

## Toward An Integrative Pluralism of Religions: Embodying Yijing, Whitehead, and Cobb

Chung-ying Cheng  
(U.S.A, University of Hawaii)

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《 Abstract 》

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이 글에서 나는 세 단계의 다른 종교이해 방식을 구분하여 세 가지 형태의 종교다원주의를 정의하고 그 특징을 설명하고 있다. 그 첫째는 차별적 다원주의인데, 현존하는 혹은 앞으로 그 모습을 드러낼 종교들 사이의 차별성을 그대로 인정하는 형태이다. 둘째는 상보적 다원주의로써 현존하는 또는 앞으로 출현할 종교들은 각각의 종교적 실천과 그 믿음이 그 내용상 상호보충적인 성격을 지니고 있다고 보는 것이다. 셋째는 통합적 다원주의이다. 이 관점은 모든 종교를 인류와 인간의 세계이해의 전체론적 발전 과정의 필수적 부분들로 보는 것이다. 이 가운데 통합적 형태의 다원주의가 가장 중요하다. 왜냐하면 이 관점은 각각의 다른 종교들에게 그것 고유의 이질적 역사적 관점에 의한 하나의 토대를 제공하기 때문이다. 이 관점은 또한 각기 다른 종교들의 차이점들을 창조적 전체와 연관시켜보는 개방적이고 창조적인 통찰력을 제공함으로써 그 종교들이 인간의 삶과 실천에 가장 중요한 비전과 관련하여 각각이 궁극적으로 적절한 위상을 성취할 수 있도록 하며, 상호간에 배우고 더욱 발전할 수 있는 존재로 서로 이해되고 격려하도록 하는 기능을 수행한다. 이와 같은 종교적 통찰력의 면에서 나는 상호보충적인 다원주의 이론을 발전시킨 존 콕과 데이비드 그리핀의 업적에 심심한 고마움을 전한다. 그러나 동시에 각 종교의 독특성을 유지하면서도 상대주의는 피하기 위해서는 어떻게 이 상호보충적인 다원주의가 화이트헤드의 창조성 철학의 관점에 의해 부분의 개성을 유지하면서도 전체를 감싸 아우르는 통합적 다원주의로 반드시 한 걸음 더 나아가야 하는지를 강조 설명하고 있다.

이 글의 후반부에서는, 나는 또한 통합적 다원주의 관점의 종교적 진리와 믿음의 고양이 중요함을 이해하기 위하여 서로 연관된 네 가지 주제를 논한다: (1) 지역적으로 상대적인 인류의 필요에 동시에 응하고자 하는 동서의 세계종교의 목표에 부응하기 위해서는 화이트헤드적 사유의 틀과 역경의 철학이 보여주는 사유의 틀이 어떻게 통합되어야 하는가 (2) 어떻게 상대주의의 내적 논리에 의해 제기된 논쟁점들이 세계종교 안에서 동시에 극복되고 고려되어 종교가 계속 발전하는데 도움을 줄 수 있는지 (3) 어떻게 인류가 창조성의 또는 창조자로서의 신의실존-우주론적 견해의 풍부함으로 인도 되는 신적 개별화의 근본 은유적 존재로 역할을 해왔는지 (4) 유가와 도가

의 통합적 조화의 역사적 모범에 기초해 볼 때, 기독교와 불교 이 두 세계종교의 통합적 조화가 가능한지, 그리고 왜 이 두 종교가 세계의 종교들이 서로 다른 종교적 믿음과 행위의 통합적 조화의 상태로 나아가는 미래의 변화를 이루는데 유효한 종교가 되는지.

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※key words: Pluralism, differential pluralism, complementary pluralism, integrative pluralism, Whitehead, John Cobb, David Griffin.  
다원주의, 전체론적, 개별화, 통합, 존 콕, 데이비드 그리핀, 화이트헤드

## I . Pre-Conditions of Integrative Pluralism

A religion once it is recognized as a religion has three components: it has a history and hence is founded in some past events of particular concretion; it has a goal directed toward its future realization, whether it delivers the individual or a nation from a human condition or finite fatality or promises a state of grand benediction or eternal bliss for a community of people it is also active in terms of theoretical justification, doctrinaire conversion and institutional organization at the present. All three aspects combine to reflect how the human person and human society are constituted and serve a human purpose of transforming (in life) or transcending (in death) humanity in humanity. Whether this explanation of religion fulfils many other requirements of religion as defined by historians, sociologists or philosophers and theologians of religion, however, is another question. But it has at least brought out the minimally shared characters of present world religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam. Based on this working perception of what religion is, one can immediately identify a core of subjectivity in any religion, which is the self-identity of what it says it is destined to achieve. One can further identify how a religion perceives its origination and which ways it offers, or persuade people to follow, in order to achieve the goal that it promises or professes to promise.

It is clear that despite the fact that a world religion has a particularity of historical beginning and development, its futurity is not bounded by its

historicity: instead it has embodied a universal claim, which is to be applied to all people in order to vindicate its message of final deliverance and spiritual conversion. In this sense it is intent on transcending time and space in establishing a power of being or presence at any present. Hence the root age in spreading a doctrine and establishing an institution by a world religion already becomes inevitable. This is to be seen again in Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam.

Although each world religion may have made its universalistic claim, as a historical fact or in light of a theoretical reflection, it will have to find its doctrine being contradicted or rejected by other religions of different historicities. In this regard, conflicts of religions must take place insofar as each lays an exclusive claim on truth. This situation of religious conflict is in one respect like the case of conflict of philosophies that would lead to arguments and debates and disputes. In another it could be different, because it is linked to a populace in a way in which philosophy does not, and could claim a power over society and share an interest in politics. Hence religious conflict could lead to wars because it could involve claims to power of influence and possessions of resources and people.<sup>1)</sup>

Thus in speaking of religions we have to recognize not only their rootedness in history but their vital realistic interests in the present. This would make religious understanding and religious harmony especially important. If all major religions find that they could peacefully co-exist, have mutual respect for each other, and honor the other's right to preach its own vision of truth, then there is no worry about a clash of arms among them, and consequently they could learn to co-develop and could even learn to assist each other toward better development.

When such circumstances arise, we must say that each religion must see

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1) Without this side, religious conflict could be reduced to philosophical conflict. One notices that seldom there is war caused by mere philosophical difference; perhaps when religions are reduced to philosophies there would be no religious conflict because there would be no religion as such. This of course raises the question of the difference between religion and philosophy.

the other religions as equally valid and equally credible, and thus each could consider the others as equal members of a free association or a great council of religious faiths, which in turn would recognize the others as equal partners and would make efforts to provide services to facilitate the sustainable development of each religion in their own ways without conflict or clash. This of course does not mean that world religions would not compete with each other. They could still compete as they actually do in terms of their persuasive powers and the appeal of their programs of deliverance. They may also cooperate with other to achieve a large role in serving humanity when there are calamities.

What I depicted in the above is a scene of what I come to envision as a comprehensive harmony of world religions founded on the principles of Integrative Religious Pluralism or an Integrative Plurality of Religions, which would recognize the following propositions as universally valid:

1. Each religion has its own particular and uncommon (peculiar) history and is rooted in a time or location of limited scope.
2. Each can have its own view of the origins of the world and the origins and conditions of humanity (particularly in reference to meaning and value of life and death), which could be formulated in universalistic terms.
3. Each could have its own universalistic teaching of salvation and self-discipline and self-transformation of people and the world.
4. Each has its vision of transcendence whether in the form of a personal God or Buddha or in the spirit of an impersonal Nirvana or Dao.
5. Each has its own community of preachers, teachers, believers or followers
6. Each agrees to recognize and respect the same rights of others to persuade, to preach, to offer religious beliefs to the world.
7. Each agrees to disagree with others on religious beliefs and resolve to use reasonable and peaceful means to resolve conflict of interests or influences.
8. Each refrains from attacking, abusing, defaming or distorting the others orally or in writing even though philosophical argument and ethical

critique are allowed.

9. Each has at least a minimal good will or good wish to understand each other for eliminating bias and / or learning knowledge and wisdom
10. Each cultivates, cherishes and makes efforts to maintain inter-religious harmony and the common good once achieved as a result of such harmony.

Given such a scenario, which we may call "Harmonize Without Being the Same," in words of Confucius, or still better "Let Being Different Lead to Harmonization," as I would say, we wish to ask whether their teachings of the religions may be justified in terms of a comprehensive theory of religious truth that is directed to understanding of humanity, the human condition, human deliverance, and reality in general. In other words, once we have religious pluralism, we need to ask philosophical questions about their truth-value as well as their value of truth. This is how the philosophy of religions becomes most relevant for today, because we do have a de facto scene of religious diversity. This I also take to be why and how Whitehead set himself to achieve in facing the diversity of two world religions, Christianity and Buddhism: How to mediate them, how to relate them or how to transcend them in light of an emerging understanding on what the world is and what human beings are. Whitehead has provided his own framework of accommodating all religions against a background understanding and anew interpretation of being and human being. But I like to interpret his purpose in terms of three levels of understanding pluralism in the following terms:

1. See the theoretical and practical differences of existing religions such as Christianity and Buddhism
2. See the theoretical and /or practical complementarity of different existing religions in light of an underlying philosophy of being and becoming
3. See all religions (including both present and future religions ) as off-springs of a comprehensive philosophy of being and becoming and the related understanding of humanity and the world.

