Article

Rethinking Public Religion in Korea: The Role of Religions in the Era of Climate Crisis

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Abstract: This paper attempts to explore the public dimension of religion in Korea. First, it examines the Western and East Asian contexts on the concept of 'public', noting that the gap in notions of public is large between East Asian and Western traditions. The following section discusses Habermas' 'institutional translation proviso' in relation to the notion 'public'. The institutional translation proviso serves as the basis for further discussion on rethinking the public role of religion in Korea in the era of climate crisis. We argue that 'secular' translations of religious convictions can help religious citizens and communities engage in public discourses on ecological challenges. We then consider major limitations of Habermas' understanding of religion. In the following section, we move on to discuss Albert Schweitzer and process theology in order to demonstrate how religious languages can be reinterpreted on the basis of modern experiences of ecological challenges. We then consider Buddhist alternatives for overcoming the climate crisis. The final section introduces José Casanova's account of public religions and discusses its implication for envisioning the public role of religious organizations in ecological efforts. Reviewing the contributions made by religious organizations to the Korean society, we suggest that 'ecological publicness' of religion can be obtained.

Keywords: public sphere; ecology; religious governance; Jürgen Habermas; religion in Korea; environmentalism; Albert Schweitzer; José Casanova; Christianity; Buddhism

1. Introduction

This paper critically reviews the notion of public and explores its application to religion in the context of ecological discourses. It consists of the following four parts. First, we introduce various notions of 'public' and 'publicness'. We stress that there is a substantial gap in notions of 'public' between the East and West. Second, with this diversity of understandings in mind, we reconceptualize the public role of religion in addressing ecological challenges and explore the possibility of a desirable governance relationship between the state and religion in Korea. Third, we pay attention to the implications that Habermas' recent discussion of religion and his idea of the institutional translation proviso have for rethinking the role of religion in the public realm. We briefly explain his account of the institutional translation proviso and discuss some limitations of his understanding of religion. We then investigate Albert Schweitzer's religious interpretation and the approach of process theology as examples of the institutional translation proviso, along with Buddhist alternatives for overcoming the climate crisis. Fourth, we discuss the public role of religion in Korea in the era of climate crisis. In doing so, we draw upon José Casanova's account of public religions. We highlight the public role of religion in seeking alternatives to the climate crisis.

2. A Brief Conceptual History of 'Public' and 'Publicness'

When translating the concept of public[1] into the Korean, Chinese, and Japanese languages, the Chinese characters used are a combination of 'kong (公)' meaning 'transparently exposed' and 'kong (共)' meaning 'together'. The Chinese word 'public' first appeared in the first great Chinese historian Sima Qian's *Shiji* (史記; 'Historical Records' in

English translation) 2100 years ago. It contains a story about the punishment of a man who jumped into the emperor's path without knowing it. One servant insisted that he should be punished harshly, while a servant named Zhang Shizhi (張釋之) said, "The law is public with the heavens and the world (法者天子所與天下公共也)" to argue that a simple fine should suffice. Here the word 'public' refers to something universally 'shared' among people regardless of status and something 'fair' to everyone. This is the etymology of the word 'public' commonly used in China, Korea, and Japan today. The word 'publicness', which unlike in the English-speaking world is extensively used in the three East Asian countries, is said to first appear in *Ethics*, a book written by Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji (Cho 2014, p. 82).

'Publicness' is sometimes used to refer to the 'state' in the communist China. State-led policies have a public nature, and resistance to them is considered 'private'. In China, Korea, and Japan, the word 'public' is commonly used to refer to something carried out by the state such as in public places or public policies. In the languages of the three countries, words such as 'public authority', 'public facilities', 'public enterprises', 'public interest', 'public places', 'republic', 'utilitarianism', 'disclosure', 'fairness', and 'public education' are used in a similar context. All of them are associated with something that is to be determined by the state and thus is general and universal and something that individuals should follow.

