Performing Gender and the Death Drive

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I. Introduction

Verbs are becoming the focal point of current research on subjectivity that presupposes that movement (as well as changeability) sets the fundamental condition of ontology and ethics, substituting nouns that have been the pivotal idea of traditional western thought focusing on substance as an immutable essence. This tendency allows practice to be theorized. Otherwise, it would be virtually impossible for actions and performances to be conceptualized and signified in the form of language; this also makes it possible to interpret religious practice in a new mode of interpretation. Liturgical practice, rituals, spiritual progress, and movement toward perfection in the religious traditions are worthy of reinterpretation by means of these contemporary ideas, by which human actions are given signification. In this sense, in her work, *Powers and Submissions: Spritiuality, Philosophsy and Gender* (2002), Sarah Coakely's introducing

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Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 CE) to Judith Butler (1956-present) in terms of gender performativity relating to eschatology seems opportune and valuable so to open up possibilities of new discourses on gender and spirituality.

Coakley argues that Butler's radical theory on gender performantivity entails an eschatological implication and extends to a divine narrative. She maintains that Butler's gender theory and practice hold spiritual significance in that Butler's trial of "the denaturalization of sex and gender" has common ground with ascetic transformation in the tradition of Christianity.[1] She adds that Butler's project of personal liberation and authenticity established through fluid gender transformation has commonalities with ancient practice by ascetics, combining theory and practice.[2] Coakley, however, obviously fails to substantiate how and why Butler's politics of the gendered body can be necessarily connected to Gregory of Nyssa's ascetic struggle towards the angelic form of sexuality. She simply insists that the current obsessive interest in the body conceals a longing for the body beyond death and raises eschatological questions; she does not explain how Butler's anti-essentialist gender theory serves as "liturgical performative utterance over the sacrificial death of gender stability" or how it relates to Gregory of Nyssa's meaning of death. Coakely just juxtaposes the two thinkers' main arguments without sufficient comparison and interpretation of eschatological vision. She is also unable to demonstrate how Butler's theory and practice lead us to "the horizon of a divine grand narrative."[3]

Moreover, although Coakley's argument illuminates a new possible interpretation on the practice of gender involving Christian spirituality, I do not see significant similarities between Gregory of Nyssa's ascetic gender transformation and Judith Butler's gender performativity beyond the gender

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1) Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions : Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*(Malden, Mass: Blackwell, Publisher, 2002), 159.

2) *Ibid.*

3) *Ibid.*, 153.

binaries in light of eschatology. Nevertheless, I think Coakley's failure to strengthen the necessary connection between the two thinkers leaves us to speculate the issue from a different angle so to beget a new way of discourse on theory and practice, on personality, on death, and on how to differentiate religious from secular practice. To this end, first, I will discuss Gregory of Nyssa and Judith Butler's almost opposite takes on personality, the self, identity, gender, body and soul, and the problem of category, focusing on their distinctive perspectives and assumptions on personality. Second, I will approach the matter by means of topology. I will delineate how their action and performance take different positions and have different topology by using Lacan's graph of desire. The last part of my project will describe how their signification of death differs, especially in an eschatological interpretation, by adopting Lacan's discourse on death to validate my argument. As a result, I attempt to differentiate religious practice from political movement. Consequently, this paper will provide an antithesis of Sarah Coakely's argument; I will show that Gregory of Nyssa and Judith Butler's premises on personality, gender, and the signification of performing gender are contrasting, located in different topological realms with different eschatological implications. Simultaneously I will demonstrate their subversive movement against the fixed gender norm is the consequence of pursuing true desire--the death drive.

II. The Fundamentals of Personality and Gender

What clearly sets Gregory of Nyssa apart from Judith Butler is the decisively different perspectives on the structure of personalitiy and the dynamics of the elements composing the personality. In fact, they take completely opposite stance on the problem of personality. Butler clarifies her position on personality in her work, Gender Trouble. "It is a significant theoretical mistake to take the internality of the psychic world for granted," establishing herself outside of traditional metaphysics that

views the self as substance.[4] She quotes Nietzsche's claim, "there is no being behind doing, effecting, becoming; the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed--the deed is everything."[5] For her, there is no agency in charge of an action and performance as speech, that is, there is no doer behind the deed. She assumes that only recurrent actions and linguistic relations among the individual performances can determine the identity of the person. While classic metaphysics has traditionally questioned what internal trait of a person constitutes self-identity over time, Butler switches the question to what degree regulatory practice establishes an identity, "the internal coherence of the subject."[6] She performs the radical critique of the existing categories of identity.

