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Won, Shin-Ae

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# KOREAN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF ACTION: NURTURING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

## INTRODUCTION

The most pressing contemporary problems of Christian religious education are inextricably related to issues of 'epistemic ontology,' 'hermeneutics,' 'postmodernism,' and the 'epistemic shift' away from the classical philosophical dualisms of subject/object, mind/body, rationality/irrationality, and reason/faith. This is especially true when one considers impasses encountered in attempts to overcome intergenerational rifts in the Korean Protestant community.

Since the early twentieth century, fundamental and *Minjung* theology have determined the state of Christian religious education in Korea and questions of pedagogical application in Korean Christian religious education have become battles between fundamental pedagogy (seen as 'doctrine') and *Minjung* pedagogy (seen as 'messianic political praxis').

Fundamental theology has largely been influenced by scientific thought and philosophical positivism and the formulation and application of its pedagogy. *Minjung* theology has been influenced by a variety of liberation struggles on behalf of the *Minjung* (varyingly translated as 'the masses,' 'people,' or 'the oppressed'), resulting in a pedagogy that places stress on political expression.

Postmodernism for some commentators occasions 'a crisis of reason' because it challenges foundational approaches to knowledge and morality and the ahistorical justifications of many social institutions (Peters and Lankshear 1996, 3). Postmodern thought is marked by a celebration of cultural pluralism and relativism and postmodern culture is nurtured by contemporary paganism, syncretism, information technologies, entertainment industries, and consumerism in general.

In some ways, the postmodern rejection of universal rationality and meta-narratives in favor of particular stories may appear to be a welcome development as possibilities of de-westernization. Nevertheless, many alleged postmodern

pedagogies still operate within, and are fueled by, unacceptable modern dualities.

It is my contention that because the older generations (that I will later call the Builder and Boomer Generations) have their value systems and faith based on the two dominant pedagogies (fundamental and *Minjung*) of the Korean Protestant community, they cannot understand and adjust to the paradigm shift in culture and society that marks the postmodern era.

Most Christian religious educators in position of authority at universities, seminaries, and in churches are members of these generations. As such, the transmission of their values and thoughts to theology students, ministers-in-training, and to their congregations is a transmission varyingly marked by their own education and participation in the paradigmatic ways of these theologies and pedagogies – including, for example, the view that education is best described as the transmission of knowledge and value.

I believe that all of these educators will be able to learn from a redefining of the notions of understanding and relationship as they interact with a variety of generations in their congregations and with those members of younger generations who are in their classrooms. Towards the end of this thesis, suggestions will be made as to how Christian religious educators can introduce into both their classrooms and their congregations changes that are in keeping with the redefinitions of understanding and relationship offered herein.

Many binary oppositions mark theologies, philosophies, and pedagogies nurtured under modernism – subject vs. object; knowledge vs. opinion; rationality vs. mob psychology; science vs. non-science; cognition vs. emotion; theory vs. imagination; necessity vs. contingency; center vs. periphery; collective vs. individual. It is my belief that understanding between generations, especially within the Korean Protestant community, has in large part been forestalled because of the acceptance of such oppositions by fundamental and *Minjung* theology. For example, the tendency of both fundamental pedagogy and *Minjung* pedagogy, to marginalize groups of youth into ‘sub-cultural groups’ or ‘counter-cultures’ is a tendency fueled by such dichotomors thinking that must be avoided.

Although it is true that *Minjung* pedagogy has, since the 1960s, taken into

account the role of youth culture, that pedagogy still strengthens additional dualities of modernism such as 'the oppressor/the oppressed,' 'enlightenment/confusion,' and 'adult/youth.' Indeed, both fundamental pedagogy and *Minjung* pedagogy are largely still concerned, especially through their emphasis on the training of 'elders,' about the older generations.

In general, fundamental pedagogy has the goal of doctrinal conformity while *Minjung* pedagogy has the goal of socio-political liberation. However, both pedagogies' acceptance of the above binary oppositions preclude the entertaining of notions of understanding and notions of doxastic and interpersonal relationships necessary in overcoming intergenerational rift. Having to choose between these two pedagogies leaves the Korean Protestant community unable to be responsibly concerned about the cultural offerings of all generations.

It is my contention that Christian religious educators need an alternative to both fundamental and *Minjung* pedagogies and, more specifically, a new perspective on the intersection of the concepts of understanding and relationships. Such a perspective, I believe, must be found if they are to adequately assess what differences between generations exist and how those differences are best articulated. It is also necessary if they are to find alternatives to assist young and old alike in resolving their differences and in nurturing valued relationships.

All generations can be seen as addressing reality and translating it into a language that makes sense to them. This task is called 'hermeneutics' and it is about gaining understanding of the world and people in it. The 'hermeneutic line' that runs throughout this paper has been developed for a variety of reasons. Historically, the hermeneutic tradition is one that has tried to underline the important connection between enculturation and education, a connection that I believe is integral to Koreans of all ages gaining a sense of their own 'private' development as necessarily involving the self-understanding and growth of others. Moreover, the hermeneutic tradition has offered many resources to those educators wishing to argue against the positivistic reduction of knowledge,

understanding, and reason to science, explanatory theory, and formal rationality respectively. A study of hermeneutics in general has much to offer Christian religious educators in their varied attempts to work free of the positivistic dualities that still shape fundamental theology and *Minjung* theology.

Fundamental and *Minjung* theologians make assumptions about how people come to understand the world, and they have tried to formalize such alleged 'methods' through pedagogical practice. Their successes in such practice have reified and entrenched in people's minds certain relationships between concepts and have 'naturalized' in our interpersonal behavior certain relationships between people.

The goal of this thesis is to undo those assumptions about understanding and the doxastic and social relationships that are concomitant with those assumptions, while offering a different way of construing understanding that is conducive to allowing Christian religious educators to move forward in their work, especially as that work concerns intergenerational strife.

This rewriting of our notions of understanding and relationship will be in a direction wherein the distinctions between faith, knowledge, self-understanding, enculturation, and ethical choice are blurred. Accordingly, this thesis champions many of those interdisciplinary approaches to the study of philosophy, theology, and education that have been influenced by both traditional hermeneutics and its radical, deconstructive re-positionings. The thesis also attempts to reflexively deploy such approaches throughout.

The first chapter provides Christian religious educators with some resources for articulating the characteristics of, and the conflicts between, the older generations and those who have been called Generation Xers. It offers some conclusions I have drawn from an informal research project in which I attempted to evaluate the differences in the Christian world-view between Boomers and Generation Xers in the Korean Protestant church.

Through this research, I sought to attune my ears more closely to the concerns of Generation X in particular, so that I would have their voices in mind as I explored the philosophical literature for insights into how intergenerational

relationships could be nurtured. It was in this context that I realized the continued significance of the Korean notion of *Chong*. This notion has been very influential throughout much of Korean history and remains so to this day. Because of its 'traditionalness,' however, it has been ignored by both fundamental and *Minjung* pedagogy. I believe that consideration of it is unavoidable for a variety of reasons. It plays an important part in the understanding and relationships of most Koreans and offers a pragmatic point of reference for many of the ideas that are to be discussed throughout the thesis. It is also a notion that is divided against itself, and thus offers a similar reference point for coming to terms with some of the postmodern criticisms of binary oppositions. Most importantly, it is a notion that Generation Xers, in spite of denials by their elders, continue to be influenced by, and is thus obviously important for educators seeking to mediate between different generations.

The second chapter opens by offering an historical overview of the interplay between fundamental and *Minjung* theology and pedagogy in Korea and criticizes the role therein of positivism and objectivism. It also critically assesses the nature of Christian religious education and what constitutes a philosophical examination of this field of endeavor.

The work of Gadamer has been the most influential representation of traditional hermeneutics over the last several decades and the work of Caputo constitutes a very fertile body of work that both radically questions Gadamerian assumptions while extending Gadamer's hermeneutic focus on the inextricable connections between our understanding and our relationships with others.

Chapters three and four respectively engage educational discourses on faith, knowledge, and ethical action through a discussion of Gadamer's 'philosophical hermeneutics,' and Caputo's radical questioning of many of the assumptions thereof. Because of the influence of Habermas' 'critical hermeneutics,' and because it offers an occasion to assess what constitutes a politically radical questioning of hermeneutics, my assessment of Gadamer's work at the end of chapter three will include some reflection on both Habermas' thoughts and, by way of introduction to Caputo, a presentation of Caputo's

criticism of Habermas. The influence of Derrida and deconstruction on Caputo's 'radical hermeneutics' is brought into the hermeneutical line that runs throughout this paper, rather than, as it often is, presented as the entirely Other to hermeneutics.

In chapter five, I shall offer critical overviews of fundamental and *Minjung* pedagogy, Gadamer's and Habermas' work on understanding and relationships, and Caputo's flux model, specifying what each model can offer Christian religious educators interested in overcoming generational rifts in the Korean Protestant community. Specifically, I will show how Caputo's flux model must be supplemented by the interpersonal notions of care and sensitivity to suffering if we are to develop a model of understanding and relationship that emphasizes the 'doing of truth' as a cooperative venture marked by responsibility and mutual guidance. I believe that 'doing the truth' is a *phronesis* for contemporary times. It reflexively highlights both the working with people in specific situations, at specific times, with specific resources at hand, towards specific goals, and how that working changes our understanding of the world and the relationships between all of us.

In the conclusion, I will suggest how what has been learned throughout the thesis can be used to reshape the relationships between different generations and between ourselves as Christian religious educators and the communities within which we work.

I will call those suggestions 'pragmatic,' and I believe that it is imperative at the outset to state as to what is involved in my use of this term. By 'pragmatic,' I do not mean 'the application of theory.' I mean something more akin to what others may call 'praxis' – a going forth into the world that is informed by and informs our valuational and doxastic appropriations of the world. There is no smooth line running from some distinct thing called theory to something else equally distinct called practice. We can never say in advance what practices 'flow' from our theory. Such a way of construing things is a leftover from a vision of the world that gives precedence to theory. Much of this paper is a defence of the idea that alleged problems between 'theory' and 'practice' are not so much

solved but rather dissolved when we act in the world. The course of our actions cannot be thoroughly delineated in advance by theory. As I have mentioned above, we can only offer suggestions as to how we might proceed in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

My redefinitions of what constitutes understanding and relationships bring into question perhaps the most prominent philosophical dualism – that between theory and practice. They do this through bringing Christian religious educators to a point where the furtherance of thought on how forms of understanding and relationships are possible between groups of people can only be affected through engaging those very people and the lives they live. Such an engagement is not so much one dictated by theory, as it is one that accepts the necessity of various kinds of doing.

The kinds of praxis proposed do not have a *necessary* theoretical underpinning. But that is one of the things that Christian religious educators must learn to appreciate – that putting the right foot forward is often a step of faith. Nevertheless, such educators do find themselves working in some, rather than other, contexts. Reformulating curriculum initially involves working within curriculum that is in place, as reformulating the kinds of relationships that constitute our congregations involves working with congregations that already exist. As such, suggestions on what to do are best formulated with such givens in mind.

Throughout this thesis, we will gradually come to see that our interpretations of the world require acting with courage. They require what Caputo has called ‘doing the truth.’ Following the hermeneutical line that runs throughout the chapters necessitates not only a study of the contingencies that constitute the world of Korean Christian religious educators, but also a doing to change those contingencies. Inevitably, this thesis supports a fusing of our understanding, our being, and our doing.

The hermeneutical position defended in this thesis is one that challenges the assumption that one can neatly separate our engagements with the world from our understanding of it, and thus supports the idea that the doing of truth is



one with our understanding of it. This position also challenges the idea that there is a thing called 'private' truth and understanding which is acquired through possessing at the level of theory aspects of the world that were at one time 'other,' beyond our grasp, our 'apprehension.'

The position defended herein is one that will hopefully enable appreciation that all generations are in the making, and that 'what is' is very much a becoming. It is defended in an attempt to help Christian religious educators help those around them – those with whom they must commune – come to realize where they might step forward into the world. The hermeneutical line that weaves throughout this thesis inevitably gives strength to the idea that a stepping forward together is how all of us engage our responsibilities towards others, enhance our understanding, and help the generation of truth.

## **CHAPTER I**

# **KOREAN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE GENERATION GAP**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## CHAPTER II

# CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN KOREA

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'Christian education' in Korea is strongly associated with American Protestant missionary work. It is often claimed that it now has some rather negative connotations, carrying overtones of indoctrination or cultural imperialism. In the following sections, I will explain why I prefer the term 'Christian religious education' to 'Christian education.' As we will come to see, 'Christian education' highlights the transfer of received doctrine from those in position of church authority to students. On the other hand, 'Christian religious education' implies the deepening of a person's Christian beliefs, attitudes, values, and dispositions to act in a Christian way. It is also more directly connotative of what I see as the more immediate and interrelated pedagogical tasks of educating, 'by God's grace, for a lived Christian faith' (Astley 1994, 7-9; Groome 1991, 14).

Attention must initially be given, however, to the many tensions that exist between fundamental theology and *Minjung* theology in Korea. In this chapter, I will first explore those tensions through an overview of significant factors in Korean history since the 1880s that have influenced the relationship between theology and Christian education and that continue to have ramifications on the course of contemporary pedagogy in Korea. Such factors are not internal to the history of theology. They include many of a political, economic, and cultural nature that were (and are) inextricably bound up with the attempts by specific groups of Korean men and women to bring change and redefinition to their lives.

Attention will be given to the notions of understanding sponsored by fundamental and *Minjung* theology and the resultant doxastic and interpersonal relationships entrenched by their pedagogies.

