

*DIALOGUE : Christian and Buddhist  
Cognitive Theories*



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# *ASIA – Nest of Great Religions*





# *Introduction (Asian Reality)*

- Asians constitute 54% of the world's population and the Christian population is just 2.3% : failure of the Asian Church in articulating and communicating the Christian faith with local cultures.
  
- Cultural and Religious Plurality
  - Massive Poverty – extreme economic dependency and polarization(Global South/Global North)
  - Oppressive Social Systems – Dalits, sex tourism, “bought wives”
  - Political Disturbance and Militarization – ethnic/religious conflicts, communist regimes, military dictatorship (Myanmar)



# *Spirit of Dialogue in Catholic Church*

- Vatican II on Dialogue

The Council's central theme was renewal and updating (*aggiornamento*). The aim was to meet the challenges of the modern world through dialogue.

“The Church *must enter into dialogue with the world* in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make” (*Ecclesiam Suam* (His Church) of Pope Paul VI No.65).

- Mission in Asia Today and Tomorrow

‘How’ of the Mission is as important as its ‘why’ and ‘what’ if it has to be understood well in a given context.

“The big question presently confronting us, given the religious and cultural context of Asia, is not *why* we should proclaim the Good News of Christ's Salvation but *how*” (*Ecclesia in Asia* of Pope John Paul II 29)



- *The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)* is a voluntary association of episcopal conferences in Asia, established with the approval of the Holy See in 1972.

Its purpose is to foster among its members solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of Church and society in Asia. The foundation for the FABC was laid at a historic meeting of 180 Asian Catholic Bishops in Manila during the visit of Pope Paul VI to the Philippines in November 1970.

That was the groundbreaking event in which never before had Asian bishops come together to exchange experiences and problems.

The focus of the FABC is on *the new way of being Church* in Asia. This 'new way' is the triple dialogue: dialogue with the poor of Asia, dialogue with the religions of Asia and dialogue with Asia's diverse cultures.



## Vatican Documents on Dialogue

- ***‘Dialogue and Proclamation’*** issued jointly in May 1991 by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

- It recommends a fourfold dialogue:

*The dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit.

*The dialogue of action*, in which Christians and others collaborate for liberation of people.

*The dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and appreciate each other's spiritual values.

*The dialogue of (religious or spiritual) experience*, where persons share their spiritual and religious experiences rooted in diverse religious traditions.



# *Dialogue and Proclamation(1991)*

- The goal of *Dialogue and Proclamation* is the “further consideration” of dialogue and proclamation.
- “For the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is present and active among the hearers of the Good News even before the Church’s missionary action comes into operation... They [hearers of the Good News] may in many cases have already responded implicitly to God’s offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, a sign of this being the sincere practice of their own religious traditions...” (*Dialogue and Proclamation*. p.111)



## *Dominus Jesus (2000)*

- *Dominus Jesus* issued by the Congregation of Faith and Doctrine distinguishes “faith” from “belief”. Faith here is limited to Christian faith: “the acceptance of the truth revealed by the one and trinitarian God.”(para.7) Belief means, on the other hand, what non-Christian religions possess: that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration.”(para.7)
- Implication: Christianity has faith, while non-Christian religions have belief.
- “Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel... One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an ex opere operato (from the work performed) salvific efficacy.” (para.21)



# *Case of Indonesia*






# Overview

- Roman Catholicism in Indonesia is one of the six approved religions: Islam (80%), Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Catholics make up 3.05 percent , or 6,5 millions of the population in 2000.
- The Church is organized into 10 archdioceses and 26 dioceses in all six regions -- Java, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, Papua, Sulawesi-Maluku, and Sumatra.
- Only in the middle of the 19th century did the Netherlands allow any missionary activities in Indonesia. Jesuits from the Netherlands first began to work.
- Catholic involvement in the public sphere is larger than other religions. The local Church has had a long tradition of providing social services to the poor, especially in health and education areas. Since the 1960s, a large number of development projects have been added to the Church's tasks.