On the contrary, the English word 'public' originated from the word res publica, which meant the representation of majority opinions. In the West, the concept of public evolved into a word implying the legitimacy of the state through the 18th century Enlightenment. By this time, it obtained the meaning of a sovereign representing individuals. The government as a sovereign representing individual interests was understood as the outcome of the consent of the majority through elections. Later, the term 'public' opinion was used as an alternative to overcoming the limitations of modern democracy. However, a critical problem with modern democracy is the absence of citizens' participation or public debate with respect to decision-making. To overcome this, in a small country such as Switzerland, citizens gather to deliberate upon an issue of concern and make a decision in the form of direct democracy whenever an important issue emerges. We argue that Habermas' notion of the 'public sphere' can be a solution to overcome the limitations of modern democracy. Indeed, the closely related concepts of civil society and public sphere, which refer to capacities for social self-organization and influence over the state, are essential to good democracy (Carlhoun 2001, p. 1897).

Before starting to translate the English word 'public' into the Chinese word '公共', East Asian countries had generally perceived events conducted by their king or government to be public. Given this, it would have been difficult for Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese to come to full grips of the modern concept of public as it was received in the Western society. In the East Asian tradition, where the so-called public discourse was almost nonexistent, it is not easy to understand the meaning and importance of the civic culture and modern democracy based on the notion of public and public discourses. Perhaps this is due to the deep influence of Confucianism that for long dominated the lives, minds, and thoughts of East Asians.

With these differences in notions of public across space and time in mind, we will discuss how the participation of religions in the public sphere can be reconceived. Especially in the era of climate crisis, the process of incorporating religious values into the public sphere is highly important. The public sphere has been increasingly challenged by both ever-expanding marketization and polarized politics in the post-truth society. Faith communities, on the contrary, while there exist perils that they can become a source of tension (Koehrsen et al. 2022), can inspire and enrich the public sphere with their pursuit of values and virtues. Korea has successfully developed its capitalist economy and democracy, but its public sphere, the very foundation of sound democracy, remains far from mature. If religious communities, using 'public reason', can learn to rationally communicate their ecological values and concerns based on their own unique religious identity in the public

discourse, we will be able to more effectively address the key environmental challenges including climate change and recurring pandemics.

3. Habermas' Institutional Translation Proviso

Jürgen Habermas evaluates that religious movements in various parts of the world have radically changed as a result of the failure of the Western modernization program, which once seemed to work well. He pays attention to the fact that religion has become revitalized and re-politicized in the United States, where modernization was most successful. Even in Europe, religion, which was long regarded as anti-revolutionary since the French Revolution, is coming to the fore in the public realm again. Behind Habermas' evaluation lies the collapse of expectations that everything would work reasonably well since the establishment of the modern constitutional state (Habermas 2006, pp. 1–3). More specifically, he acknowledges that the electoral victory of President Bush, which was largely attributed to a coalition of religiously motivated voters, led him to pay attention to the role of religion in the public sphere. Habermas emphasizes that religion has entered a new realm of rationality in the modern world, contrary to the claims of secularization theorists.

Habermas argues that religious actors can participate in public discourses when they can 'translate' their religious language into the language of secular reason, stepping out of the private realm based on individual religious experiences. Furthermore, he argues that secular philosophers, too, should help translate religious languages into a generally accessible language so that ordinary citizens can understand it. In other words, the requirement of translation is a 'cooperative task' (Habermas 2006, p. 11). He diagnoses that the virtues of modern rational citizens have deteriorated under the growing influence of global capitalism. Therefore, modern democracies should encourage citizens to rediscover virtues and engage in social and political affairs.

Habermas argues that existing religions, especially Christianity, can play an important role in this regard. He thought that sin or guilt in Christianity could awaken people to guilt or conscience, that the idea in Genesis that humans were created in the image of God can awaken human dignity, and that the kingdom of God in the New Testament could have a positive effect on the formation of a community of unconditional solidarity in the world. Therefore, when these Christian convictions are translated into the language of secular reason, Christianity is no longer a religion confined in the realm of private experiences, but a 'public religion'. In this way, religious values and ethics, once properly interpreted, can contribute to remedying pathologies of the modern society and provide valid and creative alternatives. And in this way, religious traditions, communities, and organizations can overcome the peril of over-privatization of their conviction and bigotry.