I will then discuss the significance of the term 'Christian religious

education' in Korea as opposed to that of 'Christian education,' and demonstrate how the former can help educators better realize the need people have for understanding the world, bettering their relationships with others, and for making positive changes in their lives.

## **I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN KOREA**

### ***The Place of Christianity in Korea***

Korea is a multi-religious society, with a variety of religions and denominations thereof continuing to exert influence. As we learn from the Population Census released in 1995 by the Korea National Statistics Office, of the fifty-seven percent of the Korean population calling themselves religious, about 10,320,000 are Buddhists, 8,760,000 are Protestants, 2,950,000 are Catholics and 210,000 are Confucians (Kim 2002, 153).

Traditionally, Protestant missionary work has been fueled by the principles of modernism. Underlying virtually all of the Protestant mission efforts has been the assumption of the superiority of the West. As a result, it was the task of early missionaries to promulgate Western science and technology, Western medicine, Western education, Western social welfare, and Western ideas of democracy. It was assumed that adoption of these Western elements by other peoples and cultures would lead to a better life and that Protestant missionary work was part of that development.

In Korea, Protestant missions have over one hundred and twenty years of history. In recent years, attention has been given to the phenomenal nascent growth of Protestant churches there (Schrotenboer 1983, 118). From 802 in 1895, the number of Protestant church members skyrocketed to 167,352 in 1910 (J. Kim 1996, 106). Methodist and Presbyterian churches accounted for most of this growth, with the number of adult baptized communicants increasing from 2,773 in 1904 to 13,939 in 1910 and the numbers of adherents increasing from 23,700 to 107,717 (J. Kim 1996, 106).

Many scholars are in agreement with Min's remarks on the effect and achievement of Christian education and on how it has influenced Korean culture and life. Min claims that:

First, Christian education breaks down superstitions... Secondly, Christian education was of great service in the spread of the Korean language and

literature. Thirdly, Christian education... played a central role in aiding the reception of modern culture, establishing schools, conveying the latest in medical science, importing the art of modern printing, conveying the new music, teaching the community life forms like meeting for recreation... Fourthly, it released women from housework and enabled them to meet together. Equality between man and woman and the abolition of the concubine system elevated the social state of women (Min 1981, 58).

As we are about to see, however, the story is not quite that simple or positive.

### ***Between Fundamentalist Doctrine and Political Consciousness: Missionary Work in Korea to 1960***

The so-called Opening Period (1876–1910)<sup>1</sup> that marks the beginnings of modernism in Korea also marks the initial penetration into Korea of Christianity. As soon as the Opening Period began, some individuals in the West became interested in Korea, dispatching Christian missionaries.

While the official date given for the beginning of the Roman Catholic missions to Korean is 1784, the Protestant missionary who is known to have made efforts to begin the work of evangelism in Korean was Carl Friedrich Augustus Gutzlaff in 1832 (J. Kim 1996, 91).

Prior to the Opening Period, towards the end of the Chosun Dynasty, civic ministers wielded authority and power, and tyrannized through Taewon-Koon, or Hae-eung Lee, who, although not a legitimate king, had taken control of the power given his son, King Kojong, at twelve years of age (Kim 2002, 20).

The western nations, having already experienced industrial revolutions, were trying to secure resources for their capitalist economies and began to penetrate into Chosun, and Taewon-Koon, attempting to strengthen the centralization of the Chosun Dynasty, rejected their requests for trade. Because it was Western, Roman Catholicism was perceived as a threat (Byon 1993, 421-423). Taewon-Koon was responsible for the killing of two Korean religious

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'opening' is about the growth of intellectual and social movements at the end of the Chosun Dynasty intent upon promoting modernism in Korea using the civilization of the West as an example. There are some differences of opinions among scholars about the years that define the Korean Opening Period. Ji-hoon Cho (1963, 9) argues for 1884 to 1920 and Hyun-hee Lee (1976, 11) for 1876 to 1905. The Korean Opening period is considered in this paper to stretch from 1876 to 1910.

leaders – Bong-ju Hong and Jong-nam Nam – as well as nine others, including French missionaries, and ordered state authorities to slaughter a number of Catholics in 1866. Because of this, the French diplomatic minister reconnoitered from Incheon and Kanghwa Island to Yanghwajin with eight ships and occupied parts of Kanghwa Island, protesting the massacre of the missionaries (Koak 1975, 225).

Accompanying General Sherman on an American merchant ship coming into the upper Daedong River in 1866, a Pastor Thomas and some crewmen were killed by government forces. In 1871, the American government sent warships to Kanghwa Island in order to force the Korean government to sign a treaty as well as rebuke it for the '*Shinmi-Yangyo*' ('foreign disturbance') event.

Against such a continuing policy of seclusion by Taewon-Koon, forces formed opposite to his government demanding freer trade. He was finally overthrown by the forces of Queen Minbi, who made reforms, one of which was the policy of opening a port (Byon 1993, 426).

While France and America failed to open a port under the Chosun Dynasty, Japan compelled Korea to sign the unequal *Pyungia* treaty<sup>2</sup> in 1876. Although this treaty was the precedent for further mutual treaties between Korea and Japan and ones with Europe and the U.S.A., its forced nature formed the basis of a Korean nationalism (Ha 1976, 17).

In 1876 Sang-yoon Suh, who was one of the first Korean Protestant converts in Manchuria, began to translate the Gospel of Luke from Chinese characters into Korean script with other missionaries. Feeling that native evangelists were more effective than Western missionaries could be, he laid great emphasis on colporteur work. After many attempts to bring the Scripture into the difficult political situation of Korea, Sang-yoon Suh returned to his native village of *Sorai* on the West coast of Korea, and there he preached and established the first Korean Protestant congregation (J. Kim 1996, 92).

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<sup>2</sup> Although the terms of this treaty were very unfavourable to Korea economically, politically, and militarily, it "holds great historical significance for Korea because it brought Korea for the first time out onto the international stage" (Lee 1984, 269).

With such an example in mind, John T. Kim argues that Korean Protestant Christians in many ways preceded Western missionaries in establishing the church in their country. It is Kim's belief that there is some truth in the claim that "the church was already established before the first official Protestant missionary ever set foot in Korea in 1884" (J. Kim 1996, 94).

In the beginning of the Protestant missions in Korea, direct preaching to the common people was not allowed. The missionaries adopted the policy of non-aggressive or indirect evangelistic activity of modern Western Christian education through schools founded by Protestant missionaries in the 1880s. Mission schools as a representative of Christian education began to be established in Korea. The primary reasons for their establishment were to preach the gospel through education, to train religious workers, and to free Korean people from 'ignorance.' With these purposes, 823 schools, including the prominent ones of *Baejae*, *Ewha*, and *Kyungshin*, were established by 1910<sup>3</sup>(J. Kim 1996, 157).

As an example of the early Protestant mission school one might look at *Ewha* Girl's School (1886) which, based on the spirit of the equality of the sexes, provided the first chance for females to get a proper education (Moon 1985, 10; Conrow 1956, 4). A modern system of education was established at *Ewha* in 1900. The subjects and the course of study were as follows (Jung 1967, 35-38; Conrow 1956, 11-21):

**Table 2**  
**Curriculum in 1904 of *Ewha* Girl's School**

Subjects	Curriculum							
	Course 1	H/ W	Course 2	H/ W	Course 3	H/ W	Course 4	H/ W
Korean	Gospel in Korean	5	Christian Ethics	5	Ethics	5	Christian Ethics	5

<sup>3</sup> Kim claims that of the remaining 2,250 private school in Korea in 1910, 1,402 were Chinese character learning institutes and 25 were secular modern schools (J. Kim 1996, 157); Ki-bail Lee puts the number of private schools "before Korea fell completely under Japanese colonial domination" at "some 3,000" (Lee 1984, 332).



Chinese	Great Learning	5	Analects of Confucianism	5	Analects of Confucianism	5	Analects of Confucianism	5
Math	Number, Fraction	4	Decimal Abacus	4	Comparison	4	Algebra	5
History <sup>4</sup>	Chosun	1	Koguryo, Paeche, Shila	1	Koryo	1	History of America	1
Geography		1	Korean Geography	1	Foreign Geography	2	American Geography	2
Bible	Bible	1	Bible	1	Bible	1	Bible	1
English	English	5	English	5	English	5	English	5
Science			Animal; Plant	1	Physics	2	Chemistry	3
Drawing	Picture	1	Picture	1	Reference	1		
Physiology	Physiology Sanitation	1	Home Sanitation	1	Skill of Rearing Infants	2	Skill of Rearing Infants	1
Music	A Single Sound Change	1	Instrumental Music	1	Instrumental Music	5	Instrumental Music	1

Because the content of many of these subjects – especially English and Bible Study – ran against that of traditional Korean education, such institutions were “at first the target of aversion on the part of the traditional gentry class and the first students consisted mainly of orphans or lower class converts” (J. Kim 1996, 157).

In other words, the opportunities that the missionaries made available through education were for both girls (who were still considered by many Koreans to be inferior creatures) and, later, boys of the *Minjung*. The sons of the *yang-ban* (the upper social class) were not attracted to the school (Moon 1985, 10-11). Later, however, the school did attract the attention of the elite and produced many leading figures, not only in Christian movements, but also in social and political movements, especially those movements that sought independence from Japan.

The unwitting role of Japan in the history of Christianity in Korea cannot be underestimated. Protestant Christianity came to Korea at a critical and providential time in the nation’s social and political response to the rising empire

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<sup>4</sup> For a good description of the various kingdoms that have dominated Korean history, see Lee, Ki-baik. A New History of Korea, trans. Edward W. Wanger & Edward J. Shultz (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 36-65.

of Japan. Choo Chai-young claims that during the so-called Formative Period of the Church (1880-1919), Christian missionaries helped in the struggle for independence and human rights. He argues that:

[t]he main purpose of Korean Christianity was to achieve independence from Japanese occupation and human rights for the Korean people. The people were enlightened and inspired by the analyses of current situations and problems in the "Independence Newspaper" stirred up against the maladministration and illegal judgments of government officials (Choo 1981, 69-70).

Christianity came as something new to the people in times of insecurity and was therefore easily accepted (J. Kim 1996, 96). The initial identification of Christianity with modernity was also of significant importance in that it attracted young people. The common people were attracted to the pioneer missionaries because of what they saw as the possibility of social advancement.

The history of the plight of the *Tonghaks* also seems to bolster this early, positive image of traditional missionary work within Korea. The *Tonghak Rebellion* had both religious and political significance. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the selling and buying of government positions was common and those who became 'officials' would usually 'recoup' their 'losses' through extortion. Taxes and levies were increased to three or four times the legal rate. As Suh has concluded, "extravagance, licentiousness, and debauchery were the order of the day at the court [and] the suffering people could no longer remain silent" (Suh 1981, 172).

In 1895, the *Tonghaks*, a group mostly comprised of poor peasants, rose in rebellion in the South. In many ways, it represented the first indigenous, organized *Minjung* movement in Korea and, armed with the ideology of the 'humanity of heaven,' the oppressed *Minjung* began to define themselves as subjects, rather than objects, of history and destiny (Kim 1981, 194).

Indeed after the government put down the *Tonghak Rebellion*, the countryside was ripe for missionary penetration. Missionaries went into the countryside and began to make significant and deeply felt contacts with the *Minjung* associated with the *Tonghak* movement. Most importantly, the *Minjung*

began to accept Christianity as indispensable in fighting for their deepest aspirations – justice, equality, and human rights. As Moon pointedly notes "Christianity became a politically oriented faith and a religion of hope and power for the oppressed and suffering *Minjung*" (Moon 1985, 13, 17). Kim Chi-ha, a *Minjung* theologian, emphasized 'the unification of God and revolution.' For him, "*Minjung* theology is the unification of *Tonghak* and Christianity, the unification of renewal of the human spirit and the revolutionary change for justice in the social structure... and the coincidence of worldly food (bread) and heavenly food (freedom)" (Suh 1981, 179).

However, the missionaries soon began to ignore aspirations for national liberation because, increasingly under the influence of dogmatic theology, they avoided critical reflection on traditional Korean society. Especially important here is the possibility that the early missionaries avoided considering indigenization and contextualization as praxis ways of knowing (J. Kim 1996, 244).

The increasing sponsorship of fundamental pedagogy under fundamental theology by Protestant missionaries gradually led to an emphasis on the salvation of the individual soul. It also led to a 'banking system' of education, that restricted the word of God to dogmatic, hierarchically enforced systems of learning. Certainly fundamental theology made a positive contribution to the apologetics of the church. However, the positivistic theory of knowledge that underlies that theology gradually led the fundamentalist pedagogy that received its mandates from fundamental theology to fossilize Christian faith as a system of belief most adequately reproduced through indoctrination.<sup>5</sup>

August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1910 was a day of national humiliation for the Korean people. This was the day that Korea was formally annexed to Japan. The Korean people lost their country's independence and became enslaved to Japanese military rule.

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<sup>5</sup> The charge of indoctrination probably comes up most frequently in the context of religious instruction (Thiessen 1993, 9). Indoctrination is usually associated with a certain kind of content. This content consists of necessary and sufficient criteria for determining whether a person is indoctrinated (Thiessen 1993, 59). Indoctrination is seen as being especially related to religious beliefs in some ways. In other words, indoctrination is found in religious communities and institutions (Thiessen 1993, 59). Fundamental pedagogy has the goal of 'conformity,' whereby educators strictly teach religious beliefs and doctrines, being less interested in nurturing Christian lives and ethics.

