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Author

Nak-chung, Paik

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***Won*-Buddhism and a Great Turning in Civilization**

Paik Nak-chung, Seoul National University

Abstract

Addressing the theme of a great turning in civilization, this essay focuses on the Korean religion *Won*-Buddhism with its founding motto, “With this Great Opening of matter, let there be a Great Opening of spirit.” Both its doctrine and practice arguably possess great potential. Unlike the traditional Buddhist view of enlightenment, *Won*-Buddhism’s “Great Opening of spirit” starts from a specific diagnosis of the current time as an age of “Great Opening of matter” and proposes a double project of at once adapting to and overcoming modernity. In this way, it carries on the tradition of Korea’s indigenous religious movements since the mid-nineteenth century, but by combining that strain with Buddhism as its core doctrine, it achieves a fuller global significance than its predecessors. The essay examines Roberto Unger’s *The Religion of the Future* for both parallels and divergences, sympathizing with Unger’s emphasis on a religious *revolution*, but finding his thought essentially confined within the limits of Western metaphysics. Martin Heidegger is brought in to elucidate this point, as is Karl Marx, for comparison and contrast with *Won*-Buddhism’s diagnosis of and response to modernity. In closing, the essay takes up two *Won*-Buddhist agendas that are also of global concern: gender equality and the “church and state” relation.

Keywords: *Won*-Buddhism, Buddhism, indigenous Korean religions, Roberto Unger, Martin Heidegger, Karl Marx, Raimon Pannikar, Pak Chungbin, Song Kyu, double project of modernity, gender equality, church and state relations, Great Opening

What Kind of a Great Turning?

The prominence given to *Won*-Buddhism (K: 원불교) in this essay is due partly to the fact that it was initially presented at a *Won*-Buddhism conference,¹ but also to the intellectual conviction of this non-adherent that the new religion that originated in the Korean Peninsula with the founding motto, “With this Great Opening of matter, let there be a Great Opening of spirit,” has much to contribute to humanity’s search for a new civilization—a position I will attempt to support in the subsequent pages. I shall begin by briefly examining what “a great turning in civilization” might mean and what criteria could be used to judge it.

In South Korea, popular demands for a great transformation were all too evident in April 2016, when I presented the talk on which this essay is based, and throughout the course of writing the article (Paek 2016). Widespread frustration and anger found expression in phrases like *heljosŏn* (Hell Korea), supported by statistics of high rates of suicide, old-age poverty, and youth unemployment, as well as a low birth rate and increasing economic polarization. A pivotal event fanning public anger was the sinking of the ferry Sewol in April 2014, an event that was, in large part, the result of negligent official oversight. That tragedy revealed the government's incompetence and utter indifference, while the ship with 476 passengers (most of them high school students on a school excursion) sank in full public view on television; only 172 people were rescued. In fact, the government's efforts to cover up the truth and to defame and harass the victims' families and others gave rise to the public outcry, "Is this a country?"

The threat of war has also been on the rise. A new war on the peninsula would be such a calamity that the probability of an actual outbreak seems, even now, relatively low. But even without a war, the hastening of North Korea's nuclear armament and the mutual escalation of bellicose words and acts are bound to bring about the regression and barbarization of both Koreas.

Throughout this era of turbulence, both domestic and inter-Korean, the Park Geun-hye government showed not only a total disregard for democratic process and rule of law but sheer incompetence, so that the regime's attempt to turn back the clock to her father Park Chung Hee's presidency (1961–1979)—the anachronistic attempt that some have called a "new-variety coup d'état" or "creeping coup" (Yi 2015; 2016)—only compounded the chaos.

Then, within the last several months, a momentous change has occurred. Park Geun-hye has been impeached and dismissed, and she is now in prison facing numerous criminal charges. The head of Korea's largest conglomerate, Samsung, has also been imprisoned, for the first time in the nation's or the company's history, for giving bribes to the president. Many of Park's closest aides and her intimate friend who exercised illegal power behind the scenes are also in prison awaiting trial.

That these drastic changes have all occurred within the constitutional frame and rule of law, supported by entirely peaceful mass demonstrations, makes them different from classical revolutions. Yet these very facts may indicate a well-nigh revolutionary shift in the ways of popular democratic participation, certainly in Korea but with possible ramifications across the globe.² Of course, much still depends on whether, in the snap presidential election

to fill the vacancy (scheduled for early May 2017), the country can secure a political leadership capable of carrying on the “candlelight revolution.”

In the somewhat longer run, the decisive factor will be how Koreans deal with the problem of the so-called division system,³ which, though shaken by South Korea’s democratization since June 1987, remained in force throughout the so-called ‘87 Regime, enabling the retrogressions under Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye. In the still longer run, however, a substantial transformation of South Korean society will take root and lead to a great turning in civilization itself only if accompanied by other radical changes across the globe, in addition to some marked weakening, at least, of the peninsula-wide division system.

A felt need for a great turning seems quite evident in the larger world, too. Turbulence in the ecosystem, created not only by wars and terrorism, but also by climate change, exhaustion of natural resources such as clean air and water, and many other factors, are threatening the very existence of life on the planet as we know it. What the fundamental causes for this state of affairs are, whether it can really be reversed and, if so, by what means, are subjects of multifarious controversy. For instance, many who believe that the survival of human civilization calls for not merely measures of partial amelioration but a radical transformation of social institutions and world views point to capitalism as the dominant principle of the modern world-system and identify it as the main target of radical change. While capitalist modernity undeniably has brought about an enormous increase of material production and memorable achievements in knowledge and intellect, a social system that adopts endless accumulation of capital as its fundamental principle cannot in the long run, the argument goes, be compatible with a life-sustaining society. The destruction of the ecosystem, along with increasing social polarization and the commodification of things, will ultimately do away with any possibility for life-respecting thought and action to take root.

It goes beyond my ability to examine fully the merits of such arguments. However, if we are not indulging in empty speculations, I wish to stress the need to confront the argument that transition from the capitalist world-system to a better one is essential for the preservation of human civilization and protection of the earth’s ecology. This would entail a serious return to Marx’s analysis of capital and capitalist society, a point to which I shall return when I address the *Won*-Buddhist notion of a “Great Opening of matter.”

