Article

Emptiness/Nothingness as Explained by Ryu Yongmo (Tasŏk) (1890–1981) and Isaac Jacob Schmidt (1779–1847): A Cross-Cultural Study of the Integration of Asian Intellectual Heritage into the Worldview of Two Protestant Christians

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Abstract: The concepts of *emptiness* and *nothingness* are extremely important in Eastern as well as Western spiritual traditions. In East Asia, they are relevant in Daoism, Confucianism (in the context of integrating Daoist ideas) and Buddhism (in Sūnyatā), while in the European Christian discourse they are significant in the context of *creatio ex nihilo*, kenotic theories, individual self-emptying out of humility and Nihilianism. These concepts have formed and continue to form the basis of important intercultural interactions, influencing philosophical and scholarly discourse in both the “East” and “West” to the present day. This article compares the perception of emptiness/nothingness from two representatives of Protestantism: the Korean Christian philosopher Ryu Yongmo (1890–1981, pen name Tasŏk) and the Moravian missionary Isaac Jacob Schmidt (1779–1847), who was a pioneer of Buddhist studies in Europe. A comparison between Schmidt and Tasŏk is important, because tracing the evolution of the worldview of both thinkers reveals a great similarity in how they reconciled the spiritual heritage of Asia with the principles of Western Protestant Christianity despite their different backgrounds. It also could shed new light on the possibility of dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism, especially in the context of two major philosophical systems of Mahāyāna Buddhism: Yogācāra and Mādhyamika, which were once so important in East Asia. In addition, it is exactly the interpretation of emptiness/nothingness that forms the cornerstone of the analogy of the religious-philosophical ideas of the two thinkers compared in the article.

Keywords: emptiness; nothingness; Buddhism; Christianity; Mādhyamika; Yogācāra; Prajñāpāramitā; Daoism; Ryu Yongmo (Tasŏk); Isaac Jacob Schmidt

1. Introduction

*Emptiness* as a doctrinal term is found already in the Theravāda school of Buddhism (adj. suñña; noun suññata), exclusively to the doctrine of *anatta* (non-self, Pali: อันตะ, by which was understood the unsubstantiality of all phenomena; that is, visual objects, mind-objects, corporeality, consciousness, etc., are empty of self, void of permanency and of anything lasting, eternal or immutable (Thera [1980] 2011, p. 205). However, the founder of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism, Nāgārjuna (c. 150–c. 250 CE), developed the Śūnyatā (Sanskrit: शून्यता) concept of emptiness as a doctrine, called Śūnyavāda (Sanskrit: शून्यवाद), which differs greatly from the original understanding and has greatly influenced subsequent Buddhist philosophy. The Prajñāpāramitā (perfection of wisdom, Sanskrit: प्रज्ञापारमिता) sutras are also traditionally associated with Nāgārjuna (Androsov 2008, p. 71). It is possible that his explanation of emptiness is often misunderstood in the scientific literature as simply recognition of the “dependent arising” of all phenomena (Kalupahana 1999, p. 86), understanding it as a synonym of dependence and/or impermanence, or that emptiness is the emptiness of any intrinsic nature (Garfield 2014, p. 47); in other words, that all things are “empty” because they do not have their own particular, independent
identity (Olendzki 2018). However, the author of this article is more inclined to agree with Evitar Shulman’s explanation of Nāgārjuna’s emptiness, which is, namely, that because nothing can exist without a true nature, and nothing has a true nature indeed, then that is exactly why things are empty—they do not exist at all (Shulman 2009, pp. 150–51). And from this perspective, the world is conditioned by an act of our creative, ignorant imagination (Shulman 2009, p. 159). In parallel, a completely different explanation of emptiness is considered, one that is closer to that of the two Christian thinkers analysed in this article and which grew out of another school of Mahāyāna Buddhism: Yogācāra (Sanskrit: योगाचार). Over the course of its evolution, this school in fact recognised a God-equivalent power, the One Common Mind, as the absolutely good origin of all that exists (Torchinov 2005, p. 175). It was understood as the tenet of ālāya-vijñāna (Sanskrit. आलायविज्ञान), or “storehouse consciousness”, which can be freed of all unnecessary affects or Kleshas (Sanskrit: कलश) by connecting with the “ultimate reality” that exists from the very beginning in all manifestations of Samsāra (संसार) (Taivāns 2005, p. 147).

In Taśok’s case, Christianity entered his classical Choson Dynasty-style education, creating a peculiar dimension in the synthesis of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. These spiritual teachings had been transplanted from China to ancient Korea and had further evolved locally, and together they resulted in a breaking point in his worldview upon reaching the mature age of 52. This juncture in Taśok’s life qualified as a “great enlightenment” (Tašik 2019, p. 38). In contrast, Schmidt’s interest in other cultures, which resulted in an intense accumulation of information and analysis, led to an extremely serious immersion in Mahāyāna philosophy. This interest is reminiscent of the desire that appeared in early modern European Christian scholarship to recover global knowledge lost by ancestors due to the fall of man into sin (Harrison 2009). In trying to trace the connection of these two thinkers to Christianity, Schmidt’s background emerges more clearly than that of Taśok, whose motivation, which at first glance seems easy to understand, becomes rather complicated on closer examination.

2. The Intersection of Asian and Western Spiritual Heritage in the Worldviews of Taśok and Schmidt

2.1. The Case of Taśok

Despite the fact that Taśok is still not well known to the broader circle of fans of East Asian culture, scholars have long been engaged in exploring his intellectual legacy, and a relatively wide range of publications have been devoted to analysing his worldview and his significance as an individual. And yet, reading the research to date, one is still left with the feeling that something important has remained unexplored, both in clarifying the sources of his spiritual influences and in his interpretation of the concept of God. Much has been written about the role of Korean shamanism in the genesis of a specifically Korean Christianity. But this is of little importance in Taśok’s case, because his classical education, which had been inherited from the Choson era, opened other paths for him that had little to do with shamanism (Kim 2017, pp. 253–79). Nor can the concept of Han, which is sometimes used to describe Korea’s religious traditions, be emphasised here.⁴ The influence of Leo Tolstoy’s (1828–1910) views on Taśok’s unorthodox perception of religion is well known (Park 2001, p. 91 ff.), which is particularly important in light of the fact that Tolstoy was strongly opposed to all theological constructions as well as mysticism and “faith” supported by church ideology.²

