Challenge of Religious Pluralism
to Christian Philosophy

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I. Religious Pluralism

The diversity of religious phenomena is a challenge to today's Christian. Asia in particular has a long history of the great religious traditions of Islam. Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. In comparison with these religions, the number or Christians has been relatively small. How Christians should relate to other religious people has always been a serious problem in Asia.

In the Western world today, the pluralistic situation in religion also has become a central issue. Confronted with this situation, some Christian theologians have developed a "theology of religions". This is only one illustration of the effects of so-called "pluralism" which has become a major trend throughout contemporary society. As a part of that trend, religious pluralism has become an important issue to Christian philosophy both in the East and the West.

The purpose of the present paper is twofold. First, we evaluate John Hick's theory of religious pluralism and give an alternative to it. Second, we try to construct a framework for an interreligious dialogue. By the interreligious dialogue, we do not intend, as a primary purpose, to convince people of other religions of the Christian truth; rather, we intend to try to understand themselves and ourselves better.

Recently John Hick has tried to construct a theory for understanding religious plurality in his book *"An Interpretation of Religion"* (1989), which was first delivered as the Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh. In his book he analyzed the world religions which emerged after the so-called "axial age" or "Achsenzeit." (Karl Jaspers) According to him, these "post-axial" religions accompany various forms of the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness. Here the

"self" means the selfish ego, which should be transformed so as to become the true ego with its high moral standard, through experiencing salvation/liberation as offered by these religions. Given this interpretive hypothesis, he proposes a criterion by which to assess particular religious phenomena as well as the religious traditions as totalities. This basic criterion is soteriological: salvific transformation is thought to be most readily observed by its moral fruits, which can be identified by means of the ethical ideal, common to all the great traditions, of love/compassion.[1]

Actually there are millions of people who commit themselves to their belief-systems and interpret this world according to their belief-systems. On the other hand, there are also millions of people who claim themselves to be non-religious, and interpret the world in completely different ways from those of the religious people. Therefore, Hick says, there are two ways of interpreting this world and religious phenomena; one from the religious view-point, the other from the naturalistic view-point. Both of them claim their own interpretations as being reasonable and rational. The world is seen to possess an ambiguity that allows both ways of interpretation. Hick himself opts for the former position; that is to say, he interprets the world and religious phenomena religiously.

Even if religious phenomena are interpreted religiously, there remains still another kind of ambiguity in the experience of these phenomena. People will *experience* the supernatural *as* religious phenomena according to their own cultural tradition. Thus Hick introduces the concept of "experiencing-as" when he perceives the environment, which is an extension of the idea of "seeing-as" once proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein.[2]

In order to explain in the diverse phenomena in the world religions, he introduces the concept of the transcendent that is called "the Real *an sich*", which is unknown to us. But the unknown Real *an sich,* according to his interpretation, can be experienced through each religious tradition in such different names as Allah, Jahweh, the heavenly Father, Shiva, Vishnu, Brahman, the Tao, the Dharmakaya, and Sunyata. While the Real an sich belongs to the noumenal world, people experience it through their concrete religious activities in the phenomenal world. His method of explaining religious phenomena is easily seen to be an analogous application of the Kantian epistemology, developed for the explanation of the physical world, to the religious world.[3]

Hick, however, does not propose a new religion where people should pursue the

Real *an sich* in their religious lives. Nor does he say that all religions are merely different ways of reaching the same summit from different starting places. It is a complete misunderstanding to take his theory of religious pluralism in this manner. He allows all believers to believe in their own ultimate Reality according to their traditions. But if they stay in their own tradition while neglecting other traditions and believers, they are gradually inclined to absolutize their own traditions. Thus Hick calls people's attention to the necessity of dialogue among different religions. His motivation is very clear and important. But his theoretical formulation of religious plurality is open to many questions.

Here I will discuss the philosophical implication of his religious pluralism. I do not refer to Hick's theological discussion of such concepts as revelation, salvation, Christology etc., though all of them are very much problematic.