# Religious Situations

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- Indonesia has hundreds of different ethnic groups, cultures and languages. Javanese culture and people play an important role and their influence can be felt throughout the country. This cultural richness carries certain dangers; internal ethnic conflicts and the dominance of Java have until now endangered the national unity of Indonesia.
  - For examples, Some 500 attacks have been reported in the country in the last 14 years. Forced closure by muslim militants of the St. Bernadette Catholic School in Cileduk, Banten province (40 kilo meters west of Jakarta) in early October, 2008 by members of the Islam Defenders Front.
  - The 1945 Constitution guarantees each and every citizen the freedom of religion and of worship. However, religious freedom is still controlled by various regulations: Catholics have had to use gyms to say mass because of no permits given to them for building a Church by authorities.



## *Dialogue based on Hermeneutics*

- The future of Buddhist-Christian studies and Buddhist-Christian dialogue requires a new comparative direction: a shift from comparative theory to comparative praxis, from doctrinal comparisons to more ethical and spiritually relevant comparison.
- New direction provides the two religions with pluralist attitudes: intellectual humbleness and dialogical openness toward other religions.
- The object is to build bridge of understanding and solidarity among religious communities and to be personally enriched by the contributions of all religions.



## *Examples of Irrelevant Comparison*

- Both **John of the Cross and Nagarjuna**, founder of Madhyamika (middle way) school, have been interpreted through concepts and categories foreign to their respective frameworks: from the perspective of other religions, from the standpoint of other fellow Christians or Buddhists.
- They have been compared to the apophatic path (or negative theology) to God and the Christian *via negativa* in ways that are not faithful to their respective views of “emptiness.”
- Exaggeration of similarities between John and other Christian mystics, John and Buddhism, and Nagarjuna and Christian mystics. Nagarjuna’s emptiness is often compared to that of the physicist David Bohm and thinker Ken Wilber. Abe Masao’s failure to differentiate his nothingness and Nagarjuna’s emptiness.

# Religions vs. Spirituality

- After 9/11, humanity came to realize, individual religions leads to misunderstanding, animosity, and outright violence: intense religious commitment and even belief in “God” have often become the problem. Therefore the goal is to propose a basis for structuring a global community. But how?
- Only *shared beliefs and common values* could ultimately support community—and beliefs and values are spiritual. Thus, emphasis on some generic spirituality, not particular religion, could be the solution.
- That basis or universal commonality could only lie in the very humanity that all people share: not divine, religious, or culturally specific. Appeal must be to the *human spirit and its innate structures* which only could provide a common basis on which to structure a global community of the third millennium.