Given these three levels of understanding, we may say that there are three forms of religious pluralism: The first kind is *differential pluralism*, which

is set on recognizing the difference between all existing religions or even future religions the second kind is *complementary pluralism*, which is set on seeing all existing religions or future religions as complementary forms of religious practice or believing and the third kind is *integrative pluralism*, which is intent on showing that all religions are to be regarded as integral parts of a holistic developmental process of humanity and its understanding of the world. This integrative form of pluralism is important because it would provide a philosophical basis for differential religions in terms of their histories while also providing an open and creative vision for relating their differences to a creative whole so that they can be seen and encouraged to develop further and learn from each other to achieve their ultimately proper places in light of an overarching vision of human understanding and human practice. In this light, I wholeheartedly appreciate John Cobb's and David Griffin's work in developing the *complementary pluralism*, but I also wish to stress how this complementary pluralism must, in light of the Whiteheadian philosophy of creativity, go one step further toward *integrative pluralism* in light of the Whiteheadian philosophy of creativity, to avoid relativism while preserving uniqueness, to embrace the whole while achieving the part, to realize the global while enjoying the local.

In the remainder of this essay, I discuss four interrelated topics for understanding the importance of developing an integrative pluralistic view of religious truth and beliefs: (1) how the Whiteheadian framework should integrate with the framework of the philosophy of Yijing in order to meet challenges of a Global Religion of the East and West which would also simultaneously cater to local and relative needs of humanity; (2) how the inherently open issues of relativism could be both overcome and allowed in a world religion, so that they may help the religion continue developing; (3) how humanity has acted as a root metaphor for divine personalization which leads to the enrichment of the onto-cosmological view of creativity and God as creator, and which can be seen at the same time as deeply rooted in a background Yijing-Whitehead philosophy of creativity and creative change (4) whether the integrative harmonization of Christianity and Buddhism as two world religions based on the historical model of the integrative harmonization of Confucianism and Daoism is possible and whether Confucianism and

Daoism should be regarded as religions and why they are important and instrumental for achieving a future transformation of the world religions into a state of integrative harmonization of different religious beliefs and practices.

## II. Integration of Creativity: Whitehead and Yijing

How do we understand Whitehead's notion of "creativity"? The primary understanding is that creativity is the ultimate which makes any and all things possible or in virtue of which actuality realizes itself and expands into a world of things. Without the production of things there is no creativity. If creativity is an ultimate category for describing the world, it has to describe the continuous formation and transformation of things in the world, which no doubt includes production of new things, such as new plants and new human babies. Hence creativity must pertain to the ceaseless productivity of things and it should hold without cessation in any place and at any time. As to how production of new things takes place, is it a matter of coalescing many into one? Or a matter of differentiating one into many? Observations show that both are common ways for producing new things, which we may refer to as fusion and fission respectively. Oftentimes a production of a new thing involves both fission and fusion for example, the formation of an embryo is a fusion of egg and sperm but it immediately involves a fission of cells to grow into what it is. Or take the formation of a storm: it is a separation of water particles from the ocean and then gathering momentum and speed by accumulating more of the same under tropical heat. In this sense, creativity can have many modes of being and becoming: a simple mode of fission or differentiation, a simple mode of fusion or integration, or a complex of fusion / fission or fission /fusion. It is interesting to note that for Whitehead creativity is the principle of novelty, which consists in advancing an unifying entity from a diversity of many entities.

“Creativity is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is the ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity.”<sup>2)</sup>

“Creativity is the principle of novelty. An actual occasion is a novel

entity diverse from any entity in the many which unifies. Thus creativity introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The creative advance is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates.”<sup>3)</sup>

However, there is no reason why a novel thing may not be an entity resulting from differentiation of an existing entity in the first place. Infact, to mark out this as a mode of creativity is extremely important because we have to see how creativity as the ultimate of all things and the universal of the universals must guarantee the origination of the originating agency of all things, which is God. The very coming into existence and actuality of God is the first and the foremost and the most powerful act of creation from the principle of creativity, for without God there is no further creativity and without God creativity would not become a principle which can be recognized by the human mind. Here the use of the term “God” is both conventional and unconventional: it is conventional because “God” is designated as the “creator” or the source of creativity for all things moving in the world, including the world. It is also unconventional because we do not have to identify “God” by any historical account of any world religion or any other theological view. We can instead identify “God” entirely by its creativity and creativeness which consists in the creation of things by modes of fission or fusion. We could equally well use the word “*dao*” or “*tian*” or even better still “qianyuan” (the powerful originator) in the Yijing (the Book of Change) which expresses the idea of “power of being” or “power of origination.”<sup>4)</sup>

2) See Alfred North Whitehead, *PROCESS AND REALITY*, corrected edition edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, New York, The Free Press, 1978. p.21.

3) Ibid., p.21.

4) This is not to say that people may not dress up or project and configure the notion of the creative originator as a perfect mind or a divine person of infinite knowledge, supreme good, absolute power and universal presence which is found in the notion of God as the Savior. I believe that in speaking of God, Whitehead himself is both conventional and unconventional in this sense. It can be also shown that when we take God as the source of subjective aims, God still plays the role of an initiator or a creator. Even for matters of evil, we may also conceive that God has intended good in the sense of providing initial conditions which are good in a human sense and which may lead to evil in a human sense under certain circumstances, which in turn may be corrected or overcome by way of



In this sense God is the embodiment of creativity and the initial and real/actual fulfillment of creativity as a principle. Whitehead has given the following description on how God is related to creativity:

“The true metaphysical position is that God is the aboriginal instance of this creativity, and is therefore the aboriginal condition which qualifies its action. It is the function of actuality to characterize the creativity, and God is the eternal primordial character. But, of course, there is no meaning to creativity apart from its creatures, and no meaning to the temporal creatures apart from creativity and God.”<sup>5)</sup>

With God so conceived, it is clear that God is a oneness arising from itself as an infinite creativity to itself as a source of the power of determination, motivation, inspiration and efficient causation against a background which is both itself and not-itself. In its arising as a *sui generis* power of being and becoming, the mode of creativity may be conceived as a fission or separation from itself which may also be described as being for itself in being not for itself. In so conceiving it, we may think that God is both a creative power from nothing and a creator creating the world from nothing. We may even think of God as both being and nonbeing because it transforms being into nonbeing and transforms nonbeing into being. In this sense, Whitehead's concept of God in combination with his concept of creativity needs not be seen as conflicting with the traditional view of God as the creator who performs *creatio ex nihilo*. In fact it is due to the coming into existence of the creative power such as God there comes the distinction and differentiation between being and non-being. Hence God marks both the difference and identity of being and nonbeing as well as the dynamical process of creativity between the two.

In this light we can see how the Whiteheadian view of creativity and God approaches and actually could merge with the view of the onto-cosmology of the Great Appendix (Xici) of the *Yijing* and the *Taiji Tushuo* (Discourse on the Diagram of the *Taiji*) of the great Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhou Dunyi

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the creativity in us as originally derived from God the ultimate creator.

5) *Ibid.*, p.225.

(1017–1073) in the Song Period. Without going into great details, it suffices to cite two fundamental insights from the Yizhuan (of which Xici is a part) which would lend a base for claiming the complementary plurality of things in the world and their underlying universal oneness.

In the Section 5 of the Xici, it is said that “One yin and one yang is called the Dao”. This statement is based on comprehensive observation (*guan*) of both the outer universe and reflection on the human condition, which may be regarded as a most comprehensive induction of human experiences as well as the rational intuition on what any process of change would have exhibited.<sup>6)</sup> The key notion here is the Dao and the key assumption is that the world is seen as a process of change (*yǐ*). The change in the world is observed to move from one state to another state, which is different from the earlier state and the two states must be different and yet connected in terms of time. What becomes visible and explicit is the *yang* and what remains invisible and implicit is the yin. In so far as change is concerned, one must see the transformation of the explicit into the implicit and vice versa. No doubt there are degrees of such change in terms of the degrees of explicitness and implicitness, which can be related to degrees of brightness and darkness, degrees of firmness and softness, and degrees of motion and rest. To see changes in these dimensions and their relatedness requires common experience and perception, which, however need not be simply located or atomically identified. Therefore the experience of observation (*guan*) need not be simply sensationalistic, but could be apperceptual and holistically intuitive and reflective.

With this experiential basis, one can see how the Dao as the whole and universal process of change must be an alternation of *yīn* and *yáng* in the sense suggested. Apart from seeing the temporal alternation of *yīn* and *yáng* as the paradigm for describing the experience of the Dao, it is also to be understood that yin and yang constitute two ultimate categories of reality in so far as their alternation is to be seen in a spatial sense, namely, there

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6) See my article “Philosophical Significances of Guan(Contemplative Observation): On Guan as Onto-Hermeneutical Unity of Methodology and Ontology”, *Guoji Yixue Yanjiu* (International Journal in Yi Studies), Beijing, Huaxia Shudian, p.156–203.

exists in the world diversity of things, many of which are found to be related side by side in an *yin-yang* relationship. The relationship of the cosmic heaven and earth is such an example. Other examples include female-male relationship and ruler-people relationship or many social relationships (or the Whiteheadian nexuses) that form wholes of polarities. This suggests that the *yin-yang* conception can be used as a metaphor to understand all different kinds of relationships relative to different contexts or conditions which share the basic pattern of a dynamic contrast. What follows from this is also the perception that the *yin-yang* relationship forms a dynamic field of forces which can be seen as related in simultaneous opposition and support, interdependence, mutual stimulation and reciprocal enrichment. It is in light of these experiences that we can see the *yin-yang* relationship not only as phenomenologically open but also ontologically allusive: they form open clusters of percepts and concepts which can apply to things and events on different levels in different contexts. As ontological concepts they define not only what a dynamical wholeness is but what complementarity in a whole process is.

