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Promoting Human Rights and Ecology Jointly on a Global Scale: A Contextual Reinterpretation Using a Religious Motive and Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Thesis

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECOLOGY JOINTLY ON A GLOBAL
SCALE
A Contextual Reinterpretation Using A Religious Motive And Cross-Cultural
Perspective

By

Jaemin Lee

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requirements for the degree of
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PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECOLOGY JOINTLY ON A GLOBAL
SCALE
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Jaemin Lee

Approved

By

First Reader

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hart", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. John Hart
Professor of Ethics

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PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECOLOGY JOINTLY ON A GLOBAL SCALE

A Contextual Reinterpretation Using A Religious Motif And Cross-Cultural Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Humanity in the twenty-first century needs both human rights and ecological well-being. When one considers seriously either of the two topics, one needs to be thinking and acting that human rights and ecology belong together. It is a human rights issue that the poor are suffering from lack of water or unclean water and at the same time it is clearly an environmental issue. Because of the obvious linkage between the two, each needs to be addressed for the good of both. However, it does not mean that there is no conflict in approaches for solving some issues between human rights and ecology. A primary cause of the conflict is that our habit prioritizes one or the other, but it is not a matter of choosing one over the other. In the practice of thinking about priority, each thinks hard to come up with an effective solution and yet two solutions can be easily in conflict without considering each other. However, if human rights and ecology think about each other and try to solve problems holistically and mutually beneficially, it is always possible to find alternative solutions - not necessarily conflicting ones.

A secondary cause of the conflict is that human rights groups and ecological groups are working separately. A system is needed to integrate both groups if it is not costly for two groups to integrate in some shared working areas. If it is costly because

two groups are at an apparent distance, connecting and becoming each other's resource is an efficient way to save the cost. It is critical that each group pays attention to the other and grasps each other's goal. Sometimes goals are not different. In that case, robust cooperation of the two would be able to generate tremendously good affects on humanity and on the ecology that humanity depends on.

Whether rich or poor, no country can avoid poverty. It is not too hard to figure out that environmental harm is always more severe to the poor because they are more vulnerable to the environmental damage. In fact, their situations get even worse because they do not have the capacity to relieve or relocate themselves from the harm. In this sense, providing clean water for the poor is not only an environmental approach but also a human rights approach. No country, rich or poor, can be free from these two holistic approaches to help the poor. Therefore, human rights and ecology cannot be thought about separately in dealing with poverty at the national level.

Human rights and ecology are two complementary approaches, languages, and cultures to address and advance the whole biotic well-being. The excellent work of Jonathan M. Mann, Michael A. Grodin, and George J. Annas makes a connection between health and human rights. This provides me with wisdom to find another essentially critical relationship between human rights and ecology. I have been thinking about human rights for many years until I met Professor John Hart. Then, he taught me what ecology is, and how it is related to social justice. Environmental justice is also social justice and all efforts

to save the Earth begin with hearing the cry of the people and the cry of the Earth together. This way of ecological thinking and acting is required to be one of the most important frameworks of humanity's social habits right now and for the rest of the twenty-first century. I will follow a Mann, Grodin, and Annas model¹ to articulate the relationship between human rights and ecology. In exploring the relationship, I propose three ways of their connection.

Chapter I: The first relationship, which can be diagrammed simply as HR → E, explores historically the concept of human rights. The historical research helps readers understand how the concept of human rights has embraced civil rights, political rights, social rights, economic rights, and the most advanced environmental rights; and over time and through various socio- economic and political situations, how it has encompassed rights of all people – free people from slavery, workers, women and children. Historical research reveals that the human rights tradition has a long history. Root concepts of human rights can be found in ancient times of the West and the East. And the ideas of human rights are indebted to both religious and secular traditions.

Chapter II: The second relationship, which can be diagrammed equally simply as HR ← E, expresses the idea that the well-being of humanity depends on preserving a healthy biosphere with all its sustainable ecological systems. Earth is alive as a

¹ The model can be found in their book, *Health and Human Rights: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1999. In the book, they explained the relationship of health and human rights in the following three different ways (Health → human rights, health ← human rights, and health ↔ human rights).

community of life and has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. So it can be concluded that making a sustainable Earth environment with sound ecological systems is a precondition to protect human rights. Chapter II explores the modern concept of ecology and tries to find evidence that human rights concerns are embedded into ecological culture and literature.

Chapter III: The third relationship, which can be diagrammed as HR \longleftrightarrow E, conveys an extricable linkage. The central idea of the human rights and ecology movement is that human rights and ecology act in mutually beneficial ways. Promoting and protecting human rights requires explicit and concrete efforts to protect and sustain ecology, and greater and broader fulfillment of human rights necessitates unavoidable attention to ecology. Therefore, we should set each goal together and need to pursue both human rights goals and ecological goals complementarily so that they are mutually beneficial. Chapter III describes how the recognition of the complementarity of human rights norms and ecological goals can lead to more effective human rights policies and programs and ecological policies and programs.

Chapter IV: Since both human rights and ecology are needed for humanity living in the twenty-first century, they need to be reinterpreted into different contexts. And, for a full benefit, such reinterpretation needs to be considered cross-culturally in Chapter V. Chapter IV deals with a common religious motif for reinterpreting human rights and ecology locally and contextually. The common motif can be found in almost every major

world religion. It is a useful and powerful concept to engage in conversation with local people, especially in the non-Western world. Defining and justifying Western concepts of human rights and ecology simply does not work for them. International human rights and ecological instruments that major world powers and many other state parties signed, because of economic incentives from world powers, are not good enough to make the world better. Therefore, people in the field working for human rights and ecology need to study and use the common motif, such as delivered in this paper, to talk with local people to protect and promote human rights and ecology locally.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FIRST RELATIONSHIP OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECOLOGY

Historical Roots And Development Of Human Rights

Historical research to find roots of the human rights concept can suggest two things: that the concept is indebted to a worldwide spectrum of both secular and religious traditions; that it has become much more concrete and tangible especially in the modern West. Moreover, an investigation of a significant part of the human corpus reveals that the concept of human rights has been gradually inclusive and evolving over time. Such historical findings can challenge those who think that the human rights concept is rooted

in the purely secular idea of the Enlightenment in the West. The findings also challenge many people in Eastern countries who think of the human rights concept as extrinsic. Those Easterners tend to exclude it on the ground with some justice that the past five hundred years of Western military, political, and economic dominance have made the West intellectually and morally arrogant, and therefore it imposed human rights to the East. But I think that the historical findings are meaningful and necessary to other Easterners who want to promote human rights under their own terms and policies by using their traditions and historical resources.

The human rights tradition is much older than the Enlightenment. Some historical roots of human rights can be found in ancient times of the West and the East. Since ancient times, the spirit of human rights has been transmitted consciously and unconsciously from one generation to another, carrying the scars of its tumultuous past.² However, it took a fairly long time to finalize the spirit of universal human rights. It was the apex in the history of human rights that the United Nations was established; it authorized the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The subsequent treaties and covenants of the United Nations have ratified over time a more inclusive and evolved concept of human rights. Having such reasons and findings, I would like to argue that human rights are the primary substance of global ethics. Jacques Maritain, who designed

² Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.xxi in Introduction.

a questionnaire³ to study the Chinese, Islamic, Hindu, American, and European people on human rights traditions and legal perspectives, maintained that everyone could recognize that certain basic universal rights were like natural rights, fundamental and inalienable.⁴ Also I would like to argue that human rights that include environmental rights – as the most advanced concept of human rights – is necessary for reconstructing one universal ethics if such reconstruction is ever demanded.

As for the root concepts of human rights, the ideas of justice, human dignity, religious tolerance, fair ruling, legal transparency, and progressive punishment, among other principles, have deep roots in ancient religions and secular traditions. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) supports all those notions. The Hammurabi code of ancient Babylon suggests the concept of proportionate punishment and justice. The Hebrew Bible teaches sanctity of life and reciprocal entitlements. The Hindu and Buddhist religions show the earliest defense of the ecosystem and protection of all sentient beings from pain and suffering. Confucianism emphasizes widespread education for all. The ancient Greeks and Romans had natural laws and understood the capacity of every individual to reason. Human solidarity and the problem of fostering moral conduct in wartime can be found in Christianity and Islam.

³ To assist the Human Rights Commission drafting committee, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commissioned a questionnaire, designed by Maritain.

⁴ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.1 in Part I.

Yet, the claim that religion is a source of the human rights tradition remains contested. Some scholars regard religious edicts and commandments as the very antithesis of human rights. From the Hammurabi code to the New Testament and the Koran, one can identify a common disdain toward slaves, women, children, and homosexuals. All were excluded from equal social footing. All great civilizations have tended to rationalize unequal entitlements for the weak or those “inferior.” Those facts are obvious. However, it is also true that the world’s great religions have provided dynamic interpretations of new changing contexts. And those religious communities have also established moral principles based on the interpretations. Sometimes moral principles have guided religious actors to challenge unequal entitlements and social injustice.

In further stories of the world’s great religious traditions, Confucius (551 – 479 B.C. E.) constructed a very humanistic religion – putting humans first. He viewed humans as the most important. He also believed in the perfectibility of all humans, and in this connection he radically modified a traditional concept of nobility as indicating a superior person. In other words, to him, nobility was no longer a matter of blood, but of character and virtue. His primary concern was advocacy of a good society based on a good government and harmonious human relations. To effect this, he argued for a good government that rules by the virtue and moral example of each person. Mencius’ teachings (371 – 289 B.C.E.?) were derived from Confucius. But he took a big step forward in his central doctrine of human nature. While Confucius implicitly implied that

human nature is good, Mencius declared definitely that it is originally good.⁵ In everyone's good nature, moral power is inherent. Therefore every individual is complete in himself or herself. Every individual can become a sage by education. Everyone is equal to everyone else. For Mencius, people as a whole are the most important factor in government, and they have the right to revolt if a ruler does not take care of people.⁶

Kautilya (also known as Chanakaya, 350 – 275 B.C.E.), Indian political thinker during the Mauryan Empire, argued for a benevolent autocratic king with obligations to rule his subjects fairly, to manage a transparent judiciary and penal system, and to regulate an efficient and solid economy.⁷ Kautilya's legacy influenced Asoka, the ruler of the Mauryan Empire. The early part of Asoka's reign was filled with bloody battles. After his conquest of Kalinga in India, where hundreds of people were killed and thousands of people deported, Asoka finally renounced violence and converted to Buddhism. After his conversion, he based his kingdom on the dharma principles of nonviolence, tolerance for all religious sects and different opinions, obedience to parents, magnanimity toward friends, humane treatment of servants, and generosity toward all.⁸

⁵ Chan, Wing-tsit. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963, p.49.