It seems that Habermas' optimism toward 'public religion' depends on the fact that Christianity and Western philosophy have commonalities. Both have their roots in the same period, the so-called ''Axis Age''. In the course of the Hellenization of Christianity, classical Greek philosophy "assimilated many religious motifs and concepts" of the Judeo–Christian origin (Habermas 2006, p. 17). Throughout history there is ample evidence that "philosophy has found in its encounters with religious traditions" (Habermas 2006, p. 17). Both Christianity and Western philosophy achieved the "cognitive leap from mythical narratives to a logos", embraced the same Greco-Roman concepts, and have in their essence self-reflective and critical minds. Based on this shared history and tradition, he argues, a purely secular worldview or a naturalistic worldview in the post-secular society can be properly corrected. This is what he calls "conversion of reason by reason" (Irlenborn 2012, p. 5). By translating the religious language into the secular language, we are able to overcome the reason of modernity which resulted in the loss of civic virtue.

This idea, of course, is not supported by all those who are interested in reconciling faith and rationality. Nicholas Wolterstorff, for example, disagrees. He suggests that there is no need for translation because religious citizens can communicate with each other in the same way citizens exchange ideas about politics in the public sphere (Patrick 2014).

Nevertheless, Habermas' idea has succeeded in embracing religion in modern democracies and incorporating it into the sphere of secular reason. The civic virtues that we are in desperate need of might be reinstated. In the following section, we will give one such example of translation of religion into the secular language: Albert Schweitzer's life-reverence ethics. As theologian, he provided a reinterpretation of Jesus and Christian faith. We suggest that his new understanding of Christian faith can be linked to the modern ethics of ecology.

4. Limitations of Habermas' Understanding of Religion

As discussed above, the institutional translation proviso has important implications for the public nature of deliberative democracy and religion in light of the limitations of modern representative democratic politics. Habermas' initial view on religion was that it still remained at a mythical stage, in that it is not clear whether religion is a social/objective phenomenon or a subjective one. Later, he positioned religion at a religious–mythological stage, in which traditions limit individual rationality and autonomy. With the advent of modern times, religion, considered as private, was pushed to the periphery in the Western world. Recently, however, Habermas argues that religion has gradually begun to reappear in the public domain in the post-secular society. At first glance, this change in Habermas' view on religion seems to contradict his basic position which emphasizes rationality and rational discourse at first glance. But it is a reassessment of its role, necessitated by the crisis of modernity and rationality and the "colonization of the lifeworld" (Bahram 2013, p. 366).

Regarding the discussion of the public role of religion, there is a noteworthy difference between the positions of Rawls, Audi, and Habermas on one side and Wolterstorff and Weithman on the other side. Lafont, too, was critical of the idea of institutional proviso. The core of Rawls and Habermas' argument is that religious beliefs and values are different from the public reason of the general public, and a device is needed to translate religious claims into a secular language. When the conflict between religious beliefs and secular reason emerges, there can be two contrasting approaches with respect to how to deal with it. First, there is a position that religious reason should be translated from the standpoint of public/secular reason to ensure the publicness of religion. However, critics of the institutional proviso would ask on what ground we demand such a secular translation from religious citizens. When each citizen expresses their position, whether it is based on religious beliefs or science, we cannot be assured of what will follow: they may naturally reach an agreement through democratic procedures, or they may fail to reach an agreement (Lafont 2007, p. 253).

There are other problems including whether religious citizens have the capacity to translate effectively, and whether they can retain the faithfulness to their religious beliefs in the translated secular language. If a religious person who understands himself and the world in the providence of God is engaged in the endeavor to understand himself and the world in the laws of nature and providence, can it be said that the language of religious beliefs was faithfully translated into a language of secular reason? In addition, the very attempt of translation imposes a heavy burden on religious citizens.

However, we think that the problem of translating religious language into secular language is not as simple as Lafont understood. For example, religious beliefs are deeply intertwined with important policy issues such as evolution, creation, and the same-sex marriage in the United States. Habermas is asking what kind of deliberation is needed when making political decisions over these issues. When religious and non-religious citizens discuss them, they are likely to run into a wall and to find themselves in conflict rather than in true dialogue. If many of them are not accustomed to communications and debates, a deliberation is bound to lead to conflict. Habermas' translation proviso does not give up modern rationality in this respect. It leaves us with a possibility, however slim, that religion can contribute to the public domain based on modern rationality.

