

The Study of Life in Doing Theology: Overcoming the forces of death

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Theology used to be regarded as the queen of the sciences; now it is alienated from the main body of academic activities, especially the natural sciences. We need theological reflection that serves all the academic disciplines, as an integral part of the study of life. Theology is needed to help overcome the reductionism of the modern sciences and the fragmentation of the full reality of life. Theology should function as an integrative discourse to build a holistic relationship among the disciplines. Two tasks will be presented: (1) The Story of Life as an integrative discourse on life; and (2) Convergence of the Eastern Wisdom of life and the modern sciences of life as a way toward multi-disciplinary methodology.

In the 21st century the universal issue is life: the life of all living beings, and how to overcome the powers that destroy life, such as war, poverty, hunger, disease, political oppression, cultural desertification and ecological disruption, in the context of imperial hegemony. The global empire and the global market, organized by modern technocratic power and based on modern scientific knowledge, have created an omnicidal threat on an unprecedented scale.

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I. Zoesophia (Integral Study of Life)

Theological discourse today needs to be one of convergent discourse from a global perspective. Starting from the Christian civilizations (Christendom) of West and East (“classical” theology), it has developed into “contextual” theologies, and is clearly fragmented. Theological discourse has gotten lost on the way to becoming fully global. This situation calls for a convergence of different theological discourses in one global context, through what may be called theological ecumenism. This is to overcome the claim of the “classical theology” to be universal and therefore global. There is a charge that even liberation theologies are fragmented due to their different contexts. This calls for a convergence of liberation theologies, while their unique and different contributions should be maintained in order to be faithful to their liberation agenda.

This is the way I have come to the issue of life in my theological journey. As a Minjung theologian I participated in the 1983 WCC General Assembly in Vancouver, Canada. The theme was “Jesus Christ, Life of the World. I was very active in the movement of JPIC at both the global level and in the Asian context. From the time of the debate on JPSS (Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society, 1977), and continuing through the Vancouver Assembly and other ecumenical activities, I felt that the ecumenical movement was a little short of evolving a theology of life to deal with the reality of destruction that was threatening all of life. That is, the theology of life was not engaged fully with the whole universe of life. Specifically, the theology of life was unable to engage in the secular discourse on life, especially the scientific

discourse.

As participants in the movement for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (Convocation in Seoul, Korea, 1990), we covenanted with each other and with God, dedicating ourselves for justice, peace and integrity of creation, that is, the life of the world. Although the ecumenical process took up the issue of bioethics as a part of its discussions, it could not take up the biological sciences and the whole matter of the bio-tech industry and its impact on our contemporary civilization (Church and Society, Conference on Faith and Sciences, 1978).

This is one reason why I have devoted my time and energy to the integral study of life (Zoesophia), to evolve a convergent discourse on life from various perspectives and contexts.

Living in Korea, a non-Christian country, and in the modernist cultural milieu of the intellectual community, I find theological discourse a bit confining, not being able to deal with critical issues of the times in a holistic manner. Theological discourse should be relevant not only in the church but in the society at large. It should be relevant in particular contexts but also in the global context.

While I was serving as the president of a university, an academic community, it became clear to me that the department of theology was alienated from the general discourse on life and history. Today theological language is separated from the discourse on globalization, and it does not engage the forces in the world. Therefore, the theological foundation needs to find expression in a multi-disciplinary mode, so that theological reflection can engage the discourses on the global reality.

In the Western Christianity theology has very ambivalent

relations to modern science and technology. While it is dethroned from the central place in the universe of discourse in modern times, it sought to adjust itself to the canons of modern rationality, that is, science and technology.

Modern civilization has created a world under epistemological captivity and technological control, that is, the technocratic enslavement of all life. Theology is no longer the center of civilization; it has been dethroned. The dethronement was done by force, through the symbiosis of science and technology with the powers that be: political, economic and military. Theology has been dethroned by the global economic regime, the global military regime, the global Empire, and by religions and cultures, through their collusion with power.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, religionless discourse is needed to communicate with the modern world. This was taken later as a celebration of the secular (H. Cox, C. West and Th. van Leeuwen). In this stance theology sought to have a positive approach to the modern secular world of science and technology for witness of Gospel to the modern world. Yet theology has been alienated from the modern world. Theological discourse needs to find a way to be a discourse, relevant in the world overcoming constrictions of the modern science and technology.

Theological discipline is needed to serve the fullness of life of all beings in the garden of life in a concrete way. To serve life is to raise it up as its sovereign self. But theological discourse has been discarded from the main discourse of historical development, and thus deprived of its service to God the Creator and Sustainer, Savior and Spirit of Life of the Cosmos.

Modern scientific discourse has a fundamental problem of

separating the imperative from human discourse. Theological discipline must overcome the separation between the objective indicative and the ethical imperative. The rules and norms of modern scientific language have left no room for theological discourse to participate in the world of discourse on life. This split between the indicative and the imperative is the source of reductionism and fragmentation in the discourse on life as a whole (Immanuel Kant). It is Kant who dismantled metaphysical foundation of theological discourse in the pre-modern ages.

A much more serious matter, however, is that Christian theological discourse has become the captive of the imperial power complex of geo-politics, the global market and the global military order. The current global imperial order utilizes Christianity as its culture and religion. This situation is the same with the science and technology in the form of technocratic regime which has symbiotic collusion with the imperial and global powers that be. Fresh thinking is urgently needed. In this context I have proposed the paradigm of integral study of life (Zoesophia □ Wisdom of Life). The following are preliminary assumptions for the integral study of life.

1. Zoesophia (Wisdom of Life) as Theological Paradigm

In Asia some of us (Christian intellectuals) have decided that the world should be understood as the triple intertwined matrix of global empire, global market and the convergence of advanced technologies, and their impact upon all life including human beings. This view was manifested in an historic conference on Globalization and the War on Terror (Manila, 2002). An important discussion also took place at Drew

University and Union Theological Seminary (NYC) in 2002. A global ecumenical follow-up took place at the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Accra, Ghana, 2004), which recognized the global empire as the missiological framework for Christian witness to economic and ecological justice. This was followed up by the United Church of Canada at its General Assembly, and by the WSCF General Assembly. As a post-General Assembly WCC event, the Manila conference was organized by concerned theologians of the world to discuss the theological implications of global empire (Manila Declaration).

