Spirituality as Resistance: Daesoon Jinrihoe and the Creative Revitalization of Native Thought in Korea

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JDTREA 2025,5(1): 47–73
Original Articles

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OPEN ACCESS

Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia Vol. 5. Issue 1 (September 2025): 47–73
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https://doi.org/10.25050/JDTREA.2025.5.1.47

Day of submission: 2025.07.20.
Completion of review: 2025.08.23.
Final decision for acceptance: 2025.09.20.

P-ISSN: 2799-3949
E-ISSN: 2799-4252

Abstract

Examining Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i side by side compels us to reconsider assumptions of what is "modern" and what is "good" for societies. These movements underscore that modernity, as commonly defined, does not have a monopoly on reason, ethics, or progress. They remind scholars and policy-makers alike that there exist plural modernities or even paths beyond modernity that integrate ancient wisdom with novel creativity. The relational ontologies embodied in these practices are not about rejecting airplanes, smartphones, or democratic institutions; they are about reimagining the cosmological narrative in which those things operate. They offer a narrative where community and cosmos are reunited, where moral and material are not divorced. The value of that narrative is not just in exotic religiosity, but in its potential to inspire more humane, sustainable ways of life.

Keywords: Daesoon Jinrihoe; Qoyllurit'i; Modernity; Plural Modernities; Relational Ontology; Cosmological Narrative; Sustainable Life

Introduction

Modern scholarship has increasingly challenged the binary opposition of "modernity" versus "tradition," noting that this dichotomy emerged from colonial power relations rather than neutral categories of analysis. In postcolonial and decolonial thought, what counts as rational, secular "modernity" has been privileged at the expense of other lifeworlds, which get labeled as irrational or "traditional" (Mignolo 2007; Escobar 2016; de la Cadena 2010). Scholars such as Walter Mignolo (2007) have described this hierarchy as part of the "coloniality" of knowledge, and Enrique Dussel's (2005) notion of transmodernity calls for transcending Eurocentric modernity by valuing marginalized epistemologies. Likewise, Bruno Latour urges analysts to treat Western modern ontologies and indigenous or premodern ontologies with equal scrutiny, dissolving the assumption that modern Western ways of knowing are the sole standard of reality (Latour 1993). In this article I follow these decolonial approaches and use "modernity" in a specific, critical sense: not as a neutral chronological stage, but as a historically Eurocentric project that linked industrialization, rationalization, and the nation-state to colonial expansion and to the marginalization of other epistemologies (Dussel 2005; Mignolo 2007; Escobar 2016). By "Western", therefore, I refer less to a fixed geographic region and more to this hegemonic model of modernity, which has been adopted, adapted, and contested in different parts of the world.

These perspectives provide a theoretical framework for understanding contemporary religious movements not as backward "survivals" of tradition nor as mere reactions to modernity, but as creative projects that re-enact reality on their own terms. In Latin American anthropology, concepts such as relational ontologies (Escobar 2016) and cosmopolitics (de la Cadena 2010) have been developed to describe worlds in which humans, nature, and the divine are deeply intertwined, offering alternatives to the dualisms of modern Western thought. In this article, I apply these perspectives to two specific colonial and postcolonial settings. When I refer to "colonialism" in what follows, I am primarily speaking of Spanish colonial rule in the Andes from the sixteenth century onward and of Japanese rule in Korea between 1910 and 1945, as well as of subsequent forms of cultural and epistemic coloniality in both regions.

Within this theoretical framing, the Korean new religious movement Daesoon Jinrihoe can be understood as an instance of ontological resilience and ethical creativity in the face of colonialism and modernity. In Korea, colonial rule in the early twentieth century was exercised by the Japanese Empire, which formally annexed Korea in 1910 and maintained colonial control until 1945. Although Japan was not a Western power in geographical terms, historians have shown how Japanese elites framed imperial expansion in East Asia as a project of "civilization" and modernization, selectively appropriating Western international law, racialized hierarchies, and developmental discourses while claiming a distinct regional leadership (Gluck 1985; Morris-Suzuki 1998; Lee 1999; Shin and Robinson 1999). From this perspective, Japanese colonialism in

Korea can be read as a regional mediation of Western-style modern imperialism rather than as a completely separate alternative to it.

Rather than viewing Daesoon Jinrihoe simply as an eclectic blend of old and new or as a "new religion" adapting to a changing society, we can read it as a deliberate revitalization of a relational, precolonial cosmology—one that had been disrupted by Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) and the rapid modernization of Korea—where the core principles serve as forms of resistance to colonial epistemic dominance and to the disenchantment often associated with modern secularism. The movement reclaims and reinterprets indigenous Korean religious ideas (drawing from Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and folk shamanism) into a new system oriented toward healing a disrupted world. This can be interpreted as a deliberate redesign of the world—an active effort to create a world in which relational balance and cosmic reciprocity are restored. Marisol de la Cadena's (2010) work on indigenous cosmopolitics—where mountains, spirits, and other nonhuman beings participate in social life—resonates with how Daesoon Jinrihoe treats the cosmos as an extended community of beings. Such frameworks allow us to view Daesoon not as an anachronism but as a creative postcolonial project: one that offers an alternative to the hegemony of Western modernity by revitalizing relational ontology.

At the same time, this article argues that Daesoon Jinrihoe's activities constitute a form of "ethical creativity" through which a collective subjectivity takes shape and its cosmology is materialized in practices and institutions, reordering relations and values in a manner consistent with its ontology. In other words, Daesoon Jinrihoe's teachings and activities articulate what we might call spirituality as resistance: resistance to political subjugation and cultural erasure, and resistance to the notion that modern rationalism has rendered holistic cosmologies obsolete.

To further illuminate Daesoon Jinrihoe's significance, this article will also introduce a comparative case from a very different cultural setting: the annual pilgrimage of Qoyllurit'i in the Peruvian Andes. Qoyllurit'i (Quechua for "Lord of the Snow Star") is a religious festival-pilgrimage that embodies an Andean relational cosmology in syncretic form, combining Indigenous and Catholic elements. While Korean new religion and Andean festival are distinct in many respects, comparing them highlights parallel strategies of cultural and spiritual resilience. Both Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i have creatively adapted precolonial relational worldviews to withstand and respond to the impacts of colonialism and global modernity. By placing these cases side by side, we do not equate them or reduce one to the other; rather, we see convergent logics: each in its context demonstrates how holistic cosmologies (integrating humans with divine and natural orders) generate forms of continuity, adaptability, and ethical meaning that conventional secular frameworks fail to explain. Such a comparison also reinforces the argument that movements like Daesoon Jinrihoe are not relics of the past, but part of a broader contemporary quest for alternatives to the dominant modern ontology. Ultimately, this study aims to show that Daesoon Jinrihoe is an exemplary case of

cosmological revitalization and ethical subject formation that speaks to cross-cultural questions about knowledge, modernity, and the possibilities of living in relation with the world.

