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## **A Study of an Ethic of Life**

- Concentrating on Jürgen Moltmann and Suk-hun Ham

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- I. Introduction: Technology and Life
- II. Jürgen Moltmann: Life and the Hope
- III. Suk-hun Ham: *Ssi-al* and Life
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• 국 문 초 록 •

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생명의 윤리적 의미에 대한 연구: 몰트만과 함석헌을 중심으로

성신형(숭실대학교 조교수)

본 연구는 4차산업 혁명 시대의 인간 기술에 대한 신학적 윤리적 성찰을 위해서 기획되었다. 인간은 사이보그, 로봇, 인공지능, 바이오 나노 기술, 복제 등의 기술들이 발전함에 따라서 인간은 이러한 기술들을 두려움과 경이로움으로 받아들이고 있다. 과연 이러한 기술들은 인간에게 어떤 미래를 가져다 줄 것인가? 본 연구는 이러한 질문에 대한 신학적이고 윤리적인 대답을 찾기 위해서 몰트만과 함석헌의 생명 사상에 주목하고 있다. 몰트만은 그의 고통의 신학, 희망의 신학, 창조의 질서, 성령과 종말의 신학 전반에 걸쳐서 생명의 중요성에 대해서 강조하고 있다. 또한 함석헌은 한국 역사에 주목하면서 고통받는 씨알로서의 민중과 그 생명력, 그리고 생명의 완성과 하나됨에 주목하고 있다. 이와 같이 두 사상가는 삶을 살리는 신학과 윤리를 발전시켜 나가고 있다.

주제어: 몰트만, 함석헌, 생명, 씨알, 기술

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## I. Introduction: Technology and Life

Humanity is facing an epoch of new life because of the possibility of total destruction or never-dying paradise due to the development of technology. For instance, in one sense the issue of human cloning is promising such a never-dying paradise for humanity in that this technology might make it possible to conquer any kind of disease. In another sense, people are afraid of it because of its uncertainty and instability. There are four principles to deal with of the meaning of life such as the issue of technology, science, religion, philosophy, and policy (law). The scientific question is whether or not technology is a new achievement for human beings. Religiously, is not the technological progress 'playing God?' The philosophical question is what the main purpose of technology is. That is, can it protect the dignity of human beings? Or, can it be morally good? And, in terms of policy or law, people may ask whether or not it needs to be banned. The more these types of questions are asked, the more difficult the answers are.<sup>1)</sup>

Based on this observation on technology, this research focuses on the value of 'life' in that 'life' is a common ground that emerges from the issue of technology. Those who see the pessimistic side of technology argue that it will destroy human life, whereas those who have opposite opinions advocate for it because it can help to protect or prolong

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1) Michael C. Brannigan, ed., *Ethical Issues in Human Cloning* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2001), Introduction. Also see, Ian Barbour, *Ethics in an Age of Technology* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), Part one. And, Yuval Harari, *Homo Deus* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017), Chapter one.

human life. One of the rudimentary problems with technology is to figure out the values of life, such as the purpose of life, the dignity of life, the efficiency of life, and the utility of life. Thus, the value of life is a critical basis in order to deal with the issue of technology.

This paper searches for the understanding of life based on the ethical perspectives in order to find a legitimate answer about the issues of technology. In order to develop this idea, this research explores two thinkers, Jürgen Moltmann and Suk-hun Ham, who are intently involved in this issue of life. First, this research examines Moltmann's 'theology of life' to grasp the theological significance of life. Second, it looks into a Korean thinker, Suk-hun Ham, and his perspectives of 'life.' Lastly, it initiates a conversation of both thinkers as to how similar or different their thoughts of life are. This research is not to choose a position, either pros or cons about technology; rather, it explores ethical and theological meanings of 'life.'

