Hayathology and Whitehead's Process Thought

-The Relevance of the Biblical Concept of Becoming to Process Theology-

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Section I

It is a well-known fact that the traditional doctrines of Christianity have been formulated under the strong influence of Greek ontology. The Fathers had to presuppose the concept of being, which was an essentially static and substantial one, strictly forbidding the entrance of a dynamic process aspect into deity. The Hebrew pictures of God, which seemed often to be repugnant to the eminently real Being (ὄντως ὄν), was explained away by allegorical exegeses. The apologists considered the Old Testament ascription of such passions as joy, pity, anger, or grief to God as a saving concession to the weakness of human mind. When they argued in purely philosophical terms, they affirmed God to be immutable and invariable in his being, and always in the same identical mode of existence, admitting neither progress nor diminution. The so-called Christological problem, which arose from the New Testament attribution of suffering to incarnate deity, was to them an *aporia* beyond human reasoning. They preferred to keep theology from being exposed to philosophical criticism when they asked ironically," *Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis ?* "

The famous doctrine of "*creatio ex nihilo*" could not have been formulated without any impact of Hebraism upon Hellenism, because it palpably contradicted a fundamental presupposition of Greek ontology, i.e. "*ex nihilo nihil fit.*"
As the early dogmatists wanted to be true to the biblical messages in spite of the insufficient conceptual framework, they often had to rely upon somewhat paradoxical formulae such as creation out of nothing.

The situation remained to be essentially the same when scholastic theologians attempted the synthesis of biblical thoughts and Aristotelian philosophy. As E. Gilson clearly pointed out, the cornerstone of Christian metaphysics was thought by them to be laid out by Moses, who received God's revelation of His own name. According to the Bible (Exod. 3-14) God's name was literally " אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (ehyeh asher ehyeh)" which was afterwards translated into Greek *Septuaginta* as "ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν " (I am the Being) .

As the very name of God was identified with the Being itself, the quest for God became a philosophical inquiry after the real Being, which Aristotle had considered as the chief concern of his metaphysics.

The text of Exodus however, presupposes the concept of "הָיָה (hayah)" which is the original of the verb "אֶהְיֶה (ehyeh)" in God's name. According to the Old Testament hermeneutics (cf. Boman) the Hebrew verb contains a unified meaning of Being, Becoming, and Effecting, while the corresponding term " ὄν " in Greek translation excludes any trace of change of becoming from the self-sufficient Being. The static and substantial view of Being was characteristic for Aristotle's philosophy as well as Plato's. The dynamic aspect of God had to be ignored under their influences because He was considered as the absolute substance , or the unmoved mover. The biblical God, however, cannot stand aloof from the historical process of the world. He is essentially related with the fate of mankind as if the Bible were a book of God's antholopology rather than Man's theology. (cf. Heschel) The culmination of God's concern for men was shown in Christ's incarnation and suffering, which was always a stumbling block to the Hellenistic mind, because such ideas were repugnant to the absolute being of God. If we want to explicate God's immanence in Christ as well as Christ's immanence in God, we need some other conceptual frameworks than Greek one. Historically speaking , the doctrine of trinity was invented to satisfy that need. It was notoriously a difficult one, because the formulation of trinity was borrowed from the neo-Platonism while its content was totally alien to Greek thoughts.

What the present author intends is a project of metaphysics, which is based upon the concept of "הָיָה (hayah)". In comparison with Greek ontology it may well be called "hayathology" after the late Prof. Tetsutaro Ariga(有賀鐵太郎), as he used this term in his studies of historical theology. Hayathology aims at the reconstruction of Christian philosophy. It uses the results of comparative researches between Hebrew and Greek thoughts, and undertakes a difficult task of synthesis between them in a different manner from that of medieval scholastics.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a preamble to hayathology as an immanent criticism of Greek ontology. The following mainly consists of (1) a critical consideration of ontological problems, especially the status of Forms and Matter as conceived by Plato and Aristotle, and (2) an examination of Whitehead's process thought, especially of his doctrines about eternal objects and actual entities, creativity, of his elimination of materialism and of his doctrine of mutual immanence.
Whitehead's system is treated by the present author as a precursor of hayathology because it gives us many suggestions about how to go beyond the limits of Greek

ontology. The examination of Whitehead's process thought will show us that there are many similarities between his conception of reality and the implicit metaphysics of the Bible. Contrary to a wide spread view of Christianity, the Bible has no dualism of body and mind, no doctrines about soul's immortality, and no principle of the other world. What the Bible deals with is *this* world as standing in relation to God and not with the divine nature or essence in isolation from the world. The above features are also found in Whitehead's philosophy, which can be interpreted as a transformation of Platonism to the thoroughgoing realism.

