Toward A Theocentric Ecological Ethic of Inclusive Well-being

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I. Introduction

In spite of the public awareness of the ecological crisis, this crisis has increased over recent decades. The core of the ecological crisis lies in the complex realities of social injustice (i.e., corporate globalization) and environmental devastation (i.e., global warming).[1] This complex crisis has been characterized under three dimensions as a crisis of participation, of survival and of emancipation.[2] The first participatory theme sees the ecological crisis as a matter of poor planning which can be resolved by technological advances and policy improvements. The second survival theme attempts to overcome the crisis of human survival with careful discussion of resource rationing, government intervention and population control. The third emancipatory theme examines the ecological crisis as a crisis of culture and also an opportunity for emancipation. In terms of the emancipator theme, this paper tries to suggest a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being as an opportunity for emancipation. First, I will review paradigm change in environmental ethics in order to confirm the contextual and provisional nature of ethical theories and practice. Second, I will explore hermeneutical reconstruction of moral grounds or theories for ecological ethics with reflective equilibrium.

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[1] See Rosemary Ruether, *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization and World Religion* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), ch.1; Bill McKibben, *Fight Global Warming Now*(New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007).

[2] Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), ch.1.

Third, I will suggest a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being as one of Christian environmental ethics.

II. Paradigm Change in Environmental Ethics

Environmental or Ecological ethics is generally understood as a response to the ecological crisis. I will explore a number of approaches to environmental ethics in order to confirm its paradigm change. Paradigm, which Thomas Kuhn defines as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community,"[3] generally refers to a specific worldview or model underlying scientific theories. According to Kuhn, scientific theories do not emerge simply by verification or falsification but by change of an old paradigm into a new one.[4] Paradigm change demonstrates the interpretive and provisional nature of theories of science. Likewise, paradigm change in ethics helps us emphasize contextual and provisional nature of ethical theories and practice. In other words, any ethical theories or knowledge could hold only within a specific paradigm. We cannot make a certain paradigm or a theory in it absolute.

Now let us look at paradigm change in the development of environmental ethics. Some environmentalists develop their environmental ethics on primarily human interests. They aim to solve the conflicts of human interests using the natural environment as their resource. Others are primarily interested in the harm to nature itself. These two views rely on an answer to the central ethical question, "what are the fundamental moral values underlying ecological ethics?" One defines its fundamental moral value in terms of human well-being.

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[3] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 175.

[4] Hans Küng and David Tracy, ed. *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 7-10.

The other understands it in terms of human relations to nonhuman nature, irrespective of human social relations. The first one sees environmental ethics as applying conventional human ethics to nonhuman nature, while the latter sees it as a new ethics both in principle and practice.[5] As I note the paradigm change in environmental ethics, I will name the former human-centered paradigm environmental ethics, and the latter non-human-centered new paradigm ecological ethics.

They are basically derived from two distinct kinds of environmental concern: a utilitarian approach and a deontological one. From a utilitarian approach, we can value nature just as a means for human use and benefit. Nature has only instrumental values in relation to human interests. From a deontological approach, we can regard nature as an end itself. There is an intrinsic value or good in nature apart from human use.[6] Utilitarianism, which stresses human welfare, and deontology, which stresses human dignity, may be differently evaluated in discussing ecological ethics. On the one hand, I see a classical deontological view of morality, which stresses obligation and duty independent of the consequence of action or rewards and punishments, can provide nature with intrinsic value in and for itself better than a utilitarian view. On the other hand, I think a utilitarian view of morality, which sees the best consequence resulting from the end of action as the aim of moral decision, can provides us with the necessity and significance of the specific contexts in which moral decisions are made. I see moral obligation and intrinsic value of the deontological approach, and also welfare or well-being and contextual moral decision of the utilitarian one as the fundamental moral values of an ecological ethic of well-being. However, both approaches to ecological ethics

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[5] Nigel Dower, "What is environmental ethics," in *Ethics and Environmental Responsibility*, edited by Nigel Dower (Aldershot: Avebury, 1989), 16-17.