It is interesting to consider not only what Taśok used and integrated into his extremely difficult-to-define doctrine, but also what he potentially did not accept or was not mentally prepared to accept, even though he may have proposed it in a purely formal way via his writings and speeches. We must not be misled into relying entirely on Taśok’s own views as recorded in written texts, given that he was able to simultaneously express seemingly divergent views, which was perhaps due to his particular style of communication. As an opponent of dogmatism and orthodoxy, he also seems to have made a special effort in his formulations to ignore any model of a theoretically ordered construction. Nor did he lay
out his views in a systematically summarised “doctrine”. One can fully agree with Park Junghwan that “… these are not academic writings, the information is not logical and is scattered everywhere” (Park 2020, p. 80). These texts indirectly recall the mode of expression of Reformation-era European preachers, likewise suggesting an analogy with the phenomenon of “self-awakening” so central to East Asian culture. Yet if we delve into Tasŏk’s biography, they instead seem to demonstrate a deliberate cultivation of a “prophetic” style, rather than a spontaneous, unplanned burst of thought. This is further evidenced by the ubiquitous didacticism and the mention of other thinkers’ names with ethical, philosophical and other specific terms in his texts.

Tasŏk’s fusion of Christianity and East Asian spiritual teachings had several distinct motives. Alongside an initial spiritual motive, social and political (national) motives also played a role, although they cannot be absolutised. Tasŏk was born during the Choson dynasty, and his inability to enter the Korean Confucian elite due to the low social rank of his family had, as it did for many others like him, led to a certain openness on his part to the dismantling of class distinctions and the provision of equal opportunities for all, as proselytised by Western Christian missionaries (Park 2001, p. 84). Likewise, the reaction of Korean nationalists to their homeland increasingly coming under the Japanese sphere of influence, which soon resulted in the complete annexation of Korea by Japan, may have objectively contributed to his decision to join the ever more influential Protestant church (Park 2001, p. 86). However, these factors forming the era’s outer appearance do not seem to be the only determinants in the genesis of Tasŏk’s worldview, which was one in which the self-renunciation of Jesus Christ manifests itself as a methodological model for the realisation of ideas drawn from Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. The ever-growing role of Christianity among Koreans who, like Tasŏk, had been exposed to the classical Confucian curriculum as children and the extremely flexible interpretation of Christianity in the Asian spiritual milieu cannot be underestimated in Tasŏk’s spiritual evolution in the context of the times. Park Myung-Woo’s assumption about Tasŏk’s “multi-religious experience” could be understood taking into account his synthetic outlook of the world regarding the explanation of God, reality and human perception, which he had constructed as a result of an intensive accumulation of information over a long period of time.³ In fact, Tasŏk’s path to Christianity was very similar to that of other Korean Protestant revivalists, who, regardless of their level of formal education, had initially been more or less connected to the Sino–Korean intellectual heritage of the Choson era, in which Daoism (both in China and Korea) had already long ago been updated and reinterpreted within the confines of Confucianism. Kil Sŏnju (길선주) (1869–1935) and Kim Ik-du (김익두) (1874–1950), for example, were both closely associated with Daoism before embracing Christianity, as was the Christian activist Lee Bo-han (이보한) (1872–1931), who initially studied Neo-Confucianism in earnest after “growing up with Chinese classics” (Seo et al. 2021, p. 1556). The subject matter of the texts Tasŏk later translated into Korean testifies to the enormous weight of Daoism and Confucianism in his long-standing self-education and scale of values.³ At the same time, Christianity played an ever more important role in shaping Tasŏk’s worldview, mentality and ethical orientation. For example, the Christian concept of kenosis (κένωσις), namely, the ‘self-emptying’ of Christ (Paul in Phil. 2:7) or the “… renunciation of the state of glory with the Father in order to share human life and death” (Oxford Reference 2024), was crucial in Tasŏk’s case. This concept was fully compatible with the concept of filial piety in Confucianism as well as the necessity to empty the “heart-mind” (心 xīn; Chinese 虚其心) in order to reach the deepest, otherwise non-understandable awareness of Dao in the “Daoist imperative” (Moeller 2015, pp. 99–107). As Kim Heup Young clearly explains, Tasŏk … refers to the putting-down of the mind-heart as mam-nohi (맘도حيا) and the relieving of the mind-heart as mam-bihi (맘비히). Mam-bihi could be his East Asian way of expressing a Christian spirituality of self-emptying (kenosis; Phil 2:7). One ought to empty the mind-heart to be clean like a vacuum (真空 chin-
kong). He says: “We ought to empty our mind-heart. Once there is a vacuum, then everything surges to rush in”. (Kim 2021, p. 7)

But even in the context of Christian kenosis, Tasŏk was not a lonely pathfinder and partially integrated into the Koreans’ own tradition of Protestant revivalism. Let us recall, for example, the remarkable Korean Methodist nationalist–reformer–revivalist Yi Yongdo’s (1901–1933) image of Christ, which was in effect “the Christ of kenosis, who emptied himself and silently obeyed his Father’s will up to death” (Oak 2012, p. 7). The concept of kenosis was also emphasised by several 19th-century Protestant theologians (Cross and Livingston 1988, p. 777). However, it can be definitely argued that Tasŏk’s peculiar Christianity acquired its “Asian shape” also through contact with Mahāyāna Buddhism (Kim 2019, pp. 272–73; Park 2001, p. 107), which is a certain kind of litmus test precisely in comparison with the Christian resilience of the other thinker analysed in this article, Isaac Jacob Schmidt.

2.2. The Case of Schmidt

The problem with the reception of Buddhism in Europe was that European thinkers initially had no idea of the nature and multifaceted issues of Buddhist philosophy; instead, they had superficial information about the tradition of deification, the equivalent of the idea of God and even a new type of pantheon in Buddhist cultures that, mixed with mythology and folklore, existed alongside the philosophy to provide for the needs of everyday consciousness for the population (Mylius 1983, pp. 388, 405). As a result, emptiness was often misinterpreted as an inability to judge reality, instead focusing only on the transcendental, associating it with the “Divine” in the Western analogy, as nirvana was associated with paradise. Thus, errors were often committed even by thinkers such as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who, in his erroneous critique of Chinese philosophy, qualified Buddhists as “persons unsatisfied with restraining themselves to the immanent and who mistakenly attempt something transcendent” (Reihman 2006, p. 52). Only rarely did European thinkers come to understand the complexity of the concept of emptiness, balancing between Western and Eastern spiritual traditions. One of the most significant figures in this respect was Isaac Jacob Schmidt, who is all the more interesting because he was a Christian missionary, not a philosopher per se. Despite this fact, his works served as one of the sources for Arthur Schopenhauer’s (1788–1860) positive evaluation of Buddhism. Perhaps the efforts to interpret emptiness as a transcendental union with the divine drove Schmidt’s desire to conduct a deeper study of Buddhism, and he encountered great difficulties when he discovered Prajñāpāramitā.

