

Worship as Performance Focusing on the Performance Theory of Richard Schechner

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Abstract

The decrease in the number of Christians means that Christian worship is meaningless and worthless to people. The Korean church has discussed how to overcome the crisis of a declining number of Christians, but the typical pattern of worship has not renewed. Although there have been many discussions about restoring worship, they are often only internal discourses in the theological area. Therefore, this paper criticizes the problems of the worship in the Korean church reflecting on other academic theories. First, it approaches to introduce the Performance Theory discussing the necessity of interdisciplinary research. It helps to approach a new pattern of the worship service by

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diagnosing the problems about the current Korean church worship situation. This academic effort is to overcome the limitations of theatricality. Then, it explains the concept of performance and performativity suggesting Performance studies as a newly emerging method. Thus, it applies the principle of Schechner's "Six Axioms for Environmental Theater" to the principle of worship. Finally, this paper insists 'Worship as Performance' composed of human behavior, metaphor, and implication.

- Keywords

Worship as Performance, Renewing worship, Performativity, Performance studies, Human behavior, Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre, Metaphor and Implication.

I. Introduction

The history of the theater is based on the ritual origin that the sacrificial acts to God compose in the theatrical form. The theatrical forms gradually became a genre having elements of theater, drama, and actor. Worship was also a performance itself, as it went back to its origins before it was documented and stylized. In the ear of early Christianity, the house where people lived a daily life were places of worship, and worship consisted of stories of Jesus, songs, and prayers without priests or any stereotyped formalities. These factors were gradually institutionalized as components of worship: from storytelling to the sermon, from eating and sharing to the sacraments.

We cannot deny that performance and worship have been developed as necessary rituals and expressions that embody human's beliefs and desires. Since the modern period, the theatrical circles have systematized the Performance Theory to get beyond the limits of theatricality and applied it to academia and performance. This paper indicates the six axioms of the environmental theater in the Performance Theory of Richard Schechner, who is the founder of Performance Theory, as a methodology to solve the current problems of Korean churches' worship and suggest the notion of worship as a performance. The Korean church regards 'worship as a performance' as a radical idea for the Korean Church. However, when we find something in common between performance and worship, it may give us some helpful clues to solve the problems. Thus, interdisciplinary studies of performance and theology can provide new insights into renewing worship.

1. Theatricality

Even though performance and religion are different areas, there are many connections. Their connections are giving an experience. This experience makes people stand on the boundary of theater and performance. Depending on the experiences of participants, the ritual nature of performance and religion can be acquired identity or formed community.¹ Theater can be translated as ‘Theater’ itself around the world. The origin of the term, Theater, is the combination of the Greek, *thea*(-view), *theatron*’s root and the suffix, *-tron*(place). In other words, the ancient people desired to find the *theo*(god) through Theater. Therefore, the theater has a deep relationship with religion. The Greeks themselves reflected on what God’s will was through the mandatory theater. It was their theory and theology.

Christian worship implies theatricality and rituality. The performance provided people with catharsis to separate from their everyday lives; worship also pursued the world of peace based on the separation of holiness and secularity. However, people felt empathy in the theater, by feeling extreme fear of the tragic situation or sympathizing for the characters, and then reflected on their lives. Through the unity with daily life and the worship, Christians had comfort and the purpose of establishing the kingdom of God in this world. Thus, the theater and worship have developed in common with existing “liminality.”

The theatricality and the nature of worship have a close relationship. First, it reflects a human existential desire to God and the World (of God). Second, people want to find an answer to their desire at limi-

1 Erica Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, translated by Jung Sook Kim (Seoul: Munhak kwa Jiseongsa, 2017), 5.

nality separated from their lives. Third, the desire is embodied through the humans' active and subjective actions. However, the theater gradually tried to put the world in the space called "the stage," and worship also tried to restrain the truth in the space called "the church." The theater focused on producing professional actors, and the church tried to produce professional priests. The theater and church played a role in providing the clear liminal between the imaginary world and reality. However, they could not function to give people environments to create independent performance or worship because of this space and role setting. Instead, the professional experts, who are organized by 'their world,' can only intervene and lead the people. Also, the theater was based on a script; worship was based on the liturgical text of worship, it means that it cannot be accepted if it did not fit in their formats.

The biggest problem and commonality of between performance and worship are to bridge the visible space dividing the stage and the auditorium,² the actors and the audiences, and the daily life and illusion so that it has developed the form of showing. At the form, the audience becomes a mere viewer. The stage and the auditorium are divided, the actor on the stage only experiences the illusion, which is related to the stage. The concept of illusion comes from the Latin *illudere* in a verb, which means to cheat, to play, and to mock. The term, illusion, means the realistic reconstruction or copying of the reality outside the theater. It is related to the acceptance by the audience.³ In this case, the audi-

2 Marianne H. Micks criticizes that the holy realm became the priestly realm, allowing visible space, the building of the church since Christianity became publicized in 313: Marianne H. Micks, *The Future Present: The Phenomenon of Christian Worship* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).