[6] See Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, eds., *Environmental Ethics: Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), ch.1; James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Vol.2 Ethics and Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), ch.3. He describes benchmarks from moral philosophy in two systems of utilitarian and Kantian deontological ethics.

have some limitations in that they are basically individualist focusing on the individual organism rather than the species or the ecosystem.

I will further look at a typical example for paradigm change from anthropocentric to ecocentric perspective in J. Baird Callicot's explanation of environmental ethics. Callicot reviews three major forms of environmental ethics based on the understanding of value in nature developed so far.[7] The first form is human-centered environmental ethics, called "anthropocentrism,"[8] which is one we are all mostly familiar with and simply applies the Western utilitarian moral philosophy to environmental problems. The second one is "biocentrism"[9] or life-centered ethics that extends classical human ethics to all living existence. Based on the rationale of animal welfare ethicists to lower the standard for moral consideration from human rationality to a sentience that many kinds of animals possess, biocentrists extends this lowering of the qualification for ethical standing to the interests of all living things. The third one, called "ecocentrism,"[10] seeks a more holistic approach to the biotic community beyond a focus on individual welfare based on Aldo Leopold's land ethic.[11] As human ethics claims that we have moral duties and obligations to our social community to which we belong, as well as its individual members, we also have the same moral duties to the biotic community to which we belong.

In my view, the first anthropocentric paradigm is closely related to utilitarian concern because it provides nature with instrumental values for human interest. The second biocentric paradigm is related to deontological concern because of its stress on intrinsic value of organisms. And the third ecocentric paradigm tends to, again, be more utilitarian than

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[7] See J. Baird Callicott, "Toward a Global Environmental Ethics," in ed., Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim, *Worldview and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1993), 30-38.

[8] See Susan J. Amstrong & Richard G. Botzler, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), ch.6.

[9] Ibid., ch.7.

[10] Ibid., ch.8.

[11] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) , 237-264.

deontological for the sake of the good of the ecosystem. As noted above, the recognition of paradigm change in environmental ethics, that is, anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric one help us realize the hermeneutical, contextual and provisional nature of ethical theories and practice.

III. Hermeneutical Reconstruction of Moral Grounds for Ecological Ethics with Reflective Equilibrium

The hermeneutical and provisional nature of ethical judgments and principles will be further disclosed in reconstructing moral grounds in environmental or ecological ethics. This chapter helps us to see how the methodology of hermeneutical reconstruction with reflective equilibrium works in environmental ethical theories and practice. This methodology consists of the spiral circular process of mutual correction and justification between ethical judgments, principles and the relevant background theories in contemporary moral philosophy. It helps us recognize a diversity of ethical judgments, principles and theories leading to different kinds of justification of support or critique, reinforce or revision.[12] This methodology enables us to avoid foundationalism and then realize that a moral theory or ground could not be accepted as foundational.

Now I will examine three moral grounds for environmental ethics based on Ian Barbour's position: "human benefits from the environment," "duties to future generations," and "duties to nonhuman beings."[13] Then, I will also examine two moral grounds of ecological ethics based on Holmes Rolston, III's position: care for endangered species and

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[12] Francis Schüsller Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 301-304.

[13] Ian G. Barbour, *Technology, Environment, and Human Values* (New York: Praeger, 1980), 81-91.

the ecosystem.[14] First, many environmentalists ground environmental ethics on human interest or benefit from the environment. They basically stand on an anthropocentric position. Enlightened self-interest, which recognizes human well-being relies on the integrity of the ecosystem, provides motivation for pollution abatement, resource sustainability and the preservation of the wilderness. Human values require environmental values. For example, resource conservation is needed for the realization of human values. Wilderness preservation contributes to human life: it has aesthetic, moral, spiritual, and scientific values that benefit humans.

This view doesn't need a new environmental ethic, but a careful application of conventional inter-human ethics to nonhuman nature for human well-being. It is basically a utilitarian concern in that we recognize that human intervention in nature threatens both human well-being and the necessary conditions for sustaining life itself. Here a question arises about values and wilderness preservation. Does human aesthetic value theories or theories of human nature actually prevent human exploitation of nature for human consumption and economic development? James M. Gustafson argues that we have to affirm aesthetic and spiritual values as intrinsic in order to justify why we value nature.[15] He really doubts that aesthetic or spiritual values, which are primarily instrumental values based on human benefit from the environment, can serve to prevent human exploitative intervention in nature. This approach is also questionable in relation to the supposed quality of life. Whose quality of life? It is also related to the issue of justice that will be addressed later. A moral theory of human benefit from the environment background theories of enlightened self-interest, intrinsic value, justice

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[14] Holmes Rolston, III, *Philosophy Gone Wilde: Environmental Ethics* (Buffalo, N.Y.: ~~New York:~~ Prometheus Books, 1989).