## II. Jürgen Moltmann: Life and the Hope

In Moltmann's early theological works, political concerns were the major topics because he had endured the sufferings of the World War II. That is, he had experienced the trauma, horror, and massacre of millions during the Holocaust, which inspired the ideas that developed into his "theology of the Cross" and "theology of hope." Gradually, his theological development evolved into the theology of Spirit and Creation in his later works. Among his theological ideas, the issue of life has been being the driving force of his theological works, not only

in his early theological works, but also in his later theological thoughts. Namely, 'life' can be called the focal point of his theology.

In other words, Moltmann's thinking originated from his suffering during World War II. He participated in this war as a German soldier. He was caught by the Allied Force, and was sent into the soldier prisoner's camp in Scotland. He described his personal experience at this camp that he could not only find himself, but he also look up Jesus Christ on the cross, the suffering God. This experience made him decide to study theology rather than to continue to study physics. Thus, suffering became the starting point of his theology.<sup>2)</sup> Suffering caused him to become interested in the socio-political issues in his theology. His interests in social suffering moved him to formulate the 'Theology of Hope' focusing on the study of Christological eschatology. His main concern is how hope can be understood in terms of 'life.' In other words, for him, the understanding of being and life is the basis of the 'Theology of Hope.'

When Moltmann says 'hope,' he refers to emancipation from any kind of oppression: political, religious, and even psychological situations. God's suffering and resurrection represent 'hope' for those victimized by these situations. The Crucified God, who was on the cross to overcome death for Godself, endeavors to liberate those who are victimized by such oppressions. He elaborates on this understanding as following:

"Man is taken up, without limitations and conditions, into the life and

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2) Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1-9.

suffering, the death and resurrection of God. There is nothing that can exclude him from the situation of God between the grief of the Father, the love of the Son and the drive of the Spirit.”<sup>3)</sup>

That a Christian comes to participate in such hope means that human beings should be liberated from oppressive conditions and join into a new ‘life.’ Thus, hope forms an eschatology for all Christians.

Furthermore, Moltmann develops his view for ‘life’ to the realm of pneumatology. He thinks that the thought about spirit does not simply mean a transcendental world beyond the human beings’ normal life, but the foundation of energy for human ‘life.’<sup>4)</sup> Therefore, the experience of spirit can give ‘life.’ He explains about the biblical word, ‘*ruach*,’ to show how it can be experienced. The Hebrew *ruach* does not simply mean something spiritual or immaterial, but it means God is in body and soul, humanity and nature.<sup>5)</sup> The spirit exists for ‘life’ because God is in ‘life.’

Finally, Moltmann develops his theology to the Trinitarian horizon related to ‘life.’ He found that the hope of ‘life’ is in the cross of Jesus Christ in that God the Father and the Spirit suffered with Jesus on the cross together in order to enable Jesus to experience the death completely. Crucifixion is not, however, the end of Jesus’ suffering because the Father and the Spirit made Jesus live again, that is resurrection. Through this, the Triune God provides life to humanity.

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3) Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 227.

4) Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 40.

5) Ibid.

In other words, people can have the power of 'life' because of the works of the Triune God. This is a life-giving process of the Triune god since the Triune god accomplishes the new creation which makes humanity join into the Trinitarian fellowship.<sup>6)</sup> More importantly, the life-giving experience of humanity is related to the work of the Spirit, because the Spirit is the power to endure the suffering and death. The Spirit makes people realize the meaning of 'life' on the cross as well as life in the normal realms of human beings. This is a holistic religious experience of both transcendental and earthly world. For instance, when a man or woman can say 'I can experience the spirit,' it does not only mean that he or she had a supernatural experience, but also that he or she experiences liberation, reconciliation, fellowship, and re-birth of 'life.' Finally, the Spirit of 'life' leads him or her to encounter the new creation, that is, the Kingdom of God.

