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The Christian doctrine of the Trinity has traditionally been expressed in terms of three persons and one substance or being. This belief and formulation is taken for granted by orthodox Christians. But a question may emerge when we take into consideration the fact that, although the gospel itself is universally relevant, unrestricted to any particular place or time, this formula was originally elaborated in the ancient Greco-Roman world, using the terms available in those days and intelligible within that mindset. Is this formula relevant today to Christians with other cultural backgrounds? With this question in mind, I shall set out the reasons why Japanese Christians may use another formula: God is three betweennesses, one concord. I shall do so in two steps: first, I shall explain some Japanese conceptualities, and secondly, I shall seek parallels for them in the orthodox Christian tradition.

Japanese concepts of humanity and community

Historically, the traditional trinitarian formula played a role in distinguishing orthodoxy from heresy. In fact, however, the important point is not so much the formula itself, as what trinitarians intended to express through it. Studying deeply the ancient, heated argument over the doctrine of the Trinity, and in the course of serious argument against the anti-trinitarian Servetus, John Calvin wrote calmly and tersely about trinitarian terms, in his celebrated Institutes of the Christian Religion. "I could wish they were buried, if only among all men this faith were agreed on: that Father and Son and Spirit are one God, yet the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that they are differentiated by a peculiar quality." For him, two things are crucial in this definition: unity and difference in God. These are of primary importance; the terms that signify them are secondary. This will lead those in whom a cultural mindset other than the Greco-Roman is ingrained, to say that they may use their indigenous terms provided that they signify unification and differentiation as properly and accurately as possible. When they take this route, they have an advantage. They can begin to understand the mystery of the Trinity through the terminology congenial to their mindset. Besides, they can in their turn contribute to the elucidation of the Christian understanding of God as Trinity, by introducing subtle modifications to the traditional expression of the doctrine as they use their own, native, terms.

In Japan, the original trinitarian terminology, and even its translated terms, such as 'ikaku' for 'person' and 'jitta' for 'substance', is arcane and misleading. This is partly because these translated terms are not indigenous ones, historically used in the actual life of people over a long period of time. So I wish to explore the possibility that we make use of indigenous Japanese terms in order to express the unity and difference in the trinune God. Let us now look at the terms that are potentially suitable as differentiating and unifying concepts.

Human betweenness

Obviously, there is no old and indigenous term in Japan for the Christian trinune God. But the Japanese have long nursed a term for humanity. How can we make it useful for theology?

The traditional and indigenous Japanese term for a human or humanity is 'ningen'. If we translate this directly into English, it can be expressed as 'human betweenness'. In Japan, we tend to think of humans as being what they are in their interrelationship: they are living, as we should put it, 'between' one another. This notion is inextricably interwoven with people's work in rice.
agriculture, in which a very large number of the Japanese were engaged for about 2,000 years, until the end of the war. Rice agriculture is so labour-intensive that it necessarily demands mutual co-operation. Moreover, workers follow the same pattern of rice cultivation every year. All this means that work with the same people is carried on again and again, because the nature of rice agriculture keeps workers inescapably bound to the same fields. Therefore, people always find themselves in relation to each other or, as we might put it, 'between' one another.

In this century, the first major attempt to examine 'ningen' was made by Watsuji Tetsuro (1889-1960), "the best philosopher of ethics of modern Japan", in his book Ethics as the Study of Man, published in 1934. According to this work, the Chinese characters for 'ningen' used to mean not 'humanity' but 'the world of humanity' or 'the community', and it came popularly and erroneously to mean a 'human' or 'humanity' in Japan about 1,000 years ago. Watsuji thought that this event shows how the Japanese understand humanity: their understanding is drawn from the context of community existence (pp. 14, 18f.). He regarded this as an event of great importance, since it brings into clear relief the fact that the Japanese mindset tends to think of humanity and community on the same level. On this basis, he defined 'ningen' as 'hito no aida', or 'between humans', with reference to the fact that they live closely together in a community.

Watsuij attempted to explain, from a Buddhist perspective, how the understanding of community and of humanity are closely related. He interpreted the relation between community and humanity as a dialectical relation of the whole to its parts (pp. 19ff.). For instance, pupils (parts) depend on the school (the whole) in that, without the school, there is nothing to attend and so they can no longer be pupils, whereas the school depends on the pupils in that, without any pupils, there is no longer a school. In Buddhism, this kind of argument is called 'absolute denial'; through this denial, parts and whole are seen in their dialectical relation.

