

# INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

**Dasŏk Yu Yŏng-Mo's Korean Trans-Cosmic and  
Trans-Religious Spirituality:  
A Translation and Commentary on "Spiritual Hiking"**

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Spirituality: A Translation and Commentary on "Spiritual Hiking"**

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## Abstract

This paper provides an original translation and commentary on the prayer “Stroll (산보 Sanbo)” or “Spiritual Hiking (정신 하이킹)” by Dasök Yu Yöng-mo (1890-1981). It places the prayer within his multi-religious Korean context and explores it to understand Dasök’s spiritual principle of “*pint’ang-hante machhyö noli*,” or “Playing Rituals in Harmony with the Emptiness Together.” This paper has four main aims: to help stimulate Dasök scholarship in the English speaking world; to contribute to scholarship on contextual (Korean/East Asian) theology, global theology, theological inculturation, theology of religions, and comparative theology; to highlight Dasök’s unique contribution to “religious pluralism;” and, to provide an original translation and commentary on his work, making this not simply a basic survey of his ideas, but also a deep insight into his complex world of meaning.

## Introduction

In this paper<sup>1</sup>, one of the most profound and important works of Dasök Yu Yöng-mo (1890-1981) will be introduced. Little known and studied in Korea, Dasök is even less known within the English-speaking world. He is, arguably, one of the most innovative religious thinkers in Korea's modern history, and influenced a good number of important Korean religious leaders of the twentieth century. Amongst these, the most famous is Ham Sök-hön (1901-1989), who was influential in Korean *minjung* (민중), the people's theology and movement.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, here, we will explore exactly how Dasök integrated various resources from the Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist traditions to contextualise Christianity within a multi-religious Korea to create a more indigenous theological paradigm.

In particular, this paper will provide a translation of the prayer entitled “Stroll (산보 *Sanbo*)” or “Spiritual Hiking (정신 하이킹),”<sup>3</sup> which is a profound working through of many themes and concepts which blend Christianity into the Korean context. As such, through this short text, much depth is unpacked in terms of how Dasök understood his spirituality, and how he integrated Korean indigenous understandings into his faithful practice and theologising. Key in understanding this, will be introducing what he saw as the spiritual principle of “*pint’ang-hante machhyö noli*”. This may be translated by the phrase “Playing Rituals in Harmony with the Emptiness Together.” However, these words are packed with multiple meanings that play upon various Korean, and wider East Asian, contexts and traditions, as well as being related to Christian themes and concepts. Simply seeing this wording does little to explain the meaning to an audience unversed in Dasök’s thought, while even many Korean speaking scholars may not understand the depth of meaning because of the way that each term is employed by him and how they combine to create further meaning. Indeed, the same applies to the prayer and its name of “Spiritual Hiking.”

This paper, along with the previous study of Dasök’s context,<sup>4</sup> are intended to do several things. Firstly, to provide an initial starting point for Dasök scholarship in the Western and Anglophone world. Secondly, to contribute to wider scholarship on what are often termed contextual theology, global theology, theological inculturation, theology of religions, and comparative theology with a distinct contribution from the Korean context. Thirdly, to provide a study of Dasök’s unique contribution to what may be termed “religious pluralism,” and so to enrich an understanding of Christianity and wider discourses, specifically by providing original translations and commentaries. It is acknowledged that understanding Dasök’s work is difficult, and, without a wider appreciation of Korea’s religious heritage, what is provided here is only a glimpse of the meaning within his work, but as noted in the first point my aim is to give stepping stones towards making Dasök scholarship more widely known and available. This paper is offered, therefore, as an initial contribution, rather than as a definitive study or understanding of Dasök and his work, nevertheless, especially by giving original translations and commentary it is more than simply a cursory introduction, but proffers a deep insight into a complex world of meaning.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is the second of two peer reviewed works introducing Dasök’s work in English in the *Interreligious Relations* series. The former paper provides further background on Dasök as a thinker within the Korean context, see Heup Young Kim, “Introducing Dasök Yu Yöng-Mo’s Korean Spiritual Disciplines and his Prayer “Being a Christian,”” *Interreligious Relations* 25 (2021). A note on romanisation: for Korean Romanisation, this article basically uses the McCune-Reischauer system. Chinese characters are also romanised according to Korean pronunciation, except for *dao* (道).

<sup>2</sup> See Ham Sök Hön, *Queen of Suffering: A Spiritual History of Korea*, trans. E. Sang Yu, London: Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1985. *Minjung* in Korean means the oppressed people. *Minjung* theology argued for the preferential option to the *minjung* and that they are real, authentic subjects of history in the reign of God and so of theology. For an introduction to minjung theology, see Kim Yong-Bock ed., *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, Singapore: Commission on Theological Concern, Christian Conference of Asia, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Yu Yöng-mo, “*Sanbo*,” *Chesori: Dasök Ryuyöngmo Kangüirok* [Lecture Book of Dasök Yöng-mo], ed. Kim Hüng-ho, Seoul: Sol Ch’ulp’ansa, 2001, 122; also, in Yu Yöng-mo, *Dasök-ilji* 多夕日誌 [The Diaries of Dasök], Seoul: Hongikje, 1990, 4:487.

<sup>4</sup> Kim, “Introducing Dasök Yu.”