The Trinitarian horizon of 'life' opens the eschatological hope for 'life.' The eschatological hope is the core of Moltmann's theology. Suffering and resurrection of God are the beginning points of hope in his theology; and then, God, in the creation, is the final goal of the hope. The hope for 'life' makes humanity think the theology of creation. He insists that creation is in progress and that the completion of creation, new creation, is the time of salvation. In other words, salvation is the completion of a new creation. Therefore, God must be in every creation and God is coming in the world for the hope of the

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6) Joy Ann McDougall, "The Return of Trinitarian Praxis? Moltmann on the Trinity and the Christian Life," *Journal of Religion*, Apr 2003, Vol. 83 Issue 2, 181-185.

Kingdom.

To understand Moltmann's theology of 'life,' it is necessary to see the panentheistic view, which means God is in all creation. He explains:

... but an ecological doctrine of creation today must perceive and teach God's *immanence* in the world. This does not mean departing from the biblical traditions. On the contrary, it means a return to their original truth: through his cosmic Spirit, God the Creator of heaven and earth is present in each of his creatures and in the fellowship of creation which they share.<sup>7)</sup>

In this aspect, the destruction of creatures implies the breakdown of the Kingdom as well as the death of 'life' in the Kingdom. Therefore, to save 'life' is the work for new creation, the Kingdom of God. The eschatological hope pushes human beings to be against any kinds of oppression of 'life' such as individual, social, or ecological oppressions. The eschatological hope works for revival for all 'life' - the life of human beings as well as all other creatures'. Finally, Moltmann establishes his thought of ethics of hope based on the theological ideas of life.<sup>8)</sup>

All in all, Moltmann's theological works have the consistency of 'life.' 'Life' is in God's suffering, resurrection, creation, immanence, and coming. He maintains his theological voice focusing on the Trinity. The work of the Trinity unifies one God for 'life.' There is the unification of life in Triune God. Therefore, his theology of life can be expressed

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7) Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 14.

8) Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), Introduction.

as “True spirituality is the rebirth of the full and undivided *love of life*. The total Yes to life and the unhindered love of everything living are the first experiences of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9)</sup>

### III. Suk-hun Ham: *Ssi-al* and Life

‘Life’ does not only imply the dignity of life, but it also has the vitality of life to resist against any kind of the power of death. As Moltmann’s thoughts of ‘life’ already illustrated this truth, the ‘life thought’ of Suk-hun Ham,<sup>10)</sup> a Korean Christian thinker and social activist, is another perspective of life. Ham had constructed another thought of ‘life,’ that is, ‘giving-life’ thought. Ham had developed his thinking regarding life based on the historical, philosophical, and religious particularity of Korea. He is one of the most important thinkers about life. And, his thoughts of ‘life and peace’ became one of the major thoughts for the social movement of Korea.

The main characteristics of Ham’s thoughts are ‘*Ssi-al* life thought’ and

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9) Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 85.

10) He had lived from 1901 to 1989 through Korean modern history, when Korea had experienced serious suffering including the colonization of Japanese Imperialism, the Korean War, and the military dictatorship. Through this history, he could develop the ‘life thought’ for Korean society. Moreover, he had the background of Christianity as well as oriental thought including Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. In 1979, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. It is the first nomination for such a prize to a Korean. Unfortunately, his books are not sufficiently translated in English; so, I will try to translate his books and articles in English. Henceforth, his works in this research paper is translated by me. And, I will use several words in the Romanized forms without translation to maintain the original meaning as it is very important to show his authentic thought regarding “life” issue.

‘peace-loving thought.’ To begin with, the meaning of *Ssi-al* is crucial in his systematic thought. *Ssi-al* means the seeds for sowing in the spring. Korean people value *Ssi-al* in their lives because they cannot get their food without seeds. After harvesting, they picked the best crops to sacrifice for their ancestors as their thanksgiving offerings; and then, they stored *Ssi-al* for the next farming season. If *Ssi-al* is lost or rotten during the winter, those who lost it will not survive in the next year. Therefore, life is critically related to *Ssi-al*.<sup>11)</sup>

Ham considers people in the lower classes as *Ssi-al*, because they have maintained their life through various levels and experiences of suffering. Historically, common people in the low classes have strongly kept their ‘life’ even though they have suffered various difficulties such as wars, oppressions, and natural disasters. If they could not endure the sufferings, there would be no ‘life’ in Korean history at all. Therefore, history is not for some heroes or heroines, but for *Ssi-al*, common people. Because of the preservation and vitality of *Ssi-al*, common people have continued through history. The people who maintain history are not the ruling class, but the lower class people who are enduring various historical events as they look after their *Ssi-al*’s.