Section II

According to Whitehead, the history of European philosophy merely consists of Plato's footnotes. (PR39) His imagination is so great that he can anticipate almost every school of philosophical thought. Perhaps the most influential doctrine of Platonism may be found in the middle dialogues of his development, i.e. the theory of Forms and the soul's immortality.

In the *Phaedo* (64a) the whole concern of philosophy is summed up as the practice of death, i.e. the denial of this world. The soul sincerely thirsts for the separation from the body because it dwells in the body as the result of fall. It needs an ascetic training through philosophy in order to escape from the cycle of metempsychosis. To Platonism the material world is not the true reality, but merely the place from which the philosopher must flee as soon as possible. (cf.*Theaet.*176a) If we compare this other-worldliness with the biblical idea of salvation, the difference between them is clear.

In the biblical anthropology we find no dichotomy of mind and body; the term soul (נֶפֶשׁ nepes, ψυχή) is completely interchangeable with the term flesh (בָּשָׂר basar, σάρξ) . Both of these point to one reality, i.e. the earth-bound living man. To the biblical tradition salvation cannot be found in ascetic practice because the total man with body must be saved. This is the reason why the early Christians must state that the resurrection should not be without body against the neo-Platonic heresy.

The structure of the immortality proof in the *Phaedo* runs as follows; if we admit the independent existence of Forms, i.e. the intelligible realities as the true causes of the sensible appearances, then we are forced to accept the soul's immortality. The details of the proof , indeed more complex than the above outline, show that the relation between the realm of Forms and the world of sense perception is very problematical, and it needs further research because the dualism concerned must be overcome.

The theory of Forms is not only a matter of historical concern, but also one of the most crucial problems of *hayathology*; the latter does not separate being from becoming, while the former posits the absolute existence of timeless forms independent of the world of becoming. As our aim is the truth of *hayathology*, we must examine the immanent criticism of the theory which only uses purely philosophical arguments. Recent Platonic exegeses elaborate on the so-called Third Man Argument which appeared originally in Alexander's commentary of metaphysics. This argument runs as follows; if the Form of man and particular men belong to the same logical type, the relation between them forces us to posit another kind of Form, the Third Man, and this leads to an infinite regress. If we reformulate the argument in terms of modern logistics, we find the above *aporia* in the self-predication of the Form.

It is very interesting that Whitehead met a very similar type of paradox, when he collaborated with Russell on the type theory of *Principia Mathematica*. The reason why such a queer result occurs is due to an instance of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, i.e. mistake of the abstract for the concrete reality. Whitehead points out the origin of the fallacy as follows;

> --- Greek philosophers, and in particular Plato, seem to have held this doctrine in respect to qualitative abstractions. In so far as we abstract from our experience the brute particularity of happening here and now amid this environment, there remains a residue with self-identities, differences, and essential interconnections, which seems to have no essential reference to the passage of events. According to this doctrine, as the result of this discard of the factor of transition, we rivet our attention on the eternal realm of Forms. In this imagined realm there is no passage, no loss, no gain. It is complete in itself. It is self-sustaining. It is, therefore, the realm of the "completely real " --- (MT 68)

The criticism of the theory of Forms is indeed a starting point of metaphysics, which is to provide the most universal principles for this world of sense as well as for invisible realities. Being aware of the fact that Plato's theory of Forms rests on the mere abstractions from the reality, Aristotle , elaborates on his own revision of the theory; the immanent principle of what things are. The Forms occupies one of the four causes of Aristotelian metaphysics. As Platonic Forms cannot explain the movement of the sensible world, Aristotle introduces the concept of matter as the substratum of changing qualities. All sensible things are complexes in which Form embedded in more or fewer layers of matter. The world presents itself to Aristotle as a hierarchy, the highest member of which is the immaterial form, the unmoved mover, and the lowest of which is the prime matter, the negative principle of movement. The conception of God as the

Form of forms, which is at the same time the first cause, was adopted by the medieval scholastic philosophy in spite of the fact that it is too static for Christians to accept. Aristotle ascribes to God presented in the twelfth book of his metaphysics, only that kind of mental activity which owes nothing to the body, because physical activity is excluded by the immaterial nature of God. Though St. Thomas and other schoolmen tended to interpret Aristotle in a theistic sense, the relation between God and the world as conceived by them is one-sided and lacks the dynamism of biblical revelations. It is not too much to say that Christian philosophy is destined to suffer from the idea of "θεὸς ἀπαθής(God without suffering) if it remains to be under the influence of Aristotelian metaphysics. The idea is the very opposite of the biblical picture of God, who can feel the pains of men, represented by Jeremiah as one who says, "My bowels are troubled for him."