The global signs of the times are dominated by the symbiosis of the global economic regime with the global empire, which is further interlinked with the convergent sciences and technologies (technocracy). This global reality poses the unprecedented threat of total destruction of life, as the anti-life geo-political, economic and ecological trends are totalistic and multi-dimensional. This reality needs to be articulated through fresh theological construction, a task that the Asian Christian intellectual community is ready to take up.

2. Life is the Sovereign Subject

In this critical context we affirm that Life is the Sovereign Subject—that is, the life of all living beings in the cosmos. This involves ecological debate as well as anthropological, biological, sociological (economic, geopolitical and political), religious and cultural discussion as to what life is. Because the present realities threatening living beings are all interconnected, what is needed is an integral study of life (Zoesophia) and a cosmic framework for new understanding through fresh multi-disciplinary study

and convergence of the various wisdoms about life.

Therefore we make the following propositions about what life is.

1) Life is the sovereign subject of the whole web-work of all living beings.

What this means is that life is not just an objective entity, grasped by abstract scientific statements and formulae and technologically engineered, but a subjective living reality, free and convivial, and a movement that has three aspects: 生命 (Saengmyong = life), 살 (Salm = living), 살림 (Salim = cause to live). To live is to act to overcome the power of death and destruction of living beings; to resist their objectification; and to overcome their epistemological captivity and colonization. Objectification of life refers to the treatment of living beings as fragments and objects to be manipulated and destroyed at will.

To live together means to live for common liberation. In affirming these propositions, we affirm a cosmology of life as an integral part of the oikos (Wooju = 宇宙 Household) of convivial life. Cosmic ecology is understood beyond the discourse of physical science, including ecological discourse.

2) Life as Subject (主體) includes the integral Story of Life = Zoography (生命傳記).

Let us look at the biological definition of life in a new, dynamic direction. "Life has properties that clearly distinguish it from everything else." Every living thing is cellular. In other words, it is either a single-celled creature or a creature composed of biological cells. Every cell is bounded by its own outer membrane and contains a full set of instructions necessary for its operation and reproduction. Furthermore, every cell uses the

same operating system: DNA makes RNA makes protein. DNA is a long, complex molecule that contains the cell's instructions. It is transcribed into RNA, another long, complex molecule similar to DNA; and then the RNA transcript is translated into protein. There are hundreds of billions of different proteins used by living things, but all of them are made from the same twenty amino acids, the building blocks of life.”(Footnote?)However, in this definition remarkable aspects are included: Living things reproduce themselves. Life undergoes evolution. Life begets life; and living beings beget living beings.

Three important characteristics are notable in this definition. One is that the biological definition understands life by reducing it to a cell and sub-cell process. Second is that it allows for life to be the subject of reproduction and evolution. Third is that it looks into life in the mechanical or cybernetic model using computer and can only objectify life by reduction.

At the same time, biology is bound to recognize the subjectivity or selfhood of life. This means that the objective biological definition and understanding of the life of living beings is incomplete. Jacques Monod (Chance and Necessity, Vintage: 1971) affirms the mystery of life connected to two aspects of biology: 1) evolutionary choice, and 2) birth as beginning of life. These two dimensions cannot be determined by any mechanical process, for example, cybernetics. The objective definition of life as a living subject cannot be deterministic or reductionist.

This has two implications. One is that the subject of life belongs to a mystery that cannot be explained in objective terms and is beyond rational and scientific grasp. Second is that life is open and connected to the “reality” beyond the biological boundaries

and thus to the area which is in the domain of humanities (dimensions of culture and religion)--for example, the possibility of a connection of the neurological system to linguistics, which is not yet clearly known. We are interested in the feasibility of defining life in terms of integral concepts beyond the constriction of definition in terms of mere physical and biological sciences.

3) Life is the Living Subject of the Whole Body: Cosmic, Ecological, Biological, Social and Cultural.

As we are looking for an integral and holistic understanding of life, we reject any understanding of life that is reductionist, fragmentary or compartmentalized. Our main affirmation is that life as the subject is known through its story. The story of life is the best way to describe the way in which life lives. Life is not to be fragmented and reduced into its minutest parts; and its subjectivity is in the whole of the living being, not in the objective or subjective part of the living body. This means that the whole of the living being constitutes it as subject. Life as subject does not abide in the particle of the living being, but in the whole being of life.

Life as Subject is revealed through the story of life (Zoography), in action, in thought, in feelings and senses, in belief and in spirit. Rene Decarte's reduction of ego as cogito is an epistemological illusion in the abstract. Feminist studies use the story as the best way to understand the reality of the suffering and struggle of women for their liberation into subjects of their own lives in body and spirit. Feminist studies are an excellent mode of integral study.

We understand this subjectivity in the form of "Zoography = Story of Life = Saengmyong Jeongi (生命傳記)." We decided to

avoid the term “biography,” for it is used almost exclusively to refer to the story of an individual person. We have used “social biography” in reference to the story of the Minjung to express the social and community dimension of the Minjung as Subject. Zoography is used here to mean an integral and convergent story of the whole life of living beings, including biological and ecological as well as social and cultural dimensions.

When life is the most inclusive category, discrimination among human life, animal life, and the life of plants and trees is arbitrary. All of these form one interrelated web-work of life. Even discrimination between organic and inorganic is abstract and arbitrary, for life cannot exist without inorganic substances. There is one “webwork of conviviality,” common life, in the universe. Thus Zoography is a universal story. Life as the subject (Juche = 主體) is inclusive of all the dimensions of life. The only way we can understand life is through its story.

Prof. Zhang Hwe-Ik argues that whole (global) life is the only conceivable notion of life. Other concepts of life are fragmentary, and only derivatives of whole life. He believes that the notion of the individual human person cannot be a viable concept of life in an ultimate sense; and the same goes for any individual animal or plant life. The viable concept of life must include the interconnected web of life as a whole. His argument is that the concept of the whole or global life is based upon scientific argument. However, he suggests that this concept of whole life should be interfaced with the Asian cosmic understanding of life. This suggestion is significant in that any concept of life must include not only biological, social and ecological dimensions, but also the cultural and the spiritual. Life is the subject of the

whole universe. The whole universe is the body of life. It is easy to understand that the community is the body of life: it is a web-work of all the dimensions of life.

