名古屋芸術大学研究紀要第34巻　235～248頁（2013）

Buddhistic "Soku" and the Mystic Thoughts of Eckhart and Tauler

—— *On Nishitani's Interpretation of Eckhart* ——

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1.Nishitani's standpoint: Interpretation of Eckhart according to the "emptiness"-logic

Nishitani had great interest in Christian mysticism. He was convinced that the kernel of Western and Eastern religions lay in the same mysticism, and avidly researched especially the German mysticism of the middle Ages. In 1947 he published his well-known work *God and Absolute Nothingness*. The centerpiece of this work is titled *The Relationship Between God and Man According to Eckhart*. Nishitani has been studying works by several authors who belong to the mystic stream in the German Middle Ages. Among them he considered Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) the foremost mystic. Eckhart was a leading mystic of the 14th century whose teachings in part (28 articles) were condemned as heretical by Pope John XXII, then ruling from Avignon. The Pope agreed with the Archbishop of Cologne that Eckhart's bold teachings could put the orthodox beliefs of Christianity in danger. The reason why Nishitani esteemed Eckhart so highly, lay in Nishitani's belief that fundamental elements of Western and Eastern religious systems meet together in special ways in Eckhart's mystical teachings. Nishitani titled his book *Absolute Nothingness*. According to Nishitani, the expression "absolute nothingness" (Zettai-mu 絶対無) is a synonym for the word "emptiness" (Kū 空; Sanskr. Sunyata) of Mahayana-Buddhism. He used a great deal of Buddhist terminology in his comments on Eckhart's mysticism, because he believed that the Christian experiences of the European intellectual Eckhart were similar to Buddhist experiences. He was convinced that this mystic lived his Christian faith based on a spiritual point of view, which corresponded with that of Buddhist "emptiness." He also believed that Eckhart's basic thinking was based on his experience of what Buddhists call "absolute nothing" or "emptiness." Nishitani interpreted Eckhart's mystic thinking from this dearly Eastern view of "emptiness."

Christian mysticism since Origenes and Gregor of Nyssa is a religious path, based on an experience of unification ("mystical union of the soul with God. Nishitani explored the special "unio"-experience of Eckhart and its verbalization. According to Nishitani,

this mystic believed that God and the soul paradoxically could be unified, in that they both consummate their subjective existence. This "subjective unification" does not mean a unification of essence but of action, therefore not an essential unification but an active one. Eckhart thought, according to Nishitani's interpretation, that the two could be completely one, while completely remaining "two" (separate). Therefore, Nishitani came to the conclusion that Eckhart's idea about unification approached that of Buddhist "emptiness"-logic.

According to Nishitani, the followers of Eckhart, above all Johannes Tauler (1300-1361), Heinrich Seuse (1295-1366), and the author of German Theology declined somewhat from his lofty intellectual perspective. The reason for this was they never proposed with their explanation of "unio mystica" that God and the soul each consummate their subjective existence. From this Nishitani concluded that "the free and highprincipled intellect and the deep thinking" of Eckhart were abandoned by the mystics after him, and that his teaching had lost "intensity and depth," since Eckhart's successors changed it into something more moderate and safer. In my opinion, this conclusion is right to the extent that Nishitani accepted that the experiences of the mystic unity was absolutely based on Eckhart's "consummation of subjectivity." In this case it is certainly legitimate to look upon the views of his followers negatively.

But was this negative judgment regarding the mystics who followed Eckhart problematic because they tried to safeguard the "unio" experience of Eckhart against heresy and pantheistic "unio" teachings? Concerning this point, they developed their own genuine model of "unio" teachings. Thus one can rightly say that the reason that they went the way of devout mysticism which did not contradict orthodox beliefs, that is, a mysticism of sensitivity and suffering, was not solely their fear of being accused of heresy by the Church. In my opinion, they modified the mystagogy of Eckhart based on their own experiences. Let us here consider the teachings of Johannes Tauler and look at how he regarded the "subjective existence in the mystical unity." Our questions can also show to what extent Christianity as it is generally practiced can accept the Buddhist teachings regarding "emptiness."