In what follows, the Theoretical Framework section outlines the postcolonial and ontological theories guiding this analysis, situating it in relation to existing scholarship on Daesoon Jinrihoe. The subsequent Historical Context section provides background on Daesoon Jinrihoe's origins in Korea's colonial and immediate postcolonial era, and introduces its core cosmological doctrines. The Doctrinal Holism section examines how those doctrines constitute an alternative ontology and ethical system, while Ethical Subjectivity and Institutional Development explores how Daesoon Jinrihoe cultivates moral subjects and builds institutions in line with its cosmology. A Comparative Perspective section then analyzes the Qoyllurit'i pilgrimage as an example of cosmological resistance in the Americas, drawing parallels and noting differences. Finally, the Discussion considers how these cases inform broader debates on modernity and tradition, and the Conclusion reflects on Daesoon Jinrihoe's significance as a model of ontological resistance and ethical creativity in a global context.

Theoretical Framework: Revitalization, Ontology, and Transmodernity

Any interpretation of Daesoon Jinrihoe builds upon a foundation of prior research in both Korean new religions and theoretical frameworks of cultural change. Previous scholarship on Daesoon Jinrihoe has offered valuable insights. Notably, Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (2021) analyzes Daesoon Jinrihoe through the lens of Anthony F. C. Wallace's classic theory of revitalization movements. Wallace (1956, 265) defined revitalization movements as "deliberate, organized, conscious efforts by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." Rigal-Cellard applies this to Daesoon, interpreting it as a large-scale cultural renewal that successfully institutionalized new rituals, organizations, and social services—which helps explain its remarkable growth among the many movements tracing back to Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) (Rigal-Cellard 2021). In a subsequent comparative study, Rigal-Cellard (2022) examines Daesoon theological concepts (such as the incarnation of the Divine in Daesoon thought) alongside Christian categories, highlighting Daesoon's sophisticated doctrinal system. Kim (2021) adds that Daesoon's unique appeal lies in its orientation that brings the vision of paradise into the here-and-now through lived practice. Taken together, these studies illuminate key aspects of Daesoon Jinrihoe's success: its ability to synthesize diverse traditions, its robust institutional structure, and its promise of an imminent transformed world.

Building on and reframing this scholarship, the present analysis shifts toward a postcolonial and ontological perspective. Rather than understanding revitalization only in functional or institutional terms, I approach Daesoon Jinrihoe's renewal as a process of ontological resistance, particularly from a relational ontology. Here I draw inspiration from Latin American and other global theorists who emphasize the ontological

dimension of cultural resistance.

Following Escobar (2016, 57), "ontology refers to those premises that different social groups maintain about the entities that 'really' exist in the world" (my translation). The author explains that ontologies bring worlds into being because they determine which entities exist, their modes of existence, and the kinds of actions and relations possible among them. From this perspective, modern ontology is dualist—because it rests on the essential separation between nature and culture, mind and body, etc.—and instrumental—insofar as it conceives of the world as "populated by 'individuals' who manipulate 'objects' and move in 'markets', all self-constituted and self-regulating" (Escobar 2016, 57). Thus, this ontology imagines self-sufficient subjects in a world of self-sufficient objects. It is in this sense that notions so central to western thought such as "individual," "rationality," and "private property", as well as the division of the reality into different discrete spheres (political, economic, religious, etc.) can be understood.

By "relational ontologies" we therefore mean those cosmologies in which the human, biological, physical, and "supernatural" dimensions do not represent essentially differentiated and separate entities but rather sustain relations of continuity and/or interdependence (Escobar 2016). In these ontologies, the human and the non-human are linked in complex ways, giving rise to a universe of multiple entities and agencies in which the idea of the "individual" has no place.

As to the narrative of modernity, Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel (2005) critiques it as a self-contained European achievement. He points out that what is called "modernity" (beginning around the 16th century) was inextricably intertwined with coloniality—the conquest and exploitation of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Modern science, capitalism, and nation-states came about through the incorporation and subjugation of other cultures, whose knowledge and being were largely erased or devalued. Thus, the linear history that posits Ancient–Medieval–Modern (with Europe as the protagonist) is an ideological construction that renders the global majority invisible. Dussel proposes *transmodernity* as a vision of going beyond this Eurocentric modernity by including the perspectives and contributions of those previously excluded. Transmodernity is not anti-modern or a simple return to tradition; it is "moving away from universality towards pluriversality", creating a "truly horizontal dialogue" among cultures and knowledge systems. In this light, we will analyze that Daesoon Jinrihoe can be interpreted as a transmodern endeavor: it neither completely rejects modern advancements nor simply continues premodern forms but instead seeks to fold modern Korea's challenges into a broader cosmology that draws on Korea's spiritual heritage. Likewise, the Andean cosmology in Qoyllurit'i can be seen as transmodern, fusing pre-Hispanic and colonial elements into a living, evolving practice that speaks to present-day indigenous identity and ecological concerns.

Bruno Latour, a French anthropologist of science, offers another angle by questioning the basic categorical split that undergirds the concept of modernity. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour argues that the modern distinction between Nature and Society (or

between object and subject, science and culture) is in fact a myth: in practice, even the so-called modern world is full of "hybrid networks" that entangle humans and non-humans, facts and values (Latour 1993). Modernity's claim to fame was the "purification" of these domains—as if we could talk about society with no reference to nature (social constructivism) and about nature with no reference to society (scientific objectivism). But Latour points out that modern life constantly produces mixtures as in climate change: an ostensibly natural phenomenon that is entirely tied to human activity, or a tech device that is simultaneously material and cultural.

Thus, his provocative claim is that we have never truly been modern in the sense of the modernist ideal; the binaries were rhetorical. To properly study our world, Latour calls for a "symmetrical anthropology"— one that uses the same analytical approach to understand Western scientific institutions as it does to understand tribal rituals. He urges scholars to "take seriously the real entanglements of actors (humans, things, institutions)" without presupposing that moderns are rational and non-moderns are animated by myths. Instead of an "ontological hierarchy" where modern nature is real and indigenous nature is imagined, he calls to an acknowledgment that multiple ontologies interact symmetrically

Walter Mignolo (and other decolonial theorists) echo this idea by advocating "pluriversality" as opposed to universality. The pluriverse notion, also popularized by Arturo Escobar, conceives of the pluriverse as an alternative to the one-world ontology of modernity (Mignolo 2007). In a pluriverse, Western scientific-material ontology is just one among many valid ways of world-making, coexisting with others. Pluriversal politics would entail defending these different ontologies and allowing them to shape shared reality, rather than enforcing one hegemonic model.