⁶ Ibid, p.50.

⁷ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.23.

⁸ Ibid, p.23.

Buddhism spread beyond northern India after the death of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. Buddhism taught a cosmological love for all living and nonliving beings. Certain moral codes were constructed and shared by all Buddhists, such as a strict renunciation of killing, stealing, lying, ingesting intoxicants, and partaking in harmful sex.⁹ Consistent with these moral codes, Chinese verses from the Mahaparinirvana Sutra (early fourth century C.E.) suggest that to have access to the Buddha Aksobhya's Pure Land (a paradisiacal realm in which devotees may be reborn after death) required selfless performance of good deeds and a commitment of not to injure living beings, to slander, to steal, to ravish other men's wives, and so forth.¹⁰

Judaism, Christianity and Islam share the Ten Commandments of the Hebrew Bible that represent a code of morality, justice, and mutual respect. "You shall not kill," "you shall not steal," "you shall not give false evidence against your neighbor," and "you shall not covet your neighbor's wife," in the Hebrew Bible, find their equivalents in both the New Testament and the Koran. Some of these injunctions directly translate into later formulations of rights, e.g., the right to life, the right to property, and protection against calumny. The Hebrew Bible also teaches that people should take care of the socially marginalized such as orphans and widows. These three religions preached universalism and universal moral guidance for all believers. Under one God, the creator of everything

⁹ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.29.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.30.

that exists, all humankind is viewed as a unity, with no race existing for itself alone. As all humans are children of God, we should love one another as brothers and sisters. Although the universalistic stance of the three monotheist religions was undermined by the religions' attitudes toward slaves and women, slave owners did not have absolute power over their slaves. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, masters were urged to treat their slaves in a just and humane way, and to enable them to earn their freedom after a seven-year limit or for a certain sum of money. However, none of these religions called for an end to slavery.

In the secular tradition, considering the early origins of human rights, Hammurabi, king of Babylonia (1728- 1686 B.C.E.) drafted 282 laws.¹¹ Some laws are so basic that they are beyond the reach of even the king to alter them. This concept of the law as a check against the abuse of power is an important feature of most modern legal systems. The Hammurabi code focused on various liberties and the overall integrity and transparency of the judiciary system. Yet the Talion principle, "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" in the code is controversial in modern day applications. However, the principle was formulated clearly in order to determine limitations on punishment – the nature of punishment would be determined by the nature of the offense, so that punishment cannot be beyond the offense. In the search for justice, Socrates, as reported by Plato, demolished Thrasymachus' definition of justice as what serves the interests of the

¹¹ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.8.

strongest and argued that justice is superior to injustice.¹² For Socrates, absolute justice can be achieved in a just state only when each class of individuals fulfills the task to which each is suited, in harmony with the common good, that is, a greater unity of the society. Jean- Jacques Rousseau's notion of the "General will" and contemporary defenders of group rights would echo Socrates' teaching.

Roman statesman and lawyer Cicero (106 – 43 B.C.E.) was also a believer in the common good and republican principles. His work lays out the foundations of natural law, a concept closely related to modern conceptions of human rights. The gods entrust individuals with the capacity to reason, to derive substance from nature, and to unite peacefully with fellow citizens. Despite differences of opinions, individuals are bound together in unity through an understanding that "the principle of right living is what makes men better."¹³ Another Greek stoic philosopher, Epictetus (135 – 55 B.C.E.), was a slave who later became a freeman. He advanced the idea of universal brotherhood. He challenged the common conception of freedom: if neither kings, nor one's friends, nor slaves are truly free, then who is really free? One is truly free who is not enslaved by one's body, desires, passions, and emotions, but through reason can control oneself and does not fear death. Socrates was Epictetus' stoic hero. Stoics were not driven by their

¹² Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. *Great Political Thinkers : Plato to the Present*. 6th ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000, p.22.

¹³ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.9.

passions but by a detached love for the common good, the gods, and their real country, that is, the universe for all.¹⁴

The second finding from the historical research indicates the importance of understanding the modern West in the long human rights tradition. What really happened in the modern West has made the concept of human rights much more concrete and tangible than any past formulations. What modern Westerners went through in their social struggles is directly related to the advancement of human rights today. In this sense, human rights scholars would agree that the Enlightenment represented the formative age of modern conceptions of human rights. The characteristic conditions for the Enlightenment included the scientific revolution, the rise of mercantilism, the launching of maritime explorations of the globe, the consolidation of the nation-state, and the emergence of a middle class, which combined to bring an end to the Middle Ages of Europe. These developments stimulated the expansion of modern conceptions of human rights.

Waking out of the Middle Ages, a period of Catholic Christendom, modern Westerners in their political struggles against Church and Papacy and of a myriad of religious conflicts derived the modern concept of the nation-state. Europe was plagued by religious wars pitting Catholics and Protestants in struggles to redefine religious and

¹⁴ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.9.

political structures. Although their efforts to abolish their religiosity from public domains such as politics, international affairs, and trade were not completely successful, political thinkers and leaders came up with a different version of natural law, which contested divine right and by which they guided themselves. In this effort, human rights visionaries like Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, Emmerich de Vattel, and Rene Descartes constructed a new secular language, affirming a common humanity that transcended religious sectarianism.¹⁵ Revolutionaries in England, America, and France would use a similar discourse to fight aristocratic privileges or colonial authority, and to reorganize their societies based on human rights principles.¹⁶ In the meantime, new economic interactions throughout Europe and with many other parts of the world created a new middle class, who sought to find alternative political allegiances for their states, to secure their own benefits.

Through those experiences, the new middle class people backed by their economic fortune acquired citizenship. The development of citizenship, which was a very unique experience in the West, really generated the foundation of human rights today.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.xxiii in Introduction.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.xxiv in Introduction.

¹⁷ Comparatively, the East (especially East Asian countries like China, Korea, and Japan) did not experience the same way as the West with regard to the development of citizenship. I would like to argue more about this in Chapter IV in terms of why human rights need to be reinterpreted in the East. Also in Chapter V, I would like to argue that the development of citizenship as a unique experience of the West provides a good cross-cultural perspective to the East.

People successfully achieved citizenship historically through the English Bill of Rights (1689), the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776), and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), which all became the models for the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, UDHR). The rights to life, civil liberty, and property became the ethos of the modern West, and were all supported by UDHR. To promote these liberties, Enlightenment thinkers envisioned the spread of commercial enterprises and republican institutions, which could be helpful for enduring peace among nation-states in the West. They struggled for the right to life, for freedom of religion and opinion, and for property rights, and ultimately broke the grip of monarchical regimes in Europe and America.

European Developments of Human Rights

For modern Europeans, the development of citizenship was their political achievement. From a human rights perspective, history and a social analysis of the development of citizenship indicate that the nature of the modern conception of human rights was historically evolving and gradually inclusive. T. H. Marshall's *Citizenship and Social Classes*, written in 1950, is an excellent source to prove this claim. He described the citizenship as consisting of three critical parts: civil, political, and social. The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person; freedom of speech, thought, and faith; the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts; and the right to justice on terms of equality with others and by due

process of law.¹⁸ The political element means the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body.¹⁹ The social element encompasses a whole range of rights, from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society, for example, for benefiting from the educational system and social services.²⁰ He assigned the three elements of citizenship to different centuries of development – civil rights to the eighteenth, political rights to the nineteenth, and social rights to the twentieth.

Marshall argued that the story of civil rights in the eighteenth century was one of the gradual additions of new rights to a status that already existed and was held to pertain to all adult members of the community.²¹ But it was limited to all male members. The status of women and married women was different from that of their male counterparts. In seventeenth-century England all men were free, but servile status had lingered on in the days of Elizabeth, though it vanished soon afterwards. R. H. Tawney described this change from servile to free labor as “a high landmark in the development both of

¹⁸ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.190.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.190.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.190.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.191.

economic and political society,” and as “the final triumph of the common law” in regions from which it had been excluded for four centuries.²² In the eighteenth century, the terms “freedom” and “citizenship” were interchangeable in the towns of England. The English peasant is a member of a society in which there is one law for all people. The liberty, which their predecessors won by fleeing into the free towns, had become theirs by right. When freedom became universal, citizenship grew from a local into a national institution.

Political rights associated with the institution of voting rights emerged with the first British Reform Act of 1832. However, Marshall argued that in the early nineteenth century, political rights were defective in distribution by the standards of today. In fact, the Act of 1832 did little in a quantitative sense because the voters still amounted to less than one-fifth of the adult male population after it was passed.²³ Around that time, the franchise was still a group monopoly of landowners. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century the principle of individual economic freedom was accepted as axiomatic²⁴ in a capitalist society. Individuals’ increased economic substance and the Act of 1832 gradually helped extend the franchise to leaseholders and occupying tenants. Although it was the privilege of a limited economic class, at that time, one was free to earn, to save, to buy property, or to rent a house, and to enjoy whatever political rights

²² Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.191.

²³ *Ibid*, p.190.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.190.

were attached to these economic achievements. One's civil rights entitled one, and electoral reform increasingly enabled one to participate politically. Later, in the twentieth century, the Act of 1918, by adopting men's suffrage, shifted the basis of political rights from economic substance to personal status. At the same time, the second reform of the enfranchisement of women was introduced. But Marshall evaluated that the Act of 1918 did not fully establish the political equality of all because an inequality based on differences of economic substance lingered on until plural voting (which had already been reduced to dual voting)²⁵ was finally abolished.²⁶

The original source of social rights was membership in local communities and functional associations. This source was progressively replaced by a Poor Law and a system of wage regulation, which were nationally conceived and locally administered. However, the early stage of these two instruments was struggling. The system of wage regulation was rapidly decaying in the eighteenth century primarily because it was incompatible with the new conception of civil rights in economic sphere.²⁷ The new conception of civil rights emphasized the right to work where and at what you pleased under a contract of your own making. In fact, wage regulation infringed on this

²⁵ Plural voting is the practice whereby one person might be able to vote multiple times in an election. It, as proposed by John Stuart Mill, would allow higher educated individuals to have a higher weighted vote. This higher weighted vote could be two, three, or even four times the minimum one vote.

²⁶ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.192.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.193.

individualist principle of free contract of employment. The Elizabethan Poor Law – reminiscent of a primitive social welfare – was made something more than a means for relieving destitution and suppressing the homeless.²⁸ However, it did not function as originally designed. Under the blows of a competitive economy, the old order dissolved and the Poor Law was stranded.²⁹ The idea of social rights seemed to be gradually drained away.