This is quite a contrast to how Gregory of Nyssa keeps track of the traditional substantial position on subjectivity.[7] He sets up an internal coherent self that is composed of the rational soul and the sentient soul, both of which are created by God. Human beings have twofold organization, uniting the Divine with the earthly.[8] Such a division of a subject, originated from the two different narratives of the creation in Genesis, respectively, Gen 1:26 and Gen 2:7. In Gen 1:26 (NAB), the transcendental subject expressed in the phrase such as "make mankind in

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4) Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*(New York: Routledge, 2007), xvi.

5) *Ibid.*, 34.

6) *Ibid.*, 32.

7) Gregory of Nyssa's theory of subjectivity is akin to the structure of the subject of Descartes' rationalism in that Descartes' innate idea created by God is highly similar to the *nous* of the Church Father's signification of usage. Even though Descartes has been considered the progenitor of modern philosophy, we can see his main idea on subjectivity stems from the patristic perspectives on personality. In this sense, I think Gregory of Nyssa along with the other church fathers can be the predecessors of the modern rationalists, or, that western philosophy might be a repetition of that idea.

8) Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 2.2. Translated by H.A. Wilson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 5*. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo(NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2914.htm (accessed 5 May 2013).

our image, in our likeness" belongs to the rational soul that is the Divine, whereas the sentient, corporeal, animal soul in Gen 2:7 is integrated with the body. Likewise, Gregory considers human beings in between God and animals, based on the creation in Genesis. According to *On the Making of Man*, it is the *nous* for Gregory that is created in the image of God and what makes us like God, presupposing the transcendental self and the dignity of royalty.[9] The second important characteristic of the *nous* is being free. Gregory derives the freedom of the *nous* from the freedom of God, which means God governs the universe through free will without depending on anything.[10] The *nous* of Gregory is the very foundation of the transcendental self that Butler does not allow to be included in her system of subjectivity.

When it comes to gender as a part of the entire subjectivity in Gregory's system of a human person, gender belongs to the corporeal soul related to the body, as the *nous* is affiliated with the rational soul connected to the Divine. For Gregory to perceive gender as almost opposite to the *nous*, representing reason and the divine quality, is crucial, because maximizing the rational soul by reducing the ratio of the corporeal, sentient, animal soul is key to Christian asceticism. The binary distinction of gender into male and female is, for Gregory, the inevitable human condition, but should be subjugated and transformed in the present life in the mode of ideal Christian asceticism. The final goal of gender transformation is to eliminate and nullify the division of gender by means of ascetical practice that maintains virginity rather than pursues marriage life.

On the other hand, Butler's gender theory and practice is neither ascetic nor does it erase the division of gender to make an asexual state. To begin with, Butler divides relevant dimensional categories into anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance.[11] Butler's main

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9) *Ibid.*, 2-4.
10) *Ibid.*, 2.
11) Butler, 187.

strategy is for every subject to perform one's respective gender by examining the compulsory heterosexual category of gender and reestablishing (rethinking completely) categories and relations. Her theory of gender makes it possible for gender to be multiple, breaking down the fixed gender binary of male and female. Butler signifies gender as "a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred never fully what it is at any given juncture in time."[12] Gender cannot be defined in a meaning or in a category of identity but is assembled by a variety of convergences and divergences. Thus for Butler, gender is neither a noun nor the secondary attributes to a subject, since gender is performative and is doing itself.[13] Thus, gender identity is performatively constructed by the very expressions that are considered to be its results.

Moreover, Gregory's spectrum of human history relating to the gender theory is quite extensive, covering a diachronic investigation from the Creation, the Fall, the present life, the death, the resurrection, and after the resurrection, while Butler's argument just focuses on the synchronic contemporary culture, although she does widely examine the preceding theories of gender as well. Gregory classifies gendered life into three stages in his writing *On the Making of Man*: before the Fall, the present, and after the resurrection. Before the Fall there was no marriage, birth, travail, the desire for procreation; however, when they were banished from the Paradise after their committing their sin, they were sentenced to travail, marriage, mortality, and the fear of death. But at the resurrection they can restore the angelic life close to the divine without marriage, travail, and death. Gregory's gender narrative is partially grounded on the Hebrew Bible, whereas Butler, while being a Jew, has no biblical or religious implication on her theory on gender.

Although Gregory of Nyssa and Judith Butler do not have any shared point of view on either the subjectivity or gender, they both suppose it as a practice that enables an individual to transform one's quality of

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12) *Ibid.*, 22.
13) *Ibid.*, 34.

personality and of gender. They both negate the fixed gender identity over time, endowing human practice with the engine of the transformation of one's personality and gender. In my next step, I will articulate and differentiate their theory and practice on gender transformation, by applying Lacan's graph of desire to their major argument, which will demonstrate with more clarity where each theory on gender is located and how it functions for the purpose of the gender transformation and performativity.