But regarding “the role of religion,” the other half of my title, Marx’s contribution is likely to be limited to (negative) critiques of existing religions. True, his materialist dialectic has opened up new possibilities of thinking about knowledge and praxis, but it is doubtful

that he has fully moved beyond the confines of Western science and metaphysics to accommodate a radically different role for religion(s). In this context, the work of Martin Heidegger, an insider to the Western philosophic tradition who yet moves toward thinking beyond “the end of philosophy” (Heidegger 1969; 1993), holds a peculiar interest. Like many others (including Marx and Marxists), he acknowledges the essential threat of capitalist modernity, but maintains that one needs to understand this threat in terms of the “essence of technology” and an age in which that essence comes to full fruition; further, the essence of technology is neither technological nor human (Heidegger 1954a; 1977). Rather, technology, like art, is originally a way in which Being (*das Sein*)—or Truth, in *Won*-Buddhist and Buddhist parlance⁴—is revealed; in the modern age, however, the revealing takes on the manner of forcibly calling out by turning everything into a “standing-reserve” (*der Bestand*). This manner of revealing has enabled the tremendous achievements of modern technology, but it also leads human beings to forget the essence of technology and to view it as merely an instrument or a means they can use at will, thus causing them to lose the capacity to think and placing them in danger of becoming enslaved to technological civilization—a warning that invites comparison with *Won*-Buddhism’s “Great Opening of matter.”

Such a view of the age of technology is frequently taken as a fundamental rejection of modern science and technology. Consequently, it is welcomed by some radical ecologists, while also drawing criticism for falling into a romantic and exclusive communitarianism. But Heidegger’s thinking does not reject technology as such; rather, it calls for a great turning in the relation between man and technology, a move to go beyond an era in which the true nature of technology is forgotten—which is to say, a move involving the transformation of the relation between human beings and the world produced by technology.

Such thinking becomes more urgent than ever when technological development matches or even exceeds the human capacity for calculation—or Heidegger’s “calculative thinking” (*das rechnende Denken*)⁵—while contemporary responses to the ever-quickenning pace in the growth in artificial intelligence (AI), for instance, seem largely confined to either prescriptions to limit that growth or searches for a better calculative ability to use it. Instead, we may need to attend to Heidegger’s caveat that “we are still not thinking.” “Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time,” he says, “is that we are still not thinking” (Heidegger 1954b, 6).⁶

This assertion may sound arrogant and dogmatic. However, for one thing, much like the Buddhist distinction between true enlightenment and discriminating knowledge,

Heidegger's concept of "thinking" here encompasses what he also calls "meditative thinking" (*das besinnende Denken*) (1966, 46–47 et passim), something quite different from scientific knowledge;⁷ and while one must be wary of a facile identification of Heidegger's *Seinsdenken* with Buddhist thought, both share a radical difference from the Western scientific or philosophic conception of truth, as noted by Sungtaek Cho:

Meditation, as the ground for Buddhist philosophical thought, produces two features unique to Buddhism. First, the Buddhist believes that the experience of meditation, or *samadhi*, provides a more reliable foundation for epistemology than daily life.... Second, since meditation is the means for apprehending truth, it is believed that the level of a practitioner's maturity in meditation defines the depth of his or her understanding. For this reason, Buddhism presupposes that different levels of practice yield different levels of truth. (Cho 2002, 426–427)⁸

Furthermore, in his later work "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," Heidegger specifically denies "an arrogance in these assertions which desires to put itself above the greatness of the thinkers of philosophy," and avers that

the thinking in question here necessarily falls short of the greatness of the philosophers.... [A]bove all, the thinking in question remains unassuming because its task is only of a preparatory, not of a founding character. It is content with awakening a readiness in man for a possibility whose contour remains obscure, whose coming remains uncertain. (Heidegger 1993, 66)

I propose to carry out the present exploration in an equally unassuming spirit.

Roberto Unger's *Religion of the Future*

Roberto Unger, the Brazilian philosopher, social theorist, and politician active both in his native country and the United States, is a secular thinker and advocate of radical social change who nevertheless insists that a new civilization of the future cannot be realized without religion—albeit religion in the sense defined by him. For he believes that, while existing world religions have made valuable contributions to humanity, the "religion of the future" will take a revolution rather than mere reformations of the extant religions (Unger 2014). I find much not only to sympathize with but also to disagree with in the book, which makes it all the more useful for sorting out my own thoughts.

The idea of a radical departure from all existing religions was shared among various strains of indigenous religious thinking that have emerged in Korea since the mid-nineteenth

century, including Tonghak, Chŭngsando, and *Won*-Buddhism.⁹ They all advocated a cosmic great turning called “Later Day Great Opening” (*huch’ŏn kaebyŏk* 後天開闢). Older religions, however, are not without comparable trends. A familiar example would be the Maitreya faith in traditional Buddhism, which looked toward a great transformation whereby paradise would be realized on Earth, while various movements of millenarianism have represented a similar strain in Christianity. Within present-day religions, too, there are plenty of movements proposing to go beyond mere personal salvation to participate in a fundamental transformation of society.

But if a great turning were to be made possible through efforts by such “Earlier Day” (*sŏnch’ŏn*) religions alone, there would be no need to speak of a “Later Day Great Opening,” nor of the “religion of the future,” in Unger’s sense. Here we may consider his argument for a religious revolution.

Unger’s objection to all the existing religions notes that, instead of facing the stark realities of the human condition, they have chosen to provide humanity with false comfort through a “feel-good metaphysics” (Unger 2014, 9). His *The Religion of the Future* opens with these words:

Everything in our existence points beyond itself. We must nevertheless die. We cannot grasp the ground of being. Our desires are insatiable. Our lives fail adequately to express our natures; our circumstances regularly subject us to belittlement. Religion has been both an attempt to interpret the meaning of these irreparable flaws in the human condition and a way of dealing with them. It has told us that everything is ultimately all right. However, everything is not all right. A turn in the religious consciousness of humanity would begin in an approach to these defects that abandoned the impulse to deny them. Religion would cease to console us for these frightening facts. Our hope might survive, changed. (2014, 1)

This passage sounds much like a secularist rejection (say, by atheistic existentialism) of religion as such. Yet Unger insists that it must be *religion*—not art, philosophy, or mere political movement—that should survive such a turn in consciousness and lead humanity. For “the will to take a stand in the commitment of existence in a particular direction, despite the apparent absence of adequate grounds on which to do so, and then to insist that the whole of individual life and social experience be penetrated by the vision informing such a commitment sets religion apart” (2014, 55).