In this conceptual context, anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena introduces the idea of cosmopolitics to describe political situations that involve multiple ontologies. In her study of Andean activism, she notes that when indigenous actors bring their sacred relations (e.g., earth-beings like mountains or spirits) into the public political realm, they produce a "rupture of modern politics" because they exceed the framework of what counts as "political" (de la Cadena 2010). Politics, as defined by modernity, had excluded non-humans except as resources; now suddenly nature appears as an agent with demands (e.g., rights of nature in Ecuador's constitution). De la Cadena calls this indigenous cosmopolitics in the sense of a politics of the cosmos, where different worlds meet and must negotiate. The presence of earth-beings in protests, for instance, is not simply a different belief, but a different reality asserting itself, one where the line between spiritual and material is irrelevant.

These theoretical perspectives foreground ontology as a site of resistance. Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i make it especially evident that they refuse to compartmentalize reality into disenchanted nature versus human culture. Gods, spirits, humans, animals, and earth are continuous and interrelated in these ontologies, undermining what Latour calls the "Modern Constitution." In sum, this theoretical framework combines previous

Daesoon scholarship with postcolonial theory, the anthropology of ontologies, and Latin American thought to re-situate Daesoon Jinrihoe as an exemplar of ontological resistance and ethical creativity in the modern world.

Historical Context of Daesoon Jinrihoe in Korea and its Core Principles

Daesoon Jinrihoe must be understood in the historical context of Korea's early 20th-century upheavals and the legacy of a charismatic religious figure, Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) (Flaherty 2004). Kang Jeungsan lived during a period when Korea's sovereignty was eroding under foreign encroachments. Notably, he was a youth during the Donghak Peasant Rebellion of 1894, an armed uprising influenced by the indigenous Donghak (Eastern Learning) religion against corrupt officials and encroaching Japanese influence (Introvigne 2018). According to Daesoon accounts, Kang Jeungsan foresaw the failure of the 1894 rebellion and advised his followers not to participate as he believed that deeper, cosmological changes were needed to truly liberate the world (WRSP 2020).

This idea of a need for a deep spiritual change was central to Jeungsan thought and will be the landmark of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Indeed, between 1901 and 1909, Kang Jeungsan undertook what his disciples call the "Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth", a series of mystical and ritual undertakings intended to rectify the disturbed cosmic order (Introvigne 2018; Kim 2021; Rigal-Cellard 2021). Implicit in these works was the idea that the coming of foreign powers and the suffering of Korea were part of a cosmic drama requiring divine intervention and relational healing. In doing this reordering works, Kang Jeungsan manifested himself as *Gucheon Sangje*, the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven (WRSP 2020).

Jeungsan taught that the current chaotic status of the world was the result of a long period of disharmony and energetic disorder, and that the world was entering a period of cosmic transformation that would eventually lead to the Later Heaven, which would resolve the injustices of the past and constitute a living present paradise (Flaherty 2004; Rigal-Cellard 2021). From a syncretic reclamation of Korean geomancy, Confucianism, Buddhism, religious Taoism, and Korean shamanism, Kang's revelations and miraculous acts attracted disciples and laid the foundations for a family of religious movements now termed Jeungsanism (Flaherty 2004). After Kang's death in 1909, his spiritual mantle was passed down through various successors. One main claimant to succession was Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), and through him the next successor was Park Wudang (1917–1996) (Introvigne 2018). It was under Park Wudang's leadership that Daesoon Jinrihoe was formally established and registered as an organization in 1969 (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021).

It is significant that this reorganization happened in the late 1960s—a time when South Korea was embarking on intensive economic development and modernization. In fact, Daesoon Jinrihoe's official founding came just as the country's government was promoting a narrative of "modernization" (Álvarez 2021). During these years, South

Korea underwent urbanization, industrialization, and social upheaval. By the late 20th century, Daesoon Jinrihoe had grown into the largest Jeungsanist religion and one of the most prominent new religious movements in Korea (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021). It claims membership numbers in the hundreds of thousands (with some sources estimating between half a million to a million adherents) and maintains a nationwide infrastructure (Introvigne 2018; WRSP 2020). The movement's headquarters at Yeoju is a sprawling complex featuring grand temples and training centers, and the organization operates multiple institutions including a university (Daejin University), secondary schools, research institutes, and charities such as hospitals (Rigal-Cellard 2021; WRSP 2020). This extensive institutional development is notable given that over one hundred smaller groups (and a large one, Jeungsando) also emerged from Kang Jeungsan's lineage. Daesoon Jinrihoe's relative success in outpacing its rivals is often attributed to the strength and appeal of its doctrines and its organized social outreach (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021). Importantly, Daesoon Jinrihoe frames its mission as the realization of Kang's vision of the Later World, a transformed world, not in an afterlife but on earth, through human effort and divine aid combined (Kim 2021). This orientation toward an imminent utopia or "Earthly Paradise" sets it apart from both secular modern ideologies and conventional otherworldly religions.

At the heart of Daesoon Jinrihoe's doctrinal system stand four tenets (not to be conflated with the Four Cardinal Mottos that summarize cultivation): *Eumyang-hapdeok*, *Sinin johwa* (often romanized *Shinin-johwa*), *Haewon-sangsaeng*, and *Dotong-jingyeong*—also written *Dotong-jingyeong*. *Eumyang-hapdeok* (Virtuous Concordance of Yin and yang) reinterprets the East Asian cosmology of *yin–yang* dual forces, emphasizing that true harmony (*Hapdeok*, literally "joining virtues") arises from balancing complementary energies (Baker 2022). In Daesoon thought, cosmic and social harmony require integration of dualities (male/female, dark/light, etc.) in a morally virtuous way. At the core of this principle is the idea that yin and yang are not *opposite things* but mutually influencing forces or ways of behaving (Baker 2022). In this register, "virtue" is more precisely understood as "power" and is closely tied to right action: when one comports oneself rightly—virtuously—in relation to the surrounding world, the world (beings and things alike) responds in kind with "right" actions (Baker 2022). Accordingly, the Virtuous Concordance of Yin and Yang designates the proper co-ordination of complementary forces under the guidance of such moral potency; rightly ordered reciprocity between yin and yang has the power to sustain harmony.

Sinin johwa—Harmonious Union of Divine and Humans—refers to the alignment and mutual attunement (*johwa*) between divine beings (*yin*) and human beings (*yang*) (Fehler 2023). This principle posits that gods (spirits) and humans should communicate and cooperate to bring about cosmic order. Once human beings have resolved past grievances and attained sufficient enlightenment to prevent future ones, they are able to enter into harmony with divine beings and receive their guidance. At the same time, these divine beings themselves benefit from this perfective interaction. For such a state

to be realized, the human mind must be brought into alignment with the mind of the Supreme God, having already healed all grievances generated by one's actions. Thus, *Sinin Jobwa* entails that human spiritual cultivation and divine guidance must work in concert to heal the world, and their collaboration is a desired goal in Daesoon Jinrihoe's practice (Introvigne 2018). The ultimate vision is the creation of a *Dotong gunja* or perfected human being, a transformed person who lives in accord with the Dao.