II. Religious Experience and Belief

(a) An empirical approach

One of the sources of Hick's religious pluralism is a religious epistemology which is closely related to one developed by Alvin Plantinga and William Alston. They argue much about the epistemological structure of religious experience. In the direct form, according to Hick, religious experience is viewed form the outside as a phenomenon which points to God as its cause. In the indirect form, however, it is viewed from within, from the point of view of the religious experiencer; and it is claimed that it is entirely reasonable for the one who experiences in this way to believe in God. For instance, let us take the Plantinga's much discussed notion of "proper basicality". For whilst the belief that God exists, as a properly basic belief, is not derived from other, evidence-stating propositions, it is, as Plantinga says, not therefore groundless. As he says, "a belief is properly basic only in certain conditions; these conditions are, we might say, the ground of its justification and, by extension, the ground of the belief itself. In this sense basic beliefs are not, or are not necessarily, groundless beliefs".[4] Plantinga first gives several circumstances in which belief in perceptual experience is properly basic, such as "I see a tree". Next he gives a number of examples of the analogous circumstances in which belief in God is properly basic; contemplating a flower and believing "This

flower was created by God"; beholding the starry heavens and believing "This vast and intricate universe was created by God". He says, "Calvin recognizes, at least implicitly, that other sorts of conditions may trigger this disposition. Upon reading the Bible, one may be impressed with a deep sense that God is speaking to him. Upon having done what I know is cheap, or wrong, or wicked, I may feel guilty in God's sight and form the belief God disapproves of what I have done." [5]

There are indeed "many conditions and circumstances that call forth belief in God: guilt, gratitude, danger, a sense of God's presence, a sense that he speaks, perception of various parts of the universe."

Although Plantinga does not generally use the term "religious experience", Hick thinks that these various situations are occasions of religious experience, and that this mode of experience constitutes the justifying ground of the basic belief in God. It is not suggested, however, that we infer God from the flower or the starry heavens or our sense of guilt or forgiveness: that would be the old evidentialist's procedure. Rather, according to Hick, we *experience* the flower *as* a divine creation, the starry heavens above *as* God's handiwork, the moral law within *as* God's command, life's goodness *as* God's gift, its troubles and tragedies *as* occasions to cleave to God. In prayer and contemplation the circumstances may simply be our own present existence, which we *experience as* being in the invisible divine presence. In all these cases we experience some situation as mediating Gods presence or activity, and it is claimed that it is fully sane and rational for this mode of experience to be reflected in the body of our beliefs. [6]

This fact of degree of well-groundedness opens up a new dimension in our discussions. For Hick thinks that this basic principle should be applied not only to Christian but also to other forms of theistic experience, and indeed not only to theistic but also to non-theistic forms of religious experience. Within the empirical philosophy of religion, then, we would find that by solving one major problem — namely, how to justify belief in God — we could have brought to light another equally major problem, that posed by the fact of religious plurality. In purely empirical approach to religious experiences, it seems evident that if Christian experience justifies a Christian in believing in God as the heavenly Father of Jesus' teaching, then Jewish experience justifies a Jew in believing in Adonai, king of universe, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and that Muslim expe-

rience justifies a Muslim in believing in the Qur'anic Allah, the gracious and ever merciful; and that Vaishnavite Hindu experience justifies a Vaishnavite in believing in the divine lord Krishna, incarnation of Vishnu; and that advitic Hindu experience justifies an advaitin in believing in the infinite consciousness of Brahman; and that different forms of Buddhist experience justify belief in the reality of Nirvana, of the universal Buddha nature, of the eternal Dharmakaya, of Sunyata; and so on. Thus Hick says,

> "let us look again at what Alston calls the "level distinction" between, on the one hand, the ultimate divine Reality and on the other hand the variety of different human conceptions and perceptions of that Reality. It will then be the case that instead of giving rival accounts of a common intended referent, the religious belief-systems each give an account of a different referent, namely their own culturally influenced communal perception of the ultimately Real. On this view, we postulate the transcendent divine Reality which lies (as each of the great traditions at some point asserts) beyond our networks of human concepts; which is the ground of all existence and the source of all salvific power; which is conceptualized in a variety of ways in terms of the two basic religious categories of personal deity and non-personal absolute." [7]

Further he adds that the Real is perceived in each case through the complex "lens" of modes of thought, spiritual practices, sacred writings, theological and philosophical systems, great exemplars, and a web of historical contingencies of various kinds.