The relationship of *yin-yang* constitutes a whole field and a whole world or a whole reality that can be seen as complying with our primary experiences of change in terms of the *yin-yang* dynamics. In other words, the *yin-yang* relationship defines a wholeness and a unity or oneness in which the *yin-yang* dynamics can be said to be meaningfully observed. There is also another sense of the *yin-yang* relationship in light of our experience, the *yin* and *yang* being those basic elements or forces which when linked in an appropriate way would lead to the emergence or creation of novelty or new entities. This defines the *yin-yang* relationship as a creative process and gives a meaning to the assertion that creativity of the *yin-yang* consists in production and transformation of all things in the world. It also gives a meaning to the notion of complementarity: *yin* and *yang* are complementary in so far that they find each being conducive to the change of the other and together are conducive to the production of novelty due to their interaction and merging. This sense of creative complementarity is different from the whole-producing or holistic complementarity in that the latter leads to a hypothesis on how diversity and novelty, which is exemplified in most of the

life phenomena, could come into existence, whereas the former can be found in many structurally organized phenomena of physical nature, such as the famous wave-particular dynamics of light.

In light of these two senses of complementarity, we find Yizhuan saying of the holistic complementaries that “The *yi* (change) has the *Taiji* (the Great Ultimate), and *Taiji* produces the two norms (*yin* and *yang*), two norms produce the four forms (*old yang*/*young yang*/*young yin*/*old yin*), the four forms give rise to eight trigrams.” (Shang 11) The so-called eight trigrams (*bagua*) are also forms standing for large clusters of natural phenomena just as the four forms stand for still larger natural phenomena whereas the two norms of *yin- yang* would underlie these two levels of phenomena as basic structure of dynamic change, which would lead or create these differentiation of forms. <sup>7)</sup>Consequently we may note the following:

1. The process of differentiation and integration are both observable processes but they could be projected as metaphysical principles of the formation and transformation of reality; thus the difference of *yin* and *yang* works both ways: it leads to the positing of the unity of *Taiji* to which both *yin* and *yang* belong and it also leads to the positing of the diversity to result from the interactive dynamics of the *yin- yang*. Hence we find that the *yin- yang* principle leads to an ontology of the power of being in oneness, which is *Taiji*, and a cosmology of many things generated from processes of the *yin- yang* on different levels and throughout different periods of time. Since both the ontology of being and the cosmology of things are pivoted in the creative integrating/ differentiating process under the agency of the *yin- yang*, we have an onto-cosmology of *Taijie- yin / yang* -diversity of forms. The whole world is seen as a procession and process of creativity working in both the direction of integration into oneness and differentiation into diversity. It is to be noted that the positing of the *Taiji* (the great ultimate ) could be related to the observation in the Duan Commentary, which posits the great creative force called the Creative (*qian*) and the great receptive force called

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7) All the quotations from the Yizhuan are from the standard Yijing Text under Zhu Xi's commentary.

the Receptive (*kun*), which work together to produce the world. Taiji as the great unity and source of the *qian* and *kun* serves as both the efficient and material cause of all things, which in the process of its production of things also endows things with different forms and subjective aims (teloses). Hence the Qing Critical Confucian Dai Dongyuan (1724–1777) says: “To be creatively creative is the source of transformation; to be creatively creative and yet at the same time provides patterning and ordering is the flow of the transformation.”<sup>8)</sup>

2. With both integration and differentiation we have a creativity that is creative in both ways. This is referred to in the *Yizhuan* as the process of creative change or change by creative creativity (*shengsheng*). It is said that “[t]he creativity of creativity is to be identified as the *yi*” (shang 5). From this it can be seen that the principle of creative unity or wholeness leads to the principle of oneness in Whitehead whereas the principle of creative diversity leads to the principle of manyness in Whitehead. Both “one” and “many” are principles of creativity and they are exhibited in the process of the integration of the many into one and the differentiation of the one into the many. God is the ultimate one and there are no ultimate many as creativity is an open process that has its sources in the ultimate one which is Taiji and God. Here I identify Taiji with God in the sense I have explained. Perhaps from a philosophical point of view it is better to see God as Taiji rather than Taiji as God. But on the other hand, there is no reason why Taiji when endowed with personal traits other than pure creativity may not be called God. This renaming in fact involves a process of onto-hermeneutical interpretation, namely one has to interpret something abstract and philosophical from a historical, social, or religious point of view, which is often rooted in experiences of a particular concretion. But it is equally important to hold that one must become aware of the possible reference in light of an understanding of reality. In this sense *Yijing* and Whitehead together provide a framework of reference, re-identification and

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8) See his essay “Yuan Shan” (Inquiries into Goodness), translated by Chung-ying Cheng, Honolulu, East-West Center Press, 1970, and “Mengzi Ziyi Suzheng” (Commentaries on Words in Mencius), in *The Complete Works of Dai Dongyuan*, Beijing, Qinghua University Press, 1911. Part 1.

onto-hermeneutical re-interpretation in light of our new experiences and new insights learned from other traditions.

3. There are other important messages conveyed in the onto-cosmology of creative change of the Yijing which would give a clear sense of complementarity: Complementarity implies wholeness to which complementary parts belong as parts related in an organic way. It also implies creativity that gives rise to novelty and new development in an open future. In so far as Whitehead is concerned, his idea of seeing Christianity and Buddhism as complementary would imply both even though he did not clarify the contents of either in detail. But in calling his 1926 book *RELIGION IN THE MAKING*, we could see many meanings implicated: a new religion from interaction of old religions would arise a new view on ontology and cosmology could inspire such a new religion or provide a mediation for such a new religion. His 1929 book *PROCESS AND REALITY* was clearly intended to provide this function of interrelating and mediating.

4. In light of what is said above, it is clear that the Yijing philosophy of creative change would lead the complementary plurality of truths or things into an integrative plurality of truths and things. One need not go too far to find support of this view in Whitehead's *Process and Reality*.

5. For completing the work of onto-cosmology of the Yijing we must introduce the work of Zhou Dunyi, in whom we see a merging of ideas from Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, which is manifested in the extension of the notion of Taiji to *wuji* (the ultimateless). It is said in Zhou's TJTS that "*Wuji er taiji*" (The ultimateless and then the great ultimate. What is "*wuji*" (the ultimateless)? What does this sentence mean? In the first place, "*wuji*" is a negation of the existence of any limit or any property or any force, which can qualify as any character or any characterization of being. As things are to be characterized and qualified in one way or another, "*wuji*" therefore stands for voidness (*wu*) of characters or nothing-ness in the Daoist sense. We may simply say that *wuji* is equivalent to *wu* (void/ emptiness) although Zhu Xi in the 12th century tried to make *wuji* a qualification for

taiji, namely indicating the infinity of the Great Ultimate. But Zhu Xi was obviously mistaken, because the sentence “*Wuji er taiji*” does not suggest any qualification of taiji by wuji. On the other hand, the syncategorematic word “*er*” indicates that wuji is actually being qualified by *taiji* (the great ultimate). This means to say that in the first place there is a non-being or non-existence of anything, and then there comes into being the Great Ultimate, which is the power for creating or generating the world of things.

6. As to how nothing becomes something is something to be considered a matter of creative creativity of the non-being in the Laozi’s writing Daodejing, where it is asserted that the *wu* (void) begets you (being). The you begins with the one, which should be the Taiji, which gives rise to *yin* and *yang*, which are the two norms, which then give rise to everything in the world. From this we can see that there are two kinds of creativity: creativity for the rise of the Taiji from the *wuji* and creativity for the rise of the cosmic world of things from the Taiji. It can also be said that without things in the world we would not come to see the two forms and without two forms we would not make the intuitive projection of the source of the complementary creativity of *yin* and *yang*, namely the Taiji. Without Taiji there could not exist a way of speaking of *wuji*, for if there is no quality to speak of, there is no way of referring to anything whether by language or by action, each of which is a qualifying character, as there would be no language or action. With Taiji we can refer to *wuji* as the negation of characters of things and thus *wuji* comes to be known only by way of the Taiji. Consequently, one can come to see that even *Taiji* and *wuji* can be associated in a complementary relationship of creative action namely, *wuji* gives rise to Taiji as a positive force of being which in contrast shows the creativity of the void which is *wuji*. In this sense one may see *wuji* as a symbol for primordial creativity, which is creative of creativity.