However, the Poor Law was the last remnant of a system which tried to adjust real income to the social needs and status of the citizen, not solely to the market value of one's labor.³⁰ But this attempt to inject social security into the structure of the wage system through the Poor Law failed. By the Act of 1834 the Poor Law renounced all claims to trespass on the territory of the wage system or to interfere with the free market. It referred only to those weaklings who were incapable, admitted defeat, and cried for mercy in economic competition. The Poor Law did not treat the claims of the poor, as an integral part of the rights of the citizen.³¹ The stigma that clung to poor relief expressed that those who accepted relief must cross the road that separated the community of citizens. The early Factory Acts show the same tendency. The Factory Acts could

²⁸ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.193.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.193.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.192.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.192.

represent an improvement of working conditions and a reduction of working hours to benefit all employed. But in reality, they refrained from giving this protection directly to the adult male citizen on the ground that enforced protective measures curtailed the civil right to conclude a free contract of employment. Protection was confined to women and children. Women were protected because they were not citizens. If they wished to enjoy full and responsible citizenship, they must forgo protection.³²

By the end of nineteenth century such arguments became obsolete, and the factory code became one of the pillars in the edifice of social rights.³³ Marshall argued that the nineteenth century was a period in which the foundations of social rights were laid, but the principle of social rights as an integral part of the status of citizenship was either expressively denied or not definitely admitted.³⁴ However, in the late nineteenth century the development of public elementary education revived deeply sunk ideas of social rights from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The education of children has a direct bearing on citizenship.³⁵ When the state guarantees that all children shall be educated, it means that it has the requirements of citizenship clearly in mind. It is trying

³² Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.193.

³³ *Ibid*, p.192.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.193.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.193.

to stimulate the growth of citizens in the making.³⁶ The right to education is a genuine social right of citizenship because the aim of education during childhood is to shape the future adult citizen. Marshall argued that the revival of social rights began with the development of public elementary education, but that it was not until the twentieth century that they attained to equal partnership with the other two elements in citizenship.³⁷

Following the Enlightenment's revolutionary heritage, the second generation of human rights activists proceeded by articulating how the interests of the bourgeoisie were protected, which those of the marginalized were excluded in morality, law, and the economic sphere.³⁸ In that spirit, the German socialists Friederich Engels and Karl Marx opposed the liberal character of human rights. Engels maintained that moral theories of rights were the product of the dominant class at any given stage of economic development.³⁹ Socialists argued that working conditions and legal rights were greatly restricted by the new contingencies of capitalism.⁴⁰ They maintained that the unlimited

³⁶ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.193.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.194.

³⁸ The Enlightenment's revolutionary heritage represents a classical liberal conception of human rights, i.e. civil and political rights. The second generation of human rights activists represents socialists' challenge to the liberal vision of human rights and they brought attention to social and economic rights.

³⁹ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.197.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.197.

pursuit of property rights mainly benefited those who were initially advantaged, and precluded achievement of the universal political equality advocated by liberalism.⁴¹ So they thought that an effort to address inequalities was to realize voting rights for all, with the hope that people's increased political participation would redress their economic and social disparities.

Socialists' fights for political rights as demanded by the Chartist movement, a working class movement that gained its name from the People's Charter of 1838, rallied many radical associations to its cause. The charter demanded political rights including manhood suffrage, voting by secret ballot, and an end to the need for a property qualification for Parliament.⁴² The Chartist movement and the Paris Commune of 1871 established labor parties throughout Europe and America. Karl Marx and many labor activists supported the Chartist movement in England. Karl Marx demanded social and economic rights that were not then secured by capitalism, including the right to the limitation of the working day, the right to freedom of association, universal health care, national education for both sexes, the prohibition of child labor, the establishment of factory health and safety measures, the regulation of prison labor, and the establishment of effective liability law.⁴³ It is worth noting that these political, social and economic

⁴¹ Ishay, Micheline. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, p.197

⁴² *Ibid*, p.197.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.197.

demands would later be embodied in the key international human rights documents: the 1948 U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 U.N. Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, and the 1966 Covenant for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.⁴⁴

Just as remarkable as socialists' contribution for political, social, economic rights under the great influence of the Industrial revolution and capitalism in Europe, environmentalists sought to carve a broader space for human rights in harmony with nature under the inevitable influence of globalization. Socialists maintained that labor rights are human rights. Those concerned about a healthy, sustainable environment claimed that environmental rights are human rights. Globalization scholars argue that human rights are inseparable elements of economic development. However, in the globalized economies, very large-scale economic developments had tremendously negative impacts on the environment. So an argument goes that a concept of human development should be based on the premise that human rights (e.g., a right to development) are meaningless if the environment is damaged or unsustainable. In other words, government and economic development policies should be evaluated in terms of the sustainability of the environment available to humans in their exercise of economic activities for their enjoyment of the common well-being. Such ideas and related ones

⁴⁴ During the Cold war era, the United States championed civil and political rights; the former Soviet Union championed economic, social and cultural rights. The U.S. has not yet signed the international Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Economic, social, and cultural rights include the rights to the highest attainable standard of health, to social security, to adequate food, to clothing and housing, to education, and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application.

were adopted by the Rio Declaration on Environment and Human Rights (1992); the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic (1993); the Earth Charter (1997); and Asian Human Rights Charter (1998).

In addition to the two basic recognized categories of rights (civil and political, and economic and social), a third category of rights, known as solidarity rights, should be mentioned.⁴⁵ These rights, which have recently been recognized at the international level but are not legally enforceable yet, urge solidarity with the less privileged in order to rectify the unequal distribution of resources and to prevent and respond to human suffering. This category of rights includes the rights to development, to peace, to the equal enjoyment of the common heritage of humankind, and to an unpolluted natural environment.⁴⁶ Clearly, environmental rights emerged as an equal category with the two basic rights. In this sense, a wide range of international human rights standards have been advanced, which have the status of international minimum norms.⁴⁷ Historically, Environmental rights are the final category of rights. So, they are considered as the most advanced rights in human rights thinking. Human rights should be considered as a

⁴⁵ Mann, Jonathan M. *Health and Human Rights: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1999, p.25.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.25.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.24.

discipline that is constantly evolving, rather than a rigid list of static norms and standards.⁴⁸

CHAPTER TWO

THE SECOND RELATIONSHIP OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECOLOGY

Some key expressional features encapsulated in definitions of ecology in much contemporary ecological literature are those such as being relational, connecting dots (bits and pieces), thinking about human beings and environment together, as well as healing even though these features are not all to be found. Comparatively, a traditional way of understanding nature and doing science since the modern scientific era has been to grasp the world of objects and analyze those objects, each of which is distinct and exists separately. Such a mechanistic understanding, wherein scientists dissected objects of the world into bits and pieces, has prevailed for a long time in the West. In this understanding, nature or environment is full of discrete objects, which are necessary to be analyzed and categorized based on similar characteristics among objects. In this scientific world, objects are the most important. What is subjective, the context wherein objects lie,

⁴⁸ Mann, Jonathan M. *Health and Human Rights: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1999, p.24.

and relationships among different objects are excluded. However, such a cognitive habit has been changed in the West.

Ernst Haeckel (1834 – 1919), a German Biologist, defined ecology as the study of the interrelationship of all living and nonliving systems among themselves and with their environment.⁴⁹ Leonard Boff explains that ecology is not about studying the environment or biotic or abiotic beings in themselves. What is specific about ecology lies in the interaction and interrelationship between them.⁵⁰ Now ecology and an expression of “the environment” both connote interaction and interrelationship among living- and nonliving beings and the environment. To many environmental scientists and activists today, who have this understanding, any living creature cannot be seen in isolation as a mere representative of its species. It must always be seen and analyzed in relation to the totality of vital conditions and contexts that constitute it and in balance with all the other representatives of the community of living beings.⁵¹ So it should be said that everything lives with everything else and constitutes a vast ecological community.

To Boff, Ecology is knowledge of the relations, interconnections, interdependencies, and exchanges of all with all, at all points, and at all moments.⁵² So to

⁴⁹ Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, Ecology and Justice Series*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997, p.3.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.3.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.3.

⁵² Ibid, p.3.

him, ecology is defined within the framework of the relations that it connects in all directions and in which all beings are dependent upon one another, constituting the vast fabric of their interdependencies.⁵³ Moreover, ecology is moving toward a vast homeostatic system, which means a vast balanced and self-regulating system. He also points out that a peculiar feature of ecological knowledge relates laterally ecological community, frontward future, backward past, and inwardly complexity – all experiences and all forms of comprehension as complementary and useful in our knowledge of the universe, our role within it, and in the cosmic solidarity that unites us to all.⁵⁴ This is a holistic approach to understand ecology. It does not mean the sum of knowledge or of a number of analytic standpoints.⁵⁵ It translates the grasp of the organic and open whole of reality and knowledge of this whole;⁵⁶ it therefore represents something new in the West.

A Brazilian ecologist, Jose A. Lutzenberger, has offered a fine definition of ecology in another respect. Ecology is the science of the symphony of life, and the science of survival.⁵⁷ His definition indicates an essential relatedness of ecology and human life – ecology always points to human beings and the primary subject of ecology is human life. Human beings have always established a relationship with the environment.

⁵³ Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, Ecology and Justice Series*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997, p.3.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.4.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.4.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.4.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.4.

From prehistoric periods to the rise of modern science, nature had a sacred value or at least shared a characteristic of sacredness. In some parts of the world, people worshipped nature to avoid adverse weather and seek favor for their desire to harvest more grain. In the West, people respected nature because they acknowledged a law or logic of nature that was given by a Creator. So nature was believed to bear some substance of God. However, the rise of modern science has changed the old paradigm in the West. Rene Descartes taught that: “we intervene in nature in order to become master and owner of nature.”⁵⁸ Francis Bacon said that: “we must subjugate nature, press it into delivering its secrets, tie it to our service and make it our slave.”⁵⁹

In this paradigm, human beings are above nature. They believe that they can turn nature into the condition and instruments of their happiness and progress. The founding fathers of the modern scientific paradigm did not understand themselves as standing alongside nature, jointly belonging as members of a larger whole.⁶⁰ The result of controlling and subjugating nature is that the civilization that we are building, which is energy-devouring, tends to demolish all ecosystems, and finally makes Earth sick and destroys the environment: it threatens human life. That is why ecological arguments are continually invoked in all matters having to do with quality of human life.

⁵⁸ Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, Ecology and Justice Series*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997, p.8.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.8.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.8.