[15] James M. Gustafson, *A Sense of The Divine: A Natural Environment From A Theocentric Perspective* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1994), 30.

Second, we need to consider the welfare of future generations. Do we really have moral responsibilities or obligations to future generations? This approach is basically related to the issue of survival. It is not easy to answer. Do we have moral obligations to future individuals who don't exist? Utilitarianism usually discounts the future, because of uncertainty about the remote results of human moral conduct, as well as confidence in humanity's technological advance. However, Barbour argues for moral duties to future generations from Rawl's idea of justice. Each generation should keep nonhuman nature no more polluted than when it began because we have a general duty to maintain the necessary conditions for human well-being.[16] Each generation has a right to the necessary conditions for a satisfactory human life.

John Passmore grounds the moral basis for concern of the future generations on the chain of love and concern just as we accept our moral concern for the future state of the present generation through prudence and love.[17] Or we can find our moral responsibilities for future generations in the Jewish covenant tradition,[18] because it extends the covenant from generation to generation. In this tradition, there is a strong sense of solidarity in time as well as in space. Or the biblical stewardship model requires our moral concern for future generations because God created this world and continuously plans its future.[19] However, it is perplexing to draw a clear distinction between the distant future and the near future. If our present generation suffers ecological catastrophe by acting unsustainably, will we still have any moral concern for future generations as we struggle to survive?

The third issue to be examined is human moral responsibility for nonhuman beings. Does human self-interest allow us to appropriately protect nonhuman beings? Do we have

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[16] Ian G. Barbour, *Technology, Environment, and Human Values*, 85.
[17] John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth & Co, 1974), 88-89.
[18] See Rosemary Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), ch.8.
[19] Sean McDonagh, *Passion for the Earth* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 128-134.

any moral duties to nonhuman beings? Traditional interhuman ethics claims that we have no direct moral duties to higher animals, much less other creatures, because they have no reason. Western ethics traditionally separates humans from nonhumans in terms of their rationality. Even higher animals deserve no moral rights nor are they moral agents, due to their lack of reason, that is the capacity for self-consciousness. Some utilitarians argue moral duties toward higher animals by including all sentient beings in the domain of "greatest happiness." The capability to experience suffering or pain is the criterion for whether a being can be an object of human moral duties. Animal rights movements also apply interhuman ethics to higher animals by lowering the criterion of moral standing from reason to sentience--to feel suffering or pain.[20] Even though the animals are not moral agents, they have certain interests. In this sense, they have a right not to be treated cruelly. A problem arises if we extend rights to life only to near-human animal cousins.

Holmes Rolston, III criticizes this ethic for being a subjective and psychologically based ethic that only values felt experiences. He claims that we cannot protect endangered species or the ecosystem with this moral extension. This is an extended moral theory that has no paradigm shift.[21] Nature shows, he claims, that there are no rights in nature. Nature is not interested in the welfare of particular animals. Our treatment of animals with compassion does not reflect their wildness. Compassion is formed in human culture where wild animals cannot enter. Sometimes culture may be bad for animals. Therefore Rolston suggests ecological ethics should be based on the biology and ecology of animals, not on human cultural devices, such as justice, charity, rights and welfare. The moral extension of human

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[20] See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon Books, 1990); Tom Regan, *The Case For Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983)

[21] Holmes Rolston, III, "Environmental Ethics: Values in and Duties to the Natural World," in *Ecology, Economics, Ethics: The Broken Circle*, edited by F. Herbert Bormann & Stephen R. Kellert (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 74-75.

ethics doesn't reflect animal biology and ecology.[22] James M. Gustafson also indicates inadequacy in using animal rights language to develop an ecological ethic. He claims it transfers the claim of rights in the order of human activity to nonhuman beings. This is a very rational discourse in the sphere of the law.[23] In this sense, Rolston explores an ecological ethic as more biologically objective and non-anthropocentric that needs a paradigm shift in interhuman ethics.