(b) Evaluation

Now let us evaluate the Hick's approach. Hick first thinks that there are "properly basic beliefs" even in non-Christian religious experiences. These "properly basic beliefs" are experienced by different people according to different religious traditions. Next, he introduces another major assumption. He postulates the Real or the Real *an sich* in order to explain in the diverse religious traditions on an equal footing. It should be noted that he introduces the notion of the Real *an sich* from empirical religious phenomena, instead of getting it from the Scriptural revelation. He intentionally rejects this kind of special revelation. Then, what is the true ground of Hick's induction of the Real *as* It is

the evidences! At a first glance, by using the idea of Plantinga's "proper basicality", Hick seems to evade the evidentialist's approach, but finally he resorts to the evidentialist's method by introducing the concept of the Real an sich through diverse religious phenomena. Actually he calls this concept a working hypothesis.[8]

Hick did not like to be called a relativist by approving the conflicting religious truth-claims of the world religions. He wants to give his readers an impression that his approach is entirely neutral and universal, but he finally ends up with mixing completely different approaches, i. e., mixing Plantinga's and Wittgenstein's non-evidential approach with the evidential approach of Cartesian-Kantian foundationalism. From the philosophical point of view, however, there seems to be a serious discrepancy in Hick's religious epistemology. Contrary to his initial intention, it is impossible for him to explain religious diversity or religious relativity theoretically by using the analogy of Kantian epistemology for the physical world. If the Kantian epistemology is used, all religious phenomena should be seen in the same universal mode because of the Kantian scheme of universal categories as the form of thought. We can not expect to have the pluralist's theory in religion if we use the Kantian epistemology! If Hick thinks that the categories of the mind are themselves of a historical nature and not universal in the way Kant took them, he has to show clearly how this claim is possible. Where the concept "the Real *an sich*" comes from is not explained clearly in his religious epistemology.

We cannot understand other religious beliefs within a neutral framework in so far as we commit ourselves to a particularly belief system. Today, an abundant literature in contemporary philosophical development gives an affirmative argument for rejection of a neutral framework in philosophical thinking. We Christians cannot understand Buddhism, Islam or other religions on an equal footing with Christianity. "Properly basic belief" in the ultimate being will produce the properly basic worldview. It is therefore quite reasonable that the Christians will understand other religions from the particularly Christian worldview.

Although Raimundo Panikkar identifies himself as a religious pluralist, he differs from Hick on the point that he rejects such a neutral criterion for evaluating different religions. Instead, Panikkar maintains the necessity of interreligious dialogue from each different tradition. It seems to me, however, that there is no special viewpoint more than

a hermeneutical method based on historicism in his approach. [9]

But still there remains a major question in Hick's approach. Why is there an analogical thinking between perceptual experiences and religious experiences? The belief that "I see a tree" is called a properly basic belief. Analogously, the belief that "This flower was created by God" is called a properly basic belief for a Christian. In a similar fashion, the belief that "This flower is a flower as a manifestation of absolute nothingness in Nirvana" may be called a properly basic belief for a Zen-Buddhist. Even if we admit this line of thought, is it possible to explain the origin of this analogical thinking between perceptual belief and religious belief in the tradition of empiricism? Will we not need a specific ontological framework in order to explain the origin of this analogical thinking? For this purpose, I would suggest here a transcendental approach, which at the same time will explain in the pluralization of religion. Here the transcendental approach means an approach in which some universal conditions enabling us to have empirical knowledge are carefully studied. [10] We have already said that Hick's use of the Kantian epistemology in his explanation of religious diversity was inadequate. But now I would like to see the situation in a little bit different way; I would say that Hick was, in effect, looking for some kind of transcendental approach, but he did not succeed in finding it.

III. The Transcendental Approach

Let us start from the transcendental philosophy of the Cosmonomic idea by Herman Dooyeweerd. He speaks of transcendental conditions in connection with the three moments of the so-called transcendental ground idea; the divine Origin, the unity of man in his heart and Christ as the new religious root of all reality, and the diversity and coherence in cosmic time. [11] The transcendental ground idea forms the inner point of contact between the religious sphere and theoretical thought. [12] Here religion is defined as "the innate impulse of human selfhood to direct itself toward the true or toward a pretended absolute Origin of all temporal diversity of meaning." [13] This human selfhood is the transcendental ego, which is in its central meaning the same as the religious root in the human heart. Thus there are two antithetical basic religious ground motives, two central mainsprings operative in the heart of human existence. There is the dynamic of the Holy Spirit and the dynamic of the spirit of this world. The ground motive of the Holy Spirit

is the one revealed by the divine Word-revelation and which is identified as the motive of creation, fall, and redemption by Jesus Christ in communion with the Holy Spirit. The other motive is in the opposite, apostate direction. Thus there is a religious unity in human existence even though there are two different opposite religious ground motives.