The second major attempt to interpret humanity in terms of betweenness was made by a psychiatrist, Kimura Bin (1931-) in his Between Man and Man, published in 1972. Here, he argued that a self becomes aware of itself when it meets what is not itself (pp. 14ff.). It is the distinction between the self and the non-self that enables the self to be so called. There is no self without the non-self. Both self and non-self appear simultaneously. But before they appear, there must be something which caused this encounter. For the sake of convenience, Kimura uses the terminology 'between man and man' to describe this something (p. 15). This does not describe the relationship which holds between two independent individuals who meet each other. Rather, it signifies the atemporal and spaceless field from which the relations between self and non-self, between I and thou, come into existence (pp. 15ff., 65).

There is a relationship here to Western thought. Kimura was stimulated by Martin Buber, who stated that

the fundamental fact of human existence is man with man. What is peculiarly characteristic of the human world is above all that something takes place between one being and another the like of which can be found nowhere in nature ... Man is made man by it ... It is rooted in one being turning to another as another, as this particular other being, in order to communicate with it in a sphere which is common to them but which reaches out beyond the special sphere of each. I call this sphere, which is established with the existence of man as man, but which is conceptually still uncomprehended, the sphere of 'between'. Though being realized in very different degrees, it is a primal category of human reality ... Where I and Thou meet, there is the realm of 'between'.

The
The atemporal and spaceless field of which Kimura speaks is more concretely expressed in terms of space, in 'girl' relation to others (pp. 35ff., 69). 'Girl', which describes the typical Japanese social obligations necessary for smooth relations between self and non-self, controls the Japanese pattern of social and moral behaviour to a great extent. The usual ways in which the Japanese fulfil 'girl' are to repay others' kindness and to live up to others' expectations (p. 40). The 'girl' relation originated in the repayment and exchange of kindnesses in the context of the farm work of Japanese rice agriculture. It was taken for granted that if one was helped with farm work by others, one was expected to be ready to offer help in return. To what extent one should repay kindness depends on what kind of relationship one has with the other. Whether this is a relationship of equality or subordination does not depend solely on the status of the one or the other; it depends, also, on their interaction, their 'betweeness'. This betweenness of humanity is not some abstract idea: it embraces a very significant reality which determines Japanese human behaviour (p. 65). In this respect, moral duty is not determined vertically, in relation to God, but is horizontally situated 'between man and man' (p. 39).

When this betweenness is viewed in terms of time and, in particular, retrospectively regarded in terms of the self and parents, grandparents and ancestors, the riddle of Japanese ancestor worship is easy to understand (p. 69). From the genetic standpoint, the first non-self which the self temporally meets is the parents, who also encountered their parents as non-selves. Again, there is a connection here with Western thought. John Macmurray wrote that 'genetically, the first correlate of the Self is the mother; and this personal Other ... is gradually differentiated in experience till it becomes the whole community of persons of which I am an individual member'. Macmurray also offered an explanation of ancestor worship:

The ritual head of an existing family or kinship group is inadequate as a representation of the community. For the community has a history which links it with the past, and this community with the past cannot be represented by an existing member of the group. The chief is only the temporary representative of the tribal community, himself related to the representative of a unity which spans the generations. The universal Other must thus be at least the original and originating head of the community, the original father of the kinship group. This explains the development of religion as ancestor worship.

In Japanese thought, the self, in terms of its concrete existence, is in crucial relation to its ancestors. But this does not mean that its existence depends unilaterally on its parents and ancestors. Rather, it is grounded 'in between' itself and them. Parents are parents in virtue of their relation to their children; children are children in virtue of their relation to their parents. Parents depend on their children for their parenthood. One's existence as the child of parents depends on the field which brought into existence their relation, or their betweenness. Ancestor worship is one way of expressing deference towards this betweenness. So the Japanese do not found the existence of the self just within their own, or another's, self, but between them. The Japanese term for self, 'jibun', clearly reveals this implication. Kimura points out that the Western concept of the self denotes its individuality and substantiation. This self keeps its identity and continuity eternally. But 'jibun' literally means not only 'self' but also 'share', so designating the self's share of something which transcends the self, rather than any attribute or substance with an eternal identity (p. 154). That is, the Japanese concept of 'jibun' carries within it its share of the field in which it participates in its relation to others. In brief: 'jibun' is the fusion of the self and its relation to others, the self and its betweenness. Indeed, human betweenness is primary: what I am now is determined between man and man, or self and its partner. In contrast to the Western understanding of humanity, in Japan, relation precedes the individuality of the subject and not the other way around (p. 144).

