

A COMPARISON OF ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD'S AND CARL GUSTAV JUNG'S IDEA OF RELIGION

Special Reference to their Lectures on Religion

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1. Introduction

Whitehead and Jung did not start their academic profession as a process philosopher or a depth psychologist. They did not study philosophy and psychology in the department of philosophy or psychology. Later, they created their own specific field in philosophy or psychology. They are not the philosopher or the psychologist who simply followed and maintained the basic system of philosophy or psychology.

As is well known, Whitehead taught the subject of mathematics and physics for almost 29 years in the Cambridge and the London University. When he was 63 years old, he was invited to teach philosophy at Harvard University. After he came to Harvard, he taught philosophy in the department of philosophy for only 12 years, developed his philosophy of organism, and published most books of his process philosophy.

Unlike Whitehead, Jung did not teach for a long time in the university setting. He, as doctor, did much research of the human psyche in the hospital setting. In the early period of his research, he began to suspect the dominant materialistic human understanding in the field of medical science or psychology to be influenced by the Helmholtz school at that time. He did not satisfy such shallow physical human understanding. Due to this reason, he began to study the inner depth dimension of psyche in order to prove the other dimension of human psyche to be against the current view. For the subject of his inaugural dissertation for the medical degree¹, he chose his cousin's medium experience. Since he began to study his cousin's experience, his human understanding began to be different

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¹The title of the dissertation is "On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena." The dissertation is in the first volume of *The Collected Works of C.G.Jung* translated by R.T.C. Hull(London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

from the current superficial understanding. In that time, Jung's human understanding was not the main stream .

Even though Whitehead and Jung had different academic backgrounds, they had a common opinion that their philosophy and psychology was very different from the then current materialistic or mechanistic philosophy and psychology. Especially, they came to realize that the contemporary philosophy and the psychology had excluded the transcendental dimension of life. As the result of such exclusion, the realm of religion was marginalized to become a taboo not to be mentioned or discussed in ordinary public discourse.

Whitehead's and Jung's growth process had made them to reflect their academic field more critically in relation to religion. They were brought up in religious family. Whitehead's father was the pastor of Anglican Church in England and Jung's father also the pastor of the Swiss Reformed Church. Later, they both found that religion had been deeply related to philosophy and psychology in traditional academic field but modern philosophy and psychology did not concern about religion. Unlike modern philosopher and psychologist, Whitehead and Jung thought that religion, for the rebirth of modern fragmented culture or civilization, should be reevaluated or reinterpreted. They tried to understand religion in relation to their philosophy and psychology.

Before Whitehead published his magnum opus *Process and Reality* (1929), and *The Adventures of Ideas* (1933), he delivered two lectures, Lowell Lectures in 1925 and other Lectures in 1926 at Harvard. The first one was on science and the second one on religion. Later the two lectures were published as *Science and Modern World* and as *Religion in the Making*. These two lectures are the important studies for the understanding of religion and, furthermore, became the occasion to develop his organism of philosophy in later works.

Jung began to study religion more actively in relation to human deeper psyche since he was separated from S. Freud. He tried to show the deeper realm of psyche, the collective unconscious beyond Freud' personal unconscious as the source of religion. For that, he did his research of religion. However, he did not limit himself to the study of religion but also studied dreams, fantasies, mystical experiences, alchemies and so on which revealed the realm of the collective unconscious. To him, religion is

not simply one of key factors in human life but the essence or foundation of human life. Most of his works were emphasized on this point. In this sense, Jung had an "apologetic" view of religion in the modern secular academic world.

Whitehead gave his lectures on religion in King's Chapel at Harvard during February 1926. He, in the lectures, articulated three points, the formative elements of religion, the transformation of religion, and the foundation of religion in relation to the human nature²⁾. His lectures consisted of the four chapters. The first chapter was titled as Religion in History, the second as Religion and Dogma, the third as Body and Spirit, and the fourth one as Truth and Criticism. It is a book of 154 pages.

Jung also delivered his lectures on religion in 1937 at Yale University. Jung was invited as the fifteenth lecturer of the series "Lectures on Religion in the Light of Science and Philosophy" under the auspices of the Terry Foundation. Afterwards, the lectures have been known as Terry Lecture. Terry Lecture, in the United States of American has been well known like the Guifford Lectures in Scotland.