3 Jean-Jacques Roubine, *Introduction Aux Grandes Theories Du Theatre*, translated by Ae Ryun

ence becomes a passive object that is immersed in Aristotelian Aesthetics or an aesthetic system according to the assimilation theory and adapted into compassion and fear. Aristotle's goal in his poetry is to catharsis emotion, through pity and fear. These concepts, pity, fear, and catharsis, are in the emotional world, so his Aesthetic is called emotional Aesthetic. For the emotional experience, it has to be immersed and assimilated in the emotion and is also called an assimilated Aesthetic.

2. Theatrum Mundi

Richard Schechner, who is the founder of the Performance Theory, summons the theatrical concept of the Baroque era, *Theatrum Mundi* because he feels a sense of skepticism about the systematic aesthetic theater. *Theatrum Mundi* is a worldly view of the Baroque era, in which humans first became conscious of the infinite world and finite human existence in Western history. Human beings deny the unique existence chosen by God, instead recognize actors, who always change the role in the world (like the stage).⁴ In other words, *Theatrum Mundi* is that the world is the stage, life itself is play, and each person is an actor.

The genre of theater has advanced and has already attempted a broad understanding of a text, people, and the world. Though there are many contacts between theater and worship, the verbal performance of clergy mostly forms the Protestant worship. It means that the monologue of the system of the pastor makes the congregation the au-

Kim (Seoul: Poly Media, 1993), 101-109.

4 Richard Schechner, "What is Performance Studies," *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 5.2 (1993): 5.

dience. Thus, it is a grave error to make individuals objects under the authority of worship, not as a subject of worship. More specifically, there are problems: the verbal centered worship and addressing performed by the heroized pastor; the limitations of variability depending on the well-organized worship cue sheet; the apparent gap between the high pulpit and the space of the congregation; and a passive theater structure that only allows listening without any moving of the body.

The pastor has various titles that are a communicator of salvation, a representative as a preacher, an exemplary teacher, a servant to the Word of God.⁵ According to the definition, the pastor has the limitation of being a moral teacher or a proprietor who monopolizes the sermon and liturgy. At this point, there is a high possibility that worship would be unilateral without freedom, creativity, and communication. It is the same case that the spotlighted pastor seats the congregation at the dark change, and manipulates them by the compulsory message. Therefore, the pastor as a performer is another definition and role of the pastor. At the same time, the congregation should become the behavioral subjectivity as a performer, who actively and dynamically participates in the worship, rather than as a passive and rigid worshiper. Therefore, this paper criticizes the single form of Christian worship and the theological education, then suggests alternative worship through the theory of Schechner. His Performance Theory, which explains the theater as a concept of *Theatrum Mundi*, allows for “multiple variabilities.”⁶ It also supports the possibility of the alternative worship based on the

5 Gol Rim, “The Pastor as Artist: Redefining the Role of Pastors in Reforming Church Culture,” *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 31.1 (January 2004): 339-340.

6 Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetic*, 53.

understanding about a co-producer and co-subject, beyond the showing form. After explaining the notions of performance and performativity, Performance Theory, as a new methodology, which develops worship as performance through six axioms of the environmental theater of Schechner, will be discussed in order to have solidarity between Performance Theory and theology.

II. Performance and Performativity

Before suggesting worship as performance, it is essential to appreciate the conceptual understanding of performance and the academic basis of Performance Theory.

The term, performance, originated in the ancient French *parfaire*, which means completion or fulfillment.⁷ However, interpreting the etymology of perfection, as perfectiveness, is not appropriate to the theory of performance. It attempts to transcend modern perception. Instead, it is better to understand the term, *per*, as a meaning of process like though, because, and during,⁸ or as a meaning of trying, attempting, and challenging.⁹ This approach is the lexical concept of performance that approximates the theory of performance. Performance is a word derived from the verb, perform, and the primary meaning is to do something. Thus, performance is action. Schechner defines performance as the whole action that would affect others.¹⁰ Performance

7 Victor Turner, *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play* (New York: PAJ Books, 1982), 13.

8 <https://www.wordnik.com/words/perform>, accessed September, 20, 2018.

9 Turner, *From ritual to theatre*, 17-18.

10 Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies* (London: Routledge, 2002), 23.

as action causes the reaction to the action, resulting in an interaction between the actor and its counterpart. Thus, performance occurs in action, interaction, and relation. In other words, performance exists in “between,” not in “what.”¹¹

The concept of performance tends to be perceived as a free practical action against the theory of literary constructions or as a genre of avant-garde performance art or experimental drama. However, performance does not merely mean a comprehensive understanding of theatrical performances or a part of performing arts field. The performance regards all ritual of the world as performance, which is human behavior caused by the nature of human behavior and performativity. Therefore, performance can confront theology only when it goes beyond the idea of limiting it as a performing arts genre.

The study of performance as a new academic approach begins with defining humans as ‘performing being,’ Homo Performance.¹² John L. Austin, who first mentioned performativity as a precondition for Homo Performance, borrowed the word, performance, in 1961 not only to describe the language describing and naming objects in human language behavior but also to bring the actions causing change.¹³

Judith Butler has combined Austin’s concept of performance with her gender theory. She regarded gender as not being given on the ontological basis but arising in the form of repetitive acts. She also referred to the process of gender formation, which is in the process of

11 *Ibid.*, 24.