In regard to our moral duties toward sentient life, a basic question arises: why should we limit rights to life to sentient beings? Insentient beings neither suffer nor experience anything like animals, but they have their own good and interest, i.e. their own well-being. They have not subjective but only objective life. Ecology helps us affirm that the living individual organism has intrinsic value in itself in the web of interconnected life by showing that an organism is a spontaneous and self-maintaining system that sustains and reproduces itself and operates its program.[24] This means that moral duties to organic life in ecologically based ethics are based on the wonder of life. This is called biocentrism. Albert Schweitzer's notion of reverence for life represents this approach. Every organism has a will to live well and better.[25] He allows for no hierarchical value judgment among all living things. It allows living beings to have their own intrinsic value, but is difficult to support moral choice in policies and personal life.

Fourth, we face the issue of endangered species. It is difficult to extend our sensitivity to the wonder of life to endangered species. Rolston suggests the necessary shift from biologically based ethics to ethics with care.[26] We sometimes must decide to kill individuals

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[22] Ibid., 76-77.
[23] James Gustafson, *A Sense of The Divine*, 32-33.
[24] Holmes Rolston, 78-79.
[25] Albert Schweitzer, *Philosophy of Civilization* (Buffalo, N.Y.~~New York~~: Prometheus Books, 1987).
[26] Holmes Rolston , 83; Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). In critique of androcentric ethics of duty, rights and responsibility, Carol Gilligan suggests ethics of care and concern based on love, empathy and compassion.

for the good of their kind on the level of species. It is more important to protect the vitality of species than the integrity of individuals. It places more value on the species than individuals, because a lost species cannot be reproduced, while a lost individual can be.

Fifth, we turn to the good of the whole ecosystem? This issue focuses on an ethic for the biotic community. Ecosystems provide the coordinates within which each organism operates, outside of which the species can never be situated. Within an open and complex ecosystem an organism has internal relations with others. Moral duties occur in an encounter with the ecosystem. In this sense, Rolston suggests thinking in terms of systemic values rather than intrinsic values, because the ecosystem is a value provider, not a value owner.[27] Rolston's ecocentric environmental ethics is originally derived from Aldo Leopold's land ethic. Leopold's land ethic extends the boundaries of the community as follows: "The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."[28] In this sense, his land ethic is not the replacement of human ethics but its extension. Nevertheless, his land ethic is not anthropocentric but ecocentric because of its stress on the good of the whole ecosystem. "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community; it is wrong when it tends otherwise."[29] Here the consequence for the integrity, stability, and beauty of the ecosystem determines right or wrong action. That is, the good of the biotic community is the criterion by which moral judgment are justified.

The first three approaches are individualist; the last two approaches are ecocentric. Here, questions of justice arise in the last two approaches. Isn't dangerous to make the individual totally subject to the species or the ecosystem? In the case of the survival of species, survival is more valuable than freedom. Here the issue of survival is closely related

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[27] Ibid., 92.
[28] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 239.
[29] Ibid.,262; Curt Meine and Richard L. Knight, eds., *The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 296-313.

with the issue of justice. Survival of species is a future oriented concern. But the question must be faced: who should survive in the case of limited resources? At the same time, we face the survival of individuals. Survival is a precondition for other values. Rawls suggests the relative priority of survival, justice, freedom and material well-being depending on the situation. When our survival is threatened, justice and freedom are closely linked.

As noted above, Barbour's environmental ethics is relatively anthropocentric in that he grounds our moral duties for environmental preservation, resource sustainability and future generations primarily in human benefits. He even understands ecosystem integrity in terms of the long-term interests of humans. He favors a certain hierarchical understanding of values when human values and environmental values conflict, giving priority of intrinsic values over instrumental values. He regards ecological integrity as a precondition of life and of other values, but not as determining other values.[30] In contrast, Rolston suggests ecocentric should be based neither on human subjectivity nor instrumental or intrinsic values, but on biology and systemic values. However, ecocentric environmental ethics allows us to easily ignore individual well-being or intrinsic values, while it contributes to integrity, stability and beauty of the ecosystem as a whole. So, we need to differentiate human individuals from nonhuman individuals and the ecosystem.