## “Playing Rituals in Harmony with the Emptiness Together”

### (빈탕한데 맞혀놀이 *Pint'ang-Hante Machhyō Noli*)

For Dasök, the ultimate purpose of “living as a human being” (사람살이 *saramsari*) is “Playing Rituals in Harmony with the Emptiness Together” (*Pint'ang-Hante Machhyō Noli*), which he said is equivalent to *Kongyō Paehyang* (空與配享) in Chinese.<sup>5</sup> In Confucianism, *Paehyang* originally designated an act of veneration of Confucius together with his ten disciples in Confucian worship (祭 *che*), which came to denote “receiving a veneration together”. Interpreting this as “living in harmony with each other,”<sup>6</sup> Dasök asserts that this phrase denotes “the conclusion for humanity after I have seen life as the one born as a human being.”<sup>7</sup>

“*Pint'ang*” (빈탕) originally means a space or place (탕 *t'ang*) which is empty (빈 *pin*). This word became a crucial term in Dasök's thought, designating a great empty space, even referring to a reality of Great Vacuity. He says: “The emptiness [虛空 *hōkong*] can only be called *pint'ang*... There is nothing in this world that is as certain as *pint'ang*. It is *kong-kong-hō-hō-tae-tae-sil* (空空虛虛大大實). It is said that an empty emptiness is a great and greater reality.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, this term signifies both an empty space (空空虛虛 or 虛空) and the Great Vacuity (虛虛大大 or 太虛), which also refers to sky or heaven. In this way, Dasök tries to develop this particular Korean word to be a polysemic conceptual term similar to Chinese characters, broadly embracing Daoist, Confucian, and Buddhist concepts referring to emptiness, void, vacuity, nothingness, heaven, or cosmos (空, 虛, 無, 天).<sup>9</sup>

This notion also involves Dasök's unique conception of the One (하나 *hana*), the Ultimate Ontology.<sup>10</sup> He says:

This person seems to have often thought that the emptiness (虛空) and the mind-heart are not two, but one... the Absolute God or the mind-heart does not go back and forth. This person always feels that what is inside or what is outside is a perfect match. When looking at flowers, you usually only look at the flowers inside the flower frame, but not the empty space (literally, the face of *pint'ang*) outside the flower frame. You must also see the emptiness surrounding the flower. The colourless emptiness has been pleasant since long ago, but these days I feel it is even more pleasant. Anything you do without knowing the emptiness is false. Only the emptiness is true.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Yu Yōng-mo, *Dasök-kangūi* 다석강의 [Lectures of Dasök], ed. the Society for Dasök Studies, Seoul: Hyōnamsa, 2006, 464-67.

<sup>6</sup> “서로 짝이 맞아서 누리고 사는 것” (Ibid., 464).

<sup>7</sup> “이 사람이 인간으로 나서 본 인간에 대한 결론이라고 할 수 있습니다.” (Ibid., 458).

<sup>8</sup> “허공도 빈탕이라고 할 수밖에 없습니다... 이 세상에 빈탕같이 확실한 것은 없습니다. 공공허허대대실입니다. 공(空)하고 또 공한 것이 크고 또 튼 실상이라 하였습니다.” (Ibid., 465).

<sup>9</sup> Developing the Korean language (*hangŭl*) from a phonogram to an ideogram is a task which Dasök paid special attention to. Likewise, he promoted *pint'ang* to have multiple meanings, though this paper translates it simply as *emptiness* in English.

<sup>10</sup> For Dasök, also, theology (the doctrine of God) is closely interrelated with anthropology. The Korean name of God consists of three *hangŭl* characters, *Ha-Na-Nim* (하-나-님). *Na* in the middle denotes “I.” The first character *Ha* can be the first character of *ha-na* (하나) meaning one and the interjection, “ha (하)!” Thus, *ha-na* means both “One” and “Oh, I!” *Nim* is an honorific suffix. Therefore, *Ha-Na-Nim* connotes both the Only One (하나님 *Hananim*) and the Venerable True I (하! 나님!). He said: “It is the ‘One’ as it is forever. Comes from the ‘one’ of eternity, will continue as it is toward the eternal ‘One.’ Going back to the ‘One’ eternal ... There is the Lord ‘I,’ and trying to find the One.” (“그대로 영원한 ‘하나’입니다. 영원한 하나에서 오고 그대로 영원한 하나를 향해 갑니다. 영원한 하나로 돌아옵니다... 주주가 되는 ‘나’가 있어서 그 하나를 찾는 것입니다” (Yu, *Dasök-kangūi*, 304)). For this insight of “*hana*”, see Heup Young Kim, *Kaon-tchikki: Dasök Yu Yōngmo-ŭi Global Han'guk Shinhak Sōsōl* [Introduction to The Global Korean Theology of Dasök Yu Yōngmo], Seoul: Tongyōn, 2013, 33-34, 89-94; for Dasök's anthropology, *ibid.*, 115-36.

<sup>11</sup> “이 사람은 허공과 마음이 둘이 아니라 하나라는 생각을 자주 한 것 같습니다... 절대자 하느님이나 마음은 왔다갔다하는 것이 아닙니다. 안의 것이나 밖의 것이 완전히 일치하는 것을 이 사람은 항상 느낍니다. 꽃을 볼 때는 보통 꽃 테두리 안의 꽃만 바라보지 꽃 테두리 걸인 빈탕(虛空)의 얼굴은 보지 않습니다. 꽃을 둘러싼 허공도 보아주어야 합니다. 무색의 허공은 펍 오래전부터 다정했지만, 요새 와서는 더욱 다정하게 느껴집니다. 허공을 모르고 하는 것은 모두가 거짓입니다. 허공만이 참입니다.” (Yu, *Dasök-kangūi*, 458-59).