2. Nihilistic (relative) "nothingness" and Buddhist (absolute) "nothingness"

Nishitani's philosophy of religion is based on the "emptiness" of Mahayana Buddhism. He felt that this logic had great potential to overcome the rampant nihilism of the present. Nishitani explained the relationship between "nihilism" and "emptiness"

in his book Religion and Nothingness. He perceived this "emptiness" as a Buddhist "nothingness" which is greatly different from Sartre's nothingness. Sartre was of the opinion that the basis of the world and the ego was nothing other than nothingness. However, this nothingness of Sartre's is, according to Nishitani, actually "something" called nothingness, which is objectified in the consciousness of man. If one is ensnared with this object called "nothingness," one can't reach a true freedom. This nothingness is an "only-nothingness" which arises by denying "being." Therefore, one can say that it is only a relative nothingness, which stands in contrast to being. If one attaches oneself to such nothingness, it immediately becomes being. Nishitani regarded this nothingness which cannot give life to anything, as different from Buddhist nothingness, and called it "nihilistic nothingness."

In contrast to this nothingness, Buddhist nothingness is not a nihilistic nothingness, but a nothingness that surpasses nihilistic nothingness. This nothingness is precisely the Buddhist "emptiness" which Nishitani calls "absolute nothingness." Through this "emptiness" not only the self-existence which always desires to hold on to something is emptied but also the appearance of things, on which the sense of self relies. All things are emptied by this "emptiness" and become truly empty. However, one should not come to the misunderstanding that there is a real substance which one can call "emptiness." Because "emptiness in the sense of sunyata is only emptiness when it is separate from the thought that represents emptiness as a "thing" called emptiness. "That all things are empty" means paradoxically "that all things are present in their original reality."[2] Everything appears namely transcending itself, insofar as it comes from the place of ecstatic transcendence of existence, which it reaches through decisive self-negation, to a current situation through absolute affirmation. Therefore, the negation of oneself is nothing other than the affirmation of oneself, at the same time affirmation and negation of oneself. This "such as it is"-ness points to an existence, which is "in emptiness nonexistence-sive-existence and existence-sive-nonexistence." The Buddhist expression "form is emptiness, emptiness is form," which Nishitani occasionally quotes in his work, explains this paradoxical relationship between all positive existence and emptiness. Nishitani uses the expression "Rijimuge" (理事無礙) for this, which comes from Kegon-Buddhism. He also uses the expression "Jijimuge" (事事無礙) to indicate that "emptiness" also is at work in the "mutual identity and interpenetration" of things in Pratitya-samutpada.

"Emptiness" therefore contains two components, namely on one side the paradoxical connection between "cosmic principles" ("Ri" = 理, "Dharma" = 法) and "appearances"

（"Ji"= 事), and on the other the connection between "appearances." According to Nishitani, the first connection can be found in Eckhart as the relationship between "God having form"（有相 =the trinity 三位一体) and "God without form"（無相 =divinity 神性, absolute nothingness 絶対無）, further in the idea of "soul" of man and the "soul itself'. The latter connection one may find in the changeable effect, where God and man affirm each other, in that they negate each other.

3. Peculiarities of Eckhart's thinking: "Unity in action"

Under the influence of Neo-Platonism, Eckhart felt that the unity of God and soul was related to the idea of the "return" of the human soul to God. This "return" is the final goal of a mystical, cosmic circle, which begins with all beings flowing out from God. According to Eckhart, God broke his eternal silence out of love and pronounces himself. This deed pointed, in Nishitani's view, to God's self-knowledge. Through this the images of all beings flow forth, at the same time remaining part of the eternal existence of God, along with God's image ("Logos"). In this act God became "God" (as having formed) and all things became "creatures". However, God grants his mercy on mankind, so that they can be emptied of their existence as creatures. And so the soul empties itself and its relationship to the world through its "detachment" and becomes a pure place where only God can do his works. In this way, what the mystics have called the "birth of God" came about: God created himself in the soul. Nishitani compared this "birth of God" with the emptiness of man himself and of the world in the soul. He referred to this as "the birth of God-sive-emptiness, and emptiness-sive-the birth of God."