The philosophical community will be in fact connected to this "religious unity of humankind." A few years ago, Hendrik Geertsema gave an interesting comment in his article by referring to Dooyeweerd's *Reformatie en Scholastiek*. He says,

> "The philosophical community is ultimately based upon the religious unity of the human species, because only this founds the unity which is above all of the temporal divisions of race and historical culture. It is here that religious antithesis is posited but this does not dissolve the thought community. On the contrary, the antithesis which God posits over against sin and its consequences does not serve to disturb but to preserve the community.
>
> > 'Because the Christian religion does not let fallen man go or put him out of action but seeks him again and again. The radical religious antithesis which it posits is the absolute condition for the salvation of the thought community in our sinful temporal society (*Ref. en Schol.* p. 52).'
>
> These words imply, on the one hand, that only from the scriptural, Christian standpoint can the deep religious meaning of the two opposing starting points be understood." [14]

It is clear that the Christian has the advantage of being able to understand the apostate character of the non-Christian ground motive in a way the non-Christian can not understand the significance of the Biblical ground motive (Ref. en Schol. p. 50). On the other hand non-Christian thought is also dependent upon the new religious root of humanity in Christ by God's common grace.

Thus Dooyeweerd showed that philosophy is, through the concept of the transcendental ground idea, ultimately driven and controlled by one of two mutually antithetical religious ground motives or by a synthesis between the two. In particular, the apostate ground motive can have various expressions and can come into view in relation to specific historical conditions. This specific historical condition in the case of Japan, as a typical

example of a non-Western country, was studied by the author in a previous article.[15]

Now let us apply the theory of modal aspects in order to understand the existence of the world religions. We will see the religious diversity as manifestation of the religious ground motive. In the theory of modal aspects, faith is different from the religion, i. e., the religious ground motive. Faith is a temporal human function. It is the "pistic mode", or the faith aspect, which leads the other modal aspects. There also is an interrelationship between this faith function and the supra-temporal religious ground motive. The religious ground motive must give rise to a common belief within the faith aspect of our religious experience, and it must further gain socio-cultural power within the historical aspect of each human society. Then the various contents of the apostate religious ground motive should be manifested to be modally qualified in the temporal world by the faith aspect.[16] This manifestation of the religious ground motive will generate the diverse religious phenomena. In other words, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religious traditions can be interpreted as the actual manifestation of this religious ground motive modally qualified by the pistic, social and historical aspects. So the religious diversity of today's global phenomena can be explained theoretically as the interrelation of modal aspects led by the pistic aspect in the transcendental Christian philosophy.

Furthermore, in our transcendental approach, we can also explain the origin of the analogical thinking in perceptual belief and religious belief. The religious belief or the belief in general is just the meaning-nucleus of the pistic aspect. Since the sensory aspect anticipates the meaning-nucleus of the pistic aspect, we can encounter a meaning-moment, i. e., perceptual belief, in the sensory aspect. On the other hand, religious belief can associate with religious feeling, because the pistic aspect retrocipates the meaning-nucleus of the sensory aspect. Thus there is the analogical reflection in perceptual belief and religious belief, respectively. In our coherent temporal experience between the sensory aspect and the pistic aspect, there is the unity within our heart of the transcendental ego. In this way the theory of modal aspect together with the transcendental ego gives us a true insight into the explanation of today's religious plurality and, furthermore, offers us a foundation for interfaith dialogue. Here we prefer "interfaith dialogue" rather than "interreligious dialogue" because of the definite meaning of "religion" and "faith".

The purpose of interfaith dialogue is to deepen our Christian ego, which is not a

Cartesian substantial self. By understanding other faith from our Christian ego, we would reach a better self-understanding in connection with the Christian faith. Through this dialogue, there is a possibility in which we could find out a new element in Christianity which was originally included in the Scripture but was forgotten in the long tradition of Western common interpretation of the Scripture. From this view-point, in the following, we will see a Zen-Buddhist's struggle to find the true ego.

