YOSHIMITSU YOSHIHIKO’S CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko (1904-45) is one of the most prominent Catholic theologians in Japan. He grew up in an environment where non-Christian religions were taken for granted on their own terms. Thus, Yoshimitsu adopted a generic approach to global religious study instead of the European approach. Yoshimitsu’s understanding of Christianity and other religions is based on two dimensions: “nature” and “the supernatural.” He elaborates on each religion’s doctrines and practice based on these two dimensions. Some religions focus on the realm of nature, but other religions, including Christianity, elaborate discourse through the relationship between nature and the supernatural. Yoshimitsu illustrates differences within global religions based on this “generic” scheme. This is different from the conventional European pluralistic approach, which integrates global religions through a single norm such as “the Real,” “supersensory realm,” or “pursuit of limitless better possibility.” Utilizing Yoshimitsu’s idea as the basis for a template, various religions’ doctrines can be more precisely illustrated.

Through his “generic” scheme of religion, Yoshimitsu emphasizes the key aspect of theocentric humanism in Christianity. This idea is based on his Thomistic thoughts on the Order of Creation, i.e., that God created humans in his image, and the Supernatural Order of Salvation, i.e., that Christ is given by God as Grace. Yoshimitsu suggests human
initiative based on the Order of Creation, humility towards Grace, and human possibility to be supernatural, and therefore part of the Supernatural Order of Salvation. In this Thomistic view, religious actions and virtues of followers of non-Christian religions are considered to be Adventists who await Grace. Yoshimitsu classifies Virgil and Hinduism as examples of this Adventism. Yoshimitsu, as a Catholic thinker, is an inclusivist in terms of the “supernatural.”

As shown in his advocacy of Blaise Pascal, he is keen to look into religious practice: “How to become a religious person?” He contends that an ascetic approach to sharing the suffering of Christ is indispensable for Christianity. He engages the Islamic thinker Hallaj precisely for his asceticism. How to embody religions in practice is equally important as religious doctrine for Yoshimitsu.

The works of Yoshimitsu are little known in English, but his insightful approach to global religions, which is practical and human-centered, should be kept as a legacy. Compared to the European approach, Yoshimitsu’s global religious study is intellectually substantive, culturally neutral, and authentically balanced between doctrine and practice, which enables it to provide many insights into global religious study in the twenty-first century.
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I am indebted to Professor Doak for his tutelage throughout my period of study at Georgetown University. The book, “Xavier’s Legacies: Catholicism in Modern Japanese Culture” edited by Professor Doak, which I received on May 4, 2011, inspired me to study in Georgetown University’s MALS program. In addition to his breath of knowledge, Professor Doak was always willing to engage me in a discussion of diverse topics ranging from religion to Japanese history. After forty years of a career of business away from academic studies, I appreciated Professor Doak’s guidance back into scholastic pursuit.
DEDICATION

To my wife Nobue Takemoto

After supporting my business carrier in Tokyo, New York, Detroit and Los Angeles, she supported my step onto the academic path in Washington DC, which is a rewarding, but uncommon path of retirement in Japan.

Thank you
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INTRODUCTION

Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko is a unique Japanese Catholic Theologian due to his adaptation of a generic approach towards global religious study. He lived in the early twentieth century, making it possible for him to take advantage of Japan’s new opening to the world since the beginning of Meiji in 1868 while still appreciating the heritage of traditional Japanese cultures and religions. The main component of his religious analysis is the division between nature and the supernatural. He illustrates various realms of religions, clearly identifying their themes in relation to nature and to the supernatural. He conducts his comparative religious study not from an exclusivistic viewpoint, but rather explores the compatibility of global religions from an inclusivistic viewpoint.

Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko was one of the typical Western-trained Japanese scholars of the early twentieth century, sponsored in his scholarship by the Japanese government to study in Europe. Yoshimitsu was born October 13, 1904 on Tokunoshima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture in southern Japan.¹ He was baptized into the Protestant community in 1921 during his middle school years at Kagoshima Prefecture Daiichi Middle School. The following year he moved to Tokyo to join Daiichi High School. In 1925, he started studying ethics in the Faculty of Literature at Tokyo Imperial University, where he studied German philosophy and wrote his graduation thesis on Max Scheler’s philosophy. He also translated Jacques Maritain’s “Introduction to Scholasticism” into Japanese,

publishing it around the time of his graduation. Under the influence of Father Iwashita
Soichi, who studied in Europe before coming back to Japan as a Catholic priest,
Yoshimitsu entered the Catholic Church in 1927. After his graduation from Tokyo
Imperial University, Yoshimitsu went to Europe to study under Maritain and Reginald
Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, returning to Japan in 1930. From 1931, he began his career as a
professor of philosophy at Sophia University. He also began teaching philosophy at
Tokyo Kōkyō Shingakko (Tokyo Catholic Seminary) the same year. He became a
lecturer of ethics in the Department of Literature of Tokyo Imperial University in 1935
through the recommendation of Watsuji Tetsuro. His mentor Iwashita died in 1940.
Yoshimitsu influenced the young writer Endo Shusaku, who stayed in the Catholic
dormitory San Felipe where Yoshimitsu was master of the house. Despite his
accomplishments, Yoshimitsu was not well: in the summer 1934, he contracted
diphtheria, and he also suffered from tuberculosis from the mid-1930s on. He died on
October 23, 1945.

Yoshimitsu graduated from the Tokyo Imperial University in 1928, two years
after the start of Showa when Japan’s post-WWI westernization was in full swing. In
these years, there was a persistent current of nontheism and nihilism in Europe, including
in France, where he had an opportunity to study between 1928 and 1930. Yoshimitsu was
influenced both by Iwashita Soichi, a Catholic priest who had studied in France, and
Uchimura Kanzo, an influential Protestant who had studied in the U.S. Influenced by
these Meiji-era first-generation Christian theologians, he belongs to the second generation
of Western-educated scholars after Meiji, significantly influenced by Catholicism and
Protestantism, yet intimately familiar with traditional Japanese religions. His books and articles, written during the interwar years and during WWII, offer a reinterpretation of Christian and non-Christian thoughts from a more generic viewpoint. As one of the leading Japanese Catholic intellectuals in the early twentieth century, Yoshimitsu undertook a unique exploration of theology and philosophy which even today offers us an effective path towards global religious study. His generic approach to global religious study is different from the European approach, in which the Eurocentric pluralistic view is dominant.

In order to identify the uniqueness of Yoshimitsu’s religious study, this thesis first reviews the mainstream of global religious study as envisioned by Christian theologians in the West. It then identifies characteristics of this European approach, including its religious comparative methodology and its tendency to emphasize religious doctrine over practice. Since the majority of these mainstream religious studies were conducted by Christian theologians in the West, this thesis will focus on their arguments about non-Christian religions in order to show the wider scope Yoshimitsu’s approach provides to these religions as compared with the basically theistic, ethnological, and doctrinal European approach.

With this background established, the thesis then analyzes Yoshimitsu’s global religious study, focusing on the unique aspects of his discourse as compared with these mainstream Christian studies. It argues that Yoshimitsu’s approach is both generic and inclusive. To develop this idea, it explores Yoshimitsu’s two most important propositions: the “generic approach” based on nature and the supernatural. Using
Yoshimitsu’s own works, most of them available only in the Japanese language, as well as secondary scholarship both in Japanese and English, this thesis presents a template for global religious study based on Yoshimitsu’s work. Following this comparative analysis of Yoshimitsu’s approach alongside the mainstream Christian approach, this thesis then reviews his study of non-Christian religions and Christian thinkers in order to clarify his detailed structuring of global religious study in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

Yoshimitsu’s individual religious study reflects his Thomistic Christian faith and his razor sharp eye on nature (Man), but it also engages deeply with non-Christian religions. Through his discussion of Hindu, Islamic, and Christian thinkers, the distinct character of Yoshimitsu’s religious argument as compared with the mainstream European approach becomes clear. His religious study is based on the solid core of “nature and the supernatural,” as well as on an exquisite balance between doctrine and practice. Finally, this thesis presents the advantages of Yoshimitsu’s study over the European approach. Yoshimitsu’s approach is an intellectually substantive, culturally neutral, and authentically balanced religious study which we can use as an effective reference point even in the twenty first century.
CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS GLOBAL RELIGIOUS STUDY?

The five major world religions – Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam – have a lengthy history, with Islam, the youngest, claiming thirteen hundred years of history. However, despite this long coexistence, there had not been many inter-religious intellectual or scholarly exchanges between religions until the last two centuries, especially between the Western religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and the Eastern religions (Hinduism and Buddhism). The first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 is considered to be the first epoch-making intellectual meeting among world religious involving religious leaders from the East and the West. Swami Vivekananda from India discussed Vedanta and Hindu Yoga at the meeting (Ward 1994, 198). Soyen Shaku, a scholar of Rinzai Zen Buddhism from Japan, and Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sri Lankan Buddhist, delivered a speech about Buddhism, the first of its kind, at the same meeting (Fields 1981, 126). Of course, there has been a long history of exchange among religions through the field of politics, which includes both colonialism and trade. However, intellectual exchanges such as those undertaken at the 1893 World Parliament have been comparatively rare. Therefore, this thesis will focus on twentieth century inter-religious scholarly work, which took advantage of previously unheard of democratic face-to-face meetings among religionists as well as scientific cross-reading of scholarly texts beginning at the end of nineteenth century. In this context, the twentieth century can be considered the start of apolitical, scholarly inter-religious study including both the East and the West.
The Mainstream European Approach

Before examining Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko’s discourse in the context of early twentieth century religious scholarship, it is worthwhile to review the current state of inter-religious studies in Europe and in the U.S. Prominent contemporary theologians include Francis X Clooney S.J., a Harvard Professor and American Catholic Theologian; Jacques Dupuis, a Belgian Catholic Theologian who taught at Gregorian University of Rome; S. Mark Heim, a Professor of Andover Newton and an American Protestant Theologian; and Keith Ward, Oxford Professor and Anglican Theologian. Ward’s four book series of inter-religious study (consisting of Religion and Revelation (1994), Religion and Creation (1996), Religion and Human Nature (1998), and Religion and Community (2000)), which he calls a “comparative theology,” gives an especially thorough view of the approaches to inter-religious study which are prevalent in Europe and the U.S. I term this mainstream approach the European approach to make a contrast with Yoshimitsu’s approach, which I term the generic approach.

As Alan Race has proposed, the European Christian approach to comparative theology can be divided into three camps: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.\(^1\) Exclusivism assumes a Christian-centric approach in terms of religious legitimacy and salvation. Inclusivism, in contrast, is open to other religions but maintains the supremacy of their Christian faith. Pluralism admits the legitimacy of other religions, but holds that all religious paths will merge into one Truth. In this thesis, in order to review the primary

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trends of the European approach towards non-Christian religions, the focus will be mainly on pluralists, such as Hick and Heim, with limited inclusion of inclusivists such as Clooney. Since exclusivists tend to adopt an a priori view of religions (one truth) rather than an analytical view, this thesis will concentrate on pluralists and inclusivists who discuss the legitimacy of difference. It would be reasonable to assume, following Jonathan Wong, that pluralism has now become the reigning paradigm for most contemporary Christians in the West (Wong 2013, 82).

In the studies conducted by pluralistic European Christian theologians, three main characteristics emerge. First, they are based mainly on the viewpoint of theism. Pluralist concepts of "the Real," the "supersensory realm," and the "pursuit of limitless better possibility" identify something which is otherworldly but also real, like God. Second, they observe and include ethnic influence into religions, especially making a distinction between Semitic influence and Indian influence. The European approach tends to argue that the Semitic tradition has God, but the Indian tradition has a non-dual Absolute which is not God. This is a kind of difference coming from anthropology. Thirdly, they focus more on religious doctrine than religious practice. The European approach deals more with doctrine about God, Moksha, and Nirvana than it does religious practice.

**The Theistic Assumption**

As God and revelation have been the two key components of Christianity, Christian theology has assumed this framework from its start. Thus, it is not surprising that Christian theologians in Europe have applied this same basic viewpoint to other religions, especially when engaging with other Abrahamic traditions. These studies have
thus focused on key differences in revelation under the same God. For example, Ward observes that all Abrahamic traditions stress the aspect of objective divine action, though each in a different way (Ward 2000, 343). Ward argues in a nutshell that Christianity recognizes Jesus, a revelation of the nature of God, as Love, while in Judaism, God is a morally demanding and providential agent calling one people to their special vocation, and in Islam, God is a wholly transcendent and sovereign power who reveals a moral law for all people (Ward 2000, 344-45). Among these Abrahamic traditions, whether one’s approach is exclusivist, pluralist, or inclusive, one can posit a solid metaphysical description of God. Ward summarizes his comparative theology as “an enquiry into ideas of God and revelation, of ultimate reality and its discourse to human minds, as such ideas arise across the full spectrum of human history and experience” (Ward 1994, 50). In this way, Ward argues that the European approach primarily focuses on God and revelation. In this tradition, an a priori concept of God and revelation seems typical. However, Hinduism and Buddhism do not straightforwardly lend themselves to the notions of God and revelation. In Hinduism, gods are subordinate to the Absolute; they are the secular reflection of the Absolute. The Absolute, the Brahman, in Hinduism has some god-like characteristics, such as near-omniscience, but is not a supernatural entity. In Buddhism, there is no god(s) and thus, no revelation.

Despite these differences between the theistic and non-theistic traditions, there has been a scholarly trend in the European approach to engage religions primarily through the lens of theism or quasi-theism, which eliminates non-theistic traditions from their study. For example, Ward has chosen four theistic traditions in his book, Religion
and Creation. Of course, Ward explores and analyzes Buddhism in another book, but he eliminates Buddhism entirely from this book. In the introduction, he explains why he chose to exclude Buddhism. Ward’s remarks reflect his inclination for theism. According to him, Hinduism is quasi-theistic. He writes as follows:

I propose to discuss four such traditions, which are all basically theistic in form: the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Christian traditions, and the way in which one major twentieth-century theologian of each faith interprets them in his own time…I have therefore, with some regret, omitted non-theistic traditions, like Buddhism, entirely, though that is not at all because I think them unimportant. The reason I have selected the concept of God is, of course, because it is central to my own Christian belief system. My aim is not, however, to demonstrate the superiority of my beliefs. It is, rather, to articulate and reconceptualize my beliefs by a positive interaction with those of others. (Ward 1996, 3-4)

Ward mentions his familiarity with the concept of God due to his "own Christian belief" in these remarks. As shown by Ward’s remarks, the inclination to theism might be a natural analytical inclination due to his Christian background.

Another typical inter-religious study within the European theistic approach is Francis X. Clooney’s Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions (2001). Clooney, an inclusivist, sets up four central analytical frameworks to compare the Hindu God and the Christian God. They are God’s existence, identity, embodiment, and his word. He extensively engages Hindu texts in order to compare the following four aspects of Hinduism with Christianity.