Jung, originally, wrote and delivered his lectures in English. After one year, the lectures were published as a book with the title of *Psychology and Religion* in Yale University Press and Oxford University Press. And, they were translated in German by Felicia Froboese, revised by Toni Wolff, added by Jung, and published in Zurich, 1940. The lectures consisted of three chapters, the first one was titled as the Autonomy of the Unconscious, the second as Dogma and Natural Symbols and the third as History and Psychology of a Natural Symbol. It is a book of 100pages.

Like Whitehead, Jung had the same aim of his lectures. Jung tried to delineate the foundation of religion, the transformation of religion and the constituent elements of religion in relation to the deeper dimension of human nature. However, there is a difference of the materials that they use for their lectures. Whitehead appended 8 short footnotes and quoted several phrases from Bible. But Jung added 156 long footnotes and cited many long phrases from his patient's personal dreams. He developed his lectures with amplification of dreams. This is a difference from Whitehead's lectures.

²⁾A.N.Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New American Library, 1954), see preface.

In this paper, I would like to compare Whitehead's and Jung's definition and expressions of religion, and, furthermore, to indicate their contribution to understand religiously pluralistic situation.

2. Definition of Religion

Since Religious Studies has been born as an academic field in 19th century, one of the mooted questions has been in the definition of religion. Most scholars in Religious Studies have tried to articulate a general definition of religion. For examples, Rudolf Otto defined religion as *das Heilige*, M. Eliade as sacred, Nifian Smart as world-view and W. C. Smith as a quality of life. Nevertheless, there is no agreement or consensus, as regards to the definition of religion, which is able to cover all religious phenomena in the most general sense. Due to this reason, much discussion on the definition of religion does not have been found in recent studies of religion.

Discussion on the definition of modern academic field has proceeded not only in Religious Studies for the identity of its discipline but also in most of the modern academic fields in post-modern world. For an example, in the field of literature, the traditional definition of literature is no more accepted in general consensus. Nowadays, a general and universal definition could not have been suggested in the field of literature. Maybe all modern academic fields have the same problems.

In this respect, William James' opinion that definitions of religion exist as many as religious people is very right³⁾. Thus, a universal definition of religion would be impossible. However for the advanced research of religion, the temporal and hypothetical definition of religion is to be demanded. In other words, a working definition should be suggested.

Even though Whitehead and Jung did not study religion in the field of Religious Studies, they did also know the difficulties in making a universal definition of religion. They knew precisely complexities of religion in history, comparing to the religious knowledge of other philosophers and psychologists. Due to multiplicities of religion, they avoided making a single definition including all dimensions and complexes of religion. Nevertheless, for the development of their research,

³⁾W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: The Modern Library, 1929), P. 27.

they made a working definition of religion in terms of the human nature. Whitehead and Jung did it on the basis of their analysis of historical facts of religion. They were not simple idealist or theorist who did ignore the historicity of religion. They maintained an empirical and factual standpoint for their research.

Generally, a subject's external behavior is caused by his or her internal motivation. The best way to understand and judge a subject's behavior is to find out his or her internal motivation. This point can be grasped very well in the world of religions. The real motivation and meaning of religion is in the first subject who founded a religion and the followers of the religion. Thus, to Whitehead and Jung, the most important part of religion is not in the objective external facts of religion--institutions, organization, scriptures, rituals, belief systems and so on--but in the subject's heart involved in his or her own religion, the internal fact of religion. In other words, Whitehead and Jung thought of the subject's internal experience as the essence of religion.

Whitehead thought that the internal experience was not influenced by the subject's surroundings or social systems. To him, the internal life was the most independent and free moment. In this moment, anybody or anything could not prevent the subject's internal experience from proceeding. Without this moment, religion could not be conceived.

Whitehead identified this moment as the most solitary in the subject's life. He thought that religion had been rooted in the subject's solitariness. Let's read Whitehead's phrase on religion regarding to this point.

Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness.....