The integral study of life will clarify this proposition. Asian philosophy can easily explain it--for example, the individual self, the family, the nation and the universe are one and the same entity of life. The concept of selfhood and life as subject is not like the epistemological self or subject of modern science, such as the Cartesian ego. This subject has aesthetic perceptions, spiritual senses and thinking reason. It is based upon the unknown mystery of life.

(1) Life as the subject gives birth to itself in the context of the whole web-work of life.

The birth and death of life should be understood in this context. The reproduction of life cannot be explained merely in biological terms, that is, merely in terms of cells and genes. It is not a simple bio-chemical process, for it involves the inherent subjecthood of life beyond the biological dimension. The birth of all living beings is closely related to the natural, social and cultural dimensions.

Whole life is a dynamic, intelligible web-work of the infinite reproductive and productive activities of living beings. As Lovelock has asserted, the earth as GAIA is a whole living being. This whole living being is a subject with unknown dimensions.

The productive and reproductive dynamics of birth and rebirth are an elaborate, holistic network of mutual cooperation and common life. Here the subject of life is not individualistic or fragmentary but a convivial entity. The subjectivity of any living being should be understood in terms of the close,

organic cooperation of its cells and genes at the micro-level; the symbiosis of living beings; and the interaction of organic and inorganic elements. Any living being is a subject in this complex matrix of “common life, cooperation and co-existence.” Yet it is a mystery. It is a mystery that life is the subject, not the object, of its being.

(2) Life grows by itself.

The growth of life is an indication that it is the subject, experiencing its inner life and interacting in relation to its external environment. Life nourishes and nurtures itself in its interconnection with other living beings.

(3) Life learns to live.

This is a self-education process. It learns from the environment. It learns from experiences of interaction with other living beings. Living beings learn from each other, from the past and the present, and are open to learning from the future. Life adjusts to actual living situations and overcomes obstacles to itself through a self-educational process. One cannot reduce this self-educational process of living beings to a function of mere instinct or automation. One cannot understand life in a deterministic way.

(4) Life heals itself.

When it is injured or ill, it cures its own illness and restores its wholeness and its balance for wholesome life. Asian health is very much dependent upon the notion that life has self-healing energy. Medical treatment is fundamentally to strengthen the self-healing power of life. Life is a self-healing subject.

(5) Life communicates among living beings and with the environment.

Plants and insects communicate with each other. The life of living beings involves the symbols and semantics of communication. Plants, animals and human beings are equally capable of mutual communication. We do not fully understand this communication process, but clearly life is a communicating subject.

(6) Life matures and fulfills itself. It realizes itself toward its fullness.

The maturity and fulfillment of life is neither natural destiny nor a mechanical process. It involves a telos or a destiny toward which life as the subject moves. All living beings seem to have their own destiny of self-fulfillment. This is another mark of their selfhood.

(7) Life creates and recreates itself. It interacts creatively with living beings.

Creative subjectivity can be understood on biologically evolutionary levels as well as on the cultural level. Living beings are creative beings. The creative activities of living beings involve the process of creating novelty in life. The evolutionary and culturally creative process is an integral part of life.

(8) Life lives in the world of meaning. Living beings create meaning of life and of the world in the context of their common web-work.

Life should be understood as happening within a community of meanings. The living being creates meanings and fulfills the meaning of life and of the world in which it lives.

(9) Life is spirit. Living beings are spiritual as well as material. Individually as well as communally, they are body and spirit. Not confined only to human beings, the spirit of life is cosmic,

ecological and biological, cultural and religious. This spiritual subjecthood of life cannot be reduced to a biological question, but at the same time, the spirit should not be understood without its body, like a ghost. The spirit is a bodily and ecological reality in a living organism and in a community of living beings.

Life as subject can be more fully understood in an integral way. This is the reason why we are suggesting the story of life, Zoography, as an alternative paradigm to talk and learn about life. In this learning of life we are concerned about the wisdom of life for its fulfillment. We are not excluding scientific knowledge of life. We are taking and transforming it within an integral context of the wisdom of life.

To learn the wisdom of life, we propose integral, interdisciplinary studies as well as creative fusion of Western and Eastern wisdom of life. This is the meaning of Integral Study of Life. And it begins with Zoography = the story of life.

II. Zoography and Thanatography

A living being is a subject; and all living beings are living together as convivial subjective selves. The story of the living being, Zoography, is a story of birth, growth, maturing and fulfilling of life and also a story of dying. Also the story of the life of all living beings is "life of all living beings under the omnicidal threat and reality under the powers of destruction.

Therefore, Zoography must mingle with "Thanatography."

"Thanatography," the term we will use for the story of arbitrary (not natural) death and destruction of life, is Zoecide.

Under the global empire, it is omniscient story of life. It is totalistic. Yet, each and every victim has a story to be told, but it is silenced by their death.

Thanatography under the empire takes form through the neo-con ideology of the empire that has ordained US power as the final arbiter of the global order, using military might in support of the neo-liberal market regime. Death is meted out in the names of security, the corporate “right” to profits, and religious righteousness, and indeed in the name of the Christian God. The war on terror—state terrorism—is in this way justified for national security, in the name of God, as a “just” and “holy” war. The neo-con ideology gives ultimate justification to Pax Americana, calling it God-ordained, in the language of Manifest Destiny.

Under the global market regime, the hungry, the sick and the poor have suffered democide, murder by one’s own government, with neo-liberal global market regime as the mechanism. The military and economic dimensions of thanatography are closely connected with the political ideology of neo-conservative Imperial ideology, which explains death as God’s punishment. In neo-con Christian discourse, people and life are judged by God, whose judgment is said to bring disease and ecocide as well as disasters. The global situation is indeed grave and it is manifested every corner of the world.