Schmidt was born in the Netherlands into a Protestant Christian (Moravian) family and came into contact with Asian spiritual teachings later in life; additionally, this did not happen due to a cardinal transformation of his worldview but rather as a result of information he had gradually accumulated through research. Schmidt’s path as a pioneer in Buddhist studies was initially typical of a European Protestant missionary and scholar. By accepting an offer to work as a clerk at the Moravian Church in Sarepta in 1798, then in the Russian Empire, he lived among Buddhist (Lamaist) Kalmyks and learned their language, later also learning classical Mongolian and Tibetan. At the same time, he worked intensively at translating Christian literature (Walravens 2007). Schmidt’s attempt to adapt Mahāyāna Buddhism to Christianity is evident precisely in his work regarding the interpretation of emptiness/nothingness. His becoming a Russian citizen in 1800 and his contributions to Asian studies during this period are not unusual for a European Orientalist of the time, given how many European scholars from the 18th to the early 20th century were able to launch or continue their careers in the Russian Empire. Russia’s peculiar location between Europe and Asia, in turn, ensured its contact with other cultures that increasingly fascinated European thinkers. Alongside his missionary work, Schmidt increasingly turned to the study of the cultures of these peoples, focusing in particular on Buddhism in the context of Central and East Asia. Schmidt is known as a pioneer of Lamaist, Tibetan and Mongolian studies (Karttunen 2017). His publication of grammars and dictionaries of
the Mongolian and Tibetan languages helped establish Mongolian and Tibetan studies in the Russian Empire (Terentyev 2024).

However, it is precisely with the study of Buddhism that Schmidt’s more serious immersion in the spiritual heritage of Central and East Asia is connected. This resulted in a series of publications as well as the aforementioned impact on Schopenhauer’s interpretation of Buddhism (Ryan 2020, p. 4). Unfortunately, Daoism, whose arrival in European philosophy still lay in the future and which Western philosophers failed to comprehend in depth until the 20th century (Harper 2019, p. 33), did not find any reception in Schmidt’s works. Nor did Confucianism come into his view, which, contrary to Daoism, had aroused enthusiasm in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment, but only as a teaching on correct public administration (Klavinš 2021, p. 285), never reaching the level of analysis. In some of Schmidt’s writings, one can feel the influence of European Romanticism (Friedrich von Schlegel [1772–1829], etc.), which resulted in an exaggeration of the role of “Brahmanism” (Vedic Religion) in the genesis of other religions (Schmidt 1828, p. 6, etc.). Therefore, it is the insights of Schmidt that arose as a result of his study of Buddhist philosophy, especially in the context of Mahāyāna, that are discussed below and that can prove useful for a comparison with Tasōk’s teachings.

3. Emptiness/Nothingness in the Context of Tasōk’s and Schmidt’s Perception of Christianity

3.1. The Case of Tasōk

Tasōk’s interpretation of God can be interpreted in the context of both nothingness and emptiness, but he does not specify the differences between them. Neither do his fragmentarily recorded insights explain these concepts in any depth, nor does his “preaching style” provide for an extended analysis of Taoist, Confucian or Buddhist philosophies.

One can speculate about the various possible influences on Tasōk’s worldview, but one must understand that his deliberately “unstructured” way of expressing himself and his unorthodox understanding of religions from a didactic–methodological point of view presupposes a creative synthesis of various doctrines, in each case highlighting only one phenomenon of consciousness or existence that he wished to explain to others. Scholars have, of course, tried to identify and analyse his theoretical sources as broadly as possible (Kim 2019; Park 2020). Unfortunately, an examination of various possible influences of Buddhist, Daoist or Confucian thinkers such as Jinul (보조지름) (1158–1210), Zhuangzi (c. 369–286 BCE), Wang Bi (王弼) (226–249 CE), Jizang (c. 549–623 CE), Uisang (의상) (625–702 CE) and Zhang Zai (Zhang Hengqu, 1020–1077) does not say much about his emotional connection to the views of these thinkers nor about any deeper inspiration based on them. Tasōk’s views on Christianity have also been analysed, mainly from a theoretical point of view (Park 2001); however, his emotional portrait is missing, which might explain more about his peculiar religious mentality.

Emptiness/nothingness is undoubtedly also a cornerstone of Tasōk’s interpretation of Christianity. Therefore, when reading his message, it is important to not rely only on terminology that is automatically associated with the Asian tradition. Of course, in some cases, his texts do cite certain Asian religious–philosophical teachings, as in the place where he paraphrases chapter 11 of the Tao Te Ching (道德经): “Emptiness is a vessel, and matter is what fills the vessel. Substance without it, the bowl is useless” (1960) (Daseok Thought Research Group [다석사상연구회, hereafter: DTRG], DTRG 2004–2015). But he also uses the concept of emptiness in a purely Christian sense. By analogy, it is very easy to associate such texts with Buddhism, because Christianity’s methodology for achieving its spiritual goal shares objective similarities with Buddhism. Here, the insights Tasōk presents reveal a surprising amount of didacticism consistent with Christian ethics and a mode of expression analogous to the New Testament:

What we need to know is that “emptiness” is the appearance of God... God’s inner life is the Spirit. “Bintanghande” is about me shooting into the air. I said it in pure Korean. I know how to use evenly a house with 100 rooms... You must
know how to use the universe and beyond as your own. That is why we must live in the bosom of God the Father in poverty. So, always if you do your best to do good things, you will not feel bad even when you are sad or in pain. There is no way they will lose, and you can feel that the evil person cannot last long. Today, everyone who speaks loudly says that even if a person is too quiet, he cannot do anything. They say that this is a world where bitter and honest people cannot live. This world is almost the end of the century. They say it is the end times, but even in the midst of it, the sons of God live. ... The sons of God do not appear outwardly, but they do not bend their knees to evil. I am holding on. Without them, the world would not last long. Village people say, “What kind of era will the sons of God bring to the world?” But, oh God, their time will definitely come...” (1957).

