

The Universal-Historical Meaning of Human Beings by Wolfhart Pannenberg

Choi, Tae-Kwan

Lecturer, Methodist Theological University, Korea
cys0941@hotmail.com

Abstract

This thesis tries to explore the universal historical significance of human openness of the world, as claimed by Pannenberg. Since the 20th century, philosophical anthropology has developed into a way to understand human beings not only from the level of self–consciousness, but also from the point of view of action. The world openness that Pannenberg is paying attention to is also a special place for human being to be perceived in human action. Especially between decentralization and self-centeredness, humans understand themselves by relating to the world and form a society in relation to other neighbors, creating their own cultures in them and conveying them to future generations. Based on this human understanding, this paper seeks the universal historical significance of human openness to the world. First, this thesis examines 'self-differentiation' as a transcendent act of human beings realized in the process of returning from self. Human self-identification is a special act that reveals the world's openness and decentralization. Second, this paper attempts to address the problem of human openness in the world that arises from the relationship between subjectivity and society as the basis of Pannenberg 's classification. Third, this paper examines the universal historical significance of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as a universal historical event of human openness to the world. In conclusion, it presents interdisciplinary possibilities for communication between natural science and humanities.

Keywords: Pannenberg, Universal history, The openness, Self-differentiation, Incarnation, Resurrection, Culture

1. Introduction

“What distinguishes humans from animals is not simply the biological differences between man and other species, but the cultural achievements of humans, the products of a long process of social development.” [1] This paper is to study the openness of the world as a transcendent power that transforms the creative freedom of Human in society and culture in the perspective of Wolfhart Pannenberg 's universal-historical theology. As a theologian, he finds the unique position of human beings in the world. The openness to the world means that human beings are not self - centered ones trapped in oneself but are positively related to the world to overcome their limitations. He argues with the modern theology and Anthropology and He finds the specific location of humans in relation to the philosophical anthropology and psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and philosophy of history. In particular, he emphasizes on the meaning of global openness in the process of expanding different understandings of human

¹ Article history:

Received (April 3, 2019), Review Result (April 30, 2019), Accepted (July 25, 2019)

existence into universal human beings. Human beings can creatively realize their own self based on his openness to world. As cultural and social beings, human beings need other people, neighbors and ultimately transcendent, and develop with society and culture with them. Therefore, this thesis is to elucidate the problem of religiosity as the basis of religious self-identity, away from the one-sided Christian-centered human understanding that traditional human understanding appears. In the perspective of exocentricity of human beings examines this paper the universal historical significance of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as a universal historical event of human openness to the world. In conclusion, it presents interdisciplinary possibilities for communication between natural science and humanities in the perspective of Self-differentiation by Pannenberg.

2. Self-differentiation as a power to realize the special position of human beings

In the early 20th century, the understanding of human beings begins with the perception of the development of the structure of behavior and the debate between the philosophical human disciplines that focus on human behavior and studies the essence of human beings. He does not unilaterally criticize the behaviorist approach and philosophical anthropology from a theological point of view but finds a basic way of understanding human beings from them to theological anthropology. Indeed, it is the power that drives human beings to be aware of his position in the openness to the world, and he finds the humanistic foundation of the openness to the world in them. It is because of the human inner desire to realize its own existence by relating to the surrounding environment, human being, nature, and culture beyond self-centeredness. He removes the notion of consciousness from the contemporary question of human being's unique position in nature, and the behaviorist [2] that explains it in action, or the response of a subject and the social psychological attitude to understand it. Because human beings can find their own unique position in the action of distinguishing themselves in the surrounding world. In the openness to the world, human beings understand himself as a religious being. Human beings can creatively realize their own self based on the openness to the world. He regards this nature of human beings as “exocentricity”. [3]

As cultural and social beings, human beings need other people, neighbors and ultimate concern, and develop with society and culture with them. Nonetheless, the question of "what is a human being?" remains a question that humans cannot yet elucidate. Pannenberg, who developed universal-historical theology between hypothesis and truth, did not regard the unique position of human beings distinguished from animals in relation to various secular scholars as a theological explanation but a complete understanding. Because human beings develop and transform constantly their own characteristics. So, he extended his understanding of human beings not in a limited way to the current situation, but in the universal historical perspective. Indeed, human beings are constantly involved in the open world. According to Pannenberg, Human understanding formed in a particular age is always meaningful only as a hypothetical truth, and its ultimate truth is always fulfilled at the end of history. Therefore, a human being who lives in an era must always transform himself in relation to the world by transcending himself and creatively in it. As a subject of creative action, human being is not a natural law such as his innate behavior or conditional reflection, nor is he trapped in the surrounding world, but has openness to the world. In the debate between behaviorist and philosophical anthropology, Pannenberg tries to find the foundations of human creative action as the basis of his divinity in transcendentalism. In his view, it is premised that he relies on herder's understanding of the image of god. According to Pannenberg , “Jesus distinguishes himself

from God as Father in the unity of God's revelation in explaining his divinity. There is a feature of trinitarianism.”[4] This means that human openness of the world must be religious. Man criticizes himself between self-centeredness and decentralization, and transforms himself in relation to ultimate reality. As historical evidence, Jesus of Nazareth reveals the world openness through his historical life. He disagrees with the thought of Gehlen, Herder understands human reason and freedom as an essential and source of man's self-fulfillment.[5]

