

‘LOVE OF NEIGHBOR’ AND TOYOHICO KAGAWA’S CHRISTIANITY
— PLURAL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY —

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1. Public philosophy as a glocal theology in Japan

Although I am not a theologian, as a philosopher I am very much interested in theology. Actually, even in the western world, theology has become a private activity inside churches, losing public validity outside Christian circle. Recently some theologians have proposed public theology, but there are very few as such. For instance, Alister McGrath, the author of *Scientific Theology*, says in its introductory book as follows,

This leads to one of the major themes of the vision that lies behind a scientific theology — my deep longing to develop a public theology, capable of interacting with other disciplines on its own terms. A public theology is able to stand its ground, while engaging in dialogue with others. I have intense misgivings concerning the insular approaches to theology that I discern in some theological quarters, which prevents theology from dialoguing, debating and learning..., refusing to talk to anyone in case their theological purity gets contaminated. The approach I set out, having placed the theological enterprise on a secure footing, encourages public debate and dialogue¹.

As a Japanese Christian philosopher, I have critically analyzed and had dialogues with non-Christian Japanese cultures from the Christian view point, and now I called this approach to be public philosophy.

¹ Alister McGrath *The Science of God*, 2004, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan p.13

My Christian philosophy is in the tradition of Kuyper-Dooyeweerd in the Dutch Reformed school. It is characterized by (1) common grace, (2) religious antithesis, (3) sphere sovereignty, and (4) palin-genesis (regeneration)².

The religious ground motive of a Christian worldview is creation, fall, redemption and eschaton. The redemption by Jesus Christ on the Cross in the communication of the Holy Spirit, in addition to its validity to the special grace to Christians, pours common grace on non-Christians through restraining the sin of the world. Christ is the center of this Christian worldview. Although this common grace enables Christians to have dialogues with non-Christians on common ground, the meaning of the world can be different for Christians than for non-Christians. The stream of Cain and his descendants are religiously antithetical to that of Seth and his descendents, and this gap cannot be bridged. They are 'others' to each other. Thus the Christian self is sharply confronted with that of other people, giving birth to the important problem of the 'self-other relationship' in the modern philosophical quest.

In our social life, the nation-state is seen to be the result of common grace, through which God's sovereignty works not only in churches; but also in the state. Furthermore, God's sovereignty also works widely in the spheres of citizen's life, that is, in civil society between the state and church. These sovereignties entrusted by God to humans are called sphere sovereignties: functioning in homes, schools, companies, churches, unions, NPO/NGO, and the like. People experience regeneration through the Holy Spirit, whose "fruit" is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. These virtues can be partly observed among non-Christians. Especially patience and tolerance toward others are important when we relate to our neighbors in the daily life.

Let us now translate these Christian philosophical views of the human and society into public philosophy. I, myself (the private), am thrown into the world in relation to others, living with and looking for meaning of the world. In the opposite position, there stands the state and things related to the political power (the official, 公). Between I (the private, 私) and the state (the official 公), there is the wide range of civil society or the public sphere (公共). The public is a dynamic moving power mediating from the private to the official in order to stimulate civil society openly. I refer to this as a shift from the dichotomy of the private-official to the tri-chotomy of private, public and official. Heaven endows the state with political sovereignty and many groups of civil society with sphere sovereignty.

² Hisakazu Inagaki, 'Comparative study of the Kuyperian Palingenesis' Eds. by C. van der Kooi & J. de Bruijn, *Kuyper Reconsidered*, VU Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 1998, p. 166.

Civil society is a network of associations, not a natural kinship but re-union, where we work to collaborate together through friendship and solidarity with others. Here philosophical arguments regarding self-other relations are important. The tolerant self, who welcomes dialogue with different others, must be the regenerated self. The natural self, however, is always pursuing self-interest while neglecting other's happiness. Civil society is the society respecting the common good, where people do not only pursue goodness from their own will but also live in that goodness giving thank for friendship with each other in the gifted common grace.

Although theories of civil society and social philosophy may be universal in form, at the same time their content depends heavily on particular cultural contexts. For instance, the debate between liberalism and communitarianism is in itself peculiar to the North American context, because liberalism in the strict sense did not exist in East Asia. Thus the establishment of civil society and democracy, even though it is a global issue, depends on the East Asian context after the World War II.