(DTRG 2004–2015)

In many places, Tasŏk presents his arguments in a rhetorical–didactic way, using antiphrasis as the rhetorical device. Examining the following, it becomes clear that “If the purpose is in life, then the true life does not belong to God (God’s kingdom). It is not on this earth (在天不在地). The true meaning of life is an invisible spirit” (DTRG 2004–2015). This text, for example, is entirely consistent with Christianity (analogous to John 18:36 “My kingdom is not of this world.”). It does not imply a denial of God as a transcendent phenomenon; on the contrary, it emphasises God as a transcendent phenomenon. And it makes no difference whether it is called “existent” or “non-existential” in the context of terminology describing human perception. This is supported by the subsequent statement: “Vengeance belongs to God, who is empty space, not here in this fantasy world. Earth refers to the relative world made of material” (DTRG 2004–2015). The beginning of this statement is a paraphrase of Romans 12:19–21 from the New Testament. However, the continuation, with its clear juxtaposition of the humanly perceptible or “visible” with the divine or “absolute” reality, overlaps with Christianity as well as with Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy in the sense that behind unreal (empty) external objects is hidden an inexpressible ultimate truth, which for Tasŏk is the equivalent of God. In accordance with the doctrine of Tathāgatagarbha (Sansk.: तथागतगर्भ), which became influential with the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism in East Asia (Torchinov 2005, p. 177), Tasŏk sees the path to God in the attainment of the suchness (Facticity) of things (Leaman 1999, p. 282). From this point of view, the method of obtaining the apparently unattainable truth is actually extremely simple, considering that this doctrine regards all sentient creatures as potentially containing the nature of Buddha. Therefore, enlightenment actually means “the recognition of the connections between the individual and everything in the world” (Leaman 1999, p. 256).

This is clearly manifested, for example, in the following texts by Tasŏk:

This teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha has a deep meaning. From the beginning, you should not make up your mind, but you should live. As I go, I cannot help but feel alive. Even if I give my heart away, it has nowhere to stay. ... You must gather grain with the measure of your heart, but it must be emptied quickly. In order to do this, there must be a will that comes from the true self. ... Deny the other world. The only thing that can be done is the absolute amount. How is the Self? Shade the true self. You have to keep erasing the distracting thoughts (1956). (DTRG 2004–2015)

Shakyamuni Buddha said that the 12 relationships begin with ignorance. When unknown Hell unfolds at your door, know how beautiful it is to live. You can, but because you closed your eyes, you end up in hell. Opening your heart’s eyes, this means realising the truth (true self) (1957). (DTRG 2004–2015)

In this regard, Halla Kim writes:

Indeed, one may identify the preconceptual Spiritual Self (ŏl-na) in Tasŏk as expressing the Buddha-nature (Tathāgatagarbha). The Buddha-nature, one of the
most pivotal concepts in East Asian Buddhism, is not exactly the same as Emptiness, but they are clearly related. The Spiritual Self for Tasŏk is outside the framework of the Phenomenal Self (che-na), whose primary capacity is perceiving, understanding, or conceptualising. For the True Self is fully awakened to Emptiness, which is the ultimate reality. (Kim 2019, p. 273)

On the other hand, in Tasŏk’s case, the emotional need for a higher spiritual guide for our deeds leads back to the unifying universal substance, or whatever terminology we use to define it. According to Tasŏk, “You must not believe in God, but you must connect with God” (DTRG 2004–2015). Even if he believed God is nothingness, or absolute nothingness (Kim 2019, p. 269), his tendency to reduce everything to the One, to the Absolute Principle, also shows the influence of Christian monotheism. The entry of Christianity into Tasŏk’s psycho-emotional experience undoubtedly changed his whole perspective of Asian philosophical doctrines. It seems that the renouncing of absolute relativism, “real” existence and all “idols” only strengthened his psycho-emotional clinging to a universal divine principle. Here are some examples from Tasŏk’s texts:

This person is without any oneness, this person is the source of all relative existence. I feel presence. There is nothing else but this one. All relative beings are contained in this one. Therefore, it is foolish to ask whether there is one. It is work. ... I have to do it. Confessing the truth and thoughts that I feel “the one” is all. So I must testify to this one thing. Because I do not know anything else. I have to prove only one thing. So, I am the true self. I am a witness. Not only Ryu Young-mo, but no one else knows about the true self. If you know the details, you become a witness. The One who is Absolute is with me and has given me the mission of man. Soon to be one. He receives a mission and becomes the son of Hana (—), one son. I feel like it has happened. Therefore, he must act as a son, perhaps even Jesus. I think I felt this. A son hears that one silent sound. The empty heart listens. The sky is endless and time is endless. This person feels that all things have one meaning. He acts as a son. The sound that says, and the sound that the Father exists, the Father and the Son. As a result, I can hear the sound of my will working within my heart. I keep doing this in my heart. The meaning of [it] happens. It is my will to feel it. My heart has one intention. It means: One is the greatest self, the true self. It is one thing. It is God. Why (1957). (DTRG 2004–2015)

In the relative world, if there is one (that is, absolute), it means God. There is only one whole that combines existence and nothing. There is only one, so it is absolute. This whole and absolute One is God (1956). (DTRG 2004–2015)

The Absolute (God) elevates us to the position of His Son... The Absolute (God) makes us participate (1956). (DTRG 2004–2015)

If, for example, the statement in the above-mentioned quotation from Tasŏk that “The sky is endless and time is endless” potentially refers to the notion of timeless time, or the “great ultimate” (taiji), or the dao, in which “time and the timeless are unified” (Cheng 2003, p. 730)—in other words, concepts already rooted in the ancient Chinese Book of Changes (I Ching: 易經) divination text—then in his further exposition everything nevertheless arrives at the same common denominator, or “God”. An emotional analysis of Tasŏk’s means of expression and argumentation much more calls to mind the unio mystica characteristic of the Christian mystical tradition, namely, union with the Divine or Absolute, which continued in the West in the Protestant religious revival, including the ideas of the Great Awakening so relevant to Korea, which was introduced by American missionaries and relied heavily on European Pietism with the aim of achieving complete peace of mind in union with God (Sträter 1995, p. 163). Considering the prominent role of Christianity in the genesis of Tasŏk’s worldview, we can also accept the influence of Bridal Theology (the idea of mystical union or “marriage” with God) (Burns 2014), which partly also relates to Christian Gnosticism, for example: “The reason I have a sexual desire for one (absolute)
thing in my heart is because God exists. Because I am God, the all-holy one we hope for and envision. So it is said” (1956). Tasŏk deliberately speaks in a paradoxical way, explaining the union with “God” as a complete abandonment of all interpretations, images, presumptions and perceptions of God, a complete merging with God. Many of Tasŏk’s texts are interspersed with elements from the Chinese–Korean literary–philosophical heritage, which are then continued or supplemented with interpretations of biblical passages and Christian vocabulary. Although, since the late 19th century, Korea has become a land where new native religions are constantly being born (Tonghak, Sooncheon, Daejonggyo, Jeungsangyo [a family of more than 100 new Korean religious movements], etc.) (Yoon et al. 2005), Tasŏk’s teaching is not to be interpreted as a deliberate construction of a “new religion”. It is simply that in Korea, despite all the military–political clashes and social upheavals, including the Japanese occupation, the break with the past was not as great as it was, for example, in China, where modernisation took an extremely radical turn in the early 20th century, with many intellectuals trying to completely replace the spiritual tradition of the past with a new one, albeit one based on patriotism for their country.