The life of *Ssi-al* can show the oneness of all life as the seeds sprout the bud when they get the time. Therefore, all life has only one goal, and the goal is the wholeness in history.<sup>12)</sup> He demonstrates:

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11) Hyun Sang Yoo, “The Legacy and Innovation of Korean Tradition according to the Philosophy of Ham Suk-Hun - focused on the dialectical thought in the Philosophy of “Ssi-Al (Seeds),” *Si-Dea-Wa-Cheol-Hahk (Time and Philosophy)*, Vol., 26, 2015, Spring, 316.

12) Suk-hun Ham, “Sang-myung-eun Ha-na-eb-ni-da,” [Life is oneness] in

Every life represents wholeness in the world even though the life seems to be very small or useless. Life, itself, is the cosmic-whole-living…… Therefore, nobody can kill freely any living thing only excluding the case for survival. It means nobody can manipulate life for his or her own benefits. We need to heed the technology in this point. If it does not support life, it will become a tool of sins.<sup>13)</sup>

Thus, he shows his thought of life as the formation of the wholeness of life.

Ham develops his thought more deeply as he demonstrates that the basic principle of life of *Ssi-al* is ‘*Seu-seu-ro-ham* (doing for oneself).’<sup>14)</sup> ‘Life’ has to have its own autonomy: it is the power of life. Moreover, the beauty of life comes from ‘doing for oneself.’<sup>15)</sup> His thought of ‘life’ is not limited in silence, but is spread to the vitality owing to this sense of ‘doing for oneself.’ The power of life forces him not to keep silent about any kind of circumstances which oppress people. Rather, the vitality of life stimulates Koreans to join in various social movements for society. That is the ethical power of life in terms of the idea of ‘doing for oneself.’

More interestingly, Ham’s thoughts of life are developed to the realms of the main power of *Ssi-al*’s life, based on ‘the ability of thinking.’<sup>16)</sup>

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*Ham-Suk-hun Collection 4* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1996), 63-67

13) *Ibid.*, 64

14) Suk-hun Ham, “Sang-myung-euy Ki-bon-won-ree-neun Seu-seu-ro-ham Ib-ni-da,” [The Basic Principle of Life is Doing for Oneself] in *Ham-Suk-hun Collection 4* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1996), 507-513

15) Suk-hun Ham “A-reum-da-um-ey Dea-ha-yeo,” [About Beauty] in *Ham-Suk-hun Collection 2* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1996), 189-205

*Ssi-al* which is thinking can live through history by ‘doing for oneself!’<sup>17)</sup> Thinking is not only the instinct to survive, but also the realization of life. With this logic, his assertions about the principles for life make people get into the social activism, and in that social actions are established on the ability of thinking. Thus, he claims that *Ssi-al* has to live with ‘thinking and doing for oneself.’

Furthermore, Ham’s ‘life’ thought leads us to the ethics of *Ha-na-doim*, which means ‘becoming one’ or ‘unifying each other.’<sup>18)</sup> Koreans are called ‘*Han-min-jok*.’ *Min-jok* means people and nations. *Han* has simultaneous meanings such as ‘oneness’ and ‘wholeness.’ Although *Han* seems to have two different meanings, he focuses on it as the basis of Korean life and culture to show that the whole becomes one in nature and in the universe. With this idea, he could develop a new ethics of *Ha-na-doim* which means all life becomes one. The *Ha-na-doim* ethics can support the system of thought focusing on peace for *Han-min-jok*.<sup>19)</sup> Ham insisted that the only way of resistance is the nonviolence peace movement, even though he had lived in the midst of the violence of Korean society. Moreover, he proposes that *Han-min-jok* start the peace movement for the entire world since, he insists, Koreans know very well about the importance of peace through their historical experiences

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16) Suk-hun Ham, “Sang-gak-ha-neun Ssi-al-yi-ra-ya Sab-ni-da,” [Only thinking Ssi-al can live] in *Ham-Suk-hun Collection 4* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1996), 60-62

17) Ibid.