Although “*hante*” (한테) originally denotes outside (밖), Dasö̅k expanded this meaning to the “maximum outness,” which transcends the division between the inside and the outside to eventually become one “togetherness” which includes the inside (안팎 한테 *anp’ak hant’e*).<sup>12</sup> From this point of view, he equated “*hante*” to “*yö*” (與), which means “being together” (더불어), sharing, or participating (參與). He says: “From this vantage point, *pint’ang* means emptiness, *hante* which means the togetherness of the inside and the outside (안팎 한테 *anp’ak hant’e*) signifies togetherness.”<sup>13</sup> He further equated “*machhyö*” (맞혀) to harmonising or “matching” to signify the continuous process of being weaved together. Finally, “*noli*” (놀이) refers to playing rituals saturated in an ecstatic engagement with the *pint’ang hante*. Thus, the “conclusion of life” for Dasö̅k is: “Let us play rituals in harmony with the emptiness together”.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, however, this creative and insightful apophatic spirituality and negative theology is still unpopular and even suspiciously rejected in Korean Protestantism, heavily influenced by Neo-Calvinist fundamentalism.

## Spiritual Hiking: A Trans-Religious and Trans-Cosmic Prayer

Dasö̅k’s embodied spiritual principle of “*pint’ang-hante machhyö noli*” culminates in the prayer he has written entitled “Stroll (산보 *Sanbo*)” or “Spiritual Hiking (정신 하이킹).”<sup>15</sup> In this prayer, the profound concepts found in East Asian religions like Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism are integrated with one another. Therefore, it will be exceedingly difficult for those unfamiliar with these religions to understand it. Moreover, Dasö̅k was playing here with his uniquely innovative adaptations of the Korean language (*hangul-noli*),<sup>16</sup> which will make the poetic prayer complex even for Koreans to understand. Thus, it is a tricky task to translate this short but dense prayer text into English; such a task crosses multiple religious, cultural, linguistic, conceptual, and metaphorical borders. This is probably the first ever attempt at translating Dasö̅k’s poetic prayer into English, thus this translation can by no means be considered complete (cf. “untranslatability”<sup>17</sup>). However, my aim here is to introduce Dasö̅k’s religious thought, via his prayer, to a global audience to establish his significance in the field of interreligious relations. It is hoped that this can serve as a foundation for deeper research and scholarship on this prayer in particular, or on Dasö̅k more broadly. The prayer translates:<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, he identifies emptiness with God: “허공은 참이고 하느님입니다.” (Yu, *Dasö̅k-kangüi*, 452-53). Combining this notion of God as emptiness (*pint’ang*) with the Daoist notion of nothingness or non-being (無 *mu*) and Neo-Confucian notion that “the Great Ultimate is the Non-Ultimate” (無極而太極 *mu-kük-i-t’ae-kük*), he develops an intriguing insight of “God as the *Being in Non-Being*” or “Non-Existent Existing God” (없이 계신 님 *öpsi kyeshin nim*), which is the pinnacle of his theology. Also, calling God “The Father, Being in Non-Being” (없이 계신 아바) (Yu, *Dasö̅k-ilji*, 1:607), he said, “God is the Being in Non-Being. Although God is not, God is: Although human beings are, they are not.” (“한아님은 없이 계신 이다. 없으면서도 계신다. 사람이란 있으면서도 없다.” (Park Yöng-ho, ed, 1993, *Dasö̅k-örok: Ssial-üi-maeari* [Analects of Dasö̅k: Echoes of Seeds]: Seoul: Hongikje, 371). For this notion of Being in Non-Being, see Heup Young Kim, “The Word made Flesh: A Korean Perspective on Ryu Young-mo’s Christotao” in *One Gospel and Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross-Cultural Theology*, eds. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Handrik M. Vroom, Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 2003, 143-44 and Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 81-89. Also, Youn Jeong-Hyun, “The Non-Existent Existing God: An East Asian Perspective with Specific Reference to the thought of Ryu Young-mo,” Th.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom, 2002, esp. 124-96. For Dasö̅k’s understanding of God, see Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 81-100.

<sup>12</sup> “‘한테’는 밖이라는 말이긴 하나, 정말 ‘한테’라는 밖을 죄다 점령하면 안(內)과 밖(外)이 없어집니다. ‘한테’에는 안도 다 들어갑니다.” (Yu, *Dasö̅k-kangüi*, 466).

<sup>13</sup> “이렇게 보면 빈탕은 공(空), 안팎한테인 한테는 여(與) 가 될 수 있습니다.” (Ibid.).

<sup>14</sup> “*Pint’ang-hante-e match’u-ösö noli haja* (빈탕한테에 맞추어서 놀이를 하자).” (Ibid., 467).

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>16</sup> For an example of *hangül noli*, see Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 73-74.

<sup>17</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan, New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> The original Korean text is as follows:

높고 높고 높고 산보다 높고 산들보다도 높고 흰 눈보다도 높고 삼만 오천육백만 리 해 보다도 높고 백억 천조 해들이 돌고 도는 우리 하늘 보다 높고 하늘을 휩쓸 빈탕(虛空)보다도 높고 허공을 새겨낸 마음보다 높고 마음이 난 바탈(個性)보다 더 높은 자리에 아버지 한나신 아들 참거룩하신 열이 끝없이 밀없이 그득 차이시고 고루 잠기시며 두루 옮기시사 열일이 절절이 사무쳐 움직이시는 열김 맞아 마음 오래 열려 예여오른 김 큰김 굴러 코뿔리니 안으로 그득 산김이 사백조 살알을 꿰뚫고 모여 나린 뱃심 잘몬의 바탕 힘 바다보다 깊이 땅 아래로

The Father (아버지 *abŏji*)<sup>19</sup> and the Only Begotten Son (한나신 아들 *han-nashin adŭl*)<sup>20</sup> in the seat high, high, high, and higher than the mountain, even higher than mountains, higher than white snow, even higher than the sun three hundred million *li* (里)<sup>21</sup> away, higher than our sky a hundred million thousand trillion suns round and round above, even higher than the emptiness (*pint'ang*) surrounding the sky, higher than the mind-heart (*maŭm*) that carved out the emptiness, even more, higher than the selfhood (*pat' al*) born by the mind-heart!