Is there a God who is maker of the world?
Can God’s true identity be to some extent known?
Can God become embodied?
Is revelation the norm by which to judge religions? (Clooney 2001, 12)
Clooney intends his comparative religious study to help Christians learn from non-
Christians (Clooney 2001, 13). He suggests that the ninth century Hindu theologian
Jayanta Bhatta wrote in the *Nyaya Manjari* (The Banquet of Reasoning) about God’s
existence (Clooney 2001, 39). But he also illustrates a persistent critique of it from the
major Indian religious traditions of Buddhism and Vedanta (Clooney 2001, 47-58). In the
meantime, he observes that Brahman in Vedanta has attributes “one normally assigns to
God: fullness of being, pure consciousness, and perfect bliss” (Clooney 2001, 52).
Clooney’s theistic approach is clear here, because he tries to select a specific theistic
view within Hinduism to compare them with Christianity. Clooney writes, “I am a
Christian theologian who sides with Hindu theistic theologians and, among those Hindu
theologians, with Hindu monotheists, Saiva and Vaisnava” (Clooney 2001, 178). It is
clear that Clooney stands by his own Christian theism in his comparative theology, and
that he draws from Hindu theist thoughts primarily to deepen his Christian theology.

One noticeable challenge within European approaches that try to overcome the
limitedness of a theism based on God is the adoption of theistic but more general
concepts of the sublime value such as “the Real,” the “supersensory realm,” and
“limitless better possibility.” This is a quasi-theistic platform. S. Mark Heim contends
that John Hick’s universal cognitive content, the Real, could be a theological platform to
embraces major religions within one pluralistic realm (Heim 1995, 147-49).
Conceptually, Hick considers “the Real” to be a “generalized theism” in the sense that
people are looking for a certain supersensory supreme value including God. The Real
could exist not only in the realm of the supernatural, but also in nature. Hick writes that
an “infinite Real, in itself beyond the scope of other than purely formal concepts, is
differently conceived, experienced and responded to from within the different cultural
ways of being human” (Hick 1989, 14). According to Hick, the Real would be differently
perceived empirically in different cultures. He does not specify whether the Real has a
divine character or not, but the Real does look quasi-theistic. In S. Mark Heim’s book,
*Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion*, he summarizes Hick’s approach as follows:

> None of our religious language can be applied appropriately to the
> unexperienceable Real. Thus all the ultimates of faith – God, Brahman,
> Sunyata – are themselves myth. They are the *persona* and *impersona* of
> the Real. The Real is the “noumental ground of the encountered gods and
> experienced absolutes witnessed to by the religious traditions.” (Heim
> 1995, 21).

Utilizing the philosophical platform of “the Real,” Hick tries to articulate similarities
amongst the major religious traditions, including the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism,
Christianity, and Islam), Hinduism, and Buddhism. Hick’s religious pluralism is based on
the recognition of differences between religions, but finds strong similar element among
all of them. Hick’s approach is not without problems. Whether Sunyata, to use one
example, could be considered to be the Real based on original Buddhism thoughts is
debatable, but Hick does demonstrate that experiential reality is a common thread among
religions, whether they relate to God or not.

In the same vein, Ward defines religion as “the ultimate nature of things in
relation to a supersensory realm” (Ward 1994, 318). Ward’s phrase “supersensory realm”
may sound like “other worldliness.” Here gods could be considered part of the
supersensory realm, but to categorize Buddhism as “supersensory” may invite
misunderstanding. Since Buddhism’s approach is anti-sensory, rather than super-sensory,
the Buddhist or Zen doctrine of Sunyata or Nirvana is considered to be “down to earth ontological awareness.” To the extent that Ward uses the word “supersensory” in the context of looking at sentient beings in a different ontological fashion, then his common concept could include Buddhism. Heim too offers his own term to encapsulate religious commonality, using the notion of achieving “a limitless better possibility” to illustrate a religious common goal (Heim 1995, 213). These three terms – “the Real,” “supersensory realm,” and “pursuit of limitless better possibility” – demonstrate different theologians’ expressions of how major world religions pursue or imagine the ultimate Truth. Despite these theologians’ departure from the word God, however, the basic concept of these three approaches is still theistic, because all three rely on the elements of omnipotence and infinity.

The Pluralist approach embodied by Hick, Ward, and Heim does not claim the supremacy of Christianity, but in fact accepts the validity of non-Christian religions. In this acceptance of various religions based on the theistic paradigm, some pluralists contend that there is a convergence of non-Christian religions with Christianity. This sense of convergence is another distinct feature of Christian pluralism. The Belgian theologian Jacques Dupuis developed a distinct theistic and Christocentric comparative theology. His key argument is that all religions might share “the Real” as Hick articulated, but that Christianity must be “the Ultimate Real” in that realm. He contends that all religions would be factored into Christianity, the ultimate Real. Every form of the

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2 However, Heim inconsistently claims that pluralism does distinguish true from false religion (Heim 1995, 19).
Real would emerge into this Ultimate Real – Christianity – in Dupuis’ evolitional perspective. He writes as follows:

From the standpoint of the Christian faith, it seems necessary to hold not only that the Ultimate Reality differently manifested to humankind is a personal God; but, further, that the Christian Trinitarian God represents the Ultimate Reality an sich. (Dupuis 1997, 259)

Dupuis explores this Ultimate Real in his book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997). Dupuis introduces Karl Rahner’s concept of “anonymous Christianity,” which contends that non-Christian traditions have a hidden and unknown operative presence of the mystery of Christ (Dupuis 1997, 143). In a similar vein, Dupuis articulates an inclusivistic and convergent view of all religions from his Christian perspective as follows:

The Religion of God to which the believers of other religious traditions belong in history is then indeed the Kingdom inaugurated by God in Jesus Christ. It is that Kingdom which God, in raising Jesus from the dead, has put into his hands; under the kingship of Christ, God has destined it to grow toward its final plentitude. While the believers of other religious faiths perceive God’s call through their own traditions and respond to it in the sincere practice of these traditions, they become in all truth – even without being formally conscious of it – active members of the Kingdom. In the final analysis, then, a theology of religions following the Kingdom-centered model cannot bypass or avoid the Christrocentric perspective. (Dupuis 1997, 345)

This Christocentric idea offers one of the representative European approaches. This discourse assumes the centrality of theism and suggests the convergence of religions towards Christology under one God. For the form of Christian pluralism which represents the “European approach” Christology is the merging point of all religious truth or all true religious experience.
In these European theistic approaches, Buddhism is the religion most distant from their logic. To grasp the core of Buddhism through the terminologies of “the Real,” “the supersensory realm,” and “a limitless better possibility” is challenging, because major Buddhist schools of thought, especially Mahayana Buddhism, have opposed inherent existence, *svabhava*. The core of Buddhism is not an epistemological thesis, but it is instead an ontological thesis. Since Buddhism is a religion of wisdom, *prajna*, its main concern is creating true ontological awareness for sentient beings. Thus, within Zen practice, the attainment of one’s correct ontological awareness means one’s enlightenment, where practitioners’ religious foot is “ontologically” still on the ground, in the realm of nature, not in the other-worldly realm. Thomas Merton, one of the most knowledgeable Christian scholars of Buddhism, defines Zen as “the ontological awareness of pure being beyond subject and object, an immediate grasp of being in its ‘suchness’ and ‘thusness’” (Merton 1967, 14). Buddha nature in Buddhism is the emergence of the real nature embedded in one’s nature as one’s origin. In Mahayana Buddhism, especially in Zen, adherents are encouraged to downplay “grasping Buddha” or *nirvana* as an object. In traditional theistic European pluralism, there exists the risk of inviting misunderstanding about the true nature of Buddhism, because Buddhism is basically antithetical to any concept of inherent existence, concepts which are common among theists. Despite these controversial handlings of Buddhism in the European pluralistic approach, their theistic view has been the dominant school in the field of twentieth century comparative theology.
The Ethnological Dimension: Semitic vs. Indian

Another distinctive characteristic within the European approach is the tendency to create an ethnic dichotomy between Semitic religions and Indian religions. One of the reasons for this tendency comes from the thickness of historical exchange among the Abrahamic religions, which are all Semitic. Ward elaborates the distinct features of the Indian religious tradition in comparison with that of Semitic as follows:

In India a rather different set of traditions developed. Though these traditions are of enormous variety and complexity, there are certain characteristics features which they share; and there are some feature of the Semitic tradition which they seem almost entirely to lack. There were no prophets who felt challenged by a morally judging God and who issued condemnations on oppressive social system. There was no development of belief in a historical purpose or goal. And there was little sense of one creator God who stood apart from creation, as being quite different in kind, except in later, largely heterodox, traditions like Sikhism. One of the most intriguing questions for the student of the history of religions is how such important aspects of Semitic faith seem to be wholly lacking in the Indian traditions, and what a Semitic believer is to make of this lack. (Ward 1994, 135)

The European or Christian pluralist approach recognizes the “deep valley” between the Semitic and Indian traditions in religion. Pluralists treat the Indian religious tradition from a theistic viewpoint, but recognize an immense difference between the two. It is interesting that all of the differences which Ward mentions as “missing” in the Indian tradition are God-related: God’s prophets, God’s historical purpose, and God as a Creator. Of course, the backbone of Ward’s analysis is based on theism, but Ward’s view may well suggest that the core of the Indian religious tradition rests not with God and

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3 For the ethnic contrast in the Comparative Theology, the notion of “Aryan” is also used for “Semitic.” In this thesis, the “Indian religion” denotes mainly the group of religions originated in India including Hinduism and Buddhism.
prophets, historical purpose and creation, but rather with secular and natural things. Pluralists try to engage those secular and natural aspects of the Indian tradition from a different, yet still quasi-theistic viewpoint, but there must be room for further discussion of this point. Christianity talks about Christ as a hinge between nature and the supernatural, while in Judaism and Islam, discourse remains in the realm of the supernatural. On the contrary, the core discourse of Hinduism and Buddhism remains rooted in nature or in “down to the earth” reality. As shown in Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko’s argument, which will be explored in Chapter Two, these differences between ethnic groups could be explained by how different religions claim their thoughts within the domain of nature and the supernatural without referring to ethnic character.

Following this problematic awareness of the differences between the Semitic and Indian religious traditions, one common trend of the European theologians has been the argument for supplementation of the Semitic tradition by the Indian tradition. The most common arguments among European theologians for the complementarity of the Indian tradition are non-duality or purity of individual being that is worthy to receive God. This same trend was followed by the Orientalists in Europe in the twentieth century. Ward offers his own ideas about the supplemental aspect of the Indian religious tradition to the Semitic religious tradition. He writes as follows:

It seems that in almost every respect the Semitic and Indian traditions are complementary, emphasizing the active and unchanging poles respectively of the Supreme Spiritual Reality to which they both seek to relate. Such complementarities can be, and often are, hardened into contradiction. Thus, one can contrast a personal God with a non-dual Absolute; a temporal moral purpose with a timeless and all-including Real; the exclusive worship of one God with an acceptance of many gods and forms
of devotion; and prayer as personal relation with mediation as individual enlightenment. (Ward 1994, 331)

Ward’s contention here is based on a philosophical comparison of the two traditions. There is not much research on the compatibility of different practices among different groups of religion for Ward. In relation to the aspect of different religious practices in different religious traditions, Catholic Monk Thomas Merton, as an Orientalist, suggests the value of Buddhist contemplation as a supplement to his own Christianity. Merton writes that “Zen has much to teach the West, and recently Dom Alfred Graham, in a book which became deservedly popular, pointed out that there was not a little in Zen to be adapted and used to clear the air of ascetic irrelevancies and help us to regain a healthy natural balance in our understanding for the spiritual life” (Merton 2013, 360). In this way, the European approach tries to take advantage of Indian tradition and the East to enliven Western faith. From this perspective, the difference between the Semitic and Indian tradition is eminent, but it also provide growth opportunities for Semitic traditions, especially Christianity, in terms of metaphysics and in terms of contemplation.

Looking at the historical evolution of religions in the Semitic region and in the Indian region, the legitimate question for the European approach’s dichotomous view is, “Is this divide a permanent divide or is it a mere historical contingency?” (Doak 2011, 25). Under the strong and historical global current of “inter-culturation,” an ethnological demarcation of religious trends may be effective in a certain historical time, but may not be a permanent cause for religious differences.
Doctrinal Bias against Practice

In the Soto School of Zen Buddhism, there is a dominant concept of *Shikantaza*, just sitting. It is “nothing but (shikan) precisely (da) sitting (za).” (Fisher-Schleiber, Schumacher, and Woerner 1989, 321). Suzuki Shunryu, who worked at the Zen Center in San Francisco in the 1960s, elaborates on this Zen practice and highlights its unification of religious doctrine and religious practice. According to Suzuki, religious practice is not an additional exercise to supplement one’s faith, but is rather the core expression of one’s faith. Suzuki writes as follows:

> You should be sitting straight up as if you were supporting the sky with your head. This is not just form or breathing. It expresses the key point of Buddhism. It is a perfect expression of your Buddha nature. If you want true understanding of Buddhism, you should practice this way. (Suzuki 2011, 8-9)

This concept was initially explored by the founder of Japanese Soto Zen Dogen in the thirteenth century. Zen Buddhism belongs to Mahayana Buddhism whose first prominent philosopher is Nagarjuna, active around 150 to 250 CE. Nagarjuna philosophically established the concept of *Sunyata* (Emptiness) in his book, the Middle Way. This Zen Buddhist text profoundly illustrates one of the key aspects in Buddhism, “practice.” From the Christian perspective, Thomas Merton describes this Zen practice as follows:

We cannot really understand Chinese Zen if we do not grasp the implicit Buddhist metaphysic which it so to speak acts out. But the Buddhist metaphysic itself is hardly doctrinal in our elaborate philosophical and theological sense: Buddhist philosophy is an interpretation of ordinary human experience, but an interpretation which is not revealed by God nor discovered in the access of inspiration nor in a mystical light. Basically, implication of Buddha’s own experience of enlightenment… [Buddhism]

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4 The Chinese character “ta” within *Shikan-ta-za* is also pronounced as “da.”
seeks an existential and empirical participation in the enlightenment experience. (Merton 2013, 345)

The core of Zen Buddhism then, is “practice” oriented and supported by the doctrine of Sunyata or Nirvana.