God "storms" into the soul and "breaks through" it. This impact of God is, according to Nishitani, at the same time an action of the soul. The soul bears God's son from itself. However, Eckhart regarded the birth of God to be as yet incomplete and wrote: "the soul must become so poor, that it no longer remains a place where God has an effect." God himself must be the place where God works. That is the true desire of the soul. Insofar as this desire comes over the soul, it will break into the bottomless ground of God and at the same time turn to its own bottomless ground, in order to reach its bottomless origin. That is the "breakthrough" through which the soul completely denies itself and rejects the idea of "God having form." Through this "breaking through" the soul can return to the "nothingness" of the "godhead" (the absolute nothingness) from which it flowed. Nishitani felt that at this point the eternal self-knowledge of God begins once again to create.

In this way Eckhart taught a form of neoplatonic, cosmic movement. Nishitani saw that this was a movement which occurs in and through the self.[3] Eckhart said, that "my flowing out is just a generation of God, and my return is just a denying of God." Thus paradoxically generation and denying occur at the same time in the self and in God. This mutual pervasion of God and self finds a correspondence with the paradoxical relationship among all things, called "Jijimuge" in the Buddhist concept of "emptiness."

Therefore, one can rightly say that according to Nishitani's commentary, the cosmic movement of the soul as stated by Eckhart could not occur without "me" namely the "self," namely the concrete existence of mankind. Therefore, the cosmic return of the soul to God is the unity of the self with God hic et nunc (here and now). In general, "unio mystica" traditionally states that man is emptied thanks to the grace of God and in this way is filled with the life of God. On the one hand the effort to "become empty" and to cease to exist are indispensable conditions for the working of God's grace. On the other hand, this "emptying" and this "becoming nothing" are not possible without the grace of God. Here we find the interaction of the passivity of mankind and the actions of God.

However, Eckhart was not satisfied with this thinking, and proposed that one must recognize further an activity of mankind and a passivity of God. According to him, God and mankind are both active-sive-passive and passive-sive-active in their interaction. Man transcends himself and at the same time breaks through to his own self. In this way his previous self is completely rejected by God. He achieves in this dimension his real identity and rejects the "God having form." Directly related to this, God accepts the working of the soul as his own and casts off his form. Thus God gives Himself in His own basic substance, a "formless" form, the nothingness of godhead, the absolute nothingness and the self-identity of God. The two thus become "one," at the point where each perfectly becomes itself through a mutual rejection. "Being-two" is none other than "being-one." I believe that this is where we can find the paradoxical relationship of "Rijimuge" in "emptiness" in which God and the soul can experience the absolute self-negation sive self-affirmation. As Nishitani says, "That the soul reaches its goal of becoming one with God means also that it comes to its own self-identity. This self-identity means that the soul is "the soul itself without God" and is alone, after it has broken through the God having form. In this way the soul is only a "soul without God," just as God becomes a "God without creatures." This just means that the soul is one with the divine one. This shows itself, according to Nishitani, in the words of Eckhart: "The ground of God is the ground of my soul; the ground of my soul is the ground of

God." What is most important about this is that Nishitani does not see an ontological unity, but rather an effective unity, namely the unity of the interaction of God and the soul. Nishitani attempted here to eliminate the suspicion that such mysticism must be pantheistic. Given that God and mankind are two different beings and remain so leads Nishitani to propose that the two can paradoxically become one due to their mutual influence. In regards to this unity, Nishitani saw a connection between the mutual interaction between God and the soul with the Buddhist concept of "emptiness."