Haeckel called ecology “the economics of nature.”⁶¹ To him, ecology may also be called domestic economics because nature is our common dwelling. In this sense, ecology is part of our life and part of what we do. To say it differently, we participate in what nature is doing. In general, nature is taking care of human beings and providing basic needs for humans: space to live, to farm, to labor, and to develop all kinds of natural goods for human survival. Sometimes, however, nature takes human life. We call this a natural disaster. It reveals that nature is much more powerful than human beings. With the help of science and technology today, we can monitor what nature is doing so that we can reduce many casualties from natural disasters. But we cannot make science and technology root out natural disasters entirely. If we consciously acknowledge this, our attitude needs to be humble, to live harmoniously with nature. From this point of view, ecology tells us the way we should live and have a good relationship with nature.

Ecology has moved beyond being solely a “green movement” or a protection of endangered species. It contains human stories and experiences. It teaches people how to get along with nature. Recognizing and reflecting upon our intimate relations with nature provide us a self-critical place. Boff argues that ecology has become a radical critique of the kind of civilization that we are building.⁶² Human beings and nature have a common origin and common destiny. If that is the case, then we need to ask how human beings

⁶¹ Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, Ecology and Justice Series*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997, p.4.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.4.

and nature/the environment are to survive together. How are we to safeguard our Earth home in justice, participation, wholeness, and peace? Such self-critical contemporary ecological questions embrace human beings and the environment together. All contemporary ecological concerns represent a fundamental interest in human beings and their well-being.

CHAPTER THREE

THE THIRD RELATIONSHIP OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECOLOGY

Many contemporary international documents and instruments on human rights and ecology reveal the obvious linkage between the two. People's growing consciousness and choice of the words developed at each stage in those documents point to a special mutual relationship between human rights and ecology. The Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment proclaimed in 1972 that "both aspects of man's environment, the natural and the man-made, are essential to his well-being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights, the right to life itself," so "the protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of

people and economic development throughout the world.”⁶³ This declaration also states that the protection of the environment is the urgent desire of the people of the whole world and the duty of all governments. The first principle in the declaration specifies human rights in terms of ecology: “man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being.”⁶⁴

Although ecology had yet a limited scope of focusing on human well-being, a growing consciousness on environmental concerns with regard to human activities and capabilities continued. Reaffirming the previous Declaration of 1972 and seeking to build upon it, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992 recognized a new understanding of ecology. It proclaimed the integral and interdependent nature of life and the Earth. In the notion of interdependency, human well-being is related to, depended upon the integrity of the Earth, and other beings’ well-being. However, the first principle of the Rio Declaration arguably put that “human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. Human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature,”⁶⁵ rather than the interdependency of the whole biotic well-being. It

⁶³ United Nations Environment Programme’s website in <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=97&ArticleID=1503>.

⁶⁴ United Nations Environment Programme’s website in <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=97&ArticleID=1503>.

⁶⁵ United Nations Environment Programme’s website in <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>.

can generate an assumption that everything else should be subject to human well-being. However, this principle is good enough to show that drafters of the Rio Declaration have a clear mind about the linkage between human rights and ecology. Like the previous declaration of 1972, they emphasized human rights but they did so in terms of ecology.

On the other hand, such a word choice as “interdependency” sounds very intuitive to East Asians. In fact, they would accept easily the interdependent nature of the Earth, as the Rio Declaration proclaimed, without any scientific proof that everything that exists is interdependent. In their habits of thought for a long time, they have perceived that the world is very complicated. The way things are is that all is connected in the vast web of relationships. So, their notion of interdependency is their experienced knowledge rather than a speculative one based on science. In a sense that the Rio Declaration was drafted for all states and all people, such proclamation – the interdependent nature of the Earth is very congruous with the East Asian concept of Nature. However, the developmental clause in the same declaration has been a big stumbling block to many East Asian communities to protect and promote human rights and ecology during the process of economic development. The third principle in the declaration stated that “the right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.”⁶⁶ However, in most East Asian nations,

⁶⁶ United Nations Environment Programme’s website in <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>.

economic development has been the most important social priority in order to eradicate abject poverty.

Governments in East Asia have played a substantial role to achieve that goal through economic development and modernization. The fact that East Asians tended to be submissive to the authority of their governments, and especially to economic policies that wanted to become more prosperity through economic development, was conducive to a certain delay in realizing human rights and protecting ecology in the region. In a collectivistic society, individuals are inclined to depend more on their governments to solve many social problems than in an individualistic society.⁶⁷ So it can be said that East Asians, in general, tend to expect more from their governments than Westerners. Such a context facilitates government-initiated takes on economic plans. In this path, some elites in the government who hid evil intentions easily oppressed politically any opposing constituents – e.g., they violated the international standards of human rights.⁶⁸ For example, Koreans protested against political oppression but never stood up against their government's economic plans throughout the modernization and democratization

⁶⁷ In other words, to East Asians in the context of collectivist societies, individuals are willing to take some sacrifice of individual freedoms to achieve collective goals such as economic development or alleviating poverty. So, they give up some individual freedoms to their governments for collective achievements.

⁶⁸ Evil intentions are such as making a centralized government for enjoyment of a long term power in the regime and manipulating people's acceptance of a high hope of prosperity in order to fulfill a few elites' political ambitions.

period.⁶⁹ In the same period, hope for achieving prosperity one day liberated from the experience of starvation, has always united most Koreans and helped many move their lives on from political oppression. When Koreans thought solely about economic development, they did not grasp that environmental concerns with regard to the economic development, until the 1990s, would affect them and future generations.

In 1998, the Asian Human Rights Charter, also known as A People's Charter, was declared in Kwangju, South Korea. It argued in the section on the background of the charter that: "1.3 Asian development is full of contradictions... our governments claim to be pursuing development directed at increasing levels of production and welfare but our natural resources are being depleted most irresponsibly and the environment is so dangerous that the quality of life has worsened immeasurably."⁷⁰ Clear consciousness on the linkage between human rights and ecology can be found in the Charter: "2.9 Economic developments must be sustainable. We must protect the environment against avarice, and depredations of commercial enterprises to ensure that the quality of life does not decline... our obligation to future generations."⁷¹ This charter clearly specifies human

⁶⁹ Such a period, in my opinion, can cover roughly fifty years – from acquiring independence from Japan in 1945, the ending of the Korean War in 1953, working hard for industrial modernization in the late 60s and 70s, to protesting, for a direct referendum of a presidential election, against military regimes in the 1980s.

⁷⁰ Sullivan, William M., and Will Kymlicka. *The Globalization of Ethics*, The Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, in Appendix H, p.269.

⁷¹ Ibid, p.272. For East Asians, economic development (i.e., right to development) is an important category of human rights. Such economic development was a collective goal for them; in the East Asian context, the quality of life needs to be measured by the standards of human rights, both individual and collective.

rights to include environmental rights: “foremost among rights is the right to life, from which flow other rights and freedom. The right to life... includes the right to a clean and healthy environment.”⁷² This document represents encouragingly that the Asian consciousness about the affinity of human rights and ecology with regard to the social priority for prosperity through economic development, has been changing.

The renowned Earth Charter shows a radical new understanding that is highly developed and broader, compared with the Rio Declaration. The Earth Charter recognizes that: “all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.”⁷³ In the human rights’ perspective, the charter supports the broadest sense of a human being: it affirms “faith in the inherent dignity of all human beings and in the intellectual, artistic, ethical, and spiritual potential of humanity.”⁷⁴ It attempts to connect protection of the rights of people to human beings’ environmental activities. It accepts that “a duty to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of people comes with the right to own, manage, and use natural resources.”⁷⁵

⁷² Sullivan, William M., and Will Kymlicka. *The Globalization of Ethics*, The Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.272.

⁷³ The Earth Charter Initiative®’s website in <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html>.

⁷⁴ The Earth Charter Initiative®’s website in <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html>.

⁷⁵ The Earth Charter Initiative®’s website in <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html>.

The charter cares for the community of life “with understanding, compassion, and love.” It wants communities at all levels to “guarantee human rights and fundamental freedom and provide everyone an opportunity to realize his or her full potential.”⁷⁶ The charter indicates the relation of social and economic justice to ecology: “Promote social and economic justice, enabling all to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible.”⁷⁷ All the documents cited so far have agreed that human developments should proceed on the condition of ecological sustainability. The Earth Charter clarifies this point that “at all levels sustainable development plans and regulations that make environmental conservation and rehabilitation integral to all developmental initiatives.”⁷⁸ Clearly, all the documents presented dealt with human rights and ecology together. This charter suggests adopting “patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth’s regenerative capacities, human rights, and common well-being.”⁷⁹ It declares that eradicating poverty is an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.⁸⁰

The Declaration Toward a Global Ethic endorsed by the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago, 1993 deals with two primary foci – human rights and

⁷⁶ The Earth Charter Initiative®, 3, in the part of I. Respect and Care for the Community of Life.

⁷⁷ The Earth Charter Initiative®, 3, in the part of I. Respect and Care for the Community of Life.

⁷⁸ The Earth Charter Initiative®, 5.a, in the part of II. Ecological Integrity.

⁷⁹ The Earth Charter Initiative®, 7, in the part of II. Ecological Integrity.

⁸⁰ The Earth Charter Initiative®, 9, in the part of III. Social and Economic Justice.

ecology – in shaping a new global ethic as a minimal fundamental consensus. It affirms that there is already a consensus among the religions which can be the basis for a global ethic concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and fundamental moral attitudes.⁸¹ In their common convictions, it claims that a special responsibility of human beings is for the welfare of all humanity and care for planet Earth.⁸² So it puts that “our involvement for the sake of human rights, freedom, justice, peace, and the preservation of Earth is absolutely necessary.”⁸³ The statement indicates that human rights and ecology are the common ethical involvement.

It also states that

“We trust that the ancient wisdom of our religions can point the way for the future to provide with its audience a role of religions. We know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of Earth. However, they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programs, or legal regulations alone: a change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the hearts of people, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life... Humankind urgently needs social and ecological reforms, but it needs spiritual renewal just as urgently. As religious or spiritual persons we commit ourselves to this task. The spiritual powers of the religions can offer a fundamental sense of trust, a ground of meaning, ultimate standards, and a spiritual home.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Sullivan, William M., and Will Kymlicka. *The Globalization of Ethics*, The Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, Appendix D, p.236.

⁸² Ibid, p.237.

⁸³ Ibid, p.236.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.238.

This takes into account the role of religions. Religious and ethical convictions demand that every human being must treat each other humanely; likewise, the lives of animals and plants which inhabit this planet with human beings deserve protection, preservation, and care. In that, human beings have a special responsibility – especially with a view to future generations – for Earth and the cosmos, for the air, water, and soil.⁸⁵

CHAPTER FOUR

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECOLOGY GLOBALLY

Is A Contextual Reinterpretation Of Human Rights And Ecology Necessary?

