61]

We must first move to distinguish the relations between *things* from the relations between *persons*. Intimacy between things derives from the way things are and must be, this can include between persons, when see in terms of ontology. Intimacy between persons is interpersonal in nature, and is something must be achieved.[62] What interests us primarily at this point is to talk about *things*, therefore how things are and must be, according to their respective metaphysic. We will talk about the second type of intimacy further below.

To demonstrate the difference between the two orientations, Kasulis contrasts how salt and ocean-water fuse together (a demonstration of intimacy) with sand and ocean water (a demonstration of integrity). When the latter mix, they retain their individual natures, that is, the sand retains its identity in the water. The water may become sandy, but at no point is the sand absorbed into water; their natures are left intact and inviolable. On the other hand, salt is readily absorbed into water.[63]

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[61] Kasulis’ account itself does not distinguish between the separateness implied by ‘transcendence’ and by ‘integrity’. Therefore the transcendence/immanence lens is still quite useful.

[62] Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity*, 28.

Intimacy comes from the Latin word *intimus*, referring to a close friend or something that is innermost. It is related to the verb *intima-re*, meaning 'to make known'. Intimacy is expressed as an internal rather than external relationship; this means that 'self' and 'other' belong together in a way such that the two cannot be easily distinguished. Integrity is related to the Latin *integer*, referring to an indivisible whole. It comes from the root *integere* or *intangere,* meaning to "not touch", referring to a thing's completeness or purity – that it is independent and unmixed. Relationships characterized by this orientation involve the relatants in an extrinsic manner. They are complete in themselves without need of an other.[64]

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[63] *Ibid*., 53; this seems to mirror Maximus' concern about the relationship of the divine and human natures in the Incarnate Logos, between body and soul in humans and between grace and nature in the human person (in terms of the spiritual life towards deification). However, in all these cases, Maximus would say that the two together are not merely compounds as Kasulis' example of sand and water, but composites or syntheses that are perichoresitically united with one another.

[64] *Ibid*., 53ff.

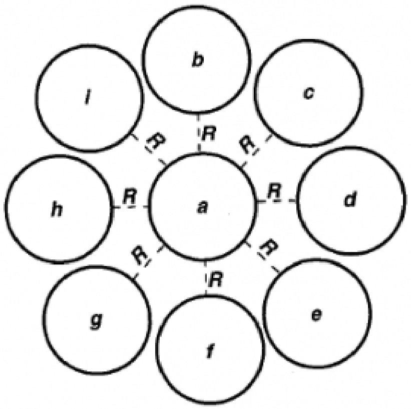

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Illustration 14: The Self of Integrity

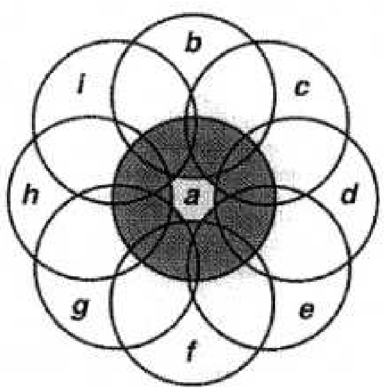

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Illustration 15: The Self of Intimacy

According to Kasulis, Buddhism exemplifies the intimacy orientation taken to its furthest point in its understanding of *anātman*.[67] The *self* as understood by the intimacy perspective is in primarily seen in a network of internal relations with the surrounding environment, things and events. While there might be an "isolated core of identity" that remains untouched by these factors in other philosophies which emphasize intimacy, Buddhism denies it. [68]

> The Buddhist understands *every* aspect of the Buddhist self to be conditioned by processes around him or her…This does not mean that I am without identity; there is still the unique overlap of interdependent process defining who am I…According to Buddhism, therefore, I am not a

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[65] See *Ibid*., 60. Kasulis uses the metaphor of a Venn diagram of circles which do not overlap.
[66] See *Ibid*., 61. Kasulis uses the metaphor of a Venn diagram of overlapping circles.
[67] It is important to note here that Kasulis' background is in East Asian religion and philosophy. Several scholars have argued that he reads into Buddhism more generally the specifics of East Asian Buddhism. Therefore he sees all of Buddhism as characterized by an intimacy orientation. Amod Lele has argued that Pali Buddhism displays a fairly strong integrity orientation in its atomistic understanding of non-self, *anātman*. See "The Atomized Buddhist Individual," *The Love of All Wisdom*, accessed September 2, 2014, http://loveofallwisdom.com/blog/2013/07/the-atomized-buddhist-individual/#more-3009, Parimal Patil has asserted that early Indic philosophy more generally has a strong 'integrity' orientation as well. See "Intimacy and Integrity", *The Love of All Wisdom*, accessed September 2, 2014, http://loveofallwisdom.com/blog/2009/06/intimacy-and-integrity/.
[68] Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity*, 62-3.

> self-existent being who chooses with what or how I wish to relate to external circumstances.[69]

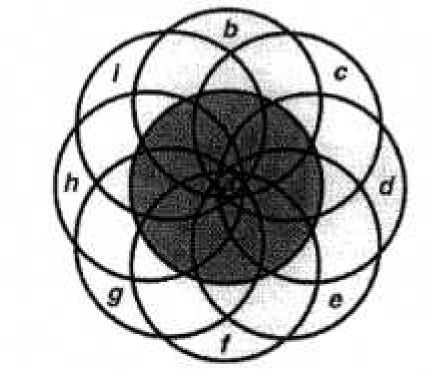

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Illustration 16: The Buddhist Self

Here the *self* is wholly constituted by these other objects which overlap it. On the other hand, the view of *self* as presented by the integrity viewpoint is, as far as possible, determined by "fixed boundaries of the ego".[71] One may be part of many things, but they are entirely extrinsic, none are a part of anything else. The Mahāyana and Tantric Buddhist understanding of the 'self' while premised on *anātman* reflects development in understandings of *sūnyatā,* emptiness and *pratītyasamutpāda*, dependent arising.

This vision of the self, it is quite compatible with Japanese Buddhism, particularly Shingon and Zen. In his reading, we have forgotten our connection with the world, each other and the Buddha. We "re-establish" the intimacy by becoming "aware of ourselves as expressions of the Buddha-principle,"[72] that is to say, we re-establish this intimacy, in a sense, by becoming aware of it. In Shingon, this is achieved through the practice of the three mysteries, various forms of meditation and even the *goma*, a fire liturgy which expunges malign karma and further helps one to recognize the nondual identity of one's self and the Buddha-mind.

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[69] *Ibid.*, 62-3.
[70] See *Ibid.*, 63. Kasulis uses the image of a Venn diagram where overlapping circles create another circle at the center of their overlap.
[71] See *Ibid.*, 60-1.
[72] Kasulis, "Intimacy: a general orientation in Japanese religious values", 445.

Utilizing these categories, we may say that Kūkai has an extremely strong, but not exclusive, focus on intimacy, as does most if not all forms of Japanese philosophy and religiosity.[73] Kūkai expresses this in the use of paradox – the relationship between emptiness and matter is analogous to the "inseparable relationship" between water and waves or gold and golden ornaments, he explains, "they are neither identical nor different".[74] Speaking of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana who represents the emptiness of all *dharmas*, he says, "The Existence of the Buddha is the existence of the sentient beings and vice versa. They are not identical but are nevertheless identical; they are not different but are nevertheless different."[75]

In comparison Maximus' account does focus on integrity, this is a result of his concern for issues of theological and Christological nature, in particular his disputes with Origenists and monophysites. The Origenists held that rational beings were part of a primal henad with *Nous* (God) and subsequent "fell" into embodiment. The primal henad assumes an ontological identification between God and creature. The monophysites asserted the incarnate Logos had a hybridized single nature rather than two distinct ones. On the other hand, he is quite concerned about intimacy as well. At the level of ontology, the *logoi* provide for the integrity of created beings which allow them to be what they are. They have a certain intimacy with God by virtue of their existence and participation, *methexis*, in God's activity, *energeia* but not his *ousia*. In this case, the *logoi* disclose that things in the created world are radically incomplete and need a grounding outside of themselves.

