

I. Statement of the Problem and Presuppositions

South Korea is a member of developed countries in the OECD and G20. It is also a part of the Third World, because it had been a colony and became independent after the Second World War. Korea still suffers the legacy of the colonialism, of which the division of the Korean peninsula is most conspicuous. Korea's colonial exploitations and the division of the nation constitute the root causes of the permanently unstable social-economic-political structures in Korea. In the way toward a complete liberation from the colonialism and neo-colonialism stand the division of the nation and other colonial legacies. Among them is the unbalanced development in South Korea. One section of South Korea has been overgrown; the other has plunged into despair. On the one hand, South Korea has business giants such as Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motor. On the other hand, South Korea is notorious for its high rate of irregular employment (more than a third of the whole industrial workers). Recently two irregular workers of Hyundai Motor immolated themselves by setting themselves on fire. Irregular workers are regarded as different species in Korea. Only regular workers have job security and good wages. The existence of irregular workers is considered buttressing the social-economic stability of the former colonial state like Korea, which otherwise, they believe, would fall into chaos and destruction. The contemporary neo-liberal capitalist system requires scapegoats for its redemption. Irregular and discriminated workers are among the scapegoats. The process of stratification of the people into a modern castes and classes is undergoing intensely. There are non-beings in the society; they are not represented by themselves or by others.

People are more stratified and classified in this world. Ordinary people are getting lower in the social class and being deprived of the resources and sources for their lives. Equality and justice are desired, but they are not realized even in the most advanced societies. The hardship of the ordinary people is not less severe in a relative well-to-do society. Racism and other discriminations along the line of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientations, regular/irregular/migrant work, etc. are getting worse. The ecological environments are deteriorating in this blindly rapid expansion of capitalist exploitative economies. The voices of the most of the people especially the so-called subaltern are not heard, nor represented meaningfully in this world. They are treated as nobodies and nothing. They live with us but they are invisible in the public.

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This essay will analyze and interpret justice, because justice is the most urgent social agenda, and at the same time the most critical theological issue in our times. I will first delineate some presuppositions of this essay. 1) Our society is deeply divided by new castes and classes; it is a stratified society. Justice matters in such a situation. 2) An ontological approach can help us to draw commonalities between Christian and Buddhist teachings on justice. 3) The evasive conception of justice can be grasped meaningfully by the ontological analysis. 4) The theory of subject should be an integral part for constructing a historically and politically engaging ontology.

II. Ontological Understanding of Justice

What is justice? In this essay, justice refers to an overarching agreed-upon rule which regulates the relations among social groups and individuals and, according to which a society and country is to be structured. What is the content of justice? The content of justice has been defined differently by different thinkers. Justice can be seen minimally. For example, Plato defines it thusly: "to render each his due." This means that each of the members of the society is entitled to his/her due portion of social benefits and duties/responsibilities. Here "due" is an implicated term that reflects the social structure of the time of Plato. The contemporary philosopher John Rawls defines justice as "fairness." Rawls presupposes a hypothetical situation where everybody is rational and open to agree the best principles of justice. But I think that Rawls's conception of justice is based on a bourgeois liberal democracy which neglects the alienation of big portion of people, who are left out as non-beings in the social system. Paul Tillich reached his conclusion that the ultimate goal of justice is to realize love.² Others such as the contemporary French philosopher Alain Badiou may well conclude that justice is after all "the possible truth of a politics."³ It seems all thinkers who have attempted to understand justice starts a minimal, and then move on to a maximal, more detailed, explication of it.

One typical example of it is John Rawls, who in his renowned book, *A Theory of Justice*⁴ takes fullest possible consideration not to leave important elements and aspects of justice untouched and un-explicated. However, Rawls' understanding of justice as "fairness" is also pointed out as simply "procedural notions of justice."⁵ This shows that although a theory of justice may make an important contribution to our journey to an insightful understanding of justice, it cannot, however, avoid its incapability to cover all the dimensions of justice.