IV. Dialogue with a Buddhist Philosophy

It is usually accepted to restrict the term 'philosophy' to the work of those Japanese thinkers whose work has been influenced directly by Western systems and categories of thought. Philosophy in this sense is less than 150 years old in Japan. The work of Kitaro Nishida (1870–1945) marks the first sustained attempt at a critical synthesis of Western and Eastern thought. After his initial studies of the thought of William James and the Neo-Kantians, [17] Nishida's philosophical standpoint as such became visible in 1927 with his notion of the "place of absolute nothingness." Nishida had become dissatisfied with the psychologism, and mysticism of his early work. To counter this psychologism, he began what would become a life-long investigation into the realm of the "non-self", what Buddhism calls "emptiness" or "nothingness" (mu無) [18]. To avoid the attendant problem of mysticism, he began to work out a "logic" of nothingness rooted in the cultural experience of Japan. In this regard, Nishida presented his idea of "absolute nothingness" in terms of the metaphor "place". Using this concept, he wished to look for an inner point of contact between religion and theoretical thought.

In the opening paragraph of the forth chapter of Nishida's maiden work, *An Inquiry into the Good* (1915), which bears the title "religion", he wrote: "The religious demand concerns the self as a whole, the life of the self." [19] This was Nishida's consistent, unchanging view of religion to his final essay, *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview* (1945). Be that as it may, this does not mean that he thought of religion simply in terms of the problem of the interior tranquility of the private individual. Instead, Nishida grasped religion in terms of the problem of the world's existence. Without doubt, as the title of the final essay indicates, the problem of religion is presented in terms of the problem of a religious worldview. This is quite natural for Nishida who insists that

the world begins where the self begins; that the ground of the self's existence is simultaneously the ground of the existence of the world. Thus religion provides the common foundation of both the self and the world. Consequently, religion concerns the problem of the ground of the existence of all things. For him, philosophy cannot be true philosophy without religion. He says,

> "And therefore, as a fundamental fact of human life, the religious form of life is not the exclusive possession of special individuals. The religious mind is present in everyone. One who does not notice this can not be a philosopher." [20]

Furthermore, Nishida consistently tried to grasp the truth of religion logically. The logic required for this project is the "logic of place" which, for Nishida, is the most concrete logic. For this reason, here and there in the final essay we find the view that "only by means of the logic of place can the religious world be thought." [21]

Here, Nishida's use of the term "place" (*basho*) is in need of some explanation. In search of the true self and its logical structure, Nishida began to think about the concrete "place" (*basho*) out of which the Cartesian dualism of subject and object arise mutually. The most abstract "place" is the world of physical object (the *basho* of relative being). Less abstract is the "place" of self-consciousness (the *basho* of relative nothingness in contrast to the relative beings which appear within consciousness). At this point, Nishida asked if the "place" of relative nothingness is self-contained or nested within a yet more concrete realm of reality. Guided by his Buddhist heritage and its rejection of a Cartesian substantial self, [22] Nishida argued that the most concrete *a-priority* is the "non-self" or the "place of absolute nothingness" which is prior even to the duality of being and non-being.

In more details, three points are outstanding. [23] First, *basho* is related to the term *topos* in the *Timaeus* as "the matrix of all becoming." David Dilworth speaks of *basho* as a "latticing of *a-priori* frameworks" into increasing levels of presuppositionlessness (see *Last Writing* [24]). In this way, the most abstract level of reality is the "world" of physics. More concrete fields of reality are the biological and historical worlds. The most concrete universal, the logical space within which all reality is encompassed, is

the "place of absolute nothingness".

Second, Nishida's concrete universal should not be confused with the "nothingness" which lies in contrast to beings as their negation (relative nothingness). The most concrete level of *a-priority* can not be placed over/against anything. The nothingness of the concrete universal is absolute in that after the relative being of all things is negated in the quest for the ground of reality itself, relative nothingness itself is negated to realize the most concrete universal experienced in the absolute affirmation of all things in their "suchness." Thus the "place of absolute nothingness" constitutes the "where-in" of all reality, in which the individual thing shows itself in its concrete immediacy prior to the imposition of conceptualization and judgment.[25]

Third, the "place of absolute nothingness" constitutes a "logic" not in the manner of an "objective" logic based on the principles of simple self-identity and non-contradiction, but rather in the Buddhist sense of the concrete structure of reality out of which arises the possibility of judgment based on these principles. He called this "logic" as the logic of "absolute contradictory self-identity".