18) Suk-hun Ham, “Sae Yoon-ree,” [New Ethics] in *Ham-Suk-hun Collection 2* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1996), 351-396.

19) Suk-hun Ham, “Woo-ree-min-jok-euy Yi-sang,” [The Ideal of *Han-min-jok*] in *Ham-Suk-hun Collection 3* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1996), 25-50.

of suffering.<sup>20)</sup>

Ham's thought of 'life' is still alive in Korea society in terms of the various social problems. For instance, Korea is the last nation in the world divided into North and South according to their ideologies. Reconciliation and reunification are critical for Korean society. The generation gap is huge in Korea because economic development has been accomplished so quickly that young and old generations cannot understand the individual life style. This gap has caused serious social conflicts between these two groups. Even though Korean society has accomplished enormous growth economically and technologically, the social conflicts are so serious that many people call Korea 'hell-chosun,'<sup>21)</sup> which makes people value life less than materialism and technology. Under these circumstances, the voice of Ham's thought of life needs to be considered more tentatively for Korean society, in particular, in this technology-centered culture.<sup>22)</sup> If materialism continues to expand its power to rule over the common people, the life thought can and will resist the power of materialism for 'life' with a peaceful way for the entire world.

Overall, Suk-hun Ham derives his life thought from the sufferings of Koreans, and he develops this thought with more elaborate views of

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20) Suk-hun Ham, "Pyeong-whoa-woon-dong-eul Ill-eu-kee-ja," [Let us begin the peace movement] in *Ham-Suk-hun Collection 2* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1996), 493-496.

21) *Chosun* is the last dynasty in Korean-peninsula, which called Lee-dynasty. Korean people usually designate *Chosun* as Korea.

22) Hyun Sang Yoo, "The Legacy and Innovation of Korean Tradition according to the Philosophy of Ham Suk-Hun - focused on the dialectical thought in the Philosophy of "Ssi-Al (Seeds)," 316-317.

history, ethics and philosophy. His consistent voices for life are not limited to the limited boundary of human beings, but it spreads out to the world for the wholeness and oneness for all creatures. Finally, his thought energizes the social movements to resist various kinds of power that subjects the masses to the oppressions of life. We can resist this power with the vitality of life, and the most effective way to resist this power is to become tools of peace for life.

#### IV. The Conversation between Moltmann and Ham

As mentioned above, the main goal of this research is to grasp the ethical meaning of life. The conversation between Moltmann and Ham is important to reach this goal in that their dialogues can offer a foundational ideas of life in terms of Christian ethics. Their similarity and difference can demonstrate the importance of an ethic of life.

To begin with, the first foundation of ethic of life is the acknowledgment of the vitality of life. Both thinkers can open their dialogue about their concepts of life originated with their experiences of sufferings and pains. Moltmann experienced the Holocaust, the most extreme horror of sufferings. Ham went through historical sufferings such as Japanese colonization, the Korean War, and the oppressive dictatorship of a military government. While they both were exposed to these extreme examples of life-demolishing sufferings, they could understand that the only way to endure and overcome these sufferings is to acknowledge the unbreakable vitality of life. The more people endure the sufferings, the deeper they might grasp their hope for life. Both thinkers have val-

ued the vitality of life.

