Caring for Creation –Towards an Ecological Culture–

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1. Introduction
“Caring for Creation” is an appropriate theme considering ecological situations in Japan and other countries.

It is also a teaching of the Catholic Church.

  “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation.”

  “If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation.”
Clarifying Some Concepts

- Environment – presupposes dualistic relationship between the human and the nature.
- Creation – contrasts with the concept of evolution.
- Nature – contrasts with the concept of grace.
- Ecology – is a new term which includes the human and the nature.
A Cultural Approach

- My methodology is a cultural approach.
- A bigger paradigm is needed to diagnose the causes of ecological crisis and prescribe the remedy for it. And it is a cultural perspective.
- Ecological problem is a matter of culture.
2. Ecological Crisis From a Scientific Perspective
Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*

- Rachel Carson (1907–1964)
- Accuses the side effect of the use of DDT.
- Invention of DDT by Swiss Chemist Paul Hermann Müller, Nobel Prize in 1948.
- DDT was banned in 1972.
Mark Lynas’ *Six Degrees*

- Mark Lynas (1973– )
- Describes the effects of global warming, degree by degree.
- www.iccp.ch
  Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Concentrations of Greenhouse Gases from 0 to 2005

- **Carbon Dioxide (CO$_2$)**
- **Methane (CH$_4$)**
- **Nitrous Oxide (N$_2$O)**
Meaning of Climate Change

- Eighteen thousand years ago, six degrees cooler – New York was covered by one mile thick ice.
- What if the temperature rises up to six degrees? It means the end of the human culture and the ecosystem of the earth.
- Meteorologists predict:
  2030 – 2 °C increase.
  2100 – 4 °C increase.
- Copenhagen Earth Summit in 2009: No concrete results.
  But emphasizes that we should not exceed 2 °C. 2 °C is a tipping point.
- Climate change is the basic context of the 21st century.
3. From Industrial Culture to Ecological Culture
Eco-Crisis from a Historical Perspective

- Lynn White Jr. (1907–1987)
- Criticizes Christianity for providing mental background of ecological exploitation.
- Proposes St. Francis as a role model of ecologically friendly way of life.
- Terminology: From environment to ecology.
Worldview of Industrial Culture

- Industrial Culture began in 18th century from European countries and now swept all over the world. It provides humanity with not only overwhelming wealth but also unprecedented difficulties.

- Dualistic Worldview
  Division between the human and the nature.

- Anthropocentric worldview
  Not God but Human thought is the criterion of truth. *Cogito ergo sum.*

- Materialistic Worldview
  Material satisfaction is more important than spiritual maturity.

- Scientific Worldview
  People are dependent on science and technology, rather than God.
Industrialization in Northeast Asia

- Japan started industrialization in Meiji period (1868–1912).
- Taiwan, South Korea, Philippine, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia started industrialization in 1960–70.
- Industrialization in Northeast Asia – About 50 years of history.
Two Side Effects of Industrial Culture

1. Poverty
   - Industrial culture make surplus products but could not solve the problem of poverty. Absolute poverty is increasing in Africa.
   - Capitalism, Neo–liberalism

2. Deterioration of Ecosystem
   - Anthropocentric, materialistic, dualistic worldview provide mental background which allows to exploit and destroy the nature in a ruthless manner.
   - Global warming, scarcity of water, deforestation. Mass extinction of species.

   - Increase of absolute poverty and deterioration of ecosystem mean that industrial culture reaches its limit.
   - We require a new form of culture by which we can overcome the problem of absolute poverty and ecological crisis.
Thomas Berry

- Thomas Berry (1914–2009)
- Passionist priest
- Visionary of ecological culture
Berry’s Ecological Culture

- Cultural historian – studied Western, Chinese, Indian cultures as well as Native American culture.
- Insists that the Cenozoic is ending due to mass extinction.
- Proposes that the human must move to the Ecozoic.
- The transition from industrial culture to ecological one is our Great Work we should undertake.
Four Developmental Stages of Human Culture

1. Tribal Culture – Neolithic, beginning of agriculture
2. Classical Culture – Iron Age, patriarchy, classical religions, ancient empires.
4–2. Ecological Culture (Ecozoic) – seeks to coexist between the human and the natural world in a mutually enhancing manner.
Tensions between Ecozoic and Technozoic

- 19–20th Centuries: Tensions between Capitalists and Communists
- 21st Century: Tensions between Capitalists and Ecologists.