One of the most remarkable features of Hebrew thought is that it totally lacks the concept of matter (cf. C. Tresmontant) . While Platonists look on any move from the one to the many as a degradation and a fall, the Hebrew considers the same as a creative advance, which cannot be 'explained away by the negative principle of matter.

To Platonic type of philosophy the One, separated from Itself, is undone in multiplicity by the negative principle, "matter" or "χώρα". The fact of movement must be explained away by it, because only the particular things can move. The implicit metaphysics of the Bible, by avoiding this negative principle, is able to look upon the genesis of things as a positive act, in itself desirable because it is excellent. Individuation is no longer to be disposed of through the intervention of matter. The explanation lies in the creative act itself, which wills the existence of this, or that being. The reason why the problem of individuation has been one of the most controversial problems must be sought in the great gap between two different conceptions of the individual: one is merely the necessary postulate of the theory of movement, the other the very object of God's concern.

Aristotle, though taking the individual substance as the basis of ontological discourse, retains the primacy of Forms. He identifies the concept of Form and matter with that of actuality and potentiality. The Form causes us to catch an individual as what it is, because the actual precedes the potential. The primacy of the concept of substance as well as that of Forms are the leading features of his metaphysics. The inquiry after what constitutes the substance of the world is the theme of metaphysics in Aristotelian philosophy. The concept of substance, however, is no less problematic than that that of Forms. The definition of it immediately creates an *aporia*; how is it possible for different substances to interact each other? The absolute character of substance leads to the

monistic system such as Spinoza's, in which there is only one substance, the World identified with God. Pantheism is an inescapable result if we consistently follow the logic of substance. If we are to avoid it, we must assign a different meaning to the word "substance" when we apply it to God. This is a kind of equivocation, which makes God an exception of the philosophical principle. It only reveals the weakness of the system unless the equivocal concepts are analysed clearly.

Section III

It is customary that Whitehead is called a Platonist. The philosophy of organism, as he himself calls his own system, is thought to be a modern revival of Platonism "with the least changes necessary by the intervening two thousand years of human experiences". (PR 39) The title, however, is a misleading one, for it involves the dualism which Whitehead earnestly tries to overcome in his writings. There is no dichotomy of appearance and reality, of the sensible and the intelligible in his system. As for the theory of Forms, he even mentions it as if he were another Aristotle, as a severe critic of the so-called participation theory. According to Whitehead the simplest theory about types of being is that some extreme type exists independently of the rest of things, and its naive attachment to the realm of Forms is entirely without justification. So he asks ironically, citing Parmenides' words, " How about the form of mud, and the forms of evil, and other forms of imperfection ?" (MT69) Of course this does not contradict the high estimate of Plato which he usually shows in a respectful manner.

The greatness of Plato does not consist in systematizing, but in the critical attitudes with which he has anticipated most of the criticism against his doctrines (cf. AI l04). Whitehead is not a disciple of Platonism, but a critical successor of Plato's philosophy.

It must be remembered that the late dialogues after the Republic were Whitehead's main concern (cf. DW177), as treasure of philosophical suggestions, while the Platonists mainly derives their inspirations from those in which the theory of Forms plays the principal parts.

When we compare Whitehead's revision of the Ideal Theory with that of Aristotle's, we find that both try to overcome the "χωρισμός (separation)" of the Forms from the sensible world by means of the modal concepts, i.e. actuality and potentiality.

Aristotle takes the immanent forms as actualities and matter as potentialities. Whitehead's conception of modality is exactly the opposite; he gives the status of pure possibility to his eternal objects (i.e. his version of Ideas) and that of actuality to the unified concept of Becoming and Being, i.e. Actual Entities.

Why does the realm of Forms become that of pure possibilities in the case of Whitehead? The answer must be sought in the different modes of logic behind ontology between Aristotle and Whitehead. We proceed to explicate that difference in the following.