Though based on a different tradition, Hinduism also emphasizes a similar core religious practice, yoga. In Hinduism, Krishna is said to teach the threefold discipline of yoga which include the discipline of action (karma-yoga), the discipline of insight (jnana-yoga), and the discipline of devotion (bhakti-yoga), each aimed at combining action with freedom (Glucklich 2008, 104). In the early twentieth century, prominent Hindu thinker Aurobindo Ghose developed a new form of yoga, called Integral Yoga, which emphasizes the spiritual aspect. He emphasized the primacy of knowledge derived from yogic experience, the discovery of spiritual evolution in Hindu religious history; the integration of religious life as its final goal (Glucklich 2008, 210). Ariel Glucklich summarizes Aurobindo’s yoga as follows:

For Aurobindo, the lesson of the One and the many was not primarily theological, however. It was practical – one discipline and many techniques, or the three faces of a single Integral Yoga. The scriptural source of this idea was, of course, the Bhagavad Gita. The great achievement of that text was to recognize the compatibility of human engagement in the world with a deep commitment to spiritual goals. (Glucklich 2008, 212)

Aurobindo sees the value of human engagement (yoga) to deepen one’s spirituality. He emphasizes that human spiritual engagement will liberate people from the worldly defilements.
Compared with this emphasis on religious practice in Buddhism and Hinduism, the European approach has underplayed this aspect, or at most treated religious practice as a supplement to religious doctrine. Since the main thesis or doctrine of Buddhism stays in the realm of ontology and that of Hinduism stays in the realm of pure consciousness, their orientation towards practice and emphasis on the spiritual aspect is crucial. This stands in contrast to the Semitic tradition where the theology of God and doctrines around God have been the focus. Hence, spiritual practice is subordinate to the doctrine in Semitic religions, but is not in the Indian tradition.

Of course, the European approach does not deny religious practice, but rather treats it as a supplementary necessity or the thing which people must not forget. Ward elaborates on this aspect in Christianity in his remarks about Buddhism. He writes as follows:

[t]he Buddhist witness is, the Christian may add, nevertheless necessary to remind Christians of their tendency to turn faith into acceptance of external dogma, and forget the primary and fundamental impulse of religious faith to facilitate the interior realization of the human goal of true joy, wisdom, and compassion. (Ward 1994, 335)

Furthering Ward’s argument, Merton suggests that interior realization through “direct experience” might constitute a core part of the Bible. This is a more positive interpretation of the religious practice. Merton contends in his essay on Zen Buddhism that the element of “direct experience” is the key element in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, an element that has been easily forgotten in Christianity. In this
context, Merton writes as follows:

Though this may seem very remote from Christianity, which is definitely a message, we must nevertheless remember the importance of direct experience in the Bible. All forms of “knowing,” especially in the religious sphere, and especially where God is concerned, are valid in proportion as they are a matter of experience and intimate contact…They [Old Testament prophets] were certainly as factual, as existential, and as disconcerting as any fact of Zen! Nor can we more than indicate briefly here the well-known importance of direct experience in the New Testament. (Merton 2013, 357-58)

Merton suggests here that Christianity could gain by sharing the Biblical direct experience. Merton understands that Zen’s direct experience and Christian direct experience are different in nature, but that Zen’s experiential practice is a good reminder for Christians that religious practice must be part of religion.

Among the Christian pluralists, Heim also takes a positive view of religious experience. He explicitly contends that there is a common thread of “ineffable” experiences among religions in relation to salvation. Heim assumes that each “ineffable” experience links up with religious reality or “the Real.” Thus, his interpretation of religious experience is somewhat communicational with the Real. For example, Heim’s “ineffable” is epistemological, not ontological. It is a practice to create the epistemological gap between finite and infinite. He writes as follows:

Sunyata and God are both ineffable and both real, and that human realization of the one and communion with the other are actual experiential possibilities. Thus both could be functional religious ultimates. Whereas Hick is committed to saying that “Sunyata” and “God” are mythological cultural forms which represent “the Real,” my hypothesis presumes that they are real religious ineffables available to the seekers, while not foreclosing the possibility that one may ultimately be
subordinate to the other or both to some other absolute. (Heim 1995, 153-54)

Heim claims that the one prevailing element among religions is not “the Real” within the philosophical realm, but rather “experiential ineffables” which leads religious seekers to their revelations within “the Real.” Heim’s proposition of “ineffable experience” linked with the Real illustrates a paradoxical aspect of reaching God by not knowing. But it may be worthwhile to note that there may exist metaphysical differences in how the “ineffable” functions between Abrahamic religions and Indian religions. The ineffable in the group of Abrahamic religions is a paradoxical epistemological practice towards God, but the ineffable in Indian religion is the religious realization itself. Originally, something real is antithetical in Buddhism, especially in the Mahayana tradition, which forbids engaging in religious practice for grasping something real. Buddhist discourse emphasizes detachment from the real or objects. In Hinduism, Brahman can be searched for in an experientially conscious way that may assume that Brahman will emerge as the Real at the end, but in Buddhism that is not the case. Judging from the nature of Heim’s argument on religious experience, his interpretation is limited in the sense that it can’t correctly address Buddhism, because it tries to decouple religious experience from any sublime inherent existence. There is no epistemological ineffable in Buddhism. In Zen Buddhism, there is a saying “Kill the Buddha if the Buddha exists somewhere else” (Suzuki 2011, 9).

Judging from its theistic and philosophical heritage, the European approach to comparative theology has considered experiential practice to be only a supplement to doctrine, or else a means to the core of the doctrine. From the European perspective, the
closeness, or even simultaneity, of doctrine and experience presented in major schools of Buddhism and Hinduism, is less familiar. Basically, in the European approach, the doctrine of God must be more certain than ineffable and apophatic religious experiences.

**Remaining Questions**

In the late twentieth century, the European approach within comparative theology and global religious studies offered a valuable intervention, defining the paradigm for an overall consolidated view of religions. However, these mainstream discourses, mainly from the Christian pluralist view, prompt key questions.

First, as we saw, Christian pluralists have tried to use their theistic or quasi-theistic paradigm to consolidate religions by deploying terms such as “the Real” or “the super-sensory.” The question we must ask, then, is whether “these abstractions represent all religions well?” As we have discussed, if these abstractions do not represent Buddhism, for example, we need to reconsider how to best articulate the common ground and difference of religions.

Second, it is necessary to explore from an anthropological and historical viewpoint whether the nature of religious difference really comes from ethnicity, specifically, from the traditional divide between the Semitic tradition and the Indian tradition. Does this difference still have any legitimate basis? Or, does this ethnic emphasis just create contingent cultural and religious difference based in a history which is in fact fluid in nature?

Third, how should we place religious practice in reference to religious doctrine? Christian pluralists have paid more attention to doctrinal theology than to practice.
However, in Buddhism and Hinduism, religious practice has been the core or “the embodiment of their doctrine” for a long time. This is not to say that Christianity does not have a grounding in religious practice; in fact, mysticism has been a valuable element of Christian heritage for a long time. This is borne out if we consider that the question of how to experience Christ has been the center of many believers’ religious life. Clearly, reconciling religious practice in relation to religious doctrine may become a key issue in the comparative theology.

These three questions in turn may relate to the classical issue within comparative theology of how to articulate common grounds and differences between Christianity and Buddhism. Also, these questions may inspire a new look at Christianity. For, example, should we define Christ as “the Real”? Should we define Christ as Semitic? Should we approach Christ only through the doctrine? If not, how? Since Christ is the hinge between nature and the supernatural, how to approach Christ could be revisited in the development of global religious studies.
CHAPTER TWO
WHAT IS YOSHIMITSU’S APPROACH?

Compared with the European approach, Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko’s approach offers a different way of looking at global religions. Of course, Yoshimitsu did not meet with the theologians who are included in Chapter One, and his works are mostly in Japanese, but it is worthwhile nonetheless to review his ideas and compare them with the European approach in order to answer some of the questions left unanswered at the end of Chapter One. Yoshimitsu accepts the individual legitimacy of global religions in the same way as the pluralists in Europe, but he does not attempt to integrate religions through a single paradigm such as the Real or the supersensory realm. Rather, he uses generic dimensions, such as the split between nature and the supernatural, to map global religions according to their doctrines. At the same time, he emphasizes the importance of religious practice within each religion. For Yoshimitsu, religious practice is the indispensable hinge between religious seekers and their goal. Hence, his religious template includes such practical elements, even though some religions downplay the aspect of practice.

Two Key Dimensions: Nature and the Supernatural

“Nature” and “supernatural” are two key words for Yoshimitsu’s religious study, and he constructs his religious idea using these two generic terms. In Yoshimitsu’s terminology, “nature” not only relates to the biological environment, but to the whole realm of humanity. Hence, for Yoshimitsu nature includes every human phenomena, inside and outside of a person, both social and private, that exist within one’s humanity. In his article “Philosophy of Culture and Religion,” he defines “nature” (shizen) as
“general worldly existence including humanistic spiritual possibilities and ontological possibilities” (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 25). This “nature” covers everything except the supernatural. It includes physical objects and spiritual experiences, civilization as well as natural objects. From Yoshimitsu’s viewpoint, humans are all striving towards the creation of their own culture within “nature,” and religions must emerge as the “ultimate evolved form” within culture (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 26). For Yoshimitsu, all religions have their play within “nature” whether they associate with the supernatural or not.

Yoshimitsu’s emphasis on this religious possibility within nature comes from his idea that nature has some sort of divine element within it. He sees the “Order of Creation” (sōzō no chitsujo) within nature (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 23). He understands that God created humans via this Order of Creation with ample possibilities, including the possibility for independent spiritual cultivation. Yoshimitsu carefully differentiates this Order of Creation from the “Supernatural Order of Salvation (chōshizenteki kyūsai no chitsujo)” (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 23). He defines the Supernatural Order of Salvation as the Grace of God. His argument is unique for including nature so strongly, yet his understanding of Christianity is not antithetical to the traditional European theology. Rather, his inclusion of the element of nature and of the Order of Creation into his argument contributes to a more substantive, more neutral, and more universal discourse than the European approach. Yoshimitsu articulates the Order of Creation as follows:

Humans are created by God with the image of God. Thus, humans are considered to be subjects having autonomous free will as “Imago Dei
(image of God).” Since humans are made by God to resemble Him based on the Order of Creation, humans are creative subjects who are free to act like God. Even though humans are looked after by God, they can act independently and separately from God as autonomous beings. Thus, human cultures and human creational acts must have their own right and value…In humanity, separate from the Supernatural Order of Salvation, expressions of high morality and profound association of lives with their religious absolutes can be found in human souls. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 24)

Based on Yoshimitsu’s argument, all humans can create morality and spirituality within “nature”; these things are human culture and religions. These human endeavors within nature have their foundation in the Order of Creation, yet they are also based on solemn and independent human endeavor exclusively by humans as “Imago Dei.” Based on his view of the Order of Creation, it is appropriate to assume that all religions would not have a merging point or single evolitional goal.

On the other hand, Yoshimitsu envisions the Supernatural Order of Salvation as a metaphysically different order coming solely from a supernatural “addition” to the Order of Creation. He writes as follows:

First of all, if we consider the concept of creation, the God-human relationship must not be understood as a direct connection to God’s supernatural life or human participation in the supernatural and eternal life, but rather it must be considered as an expression of God’s freely motivated Grace on top of the Order of Creation. True Christianity stands on this addition of the Supernatural Order of Salvation or Graceful Order from God in its own right, over and above the religious limitations coming from natural human beings. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 22-23)

This recognition of the two orders closely connects to Yoshimitsu’s faith in Christianity. However, both the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation deal with the generic relation of nature and supernatural. He downplays neither the Order of Creation nor the Supernatural Order of Salvation, neither natural nor the supernatural.
Based on Yoshimitsu’s Christian faith, the two orders will merge and will be transformed into a “nature-Grace” relation. He summarizes the ultimate relationship between these two orders as follows:

Already humans were put into the realm of supernatural Grace from the beginning; thus humans feel restless until they find themselves standing with Salvation and return to their original relation with the Supernatural and Grace…the relation between Grace and nature has elements of both the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 23)

Yoshimitsu contends that Christianity is engaged in the attempt to realize and establish a relation with the life of Grace within “nature,” even though humans were originally placed there through redemption. Therefore, the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation will eventually consolidate into “Grace and nature.” He emphasizes that Grace is one of the supernatural elements in Christianity. The linkage between Grace and nature is at the core of Yoshimitsu’s interpretation of Christianity. Even though the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation are metaphysically different, Yoshimitsu contends that the two are theologically intertwined through the special relation of Grace and nature. In this context, he quotes French poet Charles Peguy, who writes that “eternity resides within time,” and that “time is itself non-time time” (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 28).

Furthermore, Yoshimitsu suggests that nature must long for the supernatural. For him, the Order of Creation potentially seeks the Supernatural Order of Salvation. He says that “nature in deep is filled with mysticism of supernatural grace” (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 28). Yoshimitsu contends that there is a clear inclination within nature towards the
supernatural. He writes:

> [g]iven humans’ concrete historical existence, nature and the supernatural must not be classified abstractly for them. There is a call within nature that demands the recovery of supernatural life. Human natural existence and activity demands salvation from the supernatural. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 27-28)

Yoshimitsu presents a clear difference between the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation, yet he insists the two must be intertwined, and that the Order of Creation must have a basic longing for the Supernatural Order of Salvation. Sometimes Yoshimitsu is considered to be a Thomist in the sense that he is an advocate of the “analogy of being” (analogia entis), which contends that the supernatural existence of God and human-as Creature are analogous, not absolutely same and not absolutely discontinuous. Due to his emphasis on the potentiality of nature in terms of this longing for the supernatural, he stresses that the “analogy of entity” must be understood as an historical and concrete existential relationship, rather than merely a possible logical relationship (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 27). Yoshimitsu further emphasizes that human nature as “Imago Dei” emerges in historical and anthropological reality. Thus, human cultures and religions themselves must be looked at from the perspective that they embody the quest for divinity and the quest for supernatural life.

Yoshimitsu also clarifies his interpretation of the relationship between the Supernatural Order of Salvation and Christ more precisely. From his perspective, the Supernatural Order of Salvation must be realized through Christ’s supernatural life, through which nature and the Order of Creation can be transformed by Grace. He writes that “[t]he salvation by Christ means the inner realization of the supernaturally originated
life possibility given by God within the larger human possibility. Within the emergence of human culture and human spirituality themselves, concrete realization of the supernatural life must take place” (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 27). Yoshimitsu’s discourse of nature and the supernatural signifies the unity of nature and the supernatural in Christ. For him, Christ is the supernatural life given by God. Humans have to live this supernatural life through their culture and religion. This has to be “the organic unification of supernatural life and one’s inner-self” (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 27). Yoshimitsu says that humanity is deified by Christ as the possibility of God (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 24). The Order of Creation will be enlivened by the Supernatural Order of Salvation from above. In his writing “Catholicism and Contemporary Man,” he explores this idea. He writes:

The relationship of Catholicism to the world is well expressed by Christ, who is not of the world but who is the Savior of the world (Salvator mundi)...In short, it is not a transcendental relationship of a dualistic opposition to the world, nor is it an immanent relationship of a monastic unity; rather, it may be called a relationship of as it were, a transcendent immanence symbolized in the ideal of the blessing that surpasses all understanding: the hypostatic union of the human and divine natures of the Incarnate One. The relationship of the Church, the world of grace, and human nature must always be grasped as an expression of the strained efforts to realize the “Kingdom of God” in history. (Yoshimitsu [1942c] 2011, 87)

Here, it is worth noting that Yoshimitsu uses the phrase “a transcendent immanence symbolized in the ideal of blessing that surpasses all understanding.” He contends that the infinite possibility for human nature exists on its own. This is another way of defining the relationship between the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation recognizing Christ as the connection point. This argument is in line with traditional
Catholic discourse, but tries to juxtapose nature, Christ and the supernatural, a departure from the European approach. In other words, according to Yoshimitsu, Christianity, as its own unique proposition, presents Grace as a hinge between nature and supernatural, but other religions have their own independent dignity waiting on the call from Grace, one that is not based on the process of emerging into Christianity.