The third major attempt to articulate a Japanese concept of humanity was that of
a scholar in Japanese studies, Hamaguchi Eshan (1931- ), in The Rediscovery of "Japaneseness", published in 1977. This described the image of the Japanese with the help of a conceptual scheme excogitated from an inherently Japanese perspective. According to this portrayal, Westerners, irrespective of the contexts in which they find themselves, tend to behave on the basis both of what they believe to be a consistent norm determined from within and, at the same time, a sense of public values. The Japanese, on the other hand, worrying about the way in which they are seen by others, usually behave so as to adjust to the particular context in which they find themselves, along with other people. In other words, the Western concept of humanity is individualistic, signifying the ultimate indivisible and independent units which comprise society; whereas the Japanese concept of humanity is contextual, relational and communal. Therefore, Hamaguchi coined a new term - 'kanjin', or 'contextual' - which signifies this Japanese, as opposed to Western, view of humanity, with its contrasting 'individual' (pp. 62ff.).

Hamaguchi calls this contextual point of view 'outside-in' (p. 305). 'Outside-in' and 'inside-out' are technical terms used by aircraft pilots. While in flight, they look inside-out, viewing the window of the cockpit in front of them as their perceptual frame of reference. In this case, they perceive the horizon moving against the aircraft. But when they make a final approach to an airport, they change their perceptual frames of reference from inside-out to outside-in. The outside-in perspective takes the horizon as the fixed perceptual frame of reference. Now it is the aircraft that is moving in relation to the horizon and the pilots must do their best to keep the aircraft horizontal. This perceptual frame is obviously essential for safe landing. Hamaguchi applies these two frames of reference to human behaviour. 'Inside-out' is a form of behaviour in which people base their behaviour on some criteria derived from within themselves, and form independent and proper judgements of an event outside themselves. In the 'outside-in' form of behaviour, people act on the basis of the situation outside themselves, contextualizing their behaviour according to the human relations involved in the situation. Thus, roughly speaking, Westerners' behaviour is characteristically inside-out, but it is typical of the Japanese to behave in the outside-in manner (p. 308).

It is natural that the difference between the individualist and the contextual understandings of humanity, between the inside-out and outside-in points of view, is reflected in the distinctive virtues respectively emphasized by Westerners and the Japanese. For the contextual Japanese, who take context and relation to others more seriously than their proper selves, there is something of cardinal importance, something which furthers smooth human relations. That something is 'concord', to which we now turn.

**Human concord**

Where context is concerned, the highly acclaimed virtue can be said to be human concord or harmony. Hamaguchi presents three characteristics of concord in this situation. Before looking at these, let us see briefly how deeply 'concord' is embedded in the Japanese mind.

In Japan, the word 'wa', or 'concord', is of considerable importance. It is associated, above all, with the name of the country, Japan. Until the seventh century, Japan was called 'Wa' by the people of the Asian continent. The Chinese character for this 'Wa' meant 'small'. However, as the Japanese came to understand the meanings of Chinese characters, which were introduced into Japan and came into use among a small number of people in the fifth or sixth centuries, some preferred a different Chinese character. This is also transliterated 'Wa' and has the same Chinese pronunciation as 'Wa' meaning 'small', but itself has the meaning of 'concord'.

42 ThemeNet Vol 22:2
Moreover, this 'Wa' assumed an official presence in the first Japanese written law, the Seventeen-Article Constitution of 604, ascribed to Prince Shotoku (574–622). The first article of this constitution is overlaid with an affirmation of concord; 'Concord is to be valued, and an avoidance of wanton opposition to be honoured.' This urgent need for concord fundamentally derives from the discords and conflicts prevalent in those days. Before Prince Shotoku came to power and established a centralized state, the powerful clans were notoriously in serious conflict. It was these chaotic social conditions that led Prince Shotoku towards a primary insistence on concord, and the avoidance of wanton opposition. Although this understanding of concord is relatively negative, in that it means 'avoiding discord', this article means that 'concord' has firmly become the watchword of Japan as a term with positive meanings as well. Nowadays, consciously or unconsciously, almost all Japanese communities, such as families, groups of friends, fellow workers, think of concord as indispensable to keeping them together. It is especially the leader, or the head, who is expected to play a major role in maintaining concord.