Haewon-sangsaeng—Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence—is perhaps the signature ethical principle of Daesoon Jinrihoe. The concept signifies that the fundamental disharmony in the world comes from accumulated grievances— injustices, resentments, and unresolved hurts that have proliferated throughout history and across the spirit world (Huang 2021). Such grievances arise when one's actions or words cause frustration, offense, or unfulfilled desires in others, often rooted in vanity or greed, whether in this life or past lives and between individuals, social groups, or even between humans and spirits. These resentments are seen as embodied in spirits of grievance (*cheok-sin*), which obstruct personal success and may even transmit across generations through familial ties. Behaviors such as hatred, ingratitude, slander, harm, or intransigence are identified as sources of such grievances. Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that resolving grievances through forgiveness, repentance, and ritual atonement is the precondition for any new era of harmony. When grievances are resolved, all parties can thrive together (mutual life-benefiting). Scholars have highlighted this principle as encapsulating the movement's relational ethos: suffering and conflict are not denied but *reframed* as problems to be solved through moral action, thereby enabling shared flourishing (Huang 2021). Its telos is the restoration of harmony among complementary forces (yin/yang; divine/human), culminating in the realized earthly paradise.

Dotong-jingyeong—Unification with the Dao in the True Realm—expresses the eschatological goal of Daesoon practice and the three previous tenets (Huang 2021; Introvigne 2018). *Dotong* means The Perfected State of Unification with the Dao and denotes a condition in which human beings and the entirety of the Three Realms—Heaven, Earth, and Humanity—attain a consummate, genuinely enlightened state. Through disciplined cultivation that purifies mind and body and removes all lingering grievances, an individual may become fully unified with the great divinities and thereby realize human perfection. In this transformation, the Three Realms are elevated to the highest ontological dimension. Those who attain this state acquire a comprehensive understanding of the cosmos and the capacity to enact their will; the cumulative effect of such attainments is the eventual emergence of an enduring paradisical order in the world, the realization of Kang Jeungsan's Later World on earth.

These principles are not treated as abstract metaphysics; they are intimately tied to ritual practice and ethical conduct. Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that only through sustained moral discipline and communal ritual can the world be transformed. The movement's foundational scripture and subsequent teachings outline a range of practices aimed at enacting the Four Tenets in daily life. Chief among these practices is the triad of *Suryeon*,

Gido, and *Gongbu*—often termed the "three trainings" (Kim 2021; Introvigne 2018). *Suryeon* (spiritual refinement) involves meditation, breathing exercises, and moral self-cultivation techniques to purify one's mind and body. *Gido* (prayer and invocation) involves communicating with the divine—including prayers to Kang Jeungsan as the *Gucheon Sangje*—to seek guidance and supernatural aid in resolving grievances. *Gongbu* (holy study or work) refers to the collective recitation of sacred scriptures and the performance of ritual duties, often carried out in cycles at the movement's central temple in Yeoju (Kim 2021). As Rigal-Cellard (2022) observes, Daesoon Jinrihoe has created a highly systematized ritual life: daily, weekly, and seasonal rites continuously reinforce the cosmic principles and knit the community together. In essence, doctrine and practice are inseparable—the cosmology is lived through liturgy and ethical action. This integration has been crucial to the movement's durability and appeal, as it offers adherents a tangible way to participate in what they see as the healing of the world alongside with divine beings.

From a religious studies perspective, recognizing Daesoon Jinrihoe's continuity with earlier Korean thought is as important as noting what is new. Scholars emphasize that although Daesoon is a modern movement, it consciously places itself in continuity with Korea's rich religious heritage (Baker 2022). The influence of Daoism is evident in the emphasis on yin–yang harmony and the aspiration to unity with the Dao (Baker 2022). Confucian ethics are reflected in the stress on moral cultivation and righteous social relations—albeit Daesoon infuses these with eschatological urgency rather than upholding a static social order (Rigal-Cellard 2021). Buddhist elements appear in the form of meditation practices and the ideal of liberating all sentient beings from suffering (Kim 2021). Shamanistic and folk beliefs come through in the attention to ancestral spirits, the concept of cosmic grievances, and the performative rituals to pacify spirits—themes long present in Korean shamanism (Flaherty 2004). Yet, as Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (2021, 2022) argues, Daesoon Jinrihoe's syncretism is not a mere patchwork: it is creative and purposeful, forging a new system oriented toward a collective salvation in this world. This doctrinal holism—melding ideas of harmony, reconciliation, and renewal—effectively sacralizes the project of Korea's healing and forward development in what can be seen as an ontological resistance. It allowed Daesoon's followers to view the tumult of their times not as chaos to be escaped, but as part of a cosmic plan in which they had an active role to play.

Doctrinal Holism, Relational Ontology, and Cosmological Revitalization

Daesoon Jinrihoe's theology can be characterized as a form of holistic cosmological revitalization. By "holistic," we mean that it refuses to segregate the religious, the ethical, and the cosmological form other spheres—the human moral order and the cosmic order are deeply interdependent. As mentioned, Daesoon doctrine draws from multiple

religious sources, but it recombines them into a coherent worldview centered on healing and harmonizing all levels of existence. This section delves further into how Daesoon's key doctrines function as tools of ontological resistance, illustrating the movement's ethical creativity.

One striking feature is the reinterpretation of classical East Asian cosmology in explicitly ethical terms. For example, as we have seen, the concept of yin and yang—ubiquitous in East Asian thought as complementary cosmic forces—is moralized in Daesoon Jinrihoe under *Eumyang-hapdeok*. Daesoon teaching insists that humans must actively bring yin and yang into virtuous concord for the world's benefit by cultivating morality and resolving grievances. This implies that disorder or misfortune (whether personal or social) results from a loss of balance that is at once physical and moral. Thus, harmonizing yin and yang is not just a cosmological description but a normative task—a duty of ethical restoration. In this way, Daesoon Jinrihoe transforms a metaphysical principle into a call for action, aligning with Kang Jeungsan's vision that humans bear active responsibility in the cosmic reordering.

The principles of *Haewon-sangsaeng* and *Sinin-johwa* illustrate Daesoon Jinrihoe's doctrinal holism and relational ontology. Scholars note the links between the individual, the social, and the cosmic: personal misfortunes are explained as the result of *won* (grievances) one has incurred or inherited, while collective tragedies—such as Korea's colonization—are interpreted as cosmically significant *won* (Rigal-Cellard 2021). Rather than prescribing passive acceptance or otherworldly escape, Daesoon prescribes *engagement*: through rituals of repentance, compensation, and charitable works, adherents seek to appease the spirits of those wronged, both human and non-human (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021; Soryte 2022). Huang (2021) analyzes *Haewon-sangsaeng* as a "religio-ethical metaphor" that reframes suffering not as fate or divine punishment but as a debt that can be repaid and nullified. This reframing empowers believers, telling them that agency is possible even in the face of collective trauma. *Sinin-johwa* align human activity with the divine beings engaged in reordering the world's karmic ledger; ethically, they cultivate a profound sense of interconnected responsibility.