Christ says "love your neighbor." This is central to public philosophy. It is therefore expressed as a Christ-centered theology that is globally applicable, while at the same time taking into account the local situation. Therefore I will call it a 'glocal' theology. But still, I hesitate to name my approach 'theology.' In Japan, theology is not evaluated as a scholarly science because of its weak validity for the culture and the people. The Christian population is small and churches are few. Thus, I do not wish to develop my scholarly work as theology here in the Japanese context. My strategy is to develop it as a philosophy, a value-laden philosophy, namely, public philosophy. People can develop public philosophy from Marxism, Liberalism, Confucianism or Christianity in the pluralistic society. In this position, I can have dialogues with many scholarly people and citizens in the public square, looking for the meaning of our lives. This approach is in itself very much hermeneutical.

Public philosophy starts from I-ness, looking for the meaning of public happiness in society. Thus I-ness is about a speaking self or narrative self who has dialogue with others. Over against Cartesian presuppositions, my public philosophy starts from this: "I dialogue with others, therefore, I am." Another person also has meaning in her/his worldview, etc. I expect that I can find some overlapping with others in meaning. Through dialogues we hope to reach an overlapping consensus.

Let me look henceforth at a specific field, reflecting strongly on the problem of values, namely, a field of social ethics.

In order to have dialogue with many camps in Japan, I will take up the theme of "happiness," a common topic of ordinary people. The utilitarian concept of happiness where many people pursue high income through the labor market is now fading away.

People want to recover community or to connect to each other through living together as neighbors. In modern Japan, the precursor who gave such a model as a Christian was Toyohiko Kagawa (1888 – 1960).

2. Kagawa's Christology and social reform

Kagawa went into the slum in Kobe in 1909 as a Protestant worker with the mission of evangelism and relief for the poor. He was a student of a theological school, but was diagnosed with a severe case of tuberculosis. He decided to dedicate the rest of his life in service for the poor. His mission was comparable to that of Mother Theresa. Theresa's activity of God's charity was limited to rescuing the poor and caring for them until death. However, Kagawa's mission was not only to save the poor but also to protect them from further poverty. He established a co-operative system to enable the poor to make a living on their own. Kagawa is thus recognized as a founder of the cooperative movement in Japan.

As an intellectual Christian, Kagawa was interested in the problem of the quest for the historical Jesus, and he wrote *The Life of Christ*, (1913) and *Jesus' Religion and its Truth* (1921).

He had deep interests in both personal redemptive theology and natural theology of Cosmology. Furthermore, his practice as a Christian was extraordinarily wide and deep compared with the Japanese church and Christians of his time. The theological background of his practice came from his faith in re-creation of the world through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.

We can see his understanding of Christian religion in his major work, entitled *Brotherhood Economics* (1937). For instance, he says:

His cross meant the fusion of the love of God and the love of man at one focus. People describe this with the words redemptive love, but no words can adequately express His precious death. He looked at man in a new way, that is, from the standpoint of God, and shared God's burden of responsibility for the salvation of mankind.³

Kagawa did not doubt that redemption is the central meaning of the cross, and he saw God's love for human beings, by recognizing the covenant of grace through Jesus in the sense of a juridical promise between God and people. It is actually that 'God loved people so much as to give his only son.' Kagawa often used the phrase 'redemptive love'

³ Toyohiko Kagawa, *Brotherhood Economics*, Harper & Brothers, New York and London, 1936, p.32.

to express God's justice and love together. He meant this phrase as personal salvation together with social relief and reform. Of course, for Kagawa, first came personal salvation and next social reform was necessary. He also says:

Herein we discover a perfect unity of the value-movement of the individual man with the social value-movement. Though theologians frequently say that the redemptive death of Jesus is for individual souls and not for society as a whole, that is not enough. The faults of individuals cause the agony of the whole universe. Therefore, the redemptive love of Christ means the salvation of individual souls in order to save society as a whole⁴.

The saved soul will strive to do good practices. Sometimes it was so-called '*diakonia*' to the world, which has become the tradition of the various Reformation churches. Kagawa said, 'This thought is our starting point – love that is willing to bear the Cross is the essence of Christianity and to believe in this Cross is the true religious life.' The peculiar feature of Kagawa's faith is to connect this consciousness of Christ-centeredness with the worldview in the sense of re-creation of the world and restoration of the world. He said:

This Cross-embracing love would mean a step toward a re-creation of the world, because only through it can that which is lost be redeemed. Indeed, this Cross-embracing love can only take form as a great love which cares for the unemployed and redeems the loss caused by panic⁵.