12 Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer, “The Power of Transformation in Performance Studies Pedagogy,” in *Teaching Performance studies*, eds. Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2002), 12.

13 John L. Austin, *How to do things with words*, translated by Young Jin Kim (Seoul: Seokwangsa, 1992), 27.

change through culturally repeated actions, as performativity.¹⁴

Butler emphasizes the term, agency, which is the concept of action subjectivity. It is not the formation of subjectivity, but the subjectivity constructed through performativity.¹⁵ Therefore, the performativity investigates and subverts the norms and orders of ‘universal, unity, causation, general, normal, and foundation.’

Victor Turner is another noble scholar to declare performativity. He relates the ritual to the performativity. In order to know people belonging to different cultures, he argues not to claim academic anthropology, but to approach the folklore aspects of roles and ritual events.¹⁶ Turner pointed out the reason why he focused on performance anthropology and experiential anthropology in his later life. Through experiences, culturally delivered performance and actions of other nations, we can learn from not only the people who have the letter but also the people who do not have the letter. Turner presumes that performance anthropology is an essential part of the anthropology of experience. “All types of cultural practices, including all types of cultural performances, rituals, ceremony, carnivals, theater, and poetry, are explanations and interpretations of life itself.”¹⁷ The ritual performativity is developed to the theatrical performativity, and it affects to Schechner, who suggests the theory of performance.¹⁸ As such, Performance

14 An act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a “doing” rather than a “being”; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 25.

15 Actors are not assumed to be a priori, but act only occurs through act. We do not assume a subject that exists a priori. Subjectivity can be constituted only through the concept and action of non-essential subjectivity, which is constituted by the cause of action, mediation, or action.

16 Turner, *From ritual to theatre*, 19.

17 *Ibid.*, 13.

studies have globally expanded and formed the paradigm of Performative turn. It brings considerable changes in the arts, humanities, and social sciences in the present,¹⁹ it means that the concept of performance can approach other studies and topics without any problems.²⁰

By the 1990s, the metaphor of culture as the performance academically dominated.²¹ The Department of Performance studies has globally expanded and formed the paradigm of 'Performative turn.' Thus, contemporary studies try to apply performance in their academic area in order to effect a change.

It criticizes that there is a tendency to put everything under the performance.²² However, the Performance Theory is vital to understanding more dynamic and organic people and the world. We should avoid the fact that existing studies pursued are lexical, psychological, and realistic. It is time for theological studies to focus on the theory of performance that enable us to study eventual, behavioral, and variable factors.

III. Emerging method, 'Performance studies'

Performance studies were conducted mainly in the United States

18 Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 11-12.

19 Turner, *From ritual to theatre*, 79.

20 D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 149.

21 Erika Fischer-Lichte, "From Text to Performance: The Rise of Theatre Studies as an Academic Discipline in Germany," *Theatre Research International* 24.2 (1999): 168.

22 Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into performance," in *Folklore: Performance and Communication*, eds. Dan Ben-Amos & Kenneth S. Goldstein (The Hague: Mout & Co., 1975), 13.

and Germany. In the United States, it was organized by Richard Schechner at the period of the cultural transition of the performative turn after the 1960s. In Germany, it was developed by Erika Fischer-Lichte at the Free University of Berlin. She describes the characteristics of performance as follows: first, in the performance, the audience participates as a co-participant. Second, it is also a kind of performance, which is accompanied by material transformations such as space, sound, and rhythm. Third, the act itself does not function to reproduce the meaning of the existing imitation or to convey meaning only, but to occur through the event. Lastly, the experience of actions and events includes a liminal experience.

Schechner, who wanted to build a new paradigm in theatrical arts through the expansion of the concept from performing arts to performance art and again to full performance, declared through the keynote address of the conference at the American Theater Association (ATHE) in 1992: "the new paradigm is performance, not theatre."²³ As for the performance research, Schechner argued that the university should open new courses enlightening a fundamental paradigm for culture, life, and humans, rather than just teaching theory for performance.²⁴ Thus, Schechner suggested that the title of the Department of drama at New York University be changed to the Department of Performance studies. He argues that the theater should be understood as a concept of Homo Performance, not a pure drama because it examines the dynamics of human behavior beyond the form of showing.

23 Richard Schechner, "A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy," *The Drama Review* 36.4 (Winter 1992), 7.

24 Richard Schechner, "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach," in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8.

The educational purpose of performance, which Schechner intends, is not to raise the professional actor as an expert, but to foster the theorists and practitioner, who stand on the liminality, not in the given boundary. They should stand in the process rather than produce the finished work.²⁵ About this academic emphasis, Schechner gave the performance study a sense of resistance, which is against authority, order, and stability given by cultural identifications following the Western centered-aesthetic paradigm and the script as a finished work. He realized that the Department of drama, which was incorporated into the university in the title of the arts education together with the vocational training to cultivate the on-the-spot theater actor, did not provide professional training or academic education. He pointed out the fact that despite the inclusion of new media such as TV and film, there is a shortage of jobs compared to the graduates of the drama department.

