

ARTICLE

Cataphatic *Śūnyatā*? A Pure Land Alternative to Dialogue Between Eckhart and Japanese Buddhism

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Abstract

Much of the dialogue relating to the tension in apophatic Buddhist philosophy is framed in discourse around language. The aim of this paper is to change the conversation. This paper is primarily concerned with the tension between apophatic and cataphatic hermeneutics embedded in the discourse. I argue there is a dharmalogical hermeneutic that is embedded in the discourse of Buddhist philosophy. There is a subjectivity of one's own experience and views that is reconciled with Buddha-dharma. Accordingly, in the discourse of non-duality, there will be an apophatic or cataphatic emphasis embedded in the discourse, determined by one's dharmalogical hermeneutic. This respective apophatic or cataphatic emphasis is not only dharmalogically relevant, but also affects the dialogue between Eckhart and Japanese Buddhism. The cataphatic alternative from a Pure Land perspective presented here locates Eckhart's theology in closer proximity to *śūnyatā* than its apophatic counterpart.

Keywords

non-duality, negative theology, meontology, *śūnyatā*, Meister Eckhart, Pure Land Buddhism, Buddhist-Christian dialogue, Ueda Shizuteru, Kyoto School, metaphysics

From the Paradox of Language to Hermeneutics: Changing the Conversation

Much of the dialogue relating to apophatic Buddhist philosophy is an explicit discussion of the paradox of language. Edelglass suggests that apophatic discourse is both liberating and ensnaring, but more importantly, the relevant question is not “what does it say?” but rather “what does it do? What are some of the things it can do?” or “what can one do with apophatic discourse?”¹ It is about the way language functions in Buddhist philosophy. Much of this literature also relies on primary sources like sutras or koans, though there are exceptions like Ralph Müller’s treatment of “Silence in Language.”² Garfield and Huntington both engage in a hermeneutic or exegetic treatment of Nāgārjuna,³ though this is ensnared by debates about historical context, and the form of Nāgārjuna’s language. I don’t dispute that apophatic discourse is both liberating and ensnaring, but my focus is on the discourse of contemporary Buddhist commentators, rather than the Buddhist canon. Though language is the foundation of this paper, it is not the topic. The topic is rather what’s conveyed hermeneutically by language, particularly by contemporary Buddhist philosophers, and how this affects dialogue with Christian speculative mystics like Eckhart. I argue there is a dharmalogical hermeneutic that is embedded in the discourse of Buddhist philosophy. There is a subjectivity of one’s own experience and views that is reconciled with the teachings of Buddha-dharma, in a similar fashion to the hermeneutics of Christian theology. Accordingly, in the discourse of Buddhist non-duality, there will be an apophatic or cataphatic emphasis embedded in the discourse determined by one’s dharmalogical hermeneutic. This respective apophatic or cataphatic emphasis is not only dharmalogically relevant, but also affects the dialogue between Eckhart and Japanese Buddhism. The cataphatic alternative to existing dialogue presented here locates Eckhart’s theology in closer proximity to *śūnyatā* than its apophatic counterpart. I first provide a reading of Eckhart, situated in Sermon 87 and Sermon 9. This is followed by an exegesis of

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- 1 William Edelglass, “‘That Is Why The Buddha Laughs’: Apophasis, Buddhist Practice, and the Paradox of Language,” *Journal of Dharma Studies* 1, no. 2 (2019): 201–14.
 - 2 Ralf Müller, “The Articulation of Silence in Language,” in *Tetsugaku Companion to Ueda Shizuteru: Language, Experience, and Zen*, ed. Ralf Müller, Raquel Bouso, and Adam Loughnane (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2022), 201–223.
 - 3 C. W. Huntington, “The Nature of the Mādhyamika Trick,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 35, no. 2 (2007): 103–31; Jay L. Garfield, “Turning a Madhyamaka Trick: Reply to Huntington,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36, no. 4 (2008): 507–27.

Ueda Shizuteru's comparison of Eckhart with Zen as a paradigmatic case, demonstrating that Ueda's depiction of non-duality has an apophatic emphasis and accordingly a greater distinction between Buddhist non-duality and Eckhart. Though Ueda's text is based in Zen I am not suggesting that an apophatic hermeneutic is synonymous with Zen. I then present a cataphatic hermeneutic of *śūnyatā* and non-duality from a Pure Land perspective and relate this to Eckhart's theology, while I would again refrain from equating a cataphatic hermeneutic with the Pure Land sect. Finally, while I advocate for a cataphatic hermeneutic herein, this is not to argue that a cataphatic hermeneutic is more adequate or authoritative than an apophatic hermeneutic. It is simply to present an alternative to much of the existing dialogue, thereby demonstrating that neither hermeneutic is authoritative.

Meister Eckhart's Theology

In East-West dialogue, Eckhart is a popular figure for comparison, hence his role in this work. Rudolph Otto has compared Eckhart's theology with Vedanta, and specifically within Buddhist-Christian dialogue, he has been compared with Zen by Catholic monk Thomas Merton, and Zen philosophers including D.T. Suzuki, Keiji Nishitani, and Ueda Shizuteru. Keiji Nishitani offers a detailed analysis of the relationship between Eckhart and Zen, however, a limited number of pages are devoted to Eckhart in his most widely available English translation, *Religion and Nothingness*. The bulk of his attention to Eckhart is given in *God and the Absolute Nothing*, which has yet to be translated into English. Ueda Shizuteru has gained wide notoriety in discussions of Eckhart and Zen, and is referenced by Bernard McGinn, John D. Caputo, and others who write works primarily devoted to Eckhart. Shizuteru offers a unique perspective as a Zen scholar with a command of Middle High German, writing his dissertation on Eckhart alone.

The essence of Eckhart's theology lies in non-duality, expressed in his notion of the Godhead, ground (MHG *Grunt*), and in detachment (MHG *Gelassenheit*). What Eckhart posits is that the infinite ground for "God" in the form of the Trinity is the Godhead which lies beyond or underneath the creator God. The Godhead exists as an infinite, absolute potential, but has no attributes. It is infinite nothingness. It cannot be reduced to a finite concept and thus negates all qualities except its existence. In Sermon 13b, Eckhart says, "Where the Father bears His Son in the innermost ground, this nature flows in there. This nature is one and simple. Something may

here peep out or hang on it, but that is not this One.”⁴ The “something” that “peeps” out are attributes or qualities we layer on top of God, but as Eckhart says, this is not the One. This infinite ground of oneness, which is nothingness, accordingly has no cause. When we say God is infinite nothingness, we mean that God has no boundaries; God exists, but yet is not substantive. God does not stand in relation to anything. God has no boundary, no substance, no attributes, an absolute negation. Yet God exists so in the negation of the negation, the ground of nothingness of God has a perfect and absolute essence of fullness.

But the affirmation of perfect fullness is the explanation for creation. God’s nature is an inner boiling (Lat. *bullitio*), which is the source of a boiling over (Lat. *ebullitio*) that is creation. Thus the abyss of “grunt” is dynamically co-identified with *bullitio*, ultimately resulting in *ebullitio*, thus sustaining non-duality, but the consequence is cataphatic. Eckhart says, “God created the world, not out of any lack in Godself which God hoped to fill up a why, but out of the welling up within Godself of God’s own life which spills over into creatures ... [The Trinity, and by extension] creation is the overflow, the spilling over of this inner life-process into time and number and multiplicity.”⁵ There is no logical or conceptual explanation for creation other than the essence of perpetual fullness, which, of course, is inexhaustible because it is infinite. God has no “why,” God does not “act” for any end outside Godself, and if we are one with God, neither should we. For this reason he says, “[o]ut of this inmost ground, all your works should be wrought without Why.”⁶ Here he does not mean acting out of irrationality, but rather that our actions should spring from this ground of God, which is non-rational or not rational, but not arbitrary. This is to say that we are not sanctified by our works, but our works are sanctified by us, through “being.” This is possible because for Eckhart, our soul shares “a little spark” or in other words, the *grunt* of God. The little spark is not representative of divine nature, but rather the deeper ground that allows God to rise up in the soul. Our innate capacity to be related to God in God’s naked being is unrelated to anything else. He says:

4 Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. and ed. Maurice O’C. Walshe (New York: Crossroads, 2009), 108–9.

5 John D. Caputo, “The Rose is Without Why: Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” in *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 109.

6 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 110.

Whoever would exist in the nakedness of this nature, free from all mediation, must have left behind all distinction of person ... Go right out of yourself for God's sake, and God will go right out of Himself for your sake! When these two have gone out, what is left is one and simple.⁷

It is this negation of "creatureliness" that allows the essence of God's ground to boil up, arriving at a point where Eckhart and God are neither two nor one, but two in one ground. What is left that is one and simple is the fused ground. Creatures are entirely dependent on God, in the same way that a white thing cannot exist without the fundamental essence of whiteness as a potential, but all white things have the essence of whiteness. He asserts that "my ground is God's ground and God's ground is my ground."⁸ They are one in ground, yet there is still "my" ground and "God's" ground, in the same manner that waves are one with the ocean, yet distinct and finite.

Acting from creaturely faculties such as the senses or discursive reasoning relates us only to creaturely things. Eckhart says that "a creaturely image deprives you of the whole of God. As soon as this image comes in, God has to leave with all His Godhead. But when the image goes out, God comes in."⁹ The problem arises when we layer attributes upon God, turning God into a dualistic object that we can possess, or attempt to possess. When God becomes an object, specifically an object of desire, we are separated from God by nature of the fact that a subject is separated from an object. In Eckhart's words, "if a man thinks he will get more of God by meditation, by devotion, by ecstasies, or by special infusion of grace than by the fireside or in the stable—that is nothing but taking God, wrapping a cloak round His head and shoving Him under a bench. For whoever seeks God in a special way gets the way and misses God, who lies hidden in it."¹⁰ This separation stems not only from our objectification of God, but our reification of ourselves as separate and distinct subjects which are preoccupied with creaturely things. Thus, he advocates for *Gelassenheit*, or detachment, so that God can work without creaturely interference.

Eckhart's most renowned sermon, *Beati Pauperes Spiritu Quia Ipsorum Est Regnum Caelorum* (Sermon 87, "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit") is summarized in the exhortation, "A poor man is one who wants nothing, knows nothing,

7 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 109–110.

8 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 109.

9 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 110.

10 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 110.

and has nothing.”¹¹ He proclaims, “[w]hile I yet stood in my first cause, I had no God and was my own cause: then I wanted nothing and desired nothing, for I was bare being and the knower of myself in the enjoyment of truth.”¹² Eckhart here is his *own* cause, because his own cause is the little spark of God’s ground. He knows himself, but only through his bare being, unrelated to anything else. He goes on, saying “what I wanted I was and what I was I wanted, and thus I was free of God and all things ... *then* I had a God.”¹³ Only when he has relinquished the last trace of wanting God through *any means*, and come to rest in naked being can he be totally free to enjoy truth in being what he is. That is, when he is liberated from creaturely things, he still participates in them, but the ground from which he participates is God’s ground. The soul must abandon the blockage or obstacle of God entirely in order for God’s ground to rise and unite with the soul. The affirmative requires an absolute negation of the affirmative, emblematic of non-dualism, but accordingly, the consequence is affirmative.

Eckhart’s quintessential passage is found in his section on “having nothing,” for it is in this section that mystic union is described most clearly. He says:

When I flowed forth from God, all creatures declared,
 “There is a God”; but this cannot make me blessed, for with
 this I acknowledge myself as a creature. But in my breaking
 through, where I stand free of my own will, of God’s will,
 of all His works, and of God himself, then I am above
 all creatures and am neither God nor creature, but I am
 that which I was and shall remain for evermore ... for this
 breaking-through guarantees to me that I and God are one.
 Then I am what I was, then I neither wax nor wane, for then
 I am an unmoved cause that moves all things.¹⁴

In spite of the lofty description in the passage, Eckhart has cast off any trace of attachment to God, and thus cast off any attachment to transcendent or ecstatic spiritual experience. He is describing liberation—liberation that comes in the form of returning to a very ordinary existence. Eckhart’s notion of *Gelassenheit*, or letting go, is total and absolute. He is free of God himself, and only upon this last surrender can we return to the ordinary and

11 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 420.

12 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 421.

13 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 421.

14 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 424.

the everyday. Mystic union remains, because the union is not a permanent non-dual experience. Mystic union is the acceptance of the totality of dualism and non-dualism that is “being.” That final surrender is the breaking-through, *not* the ecstatic experience of non-dualism. We must first embark on a spiritual path that involves some aim to take the first step. Only after we have wanted to know God, can we let go of that desire for God and walk the full circle to return to the everyday in mystic union. This reading is supported by Eckhart’s sermon on Martha and Mary from Luke 10:38 (sermon 9).

Many of Eckhart’s contemporaries argued for the superiority of contemplative life using the story of Martha and Mary, claiming that Mary, who sat peacefully at Jesus’ feet was the virtuous character in the story, while Martha, who busies herself in the kitchen to attend to Jesus, was chided by him.¹⁵ In sermon 9, Eckhart offers a radically different reading of this passage. Although he concedes that Mary and Martha are both virtuous, he argues that it is Martha in her mature wisdom who is more spiritually developed. According to Eckhart, Martha did not ask Jesus to tell Mary to help her out of anger or resentment, but rather from a desire to help Mary develop spiritually. He says:

Hence her words, “Lord, tell her to help me,” as if to say, “my sister thinks she is able to do what she wishes to do, as long as she sits and receives solace from you. Let her see if it is so: bid her get up and go from you.” The latter part was kindly meant, though she spoke her mind ... We suspect that she, dear Mary, sat there a little more for her own happiness than for spiritual profit. That is why Martha said, “Bid her rise, Lord,” fearing that by dallying in this joy she might progress no further.¹⁶

And:

[Mary] was filled with joy and bliss and had only just entered school, to learn to live. But Martha stood there in her essence, and hence she said, “Lord, bid her get up,” as if to say “Lord, I do not like her sitting there just for joy. I want her to learn life and possess it in essence: bid her arise that she may be perfect.”¹⁷

15 John D. Caputo, “Fundamental Themes in Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” *The Thomist* 42, no. 2 (1978): 204.

16 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 84.

17 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 89.

This precisely echoes the former reading of Eckhart’s “breaking-through.” While spiritual bliss and ecstatic union are noble, we must also be free of their pursuit to become fully mature and ‘break-through’ into the ordinary work of preparing food in the kitchen. When Jesus responds to Martha’s request for Mary’s help, he says “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42 NRSV). Eckhart reads this not as a rebuke, but as a form of reassurance that her sister would grow spiritually as she desired. He draws careful attention to her being named twice by Jesus. He explains by saying:

Why did he name Martha twice? He meant that every good thing, temporal and eternal, that a creature could possess was fully possessed by Martha. The first mention of Martha showed her perfection in temporal works. When he said ‘Martha’ again, that showed that she lacked nothing pertaining to eternal bliss.¹⁸

She is named once in a temporal sense, and once in an eternal sense. For Eckhart, Martha has walked full circle to be free of God. She has embraced temporal duality and eternal non-duality, discursiveness and contemplation. In Buddhist terms, she exists as she is, whether that be in relative reality or absolute reality. When Jesus says only one thing is needed, he is not referring to Mary’s form of discipleship. He is referring to the *one* ground of God and Martha, where “*I and you are once embraced by the eternal light, that is one ... one becomes two, two is one.*”¹⁹

For Eckhart, we must be in the kitchen *however* we come to the kitchen, be it in illusion, or enlightenment. Truly to address the dualism between the relative reality of “self” and the absolute reality of “no-self”, we must embrace both as Emptiness. The only way to “break-through,” to crack open the shell of ego, is to accept that ego will *always* remain. When we surrender not only our ego, but also our effort to absolve ourselves of our ego—this is the total negation required for a complete affirmation that shares the affectivity of Meister Eckhart. The all-encompassing non-duality not only embraces non-duality, but duality *and* non-duality. This is Martha in the kitchen, and it must be affirmative since it encompasses *both* relative and absolute reality.

18 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 85.

19 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 86 (author’s emphasis).

An Apophatic *Śūnyatā*: Ueda on Eckhart

Ueda Shizuteru and his philosophy exudes an apophatic emphasis resulting in a larger distinction between Zen and Eckhart. Ueda's penetration of Buddhist philosophy is evidenced in the skill with which he portrays it. There is no critique here. Nor am I suggesting that his apophatic emphasis is corrupt or unfaithful to Buddha-dharma, in spite of a de facto violation of the Heart Sutra—this is inevitable. However, the exegesis is presented as universal, when in fact there is a dharmalogical hermeneutic embedded in the text. A cataphatic emphasis is also equally authoritative, and acknowledging our subjective orientation toward the Buddha-dharma is necessary to maintain a critical stance. Ueda summarizes his comparison of Eckhart and Zen by saying:

In Eckhart's German-language sermons one repeatedly finds statements which could be valid word-for-word translations from Zen texts ... [A]ll these elements ... find their correlations in Zen Buddhism. This is not to deny that between Meister Eckhart's mysticism and Zen a certain difference is retained, which on the one hand, in relation to the similarities, can appear quite small. On the other hand, however, these differences can appear quite large, so large in fact, that these similarities become completely meaningless.²⁰

It is also noteworthy and relevant to this discussion that he acknowledges the specific character of Zen within the larger Mahāyāna setting, saying, "Apart from the fact that, in relation to other historical forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism and other non-Buddhist religions, Zen Buddhism exhibits very few such personalistic elements, for Zen Buddhism, it comes down to a matter of overcoming such elements."²¹ Conversely, his Kyoto school counterpart Nishitani Keiji refers to Buddhist philosophy as "personally impersonal."²² Ueda draws the conclusion that in spite of their parallels, the return to the actuality of the world in the completion of the breakthrough is more radical in Zen than in Eckhart's thought. But Ueda's approach to *śūnyatā* is not necessarily authoritative for all Buddhists.

20 Ueda Shizuteru, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism in Comparison with Zen Buddhism," trans. Gregory S. Moss, *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (May 2022): 128–52, at 128–29.

21 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 129.

22 Nishitani Keiji, *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 60.

In Gregory Moss' translation, Ueda compares Joachim Bueckelaer's painting of Martha and Mary (Figure 1), which is influenced by Eckhart's sermon on the subject, and a Zen painting by Ryokai of the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism from the thirteenth century (Figure 2), drawing out the distinctions between Zen and Eckhart's theology.²³



Figure 1. Joachim Bueckelaer, *The Well-stocked Kitchen, with Jesus in the House of Martha and Mary in the Background* [*De welvoorziene keuken*], Oil on Panel, 1566 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-1451), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bueckelaer,_Joachim_-_Well-Stocked_Kitchen,_and_Jesus_in_the_house_of_Martha_and_Mary_in_the_background,_the.jpg.

23 In Bueckelaer's painting, Martha is prominently preparing the meal in the foreground, and her figure is large, as the focus of the painting. Conversely, Mary and Jesus are painted very small in the background. The attention and space given to Martha indicate that the nothingness of the Godhead is expressed positively in her ordinary preparation of food. She is far away from Jesus and has thus completely let go of God. The negative expression of the Godhead is expressed through the smallness of Jesus and his place away from the activity. Martha is not God, as Jesus is, but the nothingness of the Godhead expressed in the depiction of Jesus takes its form far away as Martha, the human being. Thus, we have both the nothingness of the Godhead and the fullness of the Godhead expressed through Jesus and Martha respectively, and though distant in their visual depiction in the painting, Martha and God in the form of Jesus are actually united in their ground which is beyond any visual depiction.



Figure 2. Liang Kai, *The Sixth Patriarch Cutting Bamboo*, Ink on Paper, thirteenth century, (Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, TA-143), https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl&colid=TA143&t=type&id=11&lang=en.

Ueda's key observation is that the ultimate implication would be to remove Jesus from the picture entirely. He says:

Despite his negative theology and theory of attributes, Eckhart does not draw the implication that personalistic theism should be overcome. Eckhart was not able to draw this last inference, and he did not want to. This implication is not expressed in this painting; the picture still contains too much, namely the form of Jesus. Here it comes down to the return of God to the non-pictorial nothingness of the Godhead; thus, Jesus is painted small, but he is still there.²⁴

For Ueda, Eckhart's statement that "his ground is God's ground" would need to be restated in a way that did not name or include God for it truly to reflect the character of Zen. If Eckhart's theology can be described as neither one, nor two, but two as one; for Ueda, there is only zero as one, or perhaps zero as infinity.

In contrast, Ryokai's painting contains only the man. It is a stark portrayal of Emptiness. As Ueda summarizes:

Here God has completely disappeared. Neither any trace of the divine nor any trace of his disappearance remains. Only mere emptiness remains. God has completely "un-become," in order to speak in comparison with Eckhart's terminology. The Emptiness belongs to the essence of Zen painting. It is an expression of the radically executed pictorial nullity of transcendence, or rather for the turning back of transcendence to pictorial nullity itself to the nothing, to that which is beyond transcendence.²⁵

In this painting, it is the absence of presence, the absence of pictorial depiction that signifies the nothingness of the Godhead. In a positive sense, the Godhead is the man, alone and working in his way. The man is cutting bamboo, and that is all. Ueda's description not only seems to highlight the absence of God in the painting generally, but specifically the solitude of the man: "He appears in such a way as though he were the only being, the most real being, in the infinite Emptiness; and this he really and truly is."²⁶ Here

24 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 130.

25 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 132.

26 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 132.

not only the absence of any personal or transcendent force or being, but the absence of anything or anyone else aside from the man. There is a sense of solitude in Ueda's description, and while the implication of this solitude is neither positive nor negative, the description is stolid and barren. This impression only intensifies as his analysis continues. He says:

However, this is no solipsistic self-absolutization of the man. To the contrary, in virtue of first becoming completely empty and *annihilated* he has come to himself, as he works in this way and is dependent upon nothing ... The man is the nothing ... He is himself, but from the outset his self has been completely penetrated by the Emptiness. That means: in the Emptiness the man himself is completely empty.²⁷

For Ueda, the man is annihilated and all that remains is the shred of him being himself. The affirmation of "he is himself" is overshadowed and qualified by the fact that "from the outset his self has been completely penetrated by the Emptiness." In the last sentence of the quote, there is no affirmation even that "he is himself," only that he is completely empty.

For Eckhart, the essence of God, which is nothingness, is given the designation "the One," and while Ueda concedes that Eckhart is clear that "the One" is nothingness, he maintains that "the number one lies at the ground of the concept of the One. One cannot completely separate the number one from the concept of 'the One,' although Eckhart claims that the One contains nothing numerical in itself."²⁸ Ueda's observation is valid, but it also needs contextualization, since we can only presume that Eckhart's designation of "the One" specifically, as opposed to zero as it is in Zen, is influenced by the neo-Platonism in which Christianity is steeped. It would be exceedingly counterintuitive to use another designation in Eckhart's milieu. Ueda contrasts this with *śūnyatā* in Zen, which is related to the term *śūnyajm*, *shunjaym* or zero in mathematics.²⁹ But contrary to Suzuki or Nicholas of Cusa even,³⁰ Ueda does not provide a counterpart to zero that mirrors its negation with an affirmation. Thus, to bring his comparison to its conclusion, Eckhart's "One" is understood to be affirmational while Ueda's "zero" is negational. Bracketing the fact that they are intended to signify the

27 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 132 (emphasis mine).

28 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 133.

29 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 133.

30 Suzuki says zero equals infinity, and Cusa says the maximum coincides with the minimum.

same paradox, the respective designations each fall either cataphatically or apophatically.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle in non-dualism is the problem of how, and even if, to speak about the absolutely ineffable. There is no dispute that Eckhart indeed did speak and preach about the ineffable. He made assertions about that which cannot be related, or ascribed attributes. The more radical approach of Zen, for Ueda, staunchly supports the view that any assertion of the Truth destroys the absolute, and this is reflective of his apophatic hermeneutic. There are countless Zen koans and dialogues to support this, and Ueda provides an example:

Monk: What is the meaning of the fact that the patriarch³¹ originally came from the West?

Zhaozhou: The oak tree in front of the garden.³²

Ueda explains that the monk is asking about meaning in the sense of intention, but the answer is provided in meaning. The monk is asking a question of “why.” For Zen though, and Eckhart too, there is no answer to questions presupposing a “why” or a reason. This however does not signify a lack of meaning in the patriarch coming to Japan. The only answer is that things are as they are. Mountains are mountains, and water is water; thus the Zen master gives a response in this fashion: The oak tree in front of the garden is as it is. The question presupposes a logical intention, and the answer is provided through non-rational meaning, since there is no answer to the question in an intentional sense driven by reason. Ueda correlates this question to the Christian soteriological question of “why did God become a man?” While God had no intention or reason for becoming man, this does not mean there is no meaning to be found in God becoming man. Ueda first refers to a logical answer by Eckhart, “He became a man in order that he may give birth to you, his one and only begotten Son, and nothing less.”³³ Then he refers to Sermon 21, where Eckhart says that God is without a why. The obvious similarity here is that the plenitude of God and the suchness of phenomena have no logical intention or reason, but they are not without meaning, and Ueda’s explication reflects this. Where Ueda draws the distinction between Eckhart and Zen is not the fundamental meaning of the answer to these questions, but the way in which the questions are answered. In Eckhart’s case, the response of “without why” is “more of an

31 By “patriarch” the monk is referring to Bodhidharma.

32 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 136.

33 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 137.

immediate negation of the question itself than an answer ... [and] does not allow the questioner any room for a further inquiry back into God, and corresponding to this, for the unfolding of doctrine.”³⁴ It sustains the logical form of inquiry of the original question. He contrasts this with the form Zhaozhou’s response, who rather than giving a negative logical response to the question, responds positively, but in a way that is disconnected from the logical form in which the question is asked. The Eckhart-inspired Angelus Silesius says, “The rose is without why; it blooms because it blooms.”³⁵ Ueda ultimately concludes that for Eckhart truly to mirror Zen he would have provided a response in the form of Silesius’ “it blooms because it blooms,” or better yet for Ueda, “the rose.”³⁶ Ueda acknowledges that Eckhart preaches that humans should work without why so that the birth of God, who works without why, can take place in the soul, saying:

In this way, the response “without why” contains a power within itself to help free the questioner from positing the question “why” and to help him to enter directly into the thing itself, which he attempts to grasp in a misguided way with the question “why?”; directly into the thing itself, that is, in the way such that the thing in question, the incarnation of God, is fulfilled straightaway in the questioner himself.³⁷

Ueda does not note, however, that while Zhaozhou’s response of “the oak tree” may help free questioners from their search for “why,” it does not guide the questioners to penetrate into the thing itself, as Eckhart does. What *is* implied though, is that Zhaozhou’s response adheres more strictly to the realm of non-duality. While this may be the case, it is also the case that Silesius and others understood Eckhart’s meaning deeply enough that they themselves were able to frame it non-dualistically anyway. Given that non-dual meaning is indeed conveyed, how important is maintaining a non-dual vehicle to convey it? Ueda claims that “Zen has its essential place outside of ‘doctrine,’”³⁸ but the strict adherence to avoiding any assertions about the

34 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 139.

35 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 140.

36 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 143.

37 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 139.

38 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 138. Ueda adds later that “the first example from Eckhart treated above, where the question ‘why’ and the answer ‘for this reason’ speak with each other about God, which means they both together make God into an object of discussion. At the same time, the distance to God offers the space for the content of the doctrine, which the ‘why’ and the ‘for this reason,’

absolute, and the rigidity of non-dual language is doctrinal in nature, even if it is not formal or explicit doctrine in the traditional sense. Ueda sees any trace of duality as something to be “overcome.”

This absolute adherence to strict non-duality supports the notion that his particular vision of Zen is in fact much more rigid than he acknowledges. While doctrine as a phenomenon is not problematic in and of itself, if the doctrine of anti-doctrine is adopted, as it seems he has, we encounter an altogether different problem. Non-duality and negative theology exist in a spectrum of speaking and not speaking, and an apophatic hermeneutic is aligned with a strict allegiance to silence about the ineffable. Ueda disavows speaking in any way about the absolute, but the discourse in which he engages through the chapter is a way of speaking of the absolute. He devotes a significant volume of text to the “is without why” of Silesius in order to support his argument. But what of the second statement: “it blooms because it blooms”? He devotes significantly less attention to this statement, and even though it has no subject or predicate, there is no reification of God here. I would argue this answer gives more insight into the question of “why did God become man?” than “the rose.” The resistance to speak at all about the absolute is not only rigid, but for some it also creates more obstacles for the seeker to overcome the rational intent of the question, and penetrate the meaning of the ineffable.

Ueda concludes the paper by contrasting the metaphysical nature of the Godhead with Zen:

Eckhart says: God un-becomes, and therewith he calls the nothingness in which God un-becomes, “Godhead.” This indicates that he continues to experience nothingness from the standpoint of God as the ground of God, not nothingness as such. The nothingness, however, into which God un-becomes, as such no longer allows the position to exist from which to determine the nothingness as Godhead. Eckhart does not say: nothingness, as happens in Zen, but rather: God is a nothingness. Here we must ascertain a decisive difference. This difference is to be worked out in closer detail. What is God? Eckhart responds: God is (in his essence) a nothingness. What is God? A Zen-master would respond: nothingness ... Eckhart conceives of the

working together in their logical co-ordination, unfold into the system of doctrine” (Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 138–39).

Absolute with the concept of substance, while Buddhism conceives of it by means of the category of “relation.” Because of the consequential deployment of the category of “substance” and the radical application of “substance” to God, Eckhart had to view the essence of God as the “pure substance simpliciter,” which is empty of every property-determination.³⁹

We may wonder whether the Godhead for Eckhart was nothingness only as it relates to its place as the ground of God, but there is something else at hand. Ueda follows this discussion with the classic Zen teaching that “the rose is not the rose, but the rose is as the rose.” There is a pairing of being with non-being that is a dynamic identity in this formulation of *śūnyatā*. So comparing the “being” of God with the Zen “non-being” of nothingness is not a parallel comparison. The ground of the “non-being” of the Godhead is paired with the “being” of God. God is, because it is paired with the non-being of the Godhead in the same way that mountains are mountains precisely because mountains are not mountains.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, Eckhart emphasizes “being” while Ueda emphasizes “non-being,” and the pairing of God and the Godhead may be slightly more dualistic since Eckhart distinguishes between the two. Being and non-being are God and the Godhead, while in Zen the pairing of being and non-being are both present in one thing, the rose. But the pairing of being and non-being is the same: God *is*, because the Godhead is not (naught). One can either emphasize the pairing of being and non-being, or the distinction that they are united as one in the rose, but co-identified in God and the Godhead. Ueda focuses on the latter, and thus finds more distinction. While I acknowledge the distinction, I would emphasize the pairing of being and non-being as that is the fundamental essence of non-duality. The essence is prioritized over the vehicle to the essence.

Ueda’s comments on Eckhart’s theology are valuable, but the implications he makes highlight a rigid non-dualism, and subtly emphasize the apophatic aspect of *śūnyatā*. Indeed, personal theism is part of Eckhart’s theology. What is important is that his ground is *God’s* ground, and despite the fact that God’s essence is absolute nothingness, he still chooses to designate it “the One.” Eckhart indeed lies on the side of the cataphatic

39 Ueda, “Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” 147–48.

40 Masao Abe, “Kenotic God and Dynamic *Śūnyata*,” in *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, ed. John B. Cobb, Jr. and Christopher Ives (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 3–65, at 28.

in comparison with Zen, but what I dispute is Ueda's statement that "Zen Buddhism breathes the same spirit as Meister Eckhart's mysticism, but the former leads the spirit to a much more radical consequence, just as much on the way of negation as well as on the way of affirmation."⁴¹ Ueda's depiction subtly violates co-identity of Emptiness too, as will any depiction; this is no failure on Ueda's part. The only problem is that it *claims* to sustain a balanced emphasis. Ueda's hermeneutic of Emptiness emphasizes the way of negation, while Eckhart emphasizes the way of affirmation. Ueda claims that: "Through his work and as his work the world worlds,"⁴² but there is nothing in the painting to show the "world worlding." The world consists of more than just the man, but there are no birds, no trees, just an empty sky, the man, and his bamboo. Ueda claims that "the universal relation itself is not a pre-existing order of being, but rather a dynamic event of being in relation to and with one another."⁴³ If this is the case, then why is the man so utterly alone in the painting? The man and his bamboo in the absence of anything else depicts an acutely contracted immanence. If the world is world-ing, the man is working as he works, there is also the mountain-ness of the mountains, the tree-ness of the trees and the sky-ness of the sky, so that pure immanence is as much expansive as contracted. In the absence of this expansive immanence, we lose an aspect of the affirmative nature of suchness, which results in a much more barren solitude than a full one. If, as Ueda says, "everything depends upon the unity of the infinite negation and the simple affirmation,"⁴⁴ the *simplicity* of the affirmation is engulfed by the *infinitude* of the negation. Ueda's apophatic emphasis is most apparent in his discussion of the unbecoming of God:

Now, with the un-becoming of God into nothing, the human being, God's son, as well as the life of God, dies. It is "a great death," as it is called in Zen, the most extreme self-alienation of the human being. There is, to speak with Eckhart, a "desert," where no life lives any more, neither human nor divine, where no creature can "green," as it would in God ... In the pure nothingness, in which God and the human being un-become together, the rose is also completely annihilated.⁴⁵

41 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 133.

42 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 132.

43 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 148.

44 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 136.

45 Ueda, "Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 146.

It is clear from this vivid description of annihilation, desert, and death, that Ueda finds liberation in the apophatic aspect of *śūnyatā*. But if not only God and man are nothing, but the rose is annihilated too, what is left? Ueda might say nothing but the man cutting bamboo, but this seems insufficient cause to celebrate, in light of the complete annihilation of everything else. Even within Zen, Ueda's prose sounds much different from Nishitani's affirmation of God's world in Dostoyevski's *House of the Dead*.⁴⁶ An apophatic hermeneutic also lends itself to a static ontology, but for the cataphatic counterpart, a liberation worthy of complete annihilation can be only an all-encompassing affirmation. In some sense it seems as though Ueda finds his liberation through "the great death" alone, but I would argue that the value of the "great death" lies in what is revealed in a complete stripping—and that is the all-embracing compassion of suchness.

A Cataphatic *Śūnyatā*

The emphasis on the affirmational aspect of *śūnyatā* is more pronounced in the speculative form of the Pure Land tradition⁴⁷ where the aspects of compassion and wisdom are fundamentally entangled and inherent in *śūnyatā*. While the evidence here largely draws from this tradition, a cataphatic *śūnyatā* is not defined by sectarian affiliation.

T'an-luan was an early Pure Land master who aimed to reconcile the story of Dharmākara with the Mahāyāna understanding of reality, and Shinran Shonin shared his views. In their explication, the formless body of *dharmakāya* is manifested in the forms of Amida Buddha and his Pure Land. Shinran quotes T'an-luan when he says:

Because true reality is formless, true wisdom is no-knowing.
Uncreated dharma-body is the body of dharma-nature.
Because dharma-nature is tranquility, dharma-body is
formless. Because it is formless, it never fails to manifest

46 Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 8.

47 For background information on the Pure Land Tradition, see: James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo, eds. *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011); Dennis Hirota, "Japanese Pure Land Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/japanese-pure-land/>; Dennis Hirota, *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism: Creating a Shin Buddhist Theology in a Religiously Plural World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

every kind of form. Therefore, the adornment of the Buddha's features and marks is itself dharma-body.⁴⁸

The mind of faith which is directed to us by the “other power” of Amida Buddha's vow is nothing other than Buddha-nature. This demythologizing approach means that the subject of faith and the object (Amida Buddha) are identical, but beyond this, that any distinction between the subject and the “form” of the Pure Land becomes extinct once we realize the Pure Land and enlightenment. In the explication by Sung-Hee Keel:

Faith in Other Power has ultimately no place once the Pure Land is realized ... Nor is there really any room in the world of realization for the story of Bodhisattva Dharmākara ... [T]here definitely exists an ontological disparity between the world of the Pure Land story and the world of realization. The latter cancels out the former ... It is no more than a dream, except it has within it the power to wake people up from it! It is a dream from which one has to wake up, but nonetheless a necessary dream!⁴⁹

Thus in this demythologization, the story of Amida becomes meontological. Yet nonetheless, liberation is based on form—the form of Dharmākara and his vow, and the form of the Pure Land. In spite of its compatibility with Mahāyāna teachings on *śūnyatā*, the emphasis on form is indispensable.

From another perspective, Takeuchi Yoshinori's essay *Buddhism and Existentialism*, while undoubtedly existential, explains the cataphatic nature of Absolute Nothingness:

God is at once Being-itself and Absolute Nothingness. As Being-itself infinitely transcends every finite being, so Absolute Nothingness transcends mere non-being ... For God in his very nature is com-passionate to the suffering of all beings. In the case of Absolute Negativity the significance of transcendence and participation is of course different from that in the case of Being-itself ... God is at once Being-itself and Absolute Nothingness. *It is understandable that I prefer the latter designation, because Absolute Nothingness as Absolute*

48 See-Hung Keel, *Understanding Shinran: A Dialogical Approach* (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 1995), 158.

49 Keel, *Understanding Shinran*, 161.

*Negativity (that is, the negation of negation) at the same time implies the former, the affirmative.*⁵⁰

Takeuchi himself states that the value of Absolute Nothingness or negation lies with its consequence—the affirmative. He says, “this standpoint of compassion must be in its very nature devoid of any standpoint.”⁵¹ The compassion of Absolute Nothingness is non-relational, yet is the foundation for the plenitude of Eckhart’s God, and the annihilation of suffering, thus it must be ground—the same ground as Eckhart’s Godhead.

We see the affirmational and liberational nature of *sūnyatā* again in the simple poems of a *myōkonin*, or lay saint, Saichi Asahara. Living an everyday existence of a simple wood carver, yet pure in devotion to the dharma, Saichi *lived* the dharma, writing his poems with regular spontaneity on his wood shavings. This lived experience of the dharma as a part of everyday life is at the heart of the Shin tradition and closely reflects Eckhart’s theology. He writes:

“O Saichi, do you recite the Nembutsu only when you think of it?
 What do you do when you do not think of it?”
 “Yes, [well,] when I do not think of it, there is
 The ‘Namu-amida-butsu’ [just the same]—
 The oneness of ki and ho;
 Even my thinking of [the Nembutsu] rises out of it.
 How thankful I am for the favour!”
 “Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu!”⁵²

“O Saichi, I am the most fortunate person!
 I am altogether free from woes of all kind,
 Not at all troubled with anything of the world.
 Nor do I even recite the ‘Namu-amida-butsu’!
 I’m saved by your mercifulness [O Amida-san!]
 How pleased I feel for your favour!
 ‘Namu-amida-butsu!’”⁵³

50 Takeuchi Yoshinori, “Buddhism and Existentialism: The Dialogue between Oriental and Occidental Thought,” in *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honour of Paul Tillich*, ed. Walter Leibrecht (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 291–318, at 302 (emphasis mine). I use the same system of capitalization as the original text.

51 Takeuchi, “Buddhism and Existentialism,” 312.

52 D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 156.

53 Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, 142.

For Saichi, there is no practicing or not practicing. Even when he is not thinking of the Nembutsu, the Nembutsu is still there because it compassionately embraces the relative and absolute. When he is not thinking of the Nembutsu, the wisdom and compassion of absolute nothingness that is incarnated in the Nembutsu arises spontaneously because its realization or its resurfacing is only possible because he is not practicing, and its revelation is inherently affirmative because of its spontaneous presentation. His pervasive exclamation marks are expressive of its affirmative nature. They are affirmative of his liberation while simultaneously and freely acknowledging his blind passions and ego. Because he has surrendered even his will to practice, he is freed of the circular trappings of ego, yet simultaneously liberated by the vow of Amida Buddha. Thus, he is grateful and continues to practice, but he “stand[s] emptied of [his] own will . . . he is beyond all creatures,”⁵⁴ and he is neither “Amida Buddha nor himself” but “naked being.” He is his “own cause according to [his] essence, which is eternal.”⁵⁵ For Eckhart, the eye through which he sees God is the same eye through which God sees him, and Saichi expresses this identity of ground almost precisely:

When I worship thee, O Buddha,
This is a Buddha worshipping another Buddha.
 And it is thou who makest this fact known to me, O Buddha!
 For this favour Saichi is most grateful⁵⁶

And:

The Oya-sama who never fails me
 Has now become myself,
 Making me hear his Name—
 The “Namu-amida-butsu.”⁵⁷

Moreover, for Eckhart, the soul cooperates to allow for God’s ground to spring up within him, but the breaking through is ultimately dependent on the fundamental essence of *grunt*. For Saichi too, it is the vow that allows him to see that he is a Buddha worshipping another Buddha, but this reflective worshipping is also the vow itself. The Nembutsu is both the vehicle to liberation and the liberation itself; for Eckhart, God is both the place in which he works and the work itself.

54 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 424.

55 Eckhart, *Complete Mystical Works*, 424.

56 Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, 140 (emphasis mine).

57 Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, 146.

Amida Buddha is the manifestation of the inherent capacity to awaken. The truth must be *em*-bodied. It is the relationship between the essence of whiteness and a white thing for Eckhart. It is the ceaseless emptying action of the Godhead that dissolves polarities of subject and object. It is easy to internalize “emptying” as a negation, but if emptying is framed as “spilling over” or “embodying,” it now takes on an affirmational quality. The cataphatic essence of Buddha-nature, *śūnyatā*, Amida Buddha, practice—in their total, ultimate, profound affirmation, they are also oblitative. The oblitative cataphatic aspect of *śūnyatā* is seen clearly and intuitively in Thomas Merton’s *Asian Journal*:

All matter, all life is charged with *dharmakaya* ... [E]verything is Emptiness and everything is *compassion* ... The purpose of Madhyamaka is not to convince, but to *explode* the argument itself. Is this sadism? *No, it is compassion.*⁵⁸

While an apophatic hermeneutic emphasizes equanimity, the cataphatic hermeneutic emphasizes affectivity. From the cataphatic perspective, Emptiness is all embracing. In its totality it manifests just as much in illusion as in realization. Thus it must inherently contain compassion. Realization is possible only because illusion exists, and whenever we notice, whenever we practice, whenever we wake up, this is the inherent wisdom that is also manifested in suchness. Realization is fundamentally affirmative: It is the “aha!” of *prajñā*. When revelation occurs, when we see what was hidden, there is the joy and elation vividly portrayed in Saichi’s poems. Simultaneously, it cannot exist without a state to awaken from, which is included in the non-dualism *of* dualism *and* non-dualism. In this way even illusion becomes affirmational. It is not compassion in an anthropomorphic sense, but in the same way that the fullness of the Godhead is part of its fundamental essence, this fundamental fullness is engulfing. The fundamental essence of boundless all-encompassing-ness must therefore be compassionate. Once the Nembutsu is understood, even the apophatic nothingness of *śūnyatā* becomes engulfed in a broader, even more ultimate affirmation of the dynamic identity of emptiness and fullness. The vow of Amida Buddha is incarnated when it is identified with the believing mind. The universal mind of Amida Buddha is not identical with the mind of the individual, but rather in the way that a wave is related to an ocean, they are both the ocean, but the wave is also distinct. It is the same relationship

58 Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1973), 235, 118 (emphasis in original).

of Eckhart's Godhead of whiteness that is carried in white things. When Eckhart says "*my* ground is *God's* ground," it is the same ground: Eckhart is Eckhart and God is God, but the source, which is the essence of nothingness and fullness, is the same.

We see in the poems of Saichi Asaharu and Takeuchi the deeply personal and affective nature of their faith, but their faith is nonetheless meontological. The fundamental nature of the dharma is the origin or cause of the work of Amida Buddha's vow and the essence of Amida Buddha is ground. While essence is often associated with being, in this case it is the essence of non-being since it is meontological.

A: Zen Master was once asked:

Q: What is Tao?

A: It is one's everyday mind.

Q: What is one's everyday mind?

A: When tired, you sleep; when hungry, you eat.⁵⁹

I do not dispute that when we experience liberation or divine wisdom, we simply exist in its naked being. The problem comes in the final answer of the koan. When tired, you sleep; when hungry, you eat—is this what liberation is? To experience and accept the everyday truly, to return after Eckhart's breakthrough: When tired, we find refuge and rest in sleep, when hungry, we relish the satisfaction of eating. In grief, in spite of any equanimity or acceptance of existence, it is still personal and affective. To erase the affectivity of naked being is to destroy our sacred humanity. Regardless of our everyday experience as painful or joyful, there is affirmation in its affectivity. As the Zen saying goes: "Do not squander your life," or in Jesus' words: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 NRSV).

An apophatic *śūnyatā* is no more or less veridical than a cataphatic *śūnyatā*. Both have a place in the constellation of discourse on *śūnyatā*. Whether one gravitates toward unflappable equanimity or human affectivity is simply a matter of orientation. They are two ways to frame the picture. All are true, but none as true as the Heart Sutra, and this is not a problem. Ultimately, whether one chooses to emphasize negation or affirmation in non-dualism comes down to a matter of personal theological or dharmalogical orientation. Certainly, they are dynamic identities, and either

59 D.T. Suzuki, "Wisdom in Emptiness," in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1968), 134.

one without the other nullifies the liberation itself, but the emphasis on one or the other is part of what distinguishes different Buddhist philosophers and characterizes Buddhist sects. But correspondingly, it also determines how much distance we perceive between Buddhist philosophy and speculative Christian mystics like Eckhart.

It seems fitting to conclude with Takeuchi's Shin Buddhist adaptation of Christian doctrine. He says:

I do not deny that there is a basic difference between the compassion of Buddhism and the agape of Christianity ... But common to all is the great law of love as it is voiced by Jesus in his commandment, "Love your neighbor and even your enemies." Still more, its outstanding characteristic is the manifestation of the pure religious heart overflowing as a stream of spontaneous sentiments that contains within itself and transforms into the indicative the moral imperative: "Thou shalt love." ... The unconditional imperative, "Love your enemy," if restated in full, should be: "As your sins are forgiven you by God, so forgive you the sins of your enemy." When this oughtness of love is perfectly obeyed, there gushes forth a stream of spontaneous love. It is a command (the oughtness as the Buddha's voice), but in my response to it my whole person becomes love ... *Therefore the ground of all being is and is not. For it is precisely on this ground that the communication of redemptive love cuts its way through* ... Man in his compassion pardoning his enemy's sin should not be indifferent to the judgment of right and wrong, even in his act of pardoning. Religious love is not a simple case of non-resistance ... In the awareness and repentance of sin and sin's solidarity, the Buddha and I, my fellow beings and I, are revived in my consciousness, all enwrapped in great Compassion. Thus we all are thankful and grateful toward each other and all toward the Buddha.⁶⁰

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60 Takeuchi, "Buddhism and Existentialism," 315–18 (emphasis mine).

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