Thus religion is solitariness; and if you never solitary, you are never religious. Collective enthusiasms, revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, bibles, codes of behavior, are the trappings of religion, its passing forms. They may be useful, or harmful; they may be authoritatively ordained, or merely temporary, expedients. But the end of religion is beyond all this.⁴⁾

Likewise, Jung thought that the core of religion was not in doctrine, creed or traditions but in religious experience. To him, religion was not

⁴⁾A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, P. 16.

external institutions but the subject's internal experience. The internal religious experience is not caused by the external facts of religion but by the deeper internal forces beyond the level of consciousness. In this moment, the person's will, habit, and prejudice is no more functioned but replaced by the inner depth power beyond the conscious level of psyche. Thus, religion is not founded by the subject's will or the social system arbitrarily but by the subject's collective unconscious. Simply, the subject should listen and obey to the command from the collective unconscious. Jung tried to articulate the command as an absolute and unique experience to possess the human subject. He identified the state as the experience of *numinosum*. He borrowed this concept from Rudolf Otto's book, *Das Heilige*. Let's read Jung's phrase on the definition of religion.

Religion, as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the *numinosum*, that is, a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, who is always rather its victim than its creator.⁵⁾

Whitehead's and Jung's working definitions of religion, furthermore, revealed an unique common point. Whitehead's solitariness is not happened in the ordinary, habitual life but in the extraordinary, secluded life. In other words, the solitariness is not expected in general life to proceed on daily time schedule. It proceeds from the most rigorous detachment from community, social organizations or groups. It is always demanding the transformation of consciousness.

Similarly, *numinosum* does not happen in the habitual, ordinary consciousness, but in the collective unconscious realm. It is not from the human subject's consciousness. It always comes from the collective unconscious. Thus it is not controlled by the subject's will. And *numinosum* is to make the subject's consciousness to be carefully linked to the collective unconscious and to be reborn. Through the experience of *numinosum*, the subject's existing consciousness would be extended or extracted. Let's quote the appropriate phrase to show this point.

⁵⁾C. G. Jung, "Psychology and Religion" in *The Collected Works*, Vol. 11, P. 7.

We might say, then, that the term "religion" designates the attitude peculiar to consciousness which has been changed by experience of the *numinosum*.⁶⁾

This new consciousness as a religious experience is not formed within the scope of the ordinary stereotyped consciousness. It always happens through the stern breakthrough of the conventional consciousness - habits, customs, laws, social rules and so on - to listen to the inner call from the human subject's deeper psyche. In this sense, this new consciousness is not tribal but always transcendental. If this new consciousness would lose the first dynamic transcendental characteristic to be fixed as a closed idea, or system, it would not function as the source or root of religion.

Whitehead and Jung criticized the reduction of the dynamic aspect of the first new consciousness into a fixed idea or thought. They commonly thought that the new consciousness should not be routine and stereotyped. It should preserve the critical reflection process of itself. To do so, it should always maintain a distance from its community, society, tribe, nation, race and all kinds of status.

The new consciousness has founded many religions in history. It has established a new religion out of the established religion as the case of Buddhism from Hinduism in India or as the case of Christianity from Judaism in the Middle East but also formed a new religion from the establishing new religion in Korea or Japan. Moreover, this new consciousness is regenerating the new religion and the established religion.

The religion which lacks the spirit of the new consciousness is inclined to lose its original transcendental power and to remain a dead formal tradition. This kind of religion is very self-defensive and apologetic to criticize neighbor religions. Due to this propensity, this religion is making a core dogma as an absolute "isms" like ideologies, communism, socialism, capitalism and so on. As ideologies are always demanding "black or white" answer, this kind of religion is also demanding the same answer.

This religion is inclined to emphasize its own community in order to separate itself from other communities. Its view of community is very

⁶⁾Ibid., P. 8.

tribal or parochial. It does not concern about the global community beyond its own community. It could not develop a universal concept of "world-community"⁷⁾ including other communities. Whitehead keenly observed that this kind of religion had brought about many wars and conflicts in history.

The same type of religion in our generation was one of the factors which lead to the great war. It leads to the morbid exaggeration of national self-consciousness. It lacks the element of quietism. Generality is the salt of religion.⁸⁾

Jung also thought that religion should be continuously developed in relation to its own source, the collective unconscious. It should be self critical and rational, paying attention to the state of the collective unconscious. Moreover, religion should regenerate its present form through the process of relativity in relation to the source. If not so, it would be deceived to be absolute against other religions. Jung thought of this kind of religion as the most dangerous, and destructive.