Moreover, the truly Holy Spirit (참 거룩한 열 *ch'am kŏruk' an ŏl*)<sup>22</sup> endlessly and boundlessly fills, evenly submerges, and thoroughly moves to completely penetrate into my mind-heart! While the mind-heart is opened by receiving the spirit (열김 *ŏl-kim*), the risen vapor (김 *kim*)<sup>23</sup> rolls through the nose, pierces through four hundred trillion cells (살알 *sal-al*), and gathers together to produce the original force in the lower abdomen (잘몬 *chalmon*).<sup>24</sup> It pierces deeper down the earth than the ocean and further down the galaxy by penetrating and threading the whole cells (알 *al*) as one.<sup>25</sup>

When this long vapor passes deep through the nose and the abdomen, does not one feel the shallow face sparks and the narrow mind-heart rings? Those who weep will be blessed because they will receive good news. Because of this, in the mind-heart, we can live upward with the feeling of the depth of life, the blood growing up from the blossoming lower abdomen, and the brilliant light to the whole cells as one. Thus as much as the shining virtues (속알 *sok-al*) in us brightens to enlarge with rolling,<sup>26</sup> our insides will widen, and our skin becomes thin so that the mind-heart, as naturally born with the selfhood, will be awakened by rolling whole virtues to leap out and rise up.<sup>27</sup>

He meditated deeply, memorising and chanting it. He regarded it as his version of the Lord's prayer. As expressed in this prayer, Dasök identified himself as a cosmic person.<sup>28</sup> As implied by the name "Spiritual

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깊이 은하계 아래로 깊이 한 알 알을 꿰어 뚫다. 이 긴 김 깊이 코김 뱃심으로 잇대는 동안 얇은 낮에 불뚝이 튀고 좁은 속에 마음중 울리다 마니 싶으지 않은가, 우는 이는 좋음이 있나니 저희가 마음 짝임(消息)을 받을 것임이라. 우리 마음에 한 목숨은 목숨키기 깊이 느껴 높이 살을 잘몬의 피어 울리는 피도 이 때문 한 알 알의 부서져 내리는 빛도 이 때문 우리 안에 밝은 속알이 밝아 굴러 커지는 대로 우리 속은 넓어지며 우리 꺼풀은 얇아지니 바탈 타고난 마음 그대로 원통 속알 굴러 깨쳐 솟아나와 오르리로다. (Yu, *Dasök-ilji*, 4:487; also, Kim Hŭng-ho, *Chesori*, 122).

<sup>19</sup> Dasök called God the Father (*abŏji*) 아버지. For his understanding of the Trinity, see Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 101-14.

<sup>20</sup> Dasök coined "*han-nashin adŭl*" (한나신 아들) as a Korean term to express Jesus as the Only Begotten Son (獨生子 *toksaengja*), which is a central notion for his Christology. For him, Jesus is first and foremost the Filial Son, as filial piety is a primary virtue of Confucianism. See Yu, *Dasök-ilji*, 1:97-98, 108; also, Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 11-12, 111-12, 167-68. For his Christology (precisely, Christo-dao), see Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 136-93; also, Kim, "The Word made Flesh," 129-48.

<sup>21</sup> An East Asian unit to measure distance (1 *li* = about 0.4 km).

<sup>22</sup> The phrase "*Ch'am kŏruk'an ŏl*" (참 거룩한 열) is an expression of Dasök for the Holy Spirit. In Dasök's terminology, "*ŏl*" (열) means both soul and spirit (靈 *yŏng*, 精神 *chŏng-sin*). While interpreting the word "*ŏl-tŏl-gyŏl*" (열덜겅), he referred to "*ŏl*" (열) as "going up" but "*tŏl*" (덜) to "falling-down". For this passage, he defined "*ŏl*" as denoting the Holy Spirit but "*tŏl*" the devil's spirit (see Yu, *Chesori*, 123-24).

<sup>23</sup> Although "*kim*" (김) originally means vapor, here it is equivalent to "*ki*" (氣; in Chinese *qi*), a key East Asian spiritual (also psycho-somatic) term, which can be translated in various ways, such as "vital force" or "meta-cosmic energy", while also meaning vapor. Hence, "*ŏl-kim*" is another of Dasök's neologism to express the Holy Spirit in pure Korean.

<sup>24</sup> *Chalmon* is equivalent to the lower abdomen (丹田 *tanchŏn*) which is thought to be the central part of human energy circulation in Sŏndo's *ki* training (氣功 *kikong*). On Sŏndo, see herein 5-6 and note 25, also Kim, "Introducing Dasök Yu," 5, 8-9.

<sup>25</sup> It is intriguing to comprehend and translate this part. *Al* basically means eggs, but here this term seems to refer to both the cells (細胞 *se-p'o*) and the holes for *ki*-flow (氣穴 *ki-hyŏl*) in the human body. In this way, Dasök seemed to express "*hyŏn-pin-il-kyu*" (玄牝一竅), a highly advanced level of Sŏndo *Kikong* (仙道 氣功), where all cells and *ki* holes are opened so that meta-cosmic energy (*ki*) penetrates the whole body and spearheads everywhere as the one hole.

<sup>26</sup> This phrase can mean cultivating virtues (德 *tŏk*) or practising inner Daoist alchemy (鍊丹 *yŏndan*), a top-level discipline of Sŏndo *Kikong*. Perhaps, Dasök would have intended both meanings.