Ⅲ. Graph of Desire

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) developed his graph of desire over a number of years, passing through four stages. I will adopt Lacan's graph of desire to interpret Gregory of Nyssa's and Judith Butler's gender theories and their ideas on gender practice by using the four graphs included in one of the Lacan's papers, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" (1960) in *Ecrits*. As Slavoj Žižek uses the Lacan's graph of desire to analyze a variety of cultural phenomena in the context of capitalism in his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), I think the Lacanian analysis of gender theories and practices by using Lacan's graph of desire will blaze a trail in the field of religious studies. Because Lacanian topology will demonstrate a possibility to distinguish religious actions in religion from seeminingly religious actions in non-religionous culture, I think this method will contribute to identifying relationality between 'what is religion' and 'what is religious'.
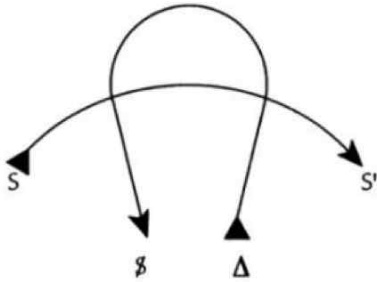
In Graph I, the vector S→S' shows pre-existing, floating signifiers' flow before a subject emerges. In this stream, the mystical, pre-symbolic intention(Δ) interrupts and quilts the flow of the signifiers, which fixes the meaning of the signifier; otherwise, there would be no meaning in the symbolic. The first point that contacts the vector S→S' (the right point of contact) is called the *point de capiton*. The *point de capiton* produces meanings of signifiers by fixation and brings us to the 'beginning' by the retroactive effect.[14] The Fall as a one-time event can be cited as an example of the point de capiton. Unidentified individuals in the Garden of Eden quilt the flow of the signifiers in the symbolic by transgressing the law of prohibition. It is the moment of the birth of subjects from the mythical individuals and it simultaneously indicates the subjects' space shifts from the imaginary to the symbolic. At this point, the subjects (S) are penetrated by signifiers and become the barred subjects ($). The retroactive effect at the point de capiton implies the production of meaning and the multiple objectification of the same event. For instance, the Fall made it possible for Adam who was an unidentified individual in the imaginary to become a subject who participates in the symbolic order and speaks signifiers.[15] After banishment as punishment of sin against God's

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14) Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink(New York: W.W.Norton &Company, 2006), 682.

15) Analyzing L-Schema, we can conclude that the imaginary as well as the symbolic has the liguistic demension. The language in the imaginary is, however, composed of the empty words, which prevent a subject from attaining the Other's discourse (true enunciation) in the symbolic. For more discussion, see Jacques Lacan,

regulation, Adam perceives Eden as a paradise where he could live an angelic life, when in fact, Eden might not be a paradise and Adam might not be angelic at that time. Still he feels that, which indicates the retroactive effect of the *point de capiton*. The retroactive effect makes a subject experiences something as if it were already there from the beginning, bringing us the past as a meaningful illusion.[16] In the same vein, Gregory of Nyssa's theory of perfection aims at restoring the angelic life of paradise by lifelong practice with virtue; however, we can never get to perfection, for perfection has never existed. (S→S') The physical time flows into the future but the time of a subject runs back to the past.
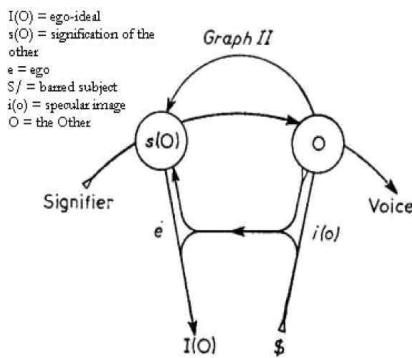
Lacan's second graph demonstrates how the interplay of symbolic identification and imaginary identification constitutes an "ego ideal" and an "ideal ego" respectively for a subject. The barred subject ($\$$, the right point of the bottom, passes the locus of the Other (O: the symbolic order)

"Introduction of the big Other," in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 2: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*. ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. trans. Sylvana Tomaselli(New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 1991), 235-247.