- Technozoic Principle
  Human Technology > Earth Technology
- Ecozoic Principle
  Human Technology < Earth Technology

- Cf. Avatar
  Human beings from the Earth – Hyper Technological Culture
  Navi Tribe from Pandora – Ecological Culture
Ecological Culture = Sustainable Way

- Ecological culture is the only way of life we can survive.
- We cannot survive without the earth because we are earthlings which are offspring of earth evolutionary process.
- Every age has its own Great Work to be solved. To achieve the ecological culture (Ecozoic) is our Great Work given to us.
Politics of Ecological Culture

- Democracy $\rightarrow$ Bio-cracy
  Transition from Democracy which allows rights of existence only for human beings to bio-cracy which allows rights of existence to all species.
- Current political and judicial systems are outcome of modern industrial anthropocentric culture.
- United Nations $\rightarrow$ United Species
- Need for acknowledging other species’ right to existence.
Economics of Ecological Culture

- Industrial economics $\rightarrow$ Eco-economics
- National Economics $\rightarrow$ Earth Economics
- The economics of the earth is primary and human economics is derivative.
- Human economy cannot survive if the earth economy becomes bankrupt.
- The fate of the earth depends on social and ecological responsibility of transnational corporations.
Universities of Ecological Culture

- University is the place to educate future generation.
- Anthropocentric education → balanced and harmonious education between the cosmos, the human, and the divine.
- Specialized/Fragmented studies → Interdisciplinary studies → Integral studies
- Ex. www.ciis.edu
  California Institute for Integral Studies
- Ex. Brian Swimme
  Mathematical physicist → Philosophical cosmologist
Religions of Ecological Culture

- To achieve ecological culture, religions play an important role because they provide people with psychic and spiritual energy. But religions should change their emphases.
- Redemption-centered spirituality → Creation-centered spirituality
- Original sin → Original blessing
- Church community → Earth community
4. Contributions of Northeast Asian Culture
Worldview of Northeast Asian Culture

1. Integrative way of thinking: the Middle Way
2. Ecologically friendly wisdom of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism

Integrative Way of Thinking

- Asian way of thinking
  - The Middle Way – “both/and” way of thinking which includes and embraces both.
  - Integration is critical to the healing of the current ecological crisis.

- Western way of thinking
  - “either/or” way of thinking which separates this and that and excludes one of the two.
Ecologically Friendly Wisdom

- Confucian notion of the cosmos: continuity, wholeness, dynamism.
- The human is microcosm, while heaven and earth are macrocosm.
- Human role and responsibility in the cosmos.
- Human beings – facilitate the functioning of cosmic process.

  - Wu-wei designates non-intervention in the natural course of things.
  - Cosmic Rhythms, Yin-yang – natural science of Northeast Asian Culture.
Buddhist wisdom:
Non-killing (Ahimsa) – sacrificial meaning.
Non-violence – social dimension.
Compassion – religious dimension.

- Ecological economics
- Simple way of life.
Need to teach the ecological issues, such as, what the fundamental causes of the ecological destruction are, and how we can heal the ecosystem.

Need to integrate Catholic teachings on ecological issues with their curricula.

Need to teach traditional cultures of Asia.
5. Conclusion
Is It Possible?

- In order to overcome the ecological crisis happening in the earth, we must change our way of life, that is, from industrial culture to ecological culture. Then, do you think we can really make a change?

Dream Drives Action

- Dream is the most powerful driving force. Dream drives untiring action plans. When we have the ecological culture as our common dream, we can make it.
Topics of Discussion

- What do you think about the ecological culture as the future vision?
- What kind of wisdom or perspective can Northeast Asian countries contribute to the establishment of the ecological culture?
6. Bibliography

- www.vatican.va
- www.thomasberry.org
- www.ecoliteracy.org
- www.worldwatch.org
Thank You Very Much for Listening