

Transformative Convergence of Spirituality for Conviviality

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Over the last three centuries there have been intensive encounters between Eastern and Western civilizations and between modern and traditional civilizations.¹ These processes have been described in many different ways. But we are seeking clues toward a convergence that is creative and transformative.

Violent Fragmentation of Life and Corrosion of Earth, the Abode of Life of All Living Beings

We are witnessing to the radical fragmentation and violent brokenness of life on earth. Bodies, spirits, families, local

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1 Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West* (Oxford University Press, 1953).

communities, national peoples and regional politics are brutalized, broken into painful fragments, made to suffer and die. This shattering of the integrity of life extends to the whole cosmic order of life, with violent conflicts in its ecological, geopolitical, political, economic, social, cultural and religious dimensions. Meanwhile, all living beings yearn for a peaceful order of conviviality — an abode of life in “great peace” (T'aiping=太平).

Clearly, the intertwined global empire and global market regime are at the root of this fragmentation of people's bodies and spirits, families and communities. The political dynamics of life have become a demonic symbiosis of war-making, as we witness in the “war on terror” and the exploitation of natural resources for the industrial market, which is heavily involved in economic warfare.

The aggressive technocracy of industrial, military and political statecraft is based on the science of objectification, reductionism and technological instrumentalism for control and domination.

Modern science is totally lacking in the capacity to grasp life as a whole, as the living subject. Rather, scientific and technological integration has brought a deadly fusion of forces moving to create a trans-human world and a mechanical history, pushing all of life toward chaotic omnicide.

Therefore, I feel the urgent need for a new discourse on “Spirituality for Conviviality—Oikonomia Convivencia”—for a just and peaceful order of life and conviviality among all living beings.

Transformative Convergence of Spiritualities for Convivial Life

Convergent dynamics for the conviviality of all living beings

pervade the universe in space and time. Heaven, humans and the earth converge to form a cosmic order of life that is justice, peace and conviviality. This is a vision of omnipresent compassion, care and love among all living beings. Every locus of the universe and every moment of time converge to birth, foster and bring this Kairotic pivot of life to fullness in the ever-changing cosmos.

When life is being killed or injured, it manifests an inherently stronger vitality. The dynamics of conviviality gain even more vigor under conditions of oppression, for life is the subjective reality for its own full realization. Each living being is a subject that rejects objectification, control or domination: intellectually, spiritually, bodily or politically. All living beings are living subjects, individually and collectively.

This astonishing reality of life is the direct opposite of global capitalism and its global market regime, and contrary to the “logic” of social Darwinism and the modern philosophy of contradiction, which have artificially and arbitrarily been posited as the engine of the cosmos of life, in symbiosis with the powers and principalities.

The modern scientific rationale of the universe of life, viewed in terms of the survival of the fittest, is cruel and ethically corrupt from its theoretical foundation, as revealed through the activities of the global powers and principalities.

The convergent movement of life resists the destructive forces of death operating through geopolitical hegemony and global militarism. It resists the symbiosis of the global market regime, the geo-politics of domination, and the global technocracy, now threatening cosmic life with total ruin. When we resist the power of the global empire, we are reaffirming our belief that the

convergence of justice, peace and conviviality (life together) is a basic precondition for life in fullness.

Our Kairotic place and pivot, here and now, is determined by the historical situation of struggle by all living beings against the forces of destruction and death.

What is the convergence of spiritualities in the context of the global empire, which through its arbitrary, violent fragmentation of communities may destroy the whole abode of life? A spiritual convergence can form a foundation of life for all living beings.

Why Convergence?

1) The universe is one whole order of conviviality of all living beings on earth and under heaven. This convergence constitutes the essential dynamic of all things. Every moment in time at every point in space meets at the point of every event in the lives of all living beings. All diverse and divergent dimensions and factors meet at every point of the act of life. This Omega point is the end point of the Alpha of life. Between the Omega and the Alpha there is infinite and permanent change. Convergence takes place as a Kairotic time and space.

2) There is already in progress a convergent movement among the peoples on earth, and among all living beings, against the life-destroying powers. The vision for convergence of movements of liberation is held in common by every part of life: "the cosmos is groaning for liberation from all the principalities and powers of this world."

3) The symbiotic dynamics of domination wielded by the global

market and global empire appear in various forms, particularly that of the technological fusion that is at their core. This unprecedented reality calls us to perceive the signs of the times and create visions for a new world.

Against the convergent powers of the global empire, humans together with all other living beings need to bring about a convergence of life together (Conviviality = Convivencia).