Justice is related to laws; the latter must become expressions of justice in particular

² Paul Tillich, *Power, and Justice* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), 71.

³ Alain Badiou *Metapolitics*, Jason Barker, trans. (London & New York: Verso, 2005), 97.

⁴ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971).

⁵ Peter Hallward, *Badiou, A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 224.

circumstances and situations. But what about if justice itself cannot be grasped objectively? If the foundation is moving and unstable, the structure on it cannot stand. As an attempt to lay a firm foundation on the concept of justice, I will approach justice by ontological terms and method. That is, I intend to explore ontological meanings of justice, which, I believe, lead us to a deeper understanding of justice. Ontology or metaphysics is a science that attempts to describe and analyze the world of forces and events which constitute the present and envisage the future.⁶

1. What is Ontology?

In other words, ontology is a scientific research into how things are, and what does exist or does not exist. It tries to understand the structure of the existing things. I would go further to politicize ontology by adopting a definition of it as a "science of explaining that how things change and are modified is what and how they *are*."⁷ What ontology is all about is not only to explain the structure of being in the present situation, but, in a real sense, to change it. I think that the ontology of Alain Badiou's version together with that of Karl Rahner's provides us with relevant conceptual tools for subject-oriented analysis of justice. There exist metaphysical or ontological clashes behind the phenomena of most social conflicts and struggles. Ontology is a political problem, because ontology deals with the pattern or structure of the existing things of the world, and with the question of how the structure changes. Ontology specially focuses on the nature of, and the fundamental relations among, the existing things in the world. Justice focuses on the relationship of the existing things and beings. This again brings justice into the territory of ontology.

In this essay, ontology focuses more on the being of humans than on inhuman beings. I agree with Karl Rahner when he notes that humans are spirits, who are self-transcendent.⁸ God is the cause of the human self-transcendence. Being constitutes itself by the acts of expressing themselves and knowing others. Being is related to others; by relating to others (i.e., other human beings and natural environment) it creates newness in and for the being. By attaining newness, a being changes or transforms itself.

⁶ I paraphrase here Halewood's politicized account of metaphysics: "In the accounts of Badiou and Whitehead, metaphysics, as a description of the general conditions of what comes to be, is a description of the field of forces and events which populate and constitute the present, and tend toward the future. This is the politics of metaphysics." Michael Halewood, "Badiou, Whitehead, and the Politics of Metaphysics," *Event and Decision: Ontology and Politics in Badiou, Deleuze, and Whitehead*, Roland Faber, et al. ed., (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 190.

⁷ I quote this sentence directly from Halewood, "Badiou, Whitehead, and the Politics of Metaphysics," 190.

⁸ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, (New York: Continuum, 1994).

Here, I understand being as the fundamental character or form of existing beings (i.e., human beings). Being is the essential core of (human) beings. In order to attain newness and increase in being, human beings must become subjects, specially the agents of acts. Here I would like to turn to the meaning of the term subject. The subject has at least two contradictory or contrasting meanings. One is closely related to the term subjectivity or subjective. The subject "refers to the person or entity carrying or and responsible for an action, rather than the object which is being acted upon."⁹ But when the word subject is used as an adjective, it carries a whole different meaning. It means "dependent or conditioned upon" others.¹⁰ Subject is both agent and body. That is, subject is an active agent who decides upon the objects, but also a body who is dependent upon and influenced and even shaped by the objects. Here my basic assumption lies in the following recognition that: the act of a subject-body upon objects in the world returns to the subject-body which is, via the act, counter-affected by the objects. This return results in changing the subject-body. If the change takes place in a positive way, we can say, following Rahner, that there is an "increment in the being."¹¹

Thus, the subject is affected and reshaped by the object upon which the former has made an act and decision. The subject and object are in a mutually affective relation. "Turn to the subject actually is turn to the subject-in-relation."¹² There exists a dialectic between subject and object that condition each other.¹³