Unger finds three large spiritual orientations in the existing religions. One includes the Vedas and Buddhism, which share an orientation of “overcoming the world” (cf. chapter

2) and seek salvation in the recognition of the illusory nature of the world and history, thus withdrawing from the world altogether or engaging it only through an indiscriminate altruism. A second orientation is represented by Confucianism, which he characterizes as “humanizing the world” (chapter 3). Unlike most other religions, this orientation does not resort to metaphysical assumptions and, without either withdrawing from the world or seeking radically to transform it, concentrates on achieving reforms under the given social order and the perfection of one’s personality within its limits. The third is the orientation toward “struggling with the world,” represented by the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (chapter 4). Unger finds these last most culpable of providing false consolations based on “feel-good metaphysics” (2014, 9), with claims of a personal God presiding over the universe, the soul surviving physical death, etc. Yet he also values this orientation more highly than the others because it pursues the simultaneous transformation of self *and* world in order to create a world suited to the human being as an embodied spirit (2014, 199 et passim). But insofar as the religion of the future, even while shedding superstitions of existing religions, must unlike science start with some kind of faith, and unlike art or philosophy address the whole range of human living, it must nonetheless be a *religion* (2014, 51–61).

By the author’s own admission (2014, 446), this is not a study of comparative religions nor religious history, hence one need not overemphasize various errors regarding particular religions, especially with those of India or East Asia, with which Unger is bound to be relatively unfamiliar. However, factual errors such as would damage his argument would be another matter; nor can we pass over some metaphysical assumptions of his own. For not only the rigor and credibility of scholarly argument but the very feasibility of his project may be put into question. It is doubtful, for instance, that masses of people will manage to accomplish such a grand project of social transformation while rejecting all the “false consolations” of existing religions and staring the “stark human condition” in the face. We may therefore ask whether he is not needlessly diminishing his own chances of success by starting with some metaphysical assumptions of his own and appealing to a degree of bravery suited only to a small, determined elite.

To start with some factual inaccuracies, Unger lumps together the Vedic religions and Buddhism as constituting one of the three spiritual orientations—namely, “overcoming the world” by taking refuge in some ultimate essence beyond individual beings and the reality of time. This overlooks the fact that Buddhism started by denying the essentialism of ancient

Brahmanism, and misunderstands the Buddhist principle of “benefiting both oneself and others” as indiscriminate altruism. Indeed, the Northern or Mahayana branch of Buddhism goes further in its respect for the multifarious lives of sentient beings. Fairness or unfairness to Buddhists is not the main point. The real problem is that any possibility for Buddhism to contribute to the religion of the future must here be radically diminished. Unger’s identification of Buddhism with Schopenhauer’s philosophy (2014, 63, 394, 404) shows that his understanding of Buddhism not only suffers from empirical defects but remains firmly within the framework of Western metaphysics.

Regarding Confucianism, Unger acknowledges that Confucius’s commitment to improve the world without relying on a transcendent divinity or irrational faith makes the orientation to “humanize the world” congenial to his own project in many ways. But by defining Confucianism as nothing more than social ameliorationism, he dismisses all revolutionary potential in its traditions, and any possibility for the religion of the future to utilize that potential. In fact, even apart from Mengze’s (Mencius’s) notion of people’s right to “change mandate” (革命, whence the modern word for “revolution”), Confucian political philosophy acquires a paradoxically radical edge by placing its utopia in the long bygone days of Emperors Yao and Shun. Nor is Unger cognizant of elements like *The Book of Changes* that Confucianism shares with Daoism, elements that quite escape the horizon of Western philosophy (Jullien 2015).¹⁰

There is also room for controversy regarding the monotheistic traditions of “struggling with the world” that Unger values most highly. True, few besides diehard believers would nowadays accept specific interventions in history by an omnipotent personal God; and the dogmatism, bellicosity, and anti-intellectualism engendered by such belief presents serious obstacles to a religion of the future. But isn’t it another sort of dogmatism and “metaphysics” to brand as “feel-good metaphysics” all “supernatural” beings or energy that modern science cannot find evidence for? Even though one finds questionable the insistence on the exclusive truth of a particular sectarian version and the demand for blind faith in the *dramatis personae* of that version’s particular narrative about God, neither is there any scientific evidence proving there is no divinity. The same goes for life after death. While it is objectionable to threaten or entice people with images of heaven and hell colored by human fancy, it goes against the grain even of natural science to dismiss all testimonies regarding postmortem experience or even the world of the spirit itself as mere fantasies of the witnesses. Scientific procedure would require waiting for further evidence and fuller scrutiny

before drawing a conclusion.

Moreover, the Buddhist doctrine of the “wheel of rebirth,” while indeed offering consolation to many, also raises the “stark human condition” that the end of this life may not signify the end of suffering. Indeed, the modern scientific nihilism that teaches that physical extinction means the end of everything could in some cases serve as a “feel-good metaphysic” of its own. True, it remains a question to be pondered whether Buddhism—which, unlike Christianity or Hinduism, refuses to acknowledge the immortality of a substantial soul—does not open itself to a logical contradiction by postulating the wheel of endless rebirth.¹¹ Buddhism addresses this problem through the doctrine of “dependent origination” (緣起), which, in combination with the notion of transmigration of souls, calls for a different type of thinking than modern science.

Apart from the correctness or adequacy of Unger’s understanding of various religious doctrines, a more fundamental problem may lie in his overemphasis on the intellectual or theological contents of given religions. Here the distinction between “belief” and “faith” advanced by Raimon Pannikar, the Spanish Catholic priest and theologian of Indian (Hindu) descent and advocate of “intrareligious dialogue,” may be helpful. Religious life naturally cannot do without some verbalized creed or belief, but such a creed or belief could never do justice to the entire life of faith, hence Pannikar’s distinction between “interreligious” and “intrareligious” dialogues:

When the encounter touches the depths of our intimate beliefs, when it reaches the ultimate questions of the meaning of life, in whatever sense, we have the “*religious dialogical dialogue*.” Oftentimes this dialogue does not go beyond doctrinal levels or emotional projections. This is the “*interreligious dialogue*,” which is generally carried on by experts or representatives of different belief-systems or artistic sensitivities....