1. Contemporary Thanatography’s regime of death has various dimensions

Modernist technocracy brought a situation where life is objectified and engineered. Living beings are regarded objects of

manipulation, as in biotechnology and the biotech industry. The physical energy of nuclear power is mobilized to attain “security” and to supply energy to maintain the economic regime. These two areas of technocracy constitute technocracy regime of thanatography. Democide is the result of modern wars with weapons of mass destruction to secure peace for one’s nation alone; biocide is committed to secure our own products for profit maximization; genocide is waged to secure one’s own nation and tribe. Zoecide is now at the level of omnicide, throughout the earth. This thanatography spells a convergent story of omnicide of all living beings. The inner dynamics and ideology in this thanatography is the “Social Darwinism” as an social ideology which also dominates the biosphere as well. Humans engage in Zoecide, mistaking this as a way of protection of their own survival and security.

Thanatography has unfolded in the name of Christianity against the native Americans, Aboriginal people, African, Asian and Pacific and South American people. Christian theodicy is used to justify Zoecide in various ways, for example, God’s justice is said to punish evil as defined by the “faithful,” as in just war theory. An urgent theological task is to free Christian communities from this thanatographic ideology, which—ironically--comes from “secular, anti-religious and social ideology. What is the nature of Christian implication in the global thanatography?

2. Composite Thanatography

Thanatography cannot be told in separate fragments; it is a composite story in space and time, in direct opposition to the

universal story of conviviality. Military democide, economic democide, biocide, the global cultural and religious regime of genocide, natural disasters and climate change are to be understood together, for they are a continuum in time and space from the perspective of a convivial cosmos. The theological ideology of thanatography is the Apocalyptic Vision of the Last Judgment of God. Why such a story of total Zoecide?

3. The Global Political Regime of Empire as an omnicidal regime?

We will need to think “Kairotically.” We begin with the here and now, which is a turning point from the past to the future and the convergent point from East and West, South and North—that is, from all directions. It is our discernment that Pax America, the US empire, must be the pivotal point of our reflection and action for the life of all living beings. The United States is mutating into a global empire, some say; but it is already in the course of decline and fall. As a beast that is injured, it is becoming more violent and aggressive.

Its history is one of conquest and dominion, of territorial aggrandizement and imposition of social order through outright coercion: genocidal war against the native American tribes, theft of land from Mexico and Spain, invasion of Russia after World War I, followed by a succession of military interventions in Korea, Indochina, Central America, Iraq, and more recently the Balkans. Today the ethos of militarism--of conquest, domination, violence, and Empire--permeates the American economy, political institutions and culture. It could hardly be otherwise given the country’s position as sole remaining superpower,

as unchallenged world hegemon. At the moment, the U.S. has unparalleled military dominion over the world's land masses, sea lanes and air spaces, with great aspirations toward colonization of outer space.

4. Global Military Regime of Hegemony

The United States presides over an armed planetary force of a magnitude never before seen in human history. It includes about a half-million troops stationed at more than 395 major bases and hundreds of minor installations in thirty-five foreign countries; more than 8,000 strategic nuclear weapons and 22,000 tactical ones; and a naval strike force greater in total tonnage and firepower than all the other navies of the world combined, consisting of missile cruisers, nuclear submarines, nuclear aircraft carriers, and destroyers that sail every ocean and make port at every continent. With only five percent of the earth's population, the United States expends more military funds than all the other major powers combined.

Worldwide US arms sales to cooperative capitalist nations rose to \$36.9 billion in 2000, up from \$34 billion in 1999. In addition to sales, since World War II, the US government has given some \$240 billion in military aid to train, equip and subsidize some 2.3 million troops and internal security forces in more than eighty countries, the purpose being not to defend these nations from outside invasion but to protect ruling oligarchs and multinational corporate investors from the dangers of domestic anti-capitalist insurgency.

A cornerstone of US military policy has been and continues to be nuclear weaponry. It is this most horrifying technology

of mass annihilation that the US has used in the past and has considered unleashing on numerous other occasions. The U.S. is still opposed to the abolition of nuclear weaponry, refining and “modernizing” its huge arsenal even while it pretends to oppose “proliferation.” Rather than rejecting nuclear weapons as totally barbaric and unthinkable, US administrations have dismissed antiballistic missile and other arms control treaties in order to develop even more lethal nukes. The US emphasis on Star Wars reflects yet another tendency in the direction of nuclear strategy. In 2001 the Pentagon authored a Nuclear Posture Review document calling for a more flexible, space-based approach to nuclear warfare, stressing the importance of renewed weapons testing and outlining “contingencies” that might require nuclear attacks on such countries as Russia, China, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Given this barbaric imperial posture on the part of American elites--not to mention the new global milieu produced by 9/11 and the war on terrorism--it is easy to understand how the sole superpower has emerged as an out-of-control Empire. US imperial domination is to be unfettered by any international treaties, laws, or conventions, uncompromised by messy UN deliberations or provisions. Of course this is a recipe for the most systemic, overt, reckless global domination by any nation in history.

Since the late 1940s the Pentagon has consumed a staggering twelve trillion dollars in resources--without doubt mostly wasteful or destructive consumption--and continues to spend roughly \$300 billion yearly (a figure that will reach more than \$500 billion within the next several years) to maintain empire. Nuclear weapons have consumed at least one trillion dollars of

that total.

5. New Doctrine of Global War: from War on Terror to Preventive War

This raises important questions about sovereignty. The strategy of preventive war is closely bound up with the new vitality of the hegemonic international law (Norman Peach- MORE INFORMATION) that is exhibited by the US administration. It is rooted in the idea that the US possesses global sovereignty and all national sovereignties are relative to it.

War serves the US in maintaining a particular global order of which it was and is the central architect and beneficiary. The imperial power is a global system of transnational institutions and agencies that meet the needs of mainly north, developed nation states that are dependent upon control of natural resources, primarily oil and gas. The recent assault on Iraq was not just because the U.S. wanted Iraq's oil; but more, because the US hegemon, and the global empire of capital it serves, need control over those resources, especially over the securing, extraction, pricing and distribution of oil.