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[73] *Ibid.*, 443ff.

[74] "The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury", in Hakeda, 201.

[75] "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence", in Hakeda, 232.

An important contrast between Kūkai and Maximus is the communion that Maximus is most concerned with is the unity provided by the Logos, who gathers all the *logoi* (and thereby all beings) together. This is not the ontological, epistemological interpenetration-unity with which Kūkai concerns himself, such is the nature of the cosmos, though sentient beings are deluded about it. The *logoi* of things provide a natural unity; all created things have the *logos* of being, which separates them from what does not exist.[76] Creatures are united by a series of enlarging *genera* (families) in which they exist, as if arranged on a Porphyrian tree. The Logos is revealed as a person,[77] who provides the supreme unity, holding all things together in himself, who is not a "myriad of hypostases", but comprises a "myriad of acts of the will [of the Logos]",[78]

> Through himself he has, in accordance with nature, united the fragments of the universal nature of the all, manifesting the universal *logoi* that have come forth for the particulars, by which the union of the divine naturally comes about, and thus he fulfills the great purpose of God the Father, *to recapitulate everything both in heaven and earth in himself* (Eph. 1:10), i*n whom everything has been created* (Col. 1:16).[79]

Though the Logos arranges them into families and communions according to their kind of being, by virtue of their intimate relation with the Logos, they have a closer relationship with each other, beyond what they naturally have by virtue of a common nature.[80] This is especially the case in terms of relations between creation and creator. As the *summum bonum* is a person, it is crucial in the Maximian scheme to relate to *him* in the way that persons do. This would seem to match intimacy at what Kasulis calls the "human level". At the level of persons, intimacy is achieved through mutual opening to one another.[81] In humans, this comes about by altering their *tropoi* through volition.[82]

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[76] *Amb*. 41 (PG 91), 1312B; cf. also *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*. 48: 82–4, CCSG 7, 341; also Törönen, *Unity and Distinction*, 138-141.

[77] It is also important to remember here that for Maximus, one of the essential characteristics of a person is the will, the ability to modify their mode of existence. In Buddhism the will is something traditionally more problematic because it implies desire and preference, which is the root of *tanha,* craving or thirst, one of the causes of dissatisfaction and suffering. Furthermore, desiring requires an object and runs the risk of reifying the object.

[78] For Maximus it is important to note that what he means by this is that the totality of the Logos is present in each creature, not just some part or proportion of the Logos. The Logos is present in each one as the innermost foundation of their essence. (Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology*, 216).

[79] *Amb*. 41, 1308d-1309a, Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 156.

Individual and Communal Dimensions of Liturgy and Ritual

In broad strokes, John Makransky paints similarities in the liturgical experience of Christians and Tantric Buddhists. In each, there is prayer, repentance, the attentive listening to revealed truths, communion with transcendent reality through a revealed embodiment. Its inward power links beings to one another in unconditional love.[83]

Even if we accept all of these as applicable to the *goma* as practiced in Shingon, there are other fundamental differences between these liturgy in the thought of Maximus and Kūkai (and which also reflects in their path of self-cultivation). One major difference lies in the dialectic between individual and communal (or ecclesial) dimensions. These are subtly informed by assumptions about the nature of identity, non-dualism in the case of Kūkai and in Maximus' understanding of Logos as drawing together all *logoi* and holding them, and all created beings, in a fruitful communion of plurality, questions of intimacy and integrity.

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[80] *Mystagogia*, ch.1.

[81] Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity*, 30.

[82] The concept of a free-standing faculty of volition apart from intellect and emotions is neither Greek nor Indian in origin, Keown claims, but something that emerges with Augustine. See *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 214-18. He makes a very broad generalization here, one that applies mainly to western Christianity. That said, his implication – that the idea of will as a distinct faculty seems to emerge in Christianity. Thinkers from both the Christian West and East, from Augustine to Maximus would agree that the *imago dei* is at least partly found in the faculty of the will.
David Loy argues that the concept of 'will' as a faculty and its attendant concern of 'free will' is problematic in the west, especially in the concept of 'original sin'. It deepened inwardness and self-vigilance and increased anxiety about his relationship with God. It brought about a deepened subjectivity and self-preoccupation. See Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West*, 34-6.

[83] He very specifically describes his experiences of attendance at Catholic Mass as a Tibetan Buddhist on campus at Boston College, a university run by the Roman Catholic Jesuit order. John Makransky, "Buddha and Christ as Mediations of Ultimate Reality: A Mahayana Buddhist Perspective," in *Buddhism and Christianity in Dialogue*, edited by Perry Schmidt-Leukel (Norfolk, England: SCM Press, 2005), 179.

Speaking of the experience of tantric rituals, Paul Williams notes that all such rituals are typically approached in the spirit of meditation, and are:

> …in the last analysis, even though communal, subordinate to the goal of personal, private transformation through appropriate experiences. The individual who has undergone the appropriate experiences, that is, who has transformed the mind, of course, then expresses that fact outwardly in care and concern, benefiting others, as did the Buddha himself. But one works first and foremost on oneself to bring about the appropriate experiences.[84]

The key, he emphasizes, is the individual's struggle to attain the experience of non-duality. Altruistic action without *prajna*, non-dual wisdom, can be quite dangerous – leading one to reify the giver, the gift and the receiver. Therefore one must undertake the seemingly individual struggle to attain *prajna.* When enlightenment is achieved, "unconditional compassion radiates forth all inclusively as a spontaneous expression of the mind's deepest unconditioned nature."[85] To call the Buddhist path as 'private' can be misleading if it is understood only from the perspective of 'everyday' or conventional reality, disregarding not from the self-understanding of tantrism. In the Mahāyāna and tantric world view, 'individual' or 'private' is a kind of conventional denotation. The border between 'self' and 'other' is mind-drawn and therefore not ultimate; attainment of *prajna* leads one to understand the indissoluble unity (intimacy) of all beings in their common emptiness. Though it lacks the explicit ecclesial, communal dimension of

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[84] Williams, *The Unexpected Way*, 65-6. The tenor of his argument however leads the reader to believe he holds that Buddhist practices are rooted in and lead one to subjectivitism. See Randal Studstill, "Buddhist Egoism and Other Infelicities," *Ars Disputandi* 8 (2008), accessed August 29, 2014, http://www.ArsDisputandi.org.

[85] John Makransky, "Compassion in Buddhist Psychology," in *Compassion and Wisdom in Psychotherapy*. Edited by Christopher K. Germer and Ronald D. Siegel (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 71.

Maximus, Kūkais' non-duality does suggest that even though one practices alone, there is the entire collectivity of sentient beings and even the universe in the background. Since the dividing line between individuals are mind-constructed and contingent, it would seem that there is an implicit collective or universal dimension, [86] what Kasulis would consider a strong form of intimacy. However, carried over from early Buddhism into its Mahāyāna and Tantric forms is the depiction of spiritual endeavor as something primarily individual which may be a remnant of Hindu *sramana* (renouncer) tradition.[87] There is at work in later Buddhist scriptures, an "implicit Buddhist ecclesiology",[88] however the communal dimensions seem quite muted, at least in ritual life when compared with Maximus.

The liturgy, the heart of ritual action for Maximus, has a strong and explicit communitarian dimension. While his divine philosophy is a path of self-cultivation, even there one can see a communal dimension with its emphasis on love of one's brethren. This contrasts strongly with his predecessor and inspiration, Evagrius, for whom the spiritual struggle is inescapably individual and private in character,[89] or Plotinus from whom the model of spiritual struggle is that of a solitary escaping to the One.[90] In contrast, "…for Maximus, the Divine Liturgy is essentially a *diastole*, a manifestation of

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[86] I am grateful to TUDOR (Temple University Department of Religion) graduate student Adam Valerio for pointing this out to me in a private conversation about three years ago.
[87] John Makransky, "Buddha and Christ as Mediations of Ultimate Reality: A Mahayana Buddhist Perspective." *Buddhism and Christianity in Dialogu*e, edited by by Perry Schmidt-Leukel (Norfolk, England: SCM Press, 2005), 198; cf. Studstill's remarks in, "Buddhist Egoism… ", 36-38. One can see an individualistic trend in the early desert fathers, for instance, St. Anthony of the Desert, for whom striving for holiness and communion with God was primarily individualistic in orientation.
[88] Makransky, "Buddha and Christ as Mediations of Ultimate Reality…"; 3-4, fn#3c.
[89] Cattoi, *Divine Contingency*, 221.
[90] *φυγη μονου προς μονον*. *Enneads*, VI.ix.11; for an analysis of the difference between Plotinus and the Church Fathers' model of spiritual cultivation, see Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 36-51.