I see, in Kagawa's activity, the power of the religious ground motives of 'creation, fall and redemption' by Jesus Christ on the cross in the communication of the Holy Spirit. Christ and His redemptive love is the center of his social thought. From this standpoint, he expanded his passion to the problems of poverty, economics, society, and world peace through his whole life.

His practice of saving the poor and people's souls in the slums grew various movements among settlements, laborers, farmers, co-operatives, universal suffrages and the proletarian political party. He became one of the pioneers of modern Japanese social movements. In the slums, there were evils in daily life such as lying, thefts, quarrels, injuries, prostitutions and the selling of babies. Since Kagawa noticed that those evils

⁴ Ibid., p.32.

⁵ Ibid., p.34.

might come from 'poverty,' he wrote a book entitled *Studies of Psychology of the Poor People* in 1915.

In 1914 he went to the USA to study at Princeton University and Theological Seminary. After he came back to Japan, he wrote several books, including *Coming Back from Death-bed* in 1920. It became a best seller with sales of one and a half million copies.

After he recovered his sickness, he began constructing a co-operative society that continued throughout his lifetime. Throughout his life he remained interested in economics, being motivated by his initial experience in the slums. His interest in economics was not in scientific economics itself but in the hypothesis of *homo economicus* and the question of its validity for actual human society. Though he doubts the meaning of competitive market economy, he did not propose the role of the government but the role of self-help among the people themselves. This is the background of his *Brotherhood Economics* and his activity in the cooperative movement of the people.

As for labor unions, he got the idea when he saw the march of laborers in New York while studying in the USA. He wrote: 'Charity actions today can not remove poor class any more. Instead it will increase the poor as the history tells us. Thus I have learned that the root of poverty lies in the labor problem and that development of labor union will solve the poverty more than socialism or social reformism'. (*Intellectual Movement and Social Movement*, 1919).

In today's terminology, he tried to make so-called intermediate groups such as labor unions, cooperative unions, and NPO/NGOs in order to establish a self-governing society. From this standing point, he also developed his idea of the 'cooperative state.' His understanding of the Christian faith went far beyond that of average Japanese Christian of his day.

3. Today's issue and civil society

In East Asia, forming and fostering a civil society is now a big issue. Religions will play important rolls in fostering civil society. But what is civil society? We need a new definition of civil society here. While the state is seen as a system of laws, civil society is a quasi-stable state, emerging one-step above the state and influencing the state through civic virtues. Thus, if we lose civic virtues, civil society will degenerate into the state. The form of democracy in the state is a representative democracy, and in civil society a participating with deliberative democracy. This is called an emergent democracy in philosophical language describing complex system. The civic virtues will be inspired by religious spirituality that requires re-birth (*palin-genesis*) of people's selves.

In the past Japan, the social welfare system depended very much on business enterprise more than on governmental support. Today, the US finance market crisis has influenced the global economy, and the Japanese market more than those of advanced European countries. Unemployment and poverty have become serious problems here. The reason can be found in the change of the governmental economical policy of the 90's. Business leaders also shifted the traditional "Japanese style management" into the so-called neo-liberal economical policy. Economic growth associated with efficiency and competition has become the central value instead of lifetime employment, the seniority system and the man's role as breadwinner, which were foundational to the working ethos based on Japanese Confucianism. "Japanese style management", including a household welfare system supported by businesses, once made possible the miraculous economical growth after WW II with high figures in GDP, though it has instead resulted in the notoriously long working time in the labor market.

The neo-liberal policy after the 90's has destroyed the reasonable social welfare system of business enterprise hitherto by introducing the principle of efficiency in the market economy. In addition, the moral values of the people, except economic values in the last two decades, have gradually faded away. Thus, due to today's economical recession, lay-offs and job loss directly bring poor people to face houseless situation because of weak governmental welfare without the least safety-net. How to secure a social inclusion for the disadvantaged in the competitive market system is now an acute problem in Japan.

Today's situation is very much similar to that of the 1930's, when unemployment and poverty were serious problems,

Last year, Kagawa's *Brotherhood Economics*, originally written in 1937, after the worldwide Great Depression, was reprinted in Japan. The author is an almost forgotten Japanese Christian social worker who was called one of three saints—together with Schweitzer and Gandhi—before WW II. He was once nominated as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in peace.