[T]he intrareligious dialogue is itself a religious act—an act that neither unifies nor stifles but re-links us (in all directions). It takes place in the core of our being in our quest for salvific truth—in whatever sense we may understand these too-loaded words....

The intrareligious dialogue is an internal dialogue in which one struggles with the angel, the *daimôn*, and oneself. How can we have access to the whole of a liberating truth if our neighbors seem to have other beliefs, which are sometimes totally incompatible with our own convictions? (Pannikar 1998, xvi–xvii)¹²

If, in this manner, one focuses on the religious experience as such, rather than on the propositional content of the creed, even the doctrine of Trinity—which Unger cites as a

signal instance of the “leap in Christianity from [the] natural experiences to this improbable and burning faith” (Unger 2014, 272)—could take on a different meaning. For in the actual life of the faithful, it could function much like a “case for questioning” (*hwadu* or *koan*) in Buddhism—that is, as a “mystery” (which is what the Trinity is actually called) to provoke thought and to guide and inspire one’s religious life rather than as a matter of propositional truth. Indeed, the belief that not only the transcendent God but the human-born Jesus and the Holy Ghost are equally divine, and that the three are one divinity, could help lead the faithful to Unger’s “divinization of man.” If one goes a step further and chooses to follow the example of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart (c.1260–c.1328) or the Korean Christian thinker Yu Yǒngmo (1890–1981) and understand God as (in Yu’s words) “someone who exists in non-existence,”¹³ it will open the way to a convergence between Christianity and Buddhism, and could even move into a realm of thought not preoccupied with the distinction between being and nonbeing—a realm that, according to Heidegger, we must enter in order to meet the real needs of our day.

For all the problems with Unger’s understanding of existing religions, however, the political, economic, educational, and ethical agendas of his religion of the future, such as “deep freedom” (chapter 6) and “becoming more human by becoming more godlike” (chapter 7), are persuasive as elements of a great transformation. The notion of “deep freedom,” for instance, manages to go beyond the fruitless conflict between “shallow freedom” and “shallow equality,” or “freedom and equality viewed within the restraints imposed by the prevailing institutional settlement” (Unger 2014, 316). While this analysis implies the collateral notion of “deep equality,” Unger’s preference for “deep freedom” as “a political principle of those who move in the direction of the religion of the future” (2014, 320) seems persuasive.

Many of Unger’s political and social proposals were actually presented in his earlier “nonreligious” writings, and Perry Anderson characterized them as “politics of empowerment” (Anderson 1992). While warmly sympathizing with the project of “empowered democracy,” however, Anderson noted the absence of “a theory of transition,” so that Unger’s book *False Necessity* “skirts all discussion of the actual social processes—national turmoil, international reaction—that any bid to implement its program would unleash” (Anderson 1992, 148).

This absence seems to hamper Unger’s religion of the future project as well.

Won-Buddhism and the Project of a “Great Opening of Spirit”

While Unger’s future religion remains the discourse of an intellectual, *Won-*

Buddhism, which was established in Korea with the aim of becoming a religion of the future, has by now accumulated a history of over one hundred years. But as a new religion based in a corner of East Asia and with a following incomparably smaller than the major world religions, its message often fails to match the force of an individual pronouncement by an eminent intellectual in the center of the world-system writing in a major language. I propose, however, to examine its stance and potential for a “great turning in civilization” in the same spirit as my earlier discussion of Unger’s project, without either prejudice against or special consideration for the particular historical and geographical attributes of *Won*-Buddhism.

In view of the need for a mode of thought going beyond the limits of Western metaphysics, one may grant that the new religion met that particular precondition when its founder, Sot’aesan Pak Chungbin (1891–1943), acknowledged Buddhism as “the unsurpassed, great path” (*Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, part 1, chapter 2, 17) and announced the aspiration to “create in this world a perfect and complete religious order by taking the buddadharma as its core principle” (*The Scripture of the Founding Master, Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 105). On the other hand, even though Unger’s criticism of Buddhism betrays many shortcomings, he is persuasive when he points out that, in comparison with the spiritual orientation represented by the monotheistic religions and their secular successors, like movements for democracy and socialism, Buddhism shows insufficient awareness of the decisive importance of history and an infirm commitment to radical social change.

Won-Buddhism, however, may be said to have strengthened its orientation toward “struggling with the world” by inheriting the idea of “Later Day Great Opening” [*huch’ ōn kaebyōk*] of the indigenous religious movements in the final days of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910). Thus, its “Great Opening of spirit” [*chōngsin kaebyōk* 精神開闢], unlike the enlightenment of traditional Buddhism, includes a particular diagnosis of the times. “Today” is the very first word in *The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism*: “Today, with the development of scientific civilization, the human spirit, which should be making use of material things, is steadily weakened, while the power of material things, which human beings should be using, has daily grown stronger, conquering that weakened spirit and bringing it under its domination; humans therefore cannot help but be enslaved by the material” (2016, 17). In other words, the motto, “With this Great Opening of matter, let there be a Great Opening of spirit,” calls for a spiritual awakening *that rises to the challenge of the age* characterized by a Great Opening of matter.

Here I would like to observe that our thinking about “matter versus spirit” has come to be habitually dominated by the binary familiar to Western philosophy. True, Western philosophers themselves conceptualize “spirit” in a great variety of ways, but in traditional metaphysics the different interpretations share the assumption that spirit is something that exists (a *Seiendes* in Heideggerian parlance). In contrast, “spirit” in Buddhism and *Won-Buddhism* indicates an ability and state of seeking and questioning fundamental truth without attachment to either being or nonbeing. A passage on “The Essential Purport of Cultivating the Spirit” in *The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism* stipulates: “‘Spirit’ (*chöngsin*) means that state in which the mind, being clear and round, calm and tranquil, is free from a tendency toward discrimination and a penchant toward attachment” (2016, 46–47). If we overlook this point in reading the “Founding Motive of the Teaching” in *The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism* (2016, 17), or the words in the prefatory chapter of *The Scripture of the Founding Master*—“Human beings are the masters of the myriad things; the myriad things are for use by human beings” (2016, 106)—then we should either end up with the trite proposal to strengthen education in ethics and culture in tandem with improvements in material life, or with the instrumental, anthropological view of technology criticized by Heidegger.