16) In a psychoanalytic setting or in our ordinary experience, a subject reinterprets and remakes the past at the *point de capiton* when he fixes signifiers in order to understand the past event and he finally produces a meaning of that experience of the past. The past experience may not be the same as what the subject understands now.

and the signification of the Other(s(O)), and reaches symbolic identification (I(O)); $\$\rightarrow O\rightarrow s(O)\rightarrow I(O)$. This route simply signifies that a subject participates in the symbolic, the symbolic order has effects on the subject, and the subject acquires the symbolic identity through this course. Symbolic identification is produced by identification with Father (the Other in the symbolic) in the last stage of the Oedipus complex, which creates the ego ideal (the superego, conscience) as a result.[17] This process provides a subject with a coordinate where the subject can be placed as a man or a woman.[18]

According to Gen 2:25, "The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame," we can infer there was no ego-ideal, no superego, in the Garden of Eden, in the imaginary. The serpent, however, tempts them into crossing "the line," saying "God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad"(Gen 3:5, NAB). The serpent suggests the emergence of the superego (knowing what is good and what is bad). "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves"(Gen 3:7, NAB). The man and his wife could not help being expelled from paradise (the imaginary) to outside of it (the symbolic) once they attained the ego-ideal. The man and his wife after being banished from the paradise had to learn to survive and adapt to the world by doing physical labor, leading a marital life with sexual reproduction, rearing children, and so on, identifying themselves with the life of the secular symbolic world. Yet Gregory of Nyssa devaluates symbolic identification and the secular way of life, since he considers retrospectively the imaginary angelic life in the Garden of Eden as an ideal life. Imaginary identification occurs to a subject along with symbolic identification that enables the subject to completely enter into the symbolic. Symbolic

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17) Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*(New York: Routledge, 1996), 52, 81.

18) *Ibid.*, 52.

identification is still based on imaginary identification.[19)]

Imaginary identification (the vector $i(o) \rightarrow e$) takes place in the imaginary, so that it creates the ideal ego. Specifically, in the mirror stage of a subject, the ego is constituted by identification of the image of 'the other'. The ego should be distinguished from the subject, in that the ego functions only in the imaginary whereas the subject extends from the imaginary and the symbolic to the real.[20)] Traditional self-consciousness is instituted by the imaginary relationship between the ego and the other which is completely different from the other counterpart since the other is located within me.[21)] The distinction between the other and the Other is also important; the other refers to something imaginary such as the projection of the ego, the ideal body image, the perfect image of a hero or a heroine, and the divine image, while the Other is the locus of the symbolic order, the field of the Law and language.

Gregory of Nyssa's emphasis on imaginary identification with the image of God is the most crucial cause of ascetic practice as an ideal Christian way of life. His belief that a human being is created in the image of God based on Gen 1:27 leads to the theory of perfection and the "Divine race" as a way of practice. The purpose of life is to attain likeness to God, and this progress towards God continues forever without ceasing at physical death. In The Life of Moses, Gregory stresses the freedom of choice, during the divine race. But Lacan believes that the ideal ego's faculty for unity, totality, and autonomy that we conceive is purely illusory making Lacan very critical of the ego's function of mastery.[22)] He believes that the freedom of choice lies not in the ego but in the

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19) Lacan, 22.

20) Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 1: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester(NewYork: W.W.Norton & Company,1991), 193.

21) Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 3: The Psychoses 1955-1956*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg(NewYork: W. W. Norton&Company, 1997), 241.

22) Lacan, *Ecrit*, 306-307.

symbolic. Therefore, it is the symbolic that enjoys the autonomy and the freedom of choice, and he believes that the ego just depends upon the symbolic.

When it comes to gender, since Gen 1:27 indicates that the rational, divine nature precedes the division of a subject into male and female, Gregory argues that "the Divine does not admit of an opposite, we hold the divine nature to be unlimited and infinite".[23] He also quotes the Apostle Paul saying that "in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female."[24]Thus the final goal of imaginary identification of gender with the Divine is to annihilate the division of gender even though the perfect extinction of gender is never reached. So in the process of the divine race, attenuating the gender nature as much as possible would be the key practice of asceticism.

On the other hand, subjects involved in the secular way of life have a different path of imaginary identification with the image of the ideal male or female, which tends to strengthen the division of gender. In this case, imaginary identification is fused with symbolic identification and they perform circular movement within the subject. In the religious realm as seen in Gregory of Nyssa, it is easy to discriminate imaginary identification (with God) from symbolic identification (with the symbolic order), but in the secular dimension the distinction between the two types of identification is vague as well as ambiguous. Even though according to Žižek, imaginary identification corresponds to 'constituted' identification as does symbolic identification to 'constitutive' identification, I think this distinction is not as decisive to sharply discriminate the two, since the two types of identification are tightly intertwined.[25] In symbolic gender identification a subject identifies his/her gender role with the symbolic order of anti-incest, heterosexuality that is expressed by phallogocentric

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23) Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson(New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 31.

24) Gregory of Nyssa *On the Making of Man* 16.7.

25) Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*(New York: Verso, 2008), 116.

language; in imaginary gender identification the male and female subjects try to imitate an ideal male and female image in their consciousness.[26)] In either case, both identifications have the same consequences; an anti-incest taboo, heterosexuality, and the gender binary of male and female as if this division were natural and essential. I think the same result from two different identifications is due to a subject's desire for 'recognition'. Since the symbolic order precedes the emergence of a subject, the subject is required to locate him/herself in a place of the symbolic where the subject should be considered to be accepted and recognized by the Othere. The subject should identify him/herself with the acceptable and dominant symbolic code of sexuality that is identified as anti-incest, heterosexual relations in order to gain recognition and avoid exclusion from the symbolic. In the case of imaginary identification, a subject tends to identify oneself with the gaze outside of the ego such as a gaze of a male or female counterpart, in order to be loved by them. The gender binary becomes crystallized by way of symbolic and imaginary identification. For Judith Butler, the gender binary fixed by two identifications is regarded as the reality that must be overcome by the recurrent subversive actions. The next two graphs, Graph III and Completed graph, deal with the theoretical ground of revolution and subversion of gender performance.

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26) Accordingto Lacan, sexual differences are determined by the subject's relation to the signifer "phallus". The male subject declares "I have the phallus" whereas a female subject declares "I am the phallus" in Lacan, *Ecrits*, 582.

Graph III

Che vuoi?

($\lozenge$O)

s(O)   O

I(O) $
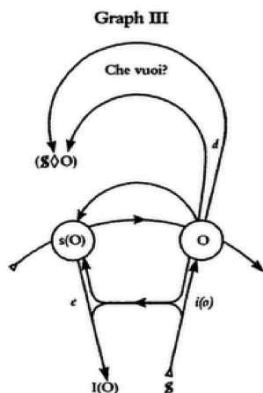
On top of that, the Other (O) questions "What do you want? (Che vuoi?)" beyond identifications. This question leads a subject to the awareness of the subject's own desire (*d*) beyond identification with the symbolic and the imaginary.[27] Lacan provides "fantasy" ($\lozenge$O: formula of fantasy) as an answer for that question. Fantasy fills the void and opens "the desire of the Other," "the lack in the Other."[28] Fantasy makes us not only feel that desire can be satisfied but also avoid approaching near to the death drive. This is because fantasy gives the world "absolute signification,"so that we may experience the world as a consistent and meaningful entity.[29] The Other, we regard as being perfect, desires as well, because it has a lack in itself. According to Lacan, desire cannot be fulfilled or satisfied, but rather constituted through fantasy so that we learn how to desire. The desire structured through fantasy, however, is a defense against the desire of the Other, the pure form of desire--the death drive.[30] Lacan has argued that we should not give up on our desire. But it is the desire of the Other beyond fantasy that we should not renounce, rather than the fantasy-based desire.[31] We should traverse the

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27) Lacan, *Ecrit*, 690.
28) Žižek, 132.
29) *Ibid.*, 138.
30) *Ibid.*, 132.
31) *Ibid.*

fantasized desire and encounter the desire of the Other--the death drive. Both Gregory of Nyssa and Judith Butler are revolutionary figures that are able to traverse the fantasy-based desire and continue to practice for the desire of the Other, for the lack of the Other in religious practice and in political movement.
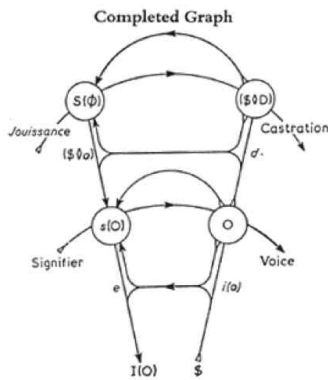
In the completed graph, as soon as jouissance penetrates the field of the symbolic, the symbolic is disturbed by jouissance and turns out to be inconsistent and porous(S(Ø)). Jouissance is something that cannot be symbolized so that the only possible signifier of jouissance is "the signifier of the lack in the Other," and "the signifier of its inconsistency."[32] The Other, the symbolic order, is structured with impossibility and a lack in the center. If there were no lack in the Other, the Other would be a closed system. Lack in the Other render the subject the space for breathing. However, jouissance is forbidden by 'pleasure' to all the subjects who 'speak'. Jouissance in this graph is equivalent to the death drive in relation to the concept of pleasure and the pleasure principle. This is because both jouissance and the death drive tend to disorder the symbolic, whereas pleasure and the pleasure principle have tendencies to maintain order and homeostasis in the symbolic. In the following part, I will continue to articulate the notions of pleasure, the pleasure principle,

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32) *Ibid.*, 137.

the death drive, and the physical death and the symbolic death in terms of eschatology to better discuss Gregory's and Butler's theory and practice on gender.