The Chosun *Yi* Dynasty (the last dynasty in Korea) formally ended and the right of government was transferred to the Japanese emperor. Only with the end of World War II in 1945 was Korea finally liberated from Japanese rule.

During the time of national crisis (1910-1945) in which Korea was colonized by Japan, the missionaries felt that the estrangement between the Koreans and the Japanese presaged a general uprising. However, they understood the hopelessness of fighting against the Japanese imperial army, and foresaw the danger of making the young Korean churches a political agency.

It can be argued that the missionaries – unwittingly or otherwise – were successful in depoliticizing Korean Christians through mass revival meetings. Although revival meetings nurtured ethical and moral transformations within individual lives and engendered significant fellowship among Christian communities, the Christian message was not geared to the social and national crisis of the Korean *Minjung*. The church leaders in this period became “products of early twentieth century fundamentalism, and their only concerns became of the ‘salvation of souls’” (Moon 1985, 16).

The desire for national liberation on the part of Korean Christians was completely ignored, and “the missionaries’ tight control of the Korean Christian communities stifled the dynamism of the autonomous communities which could have responded better to the historical predicament” (Moon 1985, 15).

Some events, such as those of March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919, in which patriotism was promoted by missionaries, led to the perception of Christianity as a politically oriented faith and a religion of hope and power for the oppressed and suffering *Minjung* (J. Kim 1996, 111). However, during what Choo calls the Depoliticization Period of the Church (1919-1932) missionaries ceased to be pioneers and to preach directly to the *Minjung*. They became organizers or managers, directing and supervising the Korean Christians’ evangelistic enterprise. The Korean church moved into a new political situation in the 1920’s. In this situation, Korean Christianity was losing its identity, and forgetting its mission in Korean society. The Korean church did not share the sufferings of the farmers, who were the majority of the Korean population. It stayed aloof from the anti-Japanese

movements of the students (Choo 1981, 74). Indeed, collaboration with the Japanese authorities was often a perceived necessity for their missionary work.

In the 1920s, many Koreans began to believe that Christian education no longer promoted an historical consciousness and an indigenous approach to Christian education within Korean society. The Korean church began to be seen as promoting a ghettoized Sunday-centered religion. A famous Korean novelist, Kwang-su Lee wrote in criticism that “the Korean church looks down on modern culture, and curses the drivers and the soldiers who are working on Sunday” (Choo 1981, 74).

During the Period of the Babylonian Captivity (1932–1960), the Korean church became increasingly “enslaved to authority and lost its subjective consciousness with the trials it faced and the confusion which set in” (Choo 1981, 75). Under the influence of imported, fundamental theology, much of the Korean church became an exercising ground for those seeking ecclesiastical authority and did not resist the enforcement of worship at Japanese shrines.

Soon after the thirty-six years of Japanese rule in Korea ended in 1945, the country was divided. The United States controlled the most significant movements in the South and the Soviets did so similarly in the North. In undivided Korea, prior to 1945, most of the Christians lived in North Korea (Moon 1985, 25).

Soon after the War, especially during Syng-man Lee’s regime, South Korea, aided by the United States, began to ‘rebuild’ the country. United States’ aid and business investments, however, were under the exclusive control of the ruling elite. The result was two hierarchical structures in the economic system – the Korean ruling powers subject to foreign control and the common people directly subject to domestic power groups (Suh 1981, 25-26; Kim 1981, 193).

During the regime of Syng-man Lee, the president, his associates, civil servants, and the army became increasingly free to exercise their power over everyone else. As one scholar has noted, “the government was actually a restructuring of the rigid Japanese colonist system into a somewhat more flexible bureaucracy” (Moon 1985, 26).

Those in power, however, necessarily face another. In the case of South Korea at that time, that other consisted of the many thousands of widows, orphans, unemployed and low-paid urban laborers, farmers, and refugees from the North. Living at or near a starvation level, these people increasingly added numbers to the class of *Minjung*.

As things 'developed,' those in positions of power became richer and the *Minjung* became poorer. The corruption was openly displayed and the injustice perpetrated against the *Minjung* became understandably unbearable. In time, the other – created and politicized by such acts of dominance – began to rebel against the ways of the Lee's regime.

### ***The Revitalization of Minjung Theology***

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960 students and several other *Minjung* marched in the streets of Seoul to show their dissatisfaction with the government. What is important to emphasize here is that this revolt was an example of a *Minjung* movement, and it was inspired by the ideals of equality, justice, liberty, and democracy that were taught by Korean Christians (Suh 1981, 29).

The student's Revolution of April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960, as an heir to the spirit of the March 1st Independence movement of 1919, opens what Choo calls the Period of Awakening (1960--present) in Korean Church history. The Korean church was seen by many to have regained its mission. Choo (1981, 76),<sup>6</sup> noting a number of church declarations after 1960, contends that all "show clearly that once again Korean Christianity has begun to see the mission of the church to be that of being a church for and of the *Minjung*."

After 1960, an indigenous theology and pedagogy, namely *Minjung* theology and pedagogy, gradually began to be developed in response to fundamental theology and pedagogy. Many factors in Korean history and society interwove as the specific background to such a development.

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<sup>6</sup> Among the declarations noted by Choo (1981, 76) are: "The Declaration of Human Rights in Korea" by the Korean National Council of Churches (1974); "The Declaration of Conscience" by Bishop Daniel Tji (1974); "The Theological Statement of Korean Christians" signed by 66 leaders of churches and seminaries and "The Declaration for the Restoration of Democracy" signed by 12 church leaders (1976).

Although *Minjung*-inspired reevaluations have been present from the earliest days of Christianity in Korea, since at least the 1920s, the leaders of the Korean Protestant churches have been overwhelmingly fundamentalistic, ritualistic, and formalistic. As Moon argues:

In spite of significant contributions toward self-awareness and nationhood by the churches, the majority of the leaders have not been influenced by the contemporary trends of the world church... The fact that Christian leaders under fundamental theology are primarily oriented toward 'the other world' and 'salvation of souls' has discouraged any meaningful social involvement of the churches (Moon 1985, 39).

Since the 1970s, however, reflection by scholars on the student uprisings in the 1960s has gradually developed into the need to propose a more indigenous theology for Korean society. In the 1970s many scholars began to discuss the role of the *Minjung* in twentieth century Korean history. Among other things, they explored the connections that could be seen between the place of the *Minjung* and indigenous, contextual, and political theology. Ongoing debate began amongst Korean scholars about the role of the Korean church *vis a vis* problems of indigenization and contextualization. It is no surprise that national identity versus Christian identity and Korean culture versus Christianity have been primary issues.

The social history of *Minjung* liberation movements (including the *Tonghak* Movement in 1895, the March 1<sup>st</sup> Independence Movement in 1919, and the April 19<sup>th</sup> Student Revolt in 1960), the *Minjung* religious traditions, and the past and the present cultural expressions of the *Minjung* are all being studied (Suh 1983, 41). For many Christian scholars and educators, it has become necessary to formulate a Biblical theology of the *Minjung* – for those who have been subjected to the inhumanity of oppression and contempt.

There are good reasons to call such a theology an indigenous, 'grass-roots' theology. It grew, and continues to grow, directly out of Christian experience in the political struggle for justice. Beginning with the suffering and resistance of the Korean *Minjung*, *Minjung* theology is in many ways Korean theology. In short, one can conclude with Moon that it is a theology of the

oppressed in the Korean political situation, a theological response to the oppressors who share in the struggle for liberation (Moon 1985, 53).

The goal of *Minjung* pedagogy is a liberation wherein the struggle for human rights is united with the revolutionary demand for justice in social structures. In order to establish a free and equal society, the *Minjung* must effect a drastic, systematic change in the existing order. It is believed that with the help of insights derived from the Old Testament, they will be able to assume such a new responsibility. In the past, such insights have strengthened their awareness of their bondage and offered them hope for liberation. Indeed, an emphasis on Exodus appears in a Sunday School lesson book published in Seoul in 1907 (Moon 1985, 16-17).

In fact, *Minjung* theologians are interested in comparative studies of the *Minjung's* condition and the socio-economic-political background of the Old and the New Testaments. As Suh contends,

[o]f particular interest in the area of the Old Testament are the Hebrews... the reign of Solomon, and the prophetic traditions. As for the area of theology, special attention is being given to studies on theodicy, Exodus, apocalyptic, the suffering servant, and the messianic spirit (Holy Spirit). The essential concern of the *Minjung* theologians using these two reference points is to interweave the Korean *Minjung's* story and the Old Testament story (Suh 1981, 158).

However, given that the interest is in the experiences of the Korean *Minjung*, the following dilemma proposed by Suh demands reflection:

if it is viewed as an imported theology from Latin America, one can easily dismiss *Minjung* theology as a Korean version of a Latin American revolutionary theology inspired by Marxist ideology... On the other hand, if it is seen as an imported product of Western theological writings, then it would be a theology understood only by those who can read Western theology in foreign languages (Suh 1981, 18-19).

I propose that *Minjung* theology could better deliver its objective by appreciating *Minjung* pedagogy. *Minjung* pedagogy in Korea, however, has strongly depended on Paulo Freire, the great 'advocator' of pedagogy of the oppressed, whose work – stemming from Latin American situations – has not



been sufficiently contextualized as it has been appropriated into Korean cultural, social, and political dynamics.

Further discussion of *Minjung* pedagogy requires that the difference between the notion of ‘the *Minjung*’ and ‘the Marxist proletariat’ be clarified. Two quotes, one from Kim and one from Suh are, I believe, most instructive in bringing about a proper clarification.

The identity and reality of the *Minjung* is known not by a philosophical or scientific definition of their essence or nature, but rather through their own stories - their social biographies which the *Minjung* themselves create and therefore can tell best. The proletariat is defined socio-economically, while the *Minjung* is known politically... the *Minjung* as historical subject transcends the socio-economic determination of history – a ‘beyond’ history which is often expressed in religious form (Kim 1981, 186).

[And]

While the proletariat of Marx’s theory is rigidly defined in socio-economic terms in all political circumstances, the notion of *Minjung* provides a framework of theology which takes into consideration the socio-economic, cultural, messianic praxis and political history of Korea and the socio-political biography of the Christian *koinonia* in Korea (Suh 1981, 19).

In my opinion, educators should attempt to formulate an indigenous pedagogy for the future that emerges out of reflections on the experiences of Koreans at this particular time in history and attempts to relate the gospel to the Korean context. With this goal in mind, *Minjung* theology seems to be too representative of Western thought, to pre-judging of Korean contingencies. Overly influenced by the same dualities of Western thought that have influenced fundamental pedagogy, *Minjung* pedagogy focuses on ‘empirical moments’ and ‘dual moments’ such as ‘good/evil,’ ‘economic hierarchies,’ ‘the oppressor/the oppressed,’ ‘nationalism/de-Westernization.’ It’s the oppressor/the oppressed dichotomies are deployed in philosophically dualistic and non-contextual fashion.

If Christian education in Korea has been for too long influenced, on the one hand, by a fundamental theology as a theoretical way of knowing, and, on the other hand, by a political movement as a praxis way of knowing, it is imperative that an investigation into the dualities that lend credence to such

positions be conducted. The following chapters in this thesis consider a number of ways of questioning those dualities from a variety of hermeneutical, deconstructivist, and postmodern positions.

This theoretical venture is not an escape from Korean contingencies. As we will inevitably see, there is good reason to give greater reflection to the reasons behind the postmodern rejection of universal rationality and metanarratives in favor of particular stories, and be willing to pay closer attention to the stories of all those individuals on the margins. We must heed, for example, the stories of *Han* so prevalent in Korean society, stories which have drawn the attention of several well-intentioned *Minjung* theologians.

*Han* is an underlying feeling of Korean people. On the one hand, it is a feeling of defeat, resignation and nothingness. On the other hand, it is that tenacity of will for life which comes to beings who have been weakened by the situations in which they must live (Suh 1981, 54). The sources and nature of such stories are very diverse and they allow access to the spirit of many people and their struggles.<sup>7</sup> In this thesis, for example, I will specifically address the issue of the generation gap in Korean society, keeping in mind that youth in Korea have their own particular *Han*, a *Han* that must be heard if understanding among all people is to be enhanced in the future.

Listening to the *Han* of different Koreans does not necessarily mean formulating syncretistic philosophies.<sup>8</sup> Christian religious educators do not have to force the Gospels into a fit with what are very often markedly incompatible Shamanistic beliefs (J. Kim 1996, 268). Syncretism is not the only strategy of de-Westernization and a respect for others and an acceptance of pluralism does not mean the surrendering of what we hold dear through the fusion of it with that

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<sup>7</sup> Suh notes four major sources for the feeling of '*Han*' amongst Koreans: "1) Koreans have suffered numerous invasions by surrounding powerful nations so that the very existence of the Korean nation has come to be understood as '*Han*.' 2) Koreans have continually suffered the tyranny of the rulers so that they think of their existence as '*baecksung*' (common people). 3) Also, under Confucianism's strict imposition of laws and customs discriminating against women, the existence of women was '*Han*' itself. 4) At a certain point in Korean history, about half of the population was registered as hereditary slaves, and many people were treated as property rather than as people of the nation. These people thought of their lives as '*Han*'" (Suh 1981, 54).

<sup>8</sup> One thinks here, for example, of Sung-bum Yun's use of sincerity in his syncretistic theology. He attempted to synthesize native Korean culture and Biblical Christianity (Yun 1972).

which is foreign to us. Neither, of course, does the celebration of such plurality intensify the drift and fragmentation of Korean Christian life. Christian education needs a new philosophical perspective for its pedagogy and for nurturing the kinds of work on the part of Christian religious educators that brings people together.

