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Toward an empathic panentheism: a study of John B. Cobb Jr.'s idea of God and Nongmun Im Seong-Ju's Idea of Ultimate Reality

Kim, Shin Myoung

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**TOWARD AN EMPATHIC PANENTHEISM:
A STUDY OF
JOHN B. COBB JR.'S IDEA OF GOD
AND NONGMUN IM SEONG-JU'S IDEA
OF ULTIMATE REALITY**

by

SHINMYOUNG KIM

B. A., Soongsil University 2006
M.Div., Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, 2010
Th.M., Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, 2012

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Approved by

First Reader

John H. Berthrong, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Comparative Theology

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with “empathic panentheism”. Precisely, we look into a comparative study between the panentheism of John B. Cobb Jr.’s idea of God and Nonmun Im Seong-Ju’s idea of Ultimate Reality. By doing so, we can find out that the relationship between God and the world shows us an “empathic” relationship.

However, we can identify many problems in Korean churches. The core problem is “the dualistic view of God and the world.” Most churches teach the divide of “the holy and the secular” or “things of God and things of the world.” This dichotomy causes indifference and apathy toward the social justice or social problems.

For solving this problem, we should deal with the panentheistic vision of God in Process Theology. In Alfred North Whitehead and John B. Cobb Jr.’s idea of God, actual occasions transit to the final concrescence through the mutual correspondence of God and the world. In this point, this relationship and correspondence between God and the world can be the empathic vision.

Also, we should look into Nongmun Im Seong-Ju’s idea of Ultimate

Reality in the Neo-Confucian tradition. Nongmun Im Seong-Ju argues that *li* and *qi* are equally real. Under this major premise, Nongmun establishes his theory of *li-qi* unlike other Neo-Confucian scholars who separate *li* with *qi* and consider the *li-qi* dichotomy. In this point, Nongmun Im Seong-Ju considers the correspondence between *li* and *qi* as life-giving intention (生意, *Saeng-ui*). Nongmun Im Seong-Ju regards the life-giving intention as the heart-mind of empathy. The life-giving intention is an ontological and cosmic creativity to connect the human heart-mind and the Great Ultimate.

For overcoming the dichotomy of Ultimate Reality (or God) and the world, both John B. Cobb Jr. and Nongmun Im Seong-Ju focus on the relationship and the correspondence. After all, both two scholars try to establish the empathic relationship between Ultimate Reality (or God) and the world.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Descartes's dictum, "I think, therefore I am", has been replaced by a new dictum, "I empathize, therefore I am."¹ Recently, some scholars have published books and they argue that empathy has the ability to solve crises and conflicts. Since the modern age began, there is nationalism, egoism, materialism, and a competitive social atmosphere have existed. Jeremy Rifkin's book, *The Empathic Civilization*, deals with empirical science like psychology, neurobiology, evolutionary biology, and brain science as well as the human sciences, or humanities, like philosophy and sociology. This book argues not only the necessity of empathy but also its inevitability. In this sense, research can expose the importance of empathy and its influence on problems of modern society.

In particular, with the rise of the modern Korean society, Korea has accomplished rapid economic development. However, the hidden side of the modern Korean society is miserable and horrible. Most people have disregarded the injustice within the society and have turned away from the

¹ Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization: the Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis* (New York: J.P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2009), 571.

sufferings of the weak. Tragically, the recent accident of the Sewol Ferry fully revealed this disturbing side of the modern Korean society and the critical need to address the issue of apathy. Moreover, Korean churches cannot explain this tragedy. Even though churches discuss this disastrous accident, they insist that it is a part of God's plan to make a better world or a chance for us to repent our sins without consideration or respect for bereaved families. Even some pastors and ministers preached that these families have to "be quiet" and refuse to answer questions during the investigation. Many Korean Christian churchgoers, as well as practitioners of other religions and atheists, fiercely criticize the attitude and social awareness of Korean churches.

However, in this regard of the attitude of Korean churches, it is not something special that stated just recently. Pastors and ministers of Mega-churches emphasize the growth of churches and the blessings in this world and afterlife. Though when many people were tortured, imprisoned, and even killed because of movements for democracy, religious leaders exalted the dictators who were responsible as the greatest leaders to hold the Korean presidential residence, *Cheongwadae*, like King David and King Solomon were exalted in the Bible. Christian writers and famous pastors teach that natural disasters, tsunamis, and tragic accidents are the providence of God. Because of these images, most people do not trust in Korean churches any more. What is the problem? And more precisely, which parts of Korean Christianity

perpetuate this problem?

We can identify many problems in churches but the core problem is “the dualistic view of God and the world.” Most churches teach the divide of “the holy and the secular” or “things of God and things of the world.” This dichotomy causes indifference and apathy toward the social justice or social problems. Because of the Japanese colonial period, modernization and age of dictatorship in Korea, many Christians do not accept risk that people resist the evil power or side with the weak. Rather, they believe in impassive and self-sufficient God without the relation of the world. Even they consider the world to be evil. Of course, conservative missionaries who came Korea taught the Western theistic and dualistic vision of God and forced the removal of Confucian life style and rituals. Although the missionaries contributed to the break down of old customs such as the status system in Korea, they banned good customs from the Confucian tradition, such as the communal life and respect for neighbors in the Confucian tradition. Thus, many Korean Christians overlook their Confucian roots and only identify with the Western theistic and dualistic vision of God.

The doctrine of God in the Western Christian theism emphasizes aseity, immutability, impassivity, and self-sufficiency unilaterally. However, it tends not to permit communal character, changeability, vulnerability, and correspondence. Aristotle understood God as the “Unmoved Mover” and

Thomas Aquinas embraced Aristotle's epistemology and the concept of perfection that identifies goodness with immutability. Thus, Aquinas argued that God does not cognize fortuitous characteristics of constant changeable physical things but rather recognizes the world through forms of things in the mind of God. However, God who does not directly respond to the actual world cannot show "true love" and "empathy"². God is not an Unmoved Mover but is affected by the causality of the world and God is Being as it experiences transition. The existence of God at least partially constitutes her/himself by authentic responses to accidental determination in the actual world. God does not only have influence on the world but also is affected by the actual world and is the correspondence with the world.

Thus, the Western theism has become a shelter during the hard times and has gradually changed to theism as a ghetto without communication with the society. More precisely, the idea that God does not empathize with the world means that Christians do not have any responsibilities of the world. Because of this way of thinking, Christians have become indifferent to the sufferings of their neighbors. To overcome this theism, God's image must be improved and is replaced with an idea of a God who empathize and correspond with the world. In doing so, we should look into the idea of God

² Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization: the Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis*, 20. The definition of empathy is not clear like other philosophy concepts related with feelings. Mundanely, a term of the empathy uses "empathy" mixed with "sympathy." However, in Korean dictionary, two words clearly have different meanings. While it means feeling with the other in the case of empathy, a term of "sympathy" means taking pity on the other. And Jeremy Rifkin does not define "empathy" strictly but it means active participation unlike "sympathy" that has passive meaning. In this point, the observer becomes parts of the other's experience and shares the other's one.

in the process theology and the Eastern Confucian idea of the Ultimate in Nonmun Im Seong-Ju.

Significance of the Study

This study deals with an empathic panentheism through the comparative study of the process theology of John B. Cobb and the Neo-Confucianism of Nonmun Im Seong-Ju. For this study, we have to understand our identity of Korean Christianity. The identity of Korean Christianity is complicated because it is made up of the Neo-Confucian tradition and the Western Christianity. If we ignore either of the two, we cannot recognize characteristics of Korean Christianity and cannot rebuild or reconstruct Korean Theology. For the reorientation of Korean Christianity, we deal with both of the Neo-Confucianism and the Western Theology. Thus, we should seek to the intersection between the Neo-Confucianism and the Western Theology.

This article is the comparative study of the Western process theology and the Eastern thought. My main concern begins with the situation of Korean Churches which hold an indifferent attitude to the secular world and consider relation of God and the world as a dualistic and a theistic vision. Also, my concern is that Korean Churches which hold an exclusivist attitude to the indigenous Neo-Confucian culture and tradition. In this point, my

hypothesis is that the Western process theology or philosophy and the Eastern Neo-Confucian philosophy have similar views and perspectives. In particular, the relation of God and the world, the panentheistic vision of God is similar to the Neo-Confucian idea of the Ultimate Reality. Of course, there are unique differences and these lead us to renew and reconstruct the idea of God in Korean Christianity.

Whitehead took a bright view of the dialogue of the process theology or philosophy and the Neo-Confucianism.

“It will be noticed that the Eastern Asiatic Concept and the Pantheistic concept invert each other. According to the former concept, when we speak of God we are saying something about the world; and according to the latter concept, when we speak of the world we are saying something about God.”³

Like Whitehead, Taksa Choi Byung-Hyun (1858~1927)⁴ also agreed with this view. Choi said, “The heaven in the Western tradition is not different from the heaven in the Eastern tradition.”⁵ As soon as missionaries introduced Christianity, many Neo-Confucian scholars established many dialogues between Christianity and Neo-Confucianism. Taksa Choi Byung-Hyun and Yun Sung-Bum (1916~1980)⁶ interpreted Christianity in the light of Neo-Confucian subjectivity in the early Korean Christianity. After them,

³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making: Lowell Lectures, 1926* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 46.