The “Great Opening of matter” (*mulchil kaebyök* 物質開闢), too, calls for special pondering. On one hand, we should not forget that the revolutionary material development that ultimately brought about the weakening of human spirit was itself the result of enormous spiritual endeavors on the part of Westerners—namely, the continuous achievements of ancient philosophy and medieval theology that prepared the way for modern science. This, not just material wealth, lies behind the great prestige enjoyed today by not only the West’s science and technology but its ideas and learning as a whole. On the other hand, we must also realize that even such achievement represents a part of the Great Opening of *matter* and not of spirit, and must scrutinize how such a state of affairs has come to pass in the history of Western thought—as thoroughly as does Heidegger, for instance. Since, moreover, it is a matter of a history of Being (Heidegger’s *Seinsgeschichte*), rather than just an intellectual history, we must understand and analyze this age of the Great Opening of matter in terms of its actual working as an age of capitalism, with the rigor and passion of (say) a Marx, though without necessarily accepting his vision of proletarian revolution as the way to the Great Opening of spirit.

How adequately the *Won-Buddhist* Order and its adherents have been carrying out that project is another question. Don Baker offers an incisive analysis of how *Won-Buddhism*

performed the role of “the vanguard” in the modernization of Korean religions (Baker 2016). From the standpoint of the “double project of simultaneously adapting to and overcoming modernity,” however, *Won*-Buddhism’s success in modernization (i.e., adaptation to modernity) must be attributed to its simultaneous commitment to overcoming modernity through the Great Opening of spirit in response to modernity’s Great Opening of matter.¹⁴

Some *Won*-Buddhist scholars and ministers tend to minimize the significance of the founding motto on the ground that its first printed record can be traced only to a 1932 text. In *The Scripture of the Founding Master*, too, the motto makes its appearance only in section 4 of the prefatory chapter. Yet even in the (as-yet-undemonstrated) case of its belated appearance, and assuming that Founding Master Sot’aesan decided retroactively to adopt it as his founding motto, this could be a significant fact in itself. The real problem is that the relatively low interest in the founding motto could imply a tendency to minimize *Won*-Buddhism’s distinctive character and a desire on the part of the current leadership to be incorporated in mainstream Buddhism. If so, this would go against the original intent of the founding master, who warned against those “who admire extraneous studies even after discovering our dharma-gate” (*The Scripture of the Founding Master*, *Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 481).

Regarding “extraneous studies,” we must note that Sot’aesan was far from rejecting all non-*Won*-Buddhist learning. The very first item of his “First Dharma Words” urges everyone to “devote yourself to the business of learning, as appropriate to the times, so that you prepare yourself in all kinds of knowledge,” while the section on “The Essential Dharmas for Preparedness as Leaders” stipulates: “Leaders should be more knowledgeable than the led” (*Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 92, 94). Furthermore, one of the requirements for advancing to the dharma rank of “beyond the household” (just below the highest rank, “the greatly enlightened tathagata”) is to be “intimately conversant with the principles of all contemporary religions” (2016, 100). Does this mean that every advanced *Won*-Buddhist person of the Way should become an erudite scholar of comparative religions? That would be neither plausible nor feasible. But the phrase “contemporary religions” suggests that it is not a matter of knowing about all religions past and present, East and West. Rather, one is reminded of Pannikar’s “intrareligious dialogue,” which goes beyond mere knowledge of other religions or amicable exchanges with them but “is itself a religious act” (Pannikar 1998, xvii), a wrestling with the reality that one’s neighbors and fellow human beings live their lives of faith while holding quite different creeds (or “beliefs”). Sot’aesan

must have set this as a great task of practice, and we may assume that out of such practice his successor, Chōngsan Song Kyu, developed his “Ethics of Threefold Identity” (discussed below).

As a non-adherent, I have little to say regarding the details of the program of practice for achieving a Great Opening of spirit. On the whole, the program resembles Buddhism in basing itself on the Dharmakaya Buddha, but, in placing a high value on active engagement with social reality and secular life, it draws closer to Confucianism or the Christianity of *minjung* or liberation theology schools. As a literary critic, I would add that a Great Opening of spirit must also take place each time a genuine work of art is created—indeed, each time such a work is received and enjoyed, too. Naturally, the authenticity and power of the particular occurrence will have to be measured by how adequately it rises to the challenge of the ongoing Great Opening of matter.

A key factor in the success of the project for the Great Opening of spirit would concern the role of the *Won*-Buddhist Order as the core agents or leaders of that project. While the Great Opening can happen to anybody and in a great variety of ways, Sot’aesan founded a new religious order as the main instrument of his project and devoted his life to its development and even sheer survival, under the difficult circumstances of Japanese colonial rule.¹⁵ Here he chose a different course from Tonghak (later Ch’ōndogyo) or Chūngsando, both of which took the radical step of abolishing all distinction between sacred and lay. The absence of ordained devotees (called *chōnmuch’ulsin* in *Won*-Buddhism) must surely be one of the factors in the diminished size and power of the once-flourishing Ch’ōndogyo. At the same time, Sot’aesan also departed from traditional Buddhism, which gave a privileged status to the sangha as one of the “Three Jewels.” The prefatory chapter (section 18) of *The Scripture of the Founding Master* clearly states, “We will be concerned only with the rank of practice and work without discriminating between laity and clergy in terms of guests or hosts. Nor will we discriminate between them in the matter of the Buddhist lineage” (*Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 121–122).