In other words, the structure of absolute nothingness is double negation. Being is negated by non-being. This is relative nothingness. In absolute nothingness, the negation of being by non-being is itself negated. This negation of negation leads to the absolute affirmation of being in which things finally appear most concretely in their "suchness."[26] Therefore, the belief that "This flower is a flower as a manifestation of absolute nothingness in Nirvana" can be called a properly basic belief for a Zen-Buddhist without the other evidences. Since absolute nothingness is not opposable to anything, it can be realized only paradoxically as a self-identity of absolute contradictories. Nishida's Buddhist view of nothingness may be compared with Hegel's *Begriff*. In his famous aphorism, Hegel declares that "the rational is the real." Contradiction is overcome through the sublation of opposites until history reaches its end in the final synthesis (the absolute *Begriff*). Nishida, in contrast, saw contradiction as constitutive of reality itself. Instead of being overcome sublationally by means of *Begriff,* absolute nothingness realizes contradictions in their "suchness". While Hegel's absolute *Begriff* is reached in a temporal process, Nishida's absolute nothingness is reached in a non-temporal "place". Therefore Nishida's notion of ultimate reality as absolute nothingness requires a para-

doxical logic of the contradictory self-identity of opposites.

Based on this logic of "absolute contradictory self-identity," Nishida studied various aspects of reality including mathematics, natural science, history, ethics, religion etc. Today Nishida's philosophy and the Kyoto School's activity have become one of the main issues in the comparative study of Western and Eastern philosophy. This situation deeply challenges me as a Japanese Christian philosopher. God reveals himself in our outer world and inner world. The Zen-Buddhist's struggle, from this view point of creational revelation, shows us the deep structure of human nature from our inner world through the long training of meditation.

Now, Nishida's investigation into "the place of absolute nothingness" as an inner point of contact between religion and theoretical thought reminds me of Dooyeweerd's approach. Dooyeweerd wrote in one of his later essays, "What is Man?" (1965), as follows,

> "This central I, which surpasses the temporal order, remains a veritable mystery. As soon as we try to grasp it in a concept of definition, it recedes as a phantom and resolves itself into nothingness. It is really a nothing, as some philosophers have said? The mystery of the human I is indeed *nothing in itself;* that is to say, it is nothing as long as we try to conceive it apart from the three central relations which alone give it meaning." [27]

Thus the Zen-Buddhist's realization of absolute nothingness of his central I after a long training of meditation is, in a sense, a correct expression of reality, provided that he refuses the true Ἀρχη of meaning as the Creator of the world. Although, here, the Zen-Buddhist uses "nothingness" in a positive sense with fullness of meaning, Dooyeweerd uses it in a negative sense. The idea of "person" in the human I has no place in Buddhism because it rejects the true personal Creator.

It also seems to be remarkable, however, that Nishida discovered the logic of "absolute contradictory self-identity" of opposites in reality. This will be easily understood when compared with Dooyeweerd's "religious dialectic" [28].

The absolutizing of special modal aspects of created reality, which in nature are relative, evokes the correlata of these aspects. These correlata now in religious conscious-

ness claim an absoluteness opposed to that of the deified aspects. This brings a religious dialectic into these basic motives. They are in fact composed of two religious motives, which, as implacable opposites, drive human action and thought continually in opposite directions, from one pole to the other. Dooyeweerd says,

"For theoretical antithesis is by nature relative and requires a theoretical synthesis to be performed by the thinking "self". On the other hand, an antithesis in the religious starting-point of theoretical thought does not allow of a genuine synthesis. In the central religious sphere the antithesis necessarily assumes an *absolute character,* because no starting-point beyond the religious one is to be found from which a synthesis could be effectuated."[29]

My observation is that Nishida's logic of "absolute contradictory self-identity" is very similar to Dooyeweerd's idea of religious dialectic, though Nishida reached this idea by starting from the practice of Zen-Buddhism. In fact, Nishida claims his logic of "absolute contradictory self-identity!" to be dialectical as follows,