However, unlike Gehlen, who understands religion or God as a by-product of human beings, finds Pannenberg a new focal point that transcends self beyond the understanding of contemplation. This is Self-differentiation that appears in trinity of God. Because the act of self-differentiation distinguishes itself from the other at this center point. This is the distinction of the present self from the past oneself, the distinction of oneself from the world, and ultimately the act of distinguishing oneself from God. Specifically, Pannenberg finds in Herder's thought the image of God that human beings cannot realize themselves and can realize in their interactions with others. Tradition and learning, reason and experience, and divine intentions. “the image of God is the human goal and distinction, although in its definitive form, ‘a form truly that of the godlike man.’” [6]

3. The incarnation of Christ as a religious theological symbol of Self-differentiation

Pannenberg distinguishes his thought from the theological standpoint of understanding the primacy of God, which is revealed in the sense that human beings become like God. The concept of “the image of God,” which Herder claims to be, emphasizes the need for external power for human being to realize himself. [7]The power to transform oneself by distinguishing oneself from the past reveals that it is not from voluntary but from the transcendent. In addition, human beings are looking for religion and humanity as the basis for distinguishing themselves from transcendent animals. In the understanding of Herder insists Pannenberg on the spontaneity of human beings rather than, asserts the spontaneity of human beings. Because he finds that the theological significance of God's image in the process of understanding the 19th century liberal theology position, that is, the destiny given to human being in history, is promoting humanistic understanding. Therefore, Pannenberg looks for the image of God in Christ. The fulfillment of the human being revealed as God means that human beings becomes true self in his life, which means the calm human being manifested in Christ. The external center is the self- differentiation of God as the basis of human being's openness to the world. “human being is not born like God, but becomes like him.” [8] Human beings distinguish themselves from God because they depend on God's process of separating oneself from human beings. Indeed, because God is incarnated through Christ, it gives man new destiny.

The triune God's self-differentiation in his systematic theology is a historical act in which the historical Jesus identifies himself with God as Father in heaven and reveals his identity as the son of God in the World. In this historical act of Christ, Pannenberg takes a unique place in human being that distinguishes it from the creation of world. Through Jesus' self-differentiation, human beings realize his identity by understanding his historical essence and existence. Based on this, human beings form their own social relations, form a group, and continuously create a new cultural environment surrounding them. The self-differentiation is the theological expression of world openness. It is a power of existence that human beings overcome his own deficiencies. At the same time, he contacts his other person and conceives his unique position. He pursues transformation into a new society suitable for it and moves to the ultimate nature of man by creating culture. “The human transcendence presupposes a reduction in instinct the

primitive condition of the human organs, unfinished state of birth, and a lengthy maturation period. But the space for free movement that is created provides only the occasion for what Konrad Lorenz calls ‘fulguration’ the ‘flashing out of the specifically human.’ [9] Pannenberg regards this transcendence of man as a self-distinction beyond the spirit of Scherer or the human creativity that appears in Gehlen. This transcendence is understood theologically as world openness. By relating to God, he realizes his special position and finds the goal of his realization there. That is the incarnation. But humans cannot reach that goal by themselves but can reach that goal by being with God. The human openness to the world revealed through the incarnation of God is understood as being a decentralized being through human transcendence and a world openness transforming oneself. Thus, Pannenberg understands man as a religious entity that understands his special position on the world by distinguishing himself. It is based on various hypotheses and moves toward transformed truths. Therefore, Scheler’s words that man should be grateful to God as the supreme being of existence are significant. because human beings are human beings who realize their nature by distinguishing oneself from others.

4. The universal historical meaning of self -differentiation in the resurrection of Christ

First, resurrection is an event that goes beyond human limits. Human beings experience his own end by death and loses the possibility of continuous development. However, the resurrection suggests that death is not the end, but a new human image that goes beyond death. The human beings can never experience a resurrection but finds the eschatological future to be realized at the end of history. It is beyond self-centeredness that we have found out the possibility of our own existence. Thus, the kingdom of God, proclaimed in Jesus' own historical life in Nazareth, is a symbol of opening a new horizon of global openness. Jesus of Nazareth proves himself as a resurrected human, distinguished from the universal human by his resurrection, and reveals his identity as the Son of God. This distinguishes him from universal humanity. On the other hand, the witnesses of the resurrection make the identity of the one on the cross and the resurrected as the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is a human being with the same historical existence as them, but by resurrection he distinguishes them as the Son of God. Unlike Jesus, the witnesses of the resurrection recognize their incomplete existence. As such a universal historical event, human beings cannot understand the resurrection without the openness to the world. The openness of human being to the world revealed in the resurrection is the power to capture the ultimate future. Based on that power, human beings preoccupy the future of eschatological humanity. His resurrection is meaningful for human beings to be eternal and new to life as sinners. As the resurrected, Jesus' manifestation and empty grave reveal a new eschatological life of man overcoming death.[10] In this regard, the self-differentiation of god is the realization of his openness to the world, that explains self-differentiation of human being. Because human beings recognize the identity of their own species and realize the essence of their own by distinguishing them from the ultimate reality and the natural world. This is visualized through the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Second, the resurrection becomes a universal private event that distinguishes human being from ultimate reality. Because this event reveals the identity between the person entrusted with the full power to proclaim the kingdom of God and the Son of God. For instance, the history of Christianity, begun by apostles proclaiming Jesus as the resurrected, reveals Jesus' openness to the world. [11] Through his openness to the world, the historical Jesus has proven the existence of the ultimate reality and the inherent nature of its history. In the face of imminent world judgment, the kingdom and his future, which Jesus proclaimed through divine influence,