In the non- Western world, people have different habits of thought, social structures, and senses of self; and most importantly, different social experiences. Many scholars in the fields of comparative philosophy, history, and anthropology – both Eastern and Western – have found that Westerners and East Asians have maintained very

⁸⁵ Sullivan, William M., and Will Kymlicka. *The Globalization of Ethics*, The Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.240.

different systems of thought for thousands of years.⁸⁶ Moreover, these scholars are in substantial agreement about the nature of these differences. For example, most who addressed the question hold that European thought rests on the assumption that the behavior of physical objects, animals, and humans can be understood in terms of straightforward rules. Westerners have a strong interest in categorization, which helps them to know what rules to apply to the objects in question, and formal logic plays a role in problem solving. East Asians, in contrast, attend to things in their broad context. The world seems more complex to Asians than to Westerners, and understanding events always requires consideration of a host of factors that operate in relation to one another in no simple, deterministic way. Formal logic traditionally played little role in problem solving.

Until humanities and social science scholars made extremely important claims about the different ways of thinking, most in the West held the assumption that human cognition would be everywhere the same. Now humanities and social science scholars claim that first, members of different cultures differ in their metaphysics or fundamental beliefs about the nature of the world.⁸⁷ Second, the characteristic thought processes of different groups differ greatly.⁸⁸ Third, the thought processes are of a piece with beliefs

⁸⁶ Westerners are primarily Europeans, Americans, and citizens of the British Commonwealth; East Asians are principally the people of China, Korea, and Japan.

⁸⁷ Nisbett, Richard E. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently-- and Why*. New York: Free Press, 2003, p. xvii in Introduction.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. xvii in Introduction.

about the nature of the world.⁸⁹ In other words, people use the cognitive tools that seem to make sense – given the sense they make of the world. Social structures and a sense of self that are characteristic of Easterners and Westerners also matter to their respective belief systems and cognitive processes. The collective or interdependent nature of Asian society is consistent with Asians’ broad, contextual view of the world and their belief that events are highly complex and determined by many factors. The individualistic or independent nature of Western society seems consistent with the Western focus on particular objects in isolation from their context and with Westerners’ belief that they can know the rules governing objects and therefore can control the objects’ behavior.

If people really do differ profoundly in their systems of thought – their worldviews and cognitive processes, then differences in people’s attitudes and beliefs, and even their values and preferences might not be caused by merely different inputs and teachings but by an inevitable consequence of using different tools to understand the world. For example, the ancient Chinese philosophers saw the world as consisting of continuous substances and the ancient Greek philosophers tended to see the world as being composed of discrete objects or separate atoms.⁹⁰ A piece of wood to the Chinese would have been a seamless, uniform material; to the Greeks it would have been seen as

⁸⁹ Nisbett, Richard E. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently--and Why*. New York: Free Press, 2003, p. xvii in Introduction.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.26.

composed of particles.⁹¹ A novel item, such as a seashell, might have been seen as a substance by the Chinese and as an object by the Greeks.⁹² Remarkably, cognitive psychologists provide evidence that modern Asians also tend to see the world as consisting of continuous substances, whereas modern Westerners are more prone to see objects. The Westerner sees an abstract statue where the Asian sees a piece of marble; the Westerner sees a wall where the Asian sees concrete.⁹³ There is much other evidence of a historical and systematic scientific nature indicating that Westerners have an analytic view focusing on salient objects (i.e. discrete and unconnected things) and their attributes, whereas Easterners have a holistic view focusing on continuities in substances and relationships in the environment.⁹⁴

Differences appear not only in habits of mind, but also in social habits.

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall introduced the notion of “low context” vs. “high context” societies to capture differences in self-understanding.⁹⁵ To the Westerners, it makes sense to speak of a person as having attributes that are independent of circumstances or particular personal relations.⁹⁶ This self – this bounded, impermeable free agent – can

⁹¹ Nisbett, Richard E. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently--and Why*. New York: Free Press, 2003, p.27.

⁹² Ibid, p.28.

⁹³ Ibid, p.29.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.32.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.50.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.51.

move from group to group and setting to setting without significant alteration.⁹⁷ But for the Easterners, the person is connected, fluid, and conditional.⁹⁸ As philosopher Donald Munro put it, East Asians understand themselves “in terms of their relation to the whole, such as the family, society, Tao Principle, or Pure Consciousness.”⁹⁹ Since all action is in concert with others, or at the very least affects others, harmony in relationships becomes a chief goal of social life. An emphasis on relationships encourages a concern with the feeling of others. When American mothers play with their toddlers, they tend to ask questions about objects and supply information about them. But when Japanese mothers play with their toddlers, their questions are more likely to concern feelings. Asian parents tend to focus on feelings in social relations. Western parents tend to focus on rules and principles in social relations. When we take into account the different contexts of relatively independent and relatively interdependent societies, the distinction makes sense.

A Common Religious Motif – Compassion

Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity commonly have a fundamental interest in human beings: their well-being and humane treatment of each other – a human being must care for, be concerned about other human beings, and consider the well-being of others – that is, the dimension of compassion. Both Buddhism and Confucianism share

⁹⁷ Nisbett, Richard E. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently--and Why*. New York: Free Press, 2003, p.51.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.51.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.51.

that the virtue of compassion/benevolence will be required in different degrees according to the level of one's achievement. In other words, compassion is a key feature in the life of an enlightened person in those religious traditions. Both traditions seem to have common assumptions with regard to the embodiment of the self-transformative virtue, to realizing the final moral goal, and to achieving the perfection of personality. Human beings are not perfect, yet they are perfectible, since they have the potential to be perfect. To awaken and cultivate this potential is the most important thing for the achievement of this perfection of personality. This process is gradual and continuous, and involves lifelong effort. In this way, the achievement of the perfect personality is based not on any external power, but rather on one's internal capacity to exert effort toward it.

Such compassion is viable and applicable to people's everyday life in the East. Compassion/benevolence can be translated that every human being must be treated humanely. That is a very operative ethical concept. So, it would be helpful to use this concept to engage dialogues with local people and increase their awareness to protect and promote human rights and ecology in their everyday life. It would make much more sense to people in the East if one were to reframe compassion in its ethical translation such that each human being must treat every other humanely and that every human being must deal with their environment compassionately, rather than providing Western philosophical justifications. On the other hand, many modern societies in the East introspectively point out that their traditional value for compassionate treatments of other human beings and the environment has gradually diminished since either they adopted or

were forced to adopt modern Western ideologies: socialism and capitalism, primarily by centuries of colonization by the West. People in the East witnessed that both ideologies put what each espoused on top of anything else, including a human life. As a result, socialists decimated their opponents to construct a classless society; in capitalistic society, money has been so pervasive as the ultimate value. This confuses people. It led people to murder other people simply because of money.

Beyond the limited scope of these two ideologies, it is demanded in the East to return to humanity, i.e. recover the true essence of a human being, which is close to the traditional values and teachings. Human beings actually invented and have managed those ideologies. In other words, human beings should be more important than those ideologies. Human beings should be the ultimate. Nothing else can be more important than human beings. Although those ideologies still affect the everyday life of people and even shape the way they think and act, those religions still teach the shared traditional value of human beings and compassionate treatment of each other and the environment that awaken and reproach people in the East.

Buddhist Ethics on Compassion

The development of Buddhism within India can be divided into three phases. Robert Thurman argues that each new phase did not supplant the previous one, but incorporated it within the new form. By the end of Indian Buddhist civilization, around

the end of the first millennium, all three coexisted in a loose integration.¹⁰⁰ The first phase is the Individual, or Monastic Vehicle (*Hinayana*). The second is the Universal Vehicle (*Mahayana*), wherein the impact of compassion was openly and fully elaborated on all levels.¹⁰¹ The third is the Vajra Vehicle (*Vajrayana*), wherein the previously esoteric meditative tradition was more widely spread popularly and more technically refined academically.¹⁰² Thurman claims that these phases can be very roughly dated as from 500 B.C.E to 0, from 0 to 500 C.E., and from 500 C.E. to 1000 C.E., respectively.¹⁰³

In regard to the first phase of the Individual Vehicle, the monastic community provided a liberative educational vehicle for those who entered it and exercised a restraining, civilizing influence on the larger society as best it could. This civilizing came out in the open during the reign of the Emperor Asoka (ca. 270 – 230 B.C.E), who eventually converted to Buddhism personally and then actively promoted Buddhist principles throughout the recently formed empire.¹⁰⁴ In keeping with all those principles, he showed tolerance for the plurality of religions, supporting all those who practiced what they preached.¹⁰⁵ For the time of Asoka's reign, the alternative world of the *Sangha*

¹⁰⁰ Bloom, Irene, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne Proudfoot. *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p.98.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p.98.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.98.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.98.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.99.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p.99.

(“assembly” or “gathering”) became something like an establishment, seeking to transform society more actively through education and through encouragement of the emperor’s legislative edicts. However, Thurman argues that Asoka in a sense overstepped the pace of development of the society, pushing the people too quickly toward nonviolence, including vegetarianism, self-cultivation, charity, and tolerance.¹⁰⁶ Soon after his death, the dynasty fell, and his successors led a reaction marked by a Hindu revival of Brahmanic fundamentalism. In spite of this reaction, the alternative order continued to exercise its influence, as well as to expand Buddhism beyond India. Sri Lanka was missionized by Asoka’s grandson and the Theravada form of the Individual Vehicle took root there to last until modern times.¹⁰⁷ From Sri Lanka it eventually spread into Burma and Thailand. Asoka also sent missions into Afghanistan and Iran.¹⁰⁸

Thurman points out that toward the end of the first phase, the Buddhist order gradually became more activist in pressing for social change, less and less content to remain the anchor of an alternative social world, and more and more aggressive in transforming activity.¹⁰⁹ This process culminated in a new form of Buddhism, the Universal Vehicle (Mahayana), whose foundation was a metaphysical insight into the absolute emptiness and universal relativity of all things, including any personal *nirvana*,

¹⁰⁶ Bloom, Irene, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne Proudfoot. *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p.99.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.99.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p.100.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p.101.

and a corresponding ethical impulse toward universal compassion (*mahakaruna*), the drive to assist all beings to achieve their own fulfilling happiness in liberation and enlightenment.¹¹⁰

Thurman translates this new form of Buddhism: philosophically, this new movement was critical of the excessive individualism of the Individual Vehicle monks who sought their own fulfillment in the alternative reality of their hypothetical “remainderless *nirvana*.” And institutionally, it was critical of the excessive aloofness of the monastic establishment, considering itself a place apart from and superior to the ordinary social world. Monasticism was still considered essential as the anchor of individualism against the tides of collectivism in the traditional society, but just as the individual saint was not considered perfect just through personal transcendence but was to strive beyond that, motivated by great compassion, to make liberation available to all, so also the monastic institution was to move beyond its anchoring function and actively promote welfare and especially the education of all citizens.¹¹¹ So the social dualism between monk and layperson was challenged by the drive of great compassion. The monasteries slowly developed into great educational centers like the great universities in the West.