In my opinion, such a new perspective will inevitably help people see common futures while helping them appreciate that their understanding of the world, their chances for making it a better place in which to live, and their relationships with others are inextricably intertwined. The hermeneutical line that runs throughout this paper increasingly encourages a praxis mode of being and a Christian religious education in Korea for the future that engages the full spectrum of Korean contingencies.

## II. 'CHRISTIAN EDUCATION' VERSUS 'CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION'

While fundamental pedagogy has used fundamental theology as a discipline provoked by scientific thought and philosophical positivism for the application of its pedagogy, *Minjung* pedagogy under *Minjung* theology encourages an 'empirical mood' of 'dual moments' such as that of 'scientific/non-scientific era,' 'the oppressor/the oppressed (subject),' and 'propositional belief/living faith.' Given this, two major questions present themselves.

First, because the two dominant theologies (fundamental and *Minjung*) in Korea have functioned in an atmosphere of dualism, positivism, and objectivism, we must ask what contemporary matters such as postmodernism, pluralism, and relativism mean for Christianity in general and for the philosophy of Christian education in particular. Secondly, we must ask if there is any philosophy to be viewed both as a new direction and as an appropriate response to the current situation.

Before we begin to answer such questions, however, I believe it is important to distinguish the term Christian education from Christian religious education. Many writers appear to treat them as synonymous terms, but I prefer 'Christian Religious Education' for reasons that will become clear.

Lois Lebar claims "Christian education is fundamentally an imitation of the methods of the 'Master Teacher'" (Lines 1987, 214). She draws a sharp contrast between secular and Christian education. For Lebar, the proper approach for Christian education is a return to basics laid out in the authoritative word since "the answers to all our problems, or at least the principles, are to be found in God's written Revelation of Himself rather than in any human source" (Lines 1987, 215). In Lebar's approach, answers to the problems of human limitation are to be founded in the past.

Certainly, the term 'Christian education' has a strong association in Korea with Protestant missionary work and teaching in Sunday schools. Christian education there has focused on the reality of human brokenness (the doctrine of sin) and has sought to discover how a theology of revelation and salvation could

be 'taught' through the church. The top-down transfer of systematic doctrine was considered to be the answer. Such 'Christian education,' however, continues to carry overtones of American imperialism and colonial dominance of religious practices.

Indeed, it was not until 1960 that books began to critically examine the very notion of 'Christian education.' In fact, the first 'Christian Education Association of Korea' meeting was held in 1961.

Thomas Groome argues that "when religious education is done by and from within a Christian community, the most descriptive term to name it is Christian religious education" (Lines 1987, 215). Catechesis, religious instruction, and other current educational terms are deployed by Groome within such an adage.

Martin Taylor continues to use both the terms "Christian education" and "religious education." For Taylor, the use of "religious education" should not be attributed to theology but to custom. His point seems to be that it is the least particularistic term for the field (Lines 1987, 215).

Educators working in the Netherlands touch upon issues that help to highlight why I believe the term 'Christian education' should be replaced with that of 'Christian religious education.' It is necessary to quote the words of Siebren Miedema and Willem L. Wardekker at some length.

Commonly, plurality is thought of in terms of multiplicity of cultures: the fact that multiple cultures now come together in the same physical areas. This makes it necessary to develop adequate ways of interacting with persons belonging to another culture. But it also calls into question the basic tenets of our own culture, which may make for feelings of uncertainty and for relativism. The implications of this multiplicity for religious education are twofold... On the one hand, when we see that 'our' religion is one among many, it becomes difficult to defend the socialisation into just one (our own) religion, and a fortiori the right of existence of mono-religious schools is questioned. On the other hand, however, the multiplicity of religions is seen by many as a prime area where intercultural skill and attitudes like 'respect for others' may be taught. Thus, teaching understanding and respect for the beliefs of others becomes a prime aim of religious education (Miedema and Wardekker 2001, 2).

Extrapolating from Wardekker and Miedema's suggestions about the importance of the role of respect in our understanding of the term 'religious,' I argue for a 'Christian religious education' that encourages the extension of a person's *responsibilities* towards others, which itself is an example of the deepening of a person's Christian beliefs in an increasingly inclusive and unified experiential field. Christian religious education should be an offering designed to be helpful in the resolution of all conflicts, including intergenerational ones, experienced in a fragmented and confused field of experience.

In this thesis, Christian religious education is considered to be a practical activity attending to the Christian faith community and sponsoring the possibility of on-going interpretation, communication, and understanding. Rather than being about the learning of the doctrines of Christianity, it is an education of the religious in life, of the unexpected, the unplanned, the unforeseen, and the unforeseeable. It is an education about, and constitutive of, the blending of our internal selves and our movements through the world. It is about the interconnectiveness of our being, knowing, and doing.

I believe that the critical and supplementary readings that I offer in the following chapters of certain hermeneutical and deconstructivist perspectives can help Christian religious educators appreciate that the virtues of care and sensitivity so dear to them need not be bracketed when discussion turns to issues of an epistemological or ontological nature. In fact, I believe that there are many resources within the contemporary philosophical community to defend the idea that ethical virtues are enhancing of our understanding of the world.

### III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

My main contention is that Christian religious education in Korea has been hampered by a false dualism; namely, that between fundamental theology's construal of understanding as successful theory and *Minjung's* construal of proper understanding as successful political praxis. In the following chapters, I will present the arguments of selected thinkers in an attempt to show how that dualism, and the philosophical oppositions assumed by both fundamental and *Minjung* theology, may be overcome.

It is my belief that the overcoming of such oppositions will increasingly enable Christian religious educators to better engage the world around them. It will better enable them in helping members of their congregations achieve those valuable relationships that enhance the life of all. My emphasis throughout this thesis on how Christian religious educators might help to resolve intergenerational strife is an attempt to depict one example of the greater attention to valuable relationships that follows in the wake of the rejection of philosophical dualisms.

While fundamental theology and pedagogy took the object and task of philosophy as the development of 'dogmatic' statements, *Minjung* pedagogy began with analyses of the social reality within a particular socio-political situation, and then regarded the task of educational philosophy as 'faith seeking intelligent action,' a form of empirical praxis. A tendency towards exclusive concentration upon either the salvation of one's own soul or the facts of oppression has respectively marked the history of fundamental and *Minjung* pedagogy in Korea.

There is, of course, no denying that present times are still in part under the shadow of Enlightenment-style attempts both to uncover 'the' way of knowing and to offer a 'mirror' of 'objective reality' using that way. Nevertheless, the efforts by variously styled postmodernists, pluralists, and relativists to substantiate different ways of knowing can hardly be ignored. Such efforts have precipitated a renewed interest in socio-culturally marginal, institutionally non-hegemonic, and conceptually challenging ways of knowing that highlight the importance of the contingent and the particular.

It can be argued that at the very core of all such contemporary thought is a rejection of the notion of universal or scientific reason (Bolt 1993, 56). Observing

science being 'put in its place' in this way may initially enthuse many individuals living a life of faith. It must be noted, however, that attacks on the notion of the universal have compelled even Christian believers to accept that the Christian religion is increasingly a religion among others in the West, no longer as privileged nor as the centre. Christian religious education has to now examine the possibility of Christian faith as 'a' way of knowing or understanding (Bolt 1993, 93). It is because of this situation that many scholars have argued that even though fundamental and *Minjung* pedagogy need to be balanced and criticized using the insights of Postmodern philosophy, Christian religious educators should also criticize the situation of postmodernism, relativism and paganism (Han 1988, 490; 492). Christian religious educators must decide how to overcome the either/or of this apparent dilemma while nurturing respect for, and learning from, others.

Christian religious education has much to offer in times marked by increasingly inter-disciplinary study. It is far from moribund. Indeed, it can be conceptualized and, more significantly, *lived* as more important today than ever before. However, Issues of an allegedly philosophical (as opposed to 'educational' or 'theological') nature cannot be ignored. Such issues include questions about the role of reason or rationality in the growth of knowledge, the meaning of 'understanding' and 'practice,' and the development of a concept of faith that, allowing for the notion of tradition as a way of understanding, is actively tied to the seeking of new traditions.

The relationship between theology and education is somewhat mystifying to representatives of both fields, but much of what is going on in theology relates to education and the broader notion of enculturation. However, a divorce has taken place between theology and education (Han 1988, 465-466). As Suh contends, fundamental pedagogy under systematic theology, "has attempted to 'depoliticize' the Christian message and Christian activities" (Suh 1981, 22). The curriculum of fundamental pedagogy was designed to be a search for purely religious experience and offered a banking system of education both in churches and Christian schools without considering the contextualities of Korea.



Chi-ha Kim, a *Minjung* theologian, claims:

*Minjung* theology is the unification of *Tonghak* and Christianity, the unification of renewal of the human spirit and the revolutionary change for justice in the social structure, the unification of idea and practice, the unification of personal prayer and the corporate Mass, and the coincidence of worldly and heavenly food (freedom) (Suh 1981, 179).

Nevertheless, even though *Minjung* theology represents an attempt as an indigenous theology to relate the gospel to the Korean context, *Minjung* pedagogy is totally biased towards western thought, such as that of Paulo Freire and Karl Marx.

This has been the situation in most churches in Asia. Christian education has had either a marginal status within theological curriculum, or a separate existence. To be engaged in theology, it is assumed, is not quite the same as being engaged in education. Theology and Christian religious education, however, should be informed by each other as equal partners in a conversation (Miller 1995, 257).

The relationship between theology and education should be organic and this is possible only when theology and Christian religious education are both viewed as dynamic and critical, not static, processes. That viewing has not been possible, however, because Christian religious education has been dominated by both fundamental and *Minjung* theology.

It is very important to emphasize again that (Christian) educational philosophy is not distinct from philosophy in general. It cannot offer a non-contextual epistemic methodology. Its offerings should be seen as an epistemic that is constantly being informed by and through its encounters with all that is.

As they were in the seventeenth century, contemporary epistemology, metaphysics and ontology are inextricably entangled in discussions of science and the possibility and limitations of the human sciences. To the Enlightenment philosopher, one of the reasons for taking up these matters was to examine the possibility of extending the scope of scientific knowledge and investigative procedures into many areas of human life (Anderson 1986, 14). It was thought

that if it were possible to obtain scientific or 'objective' knowledge of human life, then it might be possible to establish social and political laws and conventions which would allow for the creation of a well-regulated and harmonious society.

Today, few working within the human and social sciences share this aspiration; fewer still hold it with the same naivety. Nevertheless, on the one hand, the possibility of a scientific understanding of human life remains an important topic of debate and dissension and, on the other hand, the transformation to a post-objectivist philosophy has generated new philosophical issues that mark 'hermeneutical' or 'epistemological ontology' off from traditional ontology and epistemology.

Metaphysics or traditional ontology has commonly been construed as the branch of philosophical issues that deals with the nature of reality. The branch of philosophical issues associated with the nature, sources and validity of knowledge has traditionally been construed as epistemology. It is here that it is especially important to take note of Heidegger's ontology, which precludes all the myriad distinctions between fact and value that continue to drive disciplinary schisms between ontology and epistemology.

In the work of Heidegger with which I am concerned an unvalued fact and a pure value are both abstractions (Anderson 1986, 13). Heidegger's successes in carrying out such an inquiry are a critical turning point for re-thinking ontology. They are also critical in the reformulation of the projects of hermeneutics as exhibited in the work of Gadamer, Habermas, Derrida, and Caputo.

In this thesis, I use the term 'ontology' not primarily in its traditional meaning as 'the science of all being' but more in the Heideggerian sense of the Being of ourselves, as we exist in an agential relationship with historical reality. This sense is given greater cogency as we move in our investigation from Gadamer to Caputo.

We will come to see that an 'ontological turn' in Christian religious education would encourage educators to engage and inform, and form and transform, the very Being of people in the world. 'Epistemic ontology' is perhaps the best term to describe this investigation into the philosophy of Christian

religious education. It better describes my central conviction that epistemology and ontology, 'knowing' and 'being,' should be united in the work of Christian religious educators.

Christian religious education should attend to, engage, and shape one's whole way of Being. In this sense, it is at once a profoundly and thoroughgoing ontological activity with an integral practical component. Educators who take to such a way of thinking will be inspired by the thought that the knowledge that is generated in their varied encounters in the world is a knowledge that will bring about changes in the lives – the Being – of people. Such an inspiring motivation should remain in place even when such educators are engaged in what they have determined to be an exclusively epistemological undertaking (Groome 1991, 8-11).

Christian religious educators who take this turn will come to realize that exploring how the concept of understanding differs from that of practical knowledge involves an exploration of how doxastic relationships differ from valuable interpersonal relationships. They will also realize that the latter exploration can only be contextually answered in the midst of their ongoing interactions with others in the world.

In the following thesis, I will try to depict the increasing interdisciplinary nature of the philosophy of Christian religious education, and argue that, in dialogue with other disciplines, it cannot avoid directing its attention and contributions to specific issues relating to the substantive content of its practices. Indeed, it is my belief that engaging its interdisciplinarity actually brings Christian religious educators to not only consider the notion of valuable relationships, but to attempt to help people realize those kinds of relationships with others.

## CHAPTER III

### GADAMER'S DIALOGUE MODEL OF HERMENEUTICAL UNDERSTANDING: TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF RELATIONSHIP

#### INTRODUCTION

It is my contention that Gadamer's ideas of education as enculturation (*Bildung*) can provide a sense of how better to enhance communication and understanding between generations, leading to more constructive relationships for all involved in any encounter. Gadamer's pedagogical goal is an enculturation wherein people develop a self-understanding and are able to educate themselves through their tradition. Such enculturation involves a willingness to risk oneself through 'an openness to the unexpected' (Cleary & Hogan 2001, 525). In coming to terms with the generation gap, I also propose that we seriously consider Gadamer's related ideas of understanding and practical knowledge (*phronesis*).