⁴ Taksa Choi Byung-Hyun(1858~1927) was a pastor in the Jung-Dong Church. He embraced Christianity as a salvation religion in the light of Neo-Confucian subjectivity.

⁵ Duk-Ju Lee, “Indigenous Theological Spirituality in the Early Korean Church”, in *Theology and the world* 2005. 6., 195. “西洋之天 卽東洋之天”

⁶ Haechun Yun Sung-Bum is father of the Korean indigenous theology. In particular, he was interested in the dialogue between the Christianity and the Neo Confucianism of Yulgok.

because of the limit of interpretation prospect, people decrease interest in dialogues. However, for the last twenty years, many scholars tried to compare Christianity of the Neo-Confucianism in perspectives of feminism, pluralism, and ecology. The dialogues develop and improve and have an influence with each religion. Although these dialogues have various themes, the main concern is the Ultimate Reality or God.

Core themes in these dialogues are the relationship of God and the world. Namely, dialogues are to study how God or the Ultimate Reality has an influence with the world and how the world has an influence with God or the Ultimate Reality. This is a relational and an empathic panentheism.

Through this comparative study, we can reorient the identity of Korean Theology and Christianity. This panentheistic and empathic vision of God or the Ultimate Reality gives a big transformation of Korean Churches. Because God or the Ultimate Reality and the world have correspondence and mutuality, Christians have responsibilities to transform the world and the society.

Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to a survey of a few key points in the process thought and the Neo-Confucianism. First of all, looking into the process thought, we focus on the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and

the process theology of John B. Cobb. Because Whitehead's books are very broad, Dealing with the process philosophy of Whitehead, we confine the outline of Whiteheadian philosophy and the idea of God and concentrate in *Process and Reality, Modes of Thought, and Religion in the Making*.

Also, Interpreting the process theology of John B. Cobb Jr., we pivot on *God and the World, A Christian Natural Theology, and Process Theology* for search for the panentheistic vision and the relational characteristics of God.

Revealing the thought of Nongmun Im Seong-Ju in the Neo-Confucianism, first of all, we should study of Nongmun's background influenced by Confucius, Mencius, and Wang Yang-Ming in view of "empathy".

In particular, when we look into the idea of the Ultimate Reality in Nonmun Im Seong-Ju's thought, we confine in *Nonmunzip* because he wrote only this book.

Overview of the Remaining Chapters

For a comparative study between John Cobb Jr.'s Process Theology and Nongmun Im Seong-Ju's Neo-Confucian Philosophy, we should look into their core thoughts and ideas.

In order to study Cobb Jr.'s Process Theology, First of all, we should consider his academic background in the next chapter. Cobb Jr.

developed his Process Theology influenced by Alfred North Whitehead's Process Philosophy. In this chapter, we deal with Whitehead's important concepts concerned with the idea of God: Actual Occasions, Subjectivity, Essential Relatedness, and Creative Novelty. By doing so, we can recapitulate Whitehead's understanding of God.

In the chapter 3, we should deal with John B. Cobb Jr.'s idea of God in his Process Theology. In specific, we consider Cobb Jr.'s ideas, God as Energy-Event, God as Creative-Response Love, God as Novelty, and God as source of the Creative Transformation. By doing so, we can investigate the relationship between God and the world and a panentheistic vision of God in Process Theology.

In the chapter 4, after dealing with Process Theology, we should handle Neo-Confucian Philosophy. In this chapter, first of all, we should look into Nongmun Im Seong-Ju's academic background. We try to search for "Empathy" in the Confucian tradition. First, Confucius's idea of *Shù* (恕), Mencius's idea of Heart-Mind of Empathy (*cè yīn zhī xīn*, 惻隱之心), and Wang Yang-Ming's *liáng zhī* (良知) are core concepts related to "Empathy" in Confucian tradition.

In the chapter 5, we can develop Nongmun Im Seong-Ju's empathic vision of Ultimate Reality. First, we should consider his life and social background. Second, we should deal with the major hypothesis and the

empathic relationship between Ultimate Reality and the world.

In last chapter, we should establish an empathic panentheism through a comparative study between John B. Cobb Jr.'s panentheism and Nongmun Im Seong-Ju's one. Specifically, we should summarize their characteristics of the relationship between Ultimate Reality (or God) and the world and recapitulate their non-dualistic, panentheistic, empathic vision of Ultimate Reality (or God).

CHAPTER TWO

WHITEHEADIAN PHILOSOPHY:
PROCESS-RELATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Whitehead mentioned like this, “and whatever suggests a cosmology, suggests a religion.”¹ Whiteheadian philosophy that we deal with in this chapter is not only a background of Cobb’s theological vision but also provides us important insights and implications itself. Main contents in the process philosophy can be shown by five themes: the actual occasions in the process, the subjectivity, the essential relatedness, the creative novelty, and the understanding of God.

Actual Occasions in the Process

For Whitehead, the temporal process is a “*transition*” from one actual entity to another by “*feeling*” or “*prehension*”. These entities are momentary events which perish immediately upon coming into being. The perishing marks the transition to the succeeding event.² Namely, creativity that relatively complete actual world becomes a resource for new concrescence calls “*transition*”. Feeling or prehension is essentially a transition that gives rise

¹ Whitehead, *Religion in the Making: Lowell Lectures, 1926*, 141.

² John B. Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 14.

to the concrescence.

Donald W. Sherburne analyzes Whitehead's complex structure of feeling as five elements: the subject of feelings, primordial resources, elimination by negative prehensions, objective resources of feeling, and subjective form.³ (A key to Whitehead's process and reality 12) like this process, a true entity is a temporal experience of feeling. This experience of feeling calls "*actual entity*" or "*actual occasion*". A being as occasions or events is not a static and unchangeable substance but a dynamic and becoming process of concrescence. Whitehead mentioned,

"'Concrescence' is the name for the process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity in a determinate relegation of each item of the 'many' to its subordination in the constitution of the novel 'one'."⁴

"An actual occasion is nothing but the unity to be ascribed to a particular instance of concrescence. This concrescence is thus nothing else than the 'real internal constitution' of the actual occasion in question."⁵

The process itself is the constitution of actual entities. True entities, momentary experiences, mean "*societies*" of actual occasions. That is, the human existence as an individual itself is that occasions of experiences are successive and ordering societies.

Subjectivity

"To be" is to actualize oneself in the process and all actual entities enjoy

³ Donald W. Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality* (St. Luis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006), 12.

⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1979), 211.

⁵ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 212.

their own subjective existences. In the moment of concrescence, actual entities in the process enjoy what Whitehead calls “subjective immediacy”⁶. When the concrescence is completed and becomes the past, entities in this process become resources and objects for new processes, in other words, “objective immortality”⁷.

However, subjectivity does not presuppose a static and transcendent subject preceding the process of concrescence but rather it starts with concrescence in the form of a subjective aim. This subjective aim proceeds the process of concrescence related with initial aim and its subjectivity has done when it arrives at the phase of satisfaction. Immediately, subject becomes “superject”⁸ in the last phase. The statement that all actual entities are characterized by feelings and enjoyments expresses that all entities have inherent values and intrinsic realities. Thus, to be is to actualize oneself mentioned above. Besides, to be is to respond to the other, to share in the community, and to enjoy becoming the subject of experience. For Whitehead, “experience is the self enjoyment of being one among many, and of being one

⁶ John B. Cobb Jr., *A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality* (Claremont: P&F Press, 2008), 62. Subjective immediacy is the way our experience feels to us at all time. However, when we think of it, we almost necessarily have conscious subjective immediacy in mind. To understand Whitehead, we must grasp that there is also nonconscious subjective immediacy, indeed, that the vast majority of subjective immediacy is not conscious.

⁷ The state of an occasion that is the alternative to subjective immediacy is objective immortality. In its attainment of satisfaction, the occasion becomes a datum for other occasions.

⁸ Cobb Jr., *A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality*, 35. For the most part the occasion and all its prehensions express the casual efficacy of past occasions. The prehensions are better understood as expressing their casual efficacy in the constitution of the new occasion, which only comes into being as these prehensions integrate in it. To capture this emergence of the new occasion out of the working of the past in it, Whitehead sometimes speaks of the new occasion as the “superject.”

arising out of the composition of many.”⁹

Also, the Whiteheadian concept of subjectivity is different from Descartes’ dualism. Descartes’ idea of dualism is a concept of reality that human (*res cogitans*) is totally different from the other except human (*res extensa*). This idea results in human alienation from nature and destruction of nature by human. The human consciousness is just the highest phase of shared experience by all actualities. Whitehead said, “Consciousness presupposes experience, and not experience consciousness.”¹⁰ Thus, Descartes’ idea that establishes the dichotomy between subjective actualities that can experience and objective actualities that cannot experience is impossible in the process philosophy.

