

On the Relationship between Subjectivism and Education in the Era of De-Religionization: Focusing on the Concepts of Choe Je-u's *Re-creation*(開闢) and Shinran's *Amida's Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This World*(還相廻向)

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Abstract

[Objective] In religion, there are several common characteristics such as the conquest of egocentrism, interconnectedness, coexistence of difference and equality, non-violence, relativization of secular political authority, forgiveness and reconciliation, etc. Such viewpoints should be situated as the most important in religious education in Japan. In this article, I would like to clarify these characteristics through Choe Je-u's "*Re-creation*" and Shinran's '*Amida's Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This World*,' because there is an awakening of divine immanence by God/Buddha's calling and subjectivism through awakening both in Choe Je-u and in Shinran. Their concepts are most suitable to overcome ego-centrism and to attain subjectivism that are the basis of activating religious education.

[Contents] The modern nation state, expelling the ideological pillars sustained by the church, had become absolute in itself. Thus, the Catholic Church had lost its socio-political power and the role of Christianity had been restricted only to one's inner life isolated from our outer world. In such a political situation, religion could not play an important role to emancipate people both mentally and socially, because there exists no way to go beyond oneself both mentally and socially through religious awakening. Here we can see the start of De-Religionization. Japanese modernization is the same as European one. The political power that would construct a nation state, expelling Buddhism, held up the "Tenno's absoluteness" so as to obtain the absoluteness of the new state. The religiosity of the modern imperial system was typically realized in the combination of "Emperor's absolute divine right" with "the unity of church and state." State Shintoism means the religious systematization of the Imperial System and it reigned over all religions in Japan.

[Conclusions] Consequently, it was prohibited to teach religions in school education and, in place of it, Japanese History mingled with myths, morals subordinating people to the Emperor, and rituals held at school to glorify the Emperor were forced on the students. After World War II, the Imperial System and Shintoism was abolished. However, it is not easy to teach religion, because the Fundamentals of Education Act prohibits national and public schools to practice religious education for the specific religion and religious activities in the curriculum. It might be difficult for teachers to practice religious education without mentioning the thinking of a specific religion. But it might be possible to teach the characteristics common to all religions and the role of peace building in our socio-political lives, which would be compatible with the forbidden clause of practicing sectarian education. The Fundamentals of Education Act does not aim at the total ban of religious education, but support the necessities of generous mind of religions and respect of social position of religions.

[Keywords] awakening, divine immanence, Re-creation, subjectivism, Choe Je-u, Shinran.

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탈종교화 시대의 주체성과 교육의 관계: 최제우의 다시개벽과 신란의 환상회향(還相廻向)을 중심으로

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요 약

[연구 목적] 종교에는 자기중심성의 극복, 상호연결성, 차이와 평등의 공존, 비폭력, 세속 정치 권위의 상대화, 용서와 화해 등 여러 공통된 특성이 존재한다. 이러한 관점들은 일본의 종교교육에서 가장 중요한 내용으로 자리매김되어야 한다. 본 논문에서는 최제우의 ‘다시개벽’과 신란(親鸞)의 ‘환상회향(還相廻向, 아미타불의 중생을 위한 회향)’을 통해 이러한 특성들을 밝히고자 한다. 왜냐하면 최제우와 신란 모두에게서 신/부처의 부름에 의한 신성의 내재성에 대한 자각과, 그러한 자각을 통한 주체성(subjectivism)의 형성이 나타나기 때문이다. 이러한 개념들은 종교교육을 활성화하는 토대가 되는 자기중심성의 극복과 주체성의 확립에 가장 적합하다.

[연구 내용] 근대 국민국가는 교회가 지탱해 온 이념적 기반을 축출하면서 스스로 절대적인 존재가 되었다. 그 결과 가톨릭교회는 사회·정치적 영향력을 상실하였고, 기독교의 역할은 외부 세계와 단절된 개인의 내면생활에만 국한되었다. 이러한 정치적 상황 속에서 종교는 정신적으로나 사회적으로 인간을 해방시키는 중요한 역할을 수행할 수 없게 되었다. 왜냐하면 종교적 각성을 통해 정신적·사회적으로 자기 자신을 넘어설 수 있는 길이 차단되었기 때문이다. 여기에서 우리는 탈종교화의 시작을 볼 수 있다. 일본의 근대화 역시 유럽의 경우와 유사하다. 국민국가를 건설하려 했던 정치권력은 불교를 배제하는 한편, 새로운 국가의 절대성을 확보하기 위해 ‘천황의 절대성’을 내세웠다. 근대 천황제의 종교성은 ‘천황의 절대적 신권’과 ‘정교일치’의 결합을 통해 전형적으로 구현되었다. 국가신도는 곧 천황제의 종교적 체계화를 의미하며, 일본의 모든 종교 위에 군림하였다.