God's love into the world, to attract the *systole* of his love all creatures to the life of intratrinitarian communion.[91]"

Diastole (Grk: *proodos,* προοδυς) and *systole* (Grk: epistrophe, ἐπιστροφή) represent the two movements of emanation and return in Neoplatonic and Stoic philosophy. In Maximus, these come to mean creation and conversion – the latter of which means not so much the changing of religions, but the deeper continuing re-orientation and turning of the creature towards Creator without its ultimate absorption or loss of its integrity as it does in the Hellenic pagan milieu.

The church, which gathers in worship, encompasses in itself unity and diversity,[92] because the liturgy heals divisions (*diareseis*) while preserving the fruitful distinctions (*diaphora*) between created beings.[93] As such it is a counter to *philautia*, inordinate love of self and egoistic hermeneutic through which we view the world. In contrast, for Kūkai, the communal dimension is not nearly as prominent, although he always insists on the fundamental importance of compassion as the altruistic motivation for the *bodhisattva*'s quest for enlightenment, considering all others as himself and placing their benefit ahead of himself.[94] His emphasis on cultivation appears to be primarily focused on the individual or private dimension – but that cultivation of the *bodhicitta* is essential for unleashing the great compassion which serves as the root of enlightenment and *upāya* its perfection or culmination.[95]

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[91] Ciprian Streza, "St. Maximus the Confessor's *Mystagogia* as a Complex Liturgical Commentary," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 4, no.1 (2013), 64.
[92] Maximus, *Mystagogia* 2 (PG 9191:667); cf. Cattoi, *Divine Contingency*, 103.
[93] Cattoi, *Divine Contingency*, 103; Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 74, cf. Maximus, *Mystagogia*, ch.1.
[94] *Sanmaya-kaijo*, S11; cited by White, *The Role of Buddhist Enlightenment*, 168.
[95] *Mahāvairocanā-Sutra* (also known as the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-Sutra*) I.ic.

So far we have investigated how the relation between identity and practice through the use of two sets of polarities – transcendence and immanence, intimacy and integrity – in doing so we have investigated how God or and how beings relate to one another within these paradigms.

The third heuristic implicitly includes aspects of the first and second and in a way ties them together by asking a question about referentiality - how things within the cosmos gain meaning, value or significance. This question is ultimately one of relationship between the phenomenal and spiritual realms, as in the first heuristic, transcendence and immanence. The first heuristic deals with the spiritual and phenomenal realms from the "top" down, the relation of former to the latter in either a dependent or independent mode. This "reverses the equation", and asks how it is that the phenomenal realm relates (in this case, gains meaning) from the spiritual realm.

"Centrism" and "Directionality"

We have established that Maximus' concern with issues of integrity and intimacy; at the ontological level, the *logoi* function to simultaneously preserve a thing's identity as well as allow for its relation to its creator without being subsumed to him. For Kūkai, the primary concern is intimacy as shown his doctrine of non-duality. One issue that both are implicitly concerned with is has to do with significance or meaning. From whence does something gain value, meaning or import? I treat all of these as largely synonymous to the question of self-understanding. How is a creature to understand themselves? Are they to understand themselves as beings on their own or is it in terms of (an)other?

In either case, Maximus and Kūkai would hold that any creature cannot be properly understood in terms of itself; it is only fully understandable in terms of or reference to something else. It is most clearly understood in the context of esoteric Buddhism through its understanding of language. As typical of later Buddhism, it has an awareness of the linguistic construction of reality; language, epistemology and ontology are closely intertwined. Kūkai was very aware of this interconnection; he held that all phenomena were part of a world-text.[96] To this idea of world as a text, we see a certain parallel in Maximus' thought; the entire universe is an expression of God (as God's creation), but also created from his expression (through the *logoi*).

Questions such as "What is the meaning of life?", "Where does it all come from?", "What is it all for?" are questions that involve a *source* or *meaning* and point towards a *center*.[97] Ziporyn argues that such questions are actually a demand for a particular "coherence" to be ground or orient all other coherences, in terms of which they are to be understood, whether in terms of efficient, material or final causality.[98] In other words, these questions demand a center.

A center is a point of view which controls and provides the comprehensive vision of the whole, [99] all other variables are defined in terms of it and is the focus of ultimate value within the whole system.[100] The center as 'coherence' is,

> …the point within the whole that has direct and undistorted access to all the parts, just as the center of a circle is the point of convergence of all its radii which directly contact every point in the circumference, and moreover is the point in reference to which the position of all points on the periphery is determined.[101]

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[96] Most evident in his work, *Shōji jisshō gi*, "The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality".

[97] Brook Ziporyn, *Being and Ambiguity: Philosophical Experiments with Tiantai Buddhism* (Chicago: Carus Publishing Company, 2004), 313.

[98] *Ibid*.

[99] Brook Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity and Value Paradox in Tiantai Buddhist Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 56.

[100] *Ibid.*, 33.

[101] Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good*, 33.

The choice of metaphor is fascinating because it is used within the Neoplatonic tradition, found in the works of Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus, to describe the relation of the God or the One to the cosmos.[102]

In his work, *Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubectivity, and Value Paradox in Tiantai Buddhist Thought*, he outlines a schemata of *holisms*, differing understandings of the value of and relation of the parts and whole. He identifies western Christianity as bearer of a kind of *unicentric holism*[103] while esoteric Buddhism is *omnicentric holism*. *Unicentric holism* has only one center, but in the case of Christianity with a transcendent creator divinity, this center stands outside of the whole and is apart from the whole (which he then classifies as a kind of *hetero-unicentric holism*). *Omnicentrism*, on the other hand, holds that there is no center as such therefore all things can serve as the center. It describes well the world as exposed through the metaphor of Indra's net. Each node of the net reveals a jewel which reflects every other jewel as well as the net *in toto*. Found in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and subject to further development by Kūkai, it is a wonderful reflection of interpenetration and inter-causation.

One effect of a unicentric vision is that it takes from any individual, a part or an element of the whole, the power to claim their own standard of judgment.[104] In this schema, only the view of the whole is true; the view of any part is discontinous from the whole.[105] It is the view of the whole, from outside the whole, which provides coherence and value.

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[102] Plotinus: *Enneads* 5.1 [10]. 11. 9-15. The image is used repeatedly throughout book five. Cf. 5.5, (2),4-6. Pseudo-Dionysius: *Divine Names*, 5.6 (PG 3:821a). Cf. 2.5 (PG 3:644a). Maximus: *Amb*. 7 (PG1: 1081c), *Chapters on Knowledge* II.4 (PG 90: 1125d-1128a), *Mystagogia* (PG 91:1.668a-b).

[103] Ziporyn goes further, citing Augustine as an example of a holism which he says is unicentric and heterocentric. It is the latter in that it locates the singular center outside the whole that it unifies. Furthermore, there is no point within the whole, the cosmos, from which the whole is apprehensible. It is a modification of Plotinian holism. I wonder however, if such a category can as easily be applied to Maximus because of his insistence on the centrality of the Incarnation for making sense of creation. In this case, the Logos, though transcendent enters into creation assuming the centerpoint within creation. For Ziporyn's comments on Augustine, see *Evil and/or/as the Good*, 56-7.

[104] Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good*, 95.