<sup>27</sup> Yu, *Dasök-ilji*, 4:487.

<sup>28</sup> Dasök said that he does not belong to any particular residence on the earth (無主 *muchu*), but the place of his life is the vast universe. Therefore, he confessed, his life is nothing but the prayer and cultivation to be united with the cosmos by the power of the Holy Spirit. See *ibid.*, 4:611-612, see also Kim, "Introducing Dasök Yu."



Hiking,” it indicates a prayer integrated with the *modus operandi* of East Asian practices of contemplative breathing; piercing through the cosmos (namely, trans-cosmic) “to rise high and higher up to the throne of God and from there having received the Holy Spirit coming back down to this world and then again raising up by increasing my life in order that a flower blooms in the mind-heart.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Dasök’s understanding of prayer denotes spiritual cosmic hiking with the heaven as its stage. Therefore, I suggest adding the word heavenly (*hanül* 하늘) to the phrase “*pint’ang-hante machhyö noli*” (빈탕한테 맞춰 놀이) so to read “*pint’ang-hante machhyö hanül noli*” (빈탕한테 맞춰 하늘 놀이) (playing heavenly rituals in harmony with the emptiness together). Moreover, it provides a summary of Dasök’s spiritual theology, together with the three basics of spirituality he argued for Christian life, namely, keeping the body healthy (*mom-sönghi*), relieving the mind-heart (*mam-nohi*), and cultivating selfhood (*pat’al-t’oehi*).<sup>30</sup> Here is Dasök’s own interpretation of this prayer:

First, imagine, starting from the mountain past the sun, the galaxy, the emptiness (*pint’ang hante*) surrounding the cosmos on the other side, the mind-heart residing in it, and the throne of God in the center of the mind-heart. Further, imagine the Holy Spirit that flows like a river from this throne. As it descends like dew, thus, it descends in the mind-heart. The Holy Spirit pierces into mouth, eyes, ears, heart, wisdom to fully penetrate through the four-hundred trillion living cells. Its energy gathers in the gut and becomes the force to move the cosmos. While penetrating the galaxy and the solar system, this force descends to make our faces spark and our mind-hearts ring the bell so that we feel deeply and think in order that our mind-hearts are emptied and brightened. When it happens, [furthermore] there will be an awakening that will rear up our life and our soul. Therefore, we come to realise that it is the core of life to feel deeply, live highly, think profoundly, and practice honourably.<sup>31</sup>

It is noteworthy that this prayer, “the stroll in the cosmos” (*hanül sanbo*) does not only end with “a spiritual cosmic hiking” (*pint’ang-hante machhyö noli*), but there is also an intimate connection with the cosmos in the body (*mom*). The internal and the external to the body are micro-cosmos (microcosm) and the macro-cosmos (macrocosm), which are inter-communicable through the vital force and the Holy Spirit (*öl-kim*).<sup>32</sup> The “playing rituals (*noli*) in harmony with the emptiness together” means this. It sounds very similar to advanced practices of hypogastric breathing in the Söndo training,<sup>33</sup> namely, the micro-cosmic (bodily) circulation (小周天 *sochuch’ön*) and the macro-cosmic circulation (大周天 *taechuch’ön*) of the vital force or meta-cosmic energy (氣 *ki*). Dasök wrote a poem after he first experienced the union of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (天地人合一 *ch’ön-chi-in hapil*) in 1943 at the lounge of Mt. Pukaksan in Seoul:

Looking above, penetrate Heaven: Submerging, pierce under the Earth.

Looking above, extend the Body to reach the Primordial Force of Heaven.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 4:487.

<sup>30</sup> For keeping the body healthy (*mom-sönghi*), relieving the mind-heart (*mam-nohi*), cultivating selfhood (*pat’al-t’oehi*), see Kim, “Introducing Dasök Yu,” 7-9.

<sup>31</sup> The original Korean text is as follows:

맨 처음에 산에서 부터 시작하여 해를 거쳐서 은하계 저편 우주를 싸고 있는 빈탕한테 저편에 거기가 마음인데 그 마음 한복판에 하나님의 보좌를 생각하고 그 보좌에서 생명의 강처럼 흘러내려오는 열김을 생각해 본다. 그래서 이슬이 내리듯 내 마음에 내려 그 열김으로 입이 뚫리고 코가 뚫리고 눈이 뚫리고 귀가 뚫리고 마음이 뚫리고 지혜가 뚫려서 사백조 살알 세포를 다 뚫고 그 기운이 배 밑에 모여 자연을 움직이는 힘이 되어 은하계를 뚫고 태양계를 뚫고 내리어 우리 얼굴에 불뚝이 튀게 하고 우리 마음에 종을 울리게 하여 깊이 느끼고 깊이 생각하여 마음을 비게 하고 마음을 밝게 하면 우리 마음속에서 깨닫게 되는 것이 있으니, 그것이 우리의 목숨 키우고 우리의 생명을 키워가는 것이다. 그래서 깊이 느끼고 높이 살게 하는 것, 깊이 생각하고 고귀하게 실천하는 것 그것이 생명의 핵심임을 알게 된다.” (Yu, “*Sanbo*,” *Chesori*, 123).

<sup>32</sup> East Asian religions in general regard the human body as a microcosm of the cosmos. In the Söndo training, breathing is the way to develop the communion between the body (a microcosmos) and the cosmos (macro-cosmos) in and through the movement of *ki* (meta-cosmic energy).