[결론] 그 결과 학교교육에서는 종교를 가르치는 것이 금지되었고, 그 대신 신화가 뒤섞인 일본사, 사람들을 천황에게 종속시키는 도덕 교육, 그리고 천황을 찬양하는 학교 의례가 학생들에게 강요되었다. 제2차 세계대전 이후 천황제와 국가신도는 폐지되었다. 그러나 특정 종교에 대한 종교교육과 교육과정 내 종교 활동을 국공립학교에서 금지하고 있는 교육기본법 때문에 종교를 가르치는 일은 여전히 쉽지 않다. 교사들이 특정 종교의 사상을 언급하지 않고 종교교육을 실천하는 것은 어려울 수 있다. 그러나 모든 종교에 공통적으로 나타나는 특성과, 우리의 사회·정치적 삶 속에서 평화 구축이 수행하는 역할을 가르치는 것은 가능할 것이다. 이는 종파적 교육을 금지하는 조항과도 양립할 수 있다. 교육기본법은 종교교육 자체를 전면적으로 금지하려는 것이 아니라, 종교에 대한 관용적인 정신과 종교가 사회적으로 갖는 위치를 존중할 필요성을 지지하고 있다.

[주제어] 각성, 신성의 내재성, 다시개벽, 주체성, 최제우, 신란(親鸞).

I . Introduction

It was the state's absoluteness in itself that should be required for its building in European Modernity. As Descartes puts it in his *Discours de la Méthode* (1637), "Reason is equally given by God and inherent in human beings." The nation state, constructed by equal people with reason, is both rational and absolute. In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church had held the spiritual and socio-political absoluteness and ideologically held the existence of the state. However, the modern nation state, expelling the ideological pillars sustained by the church, and making God's transcendentality/absoluteness immanent in human beings, had become absolute in itself. Because it is constructed by the people with reason equally given by God, the new nation state could become absolute. Thus, the Catholic Church had lost its socio-political power and the role of Christianity had been restricted only in one's inner life isolated from our outer world.

However, in order to sustain its divinity, the nation state was destined to bring in the Christian concepts again, because it was necessary for the state to have the transcendentality, in order to sustain its divinity and sovereignty over the people. Especially, for nation states that had an inseparable relation to colonization, it was difficult to avoid wars for their expansion. They inherited Christian concepts because they needed justice of state and their divinity.

Reason as the divine existence has a tendency to become one with ego-centrism and is able to expel others. We can see an example in the colonialist ideology. The essence of colonialism is symbolized in such thinking that the rational man, as an agent of God, should change the uncivilized people into human beings. And European religious orders had played an advanced detachment of colonialism. This applies to the Japanese cases, too. A God existing outside us could criticize such ego-centrism. However, such a God had been expelled in the modern European nation state. In such a socio-political situation, religion could not play an important role to emancipate people both mentally and socio-politically, because there exists no way to go beyond oneself both mentally and socially through religious awakening.

Japanese modernization in the 19th century is the same as the European one. The socio-political power that would construct a nation state based on European modernity by the Meiji Restoration, expelled Buddhism that had played the role of the state religion and supported it ideologically. This power held up the "Tenno's absoluteness" so as to obtain the absoluteness of the new state, because it is necessary not only for a modern nation state to adopt an ideology that could ensure the justification of the state, but also for it to realize a

way to colonialism. Such ideology was ego-centric nationalism justifying the Japanese colonialist invasion of Asian countries and it could swallow up Japanese people beyond every confrontation between them. The religiosity of the modern imperial system (近代天皇制) was typically realized in the “Tenno’s (Emperor’s) absolute divine right” and “the unity of the church and state.” State Shintoism is the religious systematization of the Imperial System and it reigned over all kinds of religions in Japan, however, and it was situated as “Non-Religion.”

Consequently, it was prohibited to teach religions in school education and, in place of it, Japanese History mingled with myths, morals subordinating people to Emperor, and rituals held at school to glorify the Emperor, had been forced on the students. Thus, generations of Japanese people who despised Asians were formed.

After the Second World War, the Imperial System and State Shintoism were abolished, but in reality, it is difficult to uproot these structures completely, because the essence of religion and the role of religion that sustained the Imperial System, have not been cleared.

In the global Neo-Liberalism, continual wars and progressively worse living conditions have forced us to think on the necessity of building a peaceful symbiotic society. In this situation, in order to restore human dignity and peace, it is necessary for us to contextualize religions and to revive such subjectivism as we can see in the contextual theology through which the apartheid system was abolished in South Africa. In this essay, I would like to clarify the main reason for the De-Religionization and the difficult problems to teach religions at school. After that, in order to cope with present socio-political situation and to build up subjectivization, I would like to clarify the contemporary meanings of concepts of Choe Je-u’s “Re-creation” existing in the depth of the Korean people, and of Shinran’s “Amida’s Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This World.” Because there exist so many possibilities in religions to awaken human beings not only in the area communities in which many foreign people live with us, but also at school education that is inseparably connected with such communities.