The interregnum is full of danger, for the natural fact will raise their claim in the form of various-isms, which are productive of nothing but anarchy and destruction because inflation and man's hybris between them have elected to make the ego, in all its ridiculous paltriness, lord of the universe.⁹⁾

Furthermore, if religion is not ceaselessly reformed by a new consciousness, it would disappear as a dead religion in history. Even though it would be survived fortunately, it would not function positively. Rather, it would lose its control power to explode itself to be violent against other religions. This aspect could be easily found in history. There are many cases of religious violence: Christians' violence against Jews in Germany, Hindus' violence against Buddhists, Buddhists' violence against Hindus, Christians' against Muslims, Muslims' against Christians or Jews and religiously fundamentalists' against liberal or non-religious persons.

Unlike many positivistic thinkers' prophesy, religion does not disappear even in the times of science and technology. It exists continuously. As before, it functions positively or negatively. Very recent

⁷⁾A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, P. 39.

⁸⁾Ibid, P. 42.

⁹⁾C. G. Jung, "Psychology and Religion", P. 87-88.

times, the 11th of September tragic accident in New York and recent unimaginable religious wars show the opposite result to be different from that of the positivistic announcement. Rather, in the very modern history, scientism or positivism has a strong exclusive attitude toward religion to give many punches against religion.

In a word, even though Whitehead and Jung understood religion in terms of different academic tradition, they have the same opinion that the essence of religion is not in the memory of doctrines but the experience of solitariness and *numinosum* which is always refreshing and extending the human's consciousness.

3. The Expressions of Religion

Whitehead and Jung came to realize that every great religious experience do not have simply remain in the great individual's mind, psyche or heart but have been expressed to found or develop a religion in the human history. The original founder has directly expressed his or her experience with the current language and, frequently, expressed it with symbols and metaphors due to the limit of language. The founder's expressions have moved human individuals to follow his or her teachings and to have the same experience. Afterwards, some of them, like Augustine, worked as an organizer of belief system, some as an evangelist like the king Asoka, and some as a reformer like Martin Luther. They have participated in the making of religion with their distinct works. In the process of establishing a religion, sometimes they have had conflicts and difficulties because of the symbolic expression and the absurdity of the original intention of the founder's experience. Through the expression process of religious experience, the external form of religion has been made in history. For example, after Buddha's religious experience, the Enlightenment, he did not simply stay in front of the bo-tree but began to express his experience to form Buddhism. In the first period of Buddhism, it started as a heresy or a new religious movement in terms of the current religion, Brahmanism. And the religion stayed in the local area of North India. Later, it formed organizations and belief systems to become a world religion. Even now, it is proceeding. The formation process of other religions have been the same .

Whitehead thought that religious experience had been concretely expressed in the four factors.¹⁰⁾ Every religion has the same factors. They are ritual, emotions, belief and rationalism. They are external factors of religion. They are the result of the original founder's and the followers' religious experience and the stimulus to make the present and the future followers have the similar experience in history. These factors are the external constituents of religion rooted in religious experience.

Even though they are the factors as the locus of religious experience, it does not mean that each of them has the equal value in the making of religion. They respectively have different value. Whitehead thought that the factors of belief and rationalism would be more important than ritual and emotions in the making and the development of religion.¹¹⁾ According to him, the genuine solitariness would be discernible in the factors of belief and rationalism. Belief and rationalization¹²⁾ are the criteria of the genuine expression of solitariness.

Ritual and emotions are also the factors to carry solitariness. However, their role was not highly respected in Whitehead's Lectures on religion because of their inclination of tribal solidarity. If they were not reflected critically in relation to the other factors, belief and rationalization, they would fall into the making of tribal religion. In order to develop a tribal religion into a world religion, the process of belief and rationalism should be seriously considered. Whitehead thought of such religion as to go through the process of belief and rationalism as "rational religion"¹³⁾ with world consciousness beyond tribal consciousness.