4. Relationship between God and creature in the mysticism of Tauler

In Nishitani's view, the "unio" of God and the soul will only be possible if both can consummate their subjective existence. Now let us turn to Tauler's mystagogy program and ask whether it also contains the idea of "unio in effect" in its notion of "unio," namely a mutually effecting relationship between God and the soul, logic of emptiness. Nishitani does not speak very often about Tauler's mysticism. He says that Tauler handed down Eckhart's sermons to posterity and had a great effect on Luther. He was not very interested in Tauler's mysticism, however. He pointed only to the ethical and practical character of Tauler's mysticism and remarked that Tauler's sermons did not reach the high level of Eckhart' s thinking. Tauler served as a pastor, and guided nuns, Beguines, and the "Friends of God." Tauler accepted the central points of Eckhart's teachings. One should not overlook the fact that he at the same time in a certain sense criticized his fellow pastor, for the spirituality which Eckhart showed his audience was too deep and bold not to bring about various misunderstandings. Tauler saw a great danger that the audience might be led down a false path due to Eckhart's formulation. Therefore, he sought in his own way to explain to them the secret of the Unity. With a pastoral concern Tauler sought to set Eckhart's ontological, speculative thoughts into ethical-depth categories. Nishitani felt that this mysticism of suffering, which Tauler offered within the framework of orthodox belief, was a form of popularization of Eckhart's mysticism. But the suffering Christ is for Tauler the absolute example of the Christians. They must follow Him. Christ is moreover the Sacramental Eucharist which Christians must receive for their salvation. He paradoxically reveals God. He was of the opinion that the believer would be converted with the suffering Christ and so melted into the unfounded bottomless God, as he "suffers through his distress for belief' with Christ. Tauler held to the belief his entire life that God eternally transcends man in an irreversible relationship.

Now let us examine some ideas which Tauler did take from Eckhart: "outflow," "detachment," "breakthrough," and "return."

We already mentioned Eckhart's neoplatonic circle of "outflow," "return," and "unity." Tauler's teaching is also based on this circle. In his explanations of the way to "unio with God" he pointed many times to the "pre-existence" of mankind. For example, he says: "Just as man is in his current creation, so he has been since the beginning in God before creation, existing as one with God. And so long as man does not return to this pure origin, he will never again be with God."[4] One must keep in mind that Tauler complements the metaphor of "outflow" with the concept of "creation," which Eckhart usually did not. Since this "outflow" sounds "neo-platonic," one might come to suspect pantheism. The relationship between God and the world would then become "continuous." This belief contradicts the teachings of Christianity, that a "discontinuous" relationship between God and the world is based on the "creatio ex nihilo." Therefore, Tauler added the word "creation" to the outflow of mankind from God, and added the idea of "discontinuity" to the moment of "continuity." Through the act of creation the "creator" and the "created" can be clearly differentiated. Tauler said that before creation mankind was one being with God. He expressed furthermore very daringly that man was God in God before creation. He usually calls God the "uncreated abyss" and seldom used the abstraction "godhead." His notion of the "abyss" is somewhat similar to Eckhart' s idea of "godhead." Tauler made a distinction between the "image," which man created of God, and "God without image." However, he made no theologically formulaic designation, as Eckhart did. In Tauler we find no conception of a "formless God," becoming a personal God relative to man at the moment of man's origin, nor is there any combination of "emergence of the self," "God with form," or a "formation of the self through a personification of God" as one does with Eckhart. From a logical standpoint, it is self-evident that it must have a mutual relationship.