Kagawa, as I wrote above, went into the slums of Kobe in 1909 for the purpose of saving the poor. He lived there together with the poor people and gradually realized that charity was useless for them. In order to help them to escape from poverty, he began to advise them and help them to organize cooperatives by themselves. He taught them to live their own lives through aiding each others. After Kagawa's work, the cooperative movement soon spread widely in Japan. After getting the positive responses to this idea, he began to organize laborers and farmers into unions, cooperatives, and mutual aid associations for fighting against poverty. He became the founder of these organizations in

Japan. At the same time, he taught Jesus' teaching of love for neighbor as the basis of human social relations.

He built a good reputation in the U.S. through his friends at Princeton from 1914 to 1917. In 1936, he was invited to give lectures in the United States by President Franklin Roosevelt, who introduced the New Deal policy after the Great Depression. Among five hundred lectures was the Rauschenbush Lecture given at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and it was published as *Brotherhood Economics*. The book presented the challenge to remake the economic order within the capitalistic system by the application of Christian ethical principles, which found their expression in an alternative system based on Christian brotherhood, that is, cooperatives, mutual aid associations and credit unions. He criticized Western institutionalized Christianity for its allowance of merciless exploitation of laborers by Capitalism. It was soon translated and published in more than 20 countries.

Kagawa has been classified up to now as a Christian socialist. I suggest, however, that it is a mistaken classification. Kagawa studied at the old Kobe Reformed Seminary founded in 1907 by the Southern Presbyterian Church in America. His faith was quite orthodox, one based on traditional redemptive faith with a cosmological restorative concept of the cross, as shown before. He cannot be understood as a Christian socialist, although he referred to Marx's work very often, and though some groups in Japan at the time were identified as Christian socialists. Unfortunately, however, Kagawa was not accepted well in Japanese Churches because of the Barthian understanding of faith that had become popular in the Christian circles. The groups in which Kagawa has been most welcomed with reasonable respect are outside the churches, i.e., those of cooperative unions and social workers.

4. Christianity in East Asian context

In July 2009, I participated in a conference of philosophers sponsored by the Korea-Japan Assembly of Philosophy. I was inspired there to understand a certain socio-political problem in East Asia in relation to Christianity and Confucianism. It is through the story of one Korean figure named Soku-Hon Ham, who studied in Japan in the 1920's and met with Kagawa in Tokyo. Soku-Hon Ham is known in Korea as a Confucian Quaker who took part in the non-violent resistance movement against the Japanese Empire during WW II and afterward against the Korean military regime in the 1960's. Soku-Hon Ham did not stand on the basis of Christian socialism, but steadily on the teaching of love for neighbor, or Christian brotherhood, in the social practice that he learned through Kagawa.

Kagawa and Soku-Hon Ham thought that Capitalism was wrong because of its exploitation of laborers, and they also thought that Communism and Socialism were

wrong because of their materialism. Both of them talked about the importance of a spiritual dimension in human lives and practices in social reform, but it had already reached a point far away from the understanding of the gospel by Christian churches at that time in East Asia.⁶

Kagawa described in Chapter 7 of *Brotherhood Economics* seven types of cooperative organizations: insurance cooperatives, producers' cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, credit cooperatives, mutual aid cooperatives, and utility cooperatives and consumers' cooperatives. Furthermore, in Chapter 8, he proposed "the cooperative state." He called it a "guild state" and said that, in European history, Lenin adopted it in 1921 and Mussolini in 1934 but that both failed. According to him, the success or failure of this cooperative state depends on the degree of the conscious awakening of brotherhood love which is to control industry. He believed "there is little possibility of success unless people have the spiritual foundation of Christlike redemptive love."⁷

5. Solidarity and Christian democracy

The cooperative movements have become popular today in Japan, and the membership of consumers' cooperatives amount to more than 10% of the total population. Although this movement is interpreted as a non-profitable civil movement, the members have not realized this character well. They neither know who the founder of the cooperatives in Japan was, nor do they understand Christian brotherhood behind their idea. They use them just like ordinary shops involved in the ordinary market system, rather than seeing them as mutual aid associations founded by Christian spirit. But actually the cooperative movements are now organized internationally. An international conference in 1995 declared the identity of ICA as follows: the cooperative movements have succeeded the tradition of founders of each nation, and believe that the members have values of sincerity, openness, social responsibility, and cares for others. These ethical values are practiced through self-governance, independence and interests in the community.