With respect to Whiteheadian idea of subjectivity, Whitehead tries to explain the ontological principle. Actual entities are *causa sui* (self-cause). This is the ontological principle and there is no reason without actual entities. The ontological principle provides an ontological and epistemic basis for human experiences in time and space. When we seek to understand the world including perception and symbolism, we cannot begin with eternal objects. They describe but they do not explain. The reason any occasion becomes what it does is to be sought in actual entities. The ontological principle is that only

⁹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 220.

¹⁰ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 83.

actual entities act; only they are the reasons for what happens.¹¹

The Essential Relatedness

The interwoven, relational character of world is obvious to thoughtful people today. The western culture and philosophy for the past few decades has characteristics of individualism and dualism. Although there are various reactions against self-sufficient culture and philosophy, the idea of independence causes more intense fervor than one of the idea correspondence. On the contrary, Whiteheadian process philosophy emphasizes relatedness in the actual world. In the process philosophy, “relatedness” against independence ontologically is an inherent character and maximizes relations of the other in the actual world. The correspondence of actual entities is preconscious, nonsensory, and intrinsic relation. Put it another way, the process of actual entities has an empathic interconnection with each other. Memory is a good example that the past incarnates in the present. Namely, the past is not the subject that still experience in actual world but is experienced as the object. In this respect, Whitehead calls it objective immortality. The past is not nothing and alive. However, it is alive as the objectified and incarnated reality. In the Whiteheadian philosophy, the empathic correspondence is ecological because not only human but also all things have the inherent one. Process theologians, such as John B. Cobb Jr.,

¹¹ Cobb Jr., *A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality*, 56.

Marjorie Suhocki, and David Ray Griffin, argue that even God is best understood in terms of empathic relatedness and process rather than as an unchanging, static and impassive Being unaffected by the world.¹²

Creative Novelty

Until now, we focus on correspondence and efficient causation in the process of actual occasions. This emphasis point is not autonomy of actual occasions but dependence of ones. However, if we overemphasize dependence of actual occasions, we can cause misunderstanding of the process philosophy. Process philosophers agree that the process is partially self-creative through the autonomy and the final causation.

“Creativity” is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity. “Creativity” is the principle of novelty.¹³

Whitehead describes creativity as “the principle of novelty.”¹⁴ Each actual entity finally creates itself from given resources. The final causation completes what efficient causation begins the process. The purpose of all occasions of experience is to maximize proper enjoyment. This view leads to harmonize the final causation with the efficient causation.

¹² Robert C. Mesle, *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007), 10.

¹³ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 21.

¹⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 21.

The fact that the individual essentially is self-creative means that improved conditions cannot secure an increment of the individual enjoyment.

So does God is. John B. Cobb Jr. mentions,

“The divine reality so relates itself to us as to heighten the probability that enjoyment will be enhanced. But God does not compel us to enjoy. The individual experience finally determines, within the limits made possible by God and the world what enjoyment it will realize.”¹⁵

Moreover, in the Whiteheadian philosophy and the process theology, occasions of experience establish themselves for contribution to enjoyment of the other. Any actual entities have empathic interconnection with the other and do not exclude the other. Egoism rules out ontologically.

Every event involves the actualization of innumerable possibilities. Through the relation of God, novelty that did not actualize in the past can actualize the possibilities. Thus, God is ground of novelty. Although God in process philosophy is the ground of order, this is a changing and developing order, an order that must continually incorporate novelty.¹⁶

With respect to the process philosophy, the relation of God among all relations is essential for human. That is to say, the incarnation of God in the actual world, the initial aim given God for enjoyment, and God as the creative novelty shows that God has intrinsic and empathic characters. Thus, we should look into God in the process philosophy in more detail.

¹⁵ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 26.

¹⁶ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 28.

The Understanding of God in the Process Philosophy

Whitehead is a unique thinker among twentieth-century thinkers in seeing an important role for God in the explanation of what happens in the world. Whitehead first used a term of “God” in his Lowell Lectures of 1925 that published version of *Science and the Modern World*.¹⁷ God is not an eternal object but the one actual entity that is not an actual occasion. The function of God is the basis of regularity in the world. Whitehead believed that this ordering is the work of an actual entity. This view is different from the traditional Western understanding of God that is considered as the Ultimate, Prime Mover, and Unmoved Mover. However, although Whitehead rejects the traditional idea of God, he accepts that God primordially provides a “character” to creativity.¹⁸

For Whitehead, the nature of God has dipolar characters like all actual world (PR 593). One is primordial nature and the other is consequent nature.¹⁹ The former is the divine character that consists of experience of

¹⁷ Cobb Jr., *A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality*, 67.

¹⁸ Cobb Jr., *A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality*, 69.

¹⁹ Cobb Jr., *A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality*, 69-70. Whitehead calls God’s ordering of eternal objects for the sake of realizing value in the world, God’s “primordial nature.” He thinks of this ordering as a single nontemporal act, preceding and conditioning every actual occasion. The meaning of “primordial” here is much the same as the more usual term “eternal.” However, God to be actual would seem to require that God have physical feelings as well as conceptual ones. Those physical feelings would be and, Whitehead speculates, are, God’s prehensions of actual occasions. These prehensions constitute God’s physical pole and complete God. This aspect of God is affected by everything that happens in the world. It is in this sense “consequent” upon the world. Whitehead calls the physical pole of God, the “consequent nature.”

Eternal Object.²⁰ The latter is a character that is formed by physical experience. On one hand, God is connected to eternal objects through primordial nature, on the other hand, God is related to actual world through consequent nature. That is, primordial nature means the principle of God and consequent nature stands for the actuality of God.

The primordial nature of God is a conceptual nature and means unlimited actualization of pure potentiality. Because God as primordial nature is far from eminent reality, this abstract nature of God lacks of reality. Namely, God as primordial nature cannot be directly related with actual world and means principle, eternity, and aseity of God that cannot be limited by any actual occasions. According to Whitehead, God is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feelings at the base of things; so that, by reason of this primordial actuality, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation²¹ (PR 344). It is “the unconditioned conceptual valuation of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects”.²² (PR 46) Thus, the primordial nature of God is non-temporal, truly universal, and is not defined by events in the actual world.

²⁰ Cobb Jr., *A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality*, 23-24. Whitehead has listed “categories of existence,” he identifies two of them as having “a certain extreme finality.” One is the actual entities, the other is “eternal objects.” Some people have often made the contrast between eternal objects as pure possibilities and actual entities as possessing full actuality. However, Whitehead generally associates possibility with something that could actually occur. After all, eternal Objects are pure potentials, and that means forms that could in principle characterize something actual, but that are in their nature indifferent to whether they do, or ever will, characterize anything actual.

²¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 344.

²² Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 46.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN B. COBB JR.'S IDEA OF GOD

In the process thought, there is no actual entity that is self-sufficient and accidentally establishes the relationship with God from the beginning. The relation with God is a constitutive element of all actual occasions. This fact does not restrain the occasions of their freedom but rather there is no liberty away from God. In this respect, we can see an aspect of the panentheism in the process philosophy or theology. God opens possibilities that are not actualize and creates spaces for freedom and self-creativity. Thus, Cobb does not agree that God is Being that allows the established orders but God is the basis and ground for the creative transformation and actualizes new possibilities concerned with empathic connection or divine incarnation to the actual world.¹

God as Energy-Event

According to the concept of God, the first concern of Cobb is an ontological concern. Cobb rejects the ontological dichotomy between the material and the mind. This dichotomy is not good way that understands the relation of God and the world. Moreover, Cobb criticizes Descartes' dualism

¹ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 45-50.

that divides of “res cogitans” (thinking thing) and “res extensa” (extended thing). These two dimensions are inseparable and constitute such an energy-event aspect or type. The energy-events as the ultimate reality can include not only unconscious thing-events but also human thinking behaviors. According to Cobb’s words,

“The electron can only be understood as a *succession of events* or happening. These events can be viewed as transmissions of energy from past events to future ones. If we ask what they are in themselves, the only answer possible to the physicist is energy. The building blocks of the universe, the things of which everything else is composed, are energy-events. (...) A thought cannot be understood as a physical activity in the old sense, but it can be understood as an energy-event. My act of thinking receives energy from past occurrences in my body and transmits that energy, appropriately modified, to subsequent events.”²

Cobb applies energy-events to the understanding of God. Cobb presupposes the broad gap between human energy-event and energy-event of God. If what is most real are energy-events, and if these are highly diverse in character, then God can be conceived as a very special kind of energy-event.³ The energy-events are nothing but actual entities or actual occasions that Whitehead mentioned. Cobb thinks when we consider the ontological structure of God in the view of the actual entity and the actual occasions, we can approach the maximum of consistency and the possibility of understanding.⁴

For Cobb, a term of energy-events is the subject and the object at the

² John B. Cobb Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 70.

³ John B. Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 71.