Definition of Convergence

“In general, convergence is a coming together of two or more distinct entities or phenomena.” Convergence preserves the divergence and diverse identity of actors who participate in the convergence process. Convergence of divergent actors leads to a new horizon or reality at the point of converging. We use this term in an integral and holistic way, with regard to beings meeting and interacting toward new relationships. In this sense convergence is the creative and transformative dynamics of life.

Here, I would like to highlight the transformative dynamics of spiritual convergence as the cue for transformation toward conviviality on earth.

The Monolithic Geopolitical Integration and Symbiosis of Global Empire

The end of the Cold War marked the closure of a distinct era in geopolitics and international relations. It changed not only the

relations between states and rival blocs of states, but the very boundaries and definitions of states, and thus the component parts of the international system. The consequences of this rapid and dramatic transformation constitute the premises upon which international politics are now conducted, and the foundations on which a new global order is being built, or from which a pattern of controlled disorder is emerging. What has happened is the political convergence of global empire, intertwined with convergence in the technocratic world.

The Global Military Order Is a Matrix of Destructive Convergence

The military technocracy is integrating developments in nanotechnology, information, biotech (synthetic biology) and cognitive technologies, as for example in its integrated helmet with tunable hearing, night vision, communications, and physical and auditory protection providing tactical awareness and cognition of "in-field" activity.

"Matrix" is a complex idea used in various fields from biology to electronics, including mathematics and logic. It suggests a "supporting structure" and an "enclosing structure," one that encompasses diversity by interconnecting many structures. The idea of matrix is spreading widely in the technocratic world.

Cultural Symbiosis to Colonize the Spirit

There is also a cultural convergence under way, for market and

empire hegemony. The media technocracy has colonized the world of consciousness, perception and senses in a way that is antithetical to the natural sense of life. Academic and educational institutions are producing obedient servants for the global market and global empire. These technocrats and celebrants of power and money are strangers to the convivial life of all living beings.

Spiritual Convergence for Conviviality: Contours of Convergence Movement in the 21st Century

We can affirm the convergence of all living beings for Conviviality of Life, starting with convergence for the liberation of all. The convergent vision of peoples should be for shared participation, justice, peace, creativity and conviviality in life together of all living beings.

Convergence of Life is needed to overcome the convergence of global empire, which is fragmenting and destroying life. From times past, the order of life has been determined by the powerful. Now the global market, global empire and their convergent powers are imposing a disorder of life in Asia and throughout the earth.

Now is the time for all living beings to be joined in a new vision that is grounded in historical visions and wisdom, in response to the powers of the global empire and global market.

The fragmentation we are experiencing in this 21st century includes not only oppression and exploitation but the pitting of religions against each other. This calls for a resolute convergence in local, national, regional and global dimensions, a vital convergence of movements for liberation of life in justice, peace

and conviviality.

What is urgently needed is a comprehensive, integral vision of peace for life among peoples of different religious faiths, philosophical convictions and cultural values, a vision that is manifested in a political vision of life for action together. This means the resolute rejection of any formula of peace for life from the outside, that is, from the global empire. It must be the people's own vision, coming out of their own struggle. Yet it must be able to connect the people's own vision with the wider vision of people in regional/continental and global convergence.

Historical Precedents of Spiritual Convergence in East Asian History

Seon To (仙道=理化相生 經世濟民 太平盛代 = Convivencia or Conviviality) in the founding saga of Korea is the original arche of spirituality of the Korean people for conviviality, similar to the African Ubuntu. The historical saga of the Korean founding community reveals a Shamanistic spirituality.

Seon To converged with Buddhism, especially Maitreya Messianic Buddhism in the late Baekje period, cascading into Jungto (淨土= Pure Land).

The dynamics of transformation continued, as these spiritualities converged with Revolutionary Confucianism (especially Mencius) and its maxim "The heart of the people is the heart of Heaven," and led to the founding of the 500-year Chosun reign.

Then the Roman Catholic Spirituality of Heavenly Lord (天主實義) entered the Confucian order, invigorating the transformative

dynamics in the mid-Chosun era, when Confucian reformer Chung Yak Yong made his great intellectual breakthrough in the later part of the Chosun kingdom.

All of this led to the Donghak Movement, which emerged as a paradigm of Transformative Convergence of Spiritualities in Korea. The spiritualities I have briefly listed here were converged into the vital transformative spiritual dynamics of the Donghak peasant movement, and it was conjugated into the philosophy of life of all living beings, as a transforming dynamic of Chosun history in the later part of the 19th century.