7. The question may be raised whether *wuji* may be related to the Buddhist notion of kong (emptiness or *sunyata*). There is no simple answer to this question, for we have to trace the complex history of how the Indian Mahayana concept of sunyata was first interpreted in terms of the Daoist

concept of *wu* (void) in the 4th century, how it gradually acquired its original meaning of nonattachment and non-substantiality, and finally how by the 7th century it becomes reconstituted and understood as naturally leading to the world of things and life as it is in the Chan writings on enlightenment (*wu*). In this sense the Buddhist *kong* has to be understood in a context that in fact does not depend on the Indian Buddhist negation and extinction of world and life (*nirvana*, the de-creative nothingness) and could become exchangeable with the Daoist Dao, which is the creative void. As a matter of fact, the Buddhist co-origination (*pratitya-samudpada*) theory of the formation of things in the world needs also to be explained as a principle of natural transformation of the Dao with its inherent ordering, not just as simply a matter of karmic recycling. In this analysis we can see that *wuji* in Zhou Dunyi actually acquired a meaning in a post-Buddhist age as involving a reformation of the Buddhist *kong* not as quietude or extinction but as creativity and as origin of the originating power.

8. It may be also mentioned that for the Yijing Onto-Cosmology the sense of time and the sense of temporal process are important, because creativity is creativity in time and real in time and thus is related to the sense of becoming and transformation. The Yijing Onto-Cosmology presents a creative unity of ontology and cosmology in time and change in which one and many, *yin* and *yang*, being and nonbeing become dynamically one, which requires an insight of mind into the creativity of time and unity in time, for at any time, one needs to see all differences and disparity as resolved in a harmony of complementary forces without necessarily losing their individualities. This quality of harmonization in time is also a feature of Whitehead, as we can see in the following quotation:

“The doctrine of the philosophy of organism is that, however far the sphere of efficient causation be pushed in the determination of components of a concrescence—its data, its emotions, its appreciations, its purposes, its phases of subjective aim—beyond the determination of these components there always remains the final reaction of the self-creative unity of the universe.”<sup>9)</sup>

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9) Ibid., p.47.



The "self-creative unity of the universe" is regulative of the creative advance of the world in which differences will be harmonized in the sense of a creative unity of the world, if we keep in mind the creativity of time, which is the creativity of the Taiji itself in sustaining the world of things and in both bringing new things into being and dissolving old things.

9. In contrast, we could speak of a timeless order of harmony whether pre-conceived or pre-established in the sense of the ontological identity of the state of kong (emptiness) and the state of dependent causation (*yidaqi*), which would also logically give rise to a state of interdependent events and things. This is the final perception or conception of the world-reality described as the state of "non-obstruction of all things" (*shishiwuai*) or the state in which "one is all and all is in one" (*yijiyiqie, yiqiejiyi*) as in Huayan Buddhism, a state of "perfectly accomplished reality" (*yuanchengshi*) as in Weishi Buddhism or "the perfect fusion of three truths" (*sandiyuanrong*) as in Tiantai Buddhism.

The point of making this remark is to show that Buddhism has a tendency to reduce time to timelessness so that harmony could be realized in an enlightened understanding of mind, whereas for the Yijing Onto-Cosmology what is realized in a timeless perception of the self-creative unity in the source has to be realized in a temporal process of ceaseless harmonization of the world, for the world has to be real and has to be realized through co-participation of the human mind and human action together with the creative force of the Taiji, with human co-participation a realization of the creative force on the human level. This point is important, as we shall see, because the pluralistic differences of the religions must be resolved in the creative evolution of the religions themselves in a process toward harmonious unity and integration. The self-imposed universalism in a religion is merely abstract and need to be given meaning in a concrete process of creative adaptation and dependent co-origination and co-definition, even though in another mode a sense of transcendent satisfaction can be derived from a sense of immediate self-sufficiency and universal consistency in one's own mind.

We may now sum up the above briefly described Onto-Cosmology of Yijing in light of Zhou Dunyi as composed of the following propositions cited directly from the Yizhuan:<sup>10)</sup>

“The change and transformation of the world has originated from the originating power titled the great ultimate (*taiji*).”

“The *taiji* has its emergence from *wuji* which becomes known only when the *taiji* is formed.”

“All changes are composed of two sides derived from the *taiji*, the *yin* and the *yang* which are found in contrast of opposite qualities and forces but which are also creatively complementary so that they form the sources for the formation and transformation of the world.”

“The processes of change are always creative, ceaseless and sustainable”

It is clear that the basic propositions of Whitehead's metaphysics are onto-hermeneutically interpretable or re-interpretable in the onto-cosmology of the creative change of the Yijing and could receive a clearer meaning with regard to the concepts of Cosmic Epoch, Creativity and God, Concrescence, Novelty, Creative Advance, Actual Occasions, Prehension, Complementarity, God and World, Primordial Nature and Consequential Nature of God, One and Many, Super-Actuality, Dipolarity, Being and Nothing. This means that all these Whiteheadian concepts, particularly those related to nonbeing or nothing or origins of creativity, could receive a creative re-statement in the Yijing and Daoist philosophy of onto-cosmology. On the other hand, it can be equally possible to show that the Yijing concepts of the *dao*, the *taiji*, *wuji*, *yin-yang* can also be given a Whiteheadian meaning and re-interpretation in terms of analytical details of the Whitehead's organismic philosophy of being and becoming. In light of this implicit reciprocal re-interpretation of each other a comprehensive framework for understanding the creativity of reality and human life could be presented and be applied as a philosophy of religion or as a mediation for different philosophies of religion, east and west.

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10) All these are quotations from the Xici part of the Yizhuan.

### III. Overcoming Relativism in Integrative Pluralism

I will now address the views of John Cobb in regard to his efforts to overcome relativism in his complementary pluralism of religions. Based on what has been described in the lucid papers on Cobb by David Griffin<sup>11)</sup>, it is obvious that Cobb has shown great insights in seeing the equal relevance and importance of both Godhead (from Christianity) and emptiness (from Buddhism) in describing the Ultimate Reality and hence affirms the universally claimed truth of both religions as equally valid. His point is that the Ultimate Reality that a world religion has made efforts to embody can enjoy many characteristics, which can be realized or revealed individually or severally to different world religions, perhaps due to their different conditions of historical origins. Although I do not know how Cobb explains the different approaches taken by different religions, we might suggest that different ecological, social, cultural and historical conditions induce different religious needs and provide different ways of satisfying those needs. If we want religion to provide a holistic solution of the problems of life, we also want to see religion explained holistically on the basis of life. It is the forms of life, that determine the religious experiences we have, just as religious experiences determine or conduce to a form of life. In this fashion, we find good reason to say that religion cannot be explained by a single science or social science or by any combination of them. We may have to include the self-fulfilling abilities and self-creative abilities in human individuals and human collective life for understanding the creative functions of religion for human evolution and human cultural development.

As Cobb recognizes that different religions could yield different insights into the ultimate reality, dialogues among religions can only increase the width and depth of the self-understanding of a religion. It may also enable religions to enrich each other in the way Cobb calls "complementary". It is in this way, I see Cobb has moved from a Christian-centered point of view of religion to a point of view that would put any two religions on an equal

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11) These two papers are "*Whiteheadian Philosophy and Genuine Religious Pluralism: Rationale for a Conference*" , and "*Cobb's Whiteheadian Complementary Pluralism.*"

basis, in order to see how they may benefit and enrich each other or one another.

Although it is not immediately clear how different religious claims of truth can be reconciled as complementary and in reference to which framework of reconciliation, Cobb has suggested that one way to do so is to find reasons to see two different and apparently contradictory assertions of religious truth as truly non-contradictory and instead complementary. It seems to me that there are two steps involved in this process of transformation: The first step is to see contradictories as contraries by saying that they do not completely describe the ultimate reality; the second step is to see that contraries are in fact sub-contraries, being descriptions of different properties of the Ultimate Reality. In this process of transformation, one has to develop a concept or a view of the Ultimate Reality with regard to which one can perform transformation of contradictories into contraries and then perform transformation of contraries into sub-contraries. What is this Ultimate Reality that enables Cobb to do the transformation work? The answer is that it is his understanding of Creativity and God, the notions of which are suggested in Whitehead's philosophy of organism.

I agree with Cobb's analysis of the Whiteheadian notion of creativity as two ultimates (creativity and God) or even three ultimates (creativity, god and the world) in so far they are to be seen as interconnected. If they are not holistically connected or integrated in some theoretical and philosophical fashion, we shall not be able to see how the Buddhist truth of Emptiness and the Christian truth of Godhead could be related as parts of a whole. But then the question of integrating the three ultimates is an urgent task, which needs to be confronted. Although Whitehead has provided a basic theory of creativity and God and world, their interrelation can be still clarified in the framework of the Yijing and the Neo-Confucian theory of the Taiji and wuji, as carried out in the above section. The significance of doing this newer interpretation is to see how emptiness can be linked to the Godhead in light of how wuji is related to Taiji. This is an important task of philosophy of religion, which is implicit in Whitehead, but which has been brought to the surface by Cobb.

Given Whitehead's the framework reinforced by the Yi-Onto-Cosmology, one will be able to bring a deeper sense of complementarity than simply recognizing particularity in a universal whole: One would also see how complementarity could be the condition for future and further creativity and production of novelty and renewal of the cosmos. For we have to see the rich suggestiveness of the paradigm of the yin-yang interaction and inducement in order to see how different religions could learn from each other, renovate each other and then bring out their own fruits of innovation. It is in this sense that a religion could receive a new life and has a new content based on integration of its old content and new experience of the world in which other religions are resourceful parts. The interaction between emptiness and being, just like the interaction between world and God is the fountainhead for the transformation of our beliefs and concepts of World, God and our selves as human beings. In reference to a Whitehead statement quoted above, Griffin quoted Cobb as saying that "without a cosmic reality there can be no cosmic one and that without God there can be neither. Similarly, without both the cosmic and acosmic features of reality there can be no God." <sup>12)</sup> The interdependence of the three demonstrates an integrative creativity, which is only to be realized in the on-going creative advance of the world in which everything including the Human Person has a creative role to play.