Another assumption is that the act and decision of the subject-body is to be made "in reference to" the creative divine force that emerges in singular historical events, which the late minjung theologian Ahn Byung-mu describes as "volcanic eruptions" from the reservoir of "messianic magma" residing underneath history. Jesus's events take place in history like a volcanic eruption.¹⁴ Ahn says that the event of Jesus did not take place only at a particular time, it takes place on and on in history.¹⁵ The philosopher Alain Badiou resonates Ahn incidentally saying, "Jesus is the name of what happens to us universally."¹⁶ Event, according to Badiou, is an "arrival in

⁹ <http://uk.ask.com/beauty/Objectivity-Vs-Subjectivity>

¹⁰ *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford University, 2005).

¹¹ Stephen M. Fields, S.J., *Being as Symbol: On the Origins and Development of Karl Rahner's Metaphysics*, (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 57.

¹² Mary Hines, *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 32.

¹³ Fields, 71

¹⁴ Ahn Byung-mu, *Minjungshinhak Iyagi*, [The Story of Minjung Theology] (Chonan, Korea: Hanshinyon, 2005) 104. Ahn states that "the event of Christ repeats in history, just as volcanic eruptions take place repeatedly."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁶ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA:

being of non-being, the arrival amidst the visible of the invisible.”¹⁷ We may well think of the subject-body not in a fixed or self-subsistent state, but always in a state of self-transformation in reference to the transcendental event. The subject-body is transformed by an event which, like a divine grace, takes place anterior to, or outside of his/her subjective acts and decisions. The event transforms the body into a real subject that begins a new beginning in history, society, art, study, and life. Here I understand the transcendental not as the *apriori* condition of the subject for knowledge, which Kant has suggested, but as a transcendent source that makes possible the world to transcend itself. The transcendental forces are present not only in the subject but within all objects and their in-betweens including live relations. All objects are active, and they actualize themselves according to their transcendental logic. They are not dead objects (*res extensa*, thing that can be extended, Decartes), but they are active as subjects, and return upon us with impacts.

Again, subject has a double meaning. It is minjung theology that emphasized the double meaning of the subject both making own decision and being subject to oppression and coercion. As more explained in detail in the footnote below, the subject as agent is the one who takes the position and state and forms his/her own world.¹⁸ Without subject, there is no

Stanford Univ. Press, 2003), 60. Despite such a striking commonality between Ahn Byung-mu and Alain Badiou, the latter considers the resurrection as the only event that has the worth, while for the former the event comprises all Jesus’s activities in his earthly life as an event of novelty.

¹⁷ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London/New York: Continuum, 2005), 181. It is Badiou who efficiently argues that the existence of discrimination and exclusion with non-participation and non-representation are the ontological facts. Badiou ontologically proved that our situation is a structured and stratified and hierarchical situation within the human historical sphere. While Martin Heidegger saw the being as Dasein, the being with innate temporality, Alain Badiou analyzed the being in terms of inclusion and exclusion employing mathematical set theory. The former viewed the temporality of the human being, while the latter went over it to reach such ontological problem of human beings as exclusion of non-beings (the void) within but outside the structures. In order to break up such an ontological situation, Badiou suggests an ontological concept: the event. The event is a truthful moment in which a new thing begins and overthrows the old situation.

¹⁸ I want to clarify the meaning of the terms subject and subjectivity in relation to other similar terms such as agency, self, and person, by employing Paul Kockelman’s definitions in his book, *Agent, Person, Subject, Self: A Theory of Ontology, Interaction, and Infrastructure*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013), Kockelman suggestively states that “agency might be understood as a causal capacity, say, flexibly wielding means toward ends. Subjectivity might be understood as a representational capacity, say, holding mental states or expressing speech acts. Selfhood might be understood as a reflexive capacity, say, being the means and ends of one’s own actions or being the object of one’s own private and public representations. And personhood might be understood

meaningful challenge to change the situation/world. Explanation and interpretation alone cannot solve the problem, only direct acts of the subjects can. Subjects are connected with other subjects, and also act in the interconnected situation to realize themselves on the assumption of having grasped the reality of the situation in their own terms. If our ontology wants to be a socially and politically dynamic one, a theory of subject must participate in it as an integral element. Also, the subject must not be a static one, but rather actively engaging agent with being acting and acted upon in the web of relationship with other subjects and objects.