Hamaguchi clarifies the spirit of the concord infiltrated into the Japanese mind in this way, by contrasting it sharply to the individualism described by Steven Lukes. Firstly, individualism is based on self-centredness and attempts to maintain and develop the established inviolable self; contextualism is grounded on mutual dependence and reciprocal help. Secondly, individualism stresses self-reliance and the need for all one desires in life to be met by oneself; contextualism has a high view of mutual reliance which presupposes that all concerned should be trustworthy. Thirdly, individualism regards interpersonal relations as a means for promoting self-interest, and does not maintain inconvenient relationships; contextualism regards interpersonal relations as ends in themselves. In sum, to be in relation to others is of essential value, and to maintain and develop such relations is meaningful for life.

It is easy to point out, from the perspective of contextualism, the problems associated with individualism. Firstly, excessive self-centredness can infringe the rights of others. Secondly, excessive self-reliance can lapse into self-righteousness. Thirdly, those who treat others as means to an end will sooner or later be faced with a situation where they themselves are treated as a means. These things count in favour of contextualism. Within its perspective, firstly, one may expect others' help. Secondly, one may have self-respect by being trusted. Thirdly, one may realize that one's dignity is valued when one is treated as an end in oneself.

These characteristics of concord have been cultivated and developed historically for such a long time, through being embedded in the social economy of rice agriculture, that this framework of thought is deeply rooted in the Japanese mind. We now come to an important question: how can it be used to understand the triune God in the Japanese context?

At this point, it will help the later argument if we consider the possibility that 'betweenness' and 'concord' could be used as concepts which respectively differentiate and unify. Kimura argues that betweenness is a metaphorical field from which the relation between self and non-self comes into existence. This field can be said to cause a differentiation, as well as an interrelation, between self and non-self. This is naturally so, since, as Watsuji shows, in dialectical thought the relational whole depends on some difference between those parts that engage in the relation and on the wholeness that embraces the differences. As the Japanese terms for 'between' ('aida', or 'ma') originally designate some space differentiating something or someone from something or someone else, betweenness can be, relatively speaking, particularly appropriately used as a differentiating concept. On the other hand, concord can be used as a unifying concept in that, as Hamaguchi argues, the concord maintained in contextualism is grounded on mutual help and reliance. Here, where the relation itself is regarded as essential, this concept plays a role in connecting humans and deepening the relation. We shall extend the scope
of these concepts by applying betweenness and concord to the triune God.

Christian concepts of the triune God

How can we relate these Japanese concepts of humanity and community to Christian concepts of the triune God? Jesus Christ was a man in a particular place and time. I do not take this to mean that he accommodated himself to Jewish culture and to no other, but that he can and will accommodate himself to any culture. Athanasius’s classic study on the Incarnation and redemption, On the Incarnation, shows the depth and breadth of Christ’s work. In Athanasius’s argument, a motif of some importance emerges. The one and the same Word both created the world and humanity and recreated corrupted humanity by assuming flesh. If the Word who made all things universally in creation also recreated them in redemption through the Incarnation, this implies that the scope of redemption is also universal. In order to emphasize the universal range of redemption, Athanasius states that Christ’s redemptive work was ‘in the stead of all’, ‘on behalf of all’ and ‘for all’. According to him, the Word became flesh and dwelt ‘to us’, ‘into us’, ‘among men’ and ‘with them’. This variation on the ‘among us’ of John 1:14 points to his interpretation that the Word in flesh relates closely to humanity in every possible way.

How can we develop Athanasius’s argument in a Japanese context? As he argues, the Word condescended and accommodated himself to humanity, in order to teach it higher subjects effectively. In the words of a contemporary writer, God ‘chose a personal, interactional, receptor-oriented approach within the frame of reference of those he sought to reach’. If we apply the divine receptor-oriented approach to the Japanese concept of humanity conceived in terms of human betweenness, it is possible to interpret the incarnation in terms of Christ being not merely a human but also a human betweenness. That is, the Word became a human and dwelt between us as a human. Christ became a man between man and man. This interpretation is intellectually defensible. As we have shown, Athanasius used several prepositions in order to express the ways in which Christ dwelt in relation to us. This latitude in the way of conceiving the relation of Christ to humanity allows us, in a Japanese context, to use our culturally orientated term ‘between’. Therefore, for us, the Word became a human and dwelt between us as a human betweenness. In fact, this interpretation is exactly identical with John 1:14 in the two recent Japanese translations of the Bible, the New Revised and the New Collaborated versions. Both translations run ‘watashi tachi no aida ni’, literally translated as ‘between us’. Christ between man and man is a ‘ningen’ and, as such, is intimately connected with humanity in Japanese culture.

The human betweenness of Christ is closely related to the divine betweenness which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit maintain. We shall next direct our attention to the betweenness of God.