Chōngsan’s Ethics of Threefold Unity (*samdong yulli* 三同倫理) carries on this tradition and gives it a fuller doctrinal form. The first essential point of this Ethics is “the unity of the sources of all principles [including all religions]” (*The Dharma Words of Cardinal Master Chōngsan*, chapter 13, *Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 841–842); the second is “the connectedness through a single vital force” (2016, 843) of all humans and sentient beings. Then, Chōngsan proceeds to enunciate “the unity of enterprises” as the third

essential point, and discards not only the distinction between laity and clergy but between adherents and non-adherents as well:

Therefore, all enterprises are essentially the same enterprise. When people pursuing various enterprises under heaven awaken together to this interrelationship, understand each other, and harmonize widely with one another, then all enterprises in the world will constitute management of a single household and will thereby encourage each other and advance in tandem, ultimately joining together in the Right Mean. Hence, we first must thoroughly realize this spirit of the Right Mean and establish within our minds the great spirit that views all enterprises as one; and, in this spirit, we must serve as the vanguard in unifying all enterprises in this world through the Right Mean. (2016, 844–845)

These fine thoughts, however, could also be rather hard words for ordained devotees of *Won*-Buddhism. While demanding of them total dedication and even harsh sacrifices, the doctrine would allow nothing in return—not only to adherents of the Order but to non-adherents either—except the rewards of dedication itself. Perhaps it is less difficult for individual ordained devotees to rise to the challenge than for the organized religious order to fully comply with the ethics of essential identity, hence full equality, of all enterprises. In reality, the issue of *kyodan juūi* (the Order-first ideology, or collective egotism of a religious order) has inevitably arisen. Asked for a comment on it in an interview with the editor of the *Won*-Buddhist monthly *Wonkwang*, I took the liberty of offering the “general proposition that failure to overcome the religion-first ideology [undue privileging of the religious over the non-religious] will give rise to the Order-first ideology, which in turn gives rise to the ideology of clericalism, and once clericalism takes root, there is bound to occur a power struggle among the clerics.”¹⁶

I do not know how applicable this remark may be to the *Won*-Buddhist Order entering its second century. But, to my mind, creating a system of ordained devotees while refusing to grant those devotees any privilege over the laity seems to have been a great organizational innovation of Sot’aesan’s. If fully carried through, this should largely resolve the dilemma in religious orders (and, by inference, other organizations) between undue hierarchy and discrimination like clericalism, on one hand, and weakened cohesion and effectiveness for lack of a stable supply of dedicated cadres, on the other. The extent of the *Won*-Buddhist Order’s contribution to the Great Opening of spirit may well depend on how faithful it manages to remain to Sot’aesan’s teaching of no discrimination between laity and clergy “in terms of guests or hosts” and Chōngsan’s Ethics of Threefold Unity.

Two *Won*-Buddhist Agendas of Global Concern

In closing, I would like to take up two issues that are prominent in the *Won*-Buddhist doctrine and also represent vital global agendas. The discussion should help readers appreciate how *Won*-Buddhism served as a vanguard in the modernization of Korean religions but also pointed a way to the carrying out of “the double project of modernity.”

Gender Equality and the Cultivation of Self-Power

One mark of *Won*-Buddhism’s forward-looking nature is the fact that, from the very beginning, it adopted gender equality as both a core doctrine and an organizational principle. It made “Equal Rights for Men and Women” [*namnyŏ kwŏlli tongil* 男女權利同一] the first of its “Four Essentials” of human life in an early scriptural text,¹⁷ recruited a large number of female ministers (*kyomu*) and other ordained devotees, and introduced the principle of gender parity in the makeup of the Supreme Dharma Council, the Order’s highest decision-making body (comparable to the College of Cardinals in the Roman Catholic Church). With the passage of time, practices of gender discrimination have asserted themselves here and there, particularly with the (subsequently instituted) rule of requiring celibacy oaths only from female clergy—currently a burning issue within the Order. But not only in doctrine but organizational practice, *Won*-Buddhism compares favorably with other religions, including Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

The introduction of the idea of gender equality in modern Korea is often attributed to Western religions, particularly Protestantism. Such religions certainly made a significant contribution, since many modern ideas and institutions providing for a more equal relationship between the sexes were introduced along with them. However, Christian dogma never specifically endorsed gender equality—indeed, it often tended toward the opposite—and actual practices of the churches did not always prove less discriminatory than the secular society of the West. A far more radical thought and practice regarding gender equality were advocated by leaders of Korea’s indigenous religions, such as Suun Ch’oe Cheu, Haewŏl Ch’oe Sihyŏng (the second Tonghak leader and successor to Suun) and Chŭngsan Kang Ilsun, and one of the surest signs of *Won*-Buddhism’s belonging to that lineage would be its adoption of “Equal Rights for Men and Women” in its early formulation of the Four Essentials.

The first of the Four Essentials, however, was revised to “Developing Self-Power” [*charyŏk yangsŏng* 自力養成] in the 1943 version of *The Principal Book*, and has remained so to this day. Not that the doctrine of gender equality has disappeared. It figures importantly in the presentation of the new Essential of life, for instance, in the explication of “The Gist of the Life of Dependency in the Past”:

A woman depended on her parents in her youth, on her husband after marriage, and on her children in her old age. Also, due to her unequal rights, she was not able to receive an education like that of men. She also did not enjoy rights of social intercourse and did not have the right to inherit property. She also could not avoid facing constraints in whatever she did or did not do with her own body and mind. (*Won-Buddhist Headquarters* 2016, 39)

But does not this revision mark a retreat in the doctrinal commitment to gender equality? In my view, no. True, it may have contributed to various instances of such a retreat in the Order’s practices, and one must remain vigilant that it not be used to justify any obfuscation of the gender issue. But so long as that vigilance is maintained, “Developing Self-Power” could qualify as a more comprehensive and adequate principle. Here I will venture to quote an extended passage from my conversation with the same editor of *Wonkwang*:

Even though *Won-Buddhism* at first put forth “Equal Rights for Men and Women” because gender inequality was such a grave issue in Korea at the time and a serious impediment to the development of self-power, I think it was appropriate to foreground the more basic principle of “Developing Self-Power” when the Order came to prepare a definitive edition of the scriptures with a view to fulfilling its role as a world religion.

As a matter of fact, the most influential among doctrines promoting gender equality is the modern Western notion of equal individual rights. That notion certainly has many legitimate claims, but also entails many undesirable side-effects. It seems doubtful whether the proper way to think of a human being is to consider him or her as a kind of atom born in possession of an equal amount of rights to do this or that thing. At least, it’s at variance with the Buddhist conception of a human being.