Either Whitehead or Cobb does not seem to identify Creativity as emptiness nor explain how emptiness fits into a framework of creativity. If the Buddhist view on reality as emptiness is truly insightful of the ultimate reality, this notion should be explicitly brought into the structure or framework of the theory of integrated creativity. What has been given in the earlier section has shown how the Yizhuan and Zhou Dugyi and Daoism have formulated this theory, which even integrated the notion of Indian de-creative emptiness with the creative void of the Daoism to allow creation of the Taiji-God and a creative cosmos and humanity (I shall discuss the human factor in the next section). This suggests again that the complementary pluralism of Cobb could benefit from the Yijing-Whiteheadian Onto-Cosmology of creativity (creative origin of being and creative becoming ofbeing) not only in gaining a

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12) Griffin, p.14; Cobb, TCW, p.121.

substantial meaning of complementarity but could become logically more enriched in becoming an integrative theory of plurality and hence transform into the integrative pluralism as I have formulated in the above.

It must again be recognized that this integration of plurality also leads to reconciliation with the traditional view on God as performing creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). The question here is how one understands “*nihilo*”. In a sense, God is self-created from *nihilo* and co-exists with *nihilo* as creative resources. The traditional view of God as the eternal and infinite power of creation does not bar God from maintaining its own order of creativity, which is revealed in a way in which the world is organized and in a way in which the human person is endowed. There is more reason to believe that reason has a power from the whole process of creativity than from something not falling into the pattern of ordering as revealed in the world and the human person.

It is to be recognized that in the process of recognizing the need for integrating religious differences into a creative totality or whole, what is independently meaningful as a term or concept has to be inevitably modified in the context of the whole as this is the necessary implication of the philosophy of organism. Hence epistemologically speaking, one must recognize that to hold that the Buddhist and the Christian truths could be reconciled in a holistic theory of creativity is to hold that each has to subscribe to such a transformation of meaning. The epistemology of recognizing independent contributions leads to the epistemology of integrating differences and affirming meaning in a context of the whole. This is the methodology of moving semantic clarification of specific features to onto-hermeneutical re-interpretation. What is referred to here as “onto-hermeneutical” re-interpretation is to find or define a framework of the ultimate reality in which every feature worthwhile would be accommodated in a logical and epistemological order. In this sense any assimilation and transformation of a religious insight into the underlying philosophy of creativity must see that the semantic meaning could have to be changed in the context and one’s belief has to adapt or adjust to such semantic and onto-hermeneutical change. In this way the doctrine of “*creatio ex nihilo*” is to be tested against a whole theory, not

on piecemeal projection of possibilities.

One difficulty of relating one religion to another, even in the complementary and integrative pluralistic framework, is that one usually does not wish to give up the standard of truth one maintains in one's own religion and consequently that one does not wish to perform semantic clarification and / or onto-hermeneutical re-interpretation. But if one wishes to do so, there is also the problem of understanding what religious truth could mean in a pluralistic framework. The fundamental question is that one wishes to maintain a pluralistic position without giving up an absolutist or universalistic standpoint. The reason is that pluralism often leads to relativism and relativism leads to a closed-door self-complacency and loss of universal or objective standards and therefore loss of universal values, which human beings are expected to cherish universally. Hence the problem is how to maintain an open system of religious pluralism without diminishing the universalistic values of one's own religion.

As a theoretical and philosophical issue, pluralism needs not lead to relativism in the sense that universal standards and universal values need to be given up. It is quite possible that all members of a free association could be subject to the same standard of objective merit and organization, but may differ in many ways of implementation and evaluation or renovation or development. The problem of recognizing a common core of truths and values need not conflict with different styles of expression or different strategies of achieving secondary goals. As the Confucian motto indicates, there could be harmony and difference at the same time. Of course, genuine harmony may require some creative unity, which binds all different parts into one, and each part would have to contribute to the maintaining of the central harmony as its universal principle and value. In this case, one can have both plurality and unity, existing in the form of unity in plurality and plurality in unity. This no doubt underscores the importance of identifying the right core values and universal standards for emulation and evaluation.

In order to maintain this unity in plurality, one needs to distinguish the ideal goal of understanding from the actual understanding one presently has

with regard to the ultimate reality. If this distinction is made, one may see how differences in the other religion may be stimuli and lessons for one to improve oneself in theory or in practice, so that one may get closer to the ideal goal of one's religious standard of achievement of perfection. This is not to say, of course, that one need not hold one's own self-understanding as authentic and genuine and a basic standard of identifying truth. But to focus on this as the exclusive standard and the source of all inspiration will close one's mind to possible concrescences of novel truth about the ultimate reality. The very concept of the ultimate reality must be maintained in an open and creative manner so that one can derive openness from it and thus one can learn from others or come to see one's prejudices in reflection. This also means that one must maintain oneself in an open manner that makes learning from others possible. With this said, the universal claims of one's truth could be modified and enriched in the course of the creative advance in time and new encounters with the other religions of the world. In this sense, there is an intentional universal truth and a realized yet still enrich able universal truth in accordance with temporality. The Yijing motto that one should grow with time (*yu shi juxing*) applies here as a solution or as a way of reconciling universal claims with specific encounters, including encounters with another universalistic religion.

David Griffin has performed a service in contrasting Cobb's pluralism with that of another Whiteheadian theologian, Schubert M. Ogden, which Griffin calls Semi-Pluralism. For Ogden, according to Griffin, if a Christian religionist is to accept the truth claims of another religion, he has to find that "the truth in any philosophy not only has to confirm that in any religion, but also to be confirmed by it."<sup>13</sup> It is possible that all different religions find the truth of other religions confirmed in that way and reach an accord of mutual understanding. In this sense all religions are merely different expressions of some great religious truth and thus cannot be said to be pluralist in an enriched sense. Griffin in fact wants to call this position "semi-pluralism" or "identist pluralism." According to this view, universality is the commonly shared truth of two different relations, even though one may differ from the other in other respects. Those differences which two religions do not share in

13) See David Griffin's second paper 25, Ogden IT, p.72.



common are to be regarded relative or relativist by implication. On the side of Cobb, one sees a genuine pluralism which consists in recognizing the truths of other religions even when they are not confirmed in one's own religion. As explained above, the two different truths belong to the same ultimate reality as aspects that could give rise to a better understanding of the ultimate reality. Now we wish to raise the philosophical question as to which is a better way of preserving universalism and pluralism at the same time or whether the two could be related as identist or separate as pluralist.

Clearly we must see both as two different approaches to universalism in pluralistic contexts and there is no reason why we cannot have both. Ogden's approach, as does Cobb, would enable us to discover our truth in others and other's truth in us and thus reach a common core of minimal common values. On the other hand, Cobb's approach would enable us to discover new truths about the ultimate and expand our scope of understanding by combining the different aspects of the same reality. We need both because we need find the common core and we need also to explore new territories. Hence we need to integrate Ogden's approach with Cobb's. Of course, Cobb is much more open than Ogden, for in the case of not being able to identify a core, Ogden will remain enclosed in his own circles and lose touch with a larger reality. For Cobb, on the other hand, a genuinely rooted religious truth will get his attention and will be included in his system so that he can form a large circle of association or understanding of religious truth if others are doing the same. But he needs not nor does he has a reason to reject Ogden for his approach for discovering a common ground of religious truth. In other words, there is no reason to reject identist pluralism as a part of the complementary pluralism. We may regard identist as the lower limit of reaching universality and complementary pluralism as the upper limit of reaching universality. Both can be integrated in the integrative pluralism as the lower and upper limits of an integrated understanding of the ultimate reality or ultimate creativity.

Besides, we need to take Whitehead's principle of universal relativity seriously. According to Whitehead, every actual being is a potential for every becoming of another actual being. In other words, any item of actuality is to be formed from all actual and potential items in a process of becoming.<sup>14)</sup>

14) See Whitehead, PR, 22, the 4th principle in the 27 categories of explanation, also see

In fact, this principle defines the philosophy of organism as well as the ontological principle of the philosophy. For according to this principle, an actual entity is present in every other actual entity as all entities are dynamically related in a process of becoming and self-achievement in such a way that every entity becomes the potential ingredient for the formation and transformation of a given entity. In Whitehead's words: "The principle states that it belongs to the nature of a being that it is a potential for every becoming. Thus all things are to be conceived as qualifications of actual occasions."<sup>15)</sup> This means that for the rational explanation of any actuality one must appeal to every other actuality and hence to the whole universe.