Whitehead's logical thought is based upon the he ramified type theory in *Principia Mathemetica*. The self-predication which causes many *aporias* is prohibited by the vicious circle principle; whatever involves all of a collection must not be one of the collection. The forms become to have both objective and functional characters; objective to the higher type and functional to the lower type. (PM 37) To Aristotle the logical principle that the predicate of a predicate is predicable of the first subject, i.e. *nota notae est etiam nota rei ipsius* is the foundation of his theory of substance.

The substance is the ontological basis of other categories. To Whitehead the logical principle concerned does not hold at all. It is a type-mistake, and flatly denied. The category of substance disappears as the subject-predicate structure of dependence is a misplaced one. The concept of modality suffers from a radical change as well as that of substance. According to Russell, the collaborator of Whitehead, much false philosophy has arisen out of confusing propositional functions with propositions. In all traditional philosophy there comes a heading of modality which discusses necessary, possible, and impossible as properties of propositions, whereas in fact they are properties of propositional functions. The propositional function" is a technical term, which is not true or false in itself. The forms take a part of propositional function to the objects of the lower type. If anything is red, what makes us think of it as a red thing, the form, is not red. So the propositional function that x is red is neither true nor false. The particular object, on the other hand, can not be "necessarily red", or "possibly red", unless some functional characters are taken into consideration. The logical theory of types is a preamble of the theory of objects in the later stage of Whitehead's development. The forms make an abstract hierarchy (SMW 191), which is not a completed self-sufficient system.

> --- The forms are essentially referent beyond themselves mere fantasy to impute them any "absolute reality", which is devoid of implications beyond itself. The realm of forms is the realm of potentiality, and the very notion of potentiality has an external meaning. It refers to life and motion. It refers to inclusion and exclusion. It refers to hope, fear, and intuition. Phrasing this statement more generally, --- it refers to appetition. It refers to the development of actuality, which realizes and yet more than form. It refers to past, present, and future.(MT 69)----

While the realm of the forms loses substantial characters, the concept of matter completely fades away in Whitehead's system. His elimination of materialism is radical; first he criticizes the scientific concept of matter which causes us to bifurcate nature; second, he disposes of the metaphysical concept of matter in his categorial schemes. The bifurcation of nature has a historical reason for its introduction into science, the explanation of which is the theme of his "Concept of Nature". It is the unquestioned tendency to postulate a substratum for whatever is disclosed in sense awareness, namely, to look below what we are aware of for the substance in the sense of concrete thing. This is the origin of scientific concept of matter, and it leads scientists to accept the causal theory of perception according to which scientific objects such as molecules, atoms, an magnetic waves are the realities which causes our body to receive sense perceptions.

Whitehead protests against the bifurcation of nature because it posits two kind of nature, which, in so far as they are real, are real in different senses. One is the causal nature, which is the study of speculative physics. This would be the reality which is there for knowledge, though on this theory it is never known. For what is known is the other sort of reality, the apparent nature, which is only the by-play of mind. Thus there would be two natures, one is the mere conjecture, the other is the dream.

Though the denial of matter can be maintained within the purely phenomenalistic domain, Whitehead proceeds to undertake a difficult task of speculative philosophy; he provides an alternative scheme of concepts other than that of matter in order to explain the experience of movement and creation. What takes the place of the metaphysical concept of matter is one of the ultimate categories in Whitehead's system, i.e. creativity.

> ----"Creativity " is another rendering of the Aristotelian matter and of the modern neutral stuff. But it is divested of the notion of passive receptivity, either of form or of external relations; it is the pure notion of the activity conditioned by the objective immortality of the actual world, a world which is never the same twice, though always with the stable element of divine ordering. (PR 31)----

Whitehead cites the vision of Ezekiel in order to explain the miraculous power of creativity; "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding army."(PR 85)(Ezek.37-10)

The breath of feeling which creates a new individual fact has an origination not wholly traceable to the mere data. They clothe the dry bones with the flesh of a real being, emotional, purposive, appreciative.

Both for Plato and for Aristotle there is more in the immutable than in the moving, and one goes from the stable to the unstable by a simple diminution. Whitehead, on the

other hand, has attached greater importance to the contrary movement, that of biogenesis, of creative evolution.

He has transformed the Greek concept of time into the diametrical one; the separation of time from space is condemned as a fallacy of misplaced concreteness: for it makes us to lose sight of the true nature of events.