¹¹⁰ Bloom, Irene, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne Proudfoot. *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p.100.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p.100.

The universal Vehicle emerged in a social atmosphere of a refined, urban civilization of great wealth and sophistication. The cold, analytic wisdom (*prana*) of the Individual Vehicle, whereby the personal release from the egocentric complex was achieved, became the warm, intuitive transcendent wisdom (*prajnaparamita*), a goddess, the Mother of All Victors (*sarvajinamata*).¹¹² The focus in the Universal Vehicle was on the positive injunctions to transcendent virtues, the “ultra-obligations” of transcendent generosity, morality, and tolerance.¹¹³ What had been ideal exemplary virtues in the *Jatakas* now took hold as positive precepts to be enacted by monastic and layperson alike.¹¹⁴ People of all walks of life, all occupations, and both sexes should now become enlightened, educated, and then actively responsible in society, as it were, with no need first to abandon the ordinary realm to enter the liberated realm of the order, although that option could still be helpful to some.

The social realm, with its ups and downs, its good rulers and its bad, could not realistically be expected to become so rapidly transformed. Therefore, the messianic drive of compassion found its ideals realized in a variety of heavenly social realms, famous “pure lands,” or “Buddha-fields” of the Universal Vehicle Scriptures.¹¹⁵ These lands became imaginative icons for the populace wherein Buddhahood and social

¹¹² Bloom, Irene, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne Proudfoot. *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p.101.

¹¹³ Ibid, p.101.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p.101.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.101.

kingship fused in visions of unimaginable splendor. Emanating from this Beatific Real (*sambhogakaya*), numerous divinized forms of Buddha, “Buddhesses,” and male and female bodhisattvas, appeared to succor the individual in his or her struggle to live up to the high ideals of the teachings.¹¹⁶ During the ascendancy of the Universal Vehicle, its message of profound wisdom and loving solidarity with all life and its rich iconography enabled it to missionize much of Asia.¹¹⁷ Early on it spread through Central Asia to China, and its large-scale adoption in China after the fall of Han up to its height in the T’ang and Sung is one of the wonders of history.¹¹⁸ From China it spread to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, although the latter had another current coming from India and Sri Lanka as well. It also spread as a further strand into the Sri Lanka, Burman, and Thai traditions.

In late April 2004, the Dalai Lama visited Vancouver and the University of British Columbia. He came to lecture and teach and to participate in a roundtable dialogue. For his adherents, he is the fully realized incarnation of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, known as Guan-yin in China and Kannon in Japan. The facts of the Dalai Lama’s political exile and the genocidal oppression of seven million Tibetans, most of whom live outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and the Chinese government’s obvious ongoing irritation with his activities for Tibetan independence are

¹¹⁶ Bloom, Irene, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne Proudfoot. *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p.102.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.102.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.102.

enough to generate worldwide generous and sympathetic reporting of the current Tibetan predicament. Those Tibetans represent about two percent of the world's 325 million Buddhists.

Peter Nosco attended and reported the event of the keynote address the Dalai Lama presented at the University of British Columbia. During the speech, the Dalai Lama spoke of the need for universally governing principles around which we all can unite.¹¹⁹ Nosco states that the Dalai Lama asserted that we are all fundamentally good, and that evil is thus an aberration. He invoked his Tibetan heritage's traditional concern with compassion as a foundational value on which to build contemporary cross-cultural and inter-faith dialog on a global level.¹²⁰ Later in his address, he expanded upon compassion's importance by asserting a universal need for unbiased infinite compassion.¹²¹ Nosco reports that the Dalai Lama also promoted an understanding of religious harmony whereby one acknowledges that differences exist, while still recognizing that we all share a common message of love, compassion, commitment, and self-discipline.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Sullivan, William M., and Will Kymlicka. *The Globalization of Ethics*, The Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, P.70.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p.70.

¹²¹ Ibid, p.70.

¹²² Ibid, p.77.

Nosco explains compassion in Buddhist teaching: if Buddhism can be said to have a cardinal virtue, it would be compassion, and this compassion stems from Buddhism's view of the cosmos as an integrated and organic whole within which all causes and effects, all phenomena, every movement of dust or even stirring of the consciousness contribute to a grandly orchestrated harmonic.¹²³ According to Nosco, most Buddhists believe that dharma has an analog within human beings and other sentient creatures in the form of Buddha-nature, a bit of the dharma within, which is what universalizes the potential for enlightenment. The dharma is the conductor of the universe and is good in the senses of being morally just and practically skilled – that is, its operation in the world is by its very nature salutary, working for the good of all, and it is at the same time good itself.¹²⁴ Further, dharma courses through both the world of non-living objects and the complex multiple realms of all sentient creatures – creatures like us who have consciousness that share a potential for progress on a spiritual path.¹²⁵

Recognizing that we share a common nature, a Buddha-nature in turn deepens our sense of universal fraternity with other sentient creatures, and this translates into not just radical tolerance for others' differences, but also a profound empathy that forms the basis for our compassionate engagement of the world. Because of the integration of ourselves

¹²³ Sullivan, William M., and Will Kymlicka. *The Globalization of Ethics*, The Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.77.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.77.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p.77.

into the morally governed harmonic of the cosmos, we find that it is impossible to separate our own interests and consequences from those of others, and our fates are thus one-and-all intertwined. Buddhism powerfully reinforces this sense of mutuality, and the sufferings and hardship of others ultimately become inseparable from one's own suffering and hardship, just as the saving of others becomes a way of saving oneself. By identifying with the hardship and suffering of others, one deepens one's own compassion, dedicating oneself to the bodhisattva's goal of returning again and again to this world until all have achieved complete liberation from its strictures.

In Mahayana Buddhism, the central ideal is the bodhisattva ideal; all beings strive for and ultimately are destined for enlightenment, Buddhahood. Mahayana Buddhists believe that each being is responsible in some fashion for every other being and that whatever one being does affects all others. On the basis of the interconnectedness of all beings, we are all, to some extent, helping each other on this path to enlightenment. A bodhisattva is a helper. A bodhisattva is a person who has taken a vow to abstain from full Buddhahood and final liberation from the round of rebirth until all other beings have first achieved enlightenment. That is, the bodhisattva has vowed to remain in the world to help alleviate the suffering of other creatures and to help them on their way to spiritual maturity and enlightenment.

The essence of bodhisattvas' nature is compassion. Having achieved mastery of self, having gotten rid one's ego-centered consciousness, and having stilled the fires of

desire: bodhisattva gaze on the sufferings of creatures with infinite compassion and vow to exert their entire being to help others. In this compassion, spiritually mature people feel one with all other creatures, with their identity throughout the cosmos. Bodhisattvas equate their well-being with the well-being of all creatures and act with them always in mind. In effect, one participates in the nature of the bodhisattva, or perhaps one reveals oneself as a bodhisattva. According to Mahayana Buddhism, bodhisattvas dwell among us, affirming in their every thought and action the interconnectedness of all beings and compassion for all beings. Their effect on others and on the environment is healing.

Confucian Ethics on Compassion

Confucianism as initiated by Confucius and Mencius has had a great influence in the East. Confucius (551- 479 B.C.) was born in the Chinese classical period of the Spring and Autumn Warring Period. He thought that a collapse of ethics (or the Way of humanity) was the cause of myriad social conflicts in his society. So he pondered over how human beings could live correctly and politics would be able to be perfect. The core of Confucius teachings is *Jen* (仁, *Ren* in Chinese). It became a word combining two separate words of 人 (“human being”) and 二 (“two”). So, the word combined means “two persons standing together.” For Confucius, *jen* is to become a true human being or quintessence of humanity. *Jen* is not only the basis for ethics but also goals of politics and education. In other words, to Confucius, the goals of ethics, politics, and education, where combined, form a true humane human being. His teaching of 仁者人也 indicates

that a true human being is like a decent person who is worthy of the name of “man.” So jen represents a perfect human being or a decent person who one must become.

Confucius evolved the concept of jen which was to become central to Chinese philosophy.

Jen is like a principle or natural law to become a true human being. It is not too far and too high to achieve. Confucius asked, “Is jen far to reach? Anyone can reach jen if one is willing.” He emphasized that “I” is the subject of achieving jen that begins near “I.” For example, filial piety and brotherhood in familial relationships are the basis of accomplishing jen. Parents are the closest origin of one’s birth, and brother and sister are beings from the same origin and feel united because they have the closest bond. Such a bond can be extended to Heaven (or Nature) and become universal brotherhood. Moreover, jen is to consider other human beings as reflecting one’s own condition or standpoint. That is, one is to serve one’s parents reflecting on one’s due time when one wants to be served by one’s children. One is to be generous to one’s brother and sister considering that one also expects them to be generous. This way of acting is achievable no matter where one is and what one is doing. To live with such an attitude in one’s mind and heart is the way of becoming a true human being.

To Confucius, moral principles are not prior to deeds emanated from the quintessence of human nature. Most people who see someone steal might think that it is an expression of integrity to report that to law enforcement, even if the one who is stealing is one’s own father. However, for Confucius, with a true human mind and heart a

son would conceal the fault of their father, because they understand that the origin of morality emanates from the quintessence of human nature. Mencius took over such Confucian ideas. He also had an interest in human nature as it is prior to dealing with moral problems. Both Confucius and Mencius put the interest of the original, innate human nature above any moral discussion and judgment. For Mencius, the original human nature is essentially good. He explains why it is the case: anyone who sees a baby crawling near to a pond immediately goes to rescue the baby. Such an action is not because of a motive for making any relationship or fellowship with the baby's parents through this saving opportunity. Nor is it because of a laudable expectation or possible blame from one's townspeople. It originates spontaneously from immediate compassion/commiseration toward the baby. That is Jen. To Mencius, human beings have not only such compassion, but also shame from their faults, or hatred about injustice, deference to others, and discernment about right and wrong.