Gender inequality is bad because every human being should develop his or her self-power and live as a master of one’s own life in an equal society, and because gender discriminations obstruct such a course. But if each person must exercise an equal right in every matter, this would not only contradict the Principle of the Primacy of the Wise [the second of the Four Essentials] but would not be able to realize an equal society, either. (Paek et al. 2007, 4:206–207)

“Developing self-power” would amount to Unger’s “empowerment,” while the

modern ideology of gender equality may be a part of his “shallow equality.” Naturally, both in Korea and in the modern world as a whole, there is an urgent need for the struggle toward even that more limited goal, but Immanuel Wallerstein, for one, contends that this struggle cannot be won within the modern world system (Wallerstein 1998, 20–25). We may surmise that even to achieve “modern” objectives we need a great turning toward “postmodernity” or postcapitalism. The *Won*-Buddhist principle of empowerment, or “developing self-power,” seems to be based on a more persuasive conception of religion and truth than Unger’s, and moreover comes with a program of combining self-power and other-power (or dependence on “grace” from others) and even a methodology for realizing an equal society through the “Principle of the Primacy of the Wise” [*chija ponwi* 智者本位]. It seems to deserve serious consideration as a crucial asset in humanity’s efforts to build a new civilization of greater equality.

“Singlemindedness between Government and Religion,” or Toward a New Relationship between “Church and State”

Politics occupies an important place in Unger’s “religion of the future,” and indeed the question of political engagement by religions represents a burning issue across the globe. I remarked above that *Won*-Buddhism, while adopting Buddhism as its core doctrine, acquired also an aspect of Unger’s “religion that struggles with the world.” In today’s *Won*-Buddhist Order, there seems to be a tendency to favor political quietism and conformity with positive laws, relying on a mistaken interpretation of the fact that Sot’aesan refrained from open resistance against Japanese imperialism.¹⁸ But it was an act of utmost subversiveness to found a new religion and run an organization of Korean adherents under Japanese colonial rule, and one should not forget that the main objective of “Choice in Action,” considered the very fruit of the Threefold Study, was “to work at putting into practice the choice of the right at all costs and the forsaking of the wrong at all costs” (*Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 51).¹⁹

Won-Buddhism’s innovative contribution to the question of “church and state” seems to be the doctrine of “singlemindedness between government and religion” (*chönggyo tongsim* 政教同心), expounded by Chöngsan (*The Dharma Discourses of Cardinal Master Chöngsan*, chap. 13, sections 9 and 30; chap. 15, section 36, *Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 829–830, 837–836, 878). The principle itself derives from Sot’aesan’s idea of religion

and government being “like a family’s loving mother and strict father” (*The Scripture of the Founding Master*, Won-Buddhist Headquarters, 2016, 155) or like “two wheels of a carriage” (2016, 157). But since “loving mother and strict father” could be (mis)interpreted in terms of the old patriarchal idea, “single-mindedness of government and religion” manages to foreground the more egalitarian “two wheels” and establishes it as a *concept* rather than just a figure of speech.

In fact, existing political theories do not seem to have made a clear break from the familiar binary of “separation of church and state” versus “unity of church and state” (or some variety of theocracy). Today’s Christians, for instance, are involved in an endless controversy, with some rejecting all political activism on the part of the church because the latter’s exclusive concern should be with salvation of individual souls, while others claim that, even for the salvation of souls, religion must engage in political activities to remove the structural evil in society. Such controversy can be readily resolved, at least at the theoretical level, if we agree that government and religion, while not strictly separate and unconcerned with each other, should be of “a single mind” rather than constitute “a single body.”

Historical precedents of coming close to such “single-mindedness” are not altogether lacking. In Korea alone, the neo-Confucian state of the Chosŏn dynasty, for instance, could be termed a theocracy insofar as the king served as the high priest of state rituals, but given the power of the community of Confucian scholars to check and limit royal power, it could also be credited with a foretaste, though far from a real forerunner, of “single-mindedness of government and religion.” The earlier Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392), during which eminent monks served as the king’s teacher or spiritual guide, may have come closer in form, but in substance the Buddhist hierarchy was effectively subordinated to royal power.

Gandhi’s notion of “secularism” seems to suggest “singlemindedness of government and religion” using different terminology. In contrast to the more common usage of modern separation of church and state, his “secularism” held that government should be run by religious persons in line with religious principles but without discriminating against other religions (Nandy 2007, “An Anti-Secularist Manifesto,” 34–36).²⁰ Gandhi’s call for “bringing the right kind of religion and the right kind of politics together,” as put by psychologist and socio-political theorist Ashis Nandy’s (2007, 36), gains traction in view of India’s reality, where the attempt to build a modern secular nation-state has produced a good deal of chaos, including violent religious clashes. Nor is this a matter of indifference to the Republic of Korea, which so far has maintained a relatively peaceable multireligious society.

Its constitution, too, has adopted the prevalent modern principle of “separation of church and state,” but not only does this principle fail to resolve the often-strained relation between government and religion, but even tends (as in India) to abet conflicts among religious forces vying to capture the “separate” state power for their respective advantage.

The doctrine of “single-mindedness of government and religion” stresses the need for the government to receive moral guidance from religion without being run by religious orders or by the clergy, but such a state of affairs would require not only a great social transformation but a religious revolution (as Unger repeatedly stresses). For a religion that insists on the absolute verity of its particular creed could ensure neither the peace and justice of a state nor the free pursuit of lives of faith by its citizens, let alone truly productive collaboration between the religious and non-religious. *Won-Buddhism’s* proclaimed goal of “a religion based on truth” that offers “training in morality based on facts” (*The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism*, Won-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 7) probably would fit that shoe better—if the Order and its adherents manage to put the doctrine into practice. Indeed, the kind of nonsectarian and even not exclusively religious life laid down in the Ethics of Threefold Unity seems to accord with Unger’s definition of the religion of the future as “also the non-religion of the future” (Unger 2014, 238).

Precisely by the same logic, everybody need not, and in any event will not, embrace *Won-Buddhism* as one’s personal “religion/non-religion” of the future. But a serious dialogue with it probably will be called for somewhere along the way toward a great turning in civilization.

Paik Nak-chung is professor emeritus at Seoul National University and editor emeritus of The Changbi Quarterly.