The analogues of Donghak are found in the T'aiping Movement in China, and in the Minbonshugi (民本主義=Daisho Democracy) in Japan.

The transformative convergence of spiritualities generated revolutionary dynamics in the history of the Korean peninsula.

The Donghak Peasant Revolutionary Movement in the later part of the 19th century was suppressed by the Japanese Army.

But the transformative dynamics of spiritual convergence continued to be manifested in the history of Korea: in the March First Independence Movement of 1919, and again in the movement for democracy in South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s.

One of the most distinct characteristics of this transformative convergence of spiritualities is its embrace of Western philosophical thought such as the socialist and radical liberal philosophies of the West. This was illustrated in the social and political movements of China and Korea.

The convergent spirituality of the Korean people will be manifested in the transformative movement for reunification of

the Korean people and for peace in East Asia in the years to come.

These dynamics of spiritual convergence will meet their Chinese and Japanese counterparts to forge a world of Great Peace in East Asia. This shows us the need to foster a transnational convergence of spiritualities and social philosophies which may be conjugated into ecological, economic, political and geopolitical discourses toward East Asian peace for life together.

The Movement of Convergence for Life:

- (1) Convergence of all living beings in the struggle for liberation from the shackles of global empire, as an apex of macro-ecumenical movement.
- (2) Convergence in forming an emergent vision of life in justice, peace, and conviviality, as an alternative vision of life against the destructive dynamics of the global powers and principalities.
- (3) Convergence in the actions of all living beings for justice, peace and conviviality at the point of unity and solidarity to realize the fullness of life.
- (4) Convergence for convivial community, as the feast of life in its supreme fulfillment.

East Asian examples—in fact, paradigms—of historical convergence are found in the Donghak and T'aiping movements. The Omega/Alpha point was liberation from the oppressive powers and principalities. The convergent vision emerged through religious convergence among divergent religions. Both presented a new horizon for life in fullness with implications for

acting and living together.

Recovery of the Pivotal Point of Convergence: Is This Possible?

Jesus of Galilee against the Roman Empire is our pivotal point: It triggered a convergent vision for an order of life that would overcome the domination of Pax Romana; inherit the prophetic visions of justice, peace and life; overcome socio-economic class contradictions, ethnic-national divisions, gender and cultural injustice, intellectual segregation, power domination and religious discrimination.

However, this vision was obscured by the Romanization of the Christian faith and its subsequent development, the Western modernization of Christian faith, and Christian symbiosis with the Western colonial powers. The Christian faith needs to recover Jesus the Galilean, who holds the wisdom and the vision of life for all living beings in conviviality, and thereby to open a new horizon of convergence of different faiths and philosophies.

Convergence of wisdom and visions of life means a convergence of all wisdoms: religious and cultural, philosophical and intellectual, historical and ecological. It is a multi-faith, multi-cultural, multi-philosophical convergence. Jesus the Asian stands among these convergent movements and dynamics, becoming the Alpha and Omega of the convergence of liberation and conviviality of all living beings.

The ecumenical convergence of the Christian faith has been too constrictive. The notion of unity rings the bell of an imperial order. Agreements on doctrines and church order, which have been greatly influenced by the political regimes, is too restrictive a base for an ecumenical unity of the church or of humanity.

Convergence of the people's liberation movements should be inclusive of all their religious and philosophical wisdoms of life.

A Concluding Word

- 1) Religious ecumenism for liberation has been fragmented in spite of its exercises in dialogue and cooperation.
- 2) Religious ecumenism for liberation has been condemned to localized contexts in the name of contextualization.
- 3) Religious ecumenism for liberation has failed to forge a convergent solidarity in spite of the passion for unity.
- 4) Religious ecumenism for liberation needs clearer discernment of the signs of the times, to reach a convergent vision of the world reality.

To participate in convergence for life in fullness in Asia, we need:

- 1) Liberation from the global empire and its nexus in West Asia and the world. Divesting from religious ideologies—Christian and Jewish religious ideologies—is an integral dimension of the political struggle for liberation.
- 2) A search for a convergent vision of life in justice, peace and conviviality among faiths, cultures and philosophies, to open a new horizon.
- 3) Local, international and global convergence in action; living life in fullness.

Can we name the illicit symbiosis of powers and principalities against the life of peoples and living beings as the Axis of Global Empire? Can we forge a convergent vision of peace for life?