One of the crucial problematic related to justice is to find and determine who the real subjects are, that will witness to and bear justice adequate to historical situations. For Rawls, institutions are the real subjects for justice. For Confucians, the subjects for justice are individual scholars or trainees. For Buddhists, they are the enlightened non-Is or *Budhisattvas*.

2. Ontological Analysis of Justice

Justice is an ontological reality, which is invisible and cannot be identical with any other visible entity. But it is always drawn upon, when the relations in persons, organizations and others are regulated. Ontology deals with such genuine reality of existents visible and invisible, including human beings and conceptual realities such as justice. Justice is a temporal but transcendent reality. It must actualize itself here and now, but still it transcends its temporal actualizations expressed in laws, actions, or systems. If justice cannot be objectified, but still must be actualized in the world, there must be someone who actualizes it. Thus we can say that justice is not impersonal and objective, but rather personal and subjective. Justice is in need of the subjects who would become its media, executioners and bearers.

Justice as being is real. It must be objectified but, but cannot be fixated. It defies fixation by institutions and tenets. Once it is objectified, it must move beyond, because it defies fixed status. It works; it works as a guiding post that regulates relations *in* and *between* beings or existents. It works as a live principle to order and regulate both the visible and the invisible in the world. To explain, government, parliament, laws, mass media, other institutions are visible, while such mental side of the reality as relationship, consciousness, spirituality, or culture is invisible. Justice as a reality constantly needs visible beings and existents to realize itself in them. Karl Rahner calls them the "real symbols" of a reality.¹⁹

as a sociopolitical capacity, say, rights and responsibilities attendant on being an agent, subject, or self." Kockelman, 1.

¹⁹ I am adopting Karl Rahner's idea of "real symbol." For Rahner the real symbol is an authentic temporal expression of being, a reality. Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," *A Rahner Reader*, ed. Gerald A McCool, (New York, NY: Seabury, 1975), 120-130.

The being and 'a being as objective entity or symbol' are in mutual interaction, although the former is the dominant partner. The ontology of justice aims to disclose the whole structure of the being of justice. It wants to reveal even the unrecovered "creative" meaning of justice.²⁰ There is no complete understanding and definition of justice, but what we can do about it is to dig into the meaningfulness of justice by way of ontological, metaphysical analysis. To do that, we must refer to Biblical texts and other scriptural resources including the Buddhist ones that contain rich messages about justice.

Ontological approach to justice helps us to construct a common ground on which we can explore and compare the divergences and commonalities in the two religions' conceptions of justice. Out of common and divergent ontological notions and concepts we can envisage a convergence of them by reading and interpreting them creatively and relevantly, which we hope brings about a heightened and insightful understanding of justice. As we know, theological studies on ontology have a long history in the West. The Buddhist philosophy is characterized by its particular ontological analyses of all beings. It is full of ontological concepts that can be correlated with ontological notions in the Western theological traditions. In both East and West, justice is connected to the ultimate being. Justice is understood as the will of the ultimate being. It is an imperative descending down to the humanity from heaven, not from persons, institutions, and structures. For the ancients, justice belongs to the realm of the divinity.

Paul Tillich suggested love and power as company concepts of justice. These three are integrally connected to one another. The meaning of justice cannot be explored without exploring its relation to love and power, and the opposite direction is also true. The three realities, love, power, and justice participate in the ultimate Being, which brings them into unity.