II. Body

1. The Fundamentals of Education Act (教育基本法) in Japan and Religious Education

In Japan, religious education at school was suppressed in 1899. The Official Order No. 12 delivered by the Ministry of Education (August 5, 1899) put it as follows: “Putting religion

outside of the general education is most necessary in the educational policy, consequently both in national and public schools, teaching religion and holding religious rituals should not be permitted even though at extracurricular lessons.”

Through this official order, the way to expel religion from school education was opened. There existed a historical background of the prohibition of religious education. That was the issue of the Imperial Rescript on Education (教育勅語) (1890) just after the proclamation of the Imperial Constitution (1889). The issue of the Imperial Rescript on Education means the establishment of a grand plan to protect the imperial state as a national structure of an unbroken line of Emperor's sovereigns. By the Imperial Constitution, “Legalized Emperor as a subject of the state ruler, declared himself to be the embodiment of the supreme moral value and became a dominator of the people's minds” (National Education Research Center, 1990: 83).

If religious education were situated in the curriculum, the divinity's deception as “The Supreme Moral Value” and “The State Ruler” would be easily disclosed, for generally speaking, religiously awakening followers could not admit that the living person who has a physical body and has dominion over the people, would be a God to be worshiped in addition to their own God. Especially, if such God were to be outrageous and hostile against them, they would not submit and would act bravely as martyrs.

In reality, there took place enormous problems even in Christian private schools after the issue of the Official Order No. 12 “Christian schools declaring distinctly their founding idea, faced the crisis of their existence. If they insisted on their founding idea, it would be impossible to establish and sustain their schools. Thus, Aoyama Gakuin and Meiji Gakuin resigned the allowed right as middle schools, and, in the case of Rikkyo Middle School, Christian education was carried out at the student dormitory. Doshisha established normal school obeying the Official Order No. 12 (Yamazumi, 1995: 74).

After the Second World War, the Modern Imperial System was dismembered fundamentally, and in the Constitution of Japan that was put into operation in 1947, “The function of Emperor over the government was denied, and he was positioned as the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, and the Symbol Emperor System (象徴天皇制) was formed under the sovereignty of the people” (Editorial Committee of the Encyclopedia of Japanese History, 1995: 74).

However, in religious education, the old educational system was not always completely uprooted after the Second World War, for the Sub-section 2, Section 15 of the Fundamentals of

Education Act prohibits national and public school to practice religious education for a specific religion and religious activities in the curriculum. It might be difficult for teachers to practice religious education without mentioning the theoretical philosophy of specific religion. If they would like to avoid the danger of being criticized, all they have to do would be to teach only Japanese animism connected with Shintoism.

Until the end of the Second World War, state Shintoism had never been a religion, but the national morals that forced people to pledge loyalty to the Emperor, and forced them to sacrifice themselves for him. It was “positioned as universal human morals passing current with the world” (Murakami Shigeyosi). State Shintoism was, in reality, nothing but ‘the religion’ beyond every kind of religion. “The Emperor of The Great Japanese Empire is not only the head of state, but also the living God as the embodiment of religious authority advocating universal value and the highest soldier” (Murakami, 2006: 136). The main religious institutions of State Shintoism were Yasukuni Shrine, Gokoku Shrine, and elementary schools. These shrines exist even today, however, the fundamental characters have never been changed. This is why quite a good many Diet members worship at Yasukuni Shrine every year, and this gives rise to anger from Asian countries. Though here we can see the continuation of State Shintoism, large scale exaltation of criticism against it among people is not to be seen recently.

It is wars of aggression that have been indivisibly connected with modernization of Japan since Meiji Restoration. Needless to say, historical understanding and mutual conversations among the people, are necessary for peace building. In this respect, religious thinking has a possibility to play an important role, if it is connected with history at school education.

It is true that the Fundamentals of Education Act does not deny “religious education” at school. We can understand this from the Sub-Section 1, Section 15: “The attitude of generosity toward religion, general culture concerned to religion and religious position in social life should be esteemed educationally” (Ishii et al., 2025: 74). To realize the above mentioned, such world religions as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, namely, the contents of individual religion, should be taught in classes. At a glance, this might contradict to the Sub-Section 2, Section 15. It is as follows: “At the schools established by the government and local public entities, it is prohibited to practice religious education for the specific religions and other religious activities” (Ishii et al., 2025: 74-75).

However, it might be possible to teach the characteristics common to all religions and the roles of peace building in our socio-political lives under the Fundamentals of Education Act,

which would contribute to understand religions in the globalized world. This would be compatible with the Sub-Section 2, Section 15, namely, the forbidden clause of teaching sectarian education.