- 1) We need to ask the people who are suffering, and hear the voices of life in their convergent stories as new stories:

stories of suffering and hope. For the people are the living subjects who suffer and struggle; they are the subjects and the tellers of their own stories.

For example, we need to hear the cries of the dead, the maimed and injured, those separated and imprisoned by the wall of brutality in Palestine:

- (a) Children—Palestinian children (Nicole), who have lost everything
- (b) Youth who have lost hope for the future
- (c) Women who are raped and mutilated
- (d) Religiously / culturally damaged victims (religious prostitution, debased religion, religious ideology)
- (e) The poor and the hungry
- (f) The sick without hope of healing or cure
- (g) Those imprisoned by the Israeli state
- (h) The hostages
- (i) Those exposed to insecurity in their occupied land

These stories express intensely the reality of the global empire and global market. This is the pivot of struggle for life in justice and peace.

- 2) We need convergent readings of other faiths' cultural and philosophical texts: Is it possible to do a new reading of texts in the context of stories of their suffering and struggle?
 - (a) Liberation of texts from principalities and powers
 - (b) Liberation of texts from religious ideologies
 - (c) Convergent vision and common conviction and passion
- 3) We need the creation of a new, convergent discourse of life in fullness:

Justice, peace and conviviality, revisiting of socialist philosophies, reconstruction of a vision of peace; conviviality vs. the survival of the strongest and fittest; an integral vision of life beyond reductionism and fragmentation.

4) We need modalities of new convergent action: conversation, dialogue and communication leading to such convergence.

5) We need a geopolitical convergence of resistances.

From the ends of the world, people in resistance should converge their stories of suffering, and their visions and strategies and actions for resistance, against the convergence of the US, British and Israeli interests.

From every corner of the earth the people of resistance should converge at the center of the global empire, to expose its evils and to demonstrate life in conviviality through the sharing of experiences of suffering and struggle, through the forging of a vision of peace for life, and through convergent action and living.

Convergence of Liberation Politics

Convergence of convictions of social philosophies, religious faiths and national cultures for justice, peace and conviviality should bring about a convergent vision, convergent ways, and convergent strategies to overthrow the hegemony of the global empire and to build a new world. We will reject any fragmenting of the convergent liberation movement for life through the politics of gender, class, caste, race, ethnicity, culture or geopolitics.

The people, as the pivot of these convergences of resistance and

liberation movements, are a creative flux in resistance against the powers and principalities of the global regime and its local, national and regional manifestations. For the people are the subjects of their life together, the visionaries of the new world, and the peace makers for life in conviviality.

Life (Saengmyong=生命) is the pivotal point of Kairos (Taeguk=太極) of the Cosmos.

In the cosmos there is manifest movement of convergence toward the overcoming of contradictions and conflicts, which contravenes the logic of survival of the fittest. Justice, peace and conviviality are the basic conditions of great prosperity (太平盛代). Convergence is often used to refer to the fusion of technologies. Technological convergence points to the way technologies are increasingly converging into one. The availability of carrier technology with high bandwidth means that transmission is not limited to voice only; now data, pictures and other multimedia and interactive media can be transported in one single carrier technology like fiber optic cables and satellite technology. One other noticeable technology that perhaps is the epitome of convergence technology is computer technology. This technology provides the most striking convergent service: Internet. The Internet combines all known communication media into one single service on a computer screen.

In this context the term refers to the combination of two or more different technologies in a single device. Taking pictures with a cell phone and surfing the Web on a television are

two of the most common examples of this trend.” “The act of converging and especially moving toward union or uniformity; especially: coordinated movement of the two eyes so that the image of a single point is formed on corresponding retinal areas. Convergence is the combination of all these different media into one operating platform. It is the merger of telecom, data processing and imaging technologies. This convergence is ushering in a new epoch of multimedia, in which voice, data and images are combined to render services to the users. Braman (1998) notes that economic convergence occurs when an industry becomes dominated by oligopoly. When the individuality of an organization yields to more collective forms due to networking relationships, there is also a blurring of industrial lines. For instance telecom companies are converging through a series of mergers and acquisition deals, and telecom companies are moving into a new telecom market in addition to their traditional markets. This is a new industrial technocracy.

Unless this convergence in a perpetual flux and in a decisive moment is understood, it is not possible to understand life and the universe. This is true of Western physics and the Eastern I-Ching. In a way there is a convergence between the laws of quantum physics and Li of I-Ching (the Book of Change). Yet these two are fundamentally different in that the one is objective and the other is ethical.