However, Tauler never spoke of the relationship between God and man as described by Eckhart. We find a similar situation in regards to the "return" of the soul to God. In fact, he did not see it as the soul's role to break through the God having form. In his mysticism "God as person" and "God as trans-person" are hardly differentiable. As a rule, he did not differentiate between these two sides of God and spoke only of whole God. In Tauler's view, the Trinity was the absolute reality for mankind, the absolute mystery, and God was never something which must be broken through. With Tauler, one cannot ignore the temporal and historical elements of the relationship between God and mankind. He felt that one required the natural process of growing older in order to

return to God. He also taught that one can only truly fully achieve "unio" over the age of forty when one first becomes "heavenly and godly and has overcome to some extent one's nature." Tauler set great store by the collection of experience in the course of one's daily life. The word "abyss" is also used in Tauler's mysticism in regards to the ecstatic dimensions of the human soul. Tauler often added the word "created" to the notion "abyss" and differentiated between the abyss of God and of man (usually referred to only as "ground") . Eckhart used "ground" to mean the ecstatic "bottomless ground," in which God and the soul both come to their self-identity through their mutual rejection leading to their mutual affirmation. However, Tauler almost always took "ground" to mean the innermost part of the soul opened to God. In relation to "ground," Tauler always thought of the deepest depths of the human soul, from which man's mental abilities (thought, will) stem, and which can be opened to the hidden God. The boundary between "man's ground" and "God's ground" shows a dissimilarity which cannot be misunderstood as pantheistic.

5. "Birth," "detachment," and "break-through" in Tauler's mysticism

Tauler repeatedly presents his audience with their dual "nothingness," on the one hand their status as created beings, and on the other their sinfulness. Man can only ground himself in God once he is thoroughly aware of his "nothingness." Similarly, Kitao Nishida states "in order for the relative to meet the absolute, the relative must meet death. Paradoxically, we can only become one with God through the demise of our egos."[5] The "mors mystica" is a theme which dominates all German mysticism. By thoroughly comprehending his nothingness, a new man will be born through the fundamental attitude of "humility." And he will begin, through the inspiration of the holy soul, to base his self on God. This is no different from when one purifies one's senses and one's reason through a "radical breakthrough." Tauler made this concrete in the "imitatio Christi." Tauler stressed over and over that man can only approach the secret of God through Christ. His mysticism is "Christ mysticism." He goes so far as to say that no one can ever get beyond the relationship between man and Christ. In this regard, the Eucharist, and the meditation of Christ's suffering played a large role for Tauler.

He emphasized how important it was that man should bury his entire existence in the five wounds of Christ, and taught his audience in great detail how to prepare themselves for The Host. Through this integration of Christ's humanity into one's own existence as a believer, one can come into unity with God's "godliness" in the dimension

of the "formless God," in the "abyss" of God. One finds in Jesus a paradox in his simultaneous existence as man and God. In order to be able to attain the "formless God," one must enter categorically the suffering of the "son of God having form." The Trinity is not a secondary aspect of God which must be overcome, as with Eckhart, but rather the final reality of Christian belief. According to Eckhart, God's son, in becoming man, did not become one individual man, but rather all of "humanity." Therefore, if one could lose all individuality and unique characteristics, one would become as Christ, and therefore become one with God. Eckhart seldom spoke of the fact that Holy Communion and ecclesiastical community could help the faithful to achieve this. In Eckhart mysticism the problem of sin was not in the foreground. In contrast, in Tauler's work, as in Jodo-Buddhism (浄土仏教), sin and overcoming sin through personal nearness to a savior played a decisive role.

Tauler seldom speaks of God's birth, rather generally of birth in the sense of renewal of the whole man. He gives this "birth" many adjectives, "noble," "new," "eternal," "true," etc., and differentiates clearly between the existential experience of the individual man and that which God's son experienced. It is worth mentioning that Tauler, as did Eckhart, regarded "detachment" as an indispensable prerequisite for renewal. If one wishes to receive the "birth" in one's soul, one must take leave of all things, as was the case with Mary. "Detachment" means that "man must leave everything and separate himself from all things that are not pure and sheer God; that he must see all His works, words, and thoughts through the light of His reason, understand the holy soul, whether there is actually something which is exclusively of God or not completely required by God in all things, deeds, and rest." In other words, "detachment" occurs, when man transcends his self and the world and attains his unique, ecstatic place; and the soul comes to its own "self-identity" and purity. In this way (as Nishitani says), "man opens his transcendental ground."