Mencius thinks that such compassion, shame/hatred, deference and discernment – in other words, the original sources of morality – are embedded into human nature. He emphasizes that they are not external results or utilities. So if human beings sustain such a genuine moral essence as that which emanates from the quintessence of human nature, evil cannot exist. Mencius, however, acknowledges existential evils in the real world. According to him, the origin of evils is private avarice. Private avarice is a very unnatural and unoriginal phenomenon. For example, it is as if one cuts trees with thick foliage using an axe or a saw, or if one puts cattle to pasture so that they eat up all the grass, the

forests finally become denuded; inherently good human nature can often be concealed by such personal greed, so it does not function properly. That is evil.

Thus, to sustain innate genuine moral essence one needs to be focused on removing private avarice from one's mind and heart. For this, Mencius emphasizes 浩然之氣. It literally means, in a metaphysical sense, originally big force (chi) in the universe. To achieve it, he suggests that one should continue doing good deeds, and cultivating one's mind and heart to think about one's future good actions. One who has 浩然之氣 is called a superior person or a man of character. Wealth and fame cannot deprave a superior person. Little and low cannot change the will of a superior person. No threat can conquer a superior person.

To Mencius, you are not a human being if you do not have any commiseration for the baby falling into water. Mencius calls commiseration, shame, deference, and discernment as "four seeds." The four seeds provide clues to actualize them as four virtues in the human mind and heart. The four seeds are the essential characteristics of human beings; human beings can fulfill and expand the four virtues by their own efforts. The four seeds are the potentiality of the four virtues. Therefore, human beings should decrease their desires, avoid thinking only about gains or profits, and cultivate their mind and heart in order for the four seeds to actualize the four virtues. In terms of cultivation, no radical total change is implied. To cultivate a better character by transforming the self

is to embody the main virtue compassion/commiseration gradually, in an even greater degree.

How can a human being transform the self and embody compassion/commiseration with regard to the relationship between the self and others? This requires an explanation of the concept of self-overcoming in Confucianism. Self-overcoming is focused on control of bodily desires. They are satisfied in a restrained manner. To be overwhelmed by bodily desires and to indulge in them are seen as obstacles to proper perception and cultivation of classical Confucian virtues. Mencius emphasized that one should overcome bodily desires and should follow more important values. Other than a minimum level of satisfaction of bodily desires and maintenance of the body, one should control and utilize bodily desires for the sake of the cultivation of the mind and virtue. In fact, self-overcoming extends beyond the scope of the body to include control over all things related to a person's everyday activities.

One of the ways to control everyday activities is self-restraint of the mind. Self-restraint of the mind in classical Confucianism is expressed as nurturing the mind, wherein Mencius teaches means to reduce the number of one's desires. If one has too many desires, one will not be content unless all the desires are fulfilled. But, if one has few desires, one will be satisfied easily. Another way of restraining the mind is by neither losing the mind nor letting the mind stray. To Mencius, an important purpose of learning is not to lose one's mind. He suggests that one watch over one's character not to lose the

mind but to retain it. In fact, watching over one's character is the ultimate foundation of classical Confucian moral virtues, because one can develop other virtues. To Mencius, the task of retraining the mind is nothing but retaining and nurturing the original good mind.

On the level of important interaction with others in the Confucian perspective, a self-transformed person through self-overcoming and self-restraint of the mind behaves compassionately in a larger society. When one internalizes and embodies the virtue of self-overcoming, one becomes free from selfish desires. Reducing selfish desires, and denying the self that is undesirable and negative, gradually help one cultivate a more highly developed self. The newly constructed self is an agent that takes the lead in the development of compassion. This self has the characteristics of self-respect, self-confidence, and self-autonomy. Such a construction of a stable self with positive self-perception provides one with the mental capacity to view others properly. It enlarges one's own perspective and enables one to see and consider others.

One attempts to expand compassion to all people. All human beings are regarded as brothers and sisters in regard to reverence and respect. In this way, one should extend a loving mind to the whole world. This mind seems to urge one to awaken oneself to save all people socially. The motivation to benefit others becomes a moral imperative. Such universal compassion or a loving mind is not in conflict with the principle of differentiated love that tells one to love others on the basis of closeness of relationship.

To extend a loving mind to everyone means that in being benevolent toward all, one can be more concerned about one's own parents or siblings. It does not mean that when two parties face conflict, one should choose between one's own parents and others. Finally, compassion becomes a Confucian political motivation and ideal. To benefit all human beings by realizing the idea of compassion becomes both the beginning and the end point of Confucian politics. If one is fully compassionate toward all people, this would fulfill compassion and Confucian politics. Confucius puts this in the category of a sagely virtue.

Christian Ethics on Compassion

Christianity is a very interpretable religion. Especially biblical theologians participate in interpretation of the sacred text. In the process of interpretation, they attempt to find the meanings revealed in the text. For this, they try to understand the text as it was written, then make the revealed messages meaningful to their audience in whatever context in which the audience is situated. To train those theologians, theology (i.e., a study about God or study about Christianity in general) incorporates many other academic fields such as humanities, social sciences and even natural science because interdisciplinary research in those areas is helpful to understand very deeply the conditions of human lives and experiences – how diverse, complicated, and broad they are.

Having such a deep understanding about human beings, many Christians and theologians attempt to understand holistically who God is. When they make any claims

about God, in general, they tend to use together faith, reason, tradition, experience, and Scripture. They also scrutinize themselves – use the best knowledge about the conditions of human lives and experiences in order to understand God best. This holistic theological approach made it possible for the Christian tradition to augment ample interpretations about God.

The plentiful interpretations in the Christian tradition represent diverse ideas and opinions about religion. However, it has not always been peaceful for Christianity to have those different voices. Christian history testifies to incidents of Christians' killing each other because of their very different opinions. Authorities in Christianity have sometimes decided who was in and who was out from the tradition. However, Ernst Troeltsch has argued that tensions and counterbalancing efforts among Church, sects, and mysticism in the Christian tradition helped Christianity grow. Protestant Reformation and Catholic counter reformations also helped Christianity blossom, rather than decline. Followers of those reformations really facilitated and augmented diverse ideas and interpretations about God and their religion in the Christian tradition.

Different voices and ideas in the Christian tradition have been conducive to calling for and shaping the minds of ethical Christians. Larry Rasmussen argues that standard attention in modern ethics concentrates upon our own resources to effect good, to see what we might do to leave the world less a mess than we found it.¹²⁶ The attention

¹²⁶ Rasmussen, Larry L. *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996, p.284.

is to him as morally autonomous and responsible agents armed with natural powers.¹²⁷

Part of Christian ethics would agree with this attention in modern ethics. A Christian version of natural law has believed for a long time that God gave reason to human beings to be morally autonomous and responsible agent, and to have dominion over the nature of God's creation. Yet, another part of Christian ethics suggests that the starting point is to find the characteristics of God – e.g., God who is entering into the predicaments of others who suffer. Jesus, as the way of God and as a model of the godly life among human beings, grabs the attention in ethics. Suffering Jesus on the Cross was God. God suffers because a compassionate God is concerned about God's loving creatures – human beings. Compassion toward suffering human beings connects all of God, human beings, and other creatures in God's creation. Compassion helps Christians decide how they should live ethically. Christians also enter into the predicaments of others who suffer as God does.

Imago dei – humans are made “in the image of God” – is an ethical matter.

“Imaging God is acting in a godly way toward one another and other creatures. Imaging God is loving earth fiercely, as God does.”¹²⁸ Imaging God is to make God's work truly our own. Humans participate in continuous processes of God's creation and redemption. Such humans are co-creators with God. They redeem broken relationships with other people and other creatures. The point here is that *imago dei* is understood relationally and

¹²⁷ Rasmussen, Larry L. *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996, p.284.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.280.

dynamically, as human imaging of God's way and as humans turning toward God. These stances all carry ethical consequences in the relationships among humans and between humans and other creatures.

The Hebrew Bible reveals characteristics of God throughout the Scripture. In Mount Sinai, God told Moses that God was "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34: 6-7).¹²⁹ The compassionate God responded to the Israelites who groaned under slavery and cried out for help. God actually observed the misery of God's people who were captive in Egypt. So, God told Moses that God knew their sufferings, would come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and would bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:7-8). After delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, the compassionate God guided their way to God's promised land and provided for their basic needs. God also gave the Israelites God's law through Moses and asked them to build God's tabernacle. The law helped govern people of disorder in wilderness. The law and God's tabernacle symbolized the completion of God's liberation plan. The most important purpose throughout God's plan was that God wanted to make a new relationship with the Israelites, who did not know or remember any more the previous

¹²⁹ This is a translation from the New International Version.

relationship of God with their ancestors. Another important purpose was to show that God was always faithful to and in the relationship with God's people.

In Hosea the same compassionate God spoke to unfaithful Israel in tender words and provided assurance of forgiveness:

“I will heal their disloyalty;
 I will love them freely,
 For my anger has turned from them.
 I will be like the dew to Israel;
 He shall blossom like the lily,
 He shall strike root like the forest of Lebanon.
 His shoots shall spread out;
 His beauty shall be like the olive tree,
 and his fragrance like that of Lebanon.
 They shall again live beneath my shadow,
 They shall flourish as a garden;
 They shall blossom like the vine,
 Their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon” (Hos. 14:5-8).¹³⁰

In the New Testament the parable about a lost sheep that Jesus taught to his disciples reveals God's compassionate nature. Jesus asked his disciples, “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave

¹³⁰ This is a translation from the New Revised Standard Version.

the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?” (Matthew 18:12).¹³¹ He provided his answer to his disciples: “And if he finds it, I will tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost” (Matt. 18:13-14). At the end of the parable, Jesus told his disciples that God is “your Father in heaven.” It indicates that God is the father of all human beings. That has an important implication: all human beings are not merely distant cousins, but siblings, brothers or sisters. In this parable, it can be imagined that the compassionate God as a father grows restless, looking around to search for the lost sheep until God finds it. Figuratively, human beings can bear the same heart as God, if one of their siblings goes astray. They can also feel the same terrible feeling as God, as when parents lose their own child.

Rasmussen argues that compassion is the key virtue for a Christian ethic and an Earth ethic as well, with empathy and solidarity as the key means.¹³² He meant compassion to be “suffering-with.” The best way of describing the suffering-with can be found in what Paul said in First Corinthians: “if one member [of the body] suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor. 12:26). Just like one’s body parts function this way, so should everything in the universe that God created.

¹³¹ This is a translation from the New International Version.

¹³² Rasmussen, Larry L. *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996, p.286. He means solidarity to be “standing-with.”