Based on this understanding of nature, the supernatural, the Order of Creation, the Supernatural Order of Salvation, and Grace, Yoshimitsu opposes ethnological and historical views of religions embodied by the controversial arguments of East vs. West. He writes:

Christianity or Catholicism is not Western thought but once a cultural or political negotiation begins between the East and the West, one finds a confrontation (taimen) immediately arises between supernatural revealed Truth and Oriental wisdom. Within those limitations, one can discuss an intellectual exchange between the East and the West, yet Catholicism’s fundamental position is not the question of ‘East and West’ but must always in the end be understood as dealing with the problem we call ‘nature and the supernatural.’ (Yoshimitsu [1943b] 1952, 221)

In Yoshimitsu’s generic approach towards global religion lies the right approach. The disaggregation of religions to nature and supernatural offers a more neutral and universal understanding of religions. Both Christianity and the “Other” are within the realm of nature and the supernatural. Of course, Yoshimitsu does not assume that all religions have both natural and supernatural elements, but rather contends that all religions must spring from nature within the Order of Creation, and that only Christianity adds the Supernatural Order of Salvation as the act of Will. Some religions embrace the

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1 The translation of this text is from Doak’s “Confucianism and Catholicism in Mid-Twentieth Century Japan” (2016).
supernatural, but the Supernatural Order of Salvation is unique to Christianity. For Yoshimitsu, history and ethnology must be a contingency within his universalist approach. Thus, the causes which create different religions in different cultures need to be explained by the “generic” terminology of “nature” and “supernatural.” Yoshimitsu does not claim Christianity is superior to other religions; instead, he contends that all religions and human cultural endeavors are within the realm of nature and supernatural.

**Application of the Nature/Supernatural Discourse**

For Yoshimitsu, nature and the supernatural are axioms to evaluate philosophical and theological thoughts. Since Yoshimitsu’s idea is that human nature, as “Imago Dei,” can initiate things on its own, he values human culture and human religions, even if they have no assumption of the supernatural. On the other hand, he opposes ideas which deny a healthy relationship between nature and the supernatural, such as those which deny them each an independent role, or those which cripple the capability of nature. In his article “Concepts of Culture and Religion,” he expresses his appreciation for non-Christian “natural religions” in Virgil and Indian mysticism. These natural religions are important for Yoshimitsu’s understanding of the Order of Creation. At the same time, in the same article, he challenges Hegel and Gnosticism, both of whom contradict Yoshimitsu’s understanding of the Order of Creation.

Yoshimitsu contends that some human spiritual endeavors are natural, yet sometimes contain an implicit desire for the supernatural. He extends his definition of religion to such natural things, defining them as Adventist. He offers two examples in this
category: Virgil, the pre-Christian Roman poet, and Indian Mysticism. He writes about Virgil:

The German philosopher Theodor Heckle illustrates nicely the precursor of Christian-like salvation which resides within the deep inner spiritual domain of pagans, such as in the spiritual works of Roman prophetic poet Virgil. Heckle sees within the classical humanistic religious spirituality represented by Virgil an Adventistic, Old Testamentic humanity which hopes for the Advent of a Messiah. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 24-25)

Yoshimitsu sees that Virgil’s view of nature includes a yearning for the supernatural; thus, a form of religion exists within Virgil. It is interesting that Yoshimitsu quotes Virgil and finds religious practice within his Roman polytheistic environment. This is in contrast to the approach of mainstream religious study, which would not find anything “religious” in the paganism of Virgil. For Yoshimitsu, Virgil lived in the Old Testament period when human nature could be found in an Adventist relation to the supernatural. In other words, Virgil lived in “nature,” but he was profoundly mystical and religious in his Old Testamentic humanity. In this way, Yoshimitsu’s idea of the Order of Creation does not always require supernatural to become “religious.”

He offers a further example in reference to his mentor Jacques Maritain’s view on Indian mysticism. There, Maritain sees similarity between Indian and Christian mysticism. Yoshimitsu places Indian Mysticism in the genre of “natural mysticism.” He writes:

Recently, Jacques Maritain suggests the possibility of natural mysticism within Indian Mysticism: an Indian and Oriental mystic religious experience, which is similar to the Christian supernatural religious mystic experience. When people encounter Indian mysticism, they must understand the strong current which requires humans to consolidate human life with profound mystical understanding. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 25)
Here, Yoshimitsu contends that Indian mysticism as viewed through the lens of his Order of Creation is a solemn human religious act in nature, even though it does not have an explicit orientation to the supernatural. Yoshimitsu’s engagement of Virgil and Indian Mysticism through the frame of “natural mysticism” or “Adventism” shares a similar thread with Mark Heim’s religious norm of salvation or the “pursuit of limitless better possibility” even though it is still within the realm of nature (Heim 1995, 213).

Yoshimitsu does not contend that non-Christian religions in natural mysticism will merge into Grace, but rather that those endeavors have their own spirituality which is similar to the Christian orientation to Grace.

When reviewing Yoshimitsu’s embrace and advocacy of nature and the Order of Creation, his background in non-Christian culture must be taken into consideration. Yoshimitsu is a non-Western Christian scholar who studied both Christianity and non-Christian religions. Because of this he does not approach non-Christian religions in terms of how they might supplement Christian epistemology, since he grew up in a culture where such non-Christian religions were taken for granted on their own terms. Hence, he views non-Christian philosophies and religions utilizing his “generic approach,” marking them as what he calls Adventist and natural. As Wakamatsu Eisuke argues, Japanese traditional religious heritage has existed for more than one thousand years and should be taken on its own terms. Scholars should not disregard such religions which have come out of nature. Wakamatsu Eisuke points out Yoshimitsu’s adherence to Japanese Buddhist heritage by quoting him as follows:

If the impact of one thousand years’ history of Buddhism on Japanese spiritual culture is considered, including the contribution by Shotoku-
Taishi, Kobo-Daishi, and other Kamakura era religious thinkers, the new bloom of spirituality will compare with the previous years. The new bloom of Christian souls in Japan embracing the perspective of “the supernatural” is hopeful, and God’s future providence in world history will not be less in coming years than in the past two thousand year Glory. (Yoshimitsu [1938a] 1985, 145)

For Yoshimitsu, Japan’s Buddhist period before the importation of Christianity is a legitimate Adventist religious period. The religion in “nature” has both legitimacy and a spiritual culture; thus, it could be enriched by supernatural elements if they were introduced. Wakamatsu also quotes Yoshimitsu’s initial Protestant teacher, Uchimura Kanzo, who writes that, “I did not learn what religion is from Christian missionaries. Before that, I learned from Nichiren, Honen, Rennyo, and other respected thinkers. They taught me and my ancestors the core of religion” (Wakamatsu 2014, 160). For Yoshimitsu and Uchimura alike, Japan has had its own cultures and religions since before the introduction of Christianity, even though they are based on nature and keep the profile of Adventism. For Yoshimitsu, this Japanese Buddhist tradition aligns with Virgil’s Adventism.

Yoshimitsu clearly opposes two ideas which interpret the relation of nature and the supernatural in a distorted manner. One is the notion of “grasping supernatural within nature.” Yoshimitsu argues that Hegel’s concept of “absolute spirituality” is this type of idea (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 7). He also includes conventional anthropomorphism in this category. According to Yoshimitsu, nature cannot swallow and conceptualize the supernatural. He also opposes the negation of worldliness or materiality, since his view of nature includes materiality and civilization. He opposes the emphasis on pure spirituality
within nature, claiming that it is passive and dualistic. For Yoshimitsu, nature does not need to dispose of its physical elements in order to engage the supernatural.

In his article, “Concepts of Culture and Religion,” Yoshimitsu clarifies his opposition to these two classical approaches. First, he considers the approach which defines religion as the ultimate human expression or contents (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 7). He says that this approach, common in the Modern West, is well represented by Hegel. He writes:

In the modern philosophy of Descartes, there exists a separation between religion and human activity; thus the traditional supernatural religious concept is separated from human intellectual activity. The supernatural religious concept had been recognized independently. However, this dualistic and separational methodology was transformed by Hegel, as the leader of German epistemological school, to define God as a concept in the realm of “Absolute Spirit.” There Hegel merged his own consciousness into human consciousness, by absorbing all religious truth into human intellectual and spiritual consciousness. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 7)

Despite Yoshimitsu’s agreement with Hegel that divine spirit is embedded in secularism, Yoshimitsu cannot agree with Hegel’s attempt to absorb the supernatural into nature because Hegel does not allow for God’s Will, which is essential to Yoshimitsu’s Supernatural Order of Salvation.

Yoshimitsu is also cautious about super-spiritualism, because nature cannot be so crippled by the elimination of its material aspect. He talks about the Gnostic tradition in this context. He writes:

Historically, there were many attempts in religion to preserve religious quality through the negation of humanity or worldliness. In Christianity, the Gnostic tradition of early churches and the Middle Ages is representative of this. This is the negation of the sensuous and material
world and so emphasizes pure spirituality. It also emphasizes dualistic spiritualism from the past and the proposition of passive experiential practice. (Yoshimitsu [1942a] 1947, 15)

In this way, Gnostic spirituality denies most of the potentiality of “nature,” where only spirituality is eligible to engage with religion. This is in contrast with Yoshimitsu, who views all aspects of “nature” as the seeds for religious fruition, and “nature,” worldly things, as the center of the Order of Creation and also the Adventistic place for the Supernatural Order of Salvation.

**Doctrine and Practice**

Another key aspect of Yoshimitsu’s discourse on religion is his emphasis on engaging religious practice together with religious doctrine. His interpretation of nature and the supernatural is thus interactional. He assumes that the Supernatural Order of Salvation originally emerges from the Divine Will. However, Christ, who connects nature, the supernatural, and the testimony of the Supernatural Order of Salvation, gives humans a chance to live a supernatural life. This is the divine Grace at the core of Yoshimitsu’s Christian doctrine. This is in line with traditional Christian theology; his argument is in no way antithetical to it. What is unique in Yoshimitsu’s argument is that he anchors Christian theology in the realm of nature and the supernatural, and views other religions according to the same perspective. If a religion stays only in the realm of nature, Yoshimitsu calls it “Adventistic”; but, in accordance with his inclusive manner, he does not exclude it from the category of “religion.” For him, nature, Adventism, and the Old Testament are not mere ethnological or historical events; they are religions waiting and yearning for Grace. Based on this understanding, Yoshimitsu emphasizes the
viewpoint of religious practice as “human yearning” within religions, including Christianity. Whether poems or philosophies, if they have hardships and the agony of “human yearning” of Adventism, they are religions for Yoshimitsu. Furthermore, the pilgrimage-like practice of Adventists is also an essential part of religious doctrine. In this sense, he shares Thomas Merton’s notion that “doctrine is practice and practice is doctrine” in religion. (Merton 2013, 359)

For Yoshimitsu, these practices are critical within religion as they guide nature towards its true experience. Yoshimitsu contends that doctrine needs to be experienced in some form. He promotes this idea of “living awareness of life” as follows:

The working of religions and philosophy should always be where there are humans as spiritual beings, and mysticism or mystic is its central life, its lively elan, and its ultimate deployment of life. Philosophy and religions, in particular, must be understood as die Sache des Lebens (the matter of life). Mystic is the ultimate substance of religious and philosophical life, and mystic is a fact of life preceding explanation and definition. It exists in the living awareness of life. (Takahashi 2002, 277)

Here, Yoshimitsu equates “life” with “nature,” favoring Magel’s phrase, “Mysticism is experienced dogma” (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 44). This highlights the religious and philosophical tendencies which pursue mysticism in life. To grasp doctrine fully, doctrine-based mysticism must be lived or experienced by humans. There are different combinations of doctrine and practice (mysticism), but they all aim at a living awareness of life. Different religions will come from different sets of doctrines and practices, but for Yoshimitsu, the structure of doctrine and practice in each religion must be understood.

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2 The original text is included in Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko’s 1938 article “Shinpishugi to nijusseiki shisō (Mysticism and the Twentieth Century).” The English translation of this article is included in Takahashi Akira’s article “Understanding Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko’s Mysticism” (2002).
because “living awareness of life” is universally important for all religions. Thus, while religions may wear different costumes due to their different ethnological and historical backgrounds, identifying the living awareness of life in each religion’s doctrine and practice is more important than engaging ethnological and historical appearances. The key for Yoshimitsu, then, is the metaphysical substance within each religious doctrine and practice: the way to establish living awareness of life.

Yoshimitsu’s remarks on Descartes exhibit another approach to this “living awareness of life.” He contends that philosophers like Descartes who not only explore intellectual aspects but also experiential aspects are in the realm of religion or sublime human action in the Order of Creation. He writes:

Descartes is teaching methodological thinking rather than teaching methodology. He teaches that philosophy is not thinking based on given logic or others’ thinking, but rather is an intellectual activity where one’s own firm judgement is made. Thus, people will know that philosophers need tremendous training and there will be no necessity for laymen to imitate a philosopher; in fact, such attempts may be dangerous for laymen. Descartes warns that to be a philosopher, one needs a tremendous self-determination. (Yoshimitsu [1941d] 1984, 381)

Wakamatsu interprets this as Yoshimitsu having a steady focus on quasi-monastic practice as a way to implement doctrine. According to Yoshimitsu, religions have legitimate doctrine-practice theses that they use to strive for living awareness of life in nature.

Yoshimitsu’s Religious Template

Yoshimitsu never produced an authentic comparative analysis of different religions in his lifetime. However, his conceptions of nature and the supernatural, the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation give us a credible base to
create a religious template covering global religions from his viewpoint. Of course, in
doing so it is necessary to pay attention to the diversity of doctrine and practice within
each religion. As Thomas Merton argues, comparing religions is difficult due to the
complexity of factions and schools within a religion. Merton notes the complexity in
Christianity as follows:

Is our idea of Christianity to be taken without further qualification as the
Roman Catholic Church? Or does it include Protestant Christianity? The
Protestantism of Luther or that of Bonhoeffer? The Protestantism of the
God-is-dead school? The Catholicism of St. Thomas? Of St. Augustine
and the Western Church fathers? A supposedly “pure” Christianity of the
Gospels? A demythologized Christianity? A “social Gospel”? (Merton
2013, 349)

Despite these inherent complexities, in order to highlight Yoshimitsu’s generic approach
towards religions, representative religious discourses are chosen for analysis through the
same template. This may be schematic and artificial, but it will give a clearer perspective
of the differences of religions by allowing us to consider them on equal ground.