I identify the spiral circular process of mutual correction and justification between moral judgments, principles and the background theories in each moral ground (i.e., human benefits from the environment, duties to future generations, duties to nonhuman beings, care for endangered species and the biotic community). The spiral circular process of critical correlation should be also applied to the five continuous moral grounds. In a word, there is no single foundational ground or theory by which moral judgments are conclusively justified. As noted above, hermeneutical reconstruction of ethical theories lies in critical correlation

[30] Barbour, 94.

between their moral judgments and principles and the relevant background theories. In this sense, it is necessary to critically correlate between the five moral grounds, especially anthropocentric and ecocetentric paradigms.

IV. A Theocentric Ecological Ethic of Inclusive Well-being

Here I will attempt to suggest a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being as one of Christian environmental ethics. Ecological ethic of well-being which I suggest is an ecological ethic which sees universal well-being as the underlying moral value and criterion by which moral decisions are made. I understand well-being as inclusive meaning and values of welfare, happiness, health, peace, wholeness, fullness and shalom. In inclusive meaning of well-being, each of five moral grounds or theories purses well-being of human beings, future generations, nonhuman beings, endangered species and the ecosystem. We can see how and to what extent each one draws a line of well-being in the previous section. From human benefits to care for the ecosystem, the line of well-being has been inclusively enlarged. And then how is justified drawing a line of well-being in the specific context of ecological crisis?

When I classify the five moral theories into two opposite paradigms, Barbour's moral position is still anthropocentric, even though he recognizes ecological integrity as a precondition of life. His primary concern is human well-being. In contrast, Rolston represents an ecocentric perspective that can allow an ecosystem to ignore individual well-being for the sake of ecological integrity. In my view, both paradigms are opposite to each other in their strength and weakness.

Is there a way of reflectively balancing anthropocentric paradigm and ecocentric one in a Christian ecological ethics for the sake of human well-being and the well-being of the ecosystem? James M. Gustafson suggests a theocentric ecological ethic that strikes a reflective equilibrium between anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives. His theocentric

approach recognizes a sense of radical ecocentric interdependence with an anthropocentric accountability which allows for the possibility of human intervention for justifiable ends. He says:

> My theocentric perspective, humans and other aspect of nature as participants, the multidimensionality of values and relational value theory, and the unavoidability of moral ambiguity all cohere. God is the ultimate power of and orderer of the interdependence of elements of life with each other. But there is no clear overriding telos, or end, which unambiguously orders the priority of nature and human participation in it so that one has perfect moral justification for all human interventions.[31]

Gustafson suggests this "participation in nature" model as the ideal type, based on the proper place of humanity between God and nonhuman nature.[32] This type is not primarily derived from theological and biblical concepts of dominion or stewardship, but from human experience of all life in the world in our contemporary understanding of creation. He grounds intrinsic values in nature on a sense of the sublime, a sense of the divine and God, not in nature. We participate in the patterns of interdependence of life in the world in which we intervene for the sake of humans and nature as well. We need to value nonhuman nature in relation to both human well-being and the well-being of nature. I think Gustafson's theocentric perspective may be more appropriate model than the others that properly considers the place of humans in nature in terms of the common good for human and non-human beings and also the whole ecosystem in the face of the ecological crisis.

As shown in a wide range of environmental ethics from human beings through nonhuman beings to the ecosystem, there is unavoidable moral ambiguity as a result of competing values among them. Except for a narrowly defined environmental ethic that focuses on human benefits from nature as resource, they, by and large, recognizes the well-

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[31] James M. Gustafson, *The Sense of the Divine*, 72.
[32] Ibid., 99-106.

being of every living existence in nature and the well-being of nature as the biotic integrity. At least every approach, whether its boundary is narrow or broad, is concerned with the well-being of a certain group or a system of life it supports. In addition, I see a possibility to deepen a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being in terms of theological reconstruction of sin as the unnecessary violation of the well-being of creation. It is noted that inclusive well-being can be the norm against which we measure sin in the realm of creation, just as we have measured sin against the divine will in the classical definition of sin as rebellion against God.