If a person suffers, other persons can suffer together with the suffering one. That person possesses “a capacity for empathy” that is itself “the ground of compassion” and “the driving energy in the formation of the ethical imagination.”¹³³ Since everything is created, a human being can suffer together with suffering other beings. In an ethical standpoint from a translation of this statement, a human being should not ignore other human beings and otherkind under suffering. Rasmussen finalizes this point that the only way human beings can be human is to be human together and with otherkind; and this interconnectedness includes the pain of unredeemed relationship.¹³⁴

If human beings are co-sufferable, what about God – can a compassionate God suffer with suffering human beings? Martin Luther’s understanding of God can provide an answer to this inquiry. Luther thought of God in power, majesty, and light, in triumph, ecstasy, mighty deeds, wild success, and pure unadulterated experience.¹³⁵ However, Luther said that God is also found in weakness and wretchedness, in darkness, in failure, sorrow, and despair.¹³⁶ According to him, “God is not found only there, but God is there in a special, crystallized, and saving way. God is present in a certain kind of suffering love and as a certain kind of power on the home turf of deadliness, brokenness, and degradation. God is present in twistedness and pain, and not in beauty and health

¹³³ Rasmussen, Larry L. *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996. p.285.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 285

¹³⁵ Ibid, 284

¹³⁶ Ibid, 284

alone.”¹³⁷ God is affected by creation’s turmoil and Earth’s distress, reaches into it and takes it into divine being itself.¹³⁸ When nature suffers degradation – any of nature – God suffers.¹³⁹ The cross of Jesus substantiated God’s suffering.

The best of Christian ethics may be called “love ethics.” The short but strongest message in the long tradition of Christian ethics has been “love God, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Augustine believed that love of God is the chief good of humans. He claimed that the more one loves God, the more one feels demanded to love one’s neighbor.¹⁴⁰ For Aquinas, charity is the most excellent of virtues. Virtue aims at good. The ultimate and principal human good is the enjoyment of God. He said that “It is good for me to adhere to my God and to this end man is adapted by charity.”¹⁴¹ Speaking of charity in its proper character and essence, it is a friendship of humans with God primarily, and secondarily with the creatures that are of God.¹⁴² The more a person loves God, the more love they show for their neighbor, and allow no enemy to stand in their way.¹⁴³ He said that the love of enemies is a necessary point of charity.¹⁴⁴ One reason is

¹³⁷ Rasmussen, Larry L. *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996, p.284.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p.284.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p.284.

¹⁴⁰ Beach, Waldo, and H. Richard Niebuhr. *Christian Ethics; Sources of the Living Tradition*. New York,: Ronald Press Co., 1955, p.114.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p.221.

¹⁴² Ibid, p.223.

¹⁴³ Beach, Waldo, and H. Richard Niebuhr. *Christian Ethics; Sources of the Living Tradition*. New York,: Ronald Press Co., 1955, p.223.

that someone loving God and their neighbor would not exclude their enemies from the general compass of their love of neighbor.¹⁴⁵ Another reason is that a person's act of love to their enemy for the sake of God belongs to the perfection of charity.¹⁴⁶

Luther said that “one does not only live for oneself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but one lives also for all humans on earth; rather one lives only for others and not for oneself. To this end one brings one's body into subjection that one may serve others the more sincerely and freely.”¹⁴⁷ Christians should work with their hands so that they may give to the needy. He said that “this is what makes caring for the body a Christian work – through its health and comfort we may be able to work, to acquire, and lay by funds with which to aid those who are in need.”¹⁴⁸ “In this way the strong member may serve the weaker, and we may be sons of God, each caring for and working for the other, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ.”¹⁴⁹

The most concrete action from this love ethics is not to ignore other human beings and otherkind under suffering. Not to ignore the suffering African Americans, a beloved

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.223.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.223.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.223.

¹⁴⁷ Wogaman, J. Philip, Douglas M. Strong, and J. Philip Wogaman. *Readings in Christian Ethics : A Historical Sourcebook*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, p.126.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p.126.

¹⁴⁹ Wogaman, J. Philip, Douglas M. Strong, and J. Philip Wogaman. *Readings in Christian Ethics : A Historical Sourcebook*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, p.126.

community for them was formulated and begun by Martin Luther King Jr. and many others. King stated clearly in his letter Birmingham City Jail that he was in Birmingham because injustice was there. He said that: “injustice anywhere was a threat to justice everywhere.”¹⁵⁰ For this reason, he could not sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happened in Birmingham. His basic reasoning for his participating to stop injustice was based on his concrete cognition that all communities and states were interrelated and that whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. His continuing arguments vividly showed what kind of injustice happened in Birmingham and what the underlying cause was. He mentioned that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community with no other alternative. He pointed out that racial injustice engulfed this community. In his letter, “Birmingham was probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the U.S. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts was a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than any city in this nation.”¹⁵¹ On the basis of these conditions Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation.

With King’s incisive statements about the city’s pervasive realities of injustice, he made preparation arguments for direct action so cogent. Before getting to such an action,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p.347.

¹⁵¹ Wogaman, J. Philip, Douglas M. Strong, and J. Philip Wogaman. *Readings in Christian Ethics : A Historical Sourcebook*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, p.347.

he suggested four basic steps. This was to be fundamentally a nonviolent campaign. The first step was to collect facts to determine whether injustice was alive; the second was negotiation; the third, self-purification; and the fourth, direct action. Such steps are very specific and breathtaking. In a process of self-purification, there were workshops on nonviolence and questions repeatedly being asked such as: “Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?” “Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?”¹⁵² An economic piece of injustice mentioned in his letter is that: “you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an air-tight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society.”¹⁵³

CHAPTER FIVE

VISION AND COMMITMENT

The religious motif of compassion can be used to reinterpret human rights and ecology to protect and promote them locally. This stage may be called norm setting. The next step is a cross-cultural approach to human rights and ecology. Firm believers and adherents who especially attempt to plant seeds of human rights and ecology locally need

¹⁵² Ibid, p.348.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p.349.

to look broadly into other contexts that have been successful for planting human rights and ecology. Some critics argue that the practice of human rights in the West has been too individualistic, procedural, and judicial. As opposed to the West, human rights movements in the East have focused more on being a collective and cultural creation, not procedural and judicial.

After a successful norm setting locally, the movement needs to take into consideration making the practice of human rights procedural and judicial. As in the West, it is important to make sure human rights are protected procedurally and judicially. Without such protection, there is no way to appeal or prevent human rights violations. Without any penalty or guarantee of due process of law, there is no incentive not to violate human rights. On the other hand, in the West, environmental rights have not yet been fully protected procedurally and judicially as much as human rights. However, it is now a good chance that the East can realize a full protection of ecology procedurally and judicially along with human rights. So, human rights and ecology cannot be considered separately at this juncture in the East. Environmental rights are the most advanced concept of human rights. In order to fully protect human rights, people must embrace environmental rights because all kinds of benefits from economic development can help to realize human rights, but they would be useless to Easterners soon after the degradation of environment becomes irreversible.

International documents and instruments on human rights and ecology that were presented in chapter three have certain limitations in terms of promoting human rights and ecology locally. Adullahi An-Na'im points out that he became more appreciative of their bias when examining the current international standards of human rights from a cross-cultural point of view.¹⁵⁴ He argues that like all normative principles, they are necessarily based on specific cultural and philosophical assumptions – given the historical context within which the present standards have been formulated, it was unavoidable that they were initially based on Western cultural and philosophical assumptions.¹⁵⁵ Although this orientation was somewhat modified during the international negotiation processes through which those standards were subsequently elaborated, he says that the formative Western impact continues to influence the conception and implementation of human rights throughout the world.¹⁵⁶ In this connection, Western influence profoundly impacts local ruling elites, some scholars, and activists in the non-Western world. An-Na'im argues that even in trying to resist this influence, they are reacting to Western philosophical premises.¹⁵⁷ So, it is necessary for

¹⁵⁴ An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed. *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives: A Quest for Consensus*, University of Pennsylvania Press Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, p.427.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p.428.

¹⁵⁶ An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed. *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives: A Quest for Consensus*, University of Pennsylvania Press Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, p.428.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p.428.

Eastern people to develop indigenous ideas and concepts, and their own thinking on many fundamental philosophical and practical issues.

According to him, it is misleading to assume genuine representation of popular perceptions and attitudes toward human rights in the non-Western world from the formal participation of their delegates to international fora.¹⁵⁸ It should not be assumed either from the fact that governmental delegates participated in their formulation and adoption that there is necessarily sufficiently broad popular acceptance of these standards, and commitment to their implementation, in their respective countries. So, An-Na'im suggests that it is important to note the impact or influence of the facts of international power relations when evaluating contributions of Third World delegates at international fora, including those where human rights instruments are negotiated and adopted.¹⁵⁹

One fundamental limitation among many is that those international documents and instruments are not accessible to many local people. For example, the Asian Human Rights Charter, also called A People's Charter, is fairly unknown to many Asian people. Again, such a fact indicates that it is hard to assume that the document was formulated on the ground of popular and broad acceptance from people in the region. Even if the document is accessible to only lawyers and government officials locally whether they participated in its formulation or not, it is hard to take administrative actions against

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.428.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p.428.

offenders or take claims of human rights violations or ecological violations to a court of law without any relevant laws or regulations prepared subsequent to the document.

Certain international documents such as charter and declaration (i.e., the UDHR) are not legally binding documents. But states (nations) have endowed them with great legitimacy through their actions, including their legal and political invocation at the national and international level. International covenants and treaties are legally binding, but only on the states that have become parties to them. However, there is no international enforcement to sanction the state parties in the case that they do not follow certain procedures and responsibilities in the covenants or treaties that they signed. Parties to the Covenants accept responsibilities, including periodic submission of reports on their compliance with the substantive provisions of the texts. The United Nations has a monitoring body to watch out for actions of states and to require the member states to submit the reports biennially. Yet, the member states have constantly delayed their reports in the excuse that the preparation for the report is not their national priority and takes too much time and energy. It is much harder to expect those states to do certain actions to protect human rights and ecology, and to prevent any violations of those in the case that there is no constitutional guarantee for human rights and ecology. Even if there is a constitutional guarantee, some cultural stumbling blocks can cause delay in realizing human rights. The constitution of South Africa backing the international standards of human rights failed to realize human rights for all until apartheid was abolished in 1991.

I would like to take the South African case to argue that people have the dynamic of protecting and promoting human rights and ecology. It is not the international documents and instruments that alone do those jobs. A substantial change comes from local people who are aware that human rights must be protected and that the ecological crisis is so urgent, therefore, human beings must keep ecological sustainability and stop ecological degradation from being irreversible. Taking those actions is much more important than just maintaining the status quo. Therefore, reinterpreting human rights and ecology using the religious motive and motif of compassion, and educating and revealing to local people that a human being must care for other human beings and be concerned about the common well-being of all beings and ecology, are the most important steps to promote human rights and ecology together globally.

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