It is clear that the Fundamentals of Education Act does not aim at the total ban of religious education, but support the necessities of the “generous mind of religions” and “respect of the social position of religions.” We could understand this from the lecture entitled Commentary of the Fundamentals of Education Act, delivered by Tsujita Tsutom, the Head of Research Bureau of Ministry of Education, on the 5th May, 1947. He delivered as follows:

The Fundamentals of Education Act declared that in order to realize liberty of freedom of religion on the basis of the Constitution of Japan, the attitude to the generous mind concerned with religions and the position of them in social lives should be respected based on the spirit of the Constitution of Japan. By teaching these things, we would like to raise a bud of religion. However, it is prohibited to practice religious education for the benefit of specific religion and religious activities (Usui, 2003: 111).

In teaching the generous mind of religion common to all kinds of religion and the position of religion in socio-political lives, at least, it would be necessary to clarify their common characteristics through religions. In religion in itself, there exist such common characteristics as overcoming of ego-centrism, interrelationship, coexistence of difference and equality, non-violence, relativization of secular political authority, forgiveness and reconciliation, etc. Such viewpoints should be situated as the most important in religious education in Japan.

The Sub-Section 1 and 2, Section 15 of the Fundamentals of Education Act are inseparably connected to each other. Teaching “specific religion for its sect only” without respect for others and mutual dialogue, is not to be allowed in the class.

It is a well-known fact that there exist so many foreign workers with different religions in Japan and many of them, especially foreign school-children are apt to be forced to lead an afflicted life both physically and mentally. Religious education could play an encouraging role for them to live peacefully with Japanese in the community through such religious concepts as mutual relationship, dialogue with each other, conquest of ego-centrism, and building a peaceful symbiotic society.

2. Global Society Generating De-Religionization

In order to deepen the contents of the generous mind of religion and social positioning of religion, it would be necessary to clarify religious characteristics and universality. To do this, we must find out the conquering viewpoint against the ego-centrism that has globally pervaded. Pervasion of ego-centrism had been strengthened by the De-Religionization that has a tendency of denying the interconnectedness and priority of others as the outer- existence of ourselves, which are deeply connected with religion. This is why we need religion in the world. Tzvetan Todorov describe the ego-centric situation as follows:

The impulse that would obtain only one's own satisfaction, used to meet the pressure from society. It is difficult to say that nowadays there never exists such pressure, though it would have been weakened. It is pointed out that traditional religion has lost its influence over individuals, and such virtues as self-sacrifice and solidarity, have never been built up in the families. Such social climate has been accelerated more and more after the fall of the Berlin wall and it has been accelerated in the full flourish of neo-liberalism. The end of cold-war has brought about a relaxation of fidelity to the ideal. Only the economic success has been accepted as the criterion to value the individual flowering and the market theory has penetrated into all the corners of our lives. The term of morals in itself is taken as a word having negative nuance, and it has been regarded as oppressive and out of date. Thus, it has been thought that it is a dignified way of thinking to declare to be liberated from morals (Tzvetan, 2018: 28-29).

The end of the Cold-War has brought about two things. According to Tzvetan Todorov, one is that democracy has lost a part of its justification for existence: "The movement of democratization has extended to Southeast Asia and Latin America, as well as in East Europe and states of the former Soviet Union. However, on the other hand, be it the victory over the totalitarian government or over the military one, it changed the justification of democracy into out of date. As the ideological enemy vanished already, democracy has lost some part of the justification for existence, namely, the opportunity that could agitate an ardent wish for some particular values" (Tzvetan, 2018: 20). The other is that, by the collapse of the "Soviet Empire," "it became possible to cast away its illusion and deception" and "dispel the reference to the transcendent values." As a result, people did not talk about the ideal and another value that "it is better to lead a life searching for private profits and regarding the only key of happiness to be money" emerged in front.

It is the Neo-Liberalism that could be united with the value above mentioned. According to Susan George, Neo-Liberalists “believe that the right to dispose their own income and estate should be inviolable, and any other public and private system, including the State, has no right to intervene in” (Susan, 2008: 37). What they would like to aim at is the “reduction of taxes and retrenchment of national intervention to offer social benefit for citizens. They would like to abolish protective labor laws and public support in case of unemployment, disease, homeless, other individual calamity and unhappiness. In their opinion, any other ‘public’ services should be outside-ordered to the private company, and private school and medical institution should take place of public ones in a big way” (Susan, 2008: 41).

Ego-centrism, generated from the collapse of cold-war system, has been united with Neo-Liberalism, and largely discriminated society between the rich and the poor, was generated. The extension of economic inequality has enlarged a gap between the rich and the poor. As Takahashi Toshiaki puts it in his *Unbalanced Society* (2007), “The income of the rich has increased” and, on the contrary, “the more have the poor come to poverty,” and the numbers of the rich and poor have increased relatively. According to the same book, even in such big cities as Tokyo, Osaka, Sendai, Nagoya and so forth on, as well as in other cities, the absolute rate of poverty from the year 1996 to 2002 has heightened. The number of the homeless people has been doubled from 3000 to 6000 in Tokyo from the end of 1990s to around 2000.