As noted earlier, Maximus' understanding of *logoi* provides an answer to two questions – the first is *how* something came to be, the second is *why*. Disclosing intentionality the *logoi* of things point away from the creature to the Logos, as fingers pointing at the moon. *Philautia*, inordinate self-love, involves an inaccurate view which mis-measures, and mis-values, the whole in terms of a particular part, in this case, someone's own self. When the vision and knowledge of *logoi* are obscured, creation loses its 'transparency'; creatures cease to be an ikon and instead become an idol. Divine philosophy is the cultivation of a graced way of seeing which allows humans to see the presence of God, through his intentions, in scripture and in creation, and then later brings them to 'see' God inasmuch as they are capable. Here however, we see the limits of Ziporyn's approach. This cultivation also allows them to act as God acts, to love as God loves, inasmuch as they are capable. Deification means that they 'become' God inasmuch as a creature can, becoming by grace what God is by nature. What this means is that while they never can really become God (this transcendent center) in the ontological sense, the deified share in his divinity, in some way they participate in God's center-ness while always being other to him.[106]

The omnicentric view is engaged in a paradox. In one sense, lacking a single unifying center *per se*, there seems to be no meaning and no coherence, but in reality, any center or coherence can be the source of meaning for all others precisely because of this failure as center and source of meaning for all other coherences. One can liken it to a game of “hot potato”, wherein a ball or similar object is passed from person to person in a circle, each striving to get rid of it, but always coming back to the starting point.[107] There is no center and therefore no periphery. Nothing has an absolute identity. To return to the metaphor of Indra’s net, the individuation found there is not in a collection of essential properties unique to each being, but rather the unique manner in which the totality is manifested through the creature.[108]

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[105] *Ibid.*, 56-7.

[106] I am reminded of the Pauline conception of the church as the Body of Christ as found in I *Corinthians* 12:12-14.

Abé says something similar when describing Kūkai’s deconstruction of objects which appear to us in our senses:

> Things are never self-present, for they have no ontological grounding, except for their infinitely regressive reference to other things in their mutually referential network. That is, precisely because they are signs, things are of dependent co-origination, for they are “empty” of essence and do not originate with any transcendental prime mover.[109]

Returning to the metaphor of Indra’s net, the straits in which sentient beings find themselves in Kūkai’s omnicentric model occur when the nodes of the net seem opaque. Beings are not able to see these nodes reflect the image of all other nodes. The opacity occurs because beings are led to believe that each being is something with fixed properties and a fixed identity.[110] Delusion results as beings believe in a permanent ego,[111] leading to illusions which conceal their originally enlightened mind.[112]

In this typology, meaning in a unicentric system, ultimate meaning, does not come from the particulars themselves, but rather given in their relationship to the center. Looking to Maximus, I believe this to be the case; his doctrine of the *logoi* can be explained in this way. As clear from his evocation of Pseudo-Dionysius' and Plotinus' imagery, the Logos is the center-point of a circle through which the *logoi* intersect.[113]

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[107] Ziporyn, *Being and Ambiguity*, 313.
[108] Steven Laycock, “Harmony as Transcendence: A Phenomenological View,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 16 (1989), 179.
[109] Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 280.
[110] Laycock, Steven. “Harmony as Transcendence”, 178-9.
[111] “The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury”, Hakeda, 166.
[112] “The Difference Between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism”, Hakeda, 156.

The meaning of the creature is not 'knowable in itself', that is, unable to be understood in terms of itself.[114] This contrasts with any system where any individual existent is considered sufficient-in-itself or meaningful-in-itself. An example of this would be a kind of atomism, such as Indian Samkhya or forms of monadism or libertarianism where an individual existent does not look to others or something beyond itself for meaning or significance. According to Maximus, a being's nature is bestowed by the *logoi*, which are expressions of the will of God. A creature's nature can only be understood as the expression of the will God and not as "some objective structure of a rational kind which may be conceivable in itself."[115] It is only fully knowable in its relation with and reference to the Logos.

The *hetero-referentiality* (that is, its referentiality to something other than itself, whether God or the totality of things) of the cosmos is intelligible only to properly trained 'vision'. To discerning 'eyes', which in any case are the natural 'eyes', the kind of 'vision' that beings have in their original 'nature' (as originally enlightened, or as created before the fall of the first humans) the cosmos is transparent. This referentiality, which is relationality, is plain to see. Instead we are left with a kind of 'single vision', (to borrow an image from William Blake) which flattens out our cognitive horizon. Seen in its true state, the cosmos has an inherent epiphanic or hierophanic transparency.[116]

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[113] Maximus also holds that the Logos circumscribes them, holds them together, see his *Mystagogia* PG 91:1.668a-b. See footnote 102, this chapter (p.230) for further instances of the metaphor in Maximus, Pseudo-Dionysius and Plotinus. Ziporyn says, "This point – which sees the whole, is directly connected to all parts, and can in some sense control the whole – we call, metaphorically, the center. It is a part that is also in some sense the whole or may legitimately and adequately represent the whole, just as all radii of a circle are extensions of the center. There is only one center, which is unique and irreplaceable. The power of determination flows unidirectionally from this center to the other parts, creating, at least ideally, a single unambiguous whole with clear borders." …", Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good*, 36.

[114] Alan Brown, "On the Criticism of *Being as Communion* in Anglophone Orthodox Theology," in *The Theology of John Zizioulas*, edited by Douglas Knight (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 59

[115] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 97.

Stereoscopic Vision. In either case, the cultivation of perception begins with the purification of human faculties, because as they are, they are not properly capable of perceiving this double aspect of reality.

> For double the vision my Eyes do see, and a double vision is always with me… May God us keep, from Single vision and Newton's sleep![117]

But which faculties and by what means? There are a number of apparent parallels here. As to the question regarding means, a partial answer is this process of cultivation requires divine-human synergy, the cooperation of adherent and divine principle. In Maximus, the operative concept is *grace*, in Kūkai, *kaji*. The synergies are different in that the former involves a kind of 'other power', to use a Buddhist term, which makes possible the human effort and which crowns the human effort. No human effort is possible without it, and human effort alone will not bring it about. In the case of Kūkai, the synergy as cooperation of two ontologically separate and distinct agents appears thus when it is seen with the unenlightened eye.[118] Seen with the enlightened eye, they are actually two expressions of one more fluid reality. In either case, what is necessary is a kind of cooperation with something beyond the confines of the visible or conventional self.

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[116] These terms are inspired by Kallistos Ware's term 'theophanic transparency'. See Ware, Timothy Kallistos, "Through Creation to the Creator", Third Marco Pallis Memorial Lecture, London 1996. http://www.incommunion.org/2004/12/11/through-creation-to-the-creator/ Accessed 10 February 2015

[117] Quoted by Kallistos Ware, "Through Creation to the Creator". The first line is from William Blake, "Double Vision", the second is from William Blake, *Letter to Thomas Butt, 22 November 1802.*

[118] Cf. Krummel, *Kûkai*, accessed 8 February 2015.

In here we do see differences: in order to cultivate this Buddha ‘vision’, one must first learn to envision oneself as the Buddha.[119] This understanding is deeply rooted in the “soteriology of vision” found in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* and *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* , sources of *Tathāgatagarbha* thought.[120] In order to envision oneself as the Buddha, one must first visualize representations of the Buddha and the results of which must be in some manner displayed.[121] Due to a very ‘strong’ understanding of correlativity between sentient being, Buddha and cosmos, “the ritual/meditative mastering of vision and meaning is equated with mastery upon the self and reality”.[122]

As a second point of comparison, what grounds the efforts of divinization is likeness or identity to divinity found within the aspirant. In Maximus this is expressed in terms of *imago dei* and *similitudo dei*, which properly speaking, only reside in human beings; in Kūkai, in terms of *bodhicitta* which he finds synonymous with *tathāgatagarbha*, the matrix or womb of Buddha-hood, is present in all sentient beings.