ultimately express God's love for saving universal humanity beyond the nation of Israel. He understands himself not only as an essential unity with God that is realized in the creation of God's world, but as a mediator mediating the love of God who is forgiving the coming kingdom of God and sinners.[12] This means that human being's openness to the world is correlated with ultimate reality and responsible attitude toward the world. If Jesus Christ presented the image of eschatological human being by the resurrection, human being realize the responsible humanity to the creation world and human history on the eschatological human being. Responsible humanity presents a human image with an open attitude to the world and presents the task of overcoming the creation world and human and isolation.

Third, the resurrection reveals his openness to the world as a power that moves toward ultimate reality and eschatological consensus. Because in his historical life appears ultimate reality and that power was deeply involved in the creation of the world and human history. According to him, in the process of delivering Jesus as the first event of the resurrection, the spiritual reality was manifesting itself as the divine influence of Christ, which clearly shows that there was a power to make the ultimate reality and the life of Jesus of Nazareth coincide. [13]. The spiritual reality thus shows that human being realizes the unity in his openness to the world. Based on this, Pannenberg understands ultimate reality as 'the reality that determines everything'. [14] This shows that nature and history are integrated into one reality centering on the openness of ultimate reality to the world. The resurrection is the universal historical ground that proves his incarnation. Pannenberg saw that as a son of God, Jesus belongs to a father who reveals himself in eternity but distinguishes himself as a human being in the sense that he is obedient to the proclamation of the kingdom of God. In particular, he did not demand the authority of God for his own personality, but for the proclamation of the impending kingdom he proclaimed. [15] Thus, the cross of Jesus is the extreme separation of Jesus. [16]

5. Conclusion

We have examined the universal historical significance of self-differentiation of human beings with the world openness that determines human being's unique position and realizes itself as a person's personal identity and social and cultural existence as a human being. In his systematic theology, Pannenberg, explaining the trinitarian nature of God's economy in the context of his self-differentiation, interprets the manifestation of the world openness in which the trinitarian God's self-dispatching appears on the world positively related to the world. This implies that historical events are derived from the openness of ultimate reality to the world. In this argument, it is clear that human beings should be related to the natural world and human beings in order to escape from their own existence, to create a society in which they live with their open attitude, and to be a responsible person to create newly their own culture. In this regard, he opened a new way of understanding human beings as a religious being in the age of de-religion by seeking a meeting with religious science, philosophy, sociology and natural science. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the opening of the human world in the development of science and technology is related to all reality, and human beings are asked to have a responsible attitude toward the world and society. In this situation, human beings should have a responsible attitude that must be taken in the process of leaving the world and relating to the world. Furthermore, human beings should engage in dialogue with neighboring sciences such as religion, philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and natural sciences. That would be the universal historical significance of the openness to the world, that is led by Pannenberg. The path of human academic claims to the dimension of truth beyond the hypothetical dimension should be found in the ultimate reality and in openness of human being to the world.

References

- [1] Giddens, A., capitalism and theory of sociology, Hangil, Seoul (2013). pp.172.
- [2] Pannenberg, Wolfhart. Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive, Gütersloh (1983), pp.29.
- [3] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Anthropology in theological Perspektive, Westminster (1985), pp.35.
- [4] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Grundzüge der Christologie, Gütersloher verlaghaus, Gütersloh(1964), pp.113.
- [5] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive, Gütersloh(1983), pp.47.
- [6] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Anthropology in theological Perspektive, Westminster(1985), pp.48.
- [7] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Anthropology in theological Perspektive, Westminster(1985), pp.74.
- [8] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Anthropology in theological Perspektive, Westminster(1985), pp.54.
- [9] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Anthropology in theological Perspektive, Westminster(1985), pp.61.
- [10] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Systematische Theologie Bd. 2, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen(1991), pp.391.
- [11] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Grundzüge der Christologie, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh(1964), pp.385.
- [12] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Systematische Theologie Bd. 2, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen(1991), pp.373
- [13] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Grundzüge der Christologie, Gütersloher verlaghaus, Gütersloh(1964), pp.172.
- [14] Choi, Tae-kwan, The Universal historical Meaning of Incarnation von Jesus in the perspective of the universal-historical Theology, Korean Journal of Christian Studies(2019), pp.126.
- [15] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Grundzüge der Christologie, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh(1964), pp.175.
- [16] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Systematische Theologie Bd. 2, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen(1991), pp.386.