In fact time and space are intimately connected in the four dimensional manifolds as Whitehead's physical works teach us. The concrete basis of time and space is provided by events with interrelations of each other. The mathematical concepts of space-time are abstracted from this basis. An instant of time as well as a geometrical point of space is a product of extensive abstraction.

Section IV

We have seen that the concept of creativity is one of the ultimate categories in Whitehead's philosophy. It has a transcendental character to the other categories; it precedes both actual entities and eternal objects. We have also observed that biblical metaphysics by avoiding the negative principle of Platonism lacks the concept of matter as the principle of movement or individuation; to the Hebrew the multitude of beings is the result of an eminently positive act, a creation.

Though Whitehead repudiates the official formulation of authoritarian theology as "the deep idolatry" which fashions God in the image of the despotic prince of this world (PR.342), he basically agrees to the biblical ideas involved by the doctrine of trinity. He estimates the contribution of Alexandria and Antioch theologians as the only thinkers who in a fundamental metaphysical doctrine have improved upon Plato, because they had to grapple with the problem of mutual immanence between God and the world. (AI 168)

What metaphysics requires is a solution exhibiting the plurality of individuals as consistent with the unity of the Universe, and a solution which exhibits the World as requiring its union with God, and God as requiring his union with the world. The trinitarian doctrine points out the way in which Platonic metaphysics should develop, if it is to give a rational account of the role of the persuasive agency of God.(AI 169) Against the Platonic doctrine of subordinate derivations, the final insistence on the immanence of God was a fine effort of the early Christian ages. According to Whitehead their general concept of the Deity stopped all further generalization; they made no effort to conceive the world in terms of the metaphysical categories by means of which they interpret God, and they made no effort to conceive God in terms of the metaphysical categories which they applied to the world .

What Whitehead mentions is the doctrine of mutual immanence among three persons of the trinity. He applies it to every actual entity as the principle of relativity.

> ---The principle of universal relativity directly traverses Aristotle's dictum, "A substance is not present in a subject." On the contrary , according to this principle an actual entity is present in other actual entities. In fact, if we allow for degrees of relevance, we must say that every actual entity is present in every other actual entity. The philosophy of organism is mainly devoted to the task of making clear the notion of "being present in other entity." (PR 50)---

The originality of Whitehead consists in applying of this principle to the theological problem on the relation between God and the world. God needs the world, i.e. a multiplicity of actual occasions because the completion of God's nature into a fullness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God.

In the similar way the world needs God because He is the principle of concretion from which each temporal concrescence receives that initial aim from which its self-causation starts. (PR 245) God and the actual world jointly constitute the character of the creativity for the initial phase of the novel concrescence. Whitehead deals with the key concepts of theology as if they were always involving ambiguity.

In the last part of Process and Reality he proposes a group of antitheses as the final summary of his speculation. They seems self-contradictory if we lose sight of a sift of meaning which converts the opposition into a contrast.

While the traditional theology insists on the one-sided transcendence of God over the world, he contrasts with it the transcendence of the world over God. Similarly God's immanence in the world is contrasted with the immanence of the world in God, God's permanency with the permanency of the world, and so on.

The point of Whitehead's, summary can be found in the doctrine of subject-superject. Every actual entity including God has this character: it transcends other entities as subject, and it is immanent in other entities as *superject*. As subject every actual entity is in a process, while as a *superject* it enjoys objective immortality. The concept of objective immortality is not only a religious one, but also a metaphysical description of the highest generality. Actuality in perishing acquires objectivity, while it loses subjective immediacy. (PR 29) The "perpetual perishing" of individual absoluteness is foredoomed because the concrete finality of the individual is nothing else than a decision referent beyond itself. The very perishing of absoluteness is the attainment of "objective immortality". (PR 60) The creature perishes and immortal. (PR 82) The religious dimension of mortality follows from the general description. Each actuality in the temporal world has its reception into God's nature. The correspondent element in

God's nature is not temporal act but is the transformation of that temporal actuality into a living, ever-present fact. An enduring personality in the temporal world is a route of occasions in which the successor some peculiar completeness sum up their predecessors. The fact in God's nature inherits from the temporal counterpart according to the same principle as in the temporal world the future inherits from the past. Thus in the sense in which present occasion is the person now, and yet with his own past, so the counterpart in God is that person in God. (PR350)

Thus we arrive at the conclusion of *Process and Reality*, which presents the image of God, the great companion, and justifies the insistent craving for immortality on the basis of "the present, unfading importance of our immediate actions, which perish and yet live for evermore".

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