It is required for all the human beings to change the discriminative and oppressive society, where the dignity of human beings is injured, into non-violent and symbiotic one. To realize this, a shared intellectual understanding of reality among the people and subjective decision are needed for all humankind. It would be religions that could contribute to these decisions. We can see the example in the South African Christianity based on the indigenous ‘Ubuntu’ thinking that had contributed to the total abolition of the Apartheid System and built peaceful symbiotic South Africa.

Generally speaking, there exists religion for the realization of peaceful symbiotic society through going beyond ego-centrism. There are so many concepts to learn from religion in order to change the “unbalanced society” and to retrieve human dignity. In order to propose the issue to improve the religious education and to build up subjectivity to change the society in which ego-centric ideology has been prevailing, the common thinking between Choe Je-u (崔濟愚) and Shinran (親鸞), focusing on the concepts of ‘Renaissance’ and ‘Amida’s Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This World,’ should be clarified.

3. Choe Je-u's Concept of "Re-creation"

1) Outline of Choe Je-u's Religious Thinking

In a chain of democratization movements, namely, 3·1 Movement (1919), 4·19 Revolution (1960), Kwang Ju Struggle for Democracy (1980), and Proclaiming Martial Law Blocking Movement (2024), there exists Choe Je-u's non-violent symbiotic thinking that sustained the Dong Hak Peasant Movement (1894). If we could contextualize the core of Dong Hak thinking and connect it with the problems to conquer in the globalized society, there would emerge a possibility to build the East Asian peaceful community on non-violence.

Ego-centrism has been raging in the world. It is the same with the era of Choe Je-u who was destined to fight against it. Choe Je-u puts it in his *On Propagating Truth (Poduk-Mun)*:

However, in current times the people of the world have selfish minds, and do not follow the Principal of Heaven nor care for the Will of Heaven. Therefore, my mind is always anxious and fearful, and I do not know what will happen in the future.

In 1860 there were rumors that in order to serve God's will, Westerners were not seeking wealth or glory, yet they attacked and conquered the world, and built their churches and spread their religion. I also wonder whether it was true and why they did that (Choe, 2007: 4).

Choe Je-u knew the military strength of Westerners and felt actually that "there seems to be nothing that they cannot achieve." He was worried that "If China is destroyed, Korea may be next." Under the peril of colonization and the spoilt and morally ruined Korean State System unable to resist the critical situation, he desperately searched for a way to resolve the situation, however, he could not find it by himself at all. Then, he heard the voice of God, Hanullim. Choe Je-u puts it as follows:

Around this time, suddenly my body shook, I felt a chill and I felt the vital force of contact with the Spirit, and inwardly I heard divine words of instruction. I looked around but could not see anyone. I listened but could not hear anything. Therefore, I felt it very strange. After bracing my mind and renewing my energy, I asked, "Why is it like this?"

The divine answer was, "My mind is your mind. How can humankind know it? People know of Heaven and Earth, but they do not know the Spirit. I am the Spirit." As I am giving you the eternal Truth, cultivate and refine it, write it down and teach it to the people. Establish the laws of practice and propagate the Truth (virtue). Then you will have eternal life and will brighten the

world” (Choe, 2007: 8-9).

Choe Je-u, in the anguish unable to have a view of the future, heard the call of God (Hanullim) as the outside being. It is impossible for the finite human beings to find the immanent God all by themselves. Hanullim said to him, “My mind is your mind. How can humankind know it?” This shows us that self-consciousness of the immanent God is impossible without hearing the calling of God as the outside existence beyond humankind.

This is the same with the concept of “Bussho (仏性, Buddhaness)” in Mahayana Buddhism. The awakening of “Bussho” is impossible without hearing Buddha’s calling. In Dong Hak thinking, the God in the outer world tells us the divine immanence through the spiritual ultimate force (至氣). Receiving the calling, humankind becomes subjective by awakening and serves the God, and participates in the struggle for truth in cooperation with God.

In this way, a year later Choe Je-u summarized the eternal Truth in a short incantation for common people to understand easily. The incantation is as follows: “侍天主造定化永世不忘萬事知.” Choe Je-u explains the meanings of these 13 letters:

Si means having the Divine Spirit within and expressing the vital force in life. When people realize this they will keep it in their hearts without change. *Ju* refers to respecting, honoring, and serving God like one’s own parents. *Johwa* means natural becoming and transformation. *Jeong* means oneness with the Divine Virtue and deciding to have the mind of God. *Yeongse* refers to the long life of humankind. *Bulmang* means thinking about God always without forgetting. *Mansa* means many things. *Ji* means understanding God’s way and achieving wisdom. Thus, if one would think about and never forget the bright Truth and Virtue of God and the incantation, one will unite with the Ultimate energy (*ji-gi*) of God and attain the perfect sagehood (Choe, 2007: 11).