5. Schweitzer's Interpretation of Christianity

According to Albert Schweitzer, Jesus lived under the influence of the late Jewish apocalyptic worldview of his time. Jesus thought the world was coming to an end and emphasized the practice of love. In Schweitzer's view, the life and thought of Jesus are summarized as the following: the end is near, and thus ethical practice is of utmost priority in the face of the end. Jesus's apocalyptic worldview is based on his understanding that the world is in crisis, in which all life is dying. His God is life itself, that is, a will to live, and human-beings are no more than a will to live amongst a multitude of living things with the same will to live. Therefore, according to Schweitzer, to worship and serve God is to nurture and preserve life around us. His service in Africa is not irrelevant to the life of Jesus, who he studied as a New Testament scholar. Through his study of historical Jesus, he discovered a character who practiced love for neighbors in reverence of life. He wanted to live like his teacher Jesus, and he was convinced that he lived life as a disciple of Jesus.

According to Schweitzer, the core of Jesus' sermon is as follows: "The kingdom of God is near! Repent" (Mark 1:14). The kingdom of God which Jesus referred to is synonymous with the kingdom of the Messiah. And when he said the kingdom of God was near, it means that the end of the world was near. The kingdom of God is regarded as a supernatural period that appears after the end of the natural order. The natural world is an imperfect world dominated by evil angels. Therefore, sickness and death dominate this world. When God ends the interim between the end of the world and the arrival of the kingdom of God, the perfect will replace the imperfect, and the good will replace the evil. He will transform the Earth into a wonderful state and turn the old land into fertile soil. At this time, death will lose its power; those in the tomb will be resurrected and judged before God's throne along with the living, and the wicked and the rejected will fall into eternal pain. At this time, the chosen people will be elevated into the same ranks as the angels and will live a life of eternal blessing, participating in the feast of the Messiah. The timing of this judgment will be vaguely hinted by the Messiah.

According to Schweitzer, Jesus lived in a post-Jewish apocalypse, and although it is not well understood from today's point of view, the core of his ideas in the apocalypse contains the ethics of reverence for life (Schweitzer 1948, pp. 69–71). Schweitzer's study of Jesus is a good example of how to understand the language of late Jewish apocalypse, which is not well known to modern people. Jesus did not diagnose the crisis based on today's scientific thinking but merely based on religious intuition to grasp the crisis. Unlike Jesus, Schweitzer did experience a crisis while watching the wars and various disasters, and to overcome the crisis, he tried to embody Jesus' love for neighbors by reinterpreting it as love for life or reverence for life (Commenska 2016). Schweitzer's interpretation of Jesus is a supreme example of the translation of religious intuition into philosophical language.

6. Process Theology and a New Interpretation of Christianity

Process theology, influenced by Whitehead's process philosophy, helps us to rethink global ethics by providing a new way of interpreting the Bible in the age of climate crisis. Process theology reinterprets the Bible from the standpoint of panentheism, departing from the traditional theism of Christianity, and emphasizes the responsibility for nature created by God. From the standpoint of traditional theism, God is seen omnipotent, qualitatively different, and distant from humans. This tradition understands that God completed creation once and for all in the past. In contrast, process theology understands that God still creates nature anew today. In process theology, God is a god that exists in the interaction between humans and nature. God is not a patriarchal god who decides everything on his own, but a god who leads the whole nature by suffering with man and nature, regretting and sometimes withdrawing his decision. This understanding of God is completely different from the traditional Christian view that emphasized the superiority of humans created in the image of God and conceptualized God as personally engaging with humans.