<sup>33</sup> Korean Söndo (仙道) is an inherited ascetic tradition to become the immortal (神仙 *sinsön*), that takes hypogastric breathing (丹田呼吸) as a crucial method, partially related to Daoism. For example, see Ko Kyöngmin, *Yöngsaeng-hanün Kil* [The Way for Immortality], Seoul: Chongno Ch’ulp’ansa, 1974; also, Ko Kyöngmin, *Kuksöndo*, 3 vols, Seoul: Kuksöndo Publications, 1993; also Kim, “Introducing Dasök Yu,” 8-9.

Putting down the Mind-Heart, submerge, pierce, and arrive at the Axial Force of Earth.<sup>34</sup>

Likewise, it proposes a psycho-somatic exercise in a trans-cosmic nature to associate the bodily circulation and the cosmic circulations by breathing and meditating through the vital force's flow. Furthermore, this prayer suggests an illuminating *trans-religious* structure linking major East Asian spiritual traditions (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism) with Christianity. This contemplative prayer can be summarised in six sequences as in the following diagram:<sup>35</sup>

1. Trans-cosmic	Mountains-Earth	Solar System-Galaxy	Macro-Cosmos
2. Trans-religious (East Asian)	Emptiness ( <i>pint'ang</i> 空) Daoism	Mind-Heart ( <i>maŭm</i> 心) Buddhism	Selfhood ( <i>pat' al</i> 性) Confucianism
3. Trinity	God the Father	the Only Son (Jesus)	the Holy Spirit ( <i>öl-kim</i> ) Vital Force ( <i>kim</i> 氣)
4. Bodily (Inner) Circulation (小周天):	Circulate Vital Force (氣) through Breathing	Into Whole Body (Four Trillion Cells)	Fill up Lower Abdomen ( <i>chalmon</i> 丹田)
5. Cosmic (Outer) Circulation (大周天)	Ocean-Earth	Galaxy	Meta-Cosmos
6. Awaken the Core of Life	Empty the mind-heart	Receive Good News	Expand Virtues ( <i>sok-al</i> 德)

Figure 1: Summary of Dasök's Prayer

This prayer presents five characteristics of Dasök's insights on spirituality. First of all, the spirituality Dasök conceived goes beyond the earth's narrow limits to the entire cosmos' vastness (macro-cosmos) to reach even further to the religious and spiritual dimensions. Hence, it is the *trans-cosmic spirituality* for a cosmic person.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, the spirituality of Dasök penetrates through three major East Asian spiritual traditions and, by embracing all of them, guides the practitioner into a new horizon of Christian spirituality, further sublimated but with unmistakably Korean and East Asian elements. As such, the emptiness (*pint'ang*, 空), the mind-heart (*maŭm*, 心), and the selfhood (*pat' al*, 性) could imply the spiritual dimensions of Daoism (Laozi), Buddhism (Buddha), and Confucianism (Confucius), respectively. Hence, it portrays a *trans-religious spirituality* that passes through these three East Asian religions and a way to communion with the Triune God.

Thirdly, it entails a solidly *Trinitarian spirituality*. Of course, this is related to the East Asian triadic cosmology consisting of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (天地人 *ch'ön-chi-in*), a "the-anthropo-cosmic vision," which became the basic framework for his thought.<sup>37</sup> In this prayer, Dasök viewed the Holy Trinity – the God

<sup>34</sup> He wrote about this experience in classical Chinese: "瞻徹天 潛透地 申身瞻徹極乾元氣! 沈心潛透止坤軸力." (Pak Chae-sun, *Dasök Yöng-mo: tongsö-sasang-ül aurün ch'angjojök saengmyöng ch'örhakcha* [The Creative Philosopher of Life who integrated the Eastern and the Western Thoughts], Seoul: Hyönamsa, 2008, 54, recited) English translation is mine.

<sup>35</sup> These are the primary sequences concerning meditative objects. However, this contemplative prayer program uniquely formulated by Dasök does not have to be done precisely in this order. They can be modified in accordance with the ability and situation of practitioners. For example: (1) Beginners can similarly practice them like an image training or an ordinary Christian prayer (by following the sequences of 1-3 and 6); (2) Those who can breathe through the lower abdomen (丹田呼吸) can raise their spiritual consciousness through the sequences of 1-3 to receive the *ki* (vital force) of life (the Holy Spirit) to activate inner circulation (4 and 6); (3) The advanced can accumulate the *ki* through the inner circulations to extend it outer. However, since this program primarily aims to awaken the Dao (Way) and its wholistic embodiment beyond intellectual and cognitive knowing, the personal help of a competent spiritual director or master is highly recommended.

<sup>36</sup> In one of his lectures, he replied, "I live in the cosmos," when asking, "Where do I live?" (Yu, *Dasök-kangüi*, 292).

<sup>37</sup> The-anthropo-cosmic vision is a term to designate a fusion of horizons at the meeting between Christian theo-historical (salvation history) and Neo-Confucian anthropo-cosmic (天人合一) visions. For more, see Heup Young Kim, *A Theology of Dao*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017, 43-48, 207-11.