In the history of ecumenical movement both in Korea in particular and in the world in general, Christians and churches have come to realize that life, peace and justice are so closely and even organically connected to one another, that one cannot be understood without the other two fully considered. Both life and peace should have the form in which these two are realized. The form of life and peace is justice; and the matter of justice is life and peace. Without furthering and flourishing of life and peace, there is no justice. If justice is realized at the cost of life and peace, like the so-called just war, that is not justice, but injustice. The most dreadful expression of justice was made by Ferdinand I, the Holy Roman Emperor, who stated: "*Fiat justitia, et pereat munda*," that is, "Let justice be done, though the world perishes."²¹ Justice alone without supports and complements from the ontologically connected realities such as life and peace, will eventually fall into a dangerous situation where our life, knowledge and thought stifles. North Korea repeats nuclear tests and seems to increase its nuclear capability, which threatens the peace

²⁰ Paul Tillich used the term "creative justice" as the most ideal understanding of justice. Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 71.

²¹ Quoted from Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, (London, New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 21.

and security in and around the Korean Peninsula. But we cannot adopt the idea of justice alone or "justice only," like grace only. Justice has its ultimate aim in the context of Korea: that is, peace and life. Peace and life can be flourished only when justice is balanced with reconciliation and forgiving. Reconciliation and forgiving must result in life and peace. "Justice only" cannot bring about an authentic justice, but only injustice.

But how do we deal with the problems of past historical wrongs such as the Holocaust, Apartheid and massacres that had been done during and after colonial rule and the war in Korea? In such a situation, mutual forgiveness seems not easy, even impossible. Some process of reprimanding the inflicted wrongs and measures for restitution must be concretized and put into practice as a necessary step toward reconciliation and forgiving. Thus justice must remain a guiding principle and form for life and peace, as well as for reconciliation. But justice with blindness to love and reconciliation can be cold and cruel. Still there exists a tension among those realities: justice, peace, life, reconciliation and forgiveness.

III. An Ontological Interpretation of Buddhist Teachings

Buddhism upholds three defining characteristics of all conditioned things: impermanence (*anicca*), ignorance or unenlightenedness (*dukkha*), and without-self (*anatta*, no-enduring-self). These three marks are true of all existent beings, which are all interdependently arisen.²² The lack of enduring self points to the ever changing characteristic of the self. The self or the subject changes as it experiences and encounters other objects in the world. The subject is inner-relationally co-dependent on its objects. Objects participate into their subject and change the latter. There is no sharp division between the subject and object. They are in dialectical relation co-defining each other. Such permanent elements as substance and essence cannot stand in such an ontological understanding. In this context equality crosses over not only among people regardless of classes, races and sexes, but over the lines of different species and genera. Compassion derives from such equality. Compassion toward all others can be a fundamental for democracy, and social and ecological justice.

The main point of ontological argument is to affirm the validity of the creation and its members. The Being, the divine Qi, the Buddhahood are all realized by existent beings and the creatures. The latter can glimmer the light and color of the being itself. That is, all existing things can be symbols of the being. But in what sense they are authentic real symbols of being? If they reveal the reality in even a scanty and "glimmer" and glimpse, or "trace" way, they can serve as

²² Stephen J. Laumakis, *Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 145.

real symbols.²³ The being, the Buddha, is always there in time and place. The rest is not permanent. "Buddha's action in the world is therefore strictly omnipresent."²⁴ The omni-presence and immanence is expressed in this way.