The *imago,* found in the *logoi* of human beings, is inviolate and was not altered by the fall of the first humans; it gives humans intellect and free choice of the will. The *similitudo,* damaged after the fall, must be healed and purified. Maximus’ regimen involves a reorientation that has two aspects, one negative, purificatory and purgative, the other positive, the practice of love. The first is the development of *apatheia*, a calm detachment and critical distancing from things so that we cannot be overtaken by them, not because any created reality is evil.[123] The second is the re-orientation of the person through the practice of virtues, especially the love of one's neighbor (which includes one's enemies). Together these allow the person to become a sharer in divine knowledge.[124] One progresses further in the spiritual life through meditation on scripture, participation in the sacraments, prayer, liturgy, the means by which one is re-oriented towards God. When one draws closer to God, the Logos becomes embodied in that person through the *logoi* of the virtues, thus the person can be said to 'give birth to' or 'incarnate' Christ.

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[119] As a good contrast, compare the visualizations used in Christian, particularly Catholic, spiritual practices – Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*, the meditations contained in Francis DeSales’ *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Br. Lawrence of the Resurrection’s *Practicing the Presence of God* or the popular devotion *Stations of the Cross*.

[120] See Michael Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra…*, 136.

[121] Fabio Rambelli, *A Buddhist Theory of Semiotics* (New York, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 127.

[122] *Ibid.*, 127.

Bodhicitta is the "agent" of "man-Buddha integration"[125] and has a double meaning; as *bodhisattva utpada* (Skt: "to raise up the thought of enlightenment"), it refers to the aspiration to enlightenment, that which characterizes all sentient beings, at least in an inchoate, incipient manner – its causal aspect. In its second, resultant aspect, it refers to the actualized insight, which is the wisdom that all things are void of self-nature, and that this emptiness makes interpenetration and change possible.[126] It is wisdom that makes this integration possible. As the aspirant cultivates her wisdom, her innate wisdom is revealed. This innate wisdom is the wisdom of the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana. Innate and actualized wisdom are not opposed, but two aspects of one reality.

What allows the wisdom to emerge is the clearing away of the "cloud of deluding misconceptions"[127] Practice of the mysteries of mind, body and voice through *mantras*,

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[123] See Von Balthasar, *The Cosmic Liturgy*, 335; Maximus, *Centuries on Love* 3,4; PG 90, 1017cd.
[124] Maximus, *Chapters on Love*, I.27.
[125] Kiyota, "Shingon Mikkyo's Two-Fold Mandala…", 91-2.
[126] *Ibid.,* 93.
[127] Kenneth White, *The Role of Bodhicitta in Buddhist Enlightenment Including a Translation into English of Bodhicitta-Sa-stra, Benkenmitsu-Nikyo-ron, and Sammaya-Kaijo* (Lewiston, NY: Ediwn Mellen Press, 2005), 174.

mudras and visualization and meditation on *mandalas*, allow the practitioner to become aware of, and participate in, the three mysteries of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana. It could be considered a "*bi*-directional process" which allows for a "*uni*-fied perception of the perception the true nature of reality", leading to the transcendence of binary and oppositional modes of knowing.[128] The mysteries, along with other practices such as *a-ji* meditation, and the *goma*, help to purify the practitioner from the *klesas* which fetter her.[129] The elaborate rituals and meditations allow the aspirant to temporarily gain awareness of the preaching of Mahāvairocana, to, in the words of John Krummel, "inter-resonate with Dainichi's movements".[130]

As practice continues, one's awareness deepens, and what rituals are transcended as the awareness becomes habitual, at which point one can be said to have realized their inherent Buddha-nature, they have become a Buddha in their very body.

> …the individual's every action in daily life, without ritual form (*musô*), comes to intentionally reflect the enlightened body-and-mind of the Buddha and its three mysteries. Every word uttered is thus a mantra, every bodily movement a *mudra*, and every thought *samadhi*. [131]

Seeking Intimacy. Kūkai's method presupposes an already existing intimacy. His goal is to have us realize this. The intimacy he seeks is not primarily that of persons (to use Kasulis' hermeneutic), but rather that of the nature of all things, by virtue of their underlying emptiness.

The intimacy Maximus seeks is primarily that of persons relating to persons. Such an intimacy is only possible with other persons, and therefore would seem that such intimacy is not possible with the inanimate world, and only partially with lower orders of animals. This does not mean that these are forgotten about in his theology, only that the objects of person-centered intimacy have primacy. Interpersonal intimacy requires the ability to freely orient one's *tropoi*.

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[128] *Ibid.,* 104.

[129] *Ibid.*, 24; see *Bodhicita-sastra*, b.20-21.

[130] Krummel, "Kûkai", accessed October 28, 2014.

[131] *Ibid*.

The intimacy that Kūkai seeks to realize is not possible with God as Maximus understands him. For Maximus the intimacy that Kūkai seeks would amount to identity, given Maximus' ontological commitments. Our communion with God is with his energies, his actions, his turn outwards to the world. David Loy notes that non-duality of the kind sought by Mahāyāna and esoteric Buddhist traditions cannot be found within orthodox traditions of western religions, but some heterodox thinkers, such as the Christian monk Meister Eckhart.[132]

For Maximus, such an approach is not possible, not only because his approach is interested in the intimacy of persons as the highest good, but because there is no "source" "behind" God. Drawing from the Cappadocians, he holds that the Father is the source of the Trinity. Zizioulas argues that this means that Trinity and Divinity is grounded in person and not substance,[133] and therefore creation is as well. Personhood is "ontologically ultimate".[134]

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[132] Loy, *Nonduality*, 272-3. In the case of Eckhart, there is a distinction between personal God (as persons of the Trinity) and transpersonal Godhead (Gottheit), a divine reality that lies "behind" or "beyond" the Trinity, God in his (its) most primal nature, for instance see DW 38, Sermon 2. Eckhart is most commonly understood to be saying that spiritually adept move beyond God (*durchbrechen*, lit. "breaking through") to the Godhead, for instance, see *Von dem edeln menschen* (From the Nobleman), DW 5:109-119. [132] Scholars have noted parallels with Advaita Vedanta, a philosophical school of Hinduism which held that there existed beyond gods with attributes (*saguna brahman*), a transpersonal reality without attribute or person (*nirguna brahman*). See for example Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West.* Others have noted parallels with Buddhism, such as Karl Eugen Neumann (*Zwei buddhistische Suttas und ein Traktat Meister Eckharts*), D.T. Suzuki (*Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*), and Shizuteru Ueda ("Eckhart um zen am problem").

Techne and Turning. One other striking contrast between the two is, on the part of Maximus, a glaring absence of anything that might be considered *techne*, a technique or practical skill for attaining a desired end. Kūkai betrothed to Shingon a very detailed program and systematic approach to cultivating Buddha-mind, some of which he gained from his mentor, Hui-kuo. On the other hand, Hua-yen had a strong focus on theory and intellectualized meditation. Kūkai has a much stronger appreciation for the bodily aspects of practice as evidenced in the ritual practice of the three mysteries – chanting *mantras*, performing *mudras*, meditating on or visualizing *mandalas*.

In general Buddhism has a strong "technical" focus. With the seeming exception of *Pure Land* sects, Buddhism has traditionally focused very strongly on "self-power",[135] especially in early Buddhism. Since the condition of sentient beings was one primarily characterized by mis-cognition, it follows that any method of attaining liberation or salvation from the realm of rebirth involves learning to 'see' correctly. The renouncer tradition of ancient India had a variety of tools for re-training cognition and altering mental states – *samadhi*, meditation, breath-control, trances. The *Fourth Noble Truth* holds that suffering or dissatisfaction can be ended through the practice of the *Eightfold Noble Path*, all of which is a matter of self-discipline.

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[133] See Zizioulas, *Being and Communion*, 40-41, *Communion and Otherness*, 134; on the implications of the monarchy of the Father, see Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2008), 216.

[134] See Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 134.