Daesoon Jinrihoe's narrative of an impending *Hucheon Gaebyeok* (Great Opening of the Later World) is a hallmark of its cosmological revitalization. The term *Gaebeyeok* literally means "opening" or epochal beginning, and in Jeungsanist traditions it connotes the transition from the Former to the Later World: a cosmic upheaval and renewal, akin to a dawn after a long night of suffering (Flaherty 2004; Kim 2021; Ko and Greenberger 2023). While several Jeungsanist groups expected apocalyptic interventions at specific dates (Introvigne 2018; WRSP 2020), Daesoon Jinrihoe instead emphasizes process: the *Hucheon Gaebyeok* unfolds gradually as adherents engage in *Haewon-sangsaeng* and *Eumyang-hapdeok*. As we saw, the result of the careful realization of both with *Sinin-johwa* is the *Dotong-jingyeong*. All this process in present life can achieve the *Hucheon Gaebyeok* in history rather than deferred to an afterlife. Thus, Daesoon revitalizes not only culture but the world: a reordering of reality itself, a conscious attempt to midwife

a new age world-making. Far from mere utopian fantasy, the promise of *Hucheon Gaebyeok*—anchored in concrete ritual and ethical practice—has proven a powerful motivation for the movement's sustained growth (Palmer and Greenberger 2021; Rigal-Cellard 2021).

Finally, Daesoon Jinrihoe's syncretic doctrine can be understood as a form of soteriological creativity—the creation of new pathways to salvation. Rigal-Cellard (2021, 2022) emphasizes that Daesoon's synthesis goes beyond defensive adaptation, producing a collective and this-worldly vision of salvation. Unlike missionary Christianity or modern secular ideologies, which often oppose spirit and matter or individual and collective, Daesoon seeks to save all beings together—humans, spirits, and nature—through restored harmony (Kim 2021; Introvigne 2018; Baker 2022). In addition, its incarnational teaching that Kang Jeungsan embodied *Gucheon Sangje* and the practice of *Sinin-johwa* situates the divine within human history.

This creative doctrine of "salvation-through-harmony" addresses the alienations of modernity—humans from nature, individuals from community, generations from ancestors—and re-enchants the world in Daesoon's own terms. As Wang (2022) observes, the power of *Haewon-sangsaeng* lies not only in restoring human relations but also in extending an ethic of reciprocity to the natural world. In this sense, Daesoon Jinrihoe's re-enchantment of the world is not limited to reintegrating the sacred into human life; it also sacralizes entire ecologies, projecting an ecological civilization as the horizon of cosmic harmony. Rutana (2024) complements this view by demonstrating how Daesoon Jinrihoe articulates ethical obligations toward non-human animals, inscribing them into the field of cosmic reciprocity. In comparative perspective, Kohn (2024) shows how Daoist traditions emphasize the ontological interconnectedness of Dao, world, and humanity, thereby overcoming the modern dualism of nature and culture. Daesoon Jinrihoe resonates with this logic, reinforcing its capacity to re-enchant the world through an ethic of interconnectedness.

Ethical Creativity: Collective Subjectivity and Institutional Development

A crucial dimension of Daesoon Jinrihoe's success is how it translates its grand cosmological vision into the lived reality of a community. The movement not only preaches doctrines of harmony and reconciliation; it actively cultivates what we might call a collective ethical subjectivity. I use the term "collective ethical subjectivity" to highlight that, in Daesoon Jinrihoe, ethical self-cultivation is not merely an individual pursuit but a communal process, enacted through shared rituals, doctrines, and institutions, leading to a shared identity as moral agents working toward cosmic renewal. This section explores how Daesoon Jinrihoe ethical creativity shapes its followers' ethical outlook and builds a durable institutional structure, demonstrating the stable interplay between doctrine and everyday practice.

Palmer and Greenberger (2021) explain that Daesoon Jinrihoe's approach to children is comparatively modest and recent. The movement is primarily designed for adults, and children do not usually participate in core devotional activities; formal youth programming began only in 2005 with the creation of annual Youth Camps and the youth magazine *Donggeurami*. These camps emphasize socialization, age-appropriate activities, and light instruction (history of the movement, dramatizations of key precepts such as "promote the betterment of others"), while formal religious practice for children is limited (Palmer and Greenberger 2021). Most children of members attend regular secular schools, even though Daesoon Jinrihoe operates some educational institutions, and there is no policy of insulating them from wider society. The literature and interview data reported by Palmer and Greenberger indicate no evidence of coercive separation, forced indoctrination, or shunning; rather, parents and leaders frame youth education as offering knowledge of the faith while preserving children's future freedom to choose as adults.

In the adult religious life of Daesoon Jinrihoe, ritual practice serves as a technology of the self in the Foucauldian sense—a disciplined set of practices shaping subjects' minds and bodies toward desired virtues (Foucault 1988). The thrice-daily prayers, the group chanting sessions, the breathing exercises of *Suryeon*, and the collective welfare activities are all designed to cultivate compassion, self-consciousness and fellowship (Kim 2021). Significantly, these practices are conducted in group settings, reinforcing a communitarian ethos. Seemingly secular activities—free medical clinics, disaster relief efforts, cultural festivals—are imbued with religious meaning and often opened with prayer or scripture. They serve the dual purpose of social service and spiritual cultivation, blurring the line between charity and ritual (Šorytė 2022).

As Introvigne (2018) points out, in Daesoon Jinrihoe practices visual arts and architecture are conceived as integral components of religious cultivation rather than as decorative embellishments. Beauty is understood as both a foretaste of the Later World and a practical means for advancing the perfected unification with Dao in the true realm (*Dotong-jingyeong*) and the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence (*Haewon-sangsaeng*). Practices such as *dancheong*—the traditional harmonization of colors on sacred buildings—create spaces that embody harmony and allow participants to experience an anticipation of the earthly paradise to come. Artistic programs thus serve a didactic function, conveying the religion's cosmology through images and structures, while the process of making them is carried out collectively by devotees. Works are unsigned, underscoring that their value lies in cooperative moral action and devotion rather than in the self-expression of individual artists.