Traditionally, Christianity understood God and nature from a human-centered perspective. In the West, Christians thought that God mandated man to control and conquer

nature. This Christian theist tradition is largely responsible for the modern ecological crisis, along with the modern natural science worldview. In process theology, humans are understood as a part of the whole; they engage not only with God, but also with nature and even minerals. From this point of view, human behavior has implications not only for the relationship with God and for the relationship with other humans. It must be construed in the relationship with environments surrounding men. Repentance (*metanoia* in Greek) from the standpoint of traditional theism implies returning to God as a personal father, as is evident in the famous metaphor in the gospels. On the contrary, from the standpoint of process theology, repentance must be an *ecological conversion*. This tradition emphasizes love and responsibility for the natural ecosystem beyond adherence to God's commandments and love for human neighbors. The recent "Laudato Si" declaration by Pope Francis and the ecological movement based on it can be said to represent such a new Christian understanding.

In process theology, God is understood as a companion, not a ruler of the world. Process theology accepts the theory of evolution by understanding evolution as a process of continuous creation and emphasizes that human self-realization and God's purpose are not separated. In process theology, God is also influenced by humans, and God has no power vis-a-vis existential freedom of being. This understanding of God shows an ecological perspective on the universe, unlike the traditional view of God as an omnipotent ultimate reality. Whitehead says that the personification of God as an emperor or a moral enforcer or the concept of God as the ultimate cause of the world is far from the divine understanding emphasized by Jesus in the New Testament (Cobb and Griffin 1976, pp. 8–10, 96–98).

God is inextricably related to things and humans and cannot be separated from them. God is not only transcendent, but also intrinsic. Hong (2016) classifies the characteristics of process theological understanding implied in "Laudato Si" into three categories: (1) God as a companion, (2) God as a connected network, and (3) God inherent in the world. This God is directly connected to the position of ecology that starts from the organic connection of all living things. Thus, the adaptation of Whitehead's philosophy by process theology can aid us to reconceptualize the public role of Christianity in the age of climate crisis.

This process theological understanding is similar to the theory of interdependence of all things in Buddhism. Cobb and Griffin find similarities between process philosophy and Buddhism in rejecting substantive thinking and the position that a fixed 'I' exists, such as the modern Cartesian ego (Cobb and Griffin 1976, pp. 137–38). According to John Cobb, human independence has been overly and mistakenly emphasized in the substantive and dualistic thinking of traditional philosophy and theology, and the interdependence of humans and nature at various dimensions has not been properly recognized. In particular, he evaluates that after the 17th century scientific revolution, the absolute boundary between humans and nature was explicitly drawn. He also said Schweitzer's ethics of reverence for life received little attention as an alternative to overcome the limitations of modern philosophy and theology (Cobb and Griffin 1976, p. 76)

As pointed out earlier, Schweitzer is in line with the ecological position of process theology in that he discovers love for all creatures in Jesus' teaching on love for neighbors. Nevertheless, a key question remains unanswered in Schweitzer's and Cobb's thinking: of which life should be prioritized in situations where a choice must be made? We can agree with the principle that creatures should be protected and cared for. However, as an individual in the middle of numerous wills to live, 'I' have no choice but to live on the sacrifice of another life. Sometimes we have to sacrifice other lives to save mine. Schweitzer and Cobb tried to solve this dilemma, but the absolute solution seems difficult to find out. The task of how to overcome the gap between the principle of saving all lives and our everyday experience remains. According to Cobb, there is a hierarchy among plants, animals, and inanimate objects. Cobb conceptualizes the hierarchy from Descartes' position. Cobb says that the hierarchy between creatures is not an ontological dualism as in Descartes' case but only an organic dualism (Cobb and Griffin 1976, pp. 77–79). However, this distinction does not completely solve the problem of priorities. Despite the dilemma, the Christian

interpretation of process theology, as with Schweitzer's interpretation, could be a good guide for finding the public role of religion to address ecological challenges for Korean Protestants and citizens today.

7. Buddhist Alternatives for Overcoming the Climate Crisis

As discussed above, Schweitzer and process theology are similar in that both conceptualize a post-metaphysical God in the effort to overcome traditional theism. Meanwhile, the essence of Buddhism is based on the Zen meditation experience to escape from the obsession with the world currently experienced. Therefore, such an experience is not easy to translate this experience into a language of everyday secular reason. Mahayana Buddhism, unlike the early Buddhist tradition, emphasizes emptiness. This can be seen as an attempt to escape from obsession more thoroughly. The basic position of Buddhism is also critical of substantialism and human-centered thinking, as is Schweitzer's interpretation of Christianity and process theology. In Buddhism, there is nothing to be obsessed with in the human life, which is simply no more than living the moment between life and death. It is recommended to naturally leave it to the law of 'dependent arising (or, dependent origination)'. Buddhism declares that nothing exists in this world independently and that nothing is fixed in the world dominated by 'dependent arising'.