Triune betweenness

Gregory Nazianzen, who contributed immensely to the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity, interestingly enough refers to the relations and ‘betweenness’ of the triune God. Let us clarify these concepts by focusing on his Five Theological Orations.

According to Eunomius, the ‘Father’ is a name denoting an essence or an action. But Gregory argues against this, as follows. If ‘Father’ denotes essence, there must be a distinct essence from that of the Son. If it names an action, the same would follow: the Son would be made by the Father’s action and the essence of the Son, as someone made, would be different from the essence of
the maker." Gregory proceeds to introduce the concept of relation: 'Father is not a name either of an essence or of an action ... But it is the name of the relation in which the Father stands to the Son, and the Son to the Father.' These relational names of the Father and the Son 'denote an identity of nature between him that is begotten and him that begets' (XXIX.16). Although, on earth, the begetting 'happened according to flesh', the Son's earthly mother is a virgin, and this is called 'spiritual generation', by which Gregory seems to mean the begetting through the Holy Spirit (XXIX.4). If this begetting is not merely fleshly, but essentially spiritual, 'begotten of does not mean 'begotten after', which implies a temporal relation, although 'in respect of cause' the Son is not unoriginated (XXIX.3). The internal relations within the Trinity, therefore, are beyond such categories as time and space, for they are essentially neither fleshly nor temporal, but, rather, spiritual and eternal.

Gregory further introduces the concept of betweenness into these spiritual and eternal trune relations. As he proceeds to explain what the Holy Spirit is, he uses 'mesos' or 'between'. He summarizes concisely as follows: the Holy Spirit who 'proceeds' from the Father is not a creature; he who is not begotten is not the Son,' and he who is 'between [mesos] the unbegotten and the begotten is God' (XXXI.8). First, Gregory had already confirmed that the Holy Spirit from the Father is God and, as such, 'consubstantial with the Father (XXXI.10); and that the Spirit, as well as the Son, is 'co-eternal' with the Father (XXIX.3). Secondly, he made clear that the Spirit is not the Son. The names 'Father' and 'Son' come from the facts of unbegottenness and begottenness respectively, while the name 'Holy Spirit' comes from the fact of the procession (XXXI.9). Thirdly, he explained that the Spirit is between the Father and the Son. Now, what is this 'between'? According to Gregory, between them 'nothing ... is peculiar except the names, Father and Son, because all things are in common' (XXXI.11). This betweenness exists precisely because there is a difference between the Father and the Son. If there were no difference at all, there would be no betweenness at all, simply outright identity. Therefore, betweenness is the relation which arises from begetting: when it is stated that the Spirit is 'between' them, he is contrasted with this relation. In other words, the distinctive procession of the Spirit is stated in comparison with the begetting relation between the Father and the Son. This means that the procession happens in a way different from the begetting, so that the proper name of the Holy Spirit is secured.

How can we develop Gregory's doctrine of the trune relations and that of 'betweenness' in a Japanese context? We can begin by finding some similarities between his view of the trune God and the Japanese view of humanity. In Gregory's trinitarian view, God is what he is in the tri-personal relation: in the Japanese anthropological view, humans are what they are in their relation. In both cases, the category of 'relation' refers to what is intrinsic, not optional, and divine and human persons are defined not according to any individualities, but by their relations. As Watsuji refers to the dialectical relation of community (whole) and humanity (parts), so Gregory refers to the dialectical relation between three persons and one substance. Of course, we must also note the differences regarding relation. Kimura states that relation, or betweenness, precedes the self and the non-self, not in a temporal sense, but ontologically, in the sense that betweenness is the ground of their existence. Gregory would not say this in the case of the trune God, since the origin of the existence of the Son and Holy Spirit lies not in their relation, but in the Father, from whom the former is begotten and the latter proceeds.

The supremely interesting point is that, in both cases, the term 'between' is used. Now if, as Gregory states, there is a betweenness of Father and Son, and the Spirit is also between them, we may say that the betweenness is shared by the Spirit as well. For the trune God, beyond corporeal and temporal categories, carries neither dissolution nor separation within himself. So 'betweenness' is a [spatial] metaphor. Further, if the betweenness is shared by all three, we should also have the
betweenness which the Father and Spirit share and that which the Son and the Holy Spirit share, as well as that which the Father and the Son share. Thus, the Spirit is between the Father and the Son, and the Father is between the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is between the Father and the Spirit. Three what? Augustine asked, about the Trinity. We can answer: Three betweennesses.