Thus he called a paradigm shift to 'Performance research' for the following three reasons.²⁶ First, the theater of the limited concept of the dramatization is becoming an art for a minimal number of people as the string quartet today. Second, there is a need for a new field of the study and research that can lead to actual cultural interactive praxis against the US-led multiculturalism that attempts to conceal the central function of (Western white) cultural power through the exhibition effect of various cultures. Third, in order to satisfy these demands, it is necessary to reform the goals and curriculum of the department radically. He argues that the curriculum of education on

25 Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 104.

26 Schechner, "A New Paradigm," 7-9.

Western European drama as a ‘finished product (Completed Works)’ must be changed.

Furthermore, the discipline should concentrate on political, cultural and religious implications by explaining the performativity of the aspects used in politics, medicine, sports, religion, and daily life of the human. To do so, he urges to continue interdisciplinary research that actively interacts with experts in other disciplines, to increase the proportion of women and minority professors, and to actively attract students with diverse cultural backgrounds.²⁷

It is possible to examine the Korean theological education, which confronts a massive crisis, through Schechner’s radical claim and transformation. Is it right to adhere to the formal curriculum focusing on the function of theological education, which produces a professional pastor as a craftsperson or a religious person? Based on Schechner’s assertion raising the “in-process” practitioners and theoreticians, are the seminary and the church today responsible for the various curriculum and creative worship composition for the life of the seeker in the process? As Schechner argues, which is to pursue interdisciplinary studies that interact positively with experts in other disciplines, raise the proportion of women and minority professors, and actively attract students with diverse cultural backgrounds, do the seminary, and the church engage in research with other disciplines? Do women, the marginal, and people with diverse cultural backgrounds consider their positions and boundaries?

About this crisis, the former president of Sungkonghoe University, Lee Jung-gu refers to the theology as creative arts education should be implemented. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, he

27 *Ibid.*, 9-10.

points out that the field of art as a subject of convergence is more important than any other field. He said art is an essential field in the theological education of the future. Although creativity is not as demanding as an artist in the ministry of a pastor, a variety of art genres are needed to construct worship that encompasses human emotions and spirituality in order to construct a worship service that takes an hour or more. The pastor studies and prepares a basic understanding of minimal space, drama, stage decoration, lighting, sound, and color, and the pastor's creativity. The alternative, which human beings can cope with as much as the development of machines, is to enhance creativity. Creativity is not born but can be trained through education. Thus, he suggests that the theological education of the future considers the paradigm of the theological education through the training to provide the time, place and motivation for the art activity from the photograph to the work of the small piece, painting sculpture, theater. He emphasizes that it is time to discard or replace a considerable amount of traditional and conservative educations.²⁸

Another advice on these crises, the chaplain of Yonsei University, Rim Gol, points out the problem of the church as clergy centeredness and a deep-rooted imitation culture. The strict culture of the church connects to the authoritarianism of the rigid pastor. It is a limiting factor in the free and creative church culture. Therefore, in order to overcome the absolute rigidity of the pastor and the imitative church culture of the pastor, he says that theological education should be progressed with comprehensive art education. He argues that the seminary should be able to train pastors as artists through a detailed

28 Lee Jung Gu, "The 4th industrial revolution and theological education," *Korea Journal of Theology* 16 (2017): 105.

curriculum. He suggests that reform of the theological education, which can educate the role and function of the pastor as a total artist or a synthesis director, is necessary for the transformation of the problematic paradigm of the church. He considers that seminarians should study the artistic sense at the seminary. It is not to teach seminary as a clerical expert, but a pastor as a total artist or a synthesis director, educating a pastor who can think and practice more creative and free.²⁹

There is the most recent practical example of applying the new paradigm of theology and education. It is a performance festival held at Sogang University based on the Catholic spirit. Last spring, Sogang University performed 'Miracle,' a portable street festival with residents. 'Miracle' is produced in the form of the largest free street theater that reproduces the ancient theater. Therefore, 'Miracle' is not performed at the indoor theater but characterized by site-specific performances that the Sogang University campus is all used as the stage. The venue-specific performance is a form of presenting the opportunity of active participation and communication to the audience through a new expansion of the space, and it means to reproduce the medieval circulation which performed as a large-scale street drama. The street theater, Sogang Miracle performance, 'Passion,' is based on the story of the Bible, but it makes everyone sympathetic. 'Miracle' is a message to reconcile the busy lives of modern people and to realize the meaning of their lives again. 'Miracle' has created a magnificent and spectacular visual effect with a vertical performance that freely crosses the building using cutting-edge digital technology as a canvas around the campus. Also, it is noteworthy that not only professional actors but also students of Sogang University participated as perform-

29 Rim, "The Pastor as Artist," 335-365.

ers. Students accomplished a formal theater class and practiced choreography, acting, instrument production, and chorus. The work has been enriched with the active and creative ideas of young people. 'Miracle' was impressive as a large scale spectacle in a form that only the street drama can show; it was a free concert that did not require reservations so that anyone could visit Sogang University campus.