In Korean tradition, Buddhism's dependent arising has been translated into everyday secular language as the word 'fated relationship' ("inyeon" in Korean). While the Buddhist law of dependent arising applies to all relationships among human beings and animals in the nature, the Korean word 'fated relationship' mainly refers to accidental encounters among people, which is quite far from its original concept. Buddhism's dependent arising needs to be reinterpreted, using the language of secular reason, as the idea that no living thing around us should not be treated harshly because everything is connected to everything. For example, Schumacher's (2010) book *Small is Beautiful*, presents a Buddhist view of economics, and such a distinct worldview can provide an alternative to Protestant ethics combined with the spirit of capitalism, which played a decisive role in the ecological crisis. He argues that the large-scale economy pursued so far in capitalist society should be scaled down and transformed into locally based, small-scale ones.

In Buddhist economics, he believes that the essence of civilization is not in maximizing demand but in purifying people's character. The criterion for success in Buddhist economics is not simply the total amount of goods produced within a given time. According to Schumacher, the core of Buddhist economics is simplicity and non-violence. In Buddhist economics, the 'standard of living' is not determined by those who consume more than others. Consumption is simply a means to human welfare. The goal is to attain the best welfare with minimal consumption. Here, the principle of economics—maximizing utility with the least cost—is replaced by the principle of enjoying the greatest well-being and welfare with the least consumption. The possession and consumption of goods is only a means to an end.

From the perspective of his Buddhist economics, production for local needs using local resources makes the most sense. Therefore, dependence on imports from afar and exporting to unknown people can only be justified in exceptional cases and on a small scale (Schumacher 2010). Non-renewable resources should not be used unless it is inevitable. Excessive use of non-renewable resources amounts to violence in Buddhism. Even if we acknowledge perfect non-violence is impossible to achieve, we have an obligation to move toward the ideal goal of non-violence. Schumacher's attempt serves as an example of translating Buddhist language into secular language and provides a Buddhist alternative to the climate crisis.

These two religious traditions will be able to meet and talk to each other when they start from ecological concerns, with a critical view toward substantialist thinking and with a desire to overcome the ecological crisis. In particular, it will be possible to contribute to the formation of the publicness of religion in Korea by communicating with policymakers. Habermas' institutional translation proviso can play an important role in deliberative

democracy. In addition, it could contribute to the publicness of religion based on ecology as an alternative to the climate crisis, which is a different dimension to the role of public religion presented by Casanova.

8. Public Religions in Casanova and Habermas

In his book *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova (1994) categorized the theory of secularization into three categories: (1) secularization in the sense that secular functions are increasingly differentiated, (2) secularization in the sense that religion is in decline, and (3) secularization in the sense that religion is retreating into the private domain. While acknowledging secularization in its first sense, he dismisses the latter two—the decline of religion thesis and the privatization of religion thesis. He argues that religion has not declined and has never been privatized in the sense that it has become a private realm. To the contrary, he describes the "deprivatization" of religion in the modern world. To support this argument, he offers empirical studies of the religious phenomena of Spain, Poland, Brazil, and the United States in the 1980s, mainly associated with Catholicism and Protestantism. Using these cases as evidence, the key proposition he provides is that religion has never declined or been privatized, as the theory of secularization has repeatedly alleged. Religion has rather changed from a private religion to a public religion, embracing modern values of civil liberties and differentiated structures (Casanova 1994, pp. 221–22). His attempts at demystifying the theory of secularization and constructing a new theory of public religions provide a good guide to understanding recent religious phenomena from a new perspective.