Gadamer's ideas on education and enculturation are very closely related to his ideas on hermeneutical understanding and experience. In his view, understanding is historical. In Gadamer's view, "the meaning of hermeneutical understanding cannot transcend its historical situation and the knowledge which it attains is always partial and revisable" (Warnke 1987, 40-41). From this perspective, *Bildung* is a never-ending process of openness and a perpetual fusion of horizons, arising through dialogue, in which the idea is to learn continually (Blacker 1994, 215). In other words, *Bildung* is an understanding marked by a facility for the endless disclosure of particular facets of a subject matter in a given language and culture. Christian religious educators have to recognize that understanding is always partial and revisable, just as the 'fusion of the horizon' of the text and the horizon of the interpreters (Gadamer 1998, 308) is always an incomplete undertaking.

Also important for Gadamer's notion of understanding is his construal of the relationship between practical knowledge and virtue. For Gadamer, practical knowledge is that of *Phronesis*, of acting in solidarity. *Phronesis* is seen as a

virtue that empowers the human being to develop in a continual transformation that preserves the rationality of the form of social life that already exists.

The first two sections of this chapter deal respectively with Gadamer's ideas of hermeneutical understanding and hermeneutical experience. The third and fourth sections deal with notions of *Bildung* and *phronesis*.

In the final section of this chapter, I will suggest what Christian religious educators can learn from Gadamer's ideas on enculturation. As Christian religious educators working towards resolving problems between and within generations, we have to be constantly attuned to the fact that changes in our understanding of ourselves and our pedagogical goals and changes in our actions are intricately connected.

Such a perspective allows us to see that the projections of all generations -- including their refusals, their denials and their resistances -- do not come out of a void. They are at once fueled and shaped by the social, historical, and even linguistic contingencies in which they find themselves. Such contingencies include the projections of previous generations.

## I. GADAMER'S CONCEPT OF UNDERSTANDING

### ***Aristotle and Plato's Contribution to Gadamer's Concept of Understanding***

An examination of Gadamer's notion of *Bildung* (or 'enculturation'), must be prefaced by a depiction of the idea of 'the good' in Plato and Aristotle because this theme, which is Germane to my concerns about generation gaps, has had a large influence on Gadamer's hermeneutical understanding.

As we will see in greater depth in later sections, Gadamer's reading of *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy*<sup>9</sup> allows for significant reflection on 'the good' and the relationship between theory and practice in a life of enculturation.

Plato describes 'the good' as common to all things that are good. Aristotle, however, contends that the good life is not "something common to all cases" (Gadamer 1986, 146). It is not a universal principle of being (Gadamer 1991, 18). Moreover, although Aristotle agrees with Plato that the good life bears witness to a coming together of *theoria* and *praxis*, he believes that the determination of what is good or the right thing to do is achieved by a practical reasonableness (*phronesis*) (Gadamer 1986, 166). It does not result from the application of a rule. Both the determination of the good and the good vary from case to case.

As a contemporary exponent of Aristotle's thought, MacIntyre, especially in his work on education, tries to direct attention to the goods served by each particular type of activity:

A good education is one in which students learn not only how to play their intended part in different kinds of complex activities by developing their skills, but also one in which they learn how to recognize the goods served by those activities, goods which give purpose to what they do (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 2).

This important type of understanding is practical rather than theoretical

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<sup>9</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer. *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

and to acquire it is to see each individual human life as an answer to the question: 'What is the ultimate human good?' As we will see in greater depth in later sections, Gadamer's reading of *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy*<sup>10</sup> allows for significant reflection on 'the good' and the relationship between theory and practice in a life of enculturation.

Gadamer is convincing in his argument that there is no definite division between a dogmatic methodological Plato and a flexible or practical Aristotle. He claims that in spite of offering different occasions for the realization of the good, both Plato and Aristotle are elaborating a common ground of moral philosophy by differentiating theory, practice (*techne*/technical knowledge), and *praxis* (practical knowledge/moral philosophy) (Gadamer 1986, 34-35; 61).

Gadamer stresses his belief that both Plato and Aristotle are practitioners of '*logos*'<sup>11</sup> philosophy (Smith 1986, xiv). They agree about the relationship between *theoria* and *praxis*, claiming that the most laudable life is the life of pure *theoria* (Smith 1986, xxviii). However, the notion of *theoria* in both Plato and Aristotle must be distinguished from 'theory' in modern philosophy of science. For Gadamer, the best life for both is *philosophia*, not *Sophia* and the life of *theoria*, is "striving for wisdom, not wisdom itself" (Smith 1986, xxviii).

*Phronesis* (practical or moral knowledge) for Aristotle involves the successful recognition of the good in particular situations. However, Gadamer emphasizes that practical knowledge also involves 'applying' the particular situation to the universal to articulate what the demands of the universal are in

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<sup>10</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer. *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> In pre-Socratic Greek philosophy, "*logos* as a first principle of knowledge, in the context of our assertion that knowledge is a way of coping with our world, highlights the relational component of knowledge, as coping with one's world is the paradigm case of being in relation" (Friesen 2000, 74). While Plato uses *logos* in many different ways which encompass a wide diversity of nuances of the word, Aristotle regards *logos* mainly as reason, as an intellectual activity, or as speech (Friesen 2000, 77, 79). "Gadamer's notion of *logos* is a significant departure from traditional ideas of *logos* (Plato to Aristotle) which holds that it is only possible in proportion to the accuracy with which a finite understanding *logos* reflects the infinite *logos*" (Friesen 2000, 81). In other words, it is impossible to understand Gadamer's use of *logos* without considering the role of language in his thought in terms of the interrelation of *logos* and language. In connection to the notion of '*logos*,' Gadamer's use of *logos* is different from logocentrism, theory, or pure reason in the sense of the way to know the word and the specious ideal of objectivity in Western thought (Friesen 2000, 81).

the specific situation (Gadamer 1998, 322). In short, in Gadamer's work, understanding is modeled on *phronesis* and hermeneutics (i.e., the theory of understanding) is modeled on practical philosophy (Dunne 1997, 163).

### ***Hegel and Heidegger's Contribution to Gadamer's Concept of Understanding***

Gadamer's account of understanding is also developed with attention to Hegel's notion of 'historical experience.'

First of all, Gadamer bases his concept of understanding on Hegel's 'historical experience' of the spirit (*Geist*), or a 'historical dialectic' which is distinguished from natural science (Palmer 1969, 195). He develops the concept of 'effective-history,' in which we are already not only participating in historical experience but are also influenced by it.

Secondly, Gadamer's concept of understanding is informed by Hegel's dialectical negativity and the dynamic of the reflection of self-consciousness. Although Hegel emphasized "the dialectical movement of experience toward that which is the essential fulfillment of the spirit [*Geist*], in absolute knowledge" (Gadamer 1998, 355), Gadamer does not accept Hegel's hypothesis of absolute knowledge nor his concept of absoluteness of *Geist*. Gadamer argues that the experience of meaning does not culminate in absolute knowledge but rather in an openness to 'the experience of otherness' and 'the reflection of self-consciousness' that is not completed in the dialectical process.

Gadamer develops the meaning of Hegel's historical experience and the concept of 'effective history' and takes this base for explaining his 'historicity of understanding.' But unlike Hegel's dialectic, which tried to ground *Geist* in subjectivity with finality, Gadamer tries to relate *Geist* to the structure of understanding in Heidegger's being-in-the-world. The decisive turning point Gadamer makes in the history of hermeneutics is rooted in his use of Heidegger's concept of understanding (Palmer 1969, 216).

Heidegger, like Dilthey, took as his starting point the problem of how to



understand the structure of self-understanding, or *Dasein*<sup>12</sup> itself. But, unlike Dilthey, Heidegger does not look at the problem of the objectivity of understanding, but at the question of what understanding itself is. Most importantly, he sees understanding as something which we cannot explain objectively, because in our very participation in understanding we are already under the limitation of its historicity (Palmer 1969, 130).

Secondly, the concept of understanding in Heidegger is 'the ability to grasp one's own possibilities for being, within the context of the living world in which one exists.' Moreover, "understanding always relates to the future; this is its projective character [*Entwurfscharakter*]" (Palmer 1969, 131). But projection must have a base, and understanding is also related to one's situation [*Befindlichkeit*] (Palmer 1969, 131). In this sense, the primary conditions for understanding the world and history is 'situatedness' or 'thrownness [*Geworfenheit*]' and 'projection [*Entworfenheit*].' Heidegger's thrownness describes a way of Being as "the entity which has Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 1962, 174) in "Being-toward-possibilities" (Heidegger 1962, 188) and 'that-it-is' (Heidegger 1962, 174) in which *Dasein* exists and that *Dasein* is simply thrown into the world from the past. On the other hand, projection is openness toward the future. *Dasein* does not come to rest after it has been thrown. Thrownness leads to projection. *Dasein* has self-understanding in every moment in the world. This self-understanding participates in a tradition which *Dasein* does not create and contains a future beyond *Dasein*'s control (Warnke 1987, 38). In short, the self-understanding of *Dasein* is conditioned under temporality and thus our understanding of it has a certain character of "prestructure." As Heidegger claims, "all understanding of *Dasein* requires presuppositions" (Heidegger 1962, 151).

The prestructure of Heidegger's understanding is not modeled on the traditional subject-object scheme; rather, it depends upon an already included

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<sup>12</sup> "Heidegger's hermeneutics is not an interpretation of an interpretation but the primary act of interpretation which first brings a thing from concealment. Thus his hermeneutics is an interpretation of the being of *Dasein* and an analysis of the existentiality of *Existenz*, that is, hermeneutics is that fundamental announcing function through which *Dasein* makes known to himself the nature of being" (Palmer 1969, 129-130).

subject-object. Gadamer accepts this prestructuredness of understanding in Heidegger as a new turning point. The *Dasein* thrown into the prestructuredness of understanding must so interpret itself in the temporal structure and must live its life in certain ways and determine some future and therewith the meaning of its past. Therefore, the “self-understanding of Heidegger’s *Dasein* is thrown projection” (Warnke 1987, 38).

Gadamer develops his conception of ‘horizons’ from the prestructuredness of understanding and ‘thrown projection’ in Heidegger. Gadamer insists that a human being has his/her own horizon and has commonness as part of that horizon (Warnke 1987, 39). It is neither purely subjective, nor participation within a horizon of objectivity. A horizon already includes subject and object. The fusion of horizons is the integration of our historically determined concerns with the object of understanding. In equating successful hermeneutic understanding with dialogical consensus, Gadamer means fusions between past and present or between the alien and familiar (Warnke. 1987, 103). When horizons fuse, Gadamer says there is a real understanding and when one must interpret oneself in the process of understanding there is what Gadamer calls ‘a practical understanding.’ In this sense, Gadamer’s hermeneutical understanding is not about third-person knowledge of things. It is an understanding of where one is and where one may be going.

## **II. NEGATIVITY, OPENNESS, RELATIONALITY, AND LINGUISTICALITY: THE COMPONENTS OF HERMENEUTICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE WORK OF GADAMER**

In this section, I would like to outline how Gadamer's notion of hermeneutical understanding relates to his notion of hermeneutical experience. For Gadamer, understanding is made through a tradition, 'the horizon' within which we do our thinking. There are two horizons: the horizon of the interpreter and the horizon of tradition. Gadamer claims that the 'fusion of horizons' constitutes real understanding. The fusion of horizons allows the meeting of the past with the present. Gadamer insists that understanding is hermeneutical experience – not a method but the very way of human existence (Warnke 1987, 41). It is not perception but experience itself. Hermeneutical experience has the characteristics of negativity, openness, relationship, and linguisticity.

Whenever we listen or read, we automatically apply interpretive principles in trying to understand what is meant. When a person is speaking in a different language, we are more aware of the interpretive efforts we must make to understand them. If we are reading a difficult book, we may reread a section to understand the meaning clearly. Hermeneutics involves the identification of the principles used to properly interpret someone else's communication. However, it is not something that we use only in the rarefied atmosphere of academia. We are always using it at some level to understand others.

### ***Hermeneutical Experience as Negativity and Openness***

Gadamer insists that when we experience an object we do not understand better what is already partially understood, but that we understand differently (Palmer 1969, 233). Gadamer defines this as the creative negativity in experience.

For Gadamer, experiential negativity has a productive meaning. Such experience is not a completely new experience of any given object; in fact, we gain knowledge of the object as a result of it (Gadamer 1998, 353). Creative negativity marks the movement from given perceptions and values to that which

is new and other (Gadamer 1998, 353). One who is called experienced becomes such not only through experiences, but also through openness to new experience. The fulfillment of experience “is not in definitive knowledge, but in a diverse, and receptive openness to, experience that is made possible by experience itself” (Gadamer 1998, 355).

In understanding the notions of negativity and openness in the work of Gadamer, the notions of ‘temporal distance,’ ‘effective history,’ and ‘fusion of horizon’ are important. Firstly, the openness of conversation for Gadamer is marked by ‘temporal distance,’ that, contra positivistic portrayals of understanding, is not a negative thing, but rather a source of understanding. The time between the production of a text and its varied re-interpretations is not a gap that swallows all possibility of understanding, but is rather a ‘supportive ground’ (Dunne 1997, 118).

Temporal distance provides the ‘otherness’ between interpreter and text that allows for productive communicative understanding. The perspectives of the interpreter and of the text are not given prior to the attempts at communication themselves (Dunne 1997, 119).