Professor Kim Yong-Su, a department of Communication at Sogang University who plans and supervises the performance, said: "I want this festival to be an experimental festival that provides spiritual joy to contemporary people, who are mentally exhausted, and the participants will practice their creative vision." It was not time-consuming, but it was a performance that the school became the place of the theater with all people. During the festival period, 'Sogang Univ. Performance Competition', nine groups showed new work that crosses genre and form. These works harmonized with the local people of *Mapo*, and created a new festival place. In addition to the Miracle performance, it was the venue for a new type of university festival designed to develop the university's new youth culture.

According to the Sogang Miracle performance, this case is an outstanding practical example of applying Performance Theory. Moreover, it is an appropriate example of the possibility of practicing Performance Theory. Thus, performance studies can be an emerging methodology for the reflection and analysis of theological education and worship and the church for new generations. In conclusion, Christian education and theological education based on the Christian spirit should provide classes for physical training, creative thinking training, and critical thinking. The fragmented individuals should cooperate and create a space where they can manifest the existence values of in-

dividuals while they are in solidarity. For this, Performance Theory can be a new methodology for schools, churches, and communities.

IV. Worship as Performance by Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre

1. Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre

Schechner sees that “every act, event, or thing can be studied as performance,”³⁰ in the meaning of that everything in the world “performs” something to us. Worship is newly understood as performance.

This paper examines the theory and reality of Schechner’s environmental theater, which he proposed to expand to the theater to performance. He rejects the traditional structure of separating the stage and the audience and sets the whole theater to be a space used by the performers as well as a participatory space for audiences.

It is called the Environmental Theater. It does not limit the stage and the seats to the theater, but also tries to perform at any spaces, such as restaurants, warehouses, cafes, and churches, in our daily lives. This attempt not only plays the role of changing the device of the stage as a transformation space but also has the function of accepting and absorbing the ‘given situation’ as it is. To achieve this attempt, Schechner has a clear principle: the six axioms of Environmental Theatre.³¹

1) The theatrical event is a set of related transactions.

30 Schechner, *Performance studies*, 32.

31 Richard Schechner, “6 Axioms for Environmental Theater,” *The Drama Review* 12.3 (Spring

- 2) All the space is used for performance; all the space is used for the audience.
- 3) The Theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or in “found space.”
- 4) Focus is flexible and variable.
- 5) All production elements speak in their own language.
- 6) The text needs to be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all.

Traditional theaters consist of a closed system that ignores the reaction of the audience. The theater was work, which traditionally actualizes the rehearsal of the actor come true by the direction of the director based on the completed script as the artist intended. Therefore, encouraging audience participation in the theater system is to demand a fundamental change to the social arrangement. However, Schechner says, “if one space belongs to the audience and the other space belongs to the actor, it cannot be a creative drama. Separating space should be stopped.

Moreover, the final interchange between the performer and the audience is an exchange on space, and the audience should be the scene director as well as the audience watching the scene.”³²

It is a new paradigm that Schechner pursues to recover the performance, which was lost because of scripture, literature, and specialization. Now, the performance is not about creating a performance centered on a script. From the theme of the performance to the production of the script, the whole process should transfer to a co-creation recon-

1968): 41-64.

32 Richard Schechner, *Public Domain: Essays on the Theater* (New York: The Bobbs Merrill Co, 1969), 165.

structing through discussion. It is not from the fixed text; instead, it is that overturns the central principle of theater creation, using the materials needed for the performance.³³

The theater is a work that traditionally actualized the performances that the actor practiced on stage based on what the author had already completed. However, the genres are crossing in the present. We live in an era broken boundaries between our daily lives and art. So the performances reject traditional theatrical production methods. Now, we will build a new production method with the concept of collective creation. This proposal also provides new insights into the reflection and organization of worship.

This co-creator generates what is not in the story or what is not in the script. At this point, the audience is invited to perform a more active role as witnesses. The actors face the contingency of the audience, and the audience faces the characters of the actors who are not controlled by the role. It is, therefore, necessary to take off both masks and approach the nature of the theater. In other words, participation does not eliminate the form of the play but coexists with these two forms, that is, the new role of the actor and the audience themselves, affecting each other.³⁴ Accepting this change is changing the means of a theater production that actors and directors make as their mainstay. The performance requires a participating audience. When the audience moves, the actors should step back and give space to the audience. Eventually, the performance requires the audience's world harmonizing between the audience and the performers. At the end of the theater,

33 Theodore Shank, "Collective Creation," *The Drama Review* 16.2, Directing Issue (June 1972): 3-4.

34 Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater* (New York: Applause Books, 1994), 72-77.

the performance again sinks into the audience's world. To sum up, the traditional theater reflects previous experiences because it is imitative, and it tries to motivate the illusion of recreating them. However, the environmental theater is not imitative. It is not the logic of the story, but the logic of doing the story. Therefore, Schechner suggests the methods of the environmental theater.³⁵

- 1) Accepting the contingency as well as the artistically prepared circulation.
- 2) Finding a situation where an actor does not know much more than the audience. Not actor-centered.
- 3) Adopt a structure in which highly organized activities have a more open structure and are interconnected.
- 4) Do not force actors or audience. Do not manipulate.
- 5) To allow them to coexist in space and time, not to mix dramatic structures and participatory structures.
- 6) Begin to train additional roles such as 'guide' and 'host' to actors.