⁴ Delwin Brown, *Process Philosophy a Christian Thought*, ed. Ralph E. James and Gene Reeves (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 385.

same time. However, in the aspect of mind, the subjective dimension is more important than the object one because the mental life from various resources of the past creates the creative novelty in accordance with its subjective purpose.⁵ In this respect, Cobb claims the subjectivity of God. However, the experience of God is nonsensory or extrasensory in contrast with human experience as sensory one. This experience of God is similar to the experience in human memory. But this nonsensory experience is not unconscious but fully conscious. Thus, the divine energy-event that experiences the world by the nonsensory way is the conscious subject.

God as the Creative-Responsive Love

Cobb defines God as love. Love is creative and responsive. The creative aspect of God's love manifests her/himself through personal activity and presence of God that aims to create competent conditions in the actual world. The traditional theism describes God as a dominant force. Omnipotence of God means that God rules over all historic processes of the world. On the contrary to this opinion, the process theology considers that the creative activity is based on the response of the world. Because actual entities of the world are partially self-creative, events of future does not still determine. Thus, any power or any knowledge cannot determine future of the world in advance. This means that God does not reign over the world unilaterally.

⁵ Brown, *Process Philosophy an Christian Thought*, 385.

Therefore, the creative influence of God is not compulsory but persuasive.⁶ God acts in the actual world providing new and ideal possibilities for the whole creation. The primordial nature of God means the yearning projection of God toward the primordial potentialities. The initial aim as an urge that actualizes possibilities that transit from the primordial nature of God to the condition of the actual world is derived. God does not govern the self-actualization of finite occasions but persuades. Since God cannot fully rule over the actual world, the occurrence of evil can be compatible with the mercy of God.⁷ This is theodicy of the process theology.

The purpose of God's persuasion that Cobb calls the creative love does not fulfill the moral law but is to promote the enjoyment of the creation. However, this enjoyment does not conflict with the morality because to be moral means the actualization in the way that maximizes the enjoyment of actual entities in the future.⁸

The purpose of God's creative love that elevates enjoyment of the creation is adventurous because the creative activity of God is not compulsory but persuasive and even God does not know the consequence. For this reason, it is understood that God is the root of instability in the universe. In

⁶ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 52-53.

⁷ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 53.

⁸ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 56-57.

Whitehead words, "The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe."⁹ Although God is the source of order, this order is derived from the novelty. Namely, God does not approve established order but arouses a little chaos maximizing the enjoyment of the creation.

The essence of universe is the process and the ground of this process is the primordial nature of God. The creative love of God (Cobb) or the primordial nature of God (Whitehead) is the goad toward novelty in the universe.¹⁰ In this point, God is also adventurous because the advanced new enjoyment in the creation is the experience that provides resources for God's experience. The experience of God in the actual world arouses the responsive love that Cobb called in the consequent nature of God.

If the creative activity is the essential aspect, the empathic response is also the essential aspect. In the perfect sense, love includes the empathic response of the beloved being. The empathy is to feel the other's feelings. It means that someone who can empathize suffers with sufferers and grieves for the grief and is pleased with the joys.¹¹ However, in the traditional theism, God is fully absolute, independent, and insensitive Being. Thus, we cannot look for any empathic element or the necessity of the beloved being in this tradition.

⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), 354.

¹⁰ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 135.

¹¹ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 44.

While the traditional theism argues absoluteness, insensibility, independence, and immutability of God, the process theology asserts relativity, dependence, vulnerability, and probability of God. This process idea comes from the consequent nature of God that means prehension of the actual world by God. This God is a contrast to traditional theism derived from the Hellenic idea of God. In Whitehead words, in the consequent nature of God, God as a friend who can understand and participate the other's suffering is "the great companion" that is influence by the actual world.¹² In the same with Whitehead, Cobb maintains that the relativity of God or the consequent nature of God means responsive and receptive Being in regard to the actualization of the world.¹³ For the meaning of actual entities includes intrinsic relationship, God as the actual entity essentially is related with the actual world. New and unpredictable events happen in the world. Thus, The concrete knowledge of God depends on the determination of actual entities in the world.

God have a strong influence on actual occasions and God is affected by all actual occasion equally. In particular, the response of God to the world includes empathic feeling with beings in the actual world. Thus, God as the responsive love enjoys with our enjoyment and suffers with our suffering. Cobb quotes Whitehead's book, *Adventures of Ideas*, and he said,

¹² Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, 351.

¹³ Cobb Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 44.

Whitehead himself does not speak characteristically of meaning but rather of peace. The last two chapters of *Adventures of Ideas* are entitled "Adventure" and "Peace." In these chapters he rarely uses the word "God," but he is nevertheless speaking of that reality which he elsewhere calls God. The primordial nature of God is here pictured as the love that lures man to adventure. This aspect of God and his relation to the world has been the focus of these chapters. But Whitehead rightly feels that something more is needed for human existence, needed even to sustain the adventure itself, and it is this something else which he calls "peace."¹⁴

To sum up, while the primordial nature of God is the source of "adventure", the consequent nature of God is the source of "peace."

God as the creative-responsive love is related with the world. When the creative activity of God is based on empathic responsiveness, the response of God is a positive reception for the creative love of God experienced by the world.

Cobb criticizes the trinity of God and the personal triune God is the source of chaos and mystification. For Cobb does not agree with the concept of persons in the traditional trinity but insists that God consists of two persons, the creative love and the responsive love.¹⁵ The one God who constitutes two persons has transcendent and immanent aspect at the same time. Jesus is the inner existence of the creative love and the Spirit is the inner existence of the responsive love.

God as Novelty, the Ideal Possibility and Source of the Creative Transformation

In the Cobb's theological system, the relationship of God is the

¹⁴ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 84.

¹⁵ Cobb Jr., *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 13, 155.

constitutive element of all actual occasions mentioned above. How can the actual entities or energy-events have something to do with God? Adversely, How can God be concerned with all experience of occasions and events?

Cobb analyzes that transcendent God disappears from our view today although we still mention such a transcendent God. In this case, Cobb looks into a new vision of God that God is called as life of all creation, love, and creative self-transcendence and interacts and responds with human beings and all things.¹⁶ This vision requests theological transition. Thus, Cobb opens his theological foundations to both of the Eastern religious thinking and the Western one. With the regard to the open of two streams of thinking, Cobb considers God as the source of novelty and a lurer who tries to actualize possibilities in abundance.

Although Cobb emphasizes the creative love and the responsive love at the same time, Cobb thinks that the former is more important than the latter. In *God and the world*, Cobb tries to overcome Panenberg's criticism on Whiteheadian scholasticism. In this book, Cobb expresses his own faith through the concept of God as the source of novelty. In particular, in chapter 2, Cobb defines God as the one who calls toward future. In this case of this, God can be called as the creative love. God is the source of novelty, ideal possibility, and the creative transformation and these ideas come from the

¹⁶ John B. Cobb Jr., *The structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 91-94.

primordial nature of God in the Whiteheadian philosophy. However, Cobb's main focus changes from the eternal nature to the concrete influence of God in *God and the world*.

Cobb develops his explanation of God as the one who calls toward the future. First, features of our experience oriented to the ideal and the possible were highlighted in distinction from the casual influence of the past. Second, the need to ascribe some objectivity to ideal possibilities was urged. Third, it was proposed that this objectivity is best understood when the effective presentation of ideal possibilities is attributed to God.¹⁷ The ideal possibility and the lure come from God and this lure is called as initial aim.

Therefore, the function of God is to provide the ideal for self-actualization to each entity. What the individual forms oneself is concerned with the relation of the ideal through the primordial aim of God. God is the one who calls us forward possibilities of future over the actual occasions.

These opinions of Cobb and other process theologians show that God in the process theology is the ground of orders but this orders always transform, integrate, and receive novelty unceasingly. In this regard, the presence of God comes from not the fixed past but the future that opens the ideal possibilities. Thus, God does not keep old orders but the ground for the creative transformation that constantly changes given things from the past for the actualization of the ideal possibilities.

¹⁷ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 67.

Lastly, mentioned above, power of God as the ground of order and the source of the creative transformation is persuasive. However, this persuasion is the most effective and strongest power. The influence of God on the world does not fully determine events in the actual world. God acts by providing new possibilities for the creation in the actual world. That is, God is not a dictator but a persuasive lurer. Because we can comprehend God, God can have a great influence with us.

The Relation of God and the World: Panentheistic vision of God

When Cobb wrote his book, *God and the World*, Cobb expressed that the relation of God and the world was inseparable by using “and”. In the preface, Cobb explains the reason of using “and”.

“When a book title connects two words with an “and”, it can mean that both topics are treated or that the relation of the two is the unifying subject of the book. In this case the latter is intended. This is not a book about God, nor is it a book about the world. It is a book about how God is in the world and how the world is in and from God.”¹⁸

Cobb maintains that God does not exist up there or out there any more. Namely, there is no transcendent God as the absolute without the relation of the actual world.

¹⁸ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 9.