The institutional development of Daesoon Jinrihoe is impressive. By the 1980s and 1990s, Daesoon Jinrihoe had established a centralized administration with various departments overseeing education, temple management, proselytization, and welfare projects (WRSP 2020; Rigal-Cellard 2022; Šorytė 2022). Daesoon Jinrihoe founded Daejin University in 1992, which today is an accredited institution offering secular and

religious education (Šorytė 2022). The movement's leadership has engaged with broader society by hosting academic conferences (e.g., on comparative religion and philosophy) and participating in interfaith activities (Šorytė 2022). All of these institutional endeavors serve to legitimize and normalize Daesoon Jinrihoe's presence in Korean society, moving it beyond the fringe. But they also serve an internal function: they realize the movement's ethical teachings in concrete forms. For instance, the Daesoon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation runs facilities for elder care, welfare centers, and medical services alongside educational foundations, reflecting the ideal of mutual beneficence in practice (Rigal-Cellard 2022; Šorytė 2022). This institutionalization of charity and education echoes what Anthony Wallace identified as a stage in revitalization movements where the new vision becomes routinized and structurally embedded (Rigal-Cellard 2021). In Rigal-Cellard's (2021) terms, Daesoon Jinrihoe has successfully "constructed a more satisfying culture" for its members, complete with its own schools, sacred spaces, social services, and community life, thereby ensuring its longevity.

As stated before, it is important to note that Daesoon Jinrihoe's ethical system is not focused on individual salvation or enlightenment alone; it is inherently collectivist and relational. The notion of a "collective ethical subject" means that members perceive their moral and spiritual growth as contributing to a larger whole—the welfare of all sentient beings and the balance of the cosmos. This perspective can counter the alienation often found in modern urban life by situating persons within a larger, "cosmic" kinship. This can help foster strong mutual support networks and a sense that one's problems are shared and understood in a transcendent context.

From an analytical standpoint, this formation of ethical subjectivity is a key factor in Daesoon Jinrihoe's resilience. Movements that survive beyond their founding generation often do so because they manage to instill in their adherents a durable identity and purpose. Daesoon Jinrihoe has done this by tying personal virtue to cosmic significance. Building on Baker's (2022) analysis of Daesoon philosophy, this places Daesoon thought on a different plane than Western secular-progressive narratives: in Daesoon, ethical action is part of the structure of reality—linked to an earthly paradise horizon, an in-this-world consummation—so that setbacks can be endured by drawing on a deep reservoir of meaning. In other words, every good act bears cosmic repercussions and this belief can be a powerful motivator for sustaining commitment.

Comparative Perspective: Qoyllurit'i and Andean Cosmological Resistance

While Daesoon Jinrihoe is rooted in the specific historical and cultural context of Korea, its themes of cosmological revitalization and relational ontology resonate with movements and traditions elsewhere. To highlight the broader relevance of these ideas, it is illuminating to turn to a seemingly distant example: the Qoyllurit'i (Quechua for "Lord of the Snow Star") pilgrimage in the Peruvian Andes. It is a large, multi-day

pilgrimage near Mount Sinakara Valley of Cusco region, that has gained national and international visibility and was recognized by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO 2011). On the surface, Qoyllurit'i and Daesoon Jinrihoe could not be more different—one is a Catholic-Andean pilgrimage involving ritual dances and a syncretic saint veneration, the other a modern new religion with a formalized doctrine and global outreach. Yet at a deeper level, both can be seen as creative, resilient responses of relational cosmologies to colonial and modern pressures. Placing them side by side allows a sort of cross-cultural mirroring: each case can shed light on the other by emphasizing shared patterns. Importantly, this comparison is not to homogenize the two or suggest an underlying unity of all non-Western religions, but to appreciate how distinct cultures can independently evolve holistic worldviews that challenge the modern secular paradigm. To do this, I first sketch core features of Andean cosmology and then situate Qoyllurit'i within that horizon.

The Andean worldview—developed over millennia from early highland civilizations through the Inca—articulates a holistic understanding of the universe in which human, natural, and divine domains are mutually constitutive rather than sharply separated (Zenteno Brun 2009). A central trait is animacy: mountains, rivers, stars, animals, rocks and plants are treated as beings endowed with spirit and will, included within a wider social community to which humans are accountable (Di Salvia 2016). In this sense, the Andean world is not anthropocentric but a relational field among multiple coexisting entities, human and other-than-human alike (de la Cadena 2010; di Salvia 2016; Salas Carreño 2014).

Thus, life unfolds through continuous interrelation between cosmic and telluric forces, often figured in the complementary pairing of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) and *Pachakamaq* (celestial principle) (Randall 1982). Dual categories—day/night, sun/moon, earth/sky, male/female, above/below—function as complementary pairs whose balanced cooperation generates life and equilibrium; the same logic shapes ritual practice and social organization, including complementary moieties. Reciprocity (*ayni*) and respect organize these exchanges such that human actions call for corresponding responses to maintain cosmic harmony (Zenteno Brun 2009). In everyday life, reciprocity is routinely enacted across agricultural, social, and ceremonial domains (Zenteno Brun 2009; Limón Olvera 2024).

Another hallmark of the Andean worldview is its understanding of history as a series of interrelated cycles (Mignolo 2007; Randall 1982; Zenteno Brun 2009). This is evident in the continuity of agricultural cycles, in which time is conceived as non-linear. At the same time, history in Andean thought is also organized around major crises that mark the end of one era and the beginning of another, where each era preserves within itself a portion of the preceding one while engendering the next, forming a continuum of mutually influencing cycles. This way, remnants of past eras may re-emerge in the present, especially in ritual and myth. This is deeply connected to Andean peoples' everyday relationship with their ancestors—human and non-human—and to the rituals

intended to communicate with them. Thus, relations of reciprocity are not confined to the present but traverse time dynamically, with multitemporal and multispatial repercussions. Finally, change and temporal rupture are regarded as moments of "world turnarounds" that inaugurate a new order. In this way, the major historical shifts in Andean history have been understood not as moments of "chaos," but as events of transformation and world-reordering (Randall 1982; Zenteno Brun 2009).

Qoyllurit'I materializes this ontology by performing relations among humans, sacred mountain beings (*apus*), celestial bodies, and catholic divinities. Every year in late May or early June, thousands of indigenous Quechua and foreign pilgrims from various regions trek into the thin-aired heights (over 4,600 meters elevation) to attend this multi-day festival. The ostensible focus of devotion is an image of the Lord of Qoyllurit'i, a miraculous image of Christ painted on a rock on the mountainside, which is associated with a local apparition legend from the late 18th century (in which a young boy, interpreted as an incarnation of Christ, vanished on the mountain leaving the image behind) (Randall 1982; Salas Carreño 2014). The pilgrimage coincides with the Catholic liturgical calendar and culminates just before the feast of Corpus Christi. The rituals conducted thus involve Catholic symbols—the crucifix, images of the Christ child—but it also entails indigenous ones—most notably, the *apus* embodied by Sinakara and nearby peaks and ritual vestments with mythological meaning (Salas Careeño 2014; Pajuelo Teves 2019). The timing of the festival aligns with the reappearance of the Pleiades constellation in the night sky, which Andean people see as a marker of the new year and agricultural cycle (Pajuelo Teves 2019; Randall 1982). Thus, the pilgrimage is a celebration of the renewal of the cosmos—it marks the moment when the stars return and the annual cycle of life begins anew. In Quechua understanding, it is a time when the door between the human community and the deities opens, allowing exchange of energy and blessings.