[135] Care must be taken to remember the consistent Buddhist teaching of *anātman* and thus not to reify this categorization inasmuch as 'self' (and 'other') is a construct. *Kaji* in fact is supposed to be the cooperation between Mahāvairocana and aspirant. For more on the concepts of 'self power' and 'other power' and their emergence in Chinese Buddhism and subsequent (far more polemical) use in Japanese Buddhism, see James Ford, "Jōkei and the Rhetoric of 'Other-Power' and 'Easy Practice' in Medieval Japanese Buddhism," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29, no. 1–2 (2002), 67-106.

Without a concept of original or ancestral sin which alienats humans from a transcendent personal divinity (and also subsequently damaged human faculties beyond self-remedy), there was subsequently no need for a redeemer figure, a "salvific other". Shakyamuni Buddha is supposed to have told his monks to be lamps and refuges unto themselves.[136]

Secondly, we must also take into consideration that the three mysteries represent points of connection between the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana and the individual practitioner – where the practitioner learns and (hopefully) comes to awareness that his Buddha-mind is not different from the universal Buddha-mind.[137] The ritual and meditative practices allow one to recognize an already existing truth, not to gain something outside or foreign to it.

> From the beginning
> That which I sought
> Lay in my hands.
> How stupid I was
> To have thought it an echo
> Floating to me
> From beyond![138]

Furthermore, *tantra* is known for its "veritable anxiety" with "ritual detail".[139] Tantrism is infused with the ancient Indic, Vedic, conviction about the efficacious power of ritual; in order for it to achieve its intended effect, it must be done correctly. Kūkai is convinced of the possibility of any sentient being to attain enlightenment given the proper motivations and context.

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[136] Cf. *Digha Nikáya Sutta* 16, also Dhammapāda, no.238. Rapul Wahola notes that the in the phrase, *Attadipā viharatha, attasaranā anannasaranā*, "*attadipā*" taken to mean 'lamp' in this context actually means 'island': "Dwell making yourselves your island (support), making yourselves your refuges, and not anyone else as your refuge." Rapul Wahola, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1974).
[137] Krummel notes that Shingon represents the nonduality and mutuality between *self-power* and *other-power*. Krummel, *Kûkai*, accessed February 9, 2015.
[138] "The Enlightened Mind" from "Poems by Kōbō Daishi," translated by Beatrice Lane. *The Eastern Buddhist* 5, no. 3 (1931) 312-13.
[139] Saunders, *Mudrā*: *A Study of Symbolic…,* 28.

> For it is only through such rituals that the proper realizations can be afford an appropriate forum in which to surface, and in which these realizations can be comprehends in the context necessary for establishing their ultimate manifestation.[140]

Why is there no parallel to this in the thought of Maximus? The practice of divine philosophy does have a bodily aspect. At the beginning stages, great emphasis is placed simultaneously on controlling of one's appetites through abstinence, fasting, vigils, self-control and the like.[141] Secondly, there is the 'positive' aspect of the practice of love of one's neighbor.[142] This is not a matter of simply forbearing from injuring or doing evil to the other, but rather actively seeking for his or her good.

There are no equivalents to techniques for neutralizing thetic positings, as in the case of Kūkai. Maximus does say that the practice of the "six stillnesses" lead one to knowledge of God. I spoke of these in passing before, but wish to address these in a little more detail here. Meditating on a line from Psalm 45 (v.11), "Be still and know that I am God", he says,

> There are six stillnesses by which, if we achieve them, we are able to know God fully:
>
> …first, from sinful activity; second, from an exciting way of life; third, from a place of mingling with those who live in an unguarded way; fourth, from pursuits unsuitable for the life according to God; fifth, from an existence subject to slander and to many distractions of the *nous* by many things; sixth, the [state of] not having one's own will-completely. And this is both a renunciation and a subordination, both true and according to God.[143]

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[140] White, *The Role of Bodhicitta in Buddhist Enlightenment*, 98.

[141] See for instance, *Chapters on Love*, I.42,45.

[142] Love of one's neighbor also has a purificatory aspect, cf. *Chapters on Love,* I.27. This is probably because it helps to remove self-love from one's self. Self-love is "the mother of passions", which these other ascetic disciplines help to control, dissipate and reshape. Cf. *Chapters on Love,* II.8.

[143] Question I.45, *St. Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts,* translated by Despina D. Prassas, 148.

The first stillness is that offered by a clear conscience as well as a soul free from stain of sin, the purity required for a holy life. The second, by a stable life removed from extreme external stimulations. The third is about keeping good company. The fourth suggests something akin to what Buddhists call 'right livelihood'; the fifth one may advocate the practice of poverty or of a simplicity of lifestyle free of distractions, the final is the oblation or offering-up of one's will, submitting it to God (in the monastic context, it would be through obedience to one's legitimate superiors). This is especially important in the context of the primordial sin of the first parents who willfully disobeyed God's command. Secondly, also because of Maximus' elevation of the importance of the will, submitting the *gnomic* will to the *natural* one, so that our volitional activity accords with the natural orientation of human beings towards God.

This is a fairly comprehensive list and suggests the importance of quieting and harmonizing all aspects of one's person.[144] In a broad sense, these all represent removal of the person from absorption in distraction and absorption in certain forms of multiplicity,[145] but for Maximus, the most pressing concerns involve the kind of division caused by sin and disobedience.[146] But nothing seems to match the technical depth and complexity of Kūkai's strategy for awakening one's Buddha-mind.

There are a few things, I think, which mitigate against this:

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[144] There is an interesting parallel here with the practice of precepts, at least as described in Asvaghosa's *The Awakening of Faith*, part iv, which stress separation of the aspirant from circumstances of distraction and temptation, as well as from the more general hustle and bustle of the world. Asvaghosa also stresses here the awareness of one's faults and sins and the need of repentance. He does not however stress the renunciation of the will, but I think this is because will is not the central category it is for Christians, at least since Augustine.

[145] A common theme in Neoplatonic spiritual practice, such as found in Plotinus' *Enneads,* I.vi.

[146] *Chapters on Knowledge,* II.8.

The first is the transcendence of God. No human activity unaided can attain God,[147] because of both the ontological difference and simplicity of the creator. Once again we see that dialectic of immanence and transcendence at play in Maximus. Following in the way of Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus holds that ultimately God is responsible for moving humans beyond their capacities towards him.[148]

The second is, once again, the nature of God as person. The final goal is a form of loving communion with God, one which presupposes the existence of distinct parties. Williams contrasts this understanding, which is foundational to Christian orthodoxy, with that of nondual experience, important in all forms of Buddhism, but particularly Tantra, emphasizing their sheer incompatibility.[149] Christianity, he says, "is committed to the supreme importance of the person".[150] The *metanoia* which is central to divine philosophy and the process of deification is the changing of the will; volitional changes affect the *tropoi*, the level at which individual existents or persons relate to one another. Kūkai's commitment to nonduality and inherent enlightenment presupposes an already existing intimacy; his goal is to have us realize this. The intimacy Kūkai seeks is not primarily that of persons, but rather that of the nature of all things, made possible by virtue of their underlying emptiness.

Conclusion

I have shown that both thinkers have a concept of divinization as revealed in *sokushin-jobutsu* and *theosis*. In order to understand such doctrines I argued that we must first investigate two aspects of their teaching – how they understand *identity* (their

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[147] *Mystagogia*, ch.1; *Chapters on Knowledge*, I.1-4; II.1-2.
[148] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 423; cf. *Chapters on Knowledge*, II.36.
[149] Williams, *The Unexpected Way*, 56.
[150] *Ibid.*, 91.

metaphysics) and how they understand the project of self-cultivation (their *metapraxis*). Divinization is, in a sense, “identity in practice”.

I argued that this understanding of identity needs to be understood on the vertical and horizontal plane; for the vertical plane, the polarity of immanence and transcendence is useful, for the horizontal plane, the polarity of integrity and intimacy. Neither one is sufficient alone, but both are necessary. The vertical plane covers the aspirant’s relationship with the ‘divine’, the horizontal the aspirant’s relationship with the cosmos. The transformation that each man seeks is not uni-dimensional.