In addition to the cooperatives, since the 1980's many other associations, social groups, and NPO/NGOs have become active in Japan. But as far as I understand, these movements have not yet formed a strong 'civil society' concept that is independent and different from a service society offered by the government because people do not have

⁶ Toyohiko Kagawa, *Brotherhood*, p.20. Kagawa wrote in it as follows :“It is not enough merely to reiterate nor to deplore the tragedy of the past. We must search for a new way for the reconstruction of society, which neither materialistic communism nor political socialism has accomplished and which is beyond the power of creedal Christianity.”

⁷ Kagawa, *Brotherhood*, 154.

their own responsible public philosophy for identifying it.⁸ In order to have a responsible society with self-governance by the people, perhaps we need a new concept of civic virtue, or brotherhood and solidarity. This is why I would like to define the civil society as a quasi-stable state, emerging from the state as one-step level up that influences the state, or pulls it along from above, through civic virtues.

Furthermore, what I would like to assume here is that the basic idea of the political economy of *Brotherhood Economics* will be close to the type of democracy called Christian Democracy in Western Europe. In Western Europe, the so-called “third sector” has always been important in the social economy or solidarity-based economy, including mutual aid associations, cooperative associations, charities, and voluntary organizations.⁹ Christian Democracy is different from Liberal Democracy, because individualism and free competition in the market are not central. It is different from Social Democracy because equality and the state are not central. Christian Democrats prefer the concept of a non-profit “third sector.”¹⁰ The central idea of *Brotherhood Economics* is also brotherhood and solidarity among these “third sectors.” Especially Kagawa has already proposed “the industrial congress” elected chiefly from the seven types of cooperative organizations through a cooperative federation. But a labor federation also should be formed in order to protect the rights of laborers. Representatives from the cooperatives and from the labor federation should constitute the membership of this proposed industrial congress. This would enable the industrial congress to deal fairly with all matters under its jurisdiction.¹¹

Now I think the so-called *polder-model* in the Netherlands is rather unique. This is known in Japan as the “Dutch model.” It was a result of the patient dialogue. It is reasonable to say that such a system could not be formed without brotherhood and solidarity after the ‘pillar-society’ in the nation. Thus, I would like to ask next whether teaching love of neighbor and solidarity in Christian democracy played an important role or not when the Wassenaar Agreement was signed by the representatives of laborers, employers, and the government in 1982 (this is known in Japan as the start of ‘work-sharing’ or the Dutch model to avoid unemployment). Is it fair to say that, as Kagawa said, the people displayed the spiritual foundation of Christlike redemptive love in the process of making the polder-model? Didn’t brotherhood love spread through the Christian community to other communities there? Or did it become possible only through sharing the same economical selfish interests and utility? Brotherhood among

⁸ Hisakazu Inagaki, *Religion and Public Philosophy* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2004) (Japanese).

⁹ Adalbert Evers and Jean-Louis Laville, *The Third Sector in Europe* (Cheltenham and Northampton; Edward Elgar, 2004) 1.

¹⁰ Evers and Laville, *Third Sector*, 149.

¹¹ Kagawa, *Brotherhood*, 158.

Christians is easy to understand. But love for other people who live in different ‘pillars’ or who possess different worldviews is not so easy. Love for other people who live with different world views, different lifestyles and different economical interests is difficult but necessary in today’s civil society. How does liberal democracy express Christian love for others?

Conclusion

I have shown that Kagawa gave a strong impact in Japanese modern social reform. Among them, the cooperative movements have continued to be important today, though they forgot the original spirit of the founder. Those were clearly brought out by his faith. His unique Christology gave him an extraordinary power to act, especially, for the poor people at his time. Today, Japanese Christians should re-discover Kagawa not only for Christian circles but also for public circles in economics, politics, and NPO/NGOs. Since Christian love or ‘Love of neighbor’ is the central idea of Kagawa, many non-Christian Japanese can understand it clearly. Buddhism and Confucianism also teach it as a central discipline.

Without the classical religious spirituality of Christianity, Confucianism and Buddhism, it seems impossible to foster a healthy civic virtue. Civic virtue will be inspired by a religious spirituality that requires re-birth (*palin-genesis*) of people’s selves.

The reasonably limited labor time that comes from the ‘work-sharing