"Just as space is always considered to be omnipresent,
So also this is always considered to be omnipresent;
Just as space is omnipresent among physical forms,
So also this is omnipresent among the hosts of living beings."²⁵

This is also an exact expression of the being in the whole world. At the same time, the following is also emphasized: "The first is that while Buddha is, strictly, present to all living beings in the same way and to the same extent at all times, it is also the case that Buddha in its body of magical transformation seems to be present to different living beings in different ways and to different extents."²⁶ In actual world the extent of the presence of the Buddhahood in each living being is the same; but it is different according to the extent of how much the living being as subject can accept and actualize it in the actual life. In other words, "some living beings receive more of it because of their merits, just as high mountains get more of the sun's light; and some living beings respond positively to it and some negatively, just as some lotus plants open themselves to the sun's rays while others close their petals."²⁷ Here what matters is the existence of the subjective dimension of living beings (existents). The living beings must become subjects so that they can respond positively to the Being Itself, which is the God or the Buddha. Also, all beings must be respected as singularities, because they bear and reflect the Buddhahood. The Buddhahood is the second order reality that is immanent commonly in all existents. "Human-animals" live in the first order reality, that is, in the world of existents. It is *Bodhisattva* who pursues the ideal of the Buddhahood in this life. Like *Bodhisattva*, the subject or the subjective being is the one who live in both the first and second orders. In this context, the eternal dimension, the truth, the ultimate good and beauty belong to the second order. The subject lives in the first order, a realm of interdependent arising, but determines to live by the second order, the truth, and the revelation, in his/her mundane life-world.

IV. The Meeting Points of Buddhism and Christianity in the Search for Justice

²³ Milton Scarborough, *Comparative Theories of Nonduality: The Search for a Middle Way* (New York, London: Continuum, 2009), 87.

²⁴ Paul J. Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1994), 108.

²⁵ Quoted from the Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 109.

²⁷ Quoted from the Ibid., 110.

1. Karma and Action

The Vedas talk about the "karmic significance and importance of rituals properly performed by the Brahmins and their effects on both one's earthly existence as well as one's existence after death."²⁸ In Hinduism, the doctrine of karma is employed to justify the fate of the people. In the Vedic-Hindu tradition, Karma is a convenient instrument to explain why some are born rich and noble, while others are born poor and lowly. Karma was at first a ritual act in the Vedic tradition. If you did a wrong ritual, your fate would be not good. If you did an authentic sacrifice, your fate will be good. But even in Upanishads, the notion of Karma was extended to the entire sphere of human actions beyond the practice of rituals.²⁹

The notion of karma is central to Buddhism, which has deconstructed the rigid fatalism contained in the Hindu notion of karma. The Buddha rejected the social stratification in terms of the caste, which is justified by the Hindu doctrine of karma. In Buddhism the meaning of karma changed to mean "act," or "moral deed." I think we can even say that Karma is an instrument to change one's fate conditioned by one's circumstances. In Buddhism, karma no longer an instrument to justify and perpetuate one's present condition, but a medium to change it to a better one. This liberating idea of the Buddha was interpreted differently and distortedly in the later traditions. Rather than providing the poor with the food, the priests and monks received gift even from the poor, because people believed that by offering gifts to the monastery they could accumulate merit for a better future life. The "monastic community was considered to be a 'field of merit' for the laity, and accepting a gift was viewed as an act of compassion."³⁰ Karma in the mind of the Buddha, however, is not confined to the activities connected to the monastic community. The human karma or action must be expanded to the general public arenas. The good karma or gift should not be offered only to a certain community, because the latter does not represent the whole world.

We may well understand the Buddha's thought of karma in the narrative recorded in *Kutadanta Sutta*. To sum the story, a king asked his advisor what he should do in order to attain heaven. The advisor, who played the role of the Buddha, told him to "act publically and in socially beneficial ways and with the consent of his subjects," so that he might become worthy of attaining heaven.³¹ He told: in order to prepare for the sacrifice, the king must first get justice done in public and social matters, by ending "disorder in the kingdom, not through rigid policies

²⁸ Laumakis, 108.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Mavis Fenn, "Buddhism and Historical Setting," *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice*, ed. Michael D. Palmer and Stanley M. Burgess, (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell, 2012), 20.