Secondly, we as interpreters are under ‘effective history.’ Although the aim of hermeneutical understanding is to increasingly open ourselves to the truth claims made by others, we as interpreters have already been formed by the past, including, in many cases, the influence of the text as itself part of an entrenched tradition.

Conscious of it or not, we cannot avoid being influenced. Effective-historical consciousness is related to ‘prejudices,’ including those in depictions of generation gaps. ‘Effective-historical consciousness’ is marked by the ability to discern a prejudice that has been lost in the mixing, by ‘naïve consciousness,’ of the past into the present (Dunne 1997, 121).

By being alienated from that which is familiar, through opening ourselves to others, we can learn to recognize our prejudices. Becoming aware of our prejudices involves becoming aware of who we have become (our ‘generation’) through opening ourselves to the being and becoming (‘the generation’) of others.

We cannot separate our naïve, 'blind prejudices' from knowledge-generating 'justified prejudices' or communication enhancing 'enabling prejudices' by autonomous acts of pure reason or self-reflection. However, through dialogical encounters with what is handed down to us, we can test and risk our prejudices (R. Bernstein 1986, 90). For Gadamer, such a testing is an ongoing, open-ended undertaking (R. Bernstein 1986, 90). Only in the hermeneutical circle of understanding do we learn to productively distinguish blind from enabling prejudices.

Thirdly, Gadamer's conception of openness includes the notion of horizon. By interacting with a text, our horizon is already being expanded beyond itself. No one possesses one's present in a way that allows one to distinguish it sharply from the otherness of the past (or another's present). As Gadamer stresses, our present horizons owe much to the past (Dunn 1997, 121). Understanding is always the fusion of past and present horizons, a fusion enabled by the openness of effective historical consciousness.

### ***Hermeneutical Experience as Relationality***

The negativity and openness of experience reflect the structure of 'I-Thou.' Gadamer detects three modes of the hermeneutical experience in the relation of 'I-Thou.'

One mode is the attitude that 'Thou' is not a person but a thing, a predictable being (Gadamer 1998, 358). This attitude methodically excludes every subjectivity and understands 'Thou' to be a regularity to be taken account of in human behavior. Such an idea may, for some commentators, offer parallels to Buber's depiction of the 'I-It' relationship as a first step towards the consciousness of self provided by the 'I-Eternal Thou' relationship.<sup>13</sup> As we will see, however, Gadamer's ideas are marked by a greater sensitivity to how our effective histories and the actual situatedness of the other in communication

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<sup>13</sup> For interesting educational and theological elements in the work of Buber, see Sean Blenkinsop, "Martin Buber's Education: Imitating God, the Developmental Relationalist" in *Philosophy of Education Society: 2004 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Program*, 26 March 2004. p. 3.

allows for unique trajectories of self-development.

A second mode of the hermeneutical experience is the attitude that the 'Thou' deals with a person, but the 'Thou' is seen only through and from my point of view. It is still very much "a form of self-relatedness" (Gadamer 1998, 359). This relationship claims self-understanding of the other. In this 'I-Thou' relation, 'I' only anticipates the other and intercepts from the other (Gadamer 1998, 359). There is a reflection on the relationship to the other, but this reflection is not to participate and to reflect on 'I' and 'Thou' together.

A third type of hermeneutical experience is a relation in which the 'Thou' is a living person and the claim of 'Thou' is heard and better understood as reflecting the experience of 'I'. This type has the characteristics of question and answer dialogue (Gadamer 1998, 369). The interpreter himself or herself may both hear the text speak and participate to revise his or her own perspective and relationship of openness. Gadamer regards the most reasonable attitude as openness to historical consciousness as effected. However, Gadamer's openness includes the question of the text as well as the hearing of the word of the text. Understanding tradition requires that the "reconstructed question be set within the openness of its questionableness" (Gadamer 1998, 374). The text is not fixed nor closed, but moving and changing within the horizon of the interpreter. In this transformation, the fusion of horizons happens and this happening is the relationship of openness.

Of these three types of relationships, Gadamer applies the third, dialogical type to hermeneutical experience. This relationship of hermeneutical experience works within the context of language. Gadamer insists that there is neither 'I' nor 'thou' as isolated, substantial realities. I may say 'thou' or I may refer to myself over against a 'thou,' but a common understanding precedes these situations (Wachterhauser 1986, 229).

### ***Hermeneutical Experience as Linguisticality***

Gadamer makes two general claims about language. The first is that every conversation presupposes, even creates, a common language (Gadamer

1998, 378). Hence, language is 'the universal medium' which can make possible the human experience of the world. Humans possess the world through language. To possess the world means to have a definitive attitude about the world, an attitude made possible through language. For Gadamer, the hermeneutical problem is not about the mastery of language. It is about acquiring an understanding of the subject matter within language (Gadamer 1998, 385).

This understanding of language can be used to examine the understanding of the meaning of a text. To understand the meaning of a text does not only mean to reconstitute the linguistic custom in which the author is present but also to constitute a common language, to reach for an understanding about the 'truth' of the text.

Secondly, Gadamer rejects the idea that a universal object language, a concept positivism assumes, secures 'objectivity.' He insists that such an understanding of language separates actions and norms of action from the language games, the hermeneutic situation, that give them sense (Warnke 1987, 109). As Warnke succinctly argues, in Wittgensteinian fashion, one has to learn the new language of value and practice from the ground up by participation in the activities of a group (Warnke 1987, 110).

Gadamer insists that language does not mean a universal object language, like positivists claim, but rather a universal medium. Because language itself is a universal medium, it is impossible to understand events or meaning as a universal experience – they must be understood in terms of the language game to which they belong (Warnke 1987, 109).

Therefore, the hermeneutical experience is about a negativity that is a willingness and readiness to give up my knowing framework about an openness that admits different understandings and about language as the relationships of a mutual dialogue that is the universal medium.

Gadamer claims that the technicization of words in scientific language should be overcome through an appreciation of hermeneutical understanding as negativity, openness, relationality, and the language of hermeneutical experience.

All understanding involves what Gadamer calls a 'hermeneutical understanding' between past, present, and future in which we are neither complete masters nor slaves, but participants in a movement of meaning reflective of the true power of words (Wachterhauser 1986, 233).



### III. GADAMER AND THE PEDAGOGICAL GOAL OF ENCULTURATION

It is my belief that Gadamer's contribution to the notion of education as '*Bildung*' can contribute to accommodating both commonality and difference between generations.

The input-output school system valorized in the Enlightenment lost sight of the end of education. It became a teaching of 'skills' divorced from those contexts that should make learners be committed to humanity, community, and virtue. However, one of the great achievements of the Enlightenment was to have recognized how public debate and understanding the diverse goods of a particular life are necessary for a rational politics. Thus, the idea of Enlightenment seems like a contradiction. Knowledge increasingly became reduced to the private acquisition and accumulation of factual givens, eclipsing collective inquiry into the common good, into that which enhances the life of all who partake in its sharing.

Gadamer's notion of 'enculturation' as a pedagogical goal helps us focus on truth vs. change; freethinking or space vs. restriction; dialogue vs. self-education; old generation vs. new generation. It is also the fulcrum for distinguishing human reason from Enlightenment reason.

From the Greek point of view, *paideia* (*Bildung*) is neither private, nor about public utility. Rather, human cultivation manifests itself within a harmonious balance of the individual and the general interest, allowing for a manageable curriculum to emerge into the *Akyklios Paideia* (Nordenbo 2002, 346). The educational thinking of Renaissance humanism held that a proper education was a *Bildung* that involved study and individual development that was harmonized with the world and society (Nordenbo 2002, 346).

Gadamer derives the notion of *Bildung* from Herder, in whose work humanity has to build itself against and through the past to realize itself (Gadamer 1998, 10). Gadamer draws our attention to the theological content of the concept by noting that the word *Bildung* is evocative of that mystical tradition which stipulates that people are to cultivate themselves in the image of God that

is within them (Grondin 1997, 163). For Gadamer, human sciences is consisted of what we have in the concept of formation (*Bildung*), education or culture (Grondin 2003, 24-25).

Gadamer, of course, is opposed to the over-valorization of scientific thinking in Enlightenment attacks on Renaissance humanism and is very interested in how the notion of *Bildung* undergoes a change from Kant to Herder. According to Gadamer, Kant uses the word '*Bildung*' to mean 'cultivating' a capacity (or natural talent), an act of freedom by an acting subject related to the autonomous intellect of subjectivism.

Influenced by the Kantian idea of duties to oneself, Hegel emphasizes *Sichbilden* (educating or cultivating oneself) and *Bildung* (Gadamer 1988, 10). Gadamer explains how Hegel distinguishes the nature of practical *Bildung* from Enlightenment reason as both a scientific concept of objectivity and an individualistic subjectivism. Hegel argues that the being of *Geist* (spirit) has an essential connection with the idea of *Bildung* (Gadamer 1998, 12).

Hegel draws a distinction between practical *Bildung* and theoretical *Bildung*, which is reminiscent of Aristotle's distinction between theoretical knowledge (*episteme*) and practical knowledge (*phronesis*).<sup>14</sup> Theoretical *Bildung* consists in "sacrificing particularity" and rising "above the immediacy of its existence to universality" (Gadamer 1998, 12). Practical *Bildung* is achieved

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<sup>14</sup> According to Gadamer, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguished the deliberative faculties, *phronesis* and *techne*, from the scientific faculties, *episteme* and *sophia* (Gadamer 1999, 152). This is not what we mean by knowing in the realm of science. "*Episteme* (**theoretical knowledge**) means scientific knowing which is much closer to what we now call rational knowing or knowing by reason" (Friesen 2000, 3). While "*episteme* is a mathematical knowing by means of necessary formulas according to the canons of logic, *Sophia* as an intuitive knowing goes beyond deliberation" (Friesen 2000, ix). What we currently think of as science corresponds more closely to what the Greeks called *techne*. *Phronesis* and *techne* are the other two ways of knowing which are linked because of their deliberative characteristics. Their concern focuses on the moral issues of life and about the right thing to do in a particular situation. The notions of *phronesis* and *techne* are regarded as deliberative faculties correlating universal and particulars in concrete ways that cannot be determined beforehand. *Phronesis* and *techne* are, nevertheless, distinguished in some fundamentally significant ways. *Phronesis* (**practical knowledge or moral knowledge**) involves a similar deliberation thought to *techne*. While "*techne* is normally thought of as technical skill which deliberates about the best way to achieve the desired ends of specific production," (Friesen 2000, ix) *phronesis* is the knowledge that knows how to make the appropriate application by means of proper deliberation. And *phronesis* is not only concerned with how to do the right thing, but more specifically, what the right thing to do in any particular situation is (Gadamer 1998, 317).

when, in distinction from the immediacy of personal desires and needs and private interest, one recognizes “the basic character of the historical spirit; to reconcile itself with itself, to recognize oneself in other being” (Gadamer 1998, 13).

For Hegel, the basic idea of *Bildung* is to recognize one’s self in the foreign other and to feel at home in it (Gadamer 1998, 14). Therefore, Hegel states that every individual is always engaged in the process of *Bildung* in as much as the world into which he is growing is one that is humanly constituted through language and custom. In short, *Bildung* is not only about a process. It is that space within which educated people (*Gebildete*) live (Gadamer 1998, 14).

Even though Gadamer criticizes both Kant’s notion of ‘cultivating a capacity’ by the autonomous acting subject and Hegel’s idea of ‘*Bildung*,’ he uses their insights into the nature of *Bildung* to deepen the meanings he gives to the notions of hermeneutical understanding and enculturation. Gadamer further claims that, like Hegel, Dilthey accepts the possibility of transcending one’s historical situation to acquire an unconditioned knowledge of self and others. Dilthey does this while developing the idea of an historical consciousness against the Enlightenment’s idea of a-historical objectivistic consciousness (Shin 1994, 70). Dilthey believes that the unique quality of humanity is ‘understanding.’ Palmer contrasts Dilthey’s notion of understanding with scientific understanding.

Explaining is for the sciences, but the approach to phenomena that unites the inner and outer is understanding. The sciences explain nature, the human studies understand expressions of life. Understanding can grasp the individual entity, but science must always see the individual as a means of arriving at the general, the type... The human studies must, Dilthey contends, attempt to formulate a methodology of understanding that will transcend the reductionist objectivity of the sciences and return to the fullness of ‘life’ of human experience (Palmer 1969, 105).

The notion of the fullness of life is something that I wish to invoke at several places in offering of a new understanding of valued relationships. According to Dilthey, “we perceive, think, and understand in terms of the past, present, and future, in terms of our feelings and moral demands and imperatives”

(Palmer 1969, 103). He is in agreement with Hegel that life is a 'historical reality,' but in disagreement with him that history is the movement of absolute spirit. Dilthey gives clarification to the idea that history expresses life as relative and varied. To this extent, his ideas lend credence to the postmodern underwriting of history as flux.

Nevertheless, one can find in the work of Dilthey the acceptance of the possibility of transcending the historical situation and finding pure objectivity. In Gadamer's view, Dilthey neglects his own insight into the historicity or temporality of experience and too readily accepts a Hegelian objective spirit in his attempt to underwrite both the possibility of shared individual experiences and the possibility of species-wide knowledge gained from those experiences (Warnke 1987, 32). Gadamer thus criticizes Dilthey's historicity as being a continuation of a scientific Enlightenment due to the experiences of an over-arching consciousness or subject (Warnke 1987, 30).