The concept of *emptiness* that is so important in the Buddhist context is also interchangeable in Tasŏk’s teaching with its application in Christianity, only here plenty of variation begins. Here he could be speaking about any individual’s self-emptying out of humility, or about the self-emptying of Jesus Christ as described in the letter of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians in order to become entirely receptive to God’s divine will (kenosis). The “empty heart” mentioned in the above quote from Tasŏk and the subsequent explanation of Jesus’ example regarding the union with the Absolute (God) are completely compatible with the notion of *Imitatio Christi*, which occupies an essential place in the whole Christian discourse. The best explanation of this notion of self-emptying is found in Thomas à Kempis’ (c. 1380–1471) famous essay “De Imitatione Christi” (The Imitation of Christ, c. 1418–1427), although there, too, it is explained using the term nothingness (*nihilitatis* in the original):

> I will speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. If I consider myself anything more than this, behold You stand against me, and my sins bear witness to the truth which I cannot contradict. If I abase myself, however, if I humble myself to nothingness, if I shrink from all self-esteem and account myself as the dust which I am, Your grace will favor me, Your light will enshroud my heart, and all self-esteem, no matter how little, will sink in the depths of my nothingness to perish forever. (Kempis 2003, p. 54; Carey 2024)

It is this essay that became an individual source of inspiration of self-emptying for Catholics and Protestants alike, and it has served so right up to the present day. As for nothingness in the context of Christianity, in Tasŏk’s case, it is linked not to *creatio ex nihilo*, but to Nihilianism. By analysing Tasŏk’s legacy, we can of course find in it reflections of all possible Asian spiritual teachings and philosophies, and, based on our knowledge of them, we can thus interpret his worldview in a theoretical framework. But this does not invalidate his “religious mentality”, which, despite any intellectual exercises carried out on a philosophical–speculative level, nevertheless reveals his attachment to the simplistically presented morality in the Christian narrative and to Jesus’ call to understand the task of “this world”, always taking into account the transcendental nature of “the true (divine) reality”. If we take into account not only Tasŏk’s theoretical framework but also his psychological portrait, an analysis of such a mentality is of utmost importance, because it is often emotional factors that decisively influence the real self-identification of an individual. Seen from this point of view, the contradictory nature of Tasŏk’s character and personality becomes clearer. One can fully agree with Choi Young-Jin and Hong Jung Geun that “neuro-physiological results have revived the study of emotion …, which also led the field of philosophy to investigate emotion from a new standpoint” (Choi and Hong 2013, p. 55). Both of these authors have been able to shed light, and precisely from the perspective of emotions, on the ethical the-
ories of the Confucian scholar Dasan Yak-young (1762–1836), a Korean proponent of late Choson practical learning. For a more adequate grasp of Tasŏk’s sense of the world, a comprehensive, in-depth sentiment analysis of his texts would also be required.

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that an emphasis on emotions as such is also evidence of a certain religious worldview. Precisely from an emotional point of view, Tasŏk did not explain Nirvāṇa as an example of an illusory theoretical construction in the sense of the Mādhyamika school. This is why, despite its theoretical basis, Tasŏk’s lexicon is perhaps more expressive of a Christian mentality, in which the symbol of Nirvāṇa seems to suggest his desire for a so-called paradise (“boundless joy”) along with seeking separation of body and spirit as a result of death. This is also evident in his texts, in which Buddhism is mentioned alongside Christianity. For example:

Buddha neither flies nor dies. What is Buddha’s nature? It is eternal life. Therefore, Buddha’s nature, not his body, is Nirvana. (Nirvana) I neither entered nor came out of the country. Buddha was born in the body. Going back is a way to realize sentient beings. Jesus said the same thing. If you cast off this body and rise above your soul and return to God the Father, it is said that there is boundless joy (1960). (DTRG 2004–2015)

3.2. The Case of Schmidt

Schmidt is primarily known as the founder of Mongolian and Tibetan studies in the multinational Russian Empire (Babinger 1920; De Jong 1987). He published a Tibetan grammar (1839), a Tibetan–German dictionary (1841) and a catalogue of the Kanjur (1845). His first books on Mongolian and Tibetan traditions were published in 1824 and 1828 (Jackson 2021, p. 21). A Mongolian grammar (1831), a Mongolian–German–Russian dictionary (1835), a grammar of the Tibetan Language (1839) and a Tibetan–German dictionary (1841) followed later (Walravens 2007, pp. 193–94). Indeed, “Schmidt’s studies embraced all of Inner Asia, with special attention to Mongolia” (Jackson 2021, p. 21). Having been a Moravian missionary, he was at the same time a scholar with an extremely wide range of interests in a variety of fields: linguistics, folklore, ethnography, etc. But we must bear in mind that Schmidt never forgot his main task, namely, the conversion of the peoples of Asia to Christianity. He first translated the Gospel of Matthew into Kalmyk (printed in 1815), then the Gospel of John (1820) and the Acts of the Apostles (1822 in Kalmyk and Mongolian). He then also translated the New Testament into Mongolian (1827). And yet, Schmidt was increasingly forced to acknowledge that the worldview of the Asian peoples with which he was confronted was neither simple nor amoral, and that it offered a real alternative to Christianity. He had even greater difficulty in trying to apply Christian religious terminology to Buddhist practitioners such as the Kalmyks and the Mongols, as evidenced by an unpublished letter he wrote in 1816, the original of which is held in the Academic Library of the University of Latvia (UL Academic Library, Ms. 1130, 3 (2), R11151, N 65). Alongside his interest in philosophy, Schmidt also developed a deeper understanding of the specifics of Buddhist philosophy. These new insights possibly came as something of a shock to him. One can agree with Matthew J. Moore that, unfortunately, the “Christian idea that human beings are or possess selves, and that these selves are indestructible, immortal natural essences (i.e., souls)” is “furthest from the Buddhist no-self theory” (Moore 2015, p. 54). The absence of the concept of God in Buddhism may have initially been no less of a shock to Schmidt. Already in his letter from 1815 he wrote that for the Kalmyks, for example, the word God is “completely absent [...] in our understanding” (UL Academic Library, Ms. 1130, 3 (2), R11151, N 65). Later, Schmidt also wrote in his publications that the concept of an abstract God as the creator or co-creator of the world does not exist in Buddhism (Schmidt 1840, p. 224). All of this led him to analyse the concept of emptiness more seriously and also to seek explanations for it.