“the Father (*abŏji*),” “the Only Begotten Son (*han-nashin adŭl*),” and “the true Holy Spirit (*ch’am kŏruk’ an ŏl*)”—as both the goal of his trans-cosmic and trans-religious spirituality and the origin of spiritual energy or vital force.<sup>38</sup> Fourthly, Dasŏk’s spirituality is pneumato-centric (or *ki*-centric),<sup>39</sup> whose spirit works by breathing and through the flow of vital force or meta-cosmic energy (氣). It underscores the breathing discipline that embodies the Trinity’s vital force in our body through the Holy Spirit’s descent (a *spirituality of breathing*).<sup>40</sup> Finally, what Dasŏk proposes is a *spirituality of the body*. The prayer of “Spiritual Hiking” does not end as a psychological euphoria. “Spiritual Hiking” illustrates the process of self-cultivation and sanctification through the transformation of our body (as mentioned above in relationship with Sŏndo). Indeed, the disciplines of *mom-sŏngghi*, *mam-nohi*, and *pat’al-t’oehi* appear in physical changes and phenomenological signs. Therefore, this is not merely a simple spiritual prayer in association with the heaven (*hanŭl-noli*), but a contemplative prayer with physical embodiment (*hanŭl-mom-noli*) that results in inter-relationship and communion through the operation of the Holy Spirit or the meta-cosmic energy.<sup>41</sup>

These characteristics are related to the East Asian Spirituality of the Dao (道), as *dao* is an all-embracing concept for East Asian religions.<sup>42</sup> It also entails the spiritual context for the formulation of *theo-dao* (a theology of *dao*)<sup>43</sup> as a Korean/East Asian constructive theology that adopts the *dao* as its root-metaphor instead of *logos* (theo-logy). Dasŏk’s religious thoughts present a prototype of *theo-dao* (도의 신학 *do-ŭi sinhak*).<sup>44</sup> *Theo-dao*, with Dasŏk’s spirituality as resources, can resolve two significant problems of the global Christian theology, still dominated by Western theologies. Firstly, a dilemma of global Christian theology is the split between *theo-logos* (classical theologies) and *theo-praxis* (liberationist theologies), owing to the inherited Greek dualism between theory (*logos*) and practice (*praxis*).<sup>45</sup> Since *dao*, a holistic East Asian notion, also implies the unity of knowledge and action (知行合一 *chihaeng hapil*), *theo-dao* can be an alternative paradigm of Christian theology that overcomes the prolonged dilemma of such severe theological division.<sup>46</sup>

Secondly, the ecological crisis. The starting point for Dasŏk’s spirituality is *kaon-tchikki*, finding and locating one’s true self in the ontological and existential unity.<sup>47</sup> It resonates with Martin Luther’s notion of *Coram Deo*,

<sup>38</sup> For Dasŏk’s understanding of the Trinity, see Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 101-14; also Heup Young Kim, “The Tao in Confucianism and Taoism: the Trinity in East Asian Perspective” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter Phan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 293-308.

<sup>39</sup> *Pneuma* and *ki* are homologous terms, for both connote spirit, wind, and breath together.

<sup>40</sup> I call the theological paradigm with this insight “a theology of the breath” (숨신학 *sum sinhak*). See Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 239-56.

<sup>41</sup> I call a theological paradigm with this insight “a theology of the body” (몸신학 *mom sinhak*). See *ibid.*, 213-38.

<sup>42</sup> For modern people, a holistic notion of the polysemic word *dao* is challenging to understand. Western people generally misunderstand that *dao* is only related to Daoism. However, other East Asian traditions widely use the term, such as the *dao* of Confucianism, the *dao* of Buddhism, and even the *dao* of Christianity. An excellent definition of *dao* in English: “Tao [Dao] is a Way, a path, a road, and by common metaphorical extension it becomes in ancient China the right Way of life, the Way of governing, the ideal Way of human existence, the Way of the Cosmos, the generative-normative Way (Pattern, path, course) of existence as such.” See Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972, 19.

<sup>43</sup> See Kim, *A Theology of Dao*, 14-33, 212-16. In Korean, see Heup Young Kim, *Do-ŭi Sinhak*, Seoul: Tasan Kŭlpang, 2000 and Heup Young Kim, *Do-ŭi Sinhak II*, Seoul: Tong-yŏn, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> See Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*, 45-46, 395-97.

<sup>45</sup> Liberation theologies (theo-praxis) originated in the unjust socio-economic situation in Latin America but expanded to deal with global classism, racism, sexism, etc. They represent the antithesis to dominant classical Western theologies (theo-logos). The former take *praxis* as their theological root-metaphor, focusing on orthopraxis (the right action) of God’s reign and the preferential option for the poor (the central message of the Gospel), while the latter prioritises orthodoxy (the right doctrines) of the church. The division also represents the separation between the Global South and the Global North or the Third World and the First World. See Kim, *A Theology of Dao*, 14-33. For liberation theology, see Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

<sup>46</sup> Since its Chinese character Dao (道) consists of two parts, head (首 *su*) and movement (走 *ch’ak*), *dao* hieroglyphically means the unity of knowledge (head) and action (movement). For the unity of knowledge and action, see Heup Young Kim, *Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996, 29-32, 71-74, 149-52. Whereas theo-logos searches orthodoxy (theory) and orthopraxis (practice) separately, theo-dao pursues the ortho-dao or ortho-hodos (the right way and wisdom of life) in the all-inclusive unity (*dao*) of theory and practice. See Kim, *A Theology of Dao*, 14-33.

<sup>47</sup> *Kaon-tchikki* 가온찍기 is a core concept of Dasŏk’s thought. *Kaon* 가온 is composed of three characters of old Korean, “一” (*kiŏk*), “.” (*arae a*) and “乚” (*niŭn*). *Area a* (“.”) in old Korean can be both a (卜) and o (乚). (一 + . = 가 *ka*; . + 乚 = 온 *on*; therefore, 가온 *ka-on*). According to him, “一” signifies the heaven, “乚” the earth, and “.” selfhood (humanity).

a faith to find one's self in front of God. However, Luther's notion focuses on one's individual soul's relationship to God, neglecting the totality of one's existence with physical and cosmological dimensions. Forgetting the body and earth, this anthropocentric spirituality in Western Christianity has been criticised as a theological cause for ecological exploitation. In contrast, *kaon-tchikki* takes the body, earth, and cosmos, as the very constituencies of its the-anthropo-cosmic spirituality. It is an ecological spirituality *par excellence*.<sup>48</sup>