Whereas international conflict was until recently governed by political and ideological considerations, the wars of the future will largely be fought over the possession and control of vital economic goods, especially resources needed for the functioning of modern industrial societies. (Michael Klare)

6. Why Global Economic Regime so democidal?

The driving force of globalization has been capital, which has attained a global reach. Modern capital, originally based in Great

Britain and extended to the United States, making the US the center, has been expanding to the ends of the earth. It expanded its markets commercially and encroached into the nations of the world through colonial domination. In the post-colonial era, global capital instituted the world regime of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank (Breton Wood Institutions) and the World Trade Organization. Global/transnational capital, in the form of transnational corporations and speculative financial capital, now dominate the global economy, encroaching into the lives of the people and impoverishing them at unprecedented levels. Recently it has been involved in the financial crises of Asian nations, and such involvement will continue.

The global market regime enforces the neo-liberal ideology, which extols the freedom of transnational corporations as the primary agency of the market. Free trade is proclaimed; and national economies are liberalized and deregulated to permit the unhindered operations of private global financial powers and transnational corporations. In the name of reform of the economic system, structural adjustment programs are imposed (for example, by IMF) to completely open up nations to the global market.

The present global economic system, protected by the dominant imperial power and its allies, is like a cancer. It kills the lives of people and nature because it subjects all life to the global market, geared to capital growth for the few owners of property and financial capital, instead of satisfying the needs of all people.(Cape Town document)

US politico-corporate elites have long struggled to make the world safe for the system of transnational corporate capital

accumulation; to attain control of the markets, lands, natural resources, and cheap labor of all countries; and to prevent the emergence of revolutionary socialist, populist, or even military nationalist regimes that challenge this arrangement by seeking to build alternative or competing economic systems. To achieve this, a global military machine is essential. The goal is to create a world populated by client states and compliant populations completely open to transnational corporate penetration, on terms that are completely favorable to the penetrators. It is not too much to conclude that such an activist and violent global policy is produced not by dumb coincidence but by conscious design.

(1) Economic Democide: Death by Hunger

- In the Asian, African and Latin American countries, well over 500 million people are living in what the World Bank has called “absolute poverty.”
- Every year 15 million children die of hunger
- Throughout the 1990s more than 100 million children died from illness and starvation. The World Health Organization estimates that one-third of the world is well-fed, one-third is under-fed one-third is starving. Over 4 million will die this year.
- One in twelve people worldwide are malnourished, including 160 million children under the age of 5. (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization)
- The Indian subcontinent has nearly half the world’s hungry people. Africa and the rest of Asia together have approximately 40%, and the remaining hungry people are found in Latin America and other parts of the world.

- Nearly one in four people, 1.3 billion - a majority of humanity - live on less than \$1 per day.
- 3 billion people in the world today struggle to survive on US\$2/day.
- In the US, hunger and race are related. In 1991, 46% of African-American children were chronically hungry, and 40% of Latino children were chronically hungry compared to 16% of white children.
- Half of all children under five years of age in South Asia and one third of those in sub-Saharan Africa are malnourished.
- Every 3.6 seconds someone dies of hunger.
- It is estimated that some 800 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition, about 100 times as many as those who actually die from it each year.

Under the regime of global empire and global market, Ecocide and Biocide deepened!

- There is no way to get the stories of the biocides, for they are subjects who do not communicate to humans. Extinction of species in the biosphere is a serious story of thanatography.
- THE best guess of biologists is that species are disappearing between 100 and 1,000 times as fast as they were before Homo sapiens arrived. But our impact is different from the mass extinctions of the past. They wiped out whole groups of animals, notably the dinosaurs, whereas humans are picking off individual species. In the past, biodiversity recovered as species spread into new ecological niches, but humans are wiping out niches as well

as organisms. Wildlife will have a tough time regenerating.

- The Earth may be on the brink of a sixth mass extinction on a par with the five others that have punctuated its history, evidence suggests.
- Global warming may drive a quarter of land animals and plants to the edge of extinction by 2050, a major international study has warned.
- In the worst case scenario, between a third to a half of land animal and plant species will face extermination. The predictions come from extinction models based on over 1,100 species covering a fifth of the Earth's land mass.

Due to the ecological impact of global industry and consequent climate change and the manipulation and destruction of living beings by the biotech industry, the story of biocide plays the biggest role in the thanatography. How is the total thanatographic picture related to the human democide? When we acknowledge the impact of weapons of mass destruction, the economic democide, human ecocide and climate change, the omnicidal picture emerges.

Global Cultural and Religious Regime of Genocide

(2) Cultural prejudice and religious damnation have been an integral part of colonial subjugation and imperial hegemonic conquest. "A long tradition of this exists in Europe, early examples being the Crusades, the destruction of Jewish communities, and the Inquisition's bloody assaults on the Cathars of Montsegur and Montailou." We cannot forget that the vast majority of those who committed these crimes against humanity were Protestants and Catholics.

The witch-hunt is another example which was relatively widespread in Europe from about the sixteenth century. "Victims of witch hunts were portrayed as evil and unclean. Subsequent feminist analysis of witch hunts explains them as campaigns to challenge rebellious role models for women. These witch hunts can be described as "gendercide."

The most famous witch hunts in America took place in the Puritan community of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. The Salem witch hunt began when two Puritan women, Abigail Williams and Betty Parris, accused the slave of Samuel Parris of witchcraft. The slave girl was named Tituba, and was of either native American or African origin. Quickly the campaign became hysterical, and for many in the community the only way to avoid an accusation was to become an accuser.

A link between the historic witch hunts against unconventional women in seventeenth-century America and the post-World War II attacks upon public figures with left-wing views for alleged communist sympathies is the core of the Cold War legacy.

In addition to the genocide against Jews by Nazi Germany, many Catholic clergy in Croatia during World War II bear responsibility for supporting the Ustashe in the killing of Muslims (a circumstance that the Roman Catholic Church continues to deny or downplay).

The Bosnian genocide provides a different type of example. In Bosnia, unlike Nazi Germany, state political and military leaders intentionally employed Christian religious language and symbols to stimulate popular violence and justify military slaughter. Although studies of Bosnia may suggest, for example, that the ethnic cleansing of Muslims was a "result

of the political contest behind the wars, not ethnic or religious hatreds” (Woodward, 1993, p. 243), it is far more likely that political leaders deliberately manipulated religious imagery from Serbian history to suggest Orthodox Serbs were innocent victims of Muslim atrocities (Sells, 1996, 2001). Many within the Slavic Orthodox churches continue to insist that the Serbs were the real victims and deny their complicity other than some understandable but limited overreactions in a “civil war.”