Processions of organized pilgrim "nations," each linked to specific valleys and their tutelary mountains, circulate the sanctuary with crosses, standards, and dance choreographies that are explicitly framed as reciprocal offerings to the *apu*; dance and procession thus operate as relational labor directed toward the landscape itself (Kania 2019; Salas Carreño 2014). Ritual specialists mediate between the shrine and the glaciered peaks, enacting a diplomacy across domains (de la Cadena 2010; Salas Carreño 2014). Among these, one prominent figure is the *ukukus* (dancers dressed as a mythic bear-man) who climb the glacier at night to fetch a chunk of ice that was traditionally believed to be medicinal and sacred. The *ukukus'* nocturnal ascent is like a shamanic journey, bringing the mountain's essence down to the people. Following the descent, the dancing troupes return the crosses to the local church, where the entire procession converges and the Blessing Mass is celebrated (Salas Carreño 2014). If the celebration from the previous night is of a chaotic nature, the descent and the entry into the church occur in an orderly fashion: the nocturnal passage to dawn dramatizes the transition from the period of chaos associated with the disappearance of the Pleiades to their

ordering return, structured by the Andean energies alternation that organizes the year (Randall 2019).

During the celebrations, offerings—coca, libations, candles—are made both before Christ on the sacred rock and at outdoor altars oriented toward Sinakara, so that Catholic devotion and Andean offerings are enacted within the same ritual circuit (Salas Carreño 2014). In this context, the figure of Christ is interpreted through an Andean lens: he is considered a powerful ancestor or perhaps a *huaca* (sacred being) who, rather than displacing the mountain spirit, works in tandem with it. Moreover, ethnographic accounts foreground the polyphony of agencies that participants report—Christ, the mountain, the virgin Mary and the starry sky—without forcing a single hierarchy of causes, evidencing that the numerous entities involved are not antagonists but allies in a shared sacred landscape.

Over the years, Qoyllurit'i has faced the encroachment of various modern forces: increasing tourism (including an influx of middle-class Peruvians and foreign visitors), state intervention and regulation (especially as heritage visibility expanded), and climate change. Glaciers in the tropical Andes—specifically in Peru's Cordillera Vilcanota—have experienced sustained, accelerating retreat since the late 1970s, reshaping hydrology and highland ecologies (Kania 2019). This environmental shift directly touches a core practice at Qoyllurit'i: amid growing concern about glacier recession, in 2003 the Council of Pilgrim Nations, in coordination with custodial bodies, banned cutting ice from glaciers; since then, *ukukus* typically return with small bottles of sacred water or with naturally detached ice fragments—symbolic substitutions that preserve the ritual's meaning while mitigating impact (Kania 2019).

Likewise, as government agencies and heritage frameworks have attempted to formalize or manage aspects of the festival, the core custodians—the traditional *nations* of dancers and the local lay confraternity responsible for shrine management—have negotiated changes so as not to undermine sacred autonomy; the result has been a reconfiguration that sustains a living Andean ethos rather than its secularization (Kania 2019; de la Cadena 2010).

It is not that Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i are directly comparable in all respects. There are pronounced differences in theology, organizational structure, and historical trajectory: Daesoon Jinrihoe is a formalized new religion with a founder's doctrine and centralized institutions, whereas Qoyllurit'i is a communal pilgrimage emerging from collective indigenous tradition. The sociopolitical milieus also diverge—one rooted in twentieth-century Korea confronting colonialism, war, and rapid modernization; the other, in an Andean world negotiating colonial Catholicism and ongoing environmental and cultural transformations. Yet the comparative value lies in how each confronts disruption. Both Daesoon and Qoyllurit'i transform rupture into continuity. Neither preserves a pre-colonial world unchanged; each transfigures inherited ontologies so they speak to present conditions. Daesoon's cosmology is continuous with Korean religio-philosophical inheritances but reorganized to address modern crises. Qoyllurit'i

perpetuates an Andean ritual cycle that predates conquest while weaving Catholic symbols into a landscape of animated mountains and saints, enabling indigenous sacred relations to endure. From the inside, such processes are experienced less as revival than as the ongoing practice of living in a meaningful cosmos—a regeneration of the world rather than the creation of a new one. These insights invite a reconsideration of how we conceptualize modernity, tradition, and resistance.

Conclusions

The cases of Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i invite a critical examination of how we understand religion and reality within the dominant Western secular framework. Both phenomena in their own way highlight the limits of the modern ontological lens—that is, the worldview which separates subject from object, human from nature, religion from politics, and so on. Western modernity, rooted in Enlightenment thought, often presumes a one-size-fits-all epistemology: true knowledge is scientific, secular, and materialist, while religious or cosmological claims belong to the realm of subjective belief or cultural artifact. From this viewpoint, movements like Daesoon Jinrihoe tend to be seen as either remnants of tradition adapting to modernity or as new inventions providing psychosocial comfort to their adherents. Likewise, events like Qoyllurit'i might be dismissed as folklore or touristic spectacle. However, such interpretations are profoundly inadequate, as they fail to recognize these movements as legitimate ways of world-making that cannot be fully translated into modern secular categories.

From an anthropological perspective, Escobar and others associated with the ontological turn have suggested that we must sometimes accept that different cultures inhabit different worlds, not just the same world with different beliefs about it. This radical view implies that trying to force phenomena like Daesoon or Qoyllurit'i into our categories (religion, culture, politics, etc.) might distort them. Instead, we might let them teach us new categories. Bruno Latour (1993), as mentioned, argued that moderns never truly separated nature and culture—it was an intellectual purification that never matched reality. In practice, modern societies constantly create "hybrids". What Latour calls for is a symmetrical anthropology where we don't assume in advance that modern secular people have a more objective grasp on reality than religious practitioners. If we apply that symmetry, we might say: What if *Haewon-sangsaeng* is as real a principle for understanding the world as, say, the law of thermodynamics? *Haewon-sangsaeng* certainly explains some aspects of human experience (cycles of vengeance or the healing power of forgiveness) better than any physical law could. For Daesoon adherents, it is a truth that has predictive and explanatory power. The Western ontological framework tends to filter such principles out as "moral belief" rather than "knowledge," but a symmetrical approach would grant that principle a space in describing reality—perhaps as part of a pluriverse (Escobar 2016) of many coexisting ontologies.

Daesoon Jinrihoe translates its grand cosmology into a durable ethical community

through intertwined activities of cultivation, ritual, aesthetics, and institutional embodiment. Rather than separating "belief" from social service or "doctrine" from public life, the movement coordinates its philosophical and moral formation across childhood programs, adult disciplines, temple-based arts, and a dense welfare–education infrastructure. Read through relational-ontology approaches, Daesoon's integration of the Four Tenets in every individual and collective endeavor refuses the modern nature/culture split and treats these domains as ontologically collaborative and interdependent rather than auxiliary. Moreover, every endeavor is deeply rooted in—and develops from—the very core of the Tenets. This framing clarifies why prayer cycles, temple arts, and welfare provision are not discrete spheres but co-implicated modes of world-making.