Initially, attempts in Schmidt’s work to reconcile Christianity and Buddhism are more likely to have stemmed from a certain appreciation of Gnosticism in the sense of cleansing the soul of worldly matter and gaining knowledge of the true Divine essence, which
he emphasised in his early theoretical essay on Buddhism “Über die Verwandtschaft der gnostisch-theosophischen Lehren mit den Religions-Systemen des Oriens, vorzüglich des Buddhaismus” (On the Relationship Between Gnostic–Theosophical Teachings and the Religious Systems of the Orient, Especially Buddhism) (Schmidt 1828, p. 9). Interestingly, the Protestant denomination to which Schmidt belonged, the Moravian Brethren, had opponents who often compared them to the Gnostic Christians active in the first centuries of Christianity (Pietrenka 2017, p. 314). However, Schmidt’s spiritual–intellectual attachment to Gnosticism will have had more to do with his desire to find in the West an analogy with Asian spiritual teachings, while trying to prove the original genesis of Western Theosophy in Asia, especially highlighting India in the above-mentioned essay, following in the footsteps of Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and other Romantics. Here, he explained the essence of the Buddhist teaching as a way to completely purify the intellect of matter and finally connect with the “imperishable universal spirit” (unvergängliche Allgeist) (Schmidt 1828, p. 9). In his later writings, Schmidt delved seriously into the issues of Buddhist philosophy, and particularly in the context of emptiness/nothingness. Unfortunately, his insights into Buddhism have not been sufficiently taken up in the contemporary scientific debate. For example, Hartmut Walravens (2007) deals with Schmidt’s contributions to philology, history and the translation of literary works, while Stefan Ragaz (2021) does not intensely analyse the reception of Buddhist philosophy in Schmidt’s writings. However, despite being a Buddhist researcher, Ragaz does objectively emphasise the presence in Schmidt’s worldview of the understanding of God in the Christian sense.

Leaving aside the research on Schmidt’s contribution to the European study of Buddhism, let us focus immediately on the task of the article. Here we examine only the material in which he explains the concepts of emptiness/nothingness in Buddhism in parallel with the religio–ethical context of Christianity. Even if it is not clearly thus named, given Schmidt’s effort to maintain objectivity as a researcher, he attempted to distance himself from his position as a Christian missionary and not use one religion as a yardstick for another (Ragaz 2021, p. 227). Schmidt criticised scholars who, like Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832), perceived the Buddhism of vast regions of East Asia (e.g., Mongolia) only in the Hīnayāna interpretation. He rightly pointed out that Mahāyāna literature was very well known in East Asia, and it was this tradition that was decisive there in many ways. Likewise, in the context of the Mahāyāna, he advised readers not to confuse the facade of Buddhist literature with its deeper philosophical message (Schmidt 1834, p. 3).

In his treatise “Über einige Grundlehren des Buddhaismus” (On Some Basic Teachings of Buddhism), Schmidt used the appropriate Sanskrit term to refer to the concept of emptiness, Śūnyatā (Schmidt: S’ûnjata), stressing that this concept does not mean total annihilation but instead stands for the most perfect true state of being as the opposite of the apparent and imperfect existence in the material world of illusions and transformations filled with the intelligence-misleading and dividing creations that rely on sensory illusions and transformations (Schmidt 1832, pp. 98–99). Furthermore, in his essay “Über die sogenannte dritte Welt der Buddhaisten” (On the So-Called Third World of Buddhists) (Schmidt 1834), Schmidt writes about “the Buddhist emptiness of true being, which lies beyond judgmental knowledge” (die buddhaische Leerheit des wahrhaften Seyns oder in das Jenseits der unterscheidenden Erkenntniss) (Schmidt 1834, p. 15). At the same time, he emphasises that “the ultimate goal of the Buddha’s teaching is the return to eternal Nirvana (‘ewige Nirwâna’), or the primordial intelligence, freed from all vicissitudes of fate” (Schmidt 1834, p. 11). This interpretation implies the influence of Yogācāra’s “Ultimate Mind” on Schmidt’s views, which he was able to reconcile to some extent with his Christian worldview. Nevertheless, in his expression, Schmidt here is becoming much more objective than before, when he was using a terminology common in Christianity to find a link between this “primordial intelligence” and the discourse of paradise. For example, in his earlier essay “On the Relationship Between Gnostic-Theosophical Teachings and the Religious Systems of the Orient, Especially Buddhism” he speaks about the “bliss (or salvation) (die Seligkeit)” of eternal Nirvâna” (die Seligkeit des ewigen Nirwâna) as
the final goal of Buddhists (Schmidt 1828, p. 12). Given that Schmidt was introduced to Buddhism mainly through East Asian material, let us remember that a peculiar East Asian Yogācāra had developed there; for example, in China, Yogācāra was gaining a sizable following already by the early Tang dynasty, having been interpreted as the deepest stratum of the mind, where all experiences and forms of knowledge are stored (Lai 2003, p. 15). Knowing the immense influence of Yogācāra in China, Korea, etc., it must concurrently be understood that this source material passed Schmidt by because he lacked knowledge of the respective languages. Schmidt also noted that he knew of no European scholar of Chinese at the time who was seriously engaged in the study of Chinese Buddhist literature (Schmidt 1834, p. 6). But he certainly had an inkling of Yogācāra via Mongolian and Tibetan texts.