But it is important to emphasize that although the trine God shares betweenness, the three betweennesses I have mentioned differ according to the different relations. The Father-Son betweenness differentiates Father and Son through the begetting. This begetting or begotten betweenness is different from the processional betweenness that relates Father and Spirit. Betweenness, then, is also a differentiating factor in the trine God.

If, in a Japanese context, we can consider humans, living between other humans, as human betweennesses, we can apply the category of 'betweenness' to the trine God as well, considered as consisting of three betweennesses. As we said, the Word became a human and dwell between us; that is, the Word became a human betweenness. The betweenness which the Word assumed on earth can be interpreted as a reflection of that betweenness inherent in the trine God. Because God is divine betweenness, he became human betweenness. Relational humanity is possible for God because deity is relational.

**Triune concord**

What should we say, when asked: ‘One what?’ One possibility, consonant with Japanese conceptuality, is to answer: ‘One concord’. But is the use of the term theologically supportable? To examine this, we shall have recourse to Novatian’s *The Trinity*.

In order to counter the Patrissian view that the Son is the Father and the Adoptionist view that the Son is only man, Novatian introduces the concept of concord. Whereas he adduces scriptural passages to maintain that God is one (XXX, XXXI passim), he points out that in John 10:30, ‘I and the Father are one’, the word ‘one’ (unum) is in the neuter gender, denoting harmony of fellowship (societatis concordiae), not unity of person (XXVII.3; cf. XXXI.22). In order to clarify the distinction between them who are ‘unum’, he also has recourse to a scriptural illustration, where Paul refers, in I Corinthians 3:6ff., to ‘harmonious unity’ (concordiae unitas) (XXVII.6). Paul states: ‘I planted, Apollos watered.’ Now he and Apollos are not one and the same person. By using the term ‘concord’, on the one hand Novatian corroborates, over against Patrissianism, the existence of two persons, the Father and the Son, who maintain concord.

This concord carries another implication in the relationship between Father and Son. Novatian paraphrases the concord between them in terms of ‘identity of judgement’, and he seems to explain what he means concretely in *The Trinity* XIII.6: ‘... If Christ sees the secrets of the heart [cor], Christ is certainly God, since God alone knows the secrets of the heart [cor].’ This passage is based on Matthew 9:4, John 2:25 and 1 Kings 8:39, and these passages are situated in a context where God or the Son make a certain judgment on humanity by discerning what they have in their hearts. That is, Father and Son share a common way of thinking in making judgment, in discerning the heart. But what they share in judgment is not merely a way of thinking, but also a content. This close relation of Father and Son has much to do with the Son’s origin.

When Novatian confirms that the Son is the Word of God, of divine nature, he adduces the scriptural passage that ‘my heart [cor] has brought forth a good Word’ (XV.6, XVII.3). The ‘Word’, or the ‘Son’, is the embodiment of the Father’s heart, with the result that their judgment is necessarily the same on account of having the same origin. That is, Father and Son are in concordant
relationship, not only in the sense that the divine judgment is the same, in the
discernment of human hearts (cor), but also in the deeper sense that they share a
common [con-] heart (cor); i.e., that retain 'con-cordia' on account of their origin.
Therefore, Novatian's concept of the concord between them can hardly be delineated only
in terms of moral unity. Rather, he seems to look beyond this moral union
towards something more metaphysical ... Thus Novatian refutes the
Adoptionist, too, by corroborating the Son's divinity and his unity with the Father.

Novatian does not refer much to the Holy Spirit. But he places the Spirit, who
proceeds from God, on a par with the Father and the Son, and puts special
emphasis on his personal, distinctive outward work. We can understand, from
this, that the divine concordant relation between the Father and the Son can be
applied to God the Holy Spirit as well. That is, the Trinity is one in terms of the
divine concord. The similarities to the Japanese concept of concord are clear. As the
Japanese concord was officially introduced to counter political discord, Novatian's
concord is introduced to explain that there is no discord of the two gods which, the
heretics allege, is entailed in the divinity of the Son. Japanese concord emphasizes
the mutuality and worth of the human relation itself; Novatian's trinitarianism
emphasizes that the mutual relations to which begetting and procession give rise
are essential in the life of the Trinity.

Conclusion

I have argued for three betweennesses.

1. The begotten/begotten difference comes through the eternal process of begetting.
The fact that the Spirit is between Father and Son means that the Spirit operates
within this differentiation, playing a role corresponding to that played in the virginal
conception, the role of the river of life.