Also, Cobb suggests God as “one who calls”¹⁹ with the respect to the creative love of God. Cobb uses this expression by changing Whitehead’s term, “lure” in the primordial nature of God. In particular, when Cobb designates his term, “one who calls” that connotes “the call forward.”²⁰ Likewise, by understanding that God calls us to have an adventure forward the future, Cobb emphasizes the creative love that always has connection with the actual world. Like other actual occasions, God influences the experience of occasions.

On the other hand, the world constitutes all events and occasions related with God. If there is no God in the actual world, this world is filled with simple repetitions and loses forms of order. God acts and is immanent in the actual world by providing the ideal possibilities and novelty for the creation. In this point, Cobb explains omnipresence of God.

Because omnipresent God includes everything, we are parts of God in any sense.²¹ However, it does not mean that God is simply the sum of parts or we do not have the independence and the self-determination. The world does not exist without God but the world is not God or simple parts of God. Also, the character of the world is affected by God but God does not determine the destiny of the world. The world contributes to constitute the experience of

¹⁹ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 45.

²⁰ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 45.

²¹ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 49.

God in its own way.²²

The doctrine of God that Cobb develops this argument is “panentheism.” It is kind of theism but has a difference that stresses on the mutual externality between God and the world. Also, pantheism means God is understood to be identification of God and the world when pantheism is different from panentheism. Cobb thinks that panentheism is the synthesis of the central concerns of traditional theism and pantheism. Cobb explains traditional theism and pantheism.

“The central concerns of traditional theism as against pantheism is not spatial separateness of God and the world, and indeed such spatial separateness has been qualified or denied by many who are recognized as theists. The central concern is that God and man be each understand as having integrity in himself. Theism denies both that God is the impersonal whole and that man is a subordinated part. The central concern of pantheism is to reject an external creator outside of and over against the world who manipulates or controls from without and to assert that God pervades the world and is manifest in all its parts. To both of these central concerns panentheism says Yes, while providing a way conceptually to hold them together.”²³

Namely, panentheism is that God and the world or God and human possess the integrity and always exist in the “relationship.”

God constitutes her/himself s/he calls us to be what we can be and are not. S/he constitutes her/himself so as to provide each occasion with an ideal for its self-actualization, and it is in relation to that ideal that each human energy-event forms itself. For Whitehead, every becoming occasion derives its

²² Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 79-80.

²³ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 80.

initial aim from God.²⁴

²⁴ Cobb Jr., *God and the World*, 81.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEARCH FOR “EMPATHY”
IN THE CONFUCIAN TRADITIONDiscovery of the Empathic Spirituality
in the Confucius and Mencius:
The Idea of *Shù* (恕)
and the Heart-Mind of Empathy (*cè yīn zhī xīn*, 惻隱之心)

Humanities in the Eastern Asia consider “the empathic life” as the core proposition.¹ Confucius (BC 551~479) suggested *Shù* (恕) as the golden rule and emphasized *Shù* (恕) as the guideline of life in the Eastern Asian culture.² *Shù* (恕) is combined “equal” (如) with “heart-mind” (心) and it means that people have the same heart-mind each other in the relation between them. Thus, a term of *Shù* (恕) refers to respectful heart-mind that feels and regards the other’s feelings. This means that what one does not want to do does not force the other to do and what one wants to do recommends the other.³ Namely, it emphasizes the mutual respect and consideration.

The idea of *Shù* (恕) considers the empathic life as the core value in the Eastern Confucian tradition. In the view of Confucius, the process that

¹ Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 347-361.

² 論語「衛靈公, 21章, “子貢問曰, 有一言而可以終身行之者乎. 子曰, 其恕乎, 己所不欲勿施於人.”

³ 論語「衛靈公, 21章, “己所不欲勿施於人”

expands the empathy to the other is called as *kè jǐ fù lǐ*. (克己復禮, deny me and recover proper courtesy) and we can actualize a society filled with people of decent character (*tiān xià*, 天下歸仁) through this process.⁴ By the way, Confucius argues that one cannot requests the other's empathy but one who acts empathy just can set an example.⁵ () Thus, expanding the life of empathy, Confucius insists the necessity of the cultivation of the heart-mind. (Karen 347~361)

Also, looking into the heart-mind of human, Mencius identifies the source of empathy in the heart-mind. That is to say, when Mencius mentioned *sì duān zhī xīn* (四端之心)⁶, *cè yǐn zhī xīn* (惻隱之心), the heart-mind of empathy is the ground of Mencius' idea of the empathy. Thus, For Mencius, if people do not have *sì duān zhī xīn* (四端之心), people are lifeless. Although all people have *sì duān zhī xīn* (四端之心), only that they cannot put empathy into practice, people are their own enemy.⁷

In the opinion of Mencius, the heart-mind of empathy (*cè yǐn zhī xīn*, 惻隱之心) is inherent in our heart-mind. However, if we cannot actualize the empathy in the actual world, people cannot live decently. In this respect,

⁴ 論語 顏淵, 1章, “顏淵問仁. 子曰, 克己復禮爲仁, 一日克己復禮, 天下歸仁焉。”

⁵ 論語 顏淵, 1章, “爲仁由己而由人乎哉。”

⁶ 惻隱之心 仁之端也, 羞惡之心 義之端也, 辭讓之心 禮之端也, 是非之心 智之端也. Mencius mentions four virtue, “If people have the heart-mind of empathy, this is the best true virtue. If people have the heart-mind of sense of shame, this is the best right. If people have the heart-mind that decline politely, this is the best of politeness. If people have the heart-mind that know right or wrong, this is the best wisdom.”

⁷ 孟子 公孫丑上, 5章, “人之有是四端也, 猶其有四體也, 有是四端而自謂不能者, 自賊者也”

carrying out immanent empathy in the heart-mind, a man or a woman of decent character is actualized in the relation with the other. In the view of a man or a woman of decent character, we may change Descartes' proposition, "I think, therefore I am" to "I empathize, therefore I am."

For Mencius, the immanent empathy in the heart-mind and the practice of empathy is an obligation for all human beings. If human beings fulfill the obligation, human beings can reach a transcendental prospect pursued ultimately. Namely, "If human beings fulfill the heart-mind, they can recognize the essential value and this recognition leads them to realize transcendental value.⁸ The transcendental value that human beings desire to seek is not far away from us but rather we can get the transcendental value through actualization of immanent empathy in our heart-mind. In particular, *sì duān zhī xīn* (四端之心) of Mencius is great discovery in the point that human beings have possibilities of transcendence. The philosophy of Mencius and insights of the heart-mind have a great influence with idea of the heart-mind in the philosophy of Wang Yang-Ming and idea of the heart-mind in the philosophy of Nongmun Im Seong-Ju.

⁸ 孟子 盡心上, 1章, "孟子曰, 盡其心者, 知其性也, 知其性則知天矣", This "transcendence" refers to the Confucian transcendence. Before Confucius, "the heaven" (天) is an object of religious faith. Confucius and Mencius convert the role of the heaven (天) as the transcendental and metaphysical reality. In Sung and Ming dynasty, the meaning and the structure of the heaven convert to the immanent transcendence in the dimension of religion.

The Idea of *liáng zhī* (良知) in Wang Yang-Ming

After Mencius, in the middle of Ming dynasty (1368~1661), Experienced tremendous sufferings and difficulties, Wang Yang Ming (1472~1529) realized the truth, *xīn jí lǐ* (心即理), The heart-mind(心) is the same as the source of pattern (理). On the foundation of Mencius, Wang struggled against Neo-Confucianism and he developed the study of the heart-mind (*xīn xué*, 心學), emphasizing *xīn jí lǐ* (心即理), *zhī háng hé yī* (知行合一)⁹, and *zhì liáng zhī* (致良知)¹⁰.

The point of this study of the heart-mind is *liáng zhī* (良知). For Wang, the discovery of *liáng zhī* is amazing and it looks like a religious experience. Teachings of Wang concerned with this mystical experience have a great influence with the spread process. Wang sings like this, “Many saints in the past are only shadows and *liáng zhī* (良知) is solely my teacher.”¹¹ *liáng zhī* (良知) is gotten through the cultivation of the heart-mind. Wang considered *liáng zhī* (良知) as guide of life. Also, Wang highlighted that *liáng zhī* (良知) that can become guide of life is the substance of social behaviors. In Wang’s word,

“The knowledge is the substance of the heart-mind and this heart-mind naturally recognize. If we see our parents, we naturally know filial duty. If we see the situation that a child falls into the well, we naturally have the pitiful sense in our heart-mind. This

⁹ “The knowledge and the practice is the same.”

¹⁰ “The heart-mind inherently has all patterns of the universe.”