At the same time, when reading Schmidt’s writings, it can be seen that he also acquired knowledge of the Mādhyamika school of Mahāyāna, although he does not mention the name of this school anywhere. This is particularly clearly evident in a theoretical appendix to his German translation of one of the most important Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, the Diamond Sūtra (Sanskrit: Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra). This work, published in 1840 in Saint Petersburg, is titled “Über das Mahāyāna und Pradshchnā‑Pāramita der Bauddhchen” (On the Mahāyāna and Prajñāpāramitā of the Buddhists) (Schmidt 1840). He interprets Śūnyatā in German quite appropriately as “emptiness” (Leere, leer) rather than “nothingness” (Nichts). Simultaneously in this regard he gives a quite adequate interpretation of the main tenet of Mahāyāna Buddhism:

The inside is empty [void], the outside is empty, the outside and inside are empty, the void is empty, the great is empty, what appears to be true is empty, what is established [created, produced] is empty, that which has not been established is empty, the disappearance of boundaries is empty, the beginning and endless is empty, the non‑remaining is empty, the real quality is empty, all being (every peculiarity or essentiality) is empty, the quality of the self is empty, the unthinkable is empty, the incorporeal is empty, the [physically] existing and the incorporeally existing is empty (die Eigenschaft des Selbistes ist leer, das Unendliche ist leer, das Un‑körperliche ist leer, das [körperlich] Daseyende und das unkörperlich Daseyende ist leer). (Schmidt 1840, p. 218)

Schmidt’s interpretation of emptiness fits very well with Nāgārjuna’s argument, as explained in detail by Eviatar Shulman: “Just as there must be something existent to describe it as having no substance of its own, there must be something permanent to describe it as impermanent, or something independent to describe it as dependent.” But because there is neither one nor the other, the concepts we use to describe existence are not necessarily true but are only a “conditional agreement” that cannot be real, because then “we need to specify an existent phenomenon that could be defined as empty”. And such a phenomenon, according to Nāgārjuna’s opinion, does not exist in reality. Indeed, the void is empty as well (Shulman 2009, pp. 154‑57).

However, despite this explanation, Schmidt was not ready to give up his Christian attachment to the “Absolute”, which he sought to interpret through the Yogācāra tradition, namely, as melting with an absolute, universal, “higher” being—a “true unchangeable being” (das wahrhe unwandelbare Seyn), in contrast to the “world of appearances” (Schmidt 1832, p. 99; Schmidt 1840, p. 220). It is no coincidence that he qualified Prajñā (wisdom; Sanskrit: प्रज्ञा), using European Christian terminology, as Divine wisdom (göttliche Weisheit) (Schmidt 1832, pp. 100‑1).

If we read Schmidt’s preface to the German translation of the “Sutra of the Wise and Foolish” (Sanskrit: Damamātika‑nidāna‑sūtra; Tibetan: mdo mdzangs blun; Chinese: hsien‑yü ching), published in Leipzig in 1843, in which he presents a kind of summary of his view regarding Buddhism, one can feel that here Schmidt intuitively finds a similar justification for the presence of morality in Buddhism with that of Nāgārjuna:
the fact that Nāgārjuna understands reality to be conditioned by subjectivity demands a great degree of moral responsibility of people, since man naturally conditions and creates his own reality. According to this view, morality is not only validated, but enforced. The argument could be made that only in an empty world is morality understood to be not only a necessary, but even a constitutional force. (Shulman 2009, p. 162)

Schmidt writes:

...the people did not understand the teaching of Buddhism, they accused it of denying the essence of things, representing all categories as pointless, representing virtue ... as ... insignificant ..., leading to impiety and immorality. This unjust reproach, based on ignorance of the matter and a complete misunderstanding of the system, stems from the fact that one completely overlooked how the strict and complete exercise of all virtues results from the elimination or contempt of all material and personal relationships and is based on a pure sense of duty, leads ... beyond knowledge; so that ... the inessentiality of all relationships offered by the senses, perception and understanding, which is based on the voidness (“Nichtigkeit”) of these phenomena, draws to that which lies outside of all perception, ... which in its abstraction stands in direct relation neither to the world of lust and passions nor to that of figures, persons and colours. (Schmidt 1843, p. XXXV)

By the way, Schmidt was the first translator of the “Sutra of the Wise and Foolish” into a Western language. The jātakas that make up this sutra had originated in India and then penetrated into Central Asia, and their translation into Chinese “was undoubtedly the stimulus for writing the Tibetan Sutra in 632 CE” (Παρφινονινις 1978, p. 323). Schmidt based his translation on this Tibetan version. In his explanation of emptiness in this work, he no longer shied away from acknowledging the foundations of an understanding of emptiness closer to the philosophy of Mādhyamika also examining it from different angles, for example, by highlighting the falsifying effect of language. In other words, that “words imply that things have a real existence when they do not. The use of concepts to stand for things suggests that concepts are things, but all they are concepts” (Leaman 1999, p. 281).

Schmidt writes:

Since in this “beyond” [Jenseits] all that has name is regarded as void and non-being [nichtig und nichtseyend], it follows that all concepts and relations bound to name are equally void, without meaning, and empty [nichtig, bedeutungslos und leer]. This extends to all objects and concepts, be they high or low and noble or base, simply because they have a name. Thus, for example, because Buddha is named Buddha he is not Buddha; because virtue is called virtue it is not virtue, and vice for the same reason is not vice; yes even Sansâra—i.e., the entire world as it appears to our cognition and perception in its ceaseless change and infinite variety of physical, organic, physiological, and moral characteristics—and Nirwâna, i.e., the egress and complete release from this boundless and endless change and from these ceaseless transfigurations, are not-two [unverschieden] since they have names and therewith relationships. (Schmidt 1843, XXXIV; App 2010, p. 60. Trans. Urs App)

It was precisely Schmidt’s introduction to the “Sutra of the Wise and Foolish” that Schopenhauer qualified as “very apt as a first introduction” to Buddhism (App 2010, p. 60). According to Urs App, Schmidt’s explanation “is exactly the (positive) meaning of the same word ‘bedeutungsleer’ in Schopenhauer’s final passage of The World as Will and Representation. From 1845 onward, Schopenhauer occasionally called himself a Buddhist, and he may well be the first Westerner to have done so. But he did not light incense and sit cross-legged in his apartment in Frankfurt, as some modern Buddhist critics wish he had. Instead, he continued collecting information and found his ideas confirmed in the publications of Schmidt, whose portrayal of Buddhist philosophy and translations from the Kanjur
canon he now regarded as the best expression of genuine Buddhist teaching. In Schmidt, he had found a specialist who “seemed to understand the philosophy of the texts he was translating” (App 2010, p. 60). In the context of the present study, it is extremely interesting that it was precisely the Christian missionary Schmidt who fulfilled the essential function of “interpreter” of Buddhist philosophy in Europe, even though the understanding of emptiness in the Śūnyavāda doctrine that he explained has nothing to do with the Christian concept of creatio ex nihilo. Likewise, it cannot be linked with the “negative theology” known in European mysticism, in which nothingness is a way to emphasise God’s majesty over everything else. To justify the existence of the Divine Absolute in Buddhism, we can safely assume that Schmidt looked for an analogy of the ultimate reality of Yogācāra in the Mongolian/Tibetan sources, which were accessible to him without a language barrier. To reconcile the two divergent doctrines in Mahāyāna Buddhism (Mādhyamika and Yogācāra) and subordinate them to a Christian worldview would have required him to create a new “religion”, which did not happen because Schmidt, despite his intellectual journey into the Buddhist world, never formally abandoned the traditional discourse of Christianity.