"A true logic must adequately exhibit the self-expression of the absolute. Therefore it must be dialectic. True facts which bear existential testimony of themselves are always dialectical. Thus my concept of God is not entirely isomorphic with the Western medieval notion of a *Gottheit.* God is the absolute contradictory self-identity that includes absolute negation within itself. This is well expressed in the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* literature's dialectic of "is" and "is not".[30]

But, of course, there also is an important difference between two forms of dialectic, because Nishida thought that his logic is the ultimately true view of our reality. He did not accept the Scriptural ground motive of the creation, the fall of man, and the redemption through Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, although he read very eagerly the works of Kierkegaard and Karl Barth.[31]

Thus, after confirming the similarities and differences between our Christian philosophy and Nishida's Buddhist philosophy, I am able to find a point of contact in

our interfaith dialogue with our neighbours. Since I restrict myself to the dialogue on a philosophical level, I intend to do the so-called transcendental critique, instead of the transcendent critique. This dialogue will give me a better self-understanding as a Christian in addition to a better understanding of my neighbours who commit themselves to other faiths. [32]

I would like to close my talk with the Dooyeweerd's following words: "The religious command of love understands the neighbour as a member of the radical religious community of mankind in its central relationship to God, who created man after His image". [33]

Notes

(1) J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion,* (Macmillan, 1989) p. 14.

(2) ibid., p. 140.

(3) ibid., p. 240.

(4) A. Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in *Faith and Rationality,* eds. A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff, (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983) p. 80.

(5) ibid., p. 80.

(6) J. Hick, "Religious Pluralism and the Rationality of Religious Belief", *Faith and Philosophy,* vol. 10, N. 2, 1993, p. 244.

(7) ibid., p. 248.

(8) J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion,* p. 233. See also *Problems in the Philosophy of Religion,* (Macmillan, 1991) p. 24.
    A. Plantinga, "A Defense of Religious Exclusivism" ed. L. P. Pojman, (Wadsworth Pub. Comp., 1994) p. 529.

(9) J. Hick and P. F. Knitter (ed.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness — Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions,* (Orbis Books, 1987) p. 208.

(10) H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought,* (The Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969) vol. 1, p. 37.
    D. J. Hoitenga shows that Plantinga's approach requires some conditions and circumstances in order to determine "properly basic belief" definitely. But Plantinga's approach is not called a transcendental approach. See D. J. Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga,* (SUNY, 1991) p. 188.

(11) H. Dooyeweerd, *NC,* vol. 1, p. 68.

(12) H. Dooyeweerd, "Cornelius Van Til and the Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought" ed. by E. R. Geenhan, Jerusalem and Athens, (1971), p. 76. H. Geertsema, "Christian Philosophy: Transformation or Inner Reformation", Philosophia Reformata, 52, 1987, p. 149.

(13) H. Dooyeweerd, *NC,* vol. 1, p. 57.

(14) H. Geertsema, "Christian Philosophy", p. 159.

(15) H. Inagaki, "A Philosophical Analysis of Traditional Japanese Culture", *Philosophia Reformata,* 57, 1992, pp. 39–56.

(16) H. Geertsema, "Christian Philosophy", p. 152.

(17) Since Nishida's religious thought was initially influenced by W. James, it is not surprising that his approach is closely near to anti-evidentialist's approach.

(18) As for the gross feature of Zen-Buddhism, see M. Abe, "Zen and Buddhism", *The Eastern Buddhist,* vol. 26, N. 1, 1993, p. 26.

(19) K. Nishida, *An Inquiry to the Good,* translated by M. Abe and C. Ives, (Yale Univ. Press, 1990), p. 149.

(20) K. Nishida, "Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview", ed. and translated by D. A. Dilworth, *Last Writing; Nothingness and the Religious Worldview,* (Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1987), p. 85.

(21) ibid., p. 91.

(22) The "Buddha" means "Enlightened One" or "Awakened One". The word "Buddha" applied not only to Siddhartha Gautama, but to anyone who has awakened to the Dharma — to the law of the universe, that is, the law of dependent co-origination. This law says that everything is interdependent with each other; that nothing exists independently, that nothing has its own enduring, fixed being.

(23) M. Abe, "Inverse Correspondence in the Philosophy of Nishida: The Emergence of the Notion", *International Philosophical Quarterly,* vol. 32, N. 3, 1992, p. 328.

(24) D. A. Dilworth, *Last Writing,* p. 16.