Likewise, Jung also thought that the experience of *numinosum* had been expressed to form religion in history. In his lectures, Jung indicated that religious experience had been expressed in three external factors, creeds, dogmas or beliefs, rituals and institutions.¹⁴⁾ Unlike Whitehead, Jung did not refer to emotions and rationalization directly as the external factors of religion.¹⁵⁾ However, Jung thought that emotions was more fundamental than other factors in religion. Rather, to Jung, the process of

¹⁰⁾ A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, P. 18.

¹¹⁾ *Ibid.*

¹²⁾ *Ibid.*, P. 19.

¹³⁾ *Ibid.*, P. 40-41.

¹⁴⁾ C. G. Jung, "Psychology and Religion", P. 10.

¹⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, P. 47.

rationalization was secondary in the making of religion. Accordingly, if the external factors in a religion were not stimulus to cause religious emotions to come out in life, they would not be a live factors but a dead. Even though rituals, creeds and institution seem to function regularly, they are just maintaining the formality of religion. They are no more functioning as a meaning system of life and a healing means for the human suffering.

Though a religion has a universal rationalistic belief system, if it would not meet religious desire from the inner depth of the collective unconscious, it would become a dangerous religion. It should be amplified or extended to meet such deep religious desire. The dissatisfaction of the present religion ultimately would destroy the humanity. For example, Christianity has more rationalistic aspect than the small tribe's religion. But, Hitler's and his followers' Christianity is more destructive than the tribe's religion. Thus, rationalization itself could become a trap in the world of religion.

However, Whitehead's thought is quite different from Jung's in this aspect. Even though he thought that rationalization was the expression process and was ultimately derived from the experience of solitariness, the process of rationalization was the key external factor in the making of religion. He thought that the process of rationalism was more inclined to the universal consciousness beyond and the disengagement from the parochial mind, but emotion was more apt to form the tribal solidarity. In this sense, emotion is lower than thought in the development of religion. This aspect is a key difference from Jung's understanding of emotion.

In a word, to Whitehead and Jung, solitariness and *numinosum* are the foundation of all religious expressions, cumulative tradition, but, in later times, they could influence the individual to have the same or similar experience. The external factors, to them, are the carries of the original experience and, at the same time, the cause of the same experience in history.

4. Conclusion

So far, I have tried to compare Whitehead's idea of religion with Jung's, focusing on the definition of religion and the expressions of religious experience. From now on, I would like to describe how their idea could contribute to understand religious pluralism. I think that their

thought of religion could be developed to understand religious pluralism more deeply.

First, I think that Whitehead's and Jung's understanding of religion would be very helpful for the communication or the dialogue between religions. Every religion has its language to show its own religious experience. Thus, the communication between religions would be difficult, except for the understanding of other religious language. In this sense, Whitehead's and Jung's neutral language or term of religion would be more communicable for the development of dialogue between religions or between religion and non-religion in the times of religious pluralism.

Second, I think that Whitehead's and Jung's understanding of religion in terms of the human nature or experience would be more tunable to arouse sympathy from religions and non-religious institutions. According to my understanding, the studies of religious pluralism have been quite well developed theoretically. One of representative cases could be found in John Hick's theory of religious pluralism. Hick's discussion is very philosophical. Logically, his theory could be understandable, but not easily understood or well accepted in each religion. If each religion really wants to accept Hick's pluralism, it should hypothesize "the ultimate reality" beyond ultimate realities--God, Allah, Brahman, Ishvara, Sunyata and so on-- of religions.¹⁶⁾ All realities of religions should be subordinated to the new philosophical reality as parts. Hick's theory is good to describe religious pluralism idealistically. However, practically each religion will not easily agree with his theory. Very here I think that Whitehead's and Jung's understanding of religion to be focused on the human experience would be more practically acceptable.

Nevertheless, I think that their thought has a problem. One aspect of their idea on religion should be reconsidered. Their idea is very good to understand "individual" oriented religions, Buddhism or Christianity, because of their emphasis on individual's unique and independent experience to be detached from the influence of communities. However, their idea is not well fitted to "community" oriented religions, Confucianism, Judaism, Shintoism, and Catholicism of Christianity. In this sense, their idea of religion is quite "protestant".

¹⁶⁾See "Conclusion" in John Hick's *The Interpretation of Religion*(London : Macmilan, 1989)