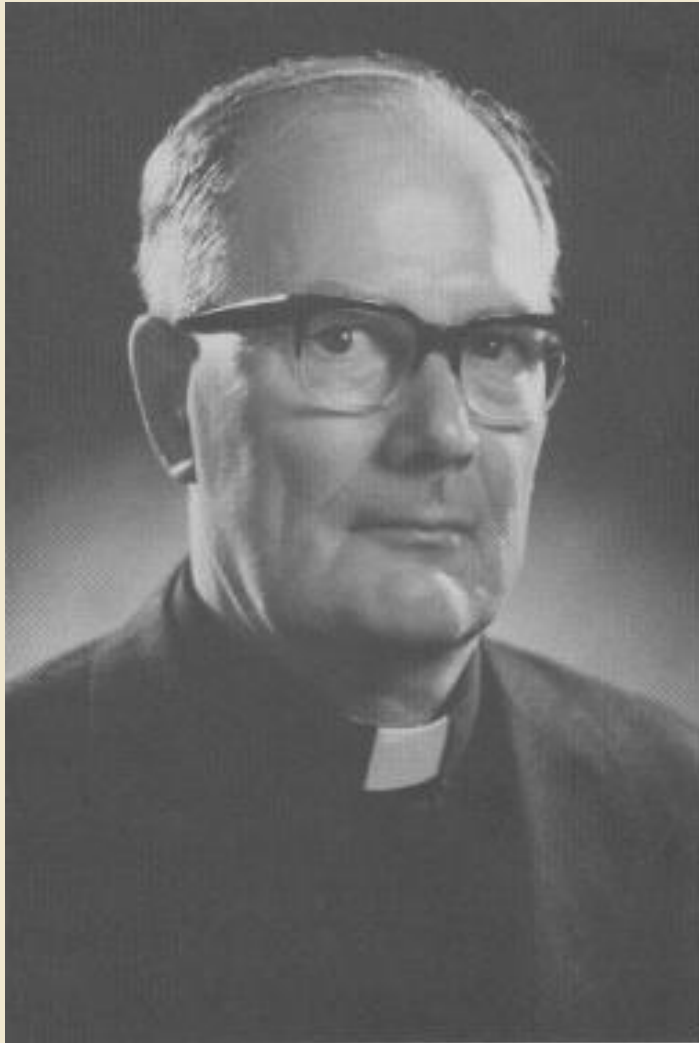


# *What Spirituality?*

- ***Spirituality as Concern for Transcendence*** : Spirituality is an awareness of, and commitment to, a transcendent dimension of life. *Spirituality is both cognitive and volitional.* Human nature is inherently social, so no spirituality proceeds apart from some kind of community. Some people find the transcendent in nature or music or art.
- ***Spirituality as a Lived Reality or a Way of Life*** : Intrinsic human dynamism toward authentic self-transcendence. *Human consideration is essential-not theist nor theotic.* But it can be expanded to include theist elements: Christian (Franciscan, Lutheran...), Buddhist, Hindu spiritualities....Set of practices or disciplines to grow spiritually: meditation, loyalty to a guru, Bible reading, rituals... (Daniel Helminiak 1996)




# *Lonergan(1904-1984) and Jinul (1158-1210)*



# *Dynamic Knowing as Spirituality*

- The challenge, then, is to elaborate the human spirit and to say exactly what spiritual and sound spirituality mean. Bernard Lonergan's analyses of human spirit or *intentional consciousness*, provide a rich elaboration.
- On the basis of "self-appropriation": attentiveness to the workings of one's own mind, Lonergan describes a dimension of the mind that is *inherently self-transcending*. It is an open-ended *dynamism caused by ceaseless questioning* and reflection that would not rest until that dynamism affirms all that is true value.
- *Spirituality is deliberate commitment to the self-transcending dimension* of our minds, and its goal is increasing sensitivity and responsiveness to this same dimension. Further, such *human spiritual capacity is the source of knowledge about Transcendent Reality* and the origin of society, culture, and organized religion.

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- In Lonergan's words, *four "transcendental precepts"* define genuine or authentic humanity: "Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible." These are the needs of the human spirit even as meanings, truth and values are its products and its hallmarks.
  - For Lonergan, *knowing is not a single activity but a dynamic and cumulative process* that consists of three distinct, but functionally related components: experience, understanding and Judging and deciding. Such questioning is possible thanks to "*pure desire to know*": *the a priori which causes to raise endless question*, intrinsic to all human consciousness which generates cultures, religions, and systems of meaning and value
  - His position seems to be immune to post-modern criticism, which itself is an expression of the human spiritual capacity that is focus of Lonergan's analyses.



# *Lonergan and Mysticism*

- *Intentional consciousness constitute the subject as existential*: humans reform themselves through their (deliberative) choices. Even as Lonergan refines the achievements of his intentionality analysis, he recognizes that *the existential subject lives within a mystical horizon*.
- He understands the *transcendental notions to be the divine call* transformed and fulfilled by the further call and *gift of God's grace*. *"I think the experience of mystery lies in a fulfillment of the transcendental notions."*
- The fulfillment of unrestricted human intentionality is *denouncement of the established horizon of human knowing* and choosing in the birth of new horizon in which the love of God transvalues human value and transforms human knowing.



# Overview on Buddhism

- There are two schools of Buddhism in general: *Hinayana* ("lesser vehicle") and *Mahayana* ("great vehicle"). The latter names the former thinking their own tradition has superior method, so surpassing the others in universality and compassion. But the name was not accepted by the “conservative” schools as referring to a common tradition. Instead, the modern upholders of the ancient Hīnayāna tradition are the Theravādins (followers of the "Way of the Elders").
- While Mahayana school is dominant in East Asian countries like China, Japan, Korea and Tibet, Theravada school has spread to Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar in Southeast Asia except Vietnam which is closer to Chinese Buddhism.





## *Debate on Sudden and Gradual*

- One of the principal debates in Buddhism in East Asia has been how to achieve enlightenment, which is a process we may call "Buddhist soteriology." The debate indeed focused especially on whether enlightenment was achieved through sudden (don or 頓) or gradual(jeom or 漸) program of spiritual development. The sudden/gradual debate was also crucial in Korean Seon.
- As well known, Jinul was a strong advocate for a moderate subitism(sudden enlightenment) that involves gradualism, that is, initial sudden awakening(dono 頓悟) followed by gradual cultivation(jeomsu 漸修).
- Unlike many Seon masters, Jinul strongly supported that even Seon practitioners required intellectual understanding of Buddhist doctrine if their practice were to succeed.