³¹ Ibid., 24.

of law and order, but through measures" such as "job-creation programs, equitable taxation, and good wages and benefits for government workers."³² Here we can see the understanding of the Buddha on karma, which for him is both individual and social action for justice in society.

Having discussed the meaning of karma in connection to the religious and ritual activities, I will bring out two texts from the Bible, which have a commonality with the story in the above. Jesus said,

"So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." (Mt. 5:23-24)

Also, let us refer to the testimony of prophet Micah.

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God? (Mic. 6:6-8).

It is Hebrew prophets who most loudly cried out the precedence of doing justice in the public arena over simply offering sacrifices and rituals in the sanctuary. Jesus was faithful to the prophetic tradition. He further went over it by proclaiming the Kingdom of God in the context of the Roman Empire and Judaic Temple Religion. The message of the Kingdom is the prophetic demand for justice for the weak in Israel. His message is summarized in the Nazareth Manifesto in the Luke 4:18-19, which is taken from Isa. 61:1-2, which states,

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

Jesus' manifesto in Nazareth manifests the agenda for his ministry, his program for action. It is evident that his manifesto contains the action program for social justice. The Hebrew

³² Ibid.

prophetic tradition of justice is more intensified in the short period of Jesus' public life, which brought a brutal death on the cross to him. Jesus believed in the Hebrew God who was a God of justice (Isa. 30:18). All his ways are justice (Deut. 32:4). Justice and righteousness are the foundation of God's throne (Ps. 97:2).

2. The Non-I (無我) and the Subject

In ontology, being is the source and cause of acts. Only through and by acts, being realizes itself. However, being as the source of act utilizes a substance or a being that includes its essence. Western classical philosophers put an ontological concept, essence, in between the being and the act. Essence is understood as what makes an entity what it fundamentally is, the identity of it. Essence is contrasted with accident, which happens by chance, and therefore does not constitute identity. Buddhism denies the existence of essence.

Buddhism believes that an entity is a product of interdependent arising in the web of innumerable relations. For the Buddhists, 'emptiness' (also, *Anatta* or *Anatman*) is the strong assertion that all phenomena are empty of any essence. It is at the root of Buddhist praxis; the belief in essence is considered to be the root of all sufferings. So, Buddhism teaches that there is no such thing as I or the self. The I or the self is a constructed reality created by the situation of complex relations where the I/self finds inevitably itself. The doctrine of the non-I or the non-self breaks the permanence of the situation that constantly shapes the inner state of the I. It also breaks the static state of the present I, breaking it up and creating ever a new I. To that extent, the Buddhist teaching of the non-I creates the space where a new subject may appear, who can become an agent to transcend the present situation.

The doctrine of the non-I leads to the doctrine that all humans and even non-human creatures have the Buddhahood. The Buddhahood or the Buddha nature (佛性) is the effective cause of the new self, to borrow the Thomistic terms. It is the source of the increment in the being of our beings. It is like a divine grace that penetrates into our human nature. Where do we draw the Buddhahood? By thinking that every phenomenon is void and empty, and that I do not have the-I. By emptying myself and drawing into the vacant and the Buddhahood, the Spirit, and the Source of Life, I then become a *bodhisattva* who realizes the Buddha in this world.

Human being is always in the process of change, without having a permanent essence, by denying itself and transcending itself to a higher (or, lower) stage by self-expressive and but actually non-'self-centered', othered acts. Human beings along with other creaturely beings participate in this source of life: the Being. Note here that I use the term the Being to be different from the being. The Being or the Being Itself is regarded as the ultimate source of all beings. Such eastern religious thoughts as Confucianism, Buddhism, and the Korean Religion of the Heavenly Way all have primary concern for human beings as agents to realize divine values such as life, peace, justice, etc. The being of humans is to be activated and realized by human acts, and then

the former participates through its acts in the Being Itself and realizes it in the world. This involves the *analogia entis* (the analogy of being). The authentic subjects and the *Bodhisattvas* in history are immortal in the sense that they participate in the Being or the True at the moment of the event.