4. The Integration of the Concept of Emptiness in the Christian Worldviews of Tasŏk and Schmidt: A Comparison

When exploring the commonalities and differences between Tasŏk’s and Schmidt’s understandings of Christianity, one must take into account the considerable distance in time between these two figures. In the first half of the 19th century, when Schmidt wrote his theoretical writings on Buddhism, Western scholars were just beginning to become more familiar with Asian spiritual teachings. On the other hand, Tasŏk’s life—which extended well into the 20th century, when his worldview became fully formed—was already saturated with intercultural contacts. However, this is precisely what makes it possible to compare these two thinkers, because a Christian theorist similar to Tasŏk would have been impossible in isolationist Choson-era Korea during the period of Schmidt’s activity.

If Tasŏk’s hard-to-define, synthetic worldview were allegorically compared to a building, one could say it was constructed from elements of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, using the transcendental aspect of Christianity as a “binding agent”. However, the concepts of emptiness/nothingness in Tasŏk and Schmidt’s interpretations can only be compared within the two men’s respective understandings of Buddhism (more specifically, Mahāyāna), because Schmidt’s work does not contain an exploration of Daoism or Confucianism. If the explanation of emptiness offered by Mādhyamika seems to have been mentally more difficult to accept for both Tasŏk and Schmidt, the Yogācāra version proved to be much more applicable. Although the paths of Tasŏk and Schmidt differed in their starting positions, they were, paradoxically, consistent with the two men’s interpretations of emptiness when they integrated this concept of the Asian spiritual tradition into their Christian worldviews. The motivation of Tasŏk was probably more emotional, while for Schmidt, who was less knowledgeable regarding the spiritual heritage of East Asia, it was more theoretical. Both of them, in a peculiar way, consciously or unconsciously tried to identify the state of emptiness with something absolute, universal and “higher”—a kind of “Divine Absolute”. But, while there is an undeniable influence of Yogācāra for both thinkers here, the influence of Christianity seems to be more significant.

As paradoxical as it may seem, thanks to the concept of kenosis and apophatic theology, in the case of Tasŏk, Christianity could be synthesised extremely well with Asian spiritual thought. In this sense, it was Christianity that could, in the spiritual evolution of Tasŏk, become a binding agent for the many Asian spiritual teachings and their various branches, divisions and interpretations—a kind of unifying principle that transcendentally unified elements of these teachings. For Schmidt, the passionate scholar, who tried to get to the very core of the explanation of emptiness, the shock at the cardinal differences between Mahāyāna Buddhism and Christianity was undoubtedly great. Yet, instead of dismantling his theoretical constructs based on religious grounds, he tried dampening these newly acquired insights as much as possible with his Christian worldview. However, in his case,
Moravian integration into other cultures, which was meant to promote the Christian mission, seemed to have crossed the boundaries of those cultures to such an extent that it could no longer be stopped. For Schmidt (as for Tasŏk), Christianity was also a unifying element between Asian spiritual traditions, creating a religiously explained justification in moments when he tried to combine the influences of the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra philosophical schools in the interpretation of emptiness.

5. Conclusions

Nowadays, when, despite the ubiquitous influence of globalisation, the differences between Asian and European spiritual discourses are sometimes exaggerated in the name of constructed “neo-identities”, the relevance of re-evaluating cross-cultural contacts in intellectual history has not lost its relevance. In the cases of Tasŏk and Schmidt, it forces one to abandon superficial stereotypes and understand the importance of mutual intellectual influences, starting already with the intensification of intellectual contacts between Europe and Asia at the end of the 18th century. When reading Tasŏk’s insights, one intuits that the Asian spiritual heritage did not sit harmoniously in him. Instead, it existed psychologically at odds with his fundamental disposition towards the one, true (“living”) God, as adapted in the theological monotheism of Western Christianity. Schmidt’s world outlook, on the other hand, was a kind of watershed, and having crossed it, he tried again and again to return to his starting point as accepted within the Christian mentality. Nevertheless, his writings show a growing acceptance of Buddhist philosophy, in his deepest essence recognising the ethical equivalence of another tradition, which for him, as a Christian missionary, may have been extremely difficult.

By delving deeper into the religious–philosophical worldviews of Schmidt and Tasŏk, one can better sense that, in circumstances of more open and intensive interaction, the juxtaposition of “Western” and “Eastern” intellectual differences loses its stereotype-based foundations.

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Notes


2. Tolstoy’s similarity to Protestant thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries is still a matter of debate among Russian scholars and clergy (Ореханов 2010).

3. “… theology gains in significance as a serious attempt to offer an alternative approach, developing a local theology through his own multi-religious experience” (Park 2001, p. 6).

4. For example, in 1959, Tasŏk made a complete translation of Lao-tzu’s (老子) Daoist scripture Tao Te Ching (道德經). Apart from a translation of the Psalms from the Bible, his translation work mainly consisted of translating Confucian classics: The Analects of Confucius (論語), The Book of Documents (書經), The Doctrine of the Mean (中庸), etc. (Park 2001, p. 107).


6. The 12 links in the chain of causation explaining why people must suffer aging and death, which appear in traditional Buddhist exegesis.

7. Interestingly, Bridal Theology reached its apogee in Protestant movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, for example, among the Moravians (to which Schmidt belonged, as stated earlier in this article) (Peucker 2015). Let us recall the great influence of Moravian ideology on early American religious radicalism (Pietrenka 2017), which, continuing in the religious awakening movements of Protestantism (Great Awakening), reached Korea in the late 19th and early 20th century thanks to American missionaries (Kļaviņš and Yi 2021, pp. 163–90).
Nihilism was the christological doctrine (condemned by the Pope in the 12th century) that Christ, in his human nature, was “nothing” because his essential being was contained only in his Godhead. It is not to be confused with nihilism (Cross and Livingston 1988, p. 976).

The German term die Seligkeit was already used by Martin Luther to mean ‘salvation’.

“Mādhyamika’s no-self theory is based on its four-cornered logic. According to this, whether we assert self or no-self, the truth is not found within language. What we call self or no-self is not the truth but merely our perceptual viewpoint” (Kim 2002, p. 38).

References


Choi, Young-Jian, and Jung Geun Hong. 2013. The German term die Seligkeit was already used by Martin Luther to mean ‘salvation’.