Here, four religions are on the table: Christianity, as represented by the orthodox
Catholicism to which Yoshimitsu belongs; Islam, as represented by Al-Ghazali and other
12th to 13th century thinkers; Hinduism, as represented by Advaita Vedanta school,
especially Shankara; and Buddhism, as represented by the Mahayana tradition. Utilizing
Yoshimitsu’s key concepts of nature and supernatural, the four religions’ basic structures
are shown below. This table represents the generic aspects of religion in order to identify
their core claims in terms of both relations between humans and the key religious
elements or experiences. In generic terms, Christianity and Islam seek “the supernatural”
in Christ or in God’s Words. Hinduism is not separate from nature, but rather pursues the
elimination of defilements (*Maya*) within nature. Buddhism talks about true experience within nature. Yoshimitsu’s analytical domain is nature and the supernatural. The relationship looking outwards from nature, where religious believers belong, are summarized in chart form provided by the author below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>nature—the supernatural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>nature—the supernatural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>nature—nature*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>nature—nature*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both Hinduism and Buddhism search for a different nature from the beginning of the religious process, even though their ultimate religious experience is considered to be still in the realm of nature. Here, for the sake of showing the differences in their ultimate experience as a goal for nature, the notation of “nature*” is used. Based on this, the template must be modified as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>nature—the supernatural</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>nature—nature*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>nature—nature*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of this template, it is worthwhile to note that religious orientation towards the supernatural is not unique to Greco-Roman thought or its philosophy of the “unmovable
mover.” It is not included here, but in the Chinese Taoist tradition, the “nameless” Tao possesses the element of supernatural. If Taoism were to be placed in this template, then, it would be expressed as follows:

| Taoism            | nature—the supernatural |

Major schools of Hinduism and Buddhism offer no suggestion of the supernatural in their discourse, but this does not mean that all Asian religions exclude the supernatural except in mythology. For example, in Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*, which was written in the sixth century B.C., Lao Tzu describes the supernatural as “nameless.” He writes that:

The way that can be spoken of / Is not the constant way; / The name that can be named / Is not the constant name. / The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth; / The name was the mother of the myriad creatures. (Lao Tzu [1963], 5)

Even though the “nameless” mysteriously merge with the “name” at the end, Taoism claims that the supernatural Tao, the “nameless,” creates myriad creatures like a bellows blowing air into the earth; the liberation of humans may thus be realized by releasing their nature in the hands of the Tao through free and wandering acts. There is a delicate relation here between nature and supernatural, but the Tao does offer supernatural elements via the nameless realm. Livia Kohn summarizes the characteristics of Tao as follows:

The Tao, in its most ancient understanding, is best described as organic order. It is a whole surrounding and embracing everything, yet at the same time prevailing all. The Tao corresponds to the Ground of the perennial philosophy. It underlies the universe and makes things be what they are. It causes the world to come into being, from which all come and to which all return. The Tao is organic in that it is not willful; it is the natural so-being
of things. Governed by the laws of nature, at the same time it is these very laws itself. (Kohn 1992, 162)

If Yoshimitsu’s religious template is applied, then, Taoism, which is often called “Early Chinese Mysticism,” would have the same generic structure of nature—the supernatural, not nature—nature*. In Kohn’s remarks that “Tao [is that] from which all come and to which all return,” we can see a similar religious orientation to God and the supernatural as in Christianity and Islam. If we follow Yoshimitsu’s religious template, as in this analysis of Taoism, the generic identification of the core of religions becomes intellectually substantive and culturally neutral.

Based on this simple template which includes nature, nature*, and the supernatural, it is possible to explore further the inclusion of practical and mystical sides of each religion that would stand in the middle of the nature, nature* or the supernatural divine. Yoshimitsu advocated for mysticism in part because he could not complete his reading of religious paradigms without a practical element. For example, in Christianity, according to Yoshimitsu, the act of Will through the Order of Supernatural Salvation is Grace, or Christ. Grace, which is in doctrine, at the same time must be experienced as “living awareness of life,” or a form of mysticism. Hence, Christianity can be rewritten in the following way:

| Christianity | nature—Grace (mysticism)—the supernatural |

This illustration of religion could also be understood as the chain of “passenger—vehicle—destination.” In Buddhism, the word “vehicle” has been used in certain schools.
In this case, vehicle means a religion or religious practice which transports practitioners to the destination. If we apply this analogy to the above illustration, nature, including the religious seeker, is the passenger, Grace is the vehicle (means), and the supernatural the destination. In this context, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism could also be rewritten to include those practical elements that bridge (or transport the seeker) between nature and the supernatural or nature and nature*.

Thus in Islam, despite the clearness of God’s words in the Qur’an, the “living awareness of life” has remained an important issue. Unlike Christianity, Islam does not have a Divine Will like the Supernatural Order of Salvation. God’s word in the Qur’an is the intermediary between nature and the supernatural, yet many Islamic thinkers, including Sufis, have suggested that spirituality is the conduit between nature and the supernatural, not just the word expressed in the Qur’an. Prominent scholars of Islam, such as Al-Ghazali in the eleventh century and Ibn Tufail in the twelfth century have suggested a spiritually-intuitive endeavor to bridge nature and the supernatural. Also in the twelfth century, Attar of Nishapur, in his poem *The Conference of the Birds*, suggested that bewilderment could be the bridge between nature and the supernatural (Attar [1984], 166). Sufism, clearly represented by Al-Ghazali has a long history of exploiting aspects of mysticism. It would be possible, then, to wrap Islamic intuition or bewilderment as spirituality in general. If we do so, the Islamic part of template reflecting Sufism could be rewritten as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>nature—spirituality/Qur’an—the supernatural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

44
In Hinduism, on the other hand, the goal of nature as nature* is the pure consciousness of Brahman. Shankara is said to receive the following four fundamental teachings of early Advaita Vedanta: Brahman is pure consciousness (“Prajnanam brahman”); I am Brahman (“Aham brahmasmi”); Thou art that (“Tat tvm asi”); The self is atman (“Ayam atman brahman”) (Glucklich 2008, 165). Hinduism has various discourses, but this thesis uses Shankara’s “pure consciousness” as nature* in Hinduism. Brahman, the Absolute, is all adherents pursue. In order to attain pure consciousness in Moksha, one has to eliminate Maya which distorts human vision in nature. In this context, Hinduism suggests “discipline of action” (karma-yoga) as a route to come closer to Moksha. In the simplified version, to align with the template, the Hinduism part of the scheme can be rewritten as follows:

| Hinduism | nature—karma-yoga—nature* |

Buddhism too has many schools of thoughts, but based on Mahayana Buddhism, the main school of Buddhist in the Northeast Asia, the key to reaching Nirvana is zen-type practice. Mahayana contends that every person has a Buddha nature, but due to the defilements in nature, Buddha nature can’t emerge as it is. Thus, zen-type practice becomes critical to achieve true nature, a true-self. In order to do that, the correct ontological awareness of nature (nature with defilements) as “empty” is necessary. It is critical to create an ontological awareness of “thusness” for nature (the world). In case of Buddhism, nature* is equal to emptiness, Buddha nature, and Nirvana. Considering this,
the Buddhism part of the template is rewritten as follows:

| Buddhism | nature—zen-type practice—nature* |

For Yoshimitsu, the above four connection points between nature and the supernatural or nature and nature* – Christian mysticism in relation to Grace, Islamic mysticism in relation to spirituality such as those in Sufism, Hindu mysticism in relation to karma-yoga, and Buddhism mysticism in relation to zen-type practice – are equally important as doctrines.

In many cases, especially in European religious study, the word mysticism has been used in connection to divine objects. It tends to be tied to the apophatic idea of God. However, Yoshimitsu contends that mysticism can exist in nature even as “natural mysticism,” because mysticism is a fact of life preceding explanation and definition. This is a unique viewpoint, one which widens Yoshimitsu’s view of religion beyond divinity.

Mysticism and religion can exist both in the doctrines of supernatural life and in natural life itself. Each form of mysticism and religion has its relation within nature as nature and nature*, or nature and the supernatural, but it must be understood as the same template consisting of nature and supernatural. The Christian doctrinal characteristics of supernatural life and mystical characteristics of Grace may be different from the others, but Christianity still shares the same template with nature and the supernatural. The template does not underplay others in the sense they might be in the spot of Adventism or just in the realm of nature.
Compared with the European approach, characterized by theism, Semitic-Indian dichotomization, and doctrine-orientation, Yoshimitsu’s approach is generic and balances doctrine and practice. The demarcation between nature and the supernatural is distinctive. He tries to construct his argument from how “nature” must recognize its own self in each religious discourse in relation to the supernatural, or nature*, the true nature. Since establishing a solid base for nature in each religion is important for Yoshimitsu, he is eager to look into religious practice that embody the doctrines of each religion. These components of nature, the supernatural, nature*, and practice are thus indispensable elements of his generic global religious study. Yoshimitsu devoted his life to conducting global religious study based on this intellectually substantive and culturally neutral approach, and clarified further his view by engaging with specific religions and specific theologians and philosophers. To demonstrate this, Section Three will review Yoshimitsu’s analysis of non-Christian religions. Section Four will review Yoshimitsu’s analysis of various Christian thinkers. Yoshimitsu is keen to identify in each religion the sense of humanistic “living awareness of life” rather than doctrinal divinity or doctrinal enlightenment.
CHAPTER THREE

YOSHIMITSU’S STUDY OF NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

In contrast to the European approach with its focus on theism, ethnology, and doctrine, Yoshimitsu’s approach to global religions is generic, based on nature and the supernatural, and practical in character. Following on the template which was presented in chapter two, chapter three reviews Yoshimitsu’s detailed analysis of non-Christian religions, specifically Hinduism and Islam.

Yoshimitsu’s main concern is each religion’s understanding of the relationship between nature and the supernatural, or nature and nature*. He looks into how each religion explores the possibility of nature to come closer to the supernatural or nature*. On the other hand, his view towards nature* (the Absolute) is inclusive. He commits himself to Grace as a Catholic theologian, but he interprets the “Other” as Adventists, not heretics.

Yoshimitsu’s approach to non-Christian religions is based on his position as an inclusive Thomist. He seems to believe that all religious seekers, who pursue clean hearts in their own religious initiatives, are already in the realm of the Supernatural Order of Salvation. Thomas O’Meara illustrates the broadness of this Supernatural Order of Salvation within the Summa theologiae (ST) as follows:

The structure of the ST is multi-layered. God is always present as the bestower of both natural and supernatural being, the human is always present touched by one form or another of creation and incarnation. Ultimately the theology of the entire ST is a history of graced beings and not a metaphysics, although just as creation is the place of grace, metaphysics offers a framework for theology. (O’Meara 1997, 60)
Yoshimitsu’s view that non-Christian religionists are Adventists is not equal to “anonymous Christianity” or to a Kingdom-centered model where a more hegemonic relationship is assumed between Christianity and non-Christian religions. Instead, Yoshimitsu’s inclusive view affirms all human religious initiative within nature as being touched by Grace. In this vein, Yoshimitsu emphasizes each person’s responsibility to all religions by quoting “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God” (Matt. 5:8, Yoshimitsu [1942d] 1979, 80). In other words, for Yoshimitsu, all religions might be blessed by Grace, but nothing will arise if practitioners, including Christians, cannot achieve the righteous state of mind such as cleanness of heart. The “state of nature” is always Yoshimitsu’s key concern when he looks into religions.

**Hinduism**

Yoshimitsu lays out his approach to Hinduism in his article “The Metaphysics of Mysticism: The Mystery of Religious Existence (*Shinpishugi to keijijyougaku: Shūkyōteki jitsuzon no higi*).” He classifies Hinduism as searching for the inner Absolute, differentiating it from the Hellenic euphoria of pure, intellectual, and speculative endeavors (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 53). He describes the core concept of Brahman in the *Upanishads* as follows:

Brahman is the true existence behind phenomena. It is the permanent true nature under all creation and change; it is certainty over uncertainty; it is the eternal principle for all; it creates all; it is the force to maintain and include all; there is no other thing in existence except Brahman. Brahman is the Atman: the Soul; it means oneself, it means “thou,” and it means him. It is the universal soul which exists as deep trans-individualistic existence. (Yoshimitsu [1943b] 1952, 54)
According to Yoshimitsu, the Upanishad’s core concept of “Tat tvam asi (Thou you art)” indicates that Brahman is the self-ness for all people, including “thou” and I. Brahman is the individualistic Atman and the universal Atman at the same time. He contends that Hinduism suggests a “mystical” approach in its metaphysical and existential recognition of the sameness between Brahman and Atman by utilizing human souls or the inner spiritual quest to grasp the ultimate reality (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 55). Also, he points out that Hindu mysticism must accompany ascetic practices that seek pure inner-self through yoga. According to Yoshimitsu, yoga, which is well represented by Patanjali’s Yoga-Sutra through “negative perfect concentration (hiteiteki sanmaikyō),” aims at positive consciousness of unity with Brahman. Within Hindu yogic contemplation, Brahman is equal to the ultimate consciousness of Atman. He suggests that yoga shows people the possibility of achieving spiritual elan (energy) while bypassing intellectual exercise. Furthermore, Hinduism contends that intellectual exercise is born of the interaction between yoga-as-natural-mysticism and philosophy (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 55). Yoshimitsu uses the term “natural mysticism (shizenteki mystic)” to represent the Indian Brahman thought or yogic ascetic practice. He explains his definition of “natural mysticism” as follows:

“Natural” means the opposition to “supernatural” in Christian theology. In the original sense, mysticism exists only in relation to the experience of God as supernatural Grace, but it could be possible to use mysticism in relation to nature if humans can achieve analogous inner direct experience with the Absolute within their spiritual possibility. In this context, this experience of the Absolute, as its possibility and its potentiality, must be the inner consciousness of the Creator and the Divine Providence which aligns with the supernatural Christian God. (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 58)
Here Yoshimitsu does not comingle nature with the supernatural and the Absolute with Grace, but instead contends that the mystical trajectory of Hinduism may harmonize with Christian mysticism in some aspect. Yoshimitsu does not see a contradiction between the essence of Hinduism’s natural mysticism and the possibility of supernatural grace in Christian mysticism. He contends that Hinduism’s “natural mysticism” becomes a solemn segue for both graceful and supernatural possibilities. This is possible because Hinduism’s natural mysticism is interpreted as a restless state before meeting with God, a state which values “the inner Man (naiteki ningensei)” by which one pursues direct contact with the origin of one’s existence through one’s absolutely emptied soul (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 59). Yoshimitsu cannot dismiss “natural mysticism” as an entrance point to Christian mysticism, because the intellectual and acetic tradition of Christian mysticism seeks the progress of oneself towards inner-self and spirituality. Furthermore, he argues that natural mysticism may involve the sense of limitedness within existential experience, which leads into the quest for supernatural mysticism beyond the idealistic monistic thoughts. In this sense, Yoshimitsu believes that Hinduism’s natural mysticism can be interpreted as humble principle of existence or the state of Advent. This is Yoshimitsu’s inclusive view of Hinduism. At the same time, it is clear for Yoshimitsu that “natural mysticism” in Hinduism could receive Christianity as Adventist. Religiously, Hindus are in natural light; thus they are eligible for supernatural light at any moment. For Yoshimitsu, the religious way to the Absolute, “nature*,” could establish a relationship with Grace and the supernatural. At the same time, the ascetic
tradition in Hindu mysticism is indispensable both for Yoshimitsu’s global religious analysis and for his own Christian practice.