¹¹ 王陽明全集 卷20, 「長生」, 796. “千聖皆過影, 良知乃吾師.”

is *liáng zhī* and we cannot need to seek outside of the heart-mind.”¹²

Wang explained *liáng zhī* (良知) that the knowledge means the heart-mind know. Then what does the heart-mind know? According to the quotation, Wang considered the filial duty and the pitiful attitude to a child in danger. To put it another way, *liáng zhī* (良知) means that human beings naturally act proper social behaviors in the relation between them and participate in the other’s sufferings and feelings. In this regard, Wang called this *liáng zhī* (良知) as *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛)¹³. In this sense, the heart-mind of *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛) is “an empathic spirituality” that can create proper social behaviors. Thus, if a proposition, “Human beings are social animals,” is based on the cultivation of the heart-mind of Wang, this proposition can be proved by the empathic spirituality. Wang said,

“*liáng zhī* (良知) means that human beings realize the truth of the heaven (*tiān lǐ*, 天理) and the heart-mind is a space that actualize the truth of the heaven. This is the inherence of the heart-mind. If we actualize *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛) in the condition that we look after our parents, it reveals as a filial duty. . If we actualize *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛) in the condition that we follow our brother, it reveals as a brotherly love. . If we actualize *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛) in the condition that we serve a king, it reveals as a loyalty.”¹⁴

Wang maintained that the truth of the heaven closely related with human society and the truth of the heaven actualizes the filial affection, the brotherly love, the loyalty, and the faith (*xiào tì zhōng xìn*, 孝悌忠信) through

¹² 傳習錄 上, 8遭, 23. “知是心之本體, 心自然會知. 見父自然知孝, 見兄自然知弟, 見孺子入井, 自然知惻隱. 此便是良知, 不假外求.”

¹³ “The pitiful and sympathetic heart-mind on the other in the sufferings and sorrows”

¹⁴ 傳習錄 中, 189조호, 161: 蓋良知只是一箇天理自然明覺發見處, 只是一箇真誠惻怛, 便是他本體. 故致此良知之真誠惻怛以事親, 便是孝. 致此良知之真誠惻怛以從兄, 便是弟. 致此良知之真誠惻怛以事君, 便是忠.

liáng zhī (良知) as *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛) or the empathic spirituality.

Because *liáng zhī* (良知) as *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛) can applies the neighbor, the nation, and the whole world, it presides over social behaviors. The heart-mind that creates social behaviors from family to the actual world is the empathy of the hearat-mind (*cè yǐn zhī xīn*, 惻隱之心). Wang planed the harmonious world by expanding the empathic spirituality or *liáng zhī* (良知) as *zhēn chéng cè dá* (真誠惻怛).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IDEA OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY
IN NONMUN IM SEONG-JU'S THOUGHT:
EMPATHIC PANENTHEISTIC VISION
OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY

Nongmun (honor name) Im Seong-Ju's "the cultivation of the heart-mind of the Way" (*Daoxue*, 道學) provide critical insights into the understanding of the harmony, integration, and wholeness of the individual, the world, and the Ultimate Reality through the empathy. The triadic relationship between the individual, the world, and the Ultimate Reality is interrelated and has a mutually big influence. Nongmun considers the dynamic harmony of these three elements through empathy to be an ideal community or society (大同社會, *dà tóng shè huì*).¹

Nongmun thinks that the cultivation of the heart-mind of the Way (*Daoxue*, 道學) is an axiological cosmology in the Neo-Confucian tradition. The cultivation of the heart-mind of the Way is defined as the teaching of the Way and is the system of Neo-Confucian philosophy. The system of the heart-mind of the Way plays an important role in achieving the harmony, the integration, and the wholeness of the things and events (*wushi*, 勿事) in the cosmos. Nongmun expects some form of harmonious accord among aspects

¹ A society that people follow *Dao* and unify in *Dao*.

of the diverse elements that constitute every thing or event. In particular, Nongmun pursues the better world through harmony, integration, and wholeness of the human heart-mind (*ren xin*, 人心) and the heart-mind of the Way (*Dao xin*, 道心). Namely, the individual heart-mind is related to the activity of the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way. The harmonious integration of human heart-mind and the heart mind of the Way lead not only to the individual transformation but also to the social transformation.

Nongmun focuses on the relationship between the individual and the Ultimate Reality. When Nongmun defined the cultivation of the heart-mind of the Way (*Daoxue*, 道學), at a time when Neo-Confucian tradition had the ultimate purpose of advancing and supporting humanity by developing the individual intelligence and morality in the relations of the Ultimate Reality. The cultivation of the individual heart-mind is related to social transformation.

For this study, I will focus on the cosmology of Nongmun. I will examine ideas of the natures of the Ultimate Reality, the individual (human consciousness), and the world; as well as the empathy of the heart-mind, the intent of Life (*shēng yì*, 生意) that connects triadic elements. To accomplish this, it is necessary to consider ideas of the nature of the Great Ultimate (*tài jí*, 太極) and the relationship between the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way in the heart-mind and the world. Nongmun can contribute to the

greater perspectives of the empathic paentheism.

The Lives of Nonmun Im Seong-Ju

Nongmun (1711-1788) is one of the most famous Neo-Confucian scholars from the Joseon dynasty. When Nongmun was 16 years old, Nongmun read Yul-gok (栗谷)'s works and realized that heaven (*tiān*, 天) and human beings (*rén*, 人) could be unified into one (*tiān rén hé yī*, 天人合一). Nongmun considered this idea to be a mystical principle of the universe (*miào lǐ*, 妙理).² Nongmun did not only establish his worldview based on *tiān rén hé yī* (天人合一) but also he explained that this unity is activated by the mystical principle (*miào lǐ*, 妙理).

When Nongmun lived during the time of the *Ho-rak* debate (*hú luò lùn zhēng*, 湖洛論爭), when the school of *ho* (*hú lùn*, 湖論) discussed the problem of nature and the problem of good and evil with the school of *rak* (*luò lùn*, 洛論). On one hand, the school of *ho* supported the idea of various phenomena and plurality of *qi*³. On the other hand, the school of *rak* argued that human nature and things' nature is the same inherent nature based on the unity of *li*⁴.

Nongmun followed Wei-Am (Honor name) Lee-Gan (1680-1746) as his teacher and had an image of the school of *rak* because Wei-Am was a leader of

² 鹿門集, 附錄 行狀: 2b

³ 分殊, 氣異, 氣局: 人物性相異

⁴ 理一, 理同, 理通: 人物性俱同

that school. However, when Nongmun was 36-37 years old, he did defend the school of *rak*. Nongmun reflected his ideas of human nature and things' nature through his hypothesis that "pattern and psychophysical energy are equally actual (*lǐ qì tóng shí*, 理氣同實) and the heart-mind and nature is the same (*xīn xìng yī zhì*, 心性一致). In particular, Nongmun rejected the problem of nature (*xìng*, 性) and the matter of good and evil in the original heart-mind (*wèi fā xīn tǐ yǒu shàn è*, 未發心體有善惡) with *lǐ* as a central criterion. Rather, Nongmun understood and reinterpreted the Neo-Confucian propositions that *lǐ* unifies and *qì* differentiates (*lǐ yī fēn shū*, 理一分殊) and a theory of the heart-mind and nature (*xīn xìng lún*, 心性論) with a balanced relation of *lǐ* and *qì* as an central idea.

In this point, Nongmun brought the *ho-rak* debate to an end and founded synthetic Neo-Confucian philosophy. At the same time, Nongmun's theory of *lǐ* and *qì* (*lǐ qì lún*, 理氣論) and his theory of the heart-mind and nature (*xīn xìng lún*, 心性論) were imbued with the understanding of what *li* is one and differentiates it (*lǐ yī fēn shū*, 理一分殊,) in Joseon Neo-Confucian tradition. Nongmun overcame the theory of the heart-mind and nature of the *ho-rak* debate and tried to prove the possibility of the ethical principle.

The Major Hypothesis of Nonmun Im Seong-Ju
: *lǐ qì tóng shí* (理氣同實)

The essential prerequisite of Nongmun (Im Seong-Ju)'s ideas is *lǐ qì tóng shí* that means *li* and *qi* are equally real. “*Li*” is the principle of the universe and “*qi*” is the vital energy. Under this major premise, Nongmun establishes his theory of *li-qi* unlike other Neo-Confucian scholars who separate *li* with *qi* and consider the *li-qi* dichotomy. For Nongmun, when many Neo-Confucian scholars study the *li-qi* of the Cheng brothers (Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi) and Zhu-Xi, they interpret the idea in various contexts and situations.

“Since Cheng brother and Zhu-Xi have invented *li-qi*, there has been no confusion of this idea. However, they answered or referred differently because they considered each single questions and situations.”⁵

Essentially, Nongmun thought that the Cheng brothers and Zhu-Xi explained their idea of *li-qi* in various perspectives because of different contexts and questions. In particular, Nongmun criticized that many Neo-Confucian scholars obsessed about *Kyol-si-yi-mul* (決是二物) that *li* and *qi* are different things and separate from each other. Nongmun said, “Today people (Ho-rak debators) do not recognize the essential meaning but they believe that *li* and *qi* are two things through the obsession of *Kyol-si-yi-mul* (決是二物). In this point, Nongmun put stresses an ontological inquiry rather than a conceptual definition. For Nongmun focused on how *li* and *qi* can coexist in

⁵鹿門集, 19:2b.

actual and concrete human existence and how he can understand *li* and *qi* synthetically.