2. Interpreting betweenness as a differentiating concept enables us to speculate
about a second betweenness, where the processor/processed difference comes
through the eternal process of procession. The fact that the Son is between Father
and Spirit means that the Son operates within this differentiation, playing a role
corresponding to that sent when he sent the Holy Spirit from the Father.

3. The difference between the begotten and the processed is now established. The
fact that the Father is between Son and Spirit means that the Father operates
within this differentiation, sending both Son and Spirit in different ways,
corresponding to the begetting and proceeding.

Divine betweenness is thus a concept which renders the distinctions between
Father, Son and Spirit in terms of relations of origin. What are distinct are called
the three divine betweennesses.

I have argued, too, for one concord. Although we have the unbegotten/begotten
difference between Father and Son, there is concord between them. The same holds
good for the difference between Father and Spirit in terms of procession and
between Son and Spirit, respectively begotten and proceeded. Because they have
the same origin (the Father), the Son and the Spirit are concordant with the Father.
Concord is the concept that describes their divine unity. Thus the triune God is one
concord.

I therefore propose that the Japanese formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity be
this: God is three betweennesses, one concord.

1 John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion I, tr. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia:
2 G.K. Plovesana, 'Watsuji Tetsuro', in P. Edwards (ed.), The Encyclopedia of
rendered here in their Japanese order, with the surname first and the Christian name last.

Watsuji Tetsuro. Ethics as the Study of Man (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1934). Subsequent page references to this work are given in the text.

Ibid., p. 14. However, more recent scholarship shows that it happened in about the early fourteenth century: see Hamaguchi Eshun, The Rediscovery of “Japaneseness” (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1988; originally published in 1971), p. 118 n. 3.


Watsuji, op. cit., p. 35. In Japan, this way of thinking (discerning parts in the whole and the whole in the parts) has been prevalent in earlier periods and remains in contemporary everyday language (Watsuji, op. cit., pp. 8, 20. For example, “hettai” can refer either to ‘troops’ or to a single member of the troops; a single term has a dual (member and group) meaning. Likewise, we can call a human member of the community ‘ningen’, a word that used to mean ‘community’. Interestingly, we can find a similarity in Hebrew thought: ‘The Hebrew concept designates … the concrete at the same time as the “abstract”, the particular as well as the collective.’ T. Boman, Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek (London: SCM, 1960), pp. 70f. For individuality and community with regard to Abraham and Christ, see J. Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology 2nd ed (London: SCM, 1977), p. 68.


Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (London: Collins, 1961), pp. 244ff. For the self and the other as correlatives, see J. Macmurray, Persons in Relation (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), p. 86: ‘Self and Other are correlatives, and the discrimination of the one involves a correlative discrimination of the other … Moreover, in discriminating myself from the Other, it is always as belonging to the Other.’


Macmurray, op. cit., p. 80.

Ibid., p. 164.

Kimura, op. cit., p. 75f.

The implication of this becomes clearer when we consider that the Japanese language has more than ten words for the first person, 1, whereas Western languages have only one. One Japanese term is chosen in relation to the one with whom I am talking. We shall not show here how this eventually leads to conceiving relationality in some ways that differ from those of Martin Buber and John Macmurray.


Hamaguchi, op. cit. Page references to this work are also given in the text.

Ibid., pp. 14ff. Elsewhere, he points out that Japanese culture presupposes that in the beginning is the situation (topos), while Western culture presupposes that in the beginning is the norm (nomos). See Japan, the Society of Contextualism (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha, 1982), p. 197.

Cf. Hamaguchi, Japan, the Society of Contextualism, p. 127.


Cf. Araki Hiroyuki, Thinking Japan from the Japanese Language (Tokyo:


According to statistics compiled about twenty years ago, 71.7% of the Japanese think that human relationships themselves give meaning to life; see Hamaguchi, Japan, the Society of Contextualism, pp. 52, 153ff. In this respect, Martin Buber would have a high opinion of the Japanese view of human relations; see his I and Thou, pp. 112f: 'The purpose of relation is the relation itself - touching the You.' John Macmurray discovers relation as an end in itself in the relation between mother and baby: see Persons in Relation, p. 63.


'The renewal of creation has been the work of the self-same Word that made it at the beginning' (op. cit., 11).