Experience (*Erlebnisse*) for Dilthey is crucial in orientating a person's self-conception and life conduct. In fact, Dilthey believes that historical knowledge and self-knowledge are both gained through experience and reflection upon that experience (Warnke 1987, 31). As noted earlier, his notion of 'educated people' is born from his assumption of the possibility of common experiences and species-wide knowledge attainable from such experience (Warnke 1987, 31).

As we will see in the next section, Gadamer's notion of *Bildung* moves from a productive alienation to not only a self-education, but also to an engagement of the good. Although Gadamer insists that Education (*Erziehung*) is about educating oneself and that 'enculturation' (*Bildung*) is self-cultivation (Gadamer 2001, 529), his ideas about education are about redefining and sustaining the practices of human learning.

In writing of *Bildung* as 'self-education,' Gadamer directs our minds to those situations which arise between young generations and those whose responsibility it is to educate them. Gadamer wonders who real educators are, and answers that one's true educator is oneself. For Gadamer, we should never forget that "we' educate ourselves, that humanity educates itself, and that the so-

called educator participates in this process only in such modest roles as teacher and as mother” (Gadamer 2001, 530). He characterizes “*Bildung* as the properly human way of developing one’s natural talents and capacities” (Grondin 1994, 163). But Gadamer wishes to underline what he sees as the interactiveness of self-education. Thus, he stresses the importance of the continual presence of others for our being-in-the world (Gadamer 2001, 534). Gadamer draws from the humanistic tradition. The characteristic of humanism, for Gadamer, is openness to the enlightening perspective of those who have preceded us and bequeathed to us the wealth of their experience and wisdom.

Although education is, primarily self-education (Cleary and Hogan 2001, 520), because the nurturing of self-education involves developing relationships with others, its exercise becomes a responsibility (Cleary and Hogan 2001, 520). This notion connects with how Gadamer applies the dialogical type of I-Thou relationship – as a relationship of reciprocal responsibility – to the growth of hermeneutical experience. The idea of reciprocal responsibility is, of course, also very important in all reflection on the role of official educators. Gadamer’s apparent attack on teachers is in fact only an attack on the over-valorization of the official role of teachers. Christian religious educators who learn from Gadamer will come to appreciate that the self-understanding and communicative interactions of the teacher are very important elements in any pedagogical undertaking.

As Gadamer argues in his book *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, because Plato and Aristotle considered the idea of the Good as above and beyond all, they considered it of most importance to distinguish knowledge of the good from knowledge of *techne*. Gadamer does not want philosophy to be ashamed of its search for the Good precisely because he believes that the human mind and heart are drawn more deeply to the Good than to anything else (Nicholson 1997, 309).

#### IV. GADAMER'S VIEWS ON *PHRONESIS* AND VIRTUE

Gadamer's critique of reason consists in championing the emancipatory spirit of the Enlightenment against the Enlightenment objectivism of scientific reason. Gadamer tries to merge the power and being of tradition with Enlightenment ideals of reason, human rationality (Grondin 2003, 97). For Gadamer, scientific reason sacrifices individuality and results in the alienation of the public from individual identity, creativity, and a sense of responsibility and morality. In contrast to scientific reason, "the virtue of *phronesis* is a state of awareness and ability acquired in the course of life" (Teigas 1995, 83). Philosophical hermeneutics in its valorization of 'self-reflection' and expressive capabilities acquired in interpretive acts puts us on the path towards such practical wisdom.

Gadamer's concept of understanding is closely related to Aristotle's practical knowledge. Gadamer's attention is drawn to Aristotle's distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* as deliberative faculties, and *episteme* and *sophia* as scientific faculties (Gadamer 1998, 314-317).

As deliberative knowing, *phronesis* and *techne* require an understanding of both particular and general situations (Gadamer 1986, 166; Gadamer 1998, 317). Gadamer believes that *phronesis* as a mode of practical philosophy is characterized by deliberation through tradition.

For Gadamer, following Aristotle, this also the point at which the fundamental difference between nature and human civilization comes into stark relief. Gadamer agrees with Aristotle that the well-developed moral consciousness itself (i.e., *phronesis*) is an ability to sensitively apprehend the good and duty (Dunne 1997, 159). Concerned with the science of the good in human life, practical philosophy promotes that good itself (Dunne 1997, 160). As philosophy, practical philosophy is an articulation of what Gadamer calls the 'universal desire to know,' and it is practical because this desire "does not break off at the point where concrete practical discernment is the decisive issue" (Dunne 1997, 161). Thus my claim that 'enculturation' as a pedagogical goal of Gadamer is based on the practical philosophy of *phronesis*.

Gadamer's practical concept is also akin to Aristotle's belief that human beings constitute self-identity in the community. He argues that the scientization and materialization of civilization has distorted our human relationships and, thereby, Aristotle's concept of solidarity. By conceptualizing practice as the application of (scientific) theory, science gives preeminence to adaptive qualities, thereby posing "the greatest danger under which our civilization stands" (Gadamer 1998, 73). Gadamer argues that our relationship to ethics has been destroyed, and then describes the hermeneutical task that we should pursue.

Gadamer stresses that one of the distinguishing characteristics of *phronesis* is that of deliberation through tradition. As social beings, people are deeply influenced by the society within they live. Our being and becoming is inextricably wedded to the being and becoming of society. Gadamer insists that application is an indispensable part of understanding because it relates to specific situations in terms of what is "the right thing to do" – one's decision on the basis of reasonable, practical deliberation (Gadamer 1986, 163).

In the work of Gadamer, moral knowledge mirrors understanding in general; moreover, there is a special relationship between hermeneutical understanding and *phronesis*, (as the ethical knowledge or virtue) (Dunn 1997, 156-157; 275). In addition, *phronesis* as the practical wisdom is accompanied with an application of ethical knowledge that is not detached from the subject and from its concrete situation (Grondin 2003, 106). Although *phronesis* as the science of the good in the concrete situation pursues a practical effect (Dunn 1997, 160), *phronesis* as ethical knowledge is always concerned with "the knowledge of others, as opposed to oneself, ought to do" (Warnke 1987, 94). Furthermore, what is important does not merely concern application of a rule to a particular situation. What is good in a particular situation is precisely the question that must be answered in the situation, and this very specific question cannot be answered apart from the situation" (Friesen 2000, 100-101). The matter of 'what is good' refers to the question of "the-for-the-sake-of which is the good" (Gadamer 1986, 146).

Gadamer unites the idea of the shaping of persons into seekers of wisdom

as a pedagogical practice in Plato with the idea of the deliberative skill of *phronesis* in Aristotle. In this connection, in his hermeneutics, Gadamer takes up the notion of 'the good' as being engaged in practical knowledge. Gadamer reshapes the notion of *phronesis* to reflect the inescapable historical nature 'being-in-the-world' (Holub 1991, 57).

Gadamer argues that the notion of understanding must be modeled on a *phronesis* that is directed towards engaging in the good. Such a *phronesis*, however, cannot be provided by Enlightenment-cum-positivistic ideas of education that reify reason. For Gadamer, the notion of *phronesis* is related to *Bildung* as 'self-education.' It is an emergent capability that we should gradually learn to embrace as an enduring responsibility.

*Phronesis* at work in the reflective interplay of the general and the particular provides the means for reaching the state of practical wisdom on which hermeneutical understanding is modeled. For Gadamer, "the *Bildung* of *phronesis*, being engaged in the good, suggests that even while dependent upon prejudice, we are drawing upon the process of introspection itself" (Friesen 2000, x). This is one of the reasons why Gadamer speaks of *phronesis* as responsiveness rather than control. At this point, we can see how *phronesis* is connected with the responsible use of reason in dialogical situations (Teigas 1995, 166).

*Phronesis*, as Bruns has succinctly argued, is different from a rationality of problem solving, which is why experience is always more important than principles, vocabularies, concepts, procedures, and rules (Bruns 1992, 259). Moreover, experience is something much different than the totality of positive knowledge. To be experienced means to be open to experience, to recognize that there is always a 'something more' to knowledge and life, that there is always an innovation to tradition, a supplement to any given. Such a view encourages an openness to those multifaceted and intersecting 'minor' narratives that define all alleged 'others.'



## V. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GADAMER'S 'DIALOGUE MODEL' AND ITS LIMITATIONS

From the standpoint of fundamental or *Minjung* pedagogy, younger generations of Koreans are not viewed as subjects from which we can all learn. They are viewed as sub-cultural objects or 'counter-cultures' without ground. Because they have viewed youth as cultural objects that defy systematic reading, neither fundamental nor *Minjung* pedagogy has focused on Generation Xers as a generation shaped by different demands of concreteness than those that shaped the Builder and the Boomer generations. It is my belief that Christian religious educators can learn much from Gadamer's hermeneutics, which is not modeled on the metaphor of reading, but on the transactional metaphor of pedagogy in which the making and taking of meaning are on-going deliberative acts.

With Gadamer's reflections on the productive alienation of *Bildung* in mind, we can begin to see that the alienation between teachers and students in Korean society could be reduced if they were enabled to understand one another as interpreters and mediators empowered with the capacity to project beyond their own specific horizons, traditions and generations. This interaction between generations is possible because there is a productive alienation from restrictions inherent in all traditions.

All generations must learn to create a new solidarity and to participate in it with one another. This new solidarity will necessarily learn from, while enhancing, both generation's value systems and voice. Self-development is intertwined with the encouraging of those around us.

Christian religious educators must note that this holds equally true for parents and children, and that assessing the role of parents will be very important in offering solutions to those gaps in understanding – those temporal distances – that give definition to different generations. Christian religious educators must recognize that members of all generations will view all that is from their own perspective and that their perception of the 'good' will be colored by a myriad of factors. We must begin to accept that generalizing stories necessarily do violence to allegedly 'marginal' groups that do not neatly fit into the narrative

molds of older generations. We must also accept that the postmodern belief that local narratives of marginal groups are necessarily at odds with the stories told by members of dominant groups is itself a meta-narrative.

I contend that we should not think that we can give up meta-narratives or grand narrative while entertaining the mini-narratives, localized stories, or counter-narratives of which Lyotard speaks.<sup>15</sup> While the old generations should listen to the voices of counter-narratives, Generation Xers' allegedly incommensurable inquiries of faith, friendship or love, Generation Xers have to hear the old generations' views as narratives without which their own transgressions and, thus projections, would not be.

Korean Christian Generation Xers are skeptical of anyone who claims to be the sole keeper of truth, but they consider relationships to be very important. According to Gadamer, the emancipation from the family usually, if not always, means entering into a new solidarity by making friends (Gadamer 1992, 59). The desire for genuine relationship Generation Xers' feel is not undermined by the feelings-based approach to life of their generation. It is part of their desire to discover new truths and become who they are. Older generations must be encouraged to see how their alleged 'transgressions' can be seen to be attempts to find new forms of solidarity in a world that is rapidly changing in so many ways. From a Gadamerian perspective, *Bildung* is a process of encouraging all generations toward the good, towards applying impersonal truth to personal truth, the old generation's meta-narratives to Generation X's counter-narratives, and official narratives of the classroom to counter-narratives of culture. *Phronesis* (practical knowledge) provides us with the ability to apply what is good in meta-narratives with what is good in counter-narratives.

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<sup>15</sup> The postmodern philosopher, J. F. Lyotard states that "in contemporary society and culture – postindustrial society, postmodern culture...the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation" (Lyotard 1984, 37). The purpose of meta-narratives is to present the ultimacy of any truth accepted by society. According to Lyotard, postmodern is "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). Counter-narratives challenge the 'official' and 'hegemonic' narratives of everyday life that are created for specific political purposes. For Lyotard, "counter-narratives are 'little stories' - the little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledge and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated or forgotten in the telling of official narratives" (Peters & Lankshear 1996, 2).

For me, the dialogue model of Gadamer as a new mode of ‘enculturation’ can be used to describe what should happen when we are engaged in a dialogue with different generations.’ It encourages us to seek out those experiences that accommodate the tension between commonality and difference or familiarity and unfamiliarity. The forms of such experiences, and the kinds of valued relationships that they allow, will be more specifically explored in my final chapter. Our generation – our pasts, our traditions, our sources of generation – has very much to do with who we are and where we are going. It has very much to do with our enculturation – our fulfillment.

Concerning the notion of fulfillment, it should be noted that Christian educators influenced by *Minjung* pedagogy have too narrowly reduced *phronesis* to political praxis because of *Minjung* pedagogy’s tendency to propose political praxis as the good. Many educators of the Boomer generation have encouraged oppressed groups to attempt critical readings of what is behind, in, and before texts, as a way of helping them to uncover the truth about their political situation. *Minjung* pedagogy as political praxis in Korea seems to be regarded as *phronesis*. *Phronesis*, however, involves the uniqueness of each individual person much more than *Minjung* pedagogy allows. In fact, it is precisely because *phronesis* doesn’t exist at the level of the universal, but at the correlation of the universal and the particular, that Christian religious educators must take seriously people’s own biographical uniqueness as a starting point for pedagogy and as a process of doing *phronesis*. Gadamer helps us in seeing the interconnectedness of the notion of understanding with that of tradition, community, horizons, practical knowledge (*phronesis*), and enculturation. This helps us to see that real understanding is characterized by negativity, openness, relationship, and linguisticity. Such notions all presuppose a relationship of interconnectivity between subject and object and suggest that our effective histories are always an ‘opening up’ to others.

Such an understanding is tied to a notion of practical knowledge that does not involve a human being individually acting upon a norm derived from an abstract consciousness. We are, on the one hand, always concretely dependent

upon prejudice and, on the other hand, always drawing upon the process of self-reflection itself. It is this kind of embodied practice that allows for the on-going openness and enhancement of meaning encountered in the hermeneutical experience. It is how members of different generations can learn from each other as they grow together through responsibly partaking of life together.