Yoshimitsu’s thesis that Hinduism is a form of Adventism is different from the European approach undertaken by scholars such as Keith Ward. The European approach argues that the Real is the core doctrine of Hinduism and Christianity alike. It does not make a distinction between nature and the supernatural, as Yoshimitsu does. For Ward, the Real in Hinduism is supernatural and divine despite its unreal character. Ward writes:

He [Thomas Aquinas] argues that God is utterly simple and without parts; is timeless and changeless; stands in no real relation to the finite universe; and is wholly ineffable, except by the use of terms which, though appropriate, do not signify what we think they do. Wherein does this differ from Shankara’s allegedly pantheistic and impersonal philosophy? For both, the Divine manifests to us for the sake of our eternal bliss in the forms of time and space. For both, the apparent can truly express or signify the Real, even though it is illusion to take it for the Real in itself. The deep unity of these views should be clear. (Ward 1994, 147)

From Yoshimitsu’s perspective, the Real in Hinduism must be attained through both intellectual and ascetic tradition, but this Real stays within nature and may include the potentiality to meet the Christian Real. Yoshimitsu’s approach does not suggest the absorption of the Hindu Real by the Christian Real; rather, it suggests that they exist in the different domains of nature and the supernatural. That said, for Yoshimitsu natural mysticism could move from the natural realm to the supernatural realm without disruption. He suggests that the Hindu Real could invite the Christian Real, because the core of Christianity is a Grace that bridges nature and the supernatural: nature (Hinduism) – Grace – the supernatural.
Islam

Unlike Hinduism, in which Yoshimitsu identifies a “natural mysticism” that could be compatible with Grace and the supernatural, orthodox Islam cause him some difficulty. While Yoshimitsu’s religious approach is based on the dimensions of nature and the supernatural, orthodox Islam has an extremely clear structure reliant solely on the supernatural. In other words, Islam deals with the supernatural so vividly in the Qur’an that it minimizes the role of nature or the Order of Creation with which Yoshimitsu is so concerned. Keith Ward characterize Islamic thought as solely Qur’anic. He writes that “There is consequently little interest in God’s self-revelation in history in Islam, since God gives a perfect revelation in the Koran” (Ward 1994, 175). Hence, there is no apathetic aspect or supernatural truth-searching asceticism to be found within “nature” in orthodox Islam, since religious seekers have the Word of God in front of them. From Yoshimitsu’s perspective, then, it would be simply a matter of “take it or leave it” in relation to the Word of God. Unfortunately, there is no article in which Yoshimitsu directly deals with orthodox Islamic thought.

Contrary to his remoteness from orthodox Qur’anic Islam, Yoshimitsu engages strongly with Sufism and its theistic mysticism. Sufism promotes the ascetic annihilation of oneself and one’s unification with God. Ward summarizes the core of Sufi religious tradition as follows:

Such movements [Sufi movements] espouse a life of devotion to God, with stages of spiritual ascent, leading from repentance and renunciation to a final stage of ‘annihilation’ (*fana*), in which the individual self seems to fade away and nothing remains in the face of God…Thus, when they are most truly themselves, they become transparent to the only basis of their reality, which is God. (Ward 1994, 189)
Yoshimitsu’s analysis of Sufism relies heavily on one of his mentors in France, Louis Massignon, a French Catholic scholar of Islam. Massignon observes that most Sufis will reach their revelation as soon as they get to the entrance of spirituality (the point of liberation from the flesh) through chanting and contemplating the Qur’an. Hence, one can either achieve religious ignition through spirituality quickly and successfully, or go for broke unsuccessfully trying (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 64). There is no sense of “God’s hand” in this mysticism. According to Yoshimitsu, Sufi mysticism is different from Hindu mysticism due to this closeness to revelation. However, Yoshimitsu specifically recognizes an exception within Sufism in the “God’s hands” alluded to by Al Ghazali (1058-1111) and Al Hallaj (858-922). He terms this group of Sufis as “super-Qur’anic” (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 65).

Yoshimitsu picks up two distinctive Sufis from the “super-Qur’anic” group. Ghazali is the dominant Islamic theologian of the eleventh to twelfth centuries, while Hallaj is more of an extremist who was executed for his thoughts in the tenth century. Therefore, while they are both super-Qur’anic inasmuch as they seek a “soul-illuminating” encounter with the supernatural, there are significant differences between the two in the Islamic tradition. Ghazali’s work emphasizes the importance of the spiritual encounter with God alongside one’s intellectual pursuits within the Qur’an. Paul Heck explores some limits of the practice of recitation of the Qur’an as follows: “The transformation that such practices [recitation of the Qur’an] offer is blocked by impurities of the heart and body as well as intellectual doubts and excessive scruples with the external practices of the religion – its ritual and moral norms… Those preoccupied with worldly concerns are unable to identify emotionally – physically and spiritually – with the verse of the Qur’an” (Heck 2009, 27-28).
Heck articulates this as follows:

The only way to have one’s character informed by divine and not simply human wisdom is to integrate the Qur’an into one’s limbs, one’s feelings and sentiments, one’s gut…This is Ghazali at his best – limbs in unison with the heart, action conforming to knowledge of God, which for Muslims is above all the soul-illuminating knowledge of the Qur’an. (Heck 2009, 28)

As Heck points out, Ghazali’s approach is a mystical technique that tries to conform to the knowledge of God with the heart.

Hallaj, on the other hand, is an extremist and a controversial figure from the Islamic perspective. Despite this, Yoshimitsu pays more scholarly attention to Hallaj than to Ghazali. The reason for his interest on Hallaj may come from the proximity of Hallaj’s religious thought process to Christianity, as is the case for his mentor Massignon. Heck explains the abnormality of Hallaj within Islam as follows:

Hallaj, a controversial figure of the ninth century who claimed to embody divine truth and was subsequently crucified, in his view to expiate the sins of Muslims, was not accepted as a liturgical model – that is, a focal point of communal prayer – in Islam. His life and death did not reflect the part of the prophetic heritage that Islam emphasizes, prayerful worship of the unique Creator and Lord. In Islam, there are prophets but not priests. (Heck 2009, 37)

Despite the heretical nature of Hallaj’s thought from the point of view of Islamic orthodoxy, Yoshimitsu builds on Massignon’s appraisal of Hallaj as noble and pure in his mysticism (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 64-65). Following Massignon, he recognizes the unique position of Hallaj within the Islamic tradition of mysticism which began with Hasan Basri (643-728) and gradually developed by integrating the Islamic creed and monastic mystic theology (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 65). Hallaj explores a form of mysticism which implements a non-traditional Islamic idea of unity with Allah.
Yoshimitsu confirms the main thesis of Hallaj, quoting his remarks on his pilgrimage to Mecca that “We are two spirits fused in a (single) body. Thus, to see me, is to see Him. And to see Him is to see us” (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952 65-66). He evaluates Hallaj’s remarks on this embodiment of the divine. He writes:

Here, as we know and remember together with the name of Hallaj, the phrase of “Ana al Haqq (I am the truth),” which also signifies him as a blasphemer in Islam, is a difficult proposition which I do not have the qualifications to solve. But, we must admit that Hallaj expressed through this phrase the joy of the interface between God and soul, or the joy of discovery of God within the emptiness without one’s ego, as the confession of “mystical unification of God,” assuming Hallaj unmistakably stayed in the Islamic faith. (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 66)

Keith Ward notes that Hallaj’s “Ana al Haqq” is paradoxical considering the absolute transcendence and power of God in orthodox Islamic discourse. He contends that Ghazali’s eleventh-century revision of Hallaj was necessary in this context. Ward writes:

Although al-Hallaj was put to death for his claim, it is a recurrent theme in some forms of Sufism that great saints or imams can achieve a sort of identity with Allah. The eleventh-century sage al-Ghazzali, who achieved a synthesis of Sufism and orthodoxy and is generally accepted as the greatest philosopher of Islam, is at pains to state that there is never an actual identity of the soul and God. ‘That [the experience of fana] had not been actual identity, but only something resembling identity,’ he says. Orthodox Islam naturally draws back from a doctrine of hulul, of Divine indwelling or incarnation. Yet such notion is a constantly recurring feature of Muslim spirituality. (Ward 1994, 190)

Since, as shown in the template, Yoshimitsu’s discourse mainly considers “practice,” the link between nature and the supernatural, he shows his strong scholarly interest in two distinctively different practices within Islam: the citation of the Qur’an and Hallaj’s embodiment of the Divine reality.
In the case of Hinduism, Yoshimitsu characterizes its “practice” as “natural mysticism,” which might also be incorporated into his Christian inclusivity as an Adventist practice. Yoshimitsu identifies Hallaj’s mysticism as very close to the mysticism of Grace in Christianity. He writes:

The inner religious quality, which Hallaj persistently seeks, shares common ground with the inner aspect of “Grace which fulfills law,” which has been explored within St. Paul’s Letters in the Bible. This idea will surpass the Qur’anic notion of religiousness, and it will merge into the point where God’s supernatural mysticism is represented solely as “God is Love.” (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 66)

Yoshimitsu is clearly aware that there is neither the Incarnation nor the Trinity in Islam, but he contends that Hallaj is somewhat considered to be a martyr, putting Jesus (as a saint) ahead of Mohammed and also putting one’s inner sanctity ahead of Islamic laws (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 66). Yoshimitsu perceives that Islam embeds antinomy between individual spirituality and external law due to its strict reliance on revelation by word. This might create a fatalistic limit. Further, this antinomy might not be objectively and universally solvable. Hence, Yoshimitsu suggests that the mysticism of Hallaj can be interpreted as analogous to the expectation of graceful love in St. Paul’s Letters in the Bible that completes the Torah, or the one which represents mysticism of anxiety towards the sacramental mundane reality of the supernatural (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 66-67).

From the viewpoint of mystical and religious practice, Yoshimitsu foresees uncertainty in the Qur’anic approach and anxiety in the super-Qur’anic approach.

If we adopt Yoshimitsu’s terminology of “natural mysticism” for Hinduism, the super-Qur’anic approach of Sufis such as Hallaj could be said to be a “partial supernatural mysticism.” Yoshimitsu further suggests that this “partial supernatural
mysticism” would be completed, both as mysticism and theology, by the Thomist God (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 67). He contends as follows:

It would be a surprise that a truly Thomist understanding of God completes Islamic religiousness both in theology and in mysticism; the Thomist understanding of God is the revelation of Grace through the Incarnation within the realm of “Analogia entis creati et increate (The analogy between God and creation)” in nature and it is the living experiential truth within Christian mysticism. (Yoshimitsu [1943c] 1952, 67)

For Yoshimitsu, Islam experiences both theological and mystical anxiety by looking at God only through the lens of omniscience and omnipotence, not through a form of living experiential truth like Grace. Just as in his view on Hinduism, Yoshimitsu does not deny Islam; he only sees a limitation within it. In other words, to bridge nature and the supernatural using his template, it is not sufficient to introduce (or practice) only the transcendental Words or spirituality towards the transcendent. For Yoshimitsu, from his Christian perspective, some form of mysticism which bridges nature and the supernatural is necessary to unite oneself with the supernatural life through Grace and the Incarnation.
CHAPTER FOUR
YOSHIMITSU’S STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

Since Yoshimitsu became Catholic in 1927 under the influence of his mentor Iwashita Soichi, his Christian faith became the basis of his religious study. The influence of his French mentor Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) is significant in Yoshimitsu’s thinking on Christianity. Maritain seems to have planted Thomist thought in Yoshimitsu. Maritain was a Thomist who initiated a dialogue between Thomistic synthesis and contemporary culture, finding in Aristotle and Aquinas a way of thinking which could be humanist and even existentialist (O’Meara 1997, 176-77). Several times in his work Yoshimitsu quotes Maritain’s concept of “humanisme integral (jūsokuteki hyumanizumu),” which illustrates human spiritual possibility and human quest for Grace (Yoshimitsu [1942d] 1979, 78). Yoshimitsu fully engages Maritain’s notion of theocentric humanism as expressed in “humanisme integral.” It is the affirmation, not the negation, of human culture (Yoshimitsu [1942d] 1979, 78). From the “natural—supernatural” relationship, Maritain assumes that independent but imperfect nature is bound to be integrated with the supernatural. Yoshimitsu argues that theocentric humanism has a natural ethical morality and wisdom along with an Adventist quest for God. According to him, this humanism embodies nothing but the Thomistic thesis that “Grace does not destroy nature (humanity), but anticipates and perfects nature” (Yoshimitsu [1942d] 1979, 78). Maritain also alludes to the notion that humanity or personality implies the laborious and the limited, the indigent, and the complicated, yet
simultaneously designates a person in the fullness of his human condition (Dougherty 2003, 56).

Keeping this theocentric humanism in mind, Yoshimitsu perceives two important developments in Western Christian thought, one from Augustine at the beginning of the Middle Ages, and another from Thomas Aquinas at the height of the Middle Ages. According to Yoshimitsu, “the Spirit and the Discourse of the Middle Ages” built by Augustine and Aquinas is the foundation of Christianity, one which evolves infinitely by overcoming the challenges which arise in the pre-modern and modern period. Yoshimitsu uses the term “a new Middle Ages” to express this permanent Christianity which he believes has survived through the ages.