However, his argument is not without problems. The first criticism is whether only a few country cases described in his book are sufficient enough to draw a general conclusion that religion has not declined and has not become privatized. To make the conclusion more compelling, more examples of religious phenomena from Europe and other regions need to be added, and the scope of religion also needs to be expanded. Furthermore, we should point out that adding a few more cases seemingly supporting his theory is not tantamount to proving its generalizability. The second and related criticism is the question about 'place'. To effectively refute the theory of secularization, counterexamples should be chosen from the region where secularists mainly use for their argumentation, i.e., Europe. Except for Spain, however, the counterexamples against secularization suggested by Casanova are located outside Europe. Given that secularization is supposedly associated with the Enlightenment tradition, it would make more sense to use as counterexamples cases such as France, Britain, and Germany. Nevertheless, we believe that Casanova's theory should be taken seriously and is worth a further investigation into religious phenomena in various regions.

What Casanova tried to emphasize by challenging the secularization theory is that the newly emerging public religions neither reject modernity per se nor interfere with modernity. Rather, they play a positive role in enlightenment and modernity. The emergence of new public religions opens up new space for rationality. Casanova's empirical research reveals that religion is compatible with modern values after modernization. Public religions create a new realm of publicness. This position is in line with Habermas' position when he emphasizes democratic communication as a characteristic of modernity in his early theory of communicative action and discourse ethics. In recent years, Habermas has explored the possibility of public religion through the translation proviso. Casanova introduces Habermas' position as one of the four analysis frameworks while discussing private and public religions (Casanova 1994, pp. 216–17). Casanova approaches the movement of public religion in three dimensions: at the political, the political society, and the civil society level. Among them, the movement of public religion in the first two dimensions does not correspond to the principle or differentiation structure of modern universality, while only public religion at the third civil society level is consistent with the modern universal principle and differentiation structure (Casanova 1994, pp. 218–20). He suggests that ex-

amples of public religions are found in Protestant fundamentalism and public intervention of American Catholic bishops.

In addition, concurring with Habermas' view on the colonization of lifeworld and on modernity as an incomplete project, Casanova hopes that religion will play a renewed role in the public sphere, rather than remain in the private sphere. Similarly, he concurs with Habermas that the common good can be obtained through communicative action (Casanova 1994, pp. 232–33). And the common good we utmost need today is to preserve the global ecosystem.

9. The Possibility of a New Public Religion in Korea

Casanova criticizes the secularization theory, based on his case study of Catholic and Protestant public activities in the 1980s (Casanova 1994). He argues that religion, once considered an obstacle to the scientific revolution and enlightenment, in fact played the role of public religion and actively engaged in public debates on common public concerns and issues. In Korea, public activities of religious communities similar to those Casanova described have been steady. A number of religious organizations have been active in areas such as the provision of social welfare services, political advocacy, volunteer work, fundraising for a cause, and fighting for the rights and interests of foreign workers and the poor. In these areas, they played a public role effectively; indeed, Korea's religions were public religions. We argue that there is one particular area in which Korea's religious communities and citizens can make a unique contribution: ecological citizenship.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate crisis, religious communities have moral obligations to pay more attention to and to participate in net zero efforts. In order for the ecological transition of religions to be successful, each faith tradition must derive ecological vision and ethics from their values and theology. Only then will it be possible to gain a lot of sympathy and support from their adherents. Therefore, it is necessary for theologians and religious leaders to reinterpret their religious tradition and to connect it with the modern experience of ecological challenges. The aforementioned Habermas' idea of institutional translation finds an echo here in the need for ecological reinterpretation. And Schweitzer's Christian interpretation of life-reverence ethics and process theology as a reinterpretation of Christianity are examples of such an effort.

The recent environmental protection activities of religious organizations and their endeavors to influence public debates on ecology have proven fruitful. Among the most visible and proactive movements are the Korea Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity and the Catholic Environmental Movement. The Laudato Si movement (https://gccmkorea.kr/ecocatholic/2727 (accessed on 30 November 2022)) by the Catholic Church of Korea and the environmental movement (https://greenchrist.org/ (accessed on 30 November 2022)) among Korean protestants represent the roles of public religion and an effort to achieve the common good. Korean Won Buddhism[2] and Buddhist organizations are also actively engaged in environmental movements to solve the problems facing mankind in the era of climate crisis. When the construction of the Cheonseongsan Tunnel was pressed ahead in spite of concerns about its ecological consequences, multiple Buddhist organizations spoke publicly against it (Lee 2018).