The doctrine of the non-I or non-essence may well be interpreted in a socially dynamic way. In the present situation of permanent stratifications, exclusions, and divisions, which take place in the present neoliberal capitalist jungle, the process of perpetuating the essence of certain humans and nonhumans by covertly or openly stereotyping and discriminating them is rampantly going on. These people unconsciously internalize such stereotyping and "essentializing" and fall into the state of the subaltern, the mute(d) minjung. In this context, the message of the non-essence/non-I, can be a liberating one. Assuming the subjecthood requires the subject-body to break up the old self and old essence that was imposed by evil institutions and structures such as neo-liberalism. The subjects are those who begin new things transcending all discriminatory and enslaving impositions.

V. Concluding Remarks

In the above, I delineated that being and act are the ontological source for the self-transcendence of the humans, as spirits. The Buddhist deconstructive notion of the non-I and non-essence intervenes and eradicates the pitfall in the idea of essence of the Western classical ontology. I tried to demonstrate that other than the idea of essence, the ontological notions of being and act can be employed to interpret the teachings of both Christianity and Buddhism in a way that justice and subject are seen as a major, if not the most important, part of their teachings.

Being is the source and origin of act. The being of an entity itself is not predetermined, but always proceeds and becomes, as the entity multiplies its acts. Being is a transcendental reality, which is not visible but still at work in all acts and entities. Being and act are in a mutually reciprocal relationship. A human (entity) makes increases in the being by his/her acts. A society can make increases in its being (total quality) by collective acts of justice. A church can make an increase in its being by its acts of all participating work in faith.

My major thesis is that justice is in need of the subject who realizes it in concrete situations. In this essay, the subject is understood in terms of being and act, which break the chains perpetuating the fate (essence) of the subaltern and minjung. The decisive moment when subject is created, is the event, in which the essences imposed upon the people in the present situation are broken, and a new beginning starts.

I have intentionally incorporated the idea of event appearing in both the minjung theologian Ahn Byung-mu and the philosopher Alain Badiou into my ontological analysis of being and act, and of justice and subject. The inclusion of the reality of the event in history in our ontology helps historicize and politicize our ontology; the doctrine of subject further delivers our

ontology from falling into a dormant inactive discourse and passive neutrality in history and society. Together with Badiou, we may well say that Jesus or the Buddha is the name of eventive acts taking place universally, which creatively respond to the call for justice in our world. What we have to do is to reawaken our hermeneutical sensitivity to discern the events of Jesus and Buddha taking place in our times.

Finally, justice in ontological conception has its roots in the divinity. Justice, peace, and life are in unity because they are rooted in the divine being. The purpose of justice is life and peace. Such an understanding of justice is quite relevant to our situation in Korea, where the state of warfare is still persisting. Therefore, I would like to emphasize that "justice only" without supportive and complementary realities such as life and peace, will turn injustice eventually.

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<Abstract>

This essay tries to secure a common ground on which we can analyze teachings of two religions (Christianity and Buddhism) on justice. This essay attempts to show that the common ground of the two religions can be constructed by concepts in the socially and politically dynamic ontology. The author interprets such ontological notions as being, act, essence to discuss the theme: justice and subject from an interreligious perspective. Justice and subject and their relationship are studied and interpreted in a way that Christianity and Buddhism find meeting points. He demonstrates that the notions of the Non-I and Karma in Buddhism are correspondent to the ideas of subject and act respectively. This essay shows that these four notions, Karma, action, the Non-I, and subject are differently and distinctly nuanced concepts but still can be interpreted and integrated into a meaningful discourse on justice. The essay proposes that the purpose of justice is life and peace. Therefore, the author suggests, "justice only" without supportive ontological realities such as life and peace, will turn injustice eventually.

<Key Words>

justice, ontology, subject, essence, non-I, Buddha, karma,