Preface

Entitled *From Being to Energy-Being: An Emerging Metaphysical Macroparadigm Shift in Western Philosophy*, the present monograph is a collection of ten papers put together for the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Grace Institute of the Holy Eucharist (1985-2010).

In retrospect, Grace Institute *inter alia* has been focusing its research uniquely on the Theology of Energy which is fundamentally grounded on the presupposition that every ‘thing’ in the totality of reality is ‘energy.’ Thus, this Theology of Energy would rise or fall depending upon the perception of ‘energy’ as the universal metaphysical unifying paradigm. Over the past two decades, it has become, therefore, a top priority of the author to present this reality to the readers. It is no surprise that many of his books and articles written in the past have been directly or indirectly related to ‘energy.’

At the same time, having lived in the West for over 35 years, the author has come to the conclusion that its metaphysical macroparadigm has been on a gradual recognizable shift, i.e., from the conception of every ‘thing’ as ‘being’ to the perception of every ‘thing’ as ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being,’ albeit slowly and quietly. As it is, ‘being’ as a word itself cannot change. It is only our intuition or perception of ‘being’ that changes according to our ever evolving mind or way of understanding of the world. As seen in the following all-inclusive observation, the metaphysical history of the West may be viewed in three major periods, progressing in the energy-being-energy cycle:

1. **Pre-Socratic Period**/ Ancient Greek thinkers speculated things are made of various forms of ‘energy.’ Examples are: every ‘thing’ is ‘water’ (Thales); every ‘thing’ is ‘air’ (Anaximenes); every ‘thing’ is a single primal boundless substance called apeiron’ (Anaximander); every ‘thing’ is ‘fire’ (Heraclitus); every ‘thing’ is ‘earth’ (Empedocles); every ‘thing’ is ‘atom’ (Leucippus and Democritus).

2. From Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle to largely the Present/
From Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, in particular since the establishment of ‘being’ by St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, a Western paradigm of metaphysics has been established wherein every ‘thing’ has been generally conceived as ‘being.’

(3) The Present Multicultural or Pluralistic Period/ High energy physics, depth psychology, East Asian and Eastern Orthodox concepts of ‘energy,’ especially the Chinese idea of qi, are causing the multicultural West to go through a universal paradigm shift in metaphysics, from the conception that every ‘thing’ is ‘being’ to the perception that every ‘thing’ is ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being’.

It must be acknowledged that, written over a period of over 12 years, not every essay in this volume has been consciously written to be tightly knitted with other papers to systematically explain the historical reality of this unprecedented metaphysical macroparadigm shift. Neither have all the papers followed the same format in meticulous details, as nine of them were published in three different journals, each following the comprehensive instruction of the editor at the time. However, one may detect, directly and indirectly, that there is a certain tendency to explicate such a shift in the history of Western philosophy.

As a whole, the 1st paper “Ultimate Reality and Meaning [URAM] of Plato’s Theory of Forms and the Problem of Universals Concerning Postmodern Relativism” tends to ascertain that ‘being’ as a metaphysical macroparadigm was somewhat employed as early as Plato (c.427-347 B.C.). As we know, Plato’s idea of ‘being’ “meant the ‘what’ of things as a stable object of certain knowledge. ‘Being’ was properly employed only of the self-identical, changeless, and hence eternal, realm of Forms — that reality, grasped by intellect alone, which is imaged in, but at the same time contrasted with, the mutable realm of ‘becoming.’”2 It is true that it was Aristotle, critical of Plato’s rather narrow identification of ‘being’ with the immutable and transcendental Forms, proceeded to insist that ‘being’ should be universally applicable.3

In any case, the 2nd paper “St. Augustine’s Concept of God as the All-Present Being for the Present Generation”4 and the 3rd “The Meaning and Challenge of St. Thomas’s Metaphysical Concept of God as Ipsum

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3 Ibid.
4 This article was published in Fu Jen Religious Studies, no. 12 (2005 Winter), pp. 195-242. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of Fu Jen Religious Studies on May 1, 2010.
Esse Subsistens Today” clearly dwell on ‘being’ as the metaphysical macroparadigm championed by St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and subsequently established by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-c.1274). It is true that after St. Thomas, ‘being’ — the single dominant metaphysical macroparadigm governing the entire period of the Medieval Age — began its long downhill journey through the Modern Period up to the current Postmodern Period.

The 4th paper “The Distinction between God’s Essence and Energy: Gregory Palamas’ Idea of Ultimate Reality and Meaning” brings our attention to the Christian East in the 14th century when St. Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), Doctor of the Uncreated Energies, ascertained the unmistakable reality of God’s Uncreated Energy. Amid the current metaphysical macroparadigm shift from ‘being’ to ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being’ in the West today, the promotion of God’s Energy by this Orthodox saint is certainly a distinct distant reason, although St. Gregory was focusing only on the supernatural dimension of ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being.’