Nongmun rejected *li* as a metaphysical concept and *qi* as physical. Also, Nongmun did not agree with *li-sun-qi-hu* (理先氣後) that *li* is more prior than *qi*. Moreover, Nongmun desperately opposed that *li* is source of good and *qi* is the cause of evil. The most essential cause of Ho-rak debate is the understanding of separating of *li* and *qi* based on *kyol-si-yi-mul*. In contrast with this dichotomy, Nongmun argued, “*li* and *qi* is equally actual (*li-qi-tong-sil*, 理氣同實) and the heart-mind and the nature is the same (*Shim-sung-il-chi*, 心性一致)”.⁶

Nongmun analyzed “the same substance (*tong-sil*, 同實)” and he did not understand that an independent concept is behind the concrete matters but rather he said, “the vital energy of the heart-mind is the substance (夫心氣本色, 實體也).”⁷ Also, Nongmun considered the substance to be concrete contents because he thought that the pure and clear vital energy moves and generates *yin-yang* (陰陽) that ceaselessly generates, grows, and harvests. This is the substance of *Dao* (道). Nongmun’s understanding of the substance follows Zhu-Xi’s arguments. For Zhu-Xi, “the substance cannot leave its own body”⁸ and “the substance cannot be found out of things.”⁹ More clearly,

⁶鹿門集, 5:b.

⁷鹿門集, 5:25a.

⁸ 中用, chapter 1 “speech of Zhu-Xi”.

Zhu-Xi thought that concrete things involve the meaning of substance and the meaning of substance can be comprehended through concrete things.

Nongmun's idea of substance identifies with Zhu-Xi's.

Also, Nongmun interpreted "*tong-sil* (同實)" as "harmony (和, *he*)". In the Neo-Confucian tradition, a term of "equal (同, *tong*)" has two meanings: unity and plurality. In *The book of change* (周易), "The principle is one but idea is myriad." The One cannot separate from the myriad but the one is related to the myriad.

The Empathic Relation
of the Ultimate Reality and the World:
Harmony, Integration, and Wholeness
of the Human Heart-Mind
and the Heart-Mind of the Way

Nongmun (Im Seong-Ju) argues that the human heart-mind harmonizes and integrates the heart-mind of the Way (人心即道心, *ren-xin-zoc-dao-xin*).¹⁰ Neo-Confucian tradition pursues the understanding of the heart-mind and proper function of the heart-mind. In particular, the heart-mind is a place involving the universe and the subject that cultivates her / himself for acceptance of the order of the universe. Basically, Neo-Confucianism aims to investigate the human nature itself for becoming a saint through individual cultivation and actualize an ideal community or society that fulfills the Way

⁹ Words of Zhu-Xi, 15:31.

¹⁰ 鹿門集, 12:3a-4b.

(大同社會, *Dae-Tong-Sa-Hoi*). In this point, Nongmun analyzes the heart-mind as two heart-minds: the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way. The purpose of this analysis is to find the source of good and evil in the human heart-mind and establishes the basis of the moral cultivation as elimination of the root of evil.

However, many Neo-Confucian scholars highlight the dichotomy between human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way because they think that the human heart-mind is human desire (人欲, *ren-yok*) and that the heart-mind of the Way is a heavenly principle or pattern (天理, *chun-li*). In particular, Lee Jung considers the heavenly pattern as an eternal and unchangeable substance of the universe, but he regards human desire as the evil. Lee Jung thinks that the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way are mutual confrontational. So Lee Jung focuses on the heart-mind of the Way and he preserves the heavenly pattern but eliminates human desire (在天理滅人欲).¹¹

Contrarily, Nongmun argues that the human heart-mind harmonizes with the heart-mind of the Way. Nongmun does not reject basic needs or desires. Rather Nongmun considers feeling needs properly as a sign of a healthy heart-mind. Nongmun said,

“If hungry, we want to eat and if cold, we want to wear warm clothes. This is human heart-mind. If you concern for others, then this is the heart-mind of the Way. As a young child is dying by drowning in the well, a person with empathy of the heart-mind saves a

¹¹ Son Heung-Chul. *A Study on Nokmun Im Seong-Ju's Life and his Philosophy*, p. 327.

young child. This is the heart of the Way.”¹²

Nongmun considers human desire on her/his own account as a manifestation of the human heart-mind and human desire with empathy of the heart-mind as the heart-mind of the Way.

Nongmun argues that the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way are given inherently. Namely, the heart-mind of the Way as moral good does not exist separated from the human heart-mind. Nongmun concedes that the human heart-mind can become the heart-mind of the Way if it fulfills human desire righteously or if the human heart-mind satisfies itself rationally. In this case, the boundary between the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way collapses and Nongmun believes that the heart-mind has an inherent possibility of good.

The Life-Giving Intention(生意)
as The Heart-Mind of Empathy(惻隱之心)

The intent of life (生意, *Saeng-ui*) is an ontological and cosmic creativity to connect the human heart-mind and the Great Ultimate. Nongmun considers the activity of vital energy as the intent of life.¹³ This intent of life is able to interpret contradictions such as determinate indeterminateness or concrete universality of vital energy. The intent of

¹²鹿門集, 4:15a.

¹³鹿門集, 1:13a.

life connects an actual condition to an ontological condition in a contradiction or impossible situation. Because the intent of life is the activity of vital energy, intent of life actualizes potentiality.

Also, In Nongmun's view, the intent of life identifies with empathy, as quoted below,

"Master Zhu had earlier asked a scholar, "If what fills the inside of one's belly is the heart-mind of empathy (惻隱之心), what fill the outside?" Do-am (Nonmun's teacher) interpreted his question to mean, "What fills both inside and outside of one's belly is altogether empathy." Do-am is correct on this, If we look at it (i.e., what fills both inside and outside) from the perspective of vital energy, it is "vast, flood-like vital energy"; if we look at it from the perspective of pattern, it is empathy. The two are in fact one. Empathy (惻隱) is what I have above called the intent of life."¹⁴

Nongmun's identification of the intent of life with empathy no doubt reflects the long-standing Neo-Confucian tradition to cosmologize core ethical notions of humanity (*ren*, 仁). These notions are defined as empathetic understanding since Zhu Xi identified them with the universal and cosmic generative operations of patterns or the Great Ultimate as manifestation in the fecund heart-mind of heaven earth.

Therefore, the intent of life as the heart-mind of empathy provides harmony, integration and wholeness between the heart-mind and the Ultimate. In an ontological condition, the intent of life as the heart-mind of empathy is activated in the pattern (the Ultimate). Also, in an actual condition, it gives creative transformation to differentiated myriad things.

Nongmun (Im Seong-Ju) aimed for harmony, integration, and

¹⁴鹿門集, 19:1a.

wholeness of the individual and Ultimate through empathy of heart.

Nongmun considered empathy as an important connector between the individual and the Ultimate. Also, harmony, integration, and wholeness of the individual and the Ultimate provide a power for transforming the individual and the world.

The idea of harmony, integration, and wholeness suggested by Nongmun can contribute to achieving a harmonious and inclusive Korean society. The emphatic and personal relationship between the individual and the Ultimate Reality through the cultivation of the heart-mind can transform and reconcile a strict and divided society to a harmonious and inclusive one.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Process Theology's Cosomology:
Empathic Panentheism

In chapter 2 and 3, I suggest Alfred North Whitehead and John B. Cobb Jr.'s structure of Process Philosophy and Theology. They explain the relationship between God and the world as the relationship between primordial and consequent nature. The relationship would always retain internal differences and contrasts. This dynamic nature of God should be always related to the world. We cannot consider God with out the world and vice versa in Process Philosophy and Theology.

Panentheism is a position concerning the relationship between the world and its Ultimate Reality, between God and the world, between the infinite and all finite things. And most Panentheists as well as Cobb does not affirm a God who is completely, but they also resist treating the 'immanent' reality, the reality that we see around us, as all that is.¹

By doing so, Cobb develops his themes, such as Energy-Event, Creative-Responsive love, Novelty, the ideal Possibility, and source of the Creative Transformation in the Panentheistic vision. Precisely, he compares human

¹ Arthur Peacocke, *All That Is: A Naturalistic Faith for the 21st Century*, ed. Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), p. xi

energy-event, responsive love, and creative transformation with God's energy-event, creative love, and the source of creative transformation.

John B. Cobb Jr.'s idea of the relationship between God and the world derives from a question, "where is God as Energy-Event?" In the modern worldview, Energy-Events themselves are Ultimate Reality. These events have relational patterns that include temporal and spatial simultaneity.

However, Cobb formulates a hypothesis, a "broad gap" between God and the world. The broad gap interrupts with developing the panentheistic vision of God because the gap reduces the possibility of correspondence between God and the world.

Despite of the hypothesis, Cobb emphasizes the panentheistic vision of God because he does not focus subjectivities of God and the world but focus on "and", the relationship itself. He argues that God can exist in the world through the relationship and human existence can also be proven by the relationship. God's standpoint in the world is the relationship. Cobb quotes Whitehead's cosmology,

"God and the World are the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity, with its diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast. In each actuality there are two concrescent poles of realization – 'enjoyment' and 'appetition', that is the 'physical' and the 'conceptual'. For God the conceptual is prior to the physical, for the World the physical poles are prior to the conceptual poles."