IV. Behaving Gender and Eschatology

It seems that theory and practice of gender for Gregory has little commonality with Butler's gender performativity except that both of their theories of gender accompany "disordering practices" against the prevalent gender norm of the time: in the Fall of Genesis, in fourth century CE, and in the late twentieth century CE to the present. Indeed, their disordering gender practices can be seen as revolutions against the existing compulsory order; the emergence of the gender binaries and relevant roles as a punishment of the act of sin, the gender binaries focusing on the marriage life, and heterosexual compulsion in phallogocentrism. I will connect their revolutionary gender practices to eschatology by using the theory of death in Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Death is located at a critical point in the Lacanian structure, having evolved its concept throughout the development of ideas. In *Seminar 7*, Lacan distinguishes two deaths. The first death refers to the physical death, which succeeds in terminating a person's biological life but fails to terminate the cycle of the destruction and the revival of the matter of the body. The second death is defined as "the point at which the very cycles of the transformations of nature are annihilated", which we call the symbolic death.[33] Lorenzo Chiesa maintains that a subject's symbolic death should be acquired only by means of the death of the symbolic order because it is impossible for the subject to completely escape the symbolic.[34] Both the first and the second death appear in Gregory of Nyssa's

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33) Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book7: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960,* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter(New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1992), 248.

gender theory and practice, whereas only the second death involves in Judith Butler's gender performativity. The second death as a symbolic death is caused by the death drive, the possibility of the symbolic death as well as the exact opposite of the symbolic order.[35] Here the symbolic order strives to maintain a homeostatic balance with pleasure, the opposite of jouissance.

In Lacanian system, the death drive as a subject's desire is a will toward destruction and nothingness, and simultaneously a desire for making a new start.[36]Lacan's death drive is anchored to Freud's death drive but highly distinctive in its conception from that of Freud in relation to the notion of pleasure and the pleasure principle. For Freud, pleasure is defined as a low amount of excitement or stimulation in an organism.[37] After some observations of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) patients, Freud had to hypothesize the death drive beyond the pleasure principle. While the pleasure principle serves to minimize the degree of stimulation in the limit of maintaining life, the death drive nullifies physical tension by discontinuing life and returning to the state of equilibrium. Lacan situates the death drive in the historical dimension in the network of the signifying chain rather than in the biological domain.[38] In this historical domain, the death drive characterizes its appearance as the "repetitive"insistence of "remembering" and "historicizing" something memorable.[39]Lacan indicates the necessity of the moment of creation ex

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34) Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*(Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 149.

35) Žižek, 147.

36) Lacan, *Seminar 7*, 212.

37) The main text that explaining how Freud creates the concept of the death drive is *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Before this text, Freud had thought that all humanorganisms tended to maximize pleasure by reducing the intensity of stimulation and maintaining homeostasis. But he observed that PTSD patients continued to remember what they suffered in war, betraying the pleasure principle of avoiding pain and pursuing pleasure. The patients' repetitive automatism gave themselves pain.

38) Lacan, *Seminar 7*, 211.

nihilo that gives birth to the historical dimension of the drive. "In the beginning was the Word—the signifier."[40] Without the signifier at the beginning, it is impossible for the drive to be articulated as historical rather than biological. For Lacan the death drive can be productive in the domain of creation ex nihilo even though the death drive is basically orienting destruction.

In light of the death drive and the symbolic death, we can interpret Butler's radical rethinking of gender identities and deconstructing of the fixed gender category as a series of actions that are driven by the death drive and pursue the symbolic death. The symbolic order that Butler aims at defeating regarding the symbolic death by the death drive has two main dimensions: language and a gender norm. First, language itself is a problem because language is pervasively masculine and phallocentric, in which a woman cannot be represented.[41] Language dominated by the paternal law and its differentiation mechanism determines the ontological condition of "being," "negation," and their "relations."[42] This will affect the linguistic structure and signification of culture. Secondly, prevalent gender norms such as ideal dimorphism, compulsory heterosexuality, and many rules and ideas of "proper and improper masculinity and femininity"are violent and pertain to governing gender.[43] For Butler, however, gender norms are phantasmic and impossible to embody in reality and gender itself is a norm not to be completely internalized.[44] Thus she calls for a subversive, recurrent practice to revise linguistic and normative reality, by the death drive, a repetitive will to absolute destruction beyond putrefaction, a will to create from nothing, and a will to resume.[45] To be concrete, for Butler, identity is a signifying practice

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39) *Ibid.*, 209.

40) *Ibid.*, 213.

41) Butler, 11.