Although religious beliefs certainly are not necessary to prompt mass killings, religion can play an important role in providing perpetrators with a sense of a God-ordained mission to cleanse the world of evil, offering solace to those who commit violence, or justifying actions taken by others. In this way, when religion provides a rationale for zealotry, religious people can be seduced into becoming murderers—just as in cases of religiously inspired terrorism and other forms of religiously inspired violence.

There has been long-historical and world-wide thanatography which cannot be detailed. However, it is to be understood as a composite story. They are not fragmented stories; they are historically linked with each other; and are interweaved with each other in space of the world as well. Therefore, we are proposing the the thanatography should be understood as a composite one. This should be an integral part of Zoesophia so that forces of death is to be overcome.

III. The Story of Life is the Story of Overcoming Arbitrary Death and Destruction

The Story of Life (Zoography) begins with the story of death and destruction of living beings as well as the fulfillment of life, not merely with the origin and birth of life. The story of life is in dialectical relationship with the story of death and destruction by power. In human his/herstory, life moves to overcome arbitrary death by natural and human disasters as well as by disease, hunger, violence, war and other social and ecological causes. The subject of life is the protagonist of life, and the agency of death and destruction is the antagonist to life in the drama of Zoography. In an analogous and connected way all living beings are struggling to overcome the powers of death and destruction to fulfill their destinies.

“Natural death” is only a part of life. When we understand life as a web-work of all living beings, death can be a moment of fulfillment in the story of life. What is the death of a butterfly in the life of insects? What is the death of a caterpillar? It is a moment in the story of the insect. When we look at the whole of life in conviviality (common life), the natural death of one living being may be a moment in the whole story of life. Humans have sought ways to overcome natural death and to have permanent life. This is being done through biological and medical means, and is a case of arbitrary human hubris attempting to extend natural life beyond its limits.

There is also death in the convivial web-work of life itself. For example, there is a chain of mutual nourishment through mutual sacrifice. Humans eat plants, fruits of trees, and some animals.

This is supposed to be a convivial, mutual and interconnected process in the garden of life. The “natural death” may be regarded as an end to begin a new life. In biology, however, this is conceived as a chain of power struggles which only the fittest and strongest survive (Darwinism). But in Asian wisdom it is regarded as common life, mutual life, convivial life, linked in mutual service. Another word used nowadays is sustainability.

Among the moments of arbitrary death and destruction caused by the powerful in the story of life, the first instance is the human destruction of life. This phenomenon has intensified drastically in the process of globalization in the 21st century.

Technocracy, organized technology, is the most powerful agency controlling, dominating and destroying life. Even if we view science and technology as value-neutral, epistemologically they have totalistic power over their object—in our case, life and all living beings. They manipulate, modify and distort according to the designs of human sciences.” Technocracy is utilized by the principalities and powers that drive the global market for their own profit. The technocratic regime, under the control of the global market and the Empire, drives the globalization process, which involves ecological destruction, the pollution and manipulation of the biosphere, the destruction of human life through increasing hunger and poverty and the accompanying spread of diseases, omnicidal wars, ensuing social violence, political oppression, and economic exploitation. This process threatens life as a whole. In this context Zoography is closely connected with the process of globalization.

1. The Zoography of Convivial Life

The story is an integrative way to disclose the realities, experiences and dynamics of life of living beings in the universe. It is a way of connecting dimensions of life, of weaving and integrating experiences of life in time and space. In fact it can frame its own unique time and space to tell the unique story of life. The story is a way to tell about the reality as an open story, not reduced to a narrow sequence of scientific and objective causality. It can reveal the meaning and wisdom of life in a holistic way.

Zoography (the story of life) begins with the present situation of life on earth in seeking the wisdom of life. It deals with experiences of life here and now.

Then we ask questions of the past stories to open up questions about the present and future. The story of life is not to be determined by the modernist time framework of absolute or relative time. Life has its own destiny (time).

Zoography is local stories of living beings in concrete geographical and ecological situations. It does not transcend time and space and become “abstractly universal,” which is just as much a reduction as the minute particle. Life is at home in its own locality. The integral methodology of “cultural anthropology” can be developed and applied to Zoography.

2. Zoography is a story of the conviviality of life

Living beings live together in the web of life, forming an inseparable community of conviviality and mutual support with animals, insects and plants and micro-organisms.

The most important story in the integral study of life may be

the conviviality of all living beings. How do we discover this story? The primary mode of life together is not competition but cooperation and mutual adjustment. Biological sciences, ecological sciences, social sciences and human sciences must be studied together in this context of Zoography.

The convivial community of living and inorganic beings is not human-centered but life-centered. The agrarian community before industrialization had such a Zoography. All lived together, adjusting and adapting to each other for mutual life (Sang Saeng = 相生).

3. Life Seeks to Fulfill its Destiny

Zoography is the story of resistance against the internal and external powers of death and destruction. Life as the subjective agency resists the destructive power, or adapts itself to the hostile environment through transformation. Zoography is the story of “transformative” change in life. On a biological level, this is regarded as evolution. Evolution, however, is not a mechanical or automatic process. It involves a qualitative change of the old into the new. It is revolutionary and transformative change. Life as subject is creative and creates new dimensions of life in the course of its birth, growth and death.

In the process of creative change and self-transformation, life moves towards its fulfillment. This could mean a creative adaptation to the life environment for its survival and fulfillment. It could mean a radical change into a new living being on biological, ecological, geo-political, socio-economic, and cultural and religious levels as a process of self-fulfillment of life.

It is important to note that “utopia” is often depicted as a place

of whole life, not just human life. Utopia or the Messianic reign is new life in a new city on a new earth and under a new heaven. It is a newly convivial garden of life, where all living beings together enjoy the feast of full life, Shalom. In this sense, life as subject fulfills its destiny by projecting its vision to overcome the powers of death and destruction.

This means that Zoography contains a vision of life, a sense of its fulfilled destiny. This is not a deterministic or automatic end of life, but an open, creative and concrete omega point. It is a dynamic movement towards an open-ended, higher level of fulfillment of life, towards the end (eschaton) of life.