Logoi simultaneously disclose a transcendent and immanent dimension, acting as a buffer and bridge between creator and creation. Nonduality primarily reveals an immanental dimension within the cosmos, denying a transcendental realm that is in any way separate from or independent of the phenomenal. Kūkai’s nonduality favors a reading of the cosmos which favors intimacy while Maximus’ requires a balance of intimacy and integrity.

The divine is embodied in the cosmos and in one’s very being, as revealed in Kūkai’s understanding of *hosshin* (Mahavairocana’s ceaseless preaching of the *dharma* embodied in the transience of all thing-events) as well as in the *bodhicitta* and in Maximus’ understanding of the embodiment¸ *ensomatosis* (ἐνσωμάτωσις) in the cosmos through the *logoi* of things and in the incarnation of the Logos.

The spiritual struggle in each is to become divinized, to attain or realize one’s true identity, but never apart from a larger context which is to work for the good of others through the exercise of altruism, either *karuna* (compassion) or *agape* (love). Part of the salvific or liberatory aspect of the struggle is the cultivation of a type of ‘vision’ which allows one to see the cosmos (and everything it contains) as it is. In this noetic vision, the universe shines in a kind of translucence or transparency in which its meaning and referentiality are clearly seen. In the omnicentric tradition of Kūkai, this referentiality is always a pointing to everything else and nothing in particular. In the unicentric vision of Maximus, this pointing of things, through their *logoi* leads to the *Logos*. One of the worst failures of humans is the "single vision" attested by William Blake, or lack of "depth perception" which reduces the phenomenal world by stripping away its referentiality and inter-relatedness.

For both Kūkai and Maximus the world is the theater in which the sacred is encountered and made present, rather than a penal arena which is to be escaped *contra* early Indic forms of Buddhism as well as certain kinds of Hellenistic philosophy and Hellenized Christian theology. At least initially we come to know the noumenal world through phenomena; at higher levels of cultivation, we directly intuit or experience the sacred, but never is the phenomenal world discarded. In either case, human beings, as either being uniquely *imago dei*, or being able to realize their Buddha-nature, are called to be active participants in an ongoing project of the divinization of the world (insofar as this is possible within respective traditions).

John Brinkman notes a similarity in the thought of Kūkai and Aquinas, which I think is applicable to Maximus as well: "In each tradition the ultimate term of reference is present to all phenomena in a profoundly enhancing manner."[151] Each creature has reference to and finds meaning ultimately in something 'other' than itself. For Maximus this meaning ultimately resides in the Logos who draws and holds all things in peaceful communion; for Kūkai, in a creature's inter-relationality with all other things as in the shining jewels of Indra's net.

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[151] John Brinkman, "Harmony, Attribute of the Sacred and Phenomenal in Aquinas and Kūkai,*" Buddhist-Christian Studies* 15 (1995), 116.

Each provides a means of attaining this fundamental vision as a step on the way of entering into union or communion with the ultimate ground/divinity. Each method has an embodied character, for Maximus this is primarily through the practice of asceticism (such as fasting and vigils) and altruism, love of one's neighbor, but also through the partaking of the sacraments (which have a physical component) and in the liturgy (which has a bodily, communal character; worship itself has physical dimensions – genuflection, standing, prostration, etc.) He sees the Synaxis or Eucharist not in terms of transmutation of the sacrament, but rather the transformation of those who partake in it.[152] There is a strong doxological character to his program grounded in the awe that a creature feels before its transcendent creator.

For Kūkai this is primarily in terms of the cultivation of the three mysteries, the meeting points on the continuum of sentient being and Buddha. This includes visualization, in part, involves imagining one's self as the tutelary deity and dissolving the difference between one's self and the deity, or visualizing one's self as a moon and then expanding the moon to be coterminous with the universe.

Because body and mind are aspects of one continua, ostensibly physical practices have a profound effect on the mind's ability to concentrate and cognize (and vice versa). Altruism too, in this case, compassion, plays a critical role, but more implicit, more in the background. Within the tantric tradition generally, compassion must serve as a starting point for the journey towards attaining enlightenment. Upon cultivating non-dual wisdom, compassion can be perfected and manifests in upaya. Not only as a means of calming the mind from the crash of passions, not only for preventing the influx of bad karma, compassion serves as a motivation for the entire liberatory undertaking.

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[152] Von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 324.

The *logoi* disclose that God freely creates beings out of nothing and sustains them. He redeems rational beings. *Logoi* reveal, by their very nature, an economy of gift-giving – there is a giver, a receiver and a gift. The tension between *logos* and *tropos* at the heart of beings wherein lies the *hypostasis* reveals the dialectic between creator and creature.

With the traditional understanding of *creatio ex nihilo* there is a hierarchy present in this relationship, one party stands in a cybernetically subordinate relation to the other.[153] Being and meaning, 'flow' downwards (or outwards) from a transcendent center as gift and in return, praise and petition rise upwards (and inwards), which are acknowledgments of the recipients' creaturely status.

In creating *ex nihilo*, the creator creates a world of *thous*. A "risky" proposition lies therein when endowing certain creatures with the *imago* and *similitudo.* In order to properly realize their *imago,* according to Maximus' thought, they must exercise their own will. The logoi endow human beings with their being (*ousia*) and nature (*physis*) that is dynamically oriented towards the creator.

At this point, a certain paradox arises wherein traditional roles are reversed, the subordinate becomes superordinate – God proposes, man disposes – by the choice made either to harmonize and living according to one's nature or in defiance of it. If deification is a proposition or a vocation, then Maximus' divine philosophy represents an affirmation of that, an *amen*.

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[153] This is not to say that Christianity marks a return to a Plotinian *scalae naturae*. Gersh notes that with focus on *creatio ex nihilio*, Christian philosophers and theologians became far less interested in the questions about gradations of being that were crucial to Middle and Neo-platonists. See Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena…, 136.*

While substance can be created, it cannot be redeemed or deified. What is redeemed and deified are persons, *hypostases*. Redemption, deification, even damnation, do not mark changes or innovations in the nature or substance of a thing, rather it represents the change in the status of a relationship between creature and creator, one that ultimately changes the creaturely *tropos*. It never ceases to be a creature, but now exists in a supernatural mode, creature becomes by grace what creator is by nature.

The cultivation of altruism, expressed in Christianity as *agape*, self-emptying love, is central to divine philosophy. In doing so, one imitates the activity of God who is love. The primal "fall" of human beings resulted from a rejection of their creaturehood, rejection of the Other, thus rejecting 'otherhood' as constitutive of being.[154] Love of one's brothers, *philadelphia*, inclusive of strangers and enemies, refuses the seductive reductionism of self-love, *philautia,* the refusal to acknowledge their *thou*-ness or personhood, the making of a *thou* into an *it*.

For Kūkai, and the Buddhist tradition more generally, there is a certain paradox, and danger, associated with the idea of 'gift'. Giving is listed as one the first of the *paramitas* in the disparate lists of Theravāda and Mahāyana. When seen from a conventional perspective, the triad makes sense and therein its danger lies. Giver, gift, recipient are easy to reify when seen from that perspective. But from the perspective of emptiness, from the Buddha's eye, the "three purities" enter in, one understands there is neither giver nor recipient nor gift because there is no self. All beings, sentient or not lack *svabhāva*; their originary nature is emptiness.[155] But this is not a nihilism, but the recognition that there the individual members of this triad, although distinct are not separate from one another.[156] In a more mundane of putting it, to say that there is no giver, gift, recipient is to say that "[a]t the deepest level, there is…only the universe rearranging itself."[157]

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[154] *Ad Thalas*. 62 (PG, 653a; 713a); Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 43.