The Builder and the Boomer generations have become used to understanding the Word of God by taking recourse to church dogma. Systematic belief and doctrine come to take precedence over the dynamic hermeneutical relationship between the Word and interpreter. Gadamer's *Bildung* aims at 'self-education' as a capability that one gradually learns to embrace as an enduring responsibility. Such responsibility involves questioning and on-going dialogue with others. From a Gadamerian perspective, it might be said that the strengthening of our responsibilities with others is related to our interaction with the word of God. In fact, Gadamer's ideas of 'understanding' and 'practical knowledge' help us to see that our very coming together is a communicative achievement.

Gadamer's notions of the role of negativity, openness, relationship, and linguisticity in hermeneutical understanding and experience help us better understand the multifaceted relationships between the Word of God and us, systematic belief faith and lived faith, subject-object dualities and many aspects of pluralities, meta-narratives and mini-narratives. I believe that such an understanding is required if one is to confront that fullness of life wherein all generations learn to love and grow together.

Learning from others through a *Bildung* that encourages embodied engagements with the world will at times necessarily involve confrontation, but it will be an educating confrontation-as-engagement, productive of our responsibilities (our respect for the offering of others). Such learning will be a learning of how we can live full lives, and generate desirable futures together.

Generation Xers, just as the Builder and Boomer Generations before them, have been thrown into the world. But they have not been abandoned. Their being is realized in the world, in the contexts into which they have been thrown.

Those contexts are very much a part of what previous generations – previous attempts at understanding – have become. Religious educators must provide the means for all to listen to the ‘demands of concreteness’ that resulted in the deliberations and decisions of others.

The work of Gadamer on understanding – what might be called his Dialogue Model – can help us, as Korean Christian religious educators to more responsibly do our work in the world. However, we must heed the voice of the many thinkers who criticize Gadamer’s ontology for lacking a critical dimension. We must encourage dialogue that illuminates both the process of social and cultural reproduction and how our relationships with others are often conditioned and delimited by that which is beyond our control.

It is here that some reflection on the work of Habermas is important. Habermas, like Gadamer, is interested in the emancipation of the notions of reason, language, and *Bildung* from the bondage of objectivistic scientism (Shin 2000, 149). He does, however, have a very different idea of hermeneutics, one that, because of its alleged ‘critical’ component, deserves some attention as an entry point to the work of Caputo.

For Habermas, the Enlightenment as an intellectual project is very much alive. In fact, he largely assumes the universal value of the traditional liberal institutions of the Enlightenment (Borradori 2003, 13). However, Habermas believes that it must regain the critical stance towards history it once had. He believes that philosophy, through a critical, theoretical examination of the problems of a modern society, can assume that stance. The goal of Habermas’ critical hermeneutics is “emancipation, regarded as the demand for improvement of the present human situation” (Borradori 2003, 15). Such a demand, for Habermas is the ‘unfinished project of modernity.’

Habermas, however, argues that the “objectivity of a ‘happening of tradition’ that is made up of symbolic meaning is not objective enough” (Habermas 1986, 271). He is of the opinion that a major limitation on hermeneutics’ claim to universality is the fact that our traditions are not free of power. For Habermas, this power constitutes a pre-linguistic basis for purposive-

rational action and that, as a result, hermeneutic experience that confronts such “actual conditions changes into critique of ideology” (Habermas 1986, 272).

Habermas is also convinced that psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology are theories of meaning detection that are not based on the Gadamerian sublimation of social processes to cultural tradition. The subjects of both theories are neither aware of nor in control of the meaning of their own utterances. Habermas’ point is that both psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology are concerned with meanings that have been ‘systematically distorted,’ and that a non-hermeneutical revealing of ideological statements produced by such distortion must precede meaningful conversation.

Habermas’ critical hermeneutics examines, for example, the psychoanalytic claim to reveal distortions produced by the sedimentations of consciousness. Habermas offers a ‘depth hermeneutics’ that is not based on the models of translation of traditional hermeneutics but rather on systematic, methodological principles. Depth hermeneutics assumes a distorted communication in need of examination and correction. It is through examining the relationship between such a depth hermeneutics and communicative competence that Habermas argues for the universality of ‘principles of discourse’ (a ‘Discourse Model’) that works towards a common good enhancing communicative virtue. Habermas believes that only a theory of communicative competence can account for distortions in communication produced by the unconscious or by ideology. For him, only such a theory adequately responds to the fact that social action exceeds the symbolic transmission of meaning.

With Habermas, I believe that the *Bildung* of a ‘self-reconstructive public’ is enhanced by communicative virtues, procedural principles, and intersubjective learning processes. Habermas explores several principles important for educative discourse such as free and equal access, ideal role taking, and respect for difference.

I believe, however, that both Gadamer and Habermas fail to show how the concepts of understanding and critical reason are related to the notion of valued relationship that I believe is of importance to Christian educators searching to

bridge the gap between generations.

In this connection, I agree with Caputo's criticism of the over-rationalizations and over-generalizations that are discernable in Habermas' attempts to resolve the crisis of reason. Caputo argues, in criticizing such Habermasian tendencies, that:

When you start rationalizing, that makes the university happy. If it pleases you, I suppose it's all right. But it is inflation. And inflation is always dangerous, not only in economics but also in philosophy. And I think that inflation is what you get out of Habermas, and that a good deal of the formulations in *Post-Cartesian Meditations*<sup>16</sup> are inflated.

No group of people is privileged over any other in having more access to universal *a priori* principles. As Caputo argues, "Our mutual commitment to linguisticity, embodiment, and historicity cuts that off. All we can do is proceed as sensibly as we can, with the aim of minimizing the suffering we inflict on one another" (Caputo 1992, 128- 29).

Even though Gadamer and Habermas both criticize such dualisms of the Enlightenment as 'enlightenment/confusion,' 'subject/object,' 'science/non-science,' and 'rationality/irrationality,' their understandings of the essence of the Enlightenment are significantly different. In spite of praising Gadamer for founding his hermeneutics on the observation of our communication in natural language, Habermas is of the opinion that hermeneutical rationality is not able to help us decide upon the ideal foundation of society and politics and that a critical reason against authority is needed. On the other hand, Gadamer emphasizes that "the passive and responsive aspect of rationality is more fundamental than the critical capacity" (Shin 1994, 150).

Believing that both Gadamer and Habermas weaken the ground of ethics with their assumption of universally valid ways to achieve understanding, Caputo, following Derrida, construes hermeneutics as a continuation of the tradition of

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<sup>16</sup> According to Caputo, Habermas' "Post-Cartesian Meditations is an attempt to formulate what James L. Marsh describes as a 'critical modernism,' that is, a philosophical standpoint which remains faithful to the essential tendencies of modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant and Hegel, while tempering the claims of modernity which have taken shape in twentieth-century continental philosophy" (Caputo 1992, 1).

metaphysics and argues that it must be deconstructed before ethics is possible (Shin 1994, 184). He writes approvingly of Derrida's deconstruction as 'radical hermeneutics.' Most importantly, he believes that it is within 'the difficulty of life' that ethics and ethical responsibility are made possible (Caputo 1987, 209). It is here that the work of Caputo is indispensable.



## **CHAPTER IV**

# **CAPUTO'S FLUX MODEL OF RADICAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE: TOWARDS NURTURING A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF RELATIONSHIP**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE INTERPLAY OF NOTIONS OF UNDERSTANDING AND VALUABLE RELATIONSHIPS AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR KOREAN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

## CHAPTER VI

### **CONCLUSION: RESHAPING OURSELVES AND OTHERS THROUGH OUR WORK AS CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS**

It has been my claim throughout this thesis that intergenerational action and understanding will be made possible and/or enhanced by a pedagogy that is fueled by a renewed understanding of the connection between our understanding of the world and our valuable relationships.

Educators imbued with such an understanding confront the fullness of life. They do not 'take sides' when it comes to the numerous dualities and binary oppositions that constitute modern philosophy and Korean society. Their notion of 'experience' extends to embodied and ideational confrontation. According to the notion of valuable relationship argued for herein, to experience is to face what is never given or present. It is to experience the unrepresentable and the impossible. Experience is a reaching towards our ideal, our God. It is an attempt to establish a relationship with that which is beyond in both space and time.

The engagement of people and of ideas, however, happens in specific historical, socio-cultural and psychophysical situations. Christian religious educators must appreciate the multifaceted contextual aspects to our shared world. Nurturing valuable relationships involves focusing attention on the variegated responses that people have to the world that surrounds and constitutes them. Part of this nurturing accordingly places great importance on the development of response-abilities, on the development of how, when, where and why to respond. It is a nurturing that enhances our world-making capabilities.

The development of this responsibility involves learning how to respect others as ourselves. Being attuned to and respecting others allows us to gain insight into their effective histories and to see how the world changes around us. It thus allows us to transform ourselves. This sensitivity to the intertwining of self and other, and individual and social growth, is an important aspect of the kind of valuable relationship I believe Christian religious educators must encourage. Such an intertwining is one of the primary reasons why I am sympathetic to an

ontological turn that reunites 'knowing' and 'being.' I believe, however, that such a uniting is not a job for theory. It can only be done as we engage others and the world around us, as we turn our valuable relationships into a mutually beneficial understanding of the world. Learning about our world and the multitude of others within it is a learning about ourselves, and such learning is necessarily a transforming of our 'individual' selves and the others through which we come to understand ourselves. Learning about limits to self and other and seeing those limits dissolve in time allows us to glimpse one important aspect of transcendence.

Respect for the being of, and attention to the voice of, others is enhanced if they are a being to whom we exhibit genuine care. Caring about others and being sensitive to their suffering is an integral part of one's own self-development, one's own *Bildung*, one's own enculturation. This way of construing things, however, is far from an individualistically pragmatic defense of the need for care. The road upon which valuable relationships are engaged and developed is a road upon which individual selves with insulated and isolated ends cannot be found.

I believe that the relationship between education and theology is best construed as an organic one. It is at the merging of the epistemic, ontic, and transcendental that I believe the nature of such a relationship is most obvious. Learning to understand meaning has very much to do with the making of meaning, not by us as isolated egos, but in concert with others. Respecting others, opening ourselves to others, and allowing our virtuous selves to reign all mean the same thing. They are very much what 'doing the truth,' realizing the truth, is about. The ends of truth, all of that which is to come, the transcendent – these different ways of giving description to the subject matter of theology offer equally suitable descriptions of the subjects of a pedagogy encouraging of those valuable relationships that make our mutual enculturation possible.

A sensitivity to the making of meaning and the suffering of others occasions a responsibility in regard to our acts of naming, our deliberations, and the purposes of our actions. It is a responsibility that cannot be properly

developed in moments wherein one engages and celebrates the flux of a world in transition. The flux of the world cannot be ignored, but in our very acknowledgement of it we must be moving beyond it, moving in a direction that has not been charted, and thus which cannot be seen as 'in flux.' Others will interpret our actions as having a specific purpose regardless of the purpose we ourselves may attach to such actions. Christian religious educators must bear this in mind when they enter the worlds of those people whom which they seek to help.

As part of being open to the fullness of life, Christian religious educators must be open to the future, to that part of life into which all effects of our responses and responsibilities move. A sense of valuable relationship akin to that defended in this thesis appreciates that God is not served in propositions or principles or absolutes, but in Spirit, and in a Spirit that moves, and that carries us as it moves. It celebrates the Gospels as dynamic, and thus as productive of reality, as leading us into a world that will be different from the world into which we have been thrown and which we have struggled to come to know.

As Christian religious educators, we must celebrate the journey we are on, a journey into the (presently) unknown, a journey that will time and time again expose us to that which is not certain, a journey upon which we will also change.

Such an openness to the fullness of life, however, also involves (the importance of) a questioning stance so thoroughgoing, so willing to accept the place of negativity within reason, that it generates a non-identification with one's own subject position and socio-cultural codes. This radical non-knowing, this acceptance of the abyss, shapes the restless, but passionate, searching heart possessed by those with an understanding of the dynamic nature of our valuable relationships to others and the world.

Christian religious educators, of course, have to accept that faith is not safe and that life can be a very difficult adventure. In our very acts of attempted apprehension we may do violence as we categorize that which surrounds us. The temporal distances that separate us from others, and even our own effective histories, may have much suffering in store for us. The individual who has

engaged such relationships, however, will see all such moments as reminders that engaging the fullness of life is a kind of engaging that is in constant need of refilling, in constant need of nurturing. She or he will have realized that suffering is in the world, but that so too is the possibility of a celebration of the Spirit that moves, of the Spirit that is the unfolding of the world, of the Spirit that makes possible the blossoming of human beings.

Christian religious educators must exercise the same care in our communication with young and old alike that we dream of them exercising towards each other. If our caring is successful, if our risks undertaken towards a life of valuable relationships are productive, our efforts might slowly begin to dissolve a binary opposition that had necessitated our encounter -- that between 'old' and 'young' generations. The latter, and the former, will have become a flux of individual names, unique stories, and special acts of caring.

Christian religious educators who have redrawn their notions of understanding and valuable relationship in ways that have been suggested in this thesis will have gained, I believe, much insight into how to approach the problem of intergenerational conflict in Korean society. They will have helped us not to be scared by fact that 'one generation goes its way, the next generation arrives,' (Ecclesiastes 1:4) and they will have helped us to understand that it is precisely because of our interrelatedness that we are all 'a chosen generation by God' (1 Peter 2:9).

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