The principle of relativity is rooted in the ontological principle, which says: "No actual entity, then no reason."<sup>16)</sup> Whitehead has formulated this principle more explicitly in the following way: "Every proposition is entertained in the constitution of some one actual entity or severally in the constitutions of many actual entities."<sup>17)</sup> From this he draws the following conclusion: "It follows from the ontological principle, thus interpreted, that the notion of a common world must find its exemplification in the constitution of each actual entity, taken by itself for analysis. For an actual entity cannot be a member of common world, except in the sense that the common world is a constituent of its constitution. It follows that every item of the universe, including all the other actual entities, is a constituent in the constitution of any one actual entity. This conclusion has already been employed under the title of the principle of relativity."<sup>18)</sup> This means that every part of the reality must be understood in reference to other parts of reality. Even though there could be different degrees of relevance according to Whitehead's Principle of "Intensive relevance" (in the sense of having a gradation of relevance of more or less, important or negligible), a part of reality must be defined in terms of other parts in our understanding. By thus relating the ontological principle to the principle of the constitution of

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p.50.

15) Ibid., p.166.

16) Ibid., p.19.

17) Ibid., p.147.

18) Ibid., p.148.

actuality, and then to the principle of relativity, one can see how each reality is organically defined and understood in a whole set of other actual beings and in a process of mutual transformation and interaction.

The so-called relativity is to simply identify that every entity is understood and defined in relation to or relative to what is constituted from other entities. It cannot be defined or understood apart from other actual entities or nonfactual forms of reality which are potential or eternal objects by way of compatibility and contrariety. What the ontological principle stresses is the importance of the concrete analysis of actual entities and our experience of them, for understanding of reasons must derive from such analysis and experience of actuality and nothing else. Relativity Principle describes the inter-prehensional relations of actual entities, which contribute to our apprehension, definition and understanding of entities. The Ontological Principle indicates and requires that we take reality as only those which follow the principle of relativity. Relativity defines ontology and ontology reveals relativity and these two principles are equivalent and are found to be so via our direct experience of reality and reflection on what would constitute reasons for experience of reality.

A consequence of such equivalence not only blurs the distinction between the subject and the object which is another subject or superject but the distinction between the universal and particular as understood since Aristotle. The traditional universal is now a potential form, which has its unique particularity which can enter into the description of an actual entity, whereas the traditional particular now becomes an actual entity which enters into the description of other actual entities.<sup>19)</sup>

I take this to be a matter of the interpenetration of the universal and particular in the mutual defining processes of actual entities in regard to other entities, actual or potential. The theoretical implication from this mutual defining and interpenetration is that an actual entity is relationally and relatively definable and conceptualizable in relation to and relative to other actual entities on different dimensions and on different levels and thus that any universalistic claim of truth could simply reveal one or two universals

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19) *Ibid.*, p.48.

among others and could also be regarded as a particular projection resulting from the actual entity itself.

On the other hand, the ontological principle allows that one can discover others in oneself just one can see how others discover oneself. If one does do this, we have a case for Ogden's thesis of reciprocal confirmation of truth. If one could not do this, namely if one could not for the moment find such reciprocal confirmation of truth, the differences between two religious truths could be seen as contributions to a re-definition of one's truth and the growth or enrichment of one's belief. This would be the thesis of Cobb who believes in a process of growth in an ever developing future of one's theology by which one would overcome the particular limitations as one sees in one's own when confronted with religious truth and values of other traditions.<sup>20)</sup>

It is in reference to this possibility of overcoming one's particular limitations and incorporating new truths about one's faith that Cobb speaks of "fundamental changes" to be effected within the Christian religion.

We have indeed seen how fundamental changes have been effected within the Buddhist religion in the 6th century China, which has led to other fundamental changes in other traditions such as Confucianism and Daoism. Indeed one may regard globalization as a process of religious change and religious reform in this present era. It is also correct for him to recognize that when religions become more globalized, their teachings whether theological or non-theological, will become both global and local, for they must face universal issues and values all humankind wish to have a understanding and solution as well as to cater to local needs of local cultures and peoples so that they will also remain as belonging to particular communities informing particular forms of life.

In light of what is said about universal and particular in the above, religious pluralism could be both universalistic and relativistic in that the religious truth of any mature religion must be seen as proposing a universal truth and dispensing a particular form of life embodying that universal truth. Both the universal truth and the particular form could be enriched and changed in light of encountering difference from other religious truth.

20) See page p.38 of Griffin's second paper, and reference to TCW p.45.

In connection with the concept of religious truth, we may make another important observation: Religious truth is a matter of trust based on understanding and interpretation of what the ultimate reality is. If one loses vision of what the ultimate reality is, a trust would lose its ground and become blind. Since Enlightenment Age, the Western mind is engaged in an enlightenment project of understanding the world by way of reason and science. In this sense a religious truth must be consistent with what science enlightens and extends to what one's heart could reasonably trust based on scientific knowledge and a comprehensive reflection on one's experience of life. In this sense a reasonable religion by its nature must be both scientific and experiential which should include one's experiential understanding or re-understanding and insight into the historical origins. As different person may have different nuances of life experiences, there is always a personal side to one's religion or lack of religion. It is unreasonable to reduce religion to dogmatic teaching without understanding as mediated by one's experience. A blind trust is trust devoid of such understanding and therefore devoid of experienced truth, but a matter of imposition or inertia-habit the acceptance of which can be only justified on psychological or social-political grounds or achieved thereby.

In speaking of integral and complementary pluralism, we are open to the possibility of transformation based on learned insights into the ultimate reality and therefore avoid the relativistic complacency therewith, but we are also open to the possibility of achieving a blind trust in rejecting experiences and insights from other traditions and become enclosed. An enclosed universalism is as problematic as an complacent relativism while an open minded relativist need not be considered less worthwhile than a dynamic universalist: both are ready to seek universal identity and recognize relative differences.

Given the above discussion on integrative pluralism, we can now see that to overcome complacent relativism and enclosed universalism in religious truth, a religious tradition need to seek what is in common with other religious traditions and at the same time to recognize what is genuinely and insightfully different in other traditions. Both provides a reason and incentive for religious renovation and reform whether in theory or in practice or whether in style or in content. It is always important to establish common

ground for inter-religious communication, and one way to seek common ground is to have communication, dialogue and understanding. From a static and substance point of view, two religions may be radically different, but from a dynamic and process point of view, two different religions may share a few things and ideas in common or may have resources of interpretation which induces such common understanding. What is incommensurable is often a matter of looking at things from a static and substance of view, but the incommensurable can become commensurable if we relate to things in a process and interactive matter. We have to find mediation in order to see and realize complementation between two religions and that is why an onto-cosmological philosophy such as Yijing and Whitehead is extremely important.

For relating two different religions traditions one may have to work with two basic principles of understanding: The principle of achieving common ground by creating a maximal common parts both religions share; and the principle of achieving common ground by creating a minimal understanding of the reality comprising their radical differences. The first principle is one of intersection and the second principle one of union. The first I call the Principle of Maximal Signification and the second I call the Principle of Minimal Comprehension, in view of the assumption we should desire the least difference and the most significant in a coherent system of understanding. This is also the principle on how an onto-hermeneutical understanding and interpretation is to be performed. We need both principles so that we can move on from a common ground to a greater and more enriched vision of the ultimate which in turn will increase the cohesiveness and congruence of the two different religions in a unified whole. The theoretical and philosophical model, which exemplifies a combination of these two principles is precisely the Yijing-Whithead or should I say, the Yijing-Whitehead-Cobb system of onto-cosmology or process philosophy of organism which we now have at hand. Not only is it a most significant but least differentiated, it is also a methodological for creating and achieving such a system from two or more religions according to the system as a methodology.

#### IV. The Role of the Human: From Ontological God to Ethical God

In describing the integration of the onto-cosmology of Yijing and the philosophy of organism of Whitehead, we have identified the Taiji (the great ultimate) with Whitehead's God as an ultimate of creativity. But the term "God" as used here clearly is an ontological God or more specifically a Creator-God without implying whether God is personal or has powers and faculties of mind and spirit. But it is not to say that the Taiji-God may not embody or contains such powers and faculties in some deep potential form. This may be the basis for the suggestion and formulation of some form of the anthropic principle by some physicists since the later part of 20th Century, which allows the development of human intelligence and human mind. But still it is apparent that it is only when human beings come around that the notion of God or the creator was formed. It is also clear that human beings have been able to attribute to God many other qualities such as love, kindness, justice, wisdom, knowledge, goodness and righteousness. In other words, God as a pure ontological creator could be also considered a perfectly ethical power and entity like a person on an infinitely expanded analogy to human powers, not merely argued from anthropic principles. Although I am not in a position to sort out which ethical and moral qualities have been attributed to which named ultimate reality in the traditional world religions, it appears to be clear that we would normally conceive God as upright and just and yet with ability to love and be kind or merciful so that God can be a moral model for people to worship, if not to emulate. In general, it is conceived that God must be good in some generic sense apart from being a creator and a sustainer of being and life.