42) *Ibid.*, 59.

43) *Ibid.*, xxi.

44) *Ibid.*, 192.

of repetition rather than a fixed category so that new possibilities for gender are only within the subversion of identity by the repetitive signifying practice.[46] In the case of gay and lesbian practice, it should be "the subversive and parodic redeployment of power" which is practicable rather than "the fantasy of its full-scale transcendence."[47] The symbolic death as a result of the subversive performance leads to the mobilization of the category of identity. In terms of language, the symbolic death reveals the arbitrary relation of a signifier and a signified, and destabilizes and mobilizes the sign.[48] Gender performative actions disrupt the categories of body, sex, gender, and sexuality and proliferate beyond the gender binary.[49] By focusing on particularity, many different centers of power as well as homosexual desire emerge.[50]

Butler's scheme of gender performativity (the symbolic order, the death drive, the symbolic death) is even simpler than that of Gregory which belongs to the Christian worldview of the multiple worlds and the critical events that generate the worlds: Creation→ Angelic (Divine) Life in the Garden of Eden→ The Fall→ The Present Age→ Death→ Resurrection → Resurrected Life. Christian ontology and ethics are traditionally connected to eschatology, while Butler's eschatology that I parted with above is not typical eschatology that implies physical death and resurrection. So, eschatological explanation of Gregory of Nyssa by using Lacan's theory of death is structured more complexly than that of Butler.

In the beginning, God created the world with Words, which is the possible condition of the death drive so that the world of signifiers germinates the death drive from the beginning. A man and his wife live and enjoy the angelic life in Paradise, angelic procreation. Regarding

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45) Lacan, *The seminar 7*, 212.
46) Butler, 198-199.
47) *Ibid.*, 169.
48) *Ibid.*, 167.
49) *Ibid.*, 34.
50) *Ibid.*, 35.

angelic procreation, for Coakley, Gregory interprets humans in the original creation as non-sexed in the image of God because the Divine does not include the opposition.[51] For Behr, the angelic mode is not just asexual but on procreation governed by reason.[52] A serpent aroused in humans the latent death drive transgressing God's law of prohibition and the angelic order, and their death drive finally caused the Fall, the symbolic death of paradise. The serpent's wording is significant, "you certainly will not die"(Gen 3:4, NAB). The symbolic death is not death in a physical way but the death of the symbolic order with the promise of a new way of life.

After the Fall as a symbolic death, the existing 'angelic' order terminates and the new order of human life emerges. Humans have to conform to the standards that their society demands of them, such as economic activity, political participation, marriage life, child rearing, and everything maintaining the secular world. Gregory, however, urges a search for the real desire beyond the social demand and fantasy that such social activity and marriage life will satisfy their desire. He exhorts us to confront the death drive beyond the fantasized desire, to attain perfection through the divine race. He proposes that the ideal mode of the Christian life should pursue the resurrected reality in hope, striving to imitate and realize the angelic life by ascetic practice and renunciation of sexual desire.[53]

Gregory suggests virginity beyond marriage life in order not to renounce the true desire the subject wants--that is, the union with God. He maintains that the man who desires union with God must detach his intention from all worldly interest.[54] Virginity is the precondition of

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51) Coakely, 163.

52) John Behr, "The Rational Animal: A Rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's Dehominis opificio." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no. 2(1999): 239-45.

53) J. Waren Smith, "The Body of Paradise and the Body of the Resurrection: Gender and the Angelic Life in Gregory of Nyssa's De hominis opicio," *Harvard Theological Review* 92, no.2 (April 2006); 224.

54) Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, 6. trans. by William Moore and Henry Austin

achieving "the aim of lofty passion," "the happiness of another class."[55] For Gregory, Macrina is the ideal woman who transcends the compulsory gender norm of that day through her virginity. She is considered more than an ordinary person because she transcends her physicality in the present and proleptically accepted the angelic life after the resurrection.[56] She never gives up on her death drive through her lifelong ascetic practice without compromising the compulsory conditioned fantasy-based marriage life and secularity.

Humans finally encounter physical death, the first death. In eschatology as well as in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the physical death is not as critical an event as the symbolic death, since in eschatology the resurrection and the resurrected life are expected after the physical death, in Lacanian pespectives; the second death, the symbolic death, is the real termination. For instance, Macrina's dead body is worshiped as a relic, which serves as a sign of the sacred so that we can conclude that her physical death does not refer to the end of her life and she is still alive as a sign. The resurrection, ironically, can be considered the symbolic death after the first death of the body because it terminates the symbolic order of the present age and enters into the new order that once existed. The resurrection signifies the restoration of Paradise so that there would not be gender binaries, gender norms, and sexual reproduction in the angelic form of life. In the resurrection, everything about gender and sex will cease to exist--the symbolic death of gender.