Furthermore, the second foundation of ethic of life is that life is not limited into a personal boundary, but broadened into the realm of the social. Both thinkers insist that life is not a personal concern, but that it should be dealt with as a socio-political issue. Survival is not an individual event. It is the issue for all of humanity. Moltmann developed his theology of cross into the realm of the fellowship of the Triune God, who started the new creation for humanity. It's not an event for individual salvation, but the life-giving restoration for all creation. Ham also saw how the oppressed recognize the strength of life and how they survive together in history. This recognition is not a personal event, but a communitarian experience to be solitary in order to resist the power of death. Thus, both thinkers value the importance of life in that it encompasses the realm of community and society.

The final basis of ethic of life is established on the idea that life is not simply initiated by the divine realm, but it also originated by the humane arena in terms of the individual recognition of life. This idea is originated by both thinkers' different ideal of life. On the one hand, Moltmann uses the theological method as he developed the concept of the Triune god who is transcendental on the cross, and immanent in life. His theology can be called a 'pneumatological life theology' based on his Trinitarian theology. In other words, his 'life' theology is based on the cross of God, which goes forth to the main work of the Holy Spirit and affects life-giving and new creation throughout the world for the kingdom of God. His 'life' theology does not make people

stay in their personal place, but pushes people to act for life to resist the power of death. On the other hand, Ham employs the philosophical method to delve into the significance of life with a humanitarian perspective first, then, to develop his idea in the religious realm. Ham's thought of 'life' integrates Korean historical, religious and philosophical experience with Christian perspectives. His thought begins with the *Ssi-al* which has flowed through people's lives in history. 'Thinking and doing for oneself' is necessary for *Ssi-al* in order to represent real 'life.' It generates the power of autonomy for 'life'; moreover, it pushes Koreans to keep world peace. Finally, *Ssi-al* works for *Ha-na-doim* (becoming-one) as an ethical demand for life. So, it is natural that his 'life' thought leads many Koreans to the social movement which is named a 'life' movement. And now, people throughout the world are hearing and practicing his thinking about life and peace. Hence, both thinkers demonstrate the ethical significance of life based on their different approaches on life.

## V. Conclusion: An Ethic of Life for the Era of Technology

This research delved into the meaning of life in order to provide an ethical foundation of life with which to manage the issue of technology. Technology can be useful and meaningful for society as long as technology supports life. Technology does not exist only for convenience but also for life, *per se*. Therefore, humanity needs to hear the theological and ethical voices that advocate for the value of life. For this, this research studied two religious thinkers who experienced sufferings and

developed their thoughts with the agenda of how to overcome the power of death. Both thinkers argued that the process of life-giving is the main theological and religious role for humanity, not only in the individual realm but also in the societal realm.

Therefore, humanity has to find a proper way to flourish 'life' in order to 'live' this era of technology. For instance, humanity should learn and teach the meaning of life and nurture the educational method. Moreover, people should keep a close watch on the uses of technology in order to ensure that it won't become another supporting tool for oppressive powers. If technology can be developed in life-giving process, all people can escape the fear of technology and utilize it for life.

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• ABSTRACT •

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This research delves into the ethical meaning of life in order to deal with the issue of technology such as cyborg, robot, artificial intelligence(AI), bio-nano technology, and cloning. Technology overwhelms humanity, making it afraid of it and not free of the power of it. Unless technology exists for the convenience of humanity as it supports life, it might become a tool for the power of death. Humanity has to be aware of the theological and philosophical voices that value life. For this, this research examines two religious thinkers, Jürgen Moltmann and Suk-hun Ham, who experienced sufferings and developed their unique thoughts of life. Moltmann's works have the consistency of life in that life' is in God's suffering, resurrection, creation, immanence, and coming. Suk-hun Ham derives his life thought from the sufferings of Koreans, and he develops his consistent voice for life is not limited to the narrow area of human beings, but it spreads out to the world for the wholeness and oneness for all creatures. Thus, both thinkers argued that giving-life is the main ethical goal for humanity.

**Key words:** Jürgen Moltmann, Suk-hun Ham, Ethics of Life, *Ssi-al*, Technology

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