○ Seon (or spirituality of Seon) has traditionally stressed :

*"direct transmission from mind to mind"*(以心傳心)

*"no dependence on words and letters"*(不立文字),

*"direct pointing to the human mind"*(直指人心).

So, it was clear that such Seon (禪) school conflicted with Gyo (教) school which strongly supported the role of "words" and "teachings".


○ It was the backdrop where Jinul made great efforts to have *Seon and Gyo in dialogue* each other and accomplished the job in Korea, the most ecumenical Buddhist tradition in Asia.

○ "...like any other religious experience, satori (enlightenment) cannot but have some effect, strong or weak, upon one's personality and behavior.....*Satory does not instantly transform the old habit of life.*"(Keel Hee-sung)



# *Ji(Chi, 知) or Awareness of Jinul*


- Most important concepts of Seon are Mind(sim 心) and Nature(seong 性), and often the two words combine to form one word, Mind-Nature(simseong 心性). This is why Seon Buddhism is also called the school of Mind.
- The Essence (che 體) of this ultimate reality, *True mind*, is not merely empty and quiescent but also has the positive aspect of *spiritual knowing*, so that Mind is not like the state of insentient beings. It is *sunyata* or *dharmata* plus something luminous called "knowing"; hence it is the *Buddha-Nature or the enlightenment-nature that is originally in sentient beings*.
- Analogy of the bronze mirror: Ji has its essence and functioning. The *material bronze is the essence of the self-nature* while *luminous reflectivity of the bronze is the functioning* of the self-nature and the *images reflected* by its luminous reflectivity are its *functioning-in-accord-with-conditions*.


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- While the reflections may have thousands of variations, the luminous reflectivity is the ever-present luminous reflectivity of the self-nature. What is unique about such analysis which Jinul followed is that it shows the absolute aspect of the Mind in terms of its essence and function. Therefore, tranquility(寂) refers to the essence of the self-nature of the Mind, and Awareness(知) to its functioning.
  - For Jinul, Ji(知) is the mystic reality which mediates and connects the two worlds of True Mind and daily life as if it is a clean and transparent mirror which could reflect all things outside because of such transparency. Through Ji or Awareness the world of daily life can be evolved as Buddha-nature, thus for Jinul ordinary activities of consciousness can be the function of Buddha-nature.



## *Conclusion: difference, similarity, criticism*

- **Two different types in a mystical union** (with God or Buddha-nature): One is usually found in *"monotheistic" faith* traditions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam which pursue *"relational" union between human soul and God*, rather than its "absolute" or "complete" union with God. We call it *"love mysticism"* which stresses human's loving union experience of God without losing human soul as "entity".
- The other is *Hindu mysticism* based on the nondualistic Advaita Vedanta and Eastern religions like *Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism* which pursue *absolute union with the Ultimate*. In other words, it stresses the mystical experience of complete oneness in which difference between the subject and the object in religious experiences totally disappear.

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- Common ground of Lonergan and Jinul: one crucial thing in common among them is *a priori* as "pure desire to know" as spirit for Lonergan, or *a priori* as Ji or Awareness for Jinul.
  - For Lonergan, reality can be accessed solely through sets of operations comprising experiences, memories, questions, insights, and judgments.
  - Similarly, Jinul argues that all humans can be enlightened by Ji or Awareness intrinsic to every human beings, which is quite different from main thought of Mahayana Buddhism like *sunyata* (空) and dependent co-arising (緣起).
  - From this, we can say that as such Lonergan's *a priori* and Jinul's are very similar as the Mind Ground, if not identical.
  - But Donald Gelpi points to the *a priori theory of them which is irrelevant.*



○ From Gelpi's view, Lonergan discovers the most fundamental orientation of humans toward God *in the dynamic spiritual structure of the individual psyche*. That orientation, therefore, originates a priori, namely, prior to any interaction with ones' world. He argues that it is *(religious) events that supply the categories which thematize this essential orientation*.

○ Gelpi thinks the individual psyche or consciousness and the dynamisms that shape it as both fallible and finite. He insists that *social intercourse rather than individual subjectivity links one to the divine*.

○ If his criticism is as valid as it is in Jinul, we can say that Lonergan and Jinul have the *same problem with social practice for common good because they are confined to a priori in individual*.