The above conditions provide a deep reflection for worship as a performance. First, performance space is a place of daily life. Second, actors and audiences collaborate to create and organize performances. In the environmental theater, the role of the audience is not fixed. It exists as a dynamic and active subject. In order to realize multi-focal points which is one of the characteristics of the environment theater and the layout of the audience which is easy to interact with the actors, it has the characteristic of designing that the audience cannot see all the scenes in one place. The audience also contributes as a participant in the dramatic action as well as a creator. Therefore, there is no fixed environment, and as the environment continuously changes and de-

35 Schechner, "6 Axioms," 82.

velops through the whole process of the performance, audience participation becomes an essential requirement. As described above, the environmental theater can be defined as a play that opens the closure of the traditional western theater, eliminates the distinction between the stage and the audience, liberates the audience and the role concept of the actor, and enables the audience to participate in the performance actively.

2. Worship as Performance

In the New Testament written in Greek, three words mean ‘worship.’ Typically, *Proscueneo* (προσκυνεω) used as ‘true worship’ in John 4: 23-24, *Ratreia* (λατρεία) used as ‘spiritual worship’ in Romans 12: 1, *Reitourgia* (Λειτουργία), which was used as a “servant method” in Hebrews 9:21.

‘*Prosceno*’ (προσκυνεω) is a composite word of ‘*Pros*’ (to) and ‘*Quineo*’ (kiss). It indicated that the servant kissed the foot concerning the owner. It means “bow,” “kiss,” “bow down,” and is related to *shahah*(הִשָּׁח) in the Old Testament. Worship in English translated this word.

Leitourgia (λειτουργία) has the same meaning as the Hebrew *Abad* (עָבַד, 2 Samuel 15: 8; Numbers 16: 9, 1 Chronicles 9:28), and the New Testament (Luke 1:23; Hebrews 8: 6, 9:21, 10:19). *Leitourgia* is derived from the word liturgy in the sense of ‘ministry’, ‘worship’ and ‘service’ and generally refers to anything that is performed publicly in accordance with the regulations at a place where worship is distinct.

Specifically, the more accurate concept of the verb ‘*abade*’ is the act of benefiting the other by dedicating oneself to the other. We use the

verb ‘*abade*’ when expressing the act of benefiting others by devoting time and labor. It means ‘to work for others’ and further to ‘serve.’ It summarizes as ‘doing/acting out’ of a human being in the dictionary. In other words, we can find the meaning of worship by performing. However, as we have seen, this is not simply doing, but worship is the act of relational doing with an obvious object. The Orthodox theologian, George Florovsky, defined worship as “Christian worship is a dialogue, not a monologue if it is true Christian worship ... Christian worship is God’s calling and. It is the human response to God’s supreme act.”³⁶ The dual meaning of worship implies that worship is a dialogue. Specifically, worship means that “God’s service and our service to God.”³⁷ It means that God and human actively participate in the category of revelation and response. In other words, it is not the single service that can be understood but is the inter-participatory worship. It emphasizes that the congregation be fully engaged with each other, meaning that all worshipers are actively involved in gathering and worshiping. What are the preconditions for worship actively pursuing such dialogue and participation? The worship of active dialogue and participation is composed of dynamic human behavior, metaphor, and implication.

Dr. Leonard Sweet, a professor of Drew theological seminary and a noble scholar of evangelism in the present, introduces the four elements of “Epic” faith: Experience, Participation, Image, and Connection. It is not a thought or a phenomenon, but it is a life that people

36 Georges Florovsky, “Worship and Every-day Life: An Eastern Orthodox View,” *Studia Liturgica* 2 (December 1963): 268-269; quoted in James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship: Third edition revised and expanded* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 23.

37 White, *Introduction*, 25.

fully experience.³⁸ It is all an element that can be acquired by human action.

More specifically, worship of the mutual action is a worship service, in which humans act in the body and actively participate in the relationship as an actor. Professor Ahn Sun-Hee at Ewha Womans University in Korea says that the body is the subject of worship, and the body and the spirit interact to perform religious communication in the worship process. However, because of the mentalization of worship, all acts of worship have been replaced by verbal; instead, excluding the entire physical things.³⁹ She asks for the expansion of nonverbal communication in worship through facial expressions, glances, gestures and movements, gestures and attitudes, body contact, space use, attire, smell, taste, and dance.⁴⁰

By the view of professor Ahn, first, the constrained (closed) space should be eliminated. In particular, the use of the extended church chair in the Korean church makes the body aware that it is a passive being that ought to be heard and accepted unconsciously by the seated person. The body already feels that worship is a group with educational intent. The second asserts that we should add an entering ritual that symbolically expresses the way of going to holiness to God. The third suggests that the congregation should walk in and participate in the sacrament, instead of passively receiving or passing the bread and the wine. Fourth, she insists on introducing and expanding the order of sharing greetings of peace. Particularly in this part, if the congrega-

38 Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World*, translated by Young Rae Kim (Seoul: Good seed book, 2002), 22.