Notes

- 1 The first version of this essay was presented as a keynote address at the April 2016 International Conference for the Centennial of *Won-Buddhism* and the seventieth anniversary of Wonkwang University in Iksan, Korea. Both the original Korean text and my English translation appeared in the conference packet (Institute of *Won-Buddhist Thought* 2016). An augmented Korean version of my talk appeared as an article in the journal *Wŏnbulgyo sasang kwa chonggyo munhwa* [*Won-Buddhist thought and religious culture*] (Paek 2016). The present *Cross-Currents* essay represents a further revised and slightly shortened version of that article.
- 2 I have endorsed the popular term “candlelight revolution” for the recent events and

- have attempted to give it some conceptual weight (Paek 2017).
- 3 See Paik (2011) for my notion of the “division system,” and Paik (2013) for a more recent discussion in English.
- 4 Heidegger understands truth as “unconcealedness” (*Entborgenheit*) and adds in a later work that the unconcealedness already includes concealment (Heidegger 1993, 444–446). This may be compared to the *Won*-Buddhist (and Buddhist) notion of the Truth [*chilli* 眞理] of the “true voidness and marvelous existence” [*chin’gong myoyu* 眞空妙有] that “freely reveal and conceal themselves” (*Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 20).
- 5 “Such thinking remains calculation even if it neither works with numbers nor uses an adding machine or computer. Calculative thinking computes.... Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is” (Heidegger 1966, 46).
- 6 The German original reads, “*Das bedenklichste in unserer bedenklichen Zeit ist, dass wir noch nicht denken*” (Heidegger 1954b, 3).
- 7 “What was said so far, and the entire discussion that is to follow, have nothing to do with scientific knowledge.... This situation is grounded in the fact that science itself does not think, and cannot think—which is its good fortune, here meaning the assurance of its own appointed course” (Heidegger 1954b, 7–8).
- 8 As the author of a scholarly article, Cho scrupulously adds, “I am not arguing that meditational experience is more valid or real than ordinary experience” (2002, 430). But a practicing Buddhist would not agree to such evenhandedness (which probably isn’t Cho’s personal conviction either, once away from scholarly disquisition, nor would Heidegger place scientific correctness (*Richtigkeit*) on an equal footing with his truth (*Wahrheit*).
- 9 Neither Suun Ch’oe Cheu (1824–1864), founder of Tonghak, nor Chŭngsan Kang Ilsun (1871–1909), founder of Chŭngsando, used the term religion (*kyo*, literally “teachings,” but a term corresponding to and later largely replaced by *chonggyo* 宗教, a word created to render the English “religion”), although Tonghak later came to adopt the name Ch’ŏndo-gyo [Religion of Heaven’s Way]. Some followers of Chŭngsan opted for Chŭngsan-gyo [Religion of Chŭngsan], but the largest sect insists on the name Chŭngsando [the Way of Chŭngsan], explicitly denying that it is a religion (Chŭngsando 1992, 19). Two remarks are in order regarding the literal (and generally accepted) rendering of Tonghak as “Eastern Learning”: first, *hak* indicates “doctrine cum practice” rather than “learning” in the ordinary sense; and second, while *tong* does oppose itself to Sŏhak (“Western Learning.” or Catholicism), it probably refers to Korea (the Eastern land in the Sinic sphere) rather than to East Asia as a whole. To some this may make the new doctrine more parochial, but it also foregrounds its self-consciousness as an original thought breaking with all traditional East Asian religions as well as with Catholicism coming from the West (cf. Paik 2011, 43).
- 10 François Jullien argues how fundamentally alien the Chinese thought represented by *The Book of Changes* is from both Greek thought, as represented by Hesiod’s *Theogony*, or the Hebraic thinking in the Bible. I bring up this point to question Unger’s conviction that the earlier religious revolutions of the world, beginning with prophetic Judaism of the eighth century B.C. and covering Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Islam, put an end to the cosmotheism of various pagan religions and

- effected a demystification of the physical universe. The early Vedas, not an apt example of a thorough demystification in any case, go as far back as to around 1100 B.C., but the whole thesis of a religious revolution demystifying the universe can properly apply only to the monotheistic religions, with modern science and rationalism completing this task of “disenchantment of the world.” The “pagan” sense of oneness with the physical universe remains alive not only in ancient Brahmanism but also in Daoism, Hinduism, and to a considerable extent Confucianism as well, while Buddhism may be said to carry out simultaneously a thorough demystification and a genuine re-enchantment.
- 11 I address this question in the context of D. H. Lawrence’s reflections on death and the possible return of the soul into a new body in his poem, “The Ship of Death” (Paik 2015b).
- 12 Italics in the original. For a fuller discussion of the difference between faith and belief, see chapter 3—“Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience”—in Pannikar (1998).
- 13 See <http://blog.daum.net/hhmm007/54>, accessed April 24, 2017.
- 14 See Paik (2015a) for my notion of “the double project of simultaneous adaptation to and overcoming of modernity.”
- 15 A recent biography (Kim 2016) renders a vivid account of the struggle for survival and growth.
- 16 Interview (by Pak Hyemyōng): “The Thought of Great Opening in Korean Religions and Sot’aesan’s Great Enlightenment” (Paek et al 2007, 3:404).
- 17 *Pogyōng yuktae yoryōng* [The Six Main Texts of Treasure Scripture]. See Ryu (2010, chapters 7 and 8).
- 18 On this point, too, the past several months have produced a remarkable change. The government’s unilateral decision to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in the close vicinity of Chōngsan’s birthplace, one of the major sacred sites of *Won*-Buddhism, galvanized the Order’s rank and file and even part of its high leadership to launch a sustained protest action. Some remark wryly that the US–ROK decision may paradoxically have been the Founding Master’s one hundredth anniversary gift to the Order.
- 19 Chōngsan later expatiated on this difference from traditional Buddhism: “Traditional Buddhist practice also involves a threefold study, but its practice of precepts, absorption, and wisdom is different from our Threefold Study. In the Buddhist tradition, precepts (*sila*) mostly derive from the texts of the *Vinaya* and are focused on the individual practice of observing the precepts. However, our ‘Choice in Action’ (*ch’wisa*) is the essential study for choosing without exception all the essential practices for self-cultivation, regulating the family, governing the nation, and realizing peace in the world” (*The Dharma Discourses of Cardinal Master Chōngsan*, chap. 6 “Exposition of Scriptures,” *Won*-Buddhist Headquarters 2016, 644).
- 20 “Gandhi said once in a while that he was secular. Yet he thought poorly of those who wanted to keep religion and politics separate” (quoted in Nandy 2007, 34–35). In a different essay, Nandy again cites Gandhi’s belief that “politics divorced from religion becomes debasing,” and quotes Pannikar’s pithy formulation, “The separation between religion and politics is lethal and their identification suicidal” (“The Twilight of Certitudes,” Nandy 2007, 62).

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