How ethical norm of inclusive well-being is critically correlated to theological reconstruction of sin? Whose well-being is valued over another in case of conflicts with each other? In face of competing values, how can inclusive or universal well-being be held as the norm or criterion against which sin is assessed? In the context of more inclusive well-being than others found in Rolston and Gustafson's versions of environmental ethics, I will further examine Suchocki's exploration of the possibility of universal well-being based on the interdependence of all existences in the world in the co-creation of God and the world.

In recognition of the tension between the vision of inclusive well-being and its practice in the competing realities of life, Suchocki sees this tension as essential to the understanding of well-being and thus sin in the interdependent world.[33] She notes the perspectival aspect of the vision of well-being. A vision of well-being can imagine a human world in which human physical and spiritual needs could be met. Yet, a vision of human well-being is one of many other-centered perspectives of the world. In relation to other worlds, such as animals, plants and the ecosystem itself, our perspective can be extended beyond narrow human interest into a more inclusive well-being.

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[33] See Marjorie –Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 66-73; *God Christ Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (New York: Cross Road, 1992), ch.2.

The dynamic interdependence of the world also leads us to know that all existences mutually rely upon each other. From our perspective, other existences exist for our well-being. From their perspectives, we exist for their well-being. Human existence is one of myriad centers of all other existences. We see the full dynamics of interdependent existence from our own perspective. The perspectival aspect of the vision of well-being and the fullness of interdependence leads to inevitable valuation of interdependent relations. By and large, the more we "depend on," the more we value. The closer we feel, the more we value. It is inevitable that we see our vision of well-being and that we value persons and things from our perspective.[34] Well-being is a value given to every existence. The assumption that every existence, which has its own center in an interdependent world, has its own well-being, involves reciprocal responsibility since interdependence entails interrelation of well-being for one another. One's well-being relies on others' well-being. The world in which all forms of existence exist in mutual relations of well-being is based on neither egoism nor altruism, but mutual responsibility, respect, trust and care.[35] This implies that inclusive well-being and its responsibility, whether personally or socially, cannot be fully realized because the vision of well-being is perspectival and our capability for responsibility is limited.

Nevertheless, in relation to the perspectival nature of the vision of well-being, and the limitation of mutual responsibility for well-being, how can we speak of a criterion of inclusive or universal well-being that all forms of existences may be well? The ideal vision of inclusive well-being, though its full realization is impossible in an interdependent world, provides us with practical awareness that we might be drawing a narrower line of well-being than is necessary.[36] Inclusive well-being gives us an ideal in terms of which our inevitable value assessment can be extended beyond a human-centered narrow perspectives toward a

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[34] Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 69.
[35] Ibid., 71.
[36] Ibid., 73.

more inclusive perspective. It challenges the narrow limits and boundaries that we have comfortably drawn around human species without any responsibility or respect for the well-being of others.

We could posit inclusive well-being as the criterion against which we measure sin. We sin because we violate the inclusive well-being of creation. Violation of the well-being of creation becomes also violation of the well-being of God. We now turn to God's participation in the well-being of creation in order to examine the well-being of God. What is the role of God in creation toward the universal well-being? Suchocki holds that the qualities of truth, love and beauty essential to God's well-being supplements the well-being of creation.[37] We can imagine creation since we posit God as the only reality who feels creation as it is. In the unity of God, God's feeling of all the actualities of creation is to recreate creation into God's becoming self. God integrates these feelings of creation into God's character. God's value judgment occurs in this integration.

The truth, love, and beauty of the divine judgment reveal its salvific aspect. God's truth means God's ultimate knowledge of creation as it has become. In the divine love, God fully accepts every existence as it is. The divine ultimate knowledge leads to God's ultimate acceptance even in judgment. In the divine beauty, God integrates creation into God's own character as the ultimate harmony of all possibilities of creation. The vision of God in a relational world is a vision of these divine qualities that constitute the well-being of God. The transformation of creation in the depths of God's truth, love and beauty renders the transformation of creation possible in history.[38] In the interdependence between God and creation, the truth, love and beauty, which constitute the well-being of God conditions the

[37] Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 74-80; *God Christ Church*, ch.3.
[38] Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 75.

well-being of creation.[39] Every existence in the world experiences the divine responsiveness to creation and thus adapts the divine qualities to its context. Human existence is more open to the effect of the divine qualities on its context than any other existence.