In sum, Zoography is the story of resistance and struggle to overcome the powers of death and destruction. It is at the same time a creative movement to fulfill its own destiny in the universe. Zoography in the context of globalization is the story of creative engagement for life in fullness, struggling against the forces of death.

4. Life as a new paradigm in search for Zoesophia

Therefore we are proposing an alternative paradigm to understand life in Zeographic terms, not in biological terms. It is holistic, not reductive; concrete, not abstract. It is an integral approach, not a fragmentary one. It is life-fulfilling, not life-dominating. It is not origin-oriented, but end-oriented. It is not past-oriented, but future-oriented; not domination-oriented, but servanthood-oriented; not human-centered, but conviviality-centered. This is the basic orientation for the integral study of life as a search for the wisdom of life on earth.

We propose to begin this integral study of life from the

humanities and social sciences, and to integrate natural scientific wisdom in a way that overcomes the totalitarian epistemology of modernity. We further propose that we integrate the Western wisdom of life with the Eastern wisdom of life, overcoming our Cartesian captivity.

We will bring the religious, mythical and cultural wisdom of the past and combine it with the wisdom of the present world to overcome the death-dealing tyranny of power. We propose that Asian and African wisdom of life be respected and rehabilitated to counter and overcome the domination-dynamics of modern Western science and technology in the technocratic form of Pax Imperium.

IV. Some Proposals for Zoesophia

1. Integration of life as a whole in Zoesophia; overcome fragmentation through Zoography
2. Coming together of East and West, past and present, in the search for holistic Zoesophia
3. Convergence of science and culture/religion: taming of modernity for convivial life and revival of the wisdom of life
4. Liberation of all living beings from the regime of the Empire: search for the Cosmic order of conviviality of all living beings.

1. Search for an Emerging Paradigm of New Civilization

Arnold Toynbee, Alfred Northrop, Theodore van Leeuwen and other historians and anthropologists postulate different patterns

of interactions among civilizations. Samuel Huntington predicts clashes due to different geo-politics. Historian-philosophers August Comte and Karl Marx speak about stages of civilizational development. Toynbee speaks of their interaction in terms of challenge and response; and Asian historians speak of eastern morality (wisdom) and Western instruments (technology). One might conceive of the interaction of the different civilizations in terms of cumulative, transformative and creative processes, as well as conflictual/contradictory, dominating/destroying and subjugating/corroding processes. Recently post-colonial theoreticians speak of hybridity among civilizations or geo-politics. In any case the proper fusion and inter-linkage of different geo-politics are critically important in the present and coming globalization process.

Asian historians speak of the interaction of Eastern civilization with Western civilization in terms of Eastern morality (東德) and Western instruments (technology = Soeyong = 西用). Asian intellectual leaders have understood the Western penetration as economic, political and cultural invasion, carried out in no small part by colonial and neo-colonial missionary enterprises." Asian leaders responded with conservative, reformist or revolutionary perspectives that have not always been respected by the Western powers. Samuel Huntington's thesis is merely an extension of this syndrome.

However, there could emerge a creative local-global perspective from which to forge a new paradigm of geo-politics for life in the cosmos.

2. Convergence of the East and the West: New Discourse of Life

The Western scholars and thinkers on such issue as ecology are beginning to appreciate Eastern religious, philosophical and cultural wisdom, including that of primitive societies. This is good progress. However, it is still being taken as a corrective to the Western discourse on life and ecology. We have noticed many scholars of the East taking seriously their traditional wisdom about life and ecology; but at the same time this is taken as secondary to the prevailing understanding and discourse of the West on the topic. The reason is that Eastern wisdom is regarded as insufficient to overcome the current ecological crisis. Eastern wisdom needs to be studied and developed to discover practical ways to deal with the crisis. At the same time the Western discourse on life and ecology is merely on the level of science and technology and technology, seeking technocratic solutions through engineering, social and technological. We see a creative possibility for discourse on life emerging on the convergent horizon of the East and the West. Let us begin with the issue of ecology, for it is a gate into the universe of discourses on life its wholeness.

One theological paper attempts to fuse the East and the West. It argues that aesthetic cosmologies in the Taoist and certain Buddhist traditions (Zen Buddhist) as well as their respective artistic traditions can provide Christianity with helpful ecological resources. In addition, examples of contemporary environmental art in the West are examined for their ecologically sensitive messages. The aesthetic traditions of East Asia display well the vision of nature in which every element of the universe

is celebrated for its particular contribution. According to this model, humanity's role is not to dominate nature; rather, as members of the cosmic community, humanity needs to align itself with the rest of the universe. Since our culture is deeply visual, East Asian aesthetic traditions together with contemporary ecological art provide important insight into how to envision an environmental ethics of care.

This means that there are attempts to forge a convergence of ecological thinking and, therefore, the discourses of East and West. What could be the nature of this convergence? It is a complex question. In fact the convergence may be an open process, radically open only to the ultimate omega point. Such a convergence could conceive a new discourse on a new plane--not nullifying the diversity, or the divergence, of East and West, but being inclusive of the diverse and divergent wisdoms with their identity and integrity.

Then we could be free from the problems of Westernization, modernization, orientalism, acculturation, indigenization, contextualization and even hybridization in Asia, for we could seek a convergence for justice, peace and conviviality among all living beings. This is what we seek in the integral study of life (Zoesophia).

1) In this context, the ecological discourse rises out of the organic cosmic order of life, which is holistic and integral. Ecology is the cosmos (house) of full convivial life. Thus there is no way to isolate ecological discourse from the integral discourse of life. We believe that the East Asian philosophical perspective can be developed and converged with its Western counterpart to construct an integral discourse on ecology and life.

Lynn White argues that Christian cosmology, expressed in the doctrine of Creation, is one of the chief factors in modern Western civilization with its industrialization and modern technocracy. This is a great critical question not only for the church but for the whole of Western Christianity, which is deeply implicated in the history of destruction of life including the current ecological crisis. White's argument is that Christian faith have opened the way for modern science and technology to be born to conquer the nature; and yet this technocracy rebelled against Christian faith so that it is alienated from the modern discourse on nature.