Further, the 5th paper “Awakening from the Kantian Anti-Supernatural Slumbers” and its sequel, i.e., the 6th paper, “Kant’s Naturalistic ‘Religion’ and ‘religion’” spell out Kant’s concept of naturalism and naturalistic religion in his anti-supernatural scientism in the Modern Period. Apparently, Kant was interested only in ‘being’ or ‘beings’ which could be scientifically verified. Whereas he dismissed the real existence of any scientifically unverifiable ‘being,’ he was making great moral use of ‘supernatural beings’ as if they exist. As a consequence, ‘being’ perceived as a universal, all-encompassing metaphysical macroparadigm after Kant’s scientific rationalistic dismissal of ‘supernatural beings’ has become further alienated from the Western mind.

Without surprise, the concept of ‘being’ as a non-universal metaphysical macroparadigm tends to become more widespread in the

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5 This article was published in Fu Jen International Religious Studies, Vol. 1, No. 1 (N. Summer 2007), pp. 149-170. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of Fu Jen International Religious Studies on May 1, 2010.

6 This article was published in URAM, vol. 21. no. 1 (March 1998), pp. 56-75. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of URAM on April 24, 2010.

7 This article was published in Fu Jen Religious Studies, no. 8 (Winter 2003), pp. 193-225. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of Fu Jen Religious Studies on May 1, 2010.

8 This article was published in Fu Jen Religious Studies, no. 11 (Summer 2005), pp. 151-180. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of Fu Jen Religious Studies on May 1, 2010.
present Postmodern Period, as explained in the 7th paper “An Emerging Metaphysical Macroparadigm Shift from Being to Energy-Being.”

Edited by Prof. Kevin Sharpe of Oxford University, an international Who’s Who in science and religion, and given the green light by Prof, John Perry, S.J., editor of *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, this paper was presented memorably in the Energy Symposium organized by the author during the Tenth Biennial Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Human Ideas on Ultimate Reality and Meaning in 1999 at the University of Toronto. Subsequently, it was published as a significant part of the Studies on Energy in an *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* issue slated for the commemoration of the URAM 25th anniversary. In this paper, said the URAM editor, “the author, John Cheng of Toronto, Canada, explains why energy-being is a prime candidate for a unifying macroparadigm of Ultimate Reality and Meaning.”

Moreover, the increasing metaphysical macroparadigm shift from ‘being’ to ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being’ in the West at the dawn of the 3rd millennium is attested in the 8th paper “Christian Faith Encounters New Age Faith in *The Celestine Vision*: A Brief Comparison between Two Types of Theology of Energy.” This essay is a succinct comparison between the theological works of two authors who subscribe to ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being’ as a metaphysical macroparadigm. While James Redfield may epitomize the New Age version of Theology of Energy, the present author seems to represent to a certain extent the development of a Christian theology taking ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being’ as the principal universal model of explanation.

Finally, transposing the concept of ‘energy’ to that of *qi* interchangeably, the 9th paper “Re-visiting St. Thomas’ Concept of God as Truth Itself from the Perspective of *Qi* in the *Guanzi’s Four Daoist Chapters*” may be viewed as a bold inter-philosophical, inter-cultural, inter-faith, inter-religious dialogue in the current Postmodern Period. At the same time, the 10th article “URAM of Chu Hsi’s Metaphysical

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9 This article was published in *URAM*, vol. 25. no. 4 (December 2002), pp. 314-330. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of *URAM* on April 24, 2010.


11 This article was published in *New Century Religious Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (September 2010), pp. 77-114. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of *NCRS* on July 12, 2010.

12 This article was published in *URAM*, vol. 30. no. 3 (September 2007), pp. 38-57. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of *URAM* on April 24, 2010.
Concept of the *Li-Ch’i* Universe for the Postmodern World”\(^{13}\) may be looked upon as an audacious attempt to delve into the problem of truth in the postmodern world in terms of an East Asian metaphysical perspective based on ‘energy’ or *qi*.

As a whole, the author attempts to make certain in the present monograph that ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being’ is an emerging metaphysical macroparadigm awaiting its eventual discovery. Taking the energy-being-energy cycle in the history of Western philosophy seriously, the present emerging perception of every ‘thing’ as ‘energy’ or ‘energy-being’ in the West is simply a natural consequence of an evolving development begun millennia ago in ancient Greece.

Due to the modern development of high energy physics, depth psychology, as well as the unprecedented openness to the Orthodox concept of ‘energy’ and the Asian idea of *qi*, the pluralistic multicultural West today has expanded its earlier concept of ‘energy’ limited to the material dimension to a comprehensive level encompassing also the human and the spiritual. In other words, the soon-to-become-obsolete mind of the West thinks that only every material ‘thing’ is ‘energy.’ However, due to the reasons stated above, every ‘thing’ as such in the material, human, and spiritual worlds is increasingly perceived today by the Western mind as some ‘energy’ or some form of ‘energy.’

Finally, in hindsight discovered only after the Concluding Remarks of the book have been ascribed,\(^{14}\) the author comes away believing that it may be critical for our readers to first look at these concluding comments located at the end of the monograph before attempting to read the articles.

John Cheng Wai-leung,
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\(^{13}\) This article was published in *URAM*, vol. 27, no. 1 (September 2004), pp. 29-50. The permission for reprinting it was graciously given by the editorial committee of *URAM* on April 24, 2010.

\(^{14}\) Cf. pp. 266-276, the last part of this monograph.