Inclusive well-being is the ideal goal toward which the creativity of God and creation reach all together. The truth, love and beauty that constitute the well-being of creation will be expressed in many forms of well-being. There will be no final mode of truth, love, and beauty in the finite creation. Nevertheless, the more we deny truth, love and beauty for ourselves and others, the more we violate the well-being of ourselves, others, creation and finally God as well. This is sin against creation. The well-being of creation thus becomes the criterion against which we measure sin. Suchocki has made a major contribution in defining sin primarily as rebellion against creation, and the criterion of sin as the well-being of creation in the competitive realities of "the robbery of life"[40] based on Whitehead's relational metaphysics. In consideration of hermeneutical reconstruction with reflective equilibrium, by critically correlating Gustafson's theocentric environmental ethic of the well-being of human beings and the ecosystem, and Suchocki's relational metaphysics of the well-being of creation and God, I suggest a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being as the moral criterion by which moral judgments are made and against which sin is measured.

V. Conclusions

In face of ecological crisis, this article attempted to suggest a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being as one of Christian environmental ethics which reflects a methodology of hermeneutical reconstruction with reflective equilibrium. For this end, I

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[39] Ibid., 77.
[40] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 105.

confirmed the hermeneutical and contextual nature of ethical practice and theories in reviewing paradigm change in environmental ethics, i.e., utilitarian and deontological ethical systems, and anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric paradigms. I then explored hermeneutical reconstruction of five major moral grounds or theories with reflective equilibrium, i.e., human benefits from the environment, duties to future generations, duties to nonhuman beings, care for endangered species and the ecosystem. In accordance with a methodology of hermeneutical reconstruction with reflective equilibrium consisting of the spiral circular process of mutual critique, justification and adjustment between moral judgments, principles and the background theories, I here affirmed that no single ground or theory should not be foundational, but rather the foundation lies in critical correlation between ethical practice and theories. Then as a more appropriate way than others of dealing with the ecological crisis in the area of Christian environmental ethics, I suggested a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being. This ecological ethic sees inclusive well-being as its moral principle or criterion by which moral judgments and theological sin are measured. In recognition of hermeneutical and provisional nature of moral practice and theories, its inevitable moral ambiguity in the competing realities of life in the interdependent world, the vision of inclusive well-being and its practice could not be conclusively or fully realized. Nevertheless, I affirm that the ideal vision of inclusive well-being as the moral principle or criterion gives us practical awareness that we might be drawing a narrower line of well-being than is necessary in the specific contexts and then sin against the well-being of creation and God. It challenges us to draw more inclusive line of well-being for the sake of the good of creation and God than anthropocentric or biocentric narrow line of well-being for themselves.

Abstract

Grappling with the ecological crisis as a crisis of culture and also an opportunity for emancipation, this paper attempts to suggest a theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being as one of Christian environmental ethics in consideration of a methodology of hermeneutical reconstruction with reflective equilibrium. Firstly, it reviews paradigm change in environmental ethics and then confirms the contextual and provisional nature of ethical practice and theories. Secondly, this paper explores hermeneutical reconstruction of five major moral grounds or theories for ecological ethics with reflective equilibrium and then affirms that a single ground or theory should not be foundational. Rather the foundation lies in critical correlation between ethical practice and theories. Thirdly, it suggests theocentric ecological ethic of inclusive well-being, which is its moral criterion by which moral judgments and theological sin are measured. In recognition of its inevitable moral ambiguity in the competing realities of life, its moral principle of inclusive well-being provides us with practical awareness that we might be drawing a narrower line of well-being than is necessary in the specific context. Then, it challenges us to draw more inclusive range of well-being for the sake of the good of creation and God more than conventional anthropocentric or biocentric environmental ethics does.

Keywords

Ecological Ethics, Inclusive Well-being, Theocentric, Reflective Equilibrium, Sin

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