Si-Cheonji (侍天主) means to become subjective, liberated from ego-centrism by serving the immanent God and collaborating with God. All are equal and mutually connected each other, because they are equally divine immanent existence, in spite of their difference in shape. Therefore, if we kill enemies, it means that we kill ourselves because there exists the same God both in themselves and in ourselves. There exists the theoretical basis of the non-violent movement. By collaboration of people who have been “awakened” and become subjective, the way to the peaceful symbiotic society, the way to support the nation and comfort the people would be open.

In the core of Choe Je-u’s religious thinking, there exists the changing of ego-centric

thinking into another thinking based on the mutual interconnectedness by the spirit's vital force. This is the most important view point to conquer "Neo-Liberalism," "Market Fundamentalism" based on ego-centrism that has swept over the whole world.

2) The Concepts of "Si-Cheonju" and "Re-creation"

Choe Je-u had been awakened that he had God within himself, hearing God's calling. After that, he summarized an incantation (the 'Eternal Truth') in 13 words so that the people could understand easily. It is the concept of "Si-Cheonju" that exists at the basis of all. The awakening of the divine imminent, leads to the understanding God within all that are different in shape each other. Humankind, by respecting, serving God, and collaborating with God, is able to be liberated from ego-centrism and join others. Through this, humankind can stand up and subjectively start building a new world. God, nominating Choe Je-u as the one to practice "Re-creation," told him as follows:

God spoke, "Since creation [kaebyok], you are the first in fifty thousand years. I have toiled away since creation, but my results have been useless. Because I meet you, you succeed, so I succeed, too. You will also be proud. Your house will now find good fortune [unsu]." After hearing these words, I alone felt happiness and self-confident. Oh, people of the world! How could you know that unlimited fate [mugug chi un] is approaching? (George L., 2013: 188).

Here it is a suggestion that the old era of ego-centrism has ended and new era is going to begin. It is a collaboration with God that could open a new era. At first, he could not understand the real meanings that the God told him. Because he had no conviction to be able to collaborate with God. However, God pointed out that such thinking was in the wrong. God spoke, "How could you know you were not as worthy as others? How could you know whether your talents were as worthy as others? Stop such words. You are the first (to collaborate with) after being born into this world. You are surrounded by good fortune. I decided to bring forth a propitious pregnancy [*p'ot'ae chi su*] (George L., 2013: 179). Hearing this, he could escape from his narrow, ego-centrism and feel happiness and self-confidence to practice "Re-creation."

Hanullim (God) existing beyond him, instructed that it was impossible for him to know by ego-centrism what he was. Thus, he emerged from ego-centrism and felt happy to be a subject to objectify himself and collaborate with God for the "Re-creation" of the world. Here we can

see that the old era has ended and the new one is coming, and he has become an awakened person who could re-create new era with God. The new era could be opened only by the collaboration with the awakened and God. Subjective person means not only Choe Je-u, but also all the people who could find God within themselves by the calling of God. The collaboration of such people could build a new era, a new world.

Despite the fact that real world has been proceeding to decay and becoming inhuman by ego-centrism, Choe Je-u felt a new era's coming in the real world. Hanullim (God) told him as follows:

Pitiful! Pitiful! The fortune [unsu] for our country is pitiful! How many years have passed since the Imjin War? Has it not been 240 years? Is it not another time of creation when the fortunes of the twelve states were afflicted with a strange disease? If the holy sages Yao and Shun returned, the country would prosper and the people would be at peace [kukt'ae minan]. But dark and threatening! Dark and threatening! The prospects for our country are dark and threatening! Doglike Japanese troops, look back upon your lives. By what grace or virtue did you descend down into this world? Even at the time of the Imjin War, if we had not had the loyal statesmen Osong and Hanum, who would have protected the jade seal of the king? Wise men [myonghyon] of our country no longer exist. I have accepted the charge from God to protect the royal seal. After such a difficult crisis passed, God confirmed the blessings and prosperity of the lives that were spread, and I received my life. (George L., 2013: 185-186).

It is because there exists ego-centrism as the basis of everything that all the states over the world have been declining. It was true that European states had been widening their colonial domination connected with religion based on ego-centrism. Choe Je-u criticized such religion in comparison with his Donghak (東學) as follows:

Our Way is the Natural Way. If each person preserves a good mind, rectifies the vital force, follows their original nature, and receives the Divine teaching, all will turn out well naturally. The Westerners have no order in their words and no logic in their writings. There is no genuine service for God but they only pray for selfish ideas. Therefore, they do not have the mystical experience of uniting with the spiritual force, and they lack the true teaching of God. Their religion has form but no substance. They have vague ideas but no real incantation. Their religion is close to emptiness and their theology is not really for God. Therefore, how can one say that there is no difference between the Western religion and my teaching? (Choe, 2007: 10).