A New Middle Ages

Yoshimitsu feels that modern thinkers fall short of articulating theocentric humanism as compared with these two outstanding thinkers. For Yoshimitsu, there has been a stagnation of Western thought since Aquinas’s presentation of theocentric humanism. He writes:

Modern spirituality has exposed a tragic dialectic process in history since the sixteenth century. It started as the separation from the church; it confronted rational deism and the separation from Christ in the seventeenth to eighteenth century; it went through naturalism and materialism in the nineteenth century; then, eventually it ended up with the hopeless selfish heroism symbolized by “God is dead.” (Yoshimitsu [1940b] 1984, 12)

Yoshimitsu is critical of the impact on human spirituality of the Enlightenment and emphasis on self-consciousness after the Renaissance. He perceives that there have been antithetical developments against this theocentric humanism since the sixteenth century.
Kevin Doak suggests that Yoshimitsu seeks “a new Middle Ages” as an effective way to challenge modernity from a more humanistic view. Doak writes:

Yoshimitsu sought to recover what he called “the spirit of the Middle Ages” as the foundation for “a new Middle Ages” (atarashiki chūsei) that would form a more humane response to the challenges of modernity but also a more universal answer to the longing of the human heart to know what is enduring and real. Yoshimitsu noted that modern intellect finds itself caught between the grandeur of scientific technology and the misery of a poverty of metaphysical spiritual contemplation. (Doak 2003, 113)

Although Yoshimitsu contends that Augustine and Aquinas are the two key theologians of theocentric humanism, he also notices clear differences between them. According to him, Augustine’s core argument is creed over reason (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 86). Meanwhile, Aquinas’s core argument is “nature and the supernatural,” or “nature and Grace” (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 130). Aquinas presents a God-like image of humans within nature and the meaning of Grace that bridges nature, suggesting that it is Grace that bridges this state of nature and the supernatural based on God’s Will. Augustine is a Neo-Platonist and Aquinas a Neo-Aristotelian. However, Yoshimitsu perceives that this difference is rooted in the broader theological evolution from Augustine to Aquinas, and that in fact they shares the same thread of ideas. Yoshimitsu suggests that Aquinas is the proper modification, not the contradiction, of Augustine, reflecting the Platonist response to the realistic Aristotelian approach (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 130 and 135). Yoshimitsu, at the same time, perceives that both Augustine and Aquinas share a similar idea in the “ability to submit to the truth of a Graced Life (onchō seimei no shinri e no kijun nōryoku)”
Augustine suggests this submission means putting faith ahead of reason, while Aquinas suggests submission is by rational Man as a creatures in the realm of the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation.

In his criticism of modernist thinkers, Yoshimitsu shows his exceptional proximity with Blaise Pascal. Despite Pascal’s peculiar position of Jansenism, Yoshimitsu is able to engage with the asceticism, suffering, and devotion of Pascal’s Christianity. Pascal’s religious elements are indispensable for Yoshimitsu’s understanding of theocentric humanism. Due to Yoshimitsu’s dual interest in “nature” and religious practice, he cannot help but engage with Pascal, whom he characterizes as a theocentric religious seeker, differentiating him from a theologian or a person of contemplation (Yoshimitsu [1942e] 1984, 417).

Within Yoshimitsu’s Christianity, Augustine’s faith over reason fuses into Aquinas’s order of “nature—the supernatural.” At the same time, “a new Middle Ages” coming out of Augustine and Aquinas will fuse into modern theocentric humanism, such as Pascal’s attempt to establish a desirable “nature—Grace” relationship through self-conscious and down-to-earth religious practice.

**Augustine**

Yoshimitsu summarizes Augustine’s contribution to Christian theology as the establishment of a theocentric, *anima*-oriented metaphysics (Yoshimitsu [1940a] 1984, 34). Yoshimitsu suggests that Augustine’s theocentric soul-oriented metaphysics comes from his basic commitment to faith or the “open spiritual attitude (*hirakareta*”)
Believe in order to know God” as the “provenience of faith (shinkō no senkōsei)” is the heart of Augustine’s discourse, according to Yoshimitsu (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 83). Faith requires the individual to first gain right knowledge. Yoshimitsu describes Augustine’s understanding of faith in comparison with other later Christian thinkers as follows:

When we talk about the subjective necessity of faith, Augustine, in his classical position, differs from the ideas of modern Christian thinkers such as Pascal, Newman, and Kierkegaard, who suggest the psychological consciousness within faith is achievable through analytical understanding, which is common for modern theology. Augustine, on the contrary, offers an ethical interpretation of the intellect stemming from faith. Augustine’s faith must be understood as an intellectual act of the recognition of trust, the “cum assentione cogitare,” as if reason is considered to be the one which, in the inclusive manner, is elevated existentially by itself to the status of reason within theological faith. This is different from Aquinas’s idea, which signifies the supernatural possibility of faith as typologically separated from natural reason. (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 84)

Yoshimitsu confirms that Augustine’s dictate that one must “believe in order to know” is neither apophatic nor ethical, but rather aims at the aspect of logos in faith (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 95). Augustine repeats that an “intuition of God comes as a “reward of faith (merces fidei).” In the same way, the end (telos) of faith is full understanding of the Word of God (logos) and this end (telos) of faith will lead into the intuition of God’s essence (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 98).

By centering faith in this way, Yoshimitsu emphasizes the three aspects of faith that Augustine explores. First is the “the consciousness of principle of existence as a creature” (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 86). Yoshimitsu suggests that for Augustine, “to believe” means to purify and make humble within the proper consciousness of oneself as a creature, upon which recognition, the quest as
Adventist becomes possible (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 86-87). Here, faith is understood to be a humble act by Man. Thus, Yoshimitsu traces Augustine’s discourse from faith to true intellect, starting from obedience to God through faith, moving on to righteous life springing from that obedience, then to purification, which springs from that righteous life, and finally to true intellectual belief, which emerges from purification (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 120).

Yoshimitsu suggests that this process characterizes Augustine’s practical and ethical asceticism, or Augustine’s existential faith backed by his virtuous and mystical theology (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 121). Augustine tries to convert the “philosopher God” to the “God of faith through revelation” (Yoshimitsu [1940b] 1984, 40). Yoshimitsu confirms that this faith of humility is in turn the reflection of the humility of Christ. He quotes Augustine’s Confession:

For I was not humble enough to conceive of the humble Jesus Christ as my God, nor had I learnt what lesson his human weakness was meant to teach. The lesson is that your Word, the eternal Truth, which far surpasses even the higher parts of your creation, raises up to himself all who subject themselves to him. (Augustine [1961], 152)

Yoshimitsu shows that Augustine recognizes the humility of Christ as the essential thing, yet recognizes also that there is a somewhat paradoxical element of weakness within this humility. Despite this weakness, though, humility is strong enough to guide Augustine and those who believe towards the eternal Truth (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 87).

The second key aspect of Augustine’s understanding of faith is the “existential consciousness of the Church” (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 86).
According to Yoshimitsu, Augustine suggests that the recognition of Christian religious truth may only be established by embracing the unique historical supernatural reality of Christianity, and then by putting oneself within that reality (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 90). In this context, Augustine’s faith coincides with the elements of the Church: martyrs and sanctity, not just words or scriptures (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 90).

The third key element within Augustine’s faith is dogma or creed. Yoshimitsu illustrates that Augustine’s faith is destined towards creed, which is given as Divine Revelation. This movement toward creed is a process of intellectual recognition of objective and existential Truth (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 92-93). Yoshimitsu further suggests that Augustine’s faith is meant to enable Man to reach intuitive recognition of the (Holy) Trinity (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 111).

Through these characteristics of faith, Yoshimitsu contends with the possibility of God’s grace in the form of “lighting up (terashidashi)” (Yoshimitsu [1941c] 1984, 219). Based on Yoshimitsu’s interpretation of Augustine, if the believer humbly opens the door for Grace, Grace and the Church will light up his wisdom and give him an intuitive sense of the Trinity. Augustine’s argument is consistent with Yoshimitsu’s template of Christianity as discussed in Chapter Two, namely nature—Grace—the supernatural. Augustine’s core argument is that nature needs humility as “practice,” and Grace together with the Spirit will provide the light for wisdom and intuition of the Trinity. According to
Yoshimitsu, a later Thomist ordering of *logos* and its cultural structure must be based on Augustinian existential spirituality. Thus, there is a continuity between Augustine and Aquinas (Yoshimitsu [1943e] 1984, 138-39).

Yoshimitsu seems to be most influenced by Augustine’s approach to the recognition of God through humble faith. According to Yoshimitsu, Augustine’s process of completing the recognition of God is nothing but the process of completing God’s love itself. It is important to note that Man’s existential state as a creature of God must define both “how to live” and “how to know” (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 100-101). In this context, Yoshimitsu describes Augustine’s faith as a practical, ethical, ascetic theology (*jissenteki rinriteki shūtoku shingaku* [Ascetik]) (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 121). He uses the Latin phrase “ut cognita faciat et faciendo cognoscat (to do what is known, to know by doing)” to express the core of Augustine’s religious practice (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 121).

Yoshimitsu underscores Augustine’s emphasis on virtue-ethics over spirituality and contemplation by stressing the need to participate in Christ’s sufferings and his redemption (Yoshimitsu [1940a] 1984 207). For Yoshimitsu, Augustine’s faith presents a life of humility and the practice of virtue, which is perfectly in line with his own idea of theocentric humanism.

**Thomas Aquinas**

Thomas O’Meara O.P., a professor at the University of Notre Dame, notes that there have been continuous changes in the theological interpretation of Aquinas. Most of
them include misunderstanding.¹ According to O’Meara, the theology of Aquinas illustrates “the gospel of Christ, precisely because the gospel is the truth about a real realm, the kingdom of God, a supernatural order to which life points and which revelation expresses” (O’Meara 1997, 45). In Yoshimitsu’s understanding of Aquinas, he focuses on this same theme, using similar terminology of “the Supernatural Order of Salvation.” Yet, Yoshimitsu also explores the spiritual possibility of Man as the “Imago Dei (image of God).” These understandings are influenced by Yoshimitsu’s mentor, Maritain. O’Meara characterizes Maritain’s position relative to Aquinas as “an open Thomism,” a form of Thomism which is liberal and eclectic. O’Meara writes:

> [f]rom 1930 to 1960 [Maritain] inspired many Catholics throughout the world to search for ways in which their church’s life and thought could escape being hostile to European and American societies and to initiate a dialogue between Thomistic synthesis and contemporary culture. (O’Meara 1997, 179)

Maritain taught Yoshimitsu in France, but Maritain taught many other places outside of France including Toronto, Chicago, and Princeton, making his Thomistic idea globally popular in the early twentieth century (O’Meara 1997, 178).

According to Yoshimitsu, Augustine’s placing of “faith over intelligence” represents a deep-rooted human approach towards the supernatural which still awaits inclusion in the Thomistic big picture of “nature—Grace—the

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¹ O’Meara is critical of a historical understanding of Thomas Aquinas. He writes that: “Through the centuries various schools and disciples have advocated the thought of Thomas Aquinas, but few have understood the structure of his theology. Too often, Aquinas has been presented in a digest text, in boring summaries, or in authoritarian lists of conclusions – and often they offered a static Aristotelianism rather than a vital Christianity” (O’Meara 1997, 45).
supernatural” (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 130). Yoshimitsu characterizes Aquinas’s approach as the establishment of a metaphysics consisting of human endemic value and endemic activity. Yoshimitsu admits the possibility of the organic combination of Augustine’s theocentric, spiritual metaphysics with Aquinas’s realm of “the analogy of Being” (yū no ruhi) (Yoshimitsu [1940a] 1984, 34). This analogy suggests Man’s ability to come closer to God through his initiative, and the possibility of completing human efforts through Grace and the revelation of Truth. For Yoshimitsu, Augustine’s metaphysical system spotlights humility and virtue ethics, while Aquinas’s metaphysical system spotlights human self-directedness and the Divine Order. Both systems suggest the centrality of the Person in theology. Yoshimitsu is most concerned with this problem of the Person in his readings of Augustine and Aquinas.

Due to this interest in the Person, Yoshimitsu is most interested in Aquinas’s notions of human endemic value or endemic activities, and his “analogical relationship of Man and God.” Yoshimitsu summarizes the historical contribution of Aquinas as centering on his philosophical demonstration of the autonomy of the person and his immortal soul. Yoshimitsu writes:

Aquinas certifies, by constructing his own paradigm, that the correct thinking of Aristotle will provide a philosophical and systematic foundation for the Christian world view by correcting Augustinian Platonic thoughts. Aquinas shows that correct understanding of Aristotle will not become a sources of heresy that is commonly seen among traditional and reactionary thinkers of his time. At the same time, Aquinas eliminates monophysitism, which advocates the elimination of individual personality through the universal reason as expressed in its heretical Arabian form of the Aristotelian thesis. Through these, Aquinas creates his philosophical foundation for a Christian view of the Person as possessing
Yoshimitsu’s view of the Person offers two distinctive, inter-related ideas. First, he argues that nature (Man) and the supernatural must be clearly separated. Second, however, nature (Man) needs to respond to the supernatural (Grace) when Grace comes from above, because nature cannot ascend from bottom to Grace in its own right.

Yoshimitsu confirms these points as follows:

The religious issue is not something coming out of human spiritual effort from the bottom, but rather it is a human response as a creature enabled by God’s own revelation of love as Grace, and with Grace from above. This response is for the glorification of love – a Trinitarian “love by itself“ – with apprehension and appreciation for the dignity of God as the supernatural which should never be confused with us [as natural creatures]. (Yoshimitsu [1942f] 1984, 265)

According to Yoshimitsu, the “analogy of God and Man” suggests that Man can’t capture God, but that God must be understood through Man’s character as a creature, or through the notion of Man as a “second cause” reliant upon God and the “analogy of God and Man” (Yoshimitsu [1932b] 1984, 278). Hence, this view confirms that it is impossible to perceive God as an extensional object of Man. Rather, the theological understanding of Man and the establishment of a metaphysical foundation for Man is the true “view of the Person” as a creature (Yoshimitsu [1932b] 1984, 278). Yoshimitsu suggests that, for Aquinas, “Man” is to be transcended. Therefore, Aquinas’s view of the Person is centered on God. In this context, Yoshimitsu often quotes Aquinas’s phrase “Grace does not destroy nature, but rather Grace perfects nature (Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit)” (Yoshimitsu [1943d] 1984, 131). This idea of the relationship embedded in
“nature and the supernatural” – the clear separation between the two together with the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of the Salvation – forms Yoshimitsu’s basic idea of Christianity and the basis for his global religious study.

Yoshimitsu concludes that Aquinas does not offer a Man-centered humanism represented by the negation of humanity or the absolute supremacy of mankind. Rather, Aquinas offers a religious analogy between “God as all reality and all value” and “Man as endemic reality and possessed of endemic value.” Through God-like endemic activities, Man can salvage himself, becoming “Being Itself (ipsum esse)” by surpassing his human nature while still acknowledging his own weakness as a creature (Yoshimitsu [1932b] 1984, 302). For Yoshimitsu, the “nature—Grace” relationship works differently in Augustine and Aquinas. It is driven by the humble initiative of nature in Augustine, while for Aquinas the relationship between nature and the supernatural is dynamically mutual, requiring that one understand simultaneously the fullness of Grace (God’s Will), the Incarnation, and human potential. Yoshimitsu suggests that, within the two distinctive domains of nature and the supernatural, the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation need to be recognized. This is Yoshimitsu’s key takeaway from Aquinas.

The God-like endemic activities of Man which Yoshimitsu finds within Aquinas would apply to the interpretation of other religions as well, inasmuch as they stay within virtuous human acts. If there is no possibility of the divine Will
in non-Christian religions, then Man’s God-like virtuous endemic activity would be seen as essentially Adventist, according to Yoshimitsu’s “nature-Grace” relationship. Yoshimitsu’s view of Virgil and Hinduism as Adventist, which was explored in Chapter Two of this thesis, has its base in his Thomist interpretation of the Order of Creation, which views Man as capable of acting virtuous, and of the Supernatural Order of Salvation, which highlights the potential of all to obtain God’s Grace.