39 Sun Hee, Ahn, *The theory of worship, the practice of worship* (Seoul: ByBooks, 2013), 103.

40 *Ibid.*, 106-115.

tion does not use the long church chair, they experience the dynamic movement of the body through the space movement at the worship. In doing so, the congregation can improve intimacy through physical contact. Lastly, she suggests applying performance in the worship, like a dance with the Bibliodrama or reading the bible as a means of proclaiming the Words of God.⁴¹ It is not to limit the Word of God only in verbal languages, not only is the world a world of language, it is the world of God. The manifestation of human physicality in worship emphasizes the way in which man restores to the subject of conscious perception.

Then, why is worship deeply related to a metaphor and an implication? Professor Sweet explains it, "The modern world is based on language. Theologians tried to create intellectual faith by placing reason and order at the core of religion. Mysteries and metaphors were overly ambiguous, ambiguous, and considered illogical. The church, which has lost its role as a storyteller to the media, is now stepping into a world where stories and metaphors are at the core of the spirit."⁴²

More specifically, Colin Counsell mentioned about artistic phenomena of the 20th century, which rejects the illusion of art based on reproduction and fiction. By avoiding the familiar cultural form, artistic works of the postmodern can express something that cannot be expressed. Instead, an absence of meaning itself is the meaning of the work.⁴³ It is similar to the worship. Worship must express a God that cannot be expressed, but should allow the absence of God, which can-

41 *Ibid.*, 115-117.

42 Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 133.

43 Colin Counsell, *Signs of Performance: An Introduction to Twentieth Century Theater* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 204.

not be determined and contained in language. How is it possible?

There is a person who urges to study this metaphor and implication as performance. The Dean (or the head of House) of Christ Church in Oxford, Martyn Percy also argues that space of negotiation can be formed from observing and analyzing ambiguous, trivial, and inconsistent performance, in his article, *Passionate Coolness: Exploring Mood and Character in a Local Rural Anglican Church*.⁴⁴ Percy says that for a new church vision, we can start by observing an atmosphere, or a small pattern of behavior that we have overlooked to be unimportant in the meantime. It says that we should pay attention to anthropological things such as the emotions, phenomena, and behaviors of the things that the Church has ignored. Through these notions, we can construct a new theological repertoire of the church communities. It suggests how to understand, react, and construct new circumstances and conditions through ethos. Focusing on how it is made by what beyond knowing what it is. Percy calls it the implicit theology.⁴⁵ This implicit worship of theology is a complex field, but it is a variable field. Through all the elements, worship can construct and implement implicit meaning. Percy concerns, “As such, it has to be modest and circumspect, namely in order to construct meaningful accounts of ordinary ecclesial life, rather than to prescribe the church or denomi-

44 Martyn Percy, “*Passionate Coolness: Exploring Mood and Character in a Local Rural Anglican Church*,” unpublished. He used this article at the seminar in Sungkonghoe University (21, September, 2018).

45 “I have tended to refer to this endeavor as the unpacking of implicit theology. In paying attention to gestures, moods, stories, testimonies, the casual-habitual use of anything from phrases to furniture, or humor to hospitality, churches are complex fields of negotiation in which the life of God (as experienced or desired) meets the life of the world, and forms a highly distinctive culture”: *Ibid*.

nation through the use of theological or social science metanarratives."⁴⁶

Therefore, it should be understood that this implication includes both silence and speaking. Our task is how to understand the relationship between tension and contradiction between silence and speaking. Rollins reflects on the extreme approaches in the modern church; he resolves the question of how speaking in a place of silence is possible.

Furthermore, Rollins, who summarized the metaphorical theory and reality of performative worship in the actual church scene, says in chapter 1 of his book, *How (not) to speak of God*. God cannot be defined in our language. However, the secret of God must be broken and shared through the language. Rollins criticized that the language was the most sophisticated and civilized approach to approach God with Enlightenment thought. Between silence and speaking, lack and excess, He sees the modern church choosing excess. This excess confirms the language, "The scriptures are the revelation."⁴⁷

This modern approach ignored the "how" journey (process, system, and understanding of structure), and repeated the errors that resulted in teleological and ontological endings. Therefore, we now insist that we must reflect and devote ourselves to how we can understand revelation beyond God's revelation. Rollins suggests that the Church should minimize certain doctrinal statements; instead, the church should be a meeting place of the how journey (the way of thinking) as we mentioned above.⁴⁸ In part 2 of Rollins' book, it introduces a "service description"⁴⁹ for specific performative service of his church.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to speak of God* (London: Paraclete Press, 2006), 8-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

This performative worship allows God's revelation expressed through anonymity. The anonymity is concealed through metaphor and implication; it is both revealed and hidden.