In the 19th century, Western religion, main stream of Christianity was ideologically bound with colonialism and did not stand on the side of the oppressed. Choe Je-u criticized such religion and constructed Donghak for the subjectivization of people to build up new era. As he says, Westerners in the 19th century “only pray for selfish ideas” and “they lack the true teaching of God.” He thought that there was no future for them. Old era is going to end, and new era is to “re-create.” The most important is to conquer ego-centrism and to form subjective people to collaborate with the God within themselves. Only such people could “re-create” a new era. As he put it in *Song of Reassurance*, “Re-creation” means “another time creation.” Therefore, “Re-creation,” another time creation means a new era that is in quality quite different from the former old one.

In the middle of the 19th century, Asian countries greeted the “New Era.” As Professor Jo Sung-hwan puts it, “Re-creation is a slogan that the popular religions generated in Korean peninsula, equally held up from the end of the 19th to the 20th century,” and its meaning is “to open the new world... Eventually, the concept that declares the conversion from older system into new one, is what the ‘Re-creation’ means” (Kitajima, 2018: 131). There existed two options for the Korean intellectuals in the middle of the 19th century. The former is “the thinking of expelling evil that would like to drive away the invading European civilization, basing on Confucian civilization. The latter is the “blooming of civilization” thinking. This means to accept the progressive European civilization, casting away the feudal Confucian civilization” (Kitajima, 2018: 132). On the contrary, the group that selected “the third way is called ‘Re-creation’ group. In ‘another time’ in the term of ‘another time of creation’ and ‘new era’ of ‘new era of creation’ that were preached by them, the meaning of new system different from older one, namely, ‘modernity’ is included.” (Kitajima, 2018: 133).

In the concept of “Re-creation,” “another time creation,” there exists a view point to change subjectively the globalized world that has been conquered by Neo-Liberalism and the Market Fundamentalism. There exists ego-centrism at its bottom. In order to change the situation, it is the most necessary for human subjectivization based on the awakening of the sacred immanent in everything.

We can find a good example in the novel, *Human Acts* by Han Kang. In the novel, a 23 year old student’s feelings are as follows:

It wasn’t as though we didn’t know how overwhelmingly the army outnumbered us. But the strange thing was, it didn’t matter. Ever since the uprising began, I’d felt something coursing

through me, as overwhelming as any army.

Conscience.

Conscience, the most terrifying thing in the world.

The day I stood shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of thousands of my fellow civilians, staring down the barrel of the soldiers' guns, the day the bodies of those first two slaughtered were placed in a handcart and pushed at the head of column, I was startled to discover an absence inside myself: the absence of fear. I remember feeling that it was all right to die. I felt the blood of a hundred thousand hearts surging together into one enormous artery, fresh and clean... the sublime enormity of single heart, pulsing blood through that vessel and into my own. I dared to feel a part of it (Han, 2016: 115).

The young student knew the army was overwhelming. However, he felt that something coursing through him, as overwhelming as any army. And "something as overwhelming as any army" became one with him. This means that man as finite being felt the "overwhelming something" within himself caused by the spiritual power. Feeling something absolute within himself, he was liberated from ego-centrism and fear. Eventually, he became subjectivized and became one with others. In the feelings, he and Choe Je-u are identical each other.

In such a way, awakening of divine immanence that makes people subjective, has been inherited in their mind.

It might be possible to teach such religious roles in society, combining with history class and moral education. Because religion is inseparably connected to our life and society. Such development of religious education would contribute to grasp subjectively the relationship between man and society and human subjectivization in the world where ego-centric Neo-Liberalism has been pervading.

4. Shinran's Concept of Amida's Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This World

I explained that the concept of "Re-creation" as a development of "Bearing/Serving God Within me," has been inherited today. We could find the same concept in Shinran's thinking in the 13th century in Japan.

As a Buddhist theorist, Shinran emphasized the divine immanence as "Buddha-nature (仏性)." He explains as follows:

The *Nirvana Sutra* states: "Good Sons! Great love and great compassion are called

Buddha-nature.” Why? Because great love and great compassion always accompany the Bodhisattva, just as shadows accompany things. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great love and great compassion. Therefore it is taught, “All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature.” Great love and great compassion are Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathagata... Buddha-nature is great shinjin. Why? Because through shinjin the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva has acquired all the paramitas from charity to wisdom. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great shinjin. Therefore it is taught, “All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature.” Great shinjin is none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathagata. (Yoshifumi, 1985: 235-236).

It is impossible for human beings to achieve awakening by themselves because they are covered with ego-centrism. It is only Buddha that could instruct them in the divine immanence, Buddha-nature within themselves. There exists such a metaphor in the first part of *The Sutra on the Great Extinction, Vol.8* (大般涅槃經卷八) that a poor woman who had never known a nugget of gold in her garden, could find it by Buddha’s instruction. Shinran thought that everyone could be awakened on hearing Amitabha’s calling in spite of being covered with ego-centrism, because there exists Buddha-nature within everyone. Thus, humankind is able to get away from ego-centrism and changed into the existence as divine immanence. Such people are called “Those who are rightly established in this world.”