(25) This kind of immediacy of knowledge without evidence has similarity with "properly basic belief" by Plantinga and with "intuitive knowledge of the law sphere" by Dooyeweerd.

(26) The concept of "negation" may be compared with *epoche* of theoretical thought in the phenomenological reduction by Edmund Husserl. Thus, by the "negation" of being, we get relative

nothingness, which may correspond to "pure consciousness" after the phenomenological reduction. But Zen is more radical than phenomenology, For this "pure consciousness" is again negated, i. e., reduced, which will result in "absolute nothingness."

(27) H. Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought,* (The Crig Press, 1965), p. 181.

(28) H. Dooyeweerd, Roots of Western Culture, (Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979), p. 11.

(29) H. Dooyeweerd, *NC,* vol. 1, p. 64.

(30) K. Nishida, "The Logic of the Place", p. 75.

(31) Late Prof. Katsumi Takizawa, a pupil of Nishida, having studied under Karl Barth in 1930's wrote many articles about the relation of Barthian theology and Buddhism philosophy. He won the award of hnoured a doctor from Heidelberg University in 1984. See K. Takizawa, *Das Heil im Heute — Texte einer japanishen Theologie,* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Gottinen, 1987)

(32) H. Geertsema has recently proposed a hermeneutical approach which follows and tries to develop critically the Dooyeweerd's philosophy. He stresses the "understanding" nature of human ego as follows, "For the critical dialogue I would like to link up with the fundamental meaning of "understanding", as implied in human existence: understanding of ourselves, understanding of the world, and understanding from the perspective of the last horizon of givenness and meaning, more concretely, of God, who calls on us to answer responsibly to the word of love by which he has called us into existence". (p. 20 in the paper entitled "Inner Reformation of Philosophy and Science Through a Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought in Herman Dooyeweerd" presented at the 5th International Symposium of the Association for Calvinist Philosophy, August, 1994) I am indebted to Geertsema through fruitful discussions for my understanding of Dooyeweerd's basic idea in this paper.

(33) H. Dooyeweerd, *NC,* vol. 1, p. 60.

〔日本語要約〕

宗教多元主義の挑戦とキリスト教哲学

稲　垣　久　和

　今日，地球大規模の宗教の多元化現象に福音主義キリスト教はどう対応するのか。この論稿ではジョン・ヒックの宗教多元主義理論の評価および宗教間対話の可能性（具体的には西田哲学とキリスト教哲学の比較研究）を取り扱う。

　ヒックの宗教多元主義は，今日の英米の経験主義的宗教哲学（プランティンガ，オールストンらの宗教宗認論）を使いつつ展開されている。しかし神学的（経済論的）主張以前の理論構成に不整合性が見いだされる。ヒックは最終的には「実在それ自体」（the Real an sich）を作業仮説として導入するところでカント的な認識論に訴えるが，これはもともとのヒックのウィトゲンシュタイン的な経験主義的出発点と整合しない。換言すれば暗黙のうちに彼が超越論的方法に訴えているからである。

　そこでわれわれはドーイヴェールトの超越論哲学を拡張した方法によって，多元的宗教現象を説明することを試みる。かつこの方法が西田幾太郎の宗教（禅仏教）に基づいた哲学へのアプローチに似ている点，異なる点を明らかにする。特にドーイヴェールトの実在に関する絶対的弁証法が西田哲学の絶対矛盾的自己同一の構造と類似していることを指摘する。これらの比較研究が宗教間対話を哲学的レベルで行なう可能性に道を開くことになる。キリスト教の側からの他宗教理解はキリスト教そのものの自己理解をも深めるものであることが示唆される。

[Abstract in English]

Challenge of Religious Pluralism
to Christian Philosophy

H. Inagaki

The diversity of religious phenomena is a challenge to today's Christian. How can the evangelical Christians meet this situation? In this article, I first analyze and evaluate John Hick's theory of religious pluralism. Next I suggest a method of inter-faith dialogue from my viewpoint.

After having shown the limit of Hick's empirical approach, I propose a transcendental approach which is just an extention of the transcendental criticism of Herman Dooyeweerd. My method of Christian philosophy makes it possible to have a dialogue with the Buddhist philosophy of Kitaro Nishida. A positive attitude towards understanding other religious faiths can surely deepen the self-understanding of one's own faith.