**Blaise Pascal**

Throughout his life, Yoshimitsu was concerned with the development of modern thought in Europe and in Japan. According to Yoshimitsu, the effects of Man-centered humanism – atheism, nihilism, and intellectualism, which he opposes – were embedded both in modern Europe and in modern Japan. For example, Yoshimitsu shows his concern with early twentieth century atheism in Europe and in Japan. He writes:

[In mid-nineteenth century,] Japan was exposed to modern European culture, a culture that had lost God. Hence, how European spiritual culture finds God again and how Japan finds God again in its own ideas and culture influenced by this atheistic European culture are inter-related. They share the same religious situation. (Yoshimitsu [1942e] 1979, 182)

Yoshimitsu suggests modern European spirituality, starting in the Renaissance, then developing through the French Revolution, and the rise of communism, is deeply rooted in the quality of “modern atheism” (Yoshimitsu [1942d] 1979, 60-61). Yoshimitsu refers to Nietzsche and Dostoevsky as exemplars of this category. At the same time, he points out three major counter-forces to this
modern atheism. First is the mythological approach, which deifies human order. Second is the reactional principle of faith as expressed in dialectical theology, which erases humanistic value and order. The third is associated with theocentric humanism, which defines humanity through the quest for God. This was called “integral humanism” by Jacques Maritain (Yoshimitsu [1942d] 1979, 66). Yoshimitsu suggests that this modern theocentric humanism follows the heritage of Augustine and Aquinas, and is the best answer to Man-centered modern atheism (Yoshimitsu [1942d] 1979, 78).

Yoshimitsu’s discussion of two modern French thinkers, Rene Descartes and Blaise Pascal – but especially Pascal – embodies his modern implementation of theocentric humanism. From Descartes and Pascal, Yoshimitsu draws two main ideas, both of which seem to be in line with Maritain. First is the basic evaluation of Descartes and Pascal in relation to Augustine and Aquinas. Yoshimitsu suggests that key ideas of Descartes and Pascal are already anticipated by Augustine. Hence, he considers Descartes and Pascal to be a part of Augustine, not a development or advance from Augustine. Second, Yoshimitsu prefers Pascal’s theocentric humanity to the humanism of Descartes. Yoshimitsu attempts to integrate Descartes, Pascal, Augustine, and Aquinas in European spiritual and philosophical history as follows:

Descartes’s “intellectual ethics” must unite with Pascal’s “logic of religious faith.” Until then, there can be no salvation for the modern world. The tragic situation of conflict, where there is no reconciliation between Descartes and Pascal but rather a false choice between the two, exemplifies the powerlessness of modern metaphysics and exposes the cause of the problems facing the modern spiritual world. If one
understands this, one can get to Augustine’s “love in truth,” which shares the same thread as Descartes’s cogito and Pascal’s amore. Then, it leads into Aquinas’s metaphysics of analogia entis, which signifies grace and freedom (nature). From there, a permanently new Middle Ages and a new modernity must arise (Yoshimitsu [1941b] 1984, 409).

Though Descartes and Pascal lived in the seventeenth century, Yoshimitsu marks their thought as a part of Augustine’s notion of “love of truth.” Yoshimitsu contends that Decartes’s “quest for truth” and Pascal’s “quest for love” must “unite within Transcendental Life” (chōetsuteki seimei ketsugō).” For Yoshimitsu, through Aquinas, the validity of particular values (tokusei koyu kachi datousei), and their ultimate realization in Grace (onchōteki kyūkyoku jitsugen) as the supernatural contemplative love must be understood as an expression of the substance of reason within the relationship called analogia entis (Yoshimitsu [1940c] 1984, 127).

For Yoshimitsu, both Descartes and Pascal fall short of Aquinas due to their ambiguous framework of grace and freedom. However, despite this deficiency, Yoshimitsu shows interest in Pascal’s Christianity. Yoshimitsu writes:

Professor Maritain wrote in his article “Inheritance of Descartes” that there exists a tragedy within the modern spirituality, which asks us to choose either Descartes or Pascal. I believe that the problem must not be presented in this way. Descartes’s self-controlled intellect, which seeks culture, and Pascal’s quest for love based on religious existentialism, must be unified through the recovery of the classical and metaphysical transcendental intellectual possibility, which is shown in the unity between Augustine and Aquinas. However, Maritain said he would choose Pascal without hesitation if he must need to choose between Descartes and Pascal. (Yoshimitsu [1943a] 1984, 490)
Yoshimitsu seems to agree with Maritain’s inclination towards Pascal.

Yoshimitsu identifies a risky, Man-centered humanism within Descartes, one which decouples the organic relationship between nature and Grace and enhances the concept of standalone natural humanism (Yoshimitsu [1939] 1984, 65).

Yoshimitsu cannot ignore Descartes’s negative historical impact in relation to the development of the Man-centered humanism that he critiques. On the other hand, Yoshimitsu observes Pascal’s strong spiritual struggle (combat spirituel) as a sign of theocentric humanism.

In a 1942 interview, Yoshimitsu characterizes Pascal as “one who experiences [life] (taikensha)” (Yoshimitsu [1942b] 1984, 417). Yoshimitsu talks about Pascal’s significance as follows:

Pascal’s significance is not as a theologian presenting a one-of-a-kind theology, nor as a humanistic philosopher looking for the deepest human psychological insights. He is a prophet, as I said before, through his deep and modern self-consciousness. His truly deep aspect is the most inner and direct religious experiences that are simply and purely depicted in his writings The Mystery of Christ and Memorial. In other words, he pursued the question, “How do people become Christian?” like Kierkegaard, or “How difficult is it for me to become a Christian?” He acknowledged the difficulty of religion, and he gained and illustrated a most lively and truthful religion by himself. In this way, he has successfully depicted a form of religious heroism (Yoshimitsu [1942b] 1984, 417).

Clearly, Yoshimitsu is primarily interested in Pascal’s religious experience or religious practice, not his theology. He characterizes Pascal’s approach to

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2 “The Mystery of Christ” is Fragment 553 of Pensee.
religious practice as that of a “real practitioner.”³ This sense of practice does not simply occur through thinking and speaking, but rather as an expression of one’s devout acts, combining with the heart of Christ and Christ’s suffering (Yoshimitsu [1942b] 1984, 417). Yoshimitsu prefers to look at Pascal as a Christian philosopher working from the principle of existence, rather than as a Jansenist theologian (Yoshimitsu [1940c] 1984, 85).

With the recognition of Pascal’s significant position in science, classicism, and Christianity, Yoshimitsu is deeply impressed by Pascal’s engagement with religious suffering and asceticism. Yoshimitsu contends that Pascal represents one of the modern European spiritual trends, in that he expresses spiritual suffering as a self-consciously modern way to confess his Christianity. (Yoshimitsu [1942b] 1984, 416).⁴ Yoshimitsu thinks of this aspect of Pascal’s religious practice as “ascetic.” He writes:

Pascal illustrates continuous demands for salvation from human souls until one is salvaged by his order of grace, which is the third of his three orders: order of body, order of spirit, and order of grace. Pascal’s deep significance resides in the fact that he is the deepest Christian confessional thinker, saying that “I will not sleep with Christ until the end of the world.” I suppose that even the most profound modern thinkers, such as Nietzsche and Kiekegaard, must understand Pascal’s significance as his character of “one who joins in Christ’s sacrifice”(Christ no gisei kyōdō suikōsha) (Yoshimitsu [1942b] 1984, 419).

³ Yoshimitsu used the word “jideyuku” in Japanese for “real practitioner.” Jideyuku means to put some idea (including philosophical idea) into action such as by eating one meal a day (action) to implement one’s life style as an economizer (philosophy).

⁴ Yoshimitsu suggests that Vladimir Solovyov of Russia (1853-1900) and John Henry Cardinal Newman of England (1801-1890) shares a similar “expression of spiritual suffering” to Pascal (Yoshimitsu [1942b] 1984, 415-16).
In addition to Pascal’s emphasis on sacrifice and asceticism, Yoshimitsu reminds people also of Pascal’s readiness to be foolish by placing God’s grace ahead of himself. According to Yoshimitsu, this readiness requires training in humility, which is different from Descartes’s training in recognition (Yoshimitsu [1941d] 1984, 390). This readiness is the precondition of Pascal’s sacrifice and asceticism.

From Yoshimitsu’s viewpoint, Pascal is not greater than the Middle Ages’ towering thinkers, Augustine and Aquinas. However, Pascal’s modern Christian approach as a “religious practitioner” of suffering follows a similar vein as Augustine, while successfully coping with the post-Renaissance problem of the Man-centered trends through an increase in self-directedness and self-consciousness. Pascal is not a theologian, but Yoshimitsu tries to introduce him as a reliable religious practitioner. Yoshimitsu’s template of “nature—Grace—the supernatural” owes much to Augustine and Aquinas, yet, in terms of deepening his thought on Christian practice, Yoshimitsu owes much to Pascal as well. Pascal engaged in a true “nature-ism” (self-consciousness) under Grace by sharing Christ’s agony and suffering. Pascal offers an important modern prototype of worldly, theocentric humanist religious practice. It is interesting, then, that Yoshimitsu calls Pascal a “modern prophet” who asserts Christ in the modern God-less realm. Pascal seems to create an equitable balance between nature and the supernatural without diminishing or erasing either. Yoshimitsu appreciates Augustine’s humility, Aquinas’s Order of Creation and Supernatural Order of Salvation, and Pascal’s status as a “real practitioner” of spiritual agony and
suffering. These are all key components of Yoshimitsu’s everlasting “new Middle Ages.”
CONCLUSION

As shown at the end of Chapter One, the European approach to global religions poses three questions: the possibility of a single abstraction of religious value, the degree of ethnological influence on religions, and the balance of doctrine and practice within religions. The European approach explores the abstraction of religious values, ethnological influence on religions, and the emphasis on doctrine. Yoshimitsu’s answers to these three questions, as an early twentieth century Japanese Catholic theologian, are different. He does not apply a dimensional view towards different religious values, nor is he an advocate for an ethnological view of religions. He also emphasizes the aspect of religious practice more consistently than the European approach.

For Yoshimitsu, nature and the supernatural are two distinctively different domains that must not be comingled. Hence, in religions, the identification of the precise relationship between nature and the supernatural is essential. The Absolute in nature like Brahman and God in the supernatural are distinctively different. Yoshimitsu does not attempt to wrap the Absolute and God into a basket of theism. In religious discourse, the relationship of nature and the supernatural, or of nature and nature*, must be the core of each religious paradigm. Hence, when identifying the essence of religions, Yoshimitsu avoids a single abstraction such as “the Real,” “the supersensory realm,” or “a limitless better possibility.” Each global religion presents a different discourse of the relationship between nature and the supernatural or nature and nature*. Some religions are open to Revelation, while others are not. The Christian relationship of “nature—Grace—the supernatural” is unique, but all of the “Other” religions have legitimate discourses in
terms of nature. In this way, Yoshimitsu takes an inclusive stance towards the religious virtues of the “Other” by signifying them as Adventistic.

Ethnological perspectives such as the Semitic and the Indian, which are often implemented in the European approach, have no significant role in Yoshimitsu’s theology. His sense of “nature” seems to be universal, crossing ethnic borders and superseding ethnological restrictions. Yoshimitsu sees ethnological influences over religion as historical contingencies; rather than spatial categories, he emphasizes temporality. Since the existence of the supernatural is the subject of history, Yoshimitsu downplays the impact of ethnicity on religion. While his view towards non-Christian religions is based on his faith in Christianity or Grace Incarnate, it is a matter of historical contingency for non-Christian believers or atheists when or whether to accept Grace.

Religions are not gene-oriented ethnic inventions for Yoshimitsu. His classification of Virgil and Hinduism as Adventistic reflects his sense of historical contingency, because Virgil and Hinduism both offers the opportunity to unite with Grace through the Order of Creation (freedom) and the Supernatural Order of Salvation (Love) at any point in history. It is the awareness of the nature-Grace relationship that matters, not ethnological conceptions. In other words, for Yoshimitsu, the real religious issue will transcend both time and space, or culture and ethnicity.

Since most of all religions have “nature” as the starting point of the religious relationship, the religious practice of “nature” is important for Yoshimitsu’s global religious study. Yoshimitsu focuses carefully on religious practice, even including an untraditional one within Islam like Hallaj. Since Yoshimitsu grew up in Japanese culture
where religious practices like Zen were taken for granted on their own terms, it is natural for him to focus more on religious practice as the key aspect of religion. In this context, he looks to the seventeenth century French thinker Blaise Pascal and his ascetic expression of Christianity. Yoshimitsu sees a modern prototype of Christian practice within Pascal, who combines Augustinian asceticism and proper control of modern self-consciousness. Pascal’s approach is considered to be a modern theocentric humanism reflecting “a new Middle Ages” that emerges from the heritage of Augustine and Aquinas. Pascal’s approach balances doctrine and practice, emphasizing the embodiment of Grace in practice. Yoshimitsu has a strong commitment to the Thomist doctrinal idea of the Order of Creation and the Supernatural Order of Salvation. In this context, following his French mentor Jacques Maritain, he cannot miss the importance of determining “how to become Christian” in practice, and Pascal offers one of the strongest answers of the modern era. At the same time, Yoshimitsu’s interest in religious practice extends beyond Christianity. Religious practice is an important element that signifies the doctrinal relationship between either “nature—the supernatural” or “nature—nature*” in each religion. Yoshimitsu has kept a proper balance between doctrine and practice throughout his religious study.

Despite the lack of English translations of Yoshimitsu’s works, his generic approach to global religions through his norm of “nature and the supernatural” had a distinctive character and novelty in the early twentieth century. His version of “Open Thomism,” which he inherited from Maritain, created a practical, human-centered approach towards global religious study. It is an intellectually substantive, culturally
neutral, and authentically balanced religious study. Yoshimitsu has selected the quotation from the Bible “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God” to illustrate the importance of one’s awareness of one’s own initiative towards all spiritual matters to overcome atheistic modernity and pursue salvation (Matt. 5:8, Yoshimitsu 1979, 80). He argues that all spiritual matters and all religions must start from “the clean of heart,” that is, individually and with one’s own footsteps. Spiritual matters do not start as a matter of the East or the West, nor as a matter of the historical moment to which they belong. They start only with the appropriate state of mind, “the clean of heart.” At the same time, Yoshimitsu assumes that “clean[liness] of heart” accompanies practical actions, which require individual attention and participation. If religious seekers obtain this cleanliness of heart, then it will be only a matter of Grace and historical contingency for them to “see God.” This insight is the motif of his entire oeuvre and the cornerstone of his global religious study.
REFERENCE LIST