One way to respond to this situation is through the radical convergence of religious wisdom from all the world's religions, through which the Christian faith may experience radical transformation in the new context. Christianity within the framework of Western civilization may not have any hope for such transformation. In this sense, Jesus of Galilee must be rescued and liberated from the Western trappings of the global cultural, political and economic powers of the world market and global empire. Jesus of Galilee may be a convergent point in which the East and West can converge. Here Jesus represent not only Christian faith tradition but also the tradition of Eastern religion (wisdom).

2) Political discourse for life establishes the right of life for all living beings. There should be ecological rights for all. In the modern liberal political thought (Thomas Hobbes) the abstract individual person was born as irreducible. This person, natural or corporate, is isolated from other person and from other living beings in a strict sense. This is analogue to the indivisible entity

of modernity. This political subject is devoid of life and separate from all living beings as subjects. It is solipsistic as the Cartesian Ego. New political discourse requires living political subjects, living together other individual persons and all other living beings. This politics may be called new politics of conviviality. Convivial politics opens a way to polity in which all living beings, including human persons, are convivial subjects. It will require new constitution in which right of life of all living beings is established as basic rights in convivial community (polis), where all living beings participate in the convivial politics. The liberal notion of individual person is to be balanced by conviviality of all living beings; and we would seek convergence of modern liberal political thought with politics of conviviality in Asia.

3) Social discourse on justice and harmony is not separate from relationships among living beings; it is eco/social discourse. Discourses of justice, harmony, reconciliation, cooperation and care are integral to ecology. Physical and scientific laws converge with ethical principles, as shown in the cosmic love of Christ. When social agents are reduced to individuals, there follows a law of competition among free individuals. Social Darwinism is this kind of social relations, which is radically fragmented as indivisible fragments. Survival and security of such individual become absolute in principle. Modern society is an organization of such individual entities by arbitrary laws which the state enforces. There is no fundamental order of justice, peace and conviviality both among individuals and human person and all living beings. An individual is to live in the web-work of justice, peace and conviviality. This convivial solidarity is possible when

there is a convergence between the modern society and convivial community, social, ecological and cosmic.

4) Economic discourse is easy to understand in ecological terms. Oikonomia, as in agriculture, is closely related to ecology. The common prosperity of all living beings is the aim of economy, not just human survival. It is the common-life (SangSaeng: 相生 = conviviality) economy that is the economy of life. This may be called as OIKONOMIA CONVIVENCIA. Economics is the social science that analyzes the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. A primary stimulus for the development of modern economics was the desire to use an empirical approach more akin to the physical sciences.[2] Economics has become a calculus of limitless growth for profits whether it is in industrial productions and distributions or in financial transactions for maximum profit. Economic agents are not living subjects for conviviality, but corporate subjects for profit. In Asia economy is a way of living among all living beings (a political economy of conviviality) and so was the Greek notion. The term economics comes from the Ancient Greek οἰκονομία (oikonomia, “management of a household, administration”) from οἶκος (oikos, “house”) + νόμος (nomos, “custom” or “law”), hence “rules of the house(hold)”. Here the rules are those of convivial life, not economic calculus. There is a need to have an alternative discourse on OIKONOMIA CONVIVENCIA through convergence of the East and West, that is, through convergence of wisdom of life and economics.

5) Wholesomeness of life is not an isolated condition or event of the human body. Discourse on body and spirit in health and

disease is macro- and micro-cosmic and biological, religious and cultural. The ecological environment is the womb of the overall health of all living beings. Eastern medicine demonstrates this clearly; and it can be converged with Western medicine. Just as the modern Western discourse on ecology is based upon the scientific discourse, the Western medicine for healing is based upon the natural science and bio-genetic engineering. The ecological discourse in the East is based upon holistic discourse of cosmovision, the wholeness of life, individual, community and ecological, is understood in the same holistic way. The convergent methodology of the Western and Eastern medicine is practiced in East Asia, and this may bring a new horizon for healing of the body, community and earth.

6) Cultural and spiritual discourse cannot be separated from ecological discourse. The fiesta of life among all living beings involves the cosmic orchestration of music and dances. Cultural and social anthropology has been moving in this direction. Culture is not merely human artifice; it is co-creation among all living beings. Science and technology as human artifice lacks the notion of culture as a co-creation of all living beings in their mutual interaction in the context of their conviviality. There is a need for a convergent understanding of culture between East and West for the rich fiesta of culture, and thus to overcome the homogenization of cultural life under technocracy of media and communication regime.

7) Religious and ethical discourse cannot be separated from the discourse of sciences such as physics and biology. Discourse on life ethics is cosmic, social, biological and spiritual. Spirituality and faith is the soul of OIKOS (the household of life), which

is managed by ecology. Due to the dominance of the objective indicative in the modern West, the spirituality and faith is relegated to the “irrational and even superstitious”. This is one of the reasons why there emerges the religious revival in the context of secularization of the Western societies. The wisdom of religions and cultures will have to be recovered to normal discourse for life so that science and technology be tamed for whole life through convergence of the cultures of East and West.

8) Geopolitical discourse on war and peace is seen in the context of the convivial life of all living beings, not merely in the context of nation states and geo-political groups. In East Asia peace means great peace, cosmic peace (Taiping 太平). On the contrary, existing military weapons systems can destroy not merely all human beings but all living beings in the entire ecosystem. Peace is to be a living peace among all living beings in the cosmos, it cannot be reduced to a geopolitical balance of military forces.

As we have indicated in shorthand form above, the discourse of Zoesophia (integral discourse of life) permeates the entire discourse of life, which is multidimensional. All the above eight (and more) dimensions converge at the omega point of the cosmos of life, just as they have emerged from the alpha point.” Omega and alpha points are one in convergence as expressed in the Asian notion of Taeguk (태극 = 太極 = the Great Absolute) of the universal OIKOS of life of all living beings. It is fortunate that the Western science and physics such as in Whitehead begin to recognize Asian cosmo-vision for life and to discern “deficiency” in modern scientific discourse. There is much excitement about new sciences as well as Whitehead’s process physics. However,

it is yet to be seen if there can be a creative convergence of the East and West.