Now it appears to me that we need not mix up these two kinds of God-concept, the concept of an ontological God or *Taiji* or *Dao* and the concept of an ethical or good God. The former is impersonal and the latter personal. The conception of the former does not require the existence of a person, the conception of the latter does. But we would not have a conception of a person until we have become persons and be conscious of and know

that we are persons. Hence the existence and self-awareness of the human person are the key or the turning point of the formation of the conception of an ethical God. In other words, the formation of the conception of an ethical God presupposes the formation of the conception of the human person. It is by appropriating features we experience as human being that we come to see God as a creator who possesses moral and ethical qualities. The notion of the human person thus can be said to act as a metaphor and or provide a model for understanding what God would be in terms of possessing these or those moral qualities.<sup>21)</sup> One may raise the question why we normally conceive our personal God as necessarily a moral power, the answer is that we find morality as desirable for us and would like to become moral if we want to be human. Nietzsche even takes the position that for the survival of the poor and weak there comes into being the morality of the slave, which requires God to be just, caring and compassionate in order to be worshipped by the poor and weak. But Nietzsche fails to note that it is sufficient to justify attribution of love and justice to God if this attribution does express the feeling and sentiment of the believing people in some way. The question of the rise and genealogy of morality can be complex and controversial, but at least one can see that if morality is humanly describable and significant for human purpose, to conceive and believe God as perfectly moral in some sense would be absolutely justifiable on the human ground. Besides, a personalized and moral God does satisfy a human and moral purpose for human morality, for it provides a standard and a justification for our belief and respect when morality is founded on theology and God becomes moralized. In this sense one sees how God has been humanized before we come to see how a moral and powerful God could uplift people morally and maintain a goal of justice because he himself has perfect morality and power.

We can simply put our point this way: The human person creates the

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21) We need not to necessarily conceive God as having moral qualities. One may accuse God of having no moral qualities or being immoral by human standards, but this is possible because we have projected the image of a human person onto the creator God or God as a creator. Any argument for the existence of God on anthropic or analogical grounds must consider reasons why God must be only moral, and not like a human being, could be both moral and immoral. Besides, when we come to see God as lacking admirable moral qualities, the appeal of God as an object of worship and reverence would lessen.



image of a personal God so that a personal God can be said to create the human being and cherish the human hope in his image. Since moral qualities in a divine entity are derived from the human self-experience and self-imagining, which moral qualities need to be chosen and attributed to God the creator also depend on our experience of what constitute the most desirable perfect moral qualities. Of course, we must also admit that the conception of these chosen qualities could also derive from our experiences and understanding of the ultimate reality. Thus, the Buddhist Buddha could have different ethical qualities from Daoist True Person (*zhenren*) and the Confucian Sage-ruler (*shengwang*) which are also different from Saint in Christianity. Similarly, the Confucian Heaven as a Divine Person is different from God in Christianity and Allah in Islam. Although we still have to admit that among all the major world religions the moral qualities of a personal God or even of an impersonal ultimate reality such as the Dao or nirvana are different and even respectively unique, these world religions may still share some generic or common qualities of morality such as compassion, love, kindness or responsibility. Ontology or theology has conditioned and founded ethics, ethics, on the other hand, could be said to personalize the Creator-God or ontology of creativity. Special ethics brings out special moral qualities of God whereas general ethical qualities bring out general and often common recognized moral qualities of God. As once our ethics becomes more global, so would be our conception of God: a global ethics may bring out a global theology, but a global theology need not lead to a global ethics as ethics has to be practiced and known before it can be easily attributed to God as a creator.

Not only we wish to see God as a person based on our own self-knowledge of personal and moral qualities, we wish to also to see God as a savior so that we can be morally strengthened or improved. Better still we want God to be our savior because we feel sometimes we need to be saved or protected. The finitude and fragility of human life put the human life on the vulnerable side and it seems natural for the human person to wish to be saved from such compromising or limiting situations such as sickness and death in human life and human destiny. Besides, even as a moral person a person may suffer from a weakness, which needs forgiveness and spiritual purification. In this case one also need a savior. As a savior the more

powerful God is, the more hope and confidence a human person may have regarding the salvific function of God. In order to make this inner wish true, it is inevitable that a person could start to conceive God as an indispensable infinite savior. To believe in a God as a savior and also as morally good (so that he may punish the bad) comes to the full circle of religious belief.

One may ask the question whether a non-atheistic religious believer may have taken the view that even if there is no salvation in a creative Taiji-God, there is salvation in terms of self-cultivation and self-enlightenment as we have seen in Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Ethical or moral virtues may be seen as emerging from understanding the ultimate reality in our selves.

The above distinction among ontological God, ethical God and salvific God makes it easy to solidify our argument for an integrative pluralism of religions. All major existing world religions could be found to share an ontology of God as the creative force as made explicit by the Yijing-Whitehead ontology of process and change, and their assertions about the creativity of God as a creator could also be interpreted and given a meaning in the Yjing-Whitehead system of understanding. Hence all such religions could be said to be universalistic in their claims about the ultimate reality. In this sense they are united and integrated in a medium or language of the philosophy of process and change. But as concrete belief systems and practice systems they can be also found to contain different personalistic, ethical and soteriological understandings of God based on historical, social and psychological reasons or causes. These differences are relative to their historicities and are unique individually due to their perceptions of the values of human life and means for human cultivation or transformation.

In these regards, we must take a pluralist stand to allow comparison, interaction and mutual learning and mutual enrichment among them. This means that even though we see a differential side apart from an integrative side in these religions, we can hold them together in light of their underlying ontology of Taiji-God as a creator and further in light of their capability to learn and understand. With regard to ethical and moral differences, very often we may see more convergence of values after a process of interaction and mutual adjustment than with regard to soteriological differences. For after all, the human nature we share in common in some sense of human nature

may provide a basis for unification of human virtues and human rights. The process of globalization in which interaction and learning take place would also facilitate the exchange and sharing of human understanding of humanly and even divinely desirable ethical and soteriological qualities. Given these considerations, to speak of a globalized or global ethics (not necessarily regional and local levels based on cultural needs) is not far-reaching. Soteriological needs and routes, perhaps, we could leave to personal choices, which are both a matter of relativity and a matter of relativism.

In sum, we must and can distinguish the Ontological God as the impersonal Creative force which we may come to know on philosophical ground, from the Ethical-moral God who we may admire and emulate, and distinguish both from the Salvific God whom we wish to believe for redeeming purposes and for hope of our future. Because we attribute our moral qualities to God in our personal manner, it should not be expected that all religions would embody the same ethics. Whatever we attribute to God on the basis of our hope for our future well-being, salvation or purification, we again do not expect that all religions have the same appeal in regard to problem of salvation. In this manner we can see how religions could differ severally on the ethical and personal salvation levels and yet may still have shared a purified understanding of the ontological Godhead as the creative force embodied in these religions. In this way, we see how a plurality of human religions could enjoy their differences and share the same core of an onto-cosmology of creativity. It is nevertheless hoped not only that the Yijing-Whiteheadian philosophy of creativity and organism provides a universal basis for all religions that value creativity and originality, but also that a closely shared and overlapping ethics and soteriology could develop among all religions in reference to their shared underlying onto-cosmology of process and change.

## **V. Reflections on Four Religions: A Historical Model of Integrative Pluralism**

To recapitulate in a different way, there are two principles at work in Integrative Pluralism: the Principle of Integration in terms of which an

integrative philosophy of dipolar creativity (being and becoming) will function as a basis for integrating two different religions in the same ontological paradigm; and the Principle of Differentiation in terms of which the differences of the two religions are realized as two complementary polarities. The philosophical inspiration of this methodological approach is derived from the Yijing philosophy itself, which is well illustrated in Whitehead's philosophy of God/ World Dipolarity. It is further crystallized in the saying by the Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhang Zai (1020-1077): "Oneness leads to divinity, twoness leads to creativity" (*yigushen, liangzehua*)<sup>22</sup>) But can we cite any factual or historical example of this theory of integrative pluralism based on integration and differentiation to show how it works? The answer is affirmative, because we can point to the developed working relationship of Confucianism and Daoism in Chinese philosophy as an excellent example.

Without getting into details, it can be shown that Confucianism and Daoism have accepted the basic philosophy of creative change as the core onto-cosmology. This is because both philosophies have drawn their origins in a common way of thinking from the philosophy of the creative change in the Yijing. Even though this point of common heritage may not be clear until later times, it is still significant to see how their explicit ways of thinking point to the same ontological grounding. This became obvious in light of a close comparison of the underlying views of the ultimate reality in the major classical texts of Classical Confucianism (Yizhuan, Zongyong and even Lunyu) and Classical Daoism (Daodejing and Zhuangzi). As we have discussed earlier, these two Chinese schools of philosophy have come to share the same ontology and cosmology in the onto-cosmology of creative change of the *dao* and *tian*. This view became even more systematized in the Song Ming Neo-Confucianism of *li / qi and taiji / wuji* in texts of Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, Cheng Brothers, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. But to say that in the Classical Period the Confucianism and Daoism, or in the Song-Ming Period, the Li Neo-Confucianism and the Qi Neo-Confucianism or the Xin Neo-Confucianism shared a common core of onto-cosmology and accepted the same canonical texts is not to say that they may not still have somewhat different interpretations of the underlying philosophy or somewhat different

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22) See Zhang Zai's well-known treatise <Zhengmeng> (Rectifying Obscurations), first chapter..

readings of the same canonical texts. In particular, it is not to say that they have shared the same ethical, moral and political philosophies. They did not.