The revelation of God is hidden. However, because it is hidden, it must be spoken by a human. However, when it is said, God does not make the word itself clear by revelation. Revelation does not require the need for clarity. The revelation is just a journey to find a consensus on how to understand the beloved. The new worship should be a place to embrace both possibilities that revelation is hidden, and revelation can be revealed. The church must be provided as a place to come and go between these tensions and contradictions. Theology should also be spoken in a non-proof answer. This response can come from a change of way of thinking, not from a change of thinking.

This pattern of the worship service is performed at the Ikon community church (UK) today. Based on this description, the following summarizes the six axioms of Schechner's environmental theater as Axioms for worship.

- 1) The event of worship is a set of related transactions.
- 2) All the space is used for a congregation.
- 3) The event of worship can take place either in a transformed space or in "found space."
- 4) Focus is flexible and variable.

49 *Ibid.*, 81-139.

50 Worship is performed in a performance-based manner with various topics. In the space of the church, various devices and tools are used according to the subject of the worship. Such devices can be things like pictures, music, candles, flowers, tapping the doors, turning the lights on and off, dropping or taking them off, putting them apart, laying walls, giving food, not giving food, relocating tools, Pouring wine, attaching an ox card, reading or speaking a poem, scripture verses and books, dialogue, and so on.

- 5) All worship elements speak in their own language.
- 6) The text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all.

According to the principle, worship as performance capable of this interpretation is an event that allows contingency rather than imitation. It is a conversation and action that allows both. It is a space of variability that allows creation rather than repetition of a fixed pattern. Worship as performance becomes a performance of worship itself in the event, conversation, action, and variable space, and performance itself becomes worship.

If we understand worship following Performance Theory, we are now free to allow freedom, creation, and coexistence. Now all elements of worship can speak for themselves. The use of the worship space should structure the space where all worshipers can worship. The act of worship is not only the practice from the Bible but also the worship of the form that can be newly recorded by doing. We can now freely imagine and create worship together with this performative performance.

V. Conclusion

We have studied what performance is, Performance Theory as a new methodology, and how these are related to church and worship. While this final application may be unfamiliar and confusing, the implication of the Performance Theory is undoubtedly a new method of church and worship. The Performance Theory avoids unilateral communication and pursues mutuality of communication, and it means to inter-

communicate. It is not to inject, but to sympathize. It pursues diversity, not uniformity. Now, worship should be a space where sympathy is crossed that brings diversity together. Worship should be a space of action, in which the subject's subjective performance is manifested. The church should be such a place.

Worship cannot confine God and human in the prescribed space and religious language. As Schechner extends the formal theater stage to the concept of *Theatrum Mundi*, this paper proposes that the church can be understood by *Theatrum Mundi* perceiving "the created world is the divine artwork of God."⁵¹ The Performance Theory refuses to perform only to show. This theory admits the whole process of rehearsals and workshops as performances. It makes us overcome the notion about worship, which is the space of the church or only progressed at the church. As Schechner summoned the concept of *Theatrum Mundi*, the space of worship can be expanded, and the subject of worship can be whoever.

We should recognize that each person, who participates in worship, is the subject of worship on which God focuses. As Don Saliers describes "prayer is a theologian of one person."⁵² We must recognize that all elements and circumstances of worship are already speaking, just as each element of the performance acknowledges that it is a text that speaks for itself rather than as auxiliary equipment for the theater. Worship should form a new paradigm through the co-creative Performance Theory, in which all elements play a role, rather than the theatrical paradigm that the leading actor led the theatrical perform-

51 Aurelius Augustinus, *A select library of the nicene and post nicene fathers of the Christian church*, translated by Jong Heup Kim (Koyang: Christian Digest, 2007), 205.

52 Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, translated by Yoon Yong Kim (Seoul: WPA, 2013), 150.

ance. Worship is also a time to be free from theatrical performances. The main character of worship is not a preacher. The preaching of heroized pastors in Korean churches is not all about worship.

Moreover, worship is not just composed of the sermon or verbal language. We cannot organize everything by preaching alone, or by spoken words. Preaching in worship is neither the starting point nor the goal of worship. Everything and everyone has the potential to be a message God is talking about as a metaphor and implication. If we consider worship as a performance with our performativity, the journey of our lives will become worship. Besides, the composition, order, and structure of worship should be created contextually according to the theme and purpose of worship. We should express the plentiful of worship with metaphorical and implicit language, symbols, and embodied of movement, rather than a message of preaching and literal interpretation preached by a Pastor who is a big issue of the Korean church.

Furthermore, it is necessary to extend the concept of space to the understanding of people and community beyond the concept of the church space, the separate space of worship of the pulpit and the church space to expand into the visible church architecture. Church cross lights surround the night scenery of Korea. Now, not only worship in the church building, but all spaces of worship should be church places. Because Worship is a Performance and performances are already deep in our worship. It is worship as Performance.

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