Both Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i illustrate that resilience is not a passive endurance but an active principle of their cosmologies. Daesoon Jinrihoe's ability to grow and maintain institutional vitality is not a happy accident; it stems from the movement's intrinsic logic that emphasizes reconciliation and adaptability. The principle of *Haewon-sangsaeng* explicitly does not shy away from conflict or suffering—it confronts it and uses it as material for creating mutual life. For Daesoon Jinrihoe, the commitment to a cosmos that is just and harmonious means that modern injustices like colonialism or social inequality are interpreted not simply as sociopolitical problems but as cosmic imbalances—and thus they have cosmic solutions. This means that when Daesoon faces external pressures, its default response is to seek a way to resolve and incorporate, rather than fragment. This gives a powerful internal impetus to overcome obstacles coherently and can galvanize action in ways that secular frameworks might not.

In sum, Daesoon Jinrihoe's doctrinal holism and relational ontology recasts Korea's religious heritage into a new constellation aimed at cultural and cosmic revitalization. The movement constructs an alternative ontology where cosmic justice, rather than secular progress, is the ultimate aim of human activity. By teaching that the universe has moral structure and that humans in community with gods and other non-human entities can actively recalibrate that structure, Daesoon Jinrihoe empowers its followers in a relational ontology to view themselves as agents of a coming Great Transformation. This worldview was, and remains, a source of profound hope and meaning, especially in a society that had experienced colonization, war, and rapid modernization. It asserts that modernity's disasters are not the end of the story—there is a way to weave the torn threads of the cosmos back together through ethical and spiritual world-making.

Placed in comparative relief, the Andean pilgrimage of Qoyllurit'i exhibits a cognate pattern: ritualized reciprocity sustains a more-than-human polity while accommodating heritage management and climate constraints (Salas Carreño 2014; Kania 2019; de la Cadena 2010). Following Marisol de la Cadena insights (2010), events like Qoyllurit'i enact a cosmopolitics where the modern distinctions between religious and secular, or human and nature, do not apply—the community includes the mountain and the stars as social and political actors. As one Quechua leader poignantly explained, "the

mountains, the rivers, the rain, etc.—all are related like a family… this place is not where we are from, it is who we are" (de la Cadena 2010, 354). Rather than a syncretic compromise, Qoyllurit'i represents a creative revitalization of the Andean cosmos under the sign of Christianity—a ritual assertion that the sacred landscape remains alive despite colonial conversion. Without collapsing cases, this parallel underscores that Daesoon's integration of aesthetics, ritual, and welfare is best read as an ontological resistance rather than a merely sociological adaptation.

Within this framework, ethical action is not merely symbolic; it is cosmologically efficacious. Classical Daesoon sources and scholarly syntheses articulate the transformation of the practitioner into a *perfected being*, situating salvation within an imminent horizon rather than a deferred afterlife. Moreover, scholars note that Daesoon's ethic scales beyond the human: *Haewon-sangsaeng* underwrites proposals for ecological civilization and articulates obligations toward non-human animals, extending reciprocity to broader ecologies (Wang 2022; Rutana 2024). These more-than-human commitments cohere with the movement's claim that moral practice recalibrates a wider cosmic order and form an internally consistent ontology that offers explanations and solutions for human suffering radically different from those of liberal secular society. Rather than being reducible to "coping mechanisms" or "charismatic religiosity," Daesoon Jinrihoe articulates a vision of the world that competes with, and provides an alternative to, the dominant modern worldview. In other words, it is not just surviving modernity; it is talking back to modernity. Its ethical creativity posits that true progress is not measured by technological advancement or individual wealth, but by the moral and spiritual restoration of a world out of balance. This is a fundamentally different teleology than that of modern secular progress. Daesoon Jinrihoe's success in South Korea (becoming one of the largest faith communities) challenges the idea that modernization necessarily secularizes or homogenizes culture. Instead, it suggests modernity in Korea took on a distinct form: deeply shaped by indigenous religious innovation.

When Qoyllurit'i pilgrims invoke *apus,* Christ and Virgin Mary while offering to *Pachamama*, they are likewise asserting a pluriversal logic. Dussel and Escobar would likely view these phenomena as signs of "alternatives to modernity that are already present." These are not romanticized noble savages nor failed modernizations; rather, they are living proof that modernity itself can be reimagined from the Global South. In Dussel's words, the transmodernity evident in these phenomena is bringing together different experiences from across the world, not only those of Western civilization. The fact that Qoyllurit'i has persisted and even expanded in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (with growing attendance and recognition) indicates that it addresses needs and experiences that modernity, in its state or market forms, does not fulfill for the participants. Likewise, the persistence and appeal of Daesoon Jinrihoe show that people are seeking something beyond what that rhetoric offers. South Korea is one of the most technologically advanced, modernized countries, yet the growth of an indigenous

spiritual movement indicates that something in the modern/secular order was incomplete or alienating for many, whether it be a craving for holistic meaning, community, or a moral vision that pure material progress did not satisfy. Similarly, in the Andes, even after centuries of Christianization and state modernization efforts, indigenous cosmologies thrive because they offer a sense of rootedness and reciprocity that the official modern culture often lacks (de la Cadena 2010).

One could ask: do relational ontologies have a contribution to make in addressing global crises (like environmental degradation, social inequality)? Many argue yes, because they inherently treat the nonhuman world with respect and see human flourishing as tied to nonhuman well-being. This is precisely the sort of alternative epistemology that relational worldviews offer: knowledge that prioritizes balance, continuity, and reciprocity. In a time when many feel the Western model of modernity is in crisis (climate crisis, spiritual void, extreme polarization), these revitalized cosmologies present not just a refuge for their adherents but potentially a toolkit of concepts and practices that others might learn from. For example, rituals of reconciliation and forgiveness could inspire new forms of conflict resolution beyond legalistic approaches; the idea of continuous communication with the divine/natural world could foster more participatory environmental governance (with local communities speaking for rivers and mountains, akin to legal rights for nature movements).

In summary, examining Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i side by side compels us to reconsider assumptions of what is "modern" and what is "good" for societies. These movements underscore that modernity, as commonly defined, does not have a monopoly on reason, ethics, or progress. They remind scholars and policymakers alike that there exist plural modernities or even paths beyond modernity—what Dussel (2005) would call transmodern options—that integrate ancient wisdom with novel creativity. The relational ontologies embodied in these practices are not about rejecting airplanes, smartphones, or democratic institutions; they are about reimagining the cosmological narrative in which those things operate. They offer a narrative where community and cosmos are reunited, where moral and material are not divorced. The value of that narrative is not just in exotic religiosity, but in its potential to inspire more humane, sustainable ways of life.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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