V. Conclusion

Wilson. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 5. ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace(Buffalo, NY: ChristianLiterature Publishing Co., 1893.) http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2907.htm (accessed 5 May 2013).

55) *Ibid.*, 3.

56) Smith, 225.

So far, I have attempted to accentuate the different points of gender theory and practice between Gregory of Nyssa and Judith Butler. In the perspectives of personality, Gregory of Nyssa stands for the traditional substantial position emphasizing human reason and downplaying the corporeal soul. Since gender is associated with corporeality, gender should be attenuated throughout life by ascetic practice. Thus, the purpose of aseceticism regardindg gender is to maintain virginity and augment reason that is divine. On the other hand, Butler gives a radical critique of a traditional category of identity, without presupposing a transcendental self, internal coherence, and an identity over time. So, she believes that only action and performance construct gender so that gender is multiple rather than binary.

The graph of desire shows that both Gregory and Butler transcend symbolic identification of gender. Gregory who is a religious thinker sets a high value on imaginary identification with God, but Butler still devalues and tries to overcome imaginary identification along with symbolic identification of gender. In religious practice unlike secular movement, imaginary identification will be momentum of ascetic practice, of the theory of perfection, and of the divine race. In terms of eschatology, Gregory's scale of human history is far more extensive than that of Butler, including the Creation, the Fall, and the Resurrection. The symbolic death is the goal of Gregory's ascetic practice and of Butler's gender performativity.

Despite the distinctiveness, both Gregory of Nyssa and Judith Butler are revolutionary thinkers and practitioners who are able to traverse the fantasized desire of the compulsory gender binaries and roles, and encounter true desire--the death drive--maintaining practice in religion and in politics.

symbolic death

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젠더 수행과 죽음 충동

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    이 논문에서는 Gregory of Nyssa의 금욕적 젠더 실천 이론과 Judith Butler의 젠더 수행성 이론의 영성적이고 종말론적인 성격을 라캉의 위상학으로 비교 분석하는 작업을 하면서 논변을 이끌어 나간다. 라캉의 위상학을 이용한 본 논문의 방법은 종교적 수행과 정치적(세속적) 실천 운동이 어떻게 다르면서도 같은지를 시각적으로 현시해줄 뿐 아니라, 종교와 세속의 실천의 의미와 개념이 어떻게 다른지도 이해하기 쉽게 해준다. 따라서 종교학의 쟁점 가운데 하나인, '종교'와 '종교적'이란 개념의 공통점과 차이점을 보다 선명하게 이해하는데 일정 부분 기여할 수 있다. 이 논문은 우선 Gregory와 Butler에게 있어서 주체론(자아론)이 기반한 사고, 젠더에 대한 관점, 동일성에 대한 관점, 영혼과 몸의 문제의 기본 전제가 확연하게 다름을 보일 것이다. 라캉의 위상학을 대표하는 욕망의 그래프를 도입하여, 그 두 학자의 젠더 실천이 라캉적 주체의 상징적 동일화와 상상적 동일화 과정에서 어떻게 다르게 해석될 수 있는지도 보여준다. 그러나 궁극적으로 두 학자에 있어서 죽음과 영성의 문제를 생물학적 죽음과 라캉의 상징적 죽음의 의미로 분석하여 이들의 젠더 이론을 실천과 영성적 혁명으로 이끄는 힘이 공통적으로는 죽음 충동임을 보여준다.

  핵심어: 젠더, 수행성, 이론과 실천, 주체, 동일화, 카테고리, 금욕주의, 욕망, 죽음 충동, 상징적 죽음

Performing Gender and the Death Drive

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This paper demonstrates spiritual and eschatological characteristics of Gregory of Nyssa's theory of gender transformation as well as of Judith Butler's gender performativity, by comparing and analyzing both theories in the lens of Lacanian topology. This method of Lacanian topology will illustrate not only the similarity and the difference between religious practice and political (secular) practice, but also how religious practice differentiates from the secular practice in terms of the concept and significance. Consequently, this project will contribute to illuminating the similarity and the difference between 'religion' and 'being religious'. To this end, this project first shows the distinctiveness of the foundational premise of Gregory's and Butler's the theory of subjectivity, gender, self-identity, and the matter of body and soul. Next, the graph of desire representing Lacanian topology displays innovative interpretation of the two theorists' gender practices in the process of imaginary and symbolic identification. But ultimately, this project demonstrates that the death drive leads the two gender theories to practice as well as to spiritual revolution, by analyzing the problem of death and spirituality in terms of the Lacanian symbolic death.