## Toward a New Horizon of Spirituality:

### Playing Heavenly Body Rituals in Harmony with the Emptiness Together (*Pint'ang-hante machhyö hanül-mom-noli*)

Even before the human species penetrated through the earth's atmosphere to reach space, Dasök Yu Yöngmo had learnt a spirituality of trans-cosmic scale and trans-religious depth to become "a cosmic spiritual person." His familiar climb up Mount Puk'an in Seoul was not merely a mountain climb. It was a spiritual discipline which he called a "stroll" or "spiritual hiking," where the cosmos is nestled, rolled, and breathed in his lower abdomen. To pray is not an anthropocentric demand for material blessings. For Dasök, on the contrary, to pray is to breathe and embody the meta-cosmic energy (*ki*) given to us by the triune God and to engage in the dance of harmony to the melody and rhythm of cosmic life movement, namely, "Playing Heavenly Body Rituals in Harmony with the Emptiness Together (*pint'ang-hante machhyö hanül-mom-noli*)." In an age where many cheap and superficial Christian spiritualities are prevalent in Korea and elsewhere, the spirituality conceived by Dasök shines brilliantly with its significance, like gold ore hidden in the murky water. These trans-cosmic and trans-religious spiritual insights of Dasök should not be a gift only for Korean or East Asian Christianity but for global Christianity. The significance of his insights lies in boldly realising Christian spirituality's holistic identity in Korea and East Asia's multi-religious and multi-spiritual context, where multi-religiosity is a reality rather than an abstract epistemological ideal as religious pluralism. Dasök's religious thoughts hold many clues for viable insights demanded by contemporary theology, religion, and spirituality in this global and cosmic age, with *theo-dao* as an example.<sup>49</sup>

## Concluding Thoughts: Dasök's Ongoing Relevance

Dasök offers a horizon on the much-needed *spirituality of body and breath* to generations that need to cope with an age of Artificial Intelligence, Digital Revolution, Transhumanism (e.g., bio-hacking technologies for human enhancement), and Post-humanity, as we see today that a person is to be mechanised into a cyborg by an unprecedented advancement in science and technology.<sup>50</sup> For, in short, cyborg post-humans equipped with

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Also, *ka-on* refers to center (가운데 *kaunde*), equivalent to Chinese character *chung* (中). Hence, *kaon* means the center in the unity between the cosmos and selfhood (my anthropo-cosmic center), namely, my real and true place (both existential and ontological). *Tchikki* literally means "to put a dot (myself)". Thus, *kaon-tchikki* connotes locating selfhood in one's unique anthropo-cosmic center (ontological and existential), which is the goal of and the true starting point for religion and spirituality. See Kim, *Kaon-tchikki*.

<sup>48</sup> See Heup Young Kim, "Eco-Dao: an Ecological Theology of Dao" in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Nature: The Elements*, eds. Laura Hobgood and Whitney Bauman, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, 99-108; also, Kim, *A Theology of Dao*, 204-22. The theanthropo-cosmic notion of eco-dao (instead of conceptual eco-logos) based on theo-dao is remarkably resonant with "*Laudato si'*: On the Care for Our Common Home," a recent ecological encyclical of Pope Francis (see "Eco-Dao," 105-8), available at: [http://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> See Kim, *A Theology of Dao*.

<sup>50</sup> See Heup Young Kim, "Cyborg, Sage, and Saint: Transhumanism as Seen from an East Asian Theological Setting" in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, eds. Calvin Mercer and Tracy J. Trothen, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014, 97-114; also Heup Young Kim, "Confucian Religious Spirituality and Transhumanist

Artificial Intelligence will not have a human-like body and cannot breathe (cf. a sci-fi movie, *Matrix*).<sup>51</sup> However, this is a note on emerging trends and their significance, a subject matter beyond this paper's scope. Furthermore, many signs of difficult times are ahead, including the anthropogenic ecological crisis (climate change) and the coronavirus pandemic related to anthropocentric and kataphatic (or logo-phonic) spirituality. It is the time when we need Dasök's the-anthropo-cosmic and apophatic spirituality of "*pint'ang-hante machhyō hanül-noli*", which makes us breathe in the magnanimous cosmic-energy. Amid the darkness of the night, it may seem like a mere flicker of a very distant star on the other side of the galaxy. However, Dasök's spiritual disciplines of *mom-sōng*hi, *mam-no*hi, and *pat'al-t'oeh*i to learn and embody the true body, the true mind-heart, and the true selfhood are indeed preparing our body, mind-heart, and spirit, and so humanity can prepare for the challenging new age to come, by opening a new horizon (new heaven) of human spirituality, which is trans-religious and trans-cosmic.

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Anthropology" in *Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics*, eds. Arvin Gouw, Brian Patrick Green, and Ted Peters, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022, 101-112.

<sup>51</sup> The cosmic spirituality of body and breath is a significant aspect that modern Western thought and logos theology have neglected. The challenges of the ecological crisis, artificial intelligence, and transhumanism are issues related to the earth, the human body, and the spirituality and theology of the body. Furthermore, with Covid-19, nature is awakening us to the importance of breathing and the spirituality of breath. Thus, the cosmic spirituality needed in this age of the ecological crisis, artificial intelligence, and the pandemic (cf. Anthropocene) is the cosmic spirituality of body and breath. It is a spiritual core and basis of theo-*dao*, set in this world of *dao* and *ki* (meta-cosmic energy). For the theology and spirituality of body and breath, see Kim, *kaon-tchikki*, 197-256.

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