Such an insight carries over into the practice of *karuna*, compassion, the sixth perfection. At the earliest level, it is marked by an object of its concern, but as wisdom grows, compassion is without object. O'Leary notes, "Compassion extends first to beings, then to all *dharmas*, then it becomes objectless."[158] At the highest level of attainment, "The Buddha's objectless compassion radiates spontaneously. It has become their very being."[159]

The pervasiveness of delusion and its causal role in preventing sentient beings from knowing their true-nature and perpetuating suffering makes the cultivation of *prajna* or non-dual wisdom essential. Thus the cultivation of wisdom is at least as essential as compassion in the practice of self-cultivation. Generosity or compassion, any kind of altruism, while a noble effort, when practiced in ignorance of the true nature of things, only runs the risk of further deluding sentient beings. Such beings live and operate in the sphere of *samvrti-satya*, conventional truth grounded, in their experiences of the "everyday" world marked by its epistemological, grammatical and ontological assumptions. Secondly, with the emergence of *prajna*, compassion is said to radiate spontaneously from the enlightened being. Furthermore, the ultimate gift that a Bodhisattva can give to a deluded being is to point them to enlightenment, but such can only come from someone who has attained this enlightenment themselves.

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[155] See for instance, chapter 4 of the *Diamond Sutra* in which the Buddha advises Bodhisattvas that they should give without support of or attachment to any of the six sense bases. These bases were traditionally associated with the *nidanas*, causal factors of dependent origination. Attachment arose from *tanha*, craving, which results from contact of one of the six sense bases with an object of perception.

[156] See Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 129-30.

[157] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 64.

[158] Joseph O'Leary, "Non-duality". *Essays on Literary and Theological Themes,* accessed January 31, 2015, http://josephsoleary.typepad.com/my_weblog/2006/10/8_nonduality.html.
According to the *Aksayamatipariprccha sutra* (Chin: *Wou-tsin-yi p'ou-sa wen*; 中之八十無盡所做的), the progression of compassion, fueled by deepening insight into emptiness is *sattvalamabanā karuna,* the second, *dharmalambanā karuna*, the final *assatvalambanā karuna*. The first is described as compassion observing sentient beings, the second, observing only phenomena or *dharma*, recognizing beings only as aggregates. The final is recognizing emptiness or voidness as a condition of all things. On this point, see also Candrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*. He says the first has beings as its object, the second has transcience as its object, the third, "Great Compassion", has no object. Ruegg notes that at the highest level, which is also known as *mahākarunā* or *nirlāmabanā karunā*, the Buddha's compassionate activity is universal and has no object, it is "non-reifying and unhypostasized." David Seyfort Ruegg, "Aspects of the Investigation of the (earlier) Indian Mahāyāna," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no.1 (2004), 54.

[159] *Ibid.,* citing Viévard, Ludovic. *Vacuité (*sûnyatâ) *et compassion* (karunâ) *dans le bouddhisme madhyamaka* (Paris: Collège de France, 2002), 175; the translation, uncredited, seems to be his own.

Both Kūkai and Maximus call for a fundamental re-orientation of the self away from a narcicistic egoism. For Maximus, this egoism is primarily moral in character (sin), which subsequently has a quasi-epistemic dimension (being unable to see the logoi due to one's self-centric vision of things). For Kūkai, this egoism is strongly epistemic in origin, the inability to see things as they are (ignorance in early Indic Buddhist accounts, to ignorance of our inherent Buddha-nature in East Asian traditions) leads to craving which gives birth to suffering. If we take non-duality seriously however, the line between cause and effect here can become quite blurred. The question of which came first is then academic in nature – there is a need for both non-dual wisdom and compassion. The quest to attain Buddha-hood in this life cannot be for the self alone – it is entered (and sustained), at least in part, out of the desire to liberate all sentient beings. When wisdom is achieved, the result is the spontaneous ability to perform *upaya*, expedient means for the liberation of sentient beings.

Both require divine aid (grace or *kaji*), however in Kūkai's case, the line is far more blurred as aspirant and Buddha are not ontologically distinct from one another, as is God and creature in Maximian thought. In the eyes of the enlightened, *kaji* does not represent the meeting of two separate realities, but of two aspects of one. In both Maximus and Kūkai though there is a kind of *synergy* at work.

Maximus is far more thoroughly committed to the sheer necessity of grace even for the aspiration to rise above one's circumstances, undoubtedly drawing from Pauline theology. Although grace may represent "other power" in the Buddhist sense, it does not seem to be the *extra nos* or "alien grace" as for some of the Protestant Reformers, but a deep part of what it means to be a human being which is by nature created for and in relation to the Logos and even exists through participation in God's being.

It is striking that both Maximus and Kūkai, in their respective traditions, seem to have discovered or have been aware of a certain spiritual parallel to the second law of thermodynamics. The second law reads, "in a natural thermodynamic process, there is an increase in the sum of the entropies of the participating systems". In an oversimplified explanation, we may say that in an enclosed system, entropy increases. Humans (and all sentient beings) exist not in isolation, but embedded in community, in a network of relationships.

Both would find deeply troubling the atomistic trajectory that western culture has taken since the Enlightenment. In its stronger tendencies, it becomes what Jean-Bethke Elshtain calls "hard self-sovereignty":

> In the world of hard self-sovereignty, the self stands alone, sans any mutually constitutive relationship to the world…relationships are seen as incidental to the self, not essential definitive of one's identity. The messiness, incompleteness, paradox, and shortcomings of the world are

> treated with a kind of scorn. The self is proud, characterized by superbia…What occupies the vertical site of transcendence? The self, outside, above the world, a place where one rises above the 'herd' and seizes one's projects with nary a backward glance.[160]

It seems to involve a forgetfulness or obscuration of the reality that human beings are relational in character and an inability or lack of desire to look beneath the surface of the 'self' of hard sovereignty. At a deeper level, modernity itself is caught up in what Norman Brown calls the Oedipal project,[161] that is, the attempt to become a "father to one's self", to become God.[162] David Loy, a psychotherapist, explains it this way:

> [It is] the attempt to become father of oneself, that is, one's own origin. The child wants to conquer death by becoming the creator and sustainer of his/her own life. Buddhism shows us how to shift the emphasis: the Oedipal project is the attempt of the developing sense-of-self to attain autonomy, to become like Rene Descartes's supposedly self-sufficient consciousness.[163]

In the Buddhist philosophy of Kūkai, this desire for 'hard sovereignty' arises from *tanha*, human craving, in this case, for an eternal, abiding existence. We intuit a lack at the core of our being, we cannot bear to look into this abyss. We discover that we lack *svabhāva*, are without "inherent existence", that is, we are not self-grounded. Loy claims that in Christian thought, this sense of guilt was reified into original sin and provided with a pedigree.[164] Furthermore the sense of primordial sin greatly deepened subjectivity and increased the sense of lack that the Buddhist outlook lays at the core of our problems.[165]

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[160] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 204.

[161] See Norman Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1958), chapter 9, 110-136.

[162] Drawing from Freud's thought, existential psychologist Norman Brown holds that the ego's death-repression instinct alters the oedipal complex, drawing the person to become their own father. See *Life Against Death*, 117-119.

[163] Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West*, 4.

[164] Loy says that the sense of guilt is fundamentally ontological in nature. See David Loy, "Avoiding the Void: The Lack of Self in Buddhism and Psychotherapy," *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 24, no.2 (1992), 156.

Maximus' account of the fall of Adam and Eve makes it clear that their temptation was one of pride, the desire for self-sufficiency, the rejection of creaturehood. Their rejection of God signaled the denial of otherness as constitutive of being, "Adam rejected the Other as constitutive of his being and declared himself to the ultimate explanation of his existence."[166] The self then becomes the measure of all being and is furthermore given priority over others or the other,[167] which leads to the rise of *philautia*.[168]

Maximus offers a hetero-unicentric account whereas Kūkai offers an omnicentric account. In rejecting the atomistic approach, they go in different, almost opposite directions, but both stress that to exist is to be open in some way to others. In a very general way, one may say their practices lead the individual to reorient themselves and relate to a higher-order reality whether the *Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana*, the universe in its totality, or the God as Logos, who transcends the realm of created being. In each case, in some way, relationality and otherness beyond the egoistic, conventional self, can be said to be constitutive of being.

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[165] Loy. *A Buddhist History of the West,* 36.
[166] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 43; Maximus, *Ad Thalas*. 62 (PG, 653a; 713a).
[167] *Epistle 2* (PG 91, 396D).
[168] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 43.

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