The remaining task for religious actors is to try to close the distance with the broader society by translating their faith-based ethics and experiences into a common language and by contributing to decision-making processes in the ecological governance. In the past, religious organizations in Korea were quick to provide support to the communities and people in emergency situations such as natural disasters. Similarly, a religion scholar Ki-ppeom Yoo emphasizes that religious communities need to go beyond their passive approaches to ecological challenges, which are characterized by relying on individual adherents' ecological sensibility. He suggests that religious traditions must seek solidarity with one another and with nonreligious citizens (Yoo 2016). By doing so, we will be able to add the public dimension to ecological spirituality.

The relationship between religion and state in Korea has been typically understood in the context of a clear delineation between the public and the private. The Korean government's attitude toward religious communities in the early days of the recent pandemic exemplifies the hands-off principle. Government officials thought that the government, due to its public nature, has superiority over religious communities and that the latter should comply with administrative orders in the public health emergency situation. There was no consultation with religious communities. This approach derives from a particular understanding of the state–religion relationship: religion is concerned with the private sphere and should not be involved in public policy. However, in reality, religious organizations have assumed a public role in many areas including serving local communities and providing social welfare services. Religious communities in Korea have been *public*. Nevertheless, the relationship between religion and the state in Korea settled in a way that the state can rely on the resources of religious communities when needed, but the latter has no say in public affairs. This inconsistency calls for a new form of religious governance and for reconceptualization of state–religion relationship for the ecological transition.

In the recent pandemic situation, there have been frequent conflicts between religion and the state not only in Korea but also in many other countries. These conflicts lead us to rethink a desirable relationship between religion and state as well as the public nature of religions. It seems that we stand at a juncture where religious communities and the government need to join together to create a new public sphere for ecological dialogue.

10. Conclusions

In this article, we have explored the Western and East Asian understandings of public, paying attention to the differences. Given the growing importance of the role of religion in the public sphere, we have noted that Habermas' idea of institutional translation, as a prerequisite for the participation of religious citizens in the public sphere, has potential to moderate tensions. And from an ecological point of view, we introduced how religious traditions can be reinterpreted in order to become a new public religion, focusing on Schweitzer and process theology. Finally, in connection with Casanova's position on public religion, we introduced some of public activities of religious organizations in Korea. We argued that there is much to contribute for religious communities with respect to environmentalism. They can influence public debates, promote awareness on ecological crisis, and participate in decision-making processes (Koehrsen et al. 2022, p. 46). What we need to focus on is two-fold: an interreligious dialogue based on the translation of each faith and the religious governance that encourages a policy dialogue between faith-based organizations and the secular power. Many religions have evolved from a religion of race into a religion of rationality (Whitehead 1926). The religion of rationality is based not on race or any collective identity. Rather, it answers to the wide universe. Whitehead explains that Christianity and Buddhism were once examples of such a religion of rationality but have lost their influence in modern days (Whitehead 1926, pp. 42–44). When Christianity and Buddhism are transformed into public religions by renewing themselves, based on ecological reinterpretations in the face of the climate crisis, they could regain the status of religion of rationality. As we saw in the new interpretation of Christianity and Buddhism suggested by Schweitzer and process theology, and Schumacher's Buddhist economics, respectively, it is not a vain expectation.

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Notes

[1]　In the Western tradition, the concept of public traces back to Greco-Roman ideas of the 'rightful members of polities'. In modern usage, public has become increasingly opposed to 'private'. According to Carlhoun (2001, 2004), it nowadays denotes in English: (1) "the people, interests or activities which are structured by or pertain to a state, (2) anything which is open or accessible, (3) that which is shared, especially that which must be shared, (4) all that is outside the household, and (5) knowledge or opinion that is formed or circulated in communicative exchange, especially through oratory, texts, or other impersonal media".

[2]　For more information on the Won Buddhism's environmental movement, visit the following website: https://www.woneco.net/action_climate (accessed on 30 November 2022).

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