If one takes what Confucius and Laozi have taught respectively about how human beings should live and behave, or compare what Mencius and Zhuangzi have said about self-cultivation and government, one will be struck with the vast difference between the two sides. This would hold with regard to moral philosophies of life of the Cheng Brothers and Zhu Xi on the one side, and Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming on the other. Despite these differences and even despite their mutual criticisms, they do appear to respect each other and each other's views and appear in a way naturally and gradually to form a sense of complementarity in their own writings. From an objective point of view, one can see how each side has influenced the other even without knowing or acknowledging it. This seems also to have happened between the Song Ming-Neo-Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism between Daoism and Chinese Buddhism. We can see influences and enrichments as well as remaining differences. Those enrichments and differences have been achieved through a long process of interaction, learning, examination, reflection and rethinking. Without this process such deeply inspiring complementary differences simply could not take place. One would also see that in this context of dynamical interaction differences become complementary and complementary differences become sources for novelty and creative advance, or adventures of new ideas, in Whitehead's sense.

With this integrative pluralism based on complementary integration, one can see how its exemplification in Confucianism and Daoism is of great benefit to people in practice. Why cannot a person be a Confucian in public life and a Daoist in retired privacy when he can afford to enjoy more mountains and rivers? Why cannot a person be an enthusiast for national politics when young and take a contemplative and even *sunya*-ist or Chanist view of life and death when old? It appears that there are different times, different tasks and different challenges of life or in a person's life that invite different goals, command different interests of life or in one's life, each of which needs not contradict, but rather fulfils, the creativity of the central onto-cosmology of the *tian / ren / dao / de*. Life is able to accommodate different forms or styles of life with one central onto-cosmology, not only for many different people, but for different times or stages of one's life.

Now with science and technology well developed in today's age, there are different skillful professions, which yield different stations and require different roles for a person, apart from different times and stages, to perform one's duties and demonstrate one's abilities. It is not only necessary but also desirable to have different and even incompatible forms of professional life and professional ethics for social and community life so that humanity may continue to thrive and flourish in division of labor and in cooperation or competition for excellence. But with regard to the understanding of an underlying onto-cosmology of creativity and creative change, this abundant multiplication of forms of professional life and professional ethics will learn not to contradict each other but would rather come to cherish and complement and enrich each other and even communally lead to an achievement of the common good. This central core philosophy would become an ever-refreshing source for one to go back for repose and an inspiring stimulus to move on to future. This is what a philosophical or religious globalization should be: An integration, or a will to integrate, with a willingness to transform differences into complements without yielding one's rightful place and identity in the process of doing so. The ideal goal should be "Harmonize without being the same" (*he er butong*), the ideal norm to follow is "Let being different lead to harmonization." (*butong er he*). A great religion needs this Confucian insight and will have achieved it by reflecting on the essence of creativity in the ultimate reality and process of life.

One may argue that Confucianism and Daoism are not religions and their integrative and harmonious complementary differentiation may not apply to established and organized religions such as Christianity and Buddhism, the possibility of whose real integration and creative complementary differentiation in a whole needs to be proven. The answer to this criticism is this. It is true that Confucianism and Daoism are not quite the same religions as Christianity and Buddhism, but their moral and spiritual values and their embodiment in personal practices have sustained vast numbers of people for thousands of years, as early as Buddhism and as solidly as Christianity. There are no Confucian churches and priests, but there are Confucian temples and Confucian scholars. In the case of philosophical Daoism, the Daoist teachings do get absorbed in the religious Daoism, and Daoist temples were built and Daoist priests flourished. The whole point of this description is that we could

identify the religious sides of Confucianism and Daoism apart from their philosophical sides just as we also need to identify the philosophical sides of Christian theology and the Buddhist atheology apart from their religious sides. I believe that this is precisely what Whitehead has intended to do and his process philosophy of organism could be said to embody his vision of a complementarily well-differentiated integration of Christianity and Buddhism as two major religions of the world, respectively representing the East and the West. I do not know whether he has any idea of the integrative harmonization of Confucianism and Daoism in China, but the historical fact of the integrative harmonization of Confucianism and Daoism in China does provide a strong example, model, incentive and hope for the development of such integration among other world religions.

We might suggest that if Confucianism can be interpreted as leading to Christianity, as this has been done by James Legge in his translations of the Confucian Classics such as Book of Poetry (Shijing) and Book of History (Shujing), Christianity can also be interpreted as leading to Confucianism. Theoretically there is no reason why there could not be mutual and equal interpretation of ancient texts in different religions or religious schools. The Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer has stressed the possibility of achieving a meeting ground and fusion of horizons via dialogues and reflective understanding. In my own Onto-Hermeneutics, which is developed in light of both Gadamer's insights and the Yijing's onto-cosmology, a mutual but creative recognition of each other's ontological assumption and reflective understanding of timely and creative change will lead to creative sharing of insights and enlargement of onto-cosmological visions in two different systems of beliefs and ideas.<sup>23)</sup> A comprehensive and profound understanding of significant differences in one single ultimate reality could be developed subsequently as has been indicated in my earlier discussion of integration. In the spirit of both Philosophical Hermeneutics and Onto-Hermeneutics we can see how Confucianism and Christianity could be

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23) See my article "Confucian Onto-Hermeneutics: Morality and Ontology", in *JOURNAL OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2000. p.33-67. See also my Chinese articles in <Benti Yu Quanshi> (Ontology and Interpretation), Beijing, Sanlian Publishing, 2000. p.15-62. And in <Benti Quanshi Xue> (Onto-Hermeneutics), Beijing, Peking University Press, 2002. pp.1-14, pp.25-30. Both volumes are edited by myself.

unionized or intersected and move on to a consensus on the personalization of Heaven and God as well as the formation of a virtue ethics of self-cultivation and self-sanctification in the context and in the spirit of Yijing-Whitehead onto-cosmology of creativity and creative change.

Similarly, Daoism and Buddhism could be mutually interpreted by each other. In fact, when Indian Buddhism was introduced in China in 3rd Century, it is by way of a Daoist interpretation that it became understood and accepted in China. In later times there were Buddhist monks who would also undertake a Buddhist interpretation of the Daoist texts. This mutual interpretation and interaction between the two finally led to the formation of the great school of Chan Buddhism, which has combined the Daoist freedom of creative spirit and the Buddhist wisdom of non-abiding or non-clinging into one onto-enlightenment philosophy of the ultimate and the ultimateless.

With such philosophical and hermeneutical alignment for both Confucianism-Christianity and Daoism-Buddhism, we can now see how a well-developed harmonization and integration between Confucianism and Daoism could also take place between Christianity and Buddhism. In this harmonization and integration, Christianity and Buddhism will become truly complementary and interrelated in a holistic unity of creative understanding as one between Daoism and Confucianism. The spirit of harmonization and integration, and yet at the same time the well-adjusted complementarity between the two, will hold on and pass on to the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism. There is no need to worry about differences in styles of life and in differences in ethical norms arising from such differences of styles of life. In so far as they are harmonized and justified in light of the onto-cosmology of creativity and creative change, they should maintain their distinctive identities, which will be basis for future creative transformation.

With the model of Confucian-Daoist harmony in view, we shall find a Christian God more humanized under the influence of a Confucian view of life and a Buddhist emptiness more naturalized under the influence of the Daoist natural philosophy. We shall also find a Confucian individual more rights-oriented than traditional virtue ethics-oriented under the Christian influence and a Daoist recluse more compassionate and world-caring than Laozi under the Buddhist influence. In different ways, but with the same

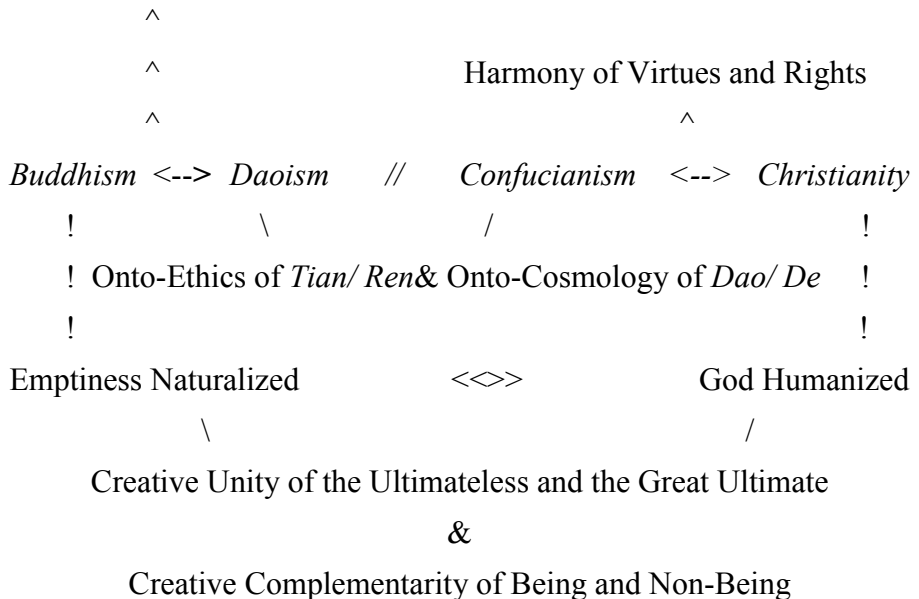


insight and spirit of creativity, we come to a consummation of integrative pluralism among the four religions, which would pave a still wider road toward integration and harmonization of all the religions in the world.

## APPENDIX

### Illustration of Integrative Pluralism in Harmonization/ Differentiation of Four Religions

Integration of Freedom and Compassion



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