1) *‘Those Who Are Rightly Established in This World’* (現生正定聚) ‘ and *‘Amida’s Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This world’*

In “Orthodox” Pure Land Thinking, those who would like to attain true Enlightenment are born in Amida’s Pure Land after their death, and after becoming a Buddha, come back to this world and could save people. However, without practicing to save people as a Bodhisattva in this world, it is impossible to become a Buddha. In Mahayana Buddhism, to attain true enlightenment and to save people are one and indivisible. Shinran grasped this oneness in this world based on the two aspects of Amida’s directing of virtue to sentient beings. One aspect is for our going forth to the Pure Land and the other is for our return to this world.

Shinran grasped that “our going forth to the Pure Land” should be based on the “Amida’s directing of virtue” for our going forth to the Pure Land, and as soon as the going forth to the Pure Land is fixed, we are destined to go there and to become a Buddha. Shinran grasped that those who could stand on such a stage are certain of attaining enlightenment, and in Faith (Shinjin) they are identical to Maitreya Bodhisattva who is decided to become a Buddha after

5,670,000,000 years (五拾六億七千萬年). Maitreya Bodhisattva has received grace to save people. They are called “those who are rightly established in this world.” Shinran grasped that when we are awakened by the “Amida’s Directing of Virtue for Our Going to the Pure Land,” at the same time, we are on the stage of the “Amida’s Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This World.” Those who stand on such a stage are called Those Who Are Rightly Established in This World. They could realize that everything is in the relationship of interconnectedness and they would like to save the suffering people and to change the social situations against humanity in this world with the aid of Amida.

Shinran thought that there existed nothing absolute in this world except Amida. For Shinran, this world is neither eternal nor absolute, but changeable for better. His worldview is depicted in his concept, “Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands (化身土).”

2) Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands

Shinran grasped this world as the “Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands.” This means the world that is a concrete object for sensorium, and that is not true but is to be changed into true, namely, the world that is dualized by truth and falsehood. According to the Buddhist worldview, this world has been located in the era of Decadent Dharma (末法) since 1052. Eventually, this world has been covered with falsehood, but there exists truth in the depth of itself and it is up to the awakened who could grasp the truth and clarify the way of emancipation. Shinran identified such awakened ones as “Those Who Are Rightly Established” with the ability to save the suffering people and to change the situation into better despite political oppressions.

III. Conclusion: Religious Relationship between Choe Je-u and Shinran Concerned with Education

First, both in Choe Je-u and Shinran, there exist not only awakening of divine immanence by God/Buddha’s calling, but also subjectivism through awakening, and collaboration with God/Buddha. Second, there exist possibilities for changing the world covered with ego-centrism into a peaceful one both in Choe Je-u’s “Re-creation” and in Shinran’s “Amida’s Directing of Virtue for Our Return to This World.” Third, there exists an establishment of subjectivism

“benefitting others” beyond ego-centrism through awakening both in the “Bearing/Serving God Within Me” and “Those Who Are Rightly Established in This World.” Fourth, there exists Non-violent Symbioticism through the divine immanence.

These religious characteristics both in Choe Je-u and in Shinran, would contribute to building subjectivism to change the world, where Neo-Liberalism as ego-centrism has been flourishing, into a peaceful, symbiotic one. In Japan, this kind of view has been omitted in education. However, this does not mean to give religious sectarian education at school. It would be necessary to combine the above-mentioned characteristics in religion, with classroom works. This could encourage students to understand human existence more profoundly and what is to be done in our society.

Nowadays, foreigners coming over to Japan for work, have been increasing year by year. According to a report by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (January 30, 2026), there exist 2,571,037 foreign residents in Japan. Many of them have been afflicted in their everyday lives. For example, in Imizu City, Toyama Prefecture, an incident in which the Koran was destroyed by Japanese occurred in 2001, and problems of garbage and noise caused friction between Pakistanis and Japanese residents in 2023. However, there exist many Pakistanis who were willing to participate in the rescue movement at the Noto Peninsula Earthquake in 2024. Nowadays, we can see the reality in which residents of Pakistani community and Japanese residents in their community, in solidarity with each other, have been going out on patrol in their communities to build symbiotic society. In order to further strengthen their solidarity and their peaceful relationship, dialogue based on common ground between Pakistanis and Japanese through religions will be needed because there exist many common points, such as interconnectedness, coexistence of difference and equality, respect for the other both in Islam and Buddhism, especially in Shin-Buddhism that has been deeply rooted in Toyama region.

In this situation, it is clear that mutual understanding between foreign residents and us is needed. These religious characteristics could encourage not only citizens, but also students to build a peaceful symbiotic community in collaboration with such foreigners.

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