But it is important to note that 'there is no suggestion in the thought of Athanosius of the kind of 'universalism' advocated by Origen or by Gregory of Nyssen' (p. 182; cf. p. 284). See, too, A. Pettersen, Athanasius and the Human Body (Bristol: The Bristol Press, 1990), pp. 40f. In the words of D. Ritschl, salvation is 'subjective acceptance' of 'the objective work of God in the Incarnation', Athanasius Versuch einer Interpretation (Zurich: Evz-Verlag, 1964), p. 43. So Torrance holds that Origen and Gregory of Nyssen advocate a kind of 'objectivism' which diminishes the importance of this subjective dimension.

See Athanasius, op. cit., 1-9.

Ibid., 15.


In rendering this in English, we prefer 'between' to 'among', because 'between' is 'still the only word available to express the relation of a thing to many surrounding things severally and individually, 'among' expressing a relation to them collectively and vaguely'. So the 1989 edition of the OED. Christ between man and man relates humans 'severally and individually' rather than 'collectively and vaguely'.


On account of the life-giving role of the Holy Spirit and the fact that on earth he played a main role in Mary’s conception (Lk. 1:35), it would be more difficult to dissociate the Holy Spirit’s role from the Son’s begotten. See L. Boff, Trinity and Society (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1988), p. 6: ‘The Son, sent by the Father, becomes flesh by virtue of the life-giving Spirit.’ Boff even adds ‘spirituale’ to ‘filioque’: ‘The Father begets the Son Spirituale, that is, in communion with the Holy Spirit’ (p. 147). And according to Thomas A. Small, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father through the Holy Spirit: see C.E. Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), p. 169.

Cf. G.L. Prestige, God in Patristic Thought (London: SPCK, 1959), p. 140. Gregory does not seek to illuminate further the relation between the Father and the Son. This relation is ‘the divine and ineffable generation’ (XXIX.4), ‘a thing so great and august in the eyes of all those who are not altogether gazing and meditated in mind’ (XXIX.11). ‘The begetting of God must be honoured by silence’ (XXIX.8).

For the atemporal nature of the Trinity, see XXIX.3. Cf. Norris, op. cit., p. 142. For the incorporeality of the Trinity, see Gregory, XXVIII.7ff.: cf. Norris, op. cit., p. 44. These considerations led Gregory to rejects any ranking in or dissection of the trune persons (XXX.12).

This important phrase is missing from Hardy, op. cit., p. 198.

In order to highlight this, Gregory states that ‘the proper name of ... the unbegotten proceeding or going forth is “the Holy Ghost”’ (XXX.19).


‘No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illuminated by the splendor of the Three: no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the One’ (XL.41). As Gunton says of this: ‘The interesting point about Gregory is ... a dynamic dialectic between the oneness and the threeness of God is of such a kind that the two are both given equal weight in the processes of thought’ (op. cit., pp. 149ff.).

This means that the betweeness of the Father and the Son cannot be identified with the Holy Spirit himself. This is one of the differences between Gregory’s doctrine of the trune God and that of Augustine, See V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (Cambridge: James & Co., 1957), p. 81.


To use physical terminology, the three is the three ‘mesons’, derived from the Greek ‘mesos’. Yukawa Hideki (1907-81), a Japanese physicist, is the first Japanese Nobel prize laureate (1949), who is known for his theory of mesons. It seems to me that Japanese intellectual culture, which esteems betweeness highly, had something to do with his idea and way of thinking. Whether we speak of ‘betweeness’ or ‘meson’, the point is that these terms inherently entail relation to others. Things are ontologically situated between something and something else.

Interestingly, Gregory refers to God’s betweeness after the final judgment,
too: after separating the saved from the lost, God will stand ‘in the midst of gods, that is, of the saved’ (XXX.4). The gods are the saved that have been delimited. The triune God is the divine betweeness not only in terms of himself internally but also in relation to the saved whom he himself delimited.

Politically schismatic, Novatian was orthodox in the doctrine of the Trinity. We use G.F. Diercks (ed.), Novatian Opera (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1972), and the translation of Novatian, The Trinity, by R.J. De Simone (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press of America, 1972). References are given in the text.

This concord between Father and Son is ‘the association of love [carnitatis societas] itself existing between them’ (XXV11.4). Gregory speaks of the triune God as ‘a monarchy ... that is made of an equality of nature, and a union of mind [gnomes sumptnial] and an identity of motion, and a convergence of its elements to unity’ (XXIX.2). Here ‘gnome’ is equivalent to the Latin ‘sententia’, judgement.


According to Prestige, ‘it is Theophilus who first employs the actual language of Logos immanent and expressed’: op. cit., p. 126.

According to Novatian: ‘Owing to His origin to the Father, He could not cause any disunion [discordia] in the godhead by making two gods’ (XXXI.13).