"Detachment" shows itself in Tauler's work in "humility," "obedience," "silence," "patience," and "endurance." In Eckhart's view, "detachment" is higher than humility, mercy, and love. The reason for this is man is brought to God through love, but God is the one who comes to man through "detachment," because "detachment" compels man to receive only God. In contrast, Tattler thought of "love" ("minne") as the highest, and he expected his audience to overcome step by step the egocentric existence of all created things. Nishitani emphasized that the "breakthrough" occurs in penetrating the subjective existence between God and the soul. Tauler did not use the expression "breakthrough" in reference to God, rather always in reference to man. Moreover that

which must be broken through is not creatureliness itself, but rather the deliberate hardening of man's ground, including man's fixation on religious insight and religious practice.

6. "Unio mystica" according to Tauler

What kind of "unio with God" does the soul experience in Tauler's view? He says, "What inexpressible fruit comes from this ground, in which the purified soul recognizes in love its dissimilarity in relation to God and melts away in the true awareness of this dissimilitude. Thus, the soul exceeds (its own) strength and plunges into the heavenly abyssl [···] and with the help of this supernatural strength, the transformed, purified soul would withdraw from its own self and come to a wonderful, pure, inexpressible desire for God. [...] This reversal cannot be conferred by anything other than Heavenly abyss in all its immensity; for such a change exceeds all measure, in Godly immensity. In such a case all of the pure, idealized (human) soul would descend into Godly darkness, in serene silence, and sink into an incomprehensible and inexpressible oneness. In this sinking all similarity and dissimilarities would cease to exist; in this chasm the human soul would lose itself and would know neither God nor itself, nothing similar or dissimilar, and nothing else; for it would be immersed in this unity with God and would have lost all awareness of such differences."[6]

According to Tauler too, the "unio" is the highest level (not the goal) of mystic development. In contrast to Eckhart, he rarely analyzed this "unio." One can explain the reason why Tauler refrained from a primary intellectual understanding of "unio" by considering that he spoke in his role as a pastor and desired to bring his audience to experience "unio." He mentions in the quote above such conditions of the soul as "metamorphosis" and "purification" as preconditions for "unio." Nishitani states that in Eckhart the soul develops from a situation of receiving grace to becoming grace itself. In Tauler's mysticism one finds no such developmental steps. For Tauler grace always remained a gift from God as completely transcendent individual. With the help of grace the soul can complete its "return" to the place where God is. Therefore, it maintains the law of an "irreversible" relationship between God and the soul. Tauler says that the transformed soul regards itself as dissimilar to God. "Dissimilarity" means the complete "alterity" and superiority of God. In recognizing that God is "dissimilar," the soul paradoxically achieves a closer relationship to God ("reversibility"). The understanding of the "dissimilarity" is indispensable to reaching the heavenly abyss. Tauler says:

"Lucifer did not recognize his dissimilarity to God wanted to become the same as God; therefore he fell into an indescribable distance from God, lost all similarity with God and all hope of ever achieving it again. However, the loving, noble angels turned their sight to their dissimilarity (to God) and so succeeded in achieving an indescribable similarity with Him." In so far as man recognizes his dissimilarity to God, a similarity to God paradoxically comes into existence. In other words, through the fact that the soul completely negates itself before absolute nothingness (God), absolute nothingness adapts the soul.

Thus the purified soul can finally achieve the "abyss" of God, which Tauler also calls "darkness," "desert," "wilderness," "wretchedness," or "still silence." Only the soul which truly negates itself and becomes "nothing" can melt into "absolute nothingness." "Therein sinks the created nothingness into the uncreated nothingness; but that is something, which man can neither understand nor express in words. [...]The created abyss calls the uncreated one to itself, and both become one: a pure Godly creature, and therefore the soul (of man) has lost itself in the soul of God, and has dived and at the same time has drowned in the bottomless sea."[7] This quote describes the "one united one" of Eckhart as found in Tauler.