If God becomes all in all in the correspondent relationship with the world, 'multiplicity' can integrate into final concrescence and appetition of God is innately related to appetition of the world. In this respect, His idea of

the relationship resonates with the Neo-Confucian idea of Ultimate Reality.

Empathic Spirituality in the Confucian Tradition:
Shù (恕), *cè yǐn zhī xīn*, (惻隱之心), and *liáng zhī* (良知)

The idea of empathy in the Confucian tradition has a spiritual meaning rather than a conceptual one. As mentioned above, Confucius, Mencius, and Wang Yang-Ming are the most representative Confucian scholars and all of them focused on the idea of empathy and expressed *shù*, *cè yǐn zhī xīn*, and *liáng zhī* in their own methods. These ideas apply to not only the secular world but also Ultimate Reality. To be precisely, we can define Confucianism as a political system, as ethical teachings, as social norms, as a humanistic philosophy, and as a religious view at the same time. Above all, the idea of empathy is a bridgehead between the secular and the sacred.

Confucian Spirituality might be described as discovering one's cosmological being amidst daily affairs. For the Confucian the ordinary is the locus of the extraordinary; the secular is the sacred; the transcendent is in the immanent. The idea of empathy is connecting link between Ultimate Reality and the world. With this respect, Nongmun Im Seong-Ju shows us the outline of Confucian Cosmology and emphasizes a valuable role of empathy.

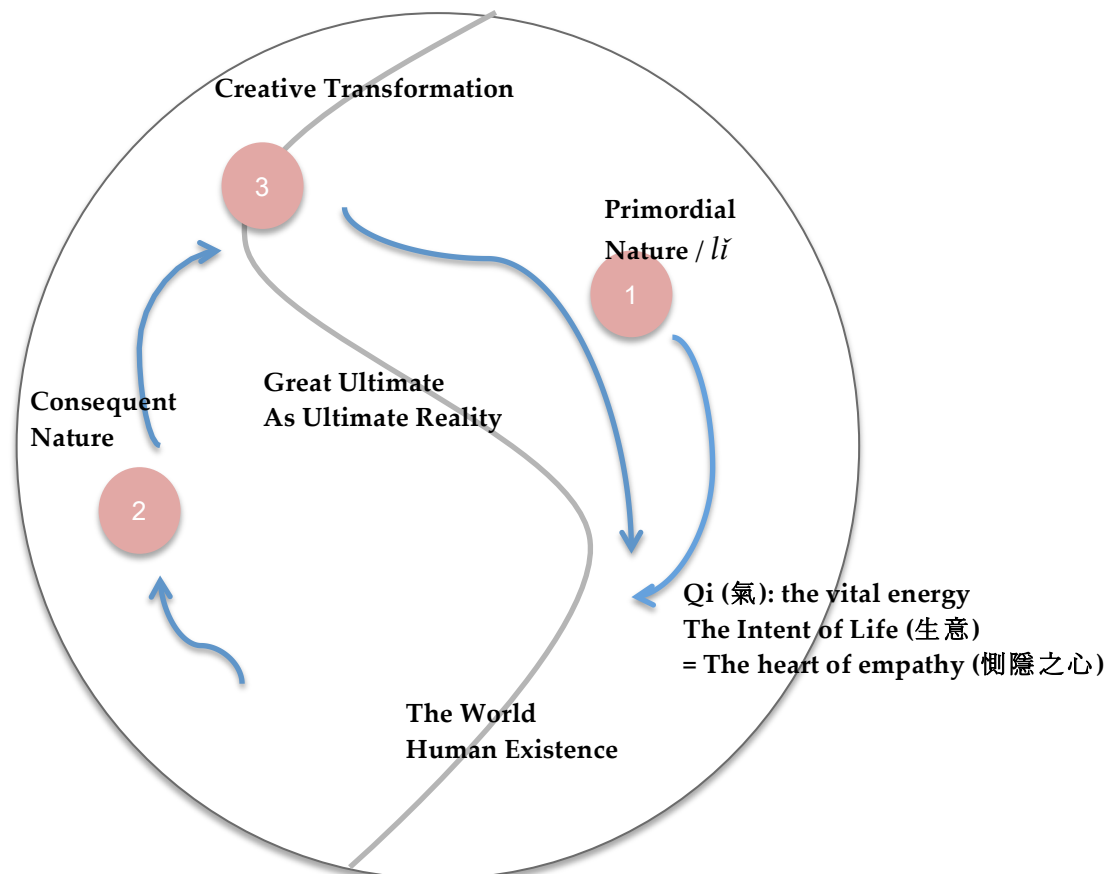
Nongmun Im Seong-Ju's Empathic Cosmology:
 Non-Dualism, Panentheistic Vision, and Empathy

First of all, Ideas of Nongmun have non-dualistic characters. Because Nongmun's major prerequisite, *lǐ qì tóng shí* is non-dualistic, his whole ideas are non-dualistic. In the ontological condition and the actual condition, the proposition that *lǐ* and *qì* are equally real means the principle of the universe and the vital energy always coexist but do not become mixed up and do not leave each other. Nongmun's wholistic theory of *lǐ-qì* is a frame of his whole philosophical system.

Also, Nongmun (Im Seong-Ju) have panentheistic perspectives of Ultimate Reality. The individual involves in Ultimate Reality and it resides in the world. Specifically, the panentheistic views focus on relationship between the individual and the Ultimate Reality. Of course, Nongmun do not identify the individual with the Ultimate because he thinks that the Ultimate is bigger than the world. For Nongmun, *lǐ* and *qì* in the ontological condition communicate with *li* and *qi* in the actual condition. Mentioned above, *tong* (同) means the mutual communication rather than the unity. Nongmun tried to connect the ontological condition with the actual condition.

Lastly, "The intent of Life" is one of important ideas of Nongmun (Im Seong-Ju). The intent of Life is telos to achieve love and reconciliation. For Nongmun, the intent of Life (生意, *saeng-ui*) is the same as the empathy of heart (惻隱之心, *chok-en-ji-sim*). In these respects, the intent of Life refers to love, reconciliation, and empathy. This idea of empathy plays an important

role in ideas of Nongmun (Im Seong-Ju). Empathy is a mediator that connects the individual and the Ultimate and is a ground for transforming society. If we draw the outline of Confucian Cosmology as well as Nongmun one, it is like this:



After all, the empathic panentheism as harmony, integration, and wholeness expresses relationship between the individual and Ultimate Reality (God). The principle of the universe (*li*) and the vital energy (*qi*) gives the intent of life to the human heart-mind. Life-giving intention activates dynamic movements in the heart-mind. The intents of Life are concentrated in the

center of the heart-mind. In the centering moment, the individual can encounter with Ultimate Reality and can radiate a transforming force to society. By doing so, the individual transforming force establishes the consequent nature of the Ultimate Reality. This carries out creative transformation in the world and the Ultimate Reality.

Nongmun (Im Seong-Ju) can give creative ideas to us. Specifically, his idea of “intent of Life” is a key to achieve an idea community (大同社會). The life-giving intention is transforming power, love, reconciliation, and empathy. It is a possibility that jumps over an impossible boundary and contradiction and forms community. As these two scholars provide the possibility that connects the individual, the world, and the Ultimate Reality, we can leap over distrust and conflict and strive toward an ideal community.

The Possibilities of Interreligious Dialogue on Empathy

Catherine Cornille said, “If empathy always involves a certain degree of projection or superimposition of one’s own experiential framework upon the other, then *empathy requires dialogue as much as dialogue presupposes empathy* (my italic).”² Empathy does not stop a concept itself but need to apply to the dialogues. In particular, interreligious dialogues are not exchange of data but empathic understanding between interlocutors.

² Catherine Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008), 171

In this point, the idea of empathy in the Confucian tradition and Process Theology is a critical resource in interreligious dialogues because empathic relationship encompasses whole universe and the Great Ultimate in Neo-Confucianism and Process Theology. Moreover, empathy penetrates both the secular and the sacred. In this sense, empathy is a mediator between the universality and the plurality and provides common ground in interreligious dialogues. Furthermore, if we study comparatively between Process Theology and Neo-Confucian Philosophy, we can find a new vision of Empathic Interreligious Dialogue.

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VITA

Name: Shin Myoung Kim

Telephone Number: (857) 260-9343

Address: 210 Herrick Road, Campus Box 21, Newton Centre MA 02459

E-mail: whysmkim@gmail.com

Gender: Male

Year of Birth: 1979

Place of Birth: Republic of Korea

Country of Citizenship: Republic of Korea

Education:

Soongsil University:

School Year 1998-2005

Bachelor of English Literature

Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary

School Year 2007-2010

(now known as Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary):

Master of Divinity (M. Div.) Program

Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary

School Year 2010-2012

(now known as Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary):

Master of Theology (Th.M.) Program