When the soul fuses beyond its foundations with the absolute nothingness, it can distinguish nothing more. One can see Tauler's logic in this: the soul, which has completely rejected itself, overcomes the form of God and comes to the "formless God." Perhaps here one can see the "consummation of subjectivity" of God and the soul, which Nishitani saw as the fundamental principle of mysticism and called "emptiness" logic. One finds here the structure of the mutual negation of God and the soul, insofar as God allows the approaching soul no similarity, and the soul, as it nears God, cannot regard itself as similar to God. At the same time, however, two absolutely separate beings merge together in action. According to Tauler, the "light of grace" helps the soul to part from all created things. The soul enters the "abyss" of God, led by the "light of God," and unites with God as the absolute inexpressible. The subject of this effort is God who leads the soul into the ground of the soul, and through this into the abyss of God. Clearly there exists a relationship between the two of "active and passive," of "leading and following." "Unio" is achieved when the soul accepts God's initiative.

In contrast Eckhart's "detachment," means that the soul empties itself, until it is no longer a place in which one can receive God. In this one cannot ignore the active effort of the soul without God. The unio occurs with this activity on the part of the soul---the act of breaking ecstatically through the self---as its precondition. Tauler recognized no

such ecstatic breakthrough to revoke the created nature, as Eckhart called for. According to Nishitani, "the consummation of subjective existence" was absent in Tauler's mysticism. Tauler did not recognize any activity of the soul in the sense of passing into a "formless God" and becoming one with the "absolute nothingness" (of godhead). With Tauler one finds no indication that he was of the opinion that God appeared to the soul as a "formless" self because of the self-rejection on the part of the soul. From the above quotation it appears that the soul loses itself in the "unio" and sinking into the abyss, flows into God' s abyss. In my opinion it is clear here, that the superiority of God in regards to man in the sense of the "irreversibility" of the relationship dominates Tauler's work.

7. Peculiarity of Tauler's mysticism: an "irreversible" relationship between God and mankind

Now let us return to Nishitani's thoughts. According to him, the "consummation of the subjective existence" is indispensable for "unio mystica." God and the soul must mutually negate each other and on the basis of this negation affirm each other at the place of ecstacy in order to achieve their true "self-identity." From the reflections up to this point one can see that this "unio" logic, namely the paradoxical relationship between two subjects identifying with and entering into one another, is at the least hidden in Tauler's mysticism. In this sense, "irreversibility" is characteristic of Tauler's mysticism. The "dissimilarity" is the basis for "similarity," and the attainment of similarity comes through the recognition and existential understanding of the eternal "dissimilarity." Tauler always emphasized "dissimilarity" in regards to the simultaneous paradoxical relationship between God and man, therefore in the "Unio contradictionum," (矛盾的相即) termed "Soku" (即) in Japanese.

That is, as we saw above, based on his undialectical conception of God. In his teachings about the Holy Spirit Tauler offers a model of the "unio mystica," which puts the Eckhartian neo-platonic and Areopagite approaches behind it and gives greater weight to the mystery of the third person in God. Nevertheless, he strove towards the "unio" and was well aware that in the deification of the soul there was an element of "active sive passive." He also pointed to a "formless God" as "God without image," which was to be differentiated from "God with form," that is, God as an idea or thought. Since Tauler was not the speculative thinker Eckhart was, and saw it as his special assignment as pastor to nurture his audience and to present his audience with typically Christian gospel, he did so without neo-platonic Theologumena, which, as Eckhart's last

days show, brought more misunderstandings than help. Tauler was superior to Eckhart in his concrete mystagogy, which was entirely based on the unpantheistic spirit of the bible. In their pastoral concerns and the bold understanding of the unity with God as the higher level of belief both mystagogues are in agreement; they agreed also on the notion of the "ground" of man as the place of the contact and unity with God; and also on the negation of the all too imaginative and emotional piety on the one side and pantheistic, asocial free thinking on the other. As Nishitani emphasized, Tauler strongly negated emotional experiences or overvaluation of visions by nuns, because they were so dangerous for the spiritual advancement. The accuracy of his psychic analyses, the extensive adoption of the biblical and pastoral spirituality and the concrete program of spiritual striving in the everyday life of Christians which he built his analyses upon are the unique features of Tauler's mysticism, which distinguishes him from Eckhart.

8. Concluding remark--the thought of the two mystics from the viewpoint of "Soku" logic.

In regards to the logic of relationship between God and soul, we can find diverse discussions among many philosophers of religion.[8] In my opinion, Masaaki Honda's view of this relationship is most convincing, since it appears that one can explain the relationship between absolute being (God ,Dharma) and relative being (man) with the "Soku" logic which Honda proposes. Honda intuitively understood at his conversion that this logic is reversible-sive-irreversible (可逆即不可逆) and irreversible-sive-reversible (不可逆即可逆). I think that the logic in which one considers the relationship between absolute being and relative being only as reversible is so abstract and one-sided that we can't comprehend the true and real relationship. In fact there are Buddhists (e.g.,Zen Master Ryomin Akizuki) who see the relationship between God (Buddha) and mankind as reversible as well as irreversible. According to Honda, "reversible" and "irreversible" stand in the relationship which one calls "On-Ken-Gujo."(隠顕倶成) "On-Ken-Gujo" functions as in the following example: when the irreversible side of a thing comes to the fore ("Ken"=顕) the reversible side fades at once into the background ("On"=隠). All conditions in the world have an opposite, reverse side. While the irreversible relationship between God and the soul simultaneiously contains the reversible, from the viewpoint of the reversible relationship one experiences irreversibility. If "the soul exists because God exists" (the irreversible side) is the forward side, then "if the soul exists, then so does God" (the reversible side) must be implied in the background. The opposite is true too. In the place of 'unio' where the condition "if the soul exists, then

God does too" occurs, one recognizes paradoxically "if God exists, then the soul does too". Therefore we can say that although Eckhart and Tauler have the same 'Soku'-viewpoint, the reversible side of 'Soku' is with the former more emphasized and the irreversible side more with the latter.

In closing, I would like to answer the question of how far the Catholic traditional Christian faith which Tauler represents can accept the Buddhist emptiness. If this "emptiness" rejects the "irreversible" side of transcendence-sive-mankind, and recognizes only a mutual relationship of the "reversible" side, Christianity cannot accept the Buddhist concept of "emptiness." However, if one takes Honda's view, "irreversible-sive-reversible, reversible-sive-irreversible"（不可逆即可逆・可逆即不可逆）, then Tauler's faith can accept this "emptiness." The reversible relationship " 'mankind based on God' -sive- 'God based on mankind' " is possible on condition that God created creatures (including mankind) from nothing.

〈NOTE〉

1 This thesis is based on a conference presentation at "The Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies"（1996. July 27th-August 3rd, Chicago）. The auther has revised the original manuscript and elaborated and expanded on the original with new insights.

All literature（Japanese and German）cited in this thesis are translated by the auther.

2 Nishitani, Keiji：*Kyomu to Kû*, p.109.

3 Nishitani, Keiji：*Eckhart ni okeru kami to ningen no kankei*, p.74.

4 Hofmann, Georg：*Johannes Tauler II*, p.337.

5 Cf. Nishida, Kitaro：*Bashoteki ronri to shukyoteki sekaikan*, Chapter 2.

6 Hofmann, Georg：*Johannes Tauler I*, p.196f.

7 Hofmann, G：*Johannes Tauler II*, p.314f.

8 Cf. Hashimoto, Hiroaki：*Honda tetsugaku ni okeru kagyaku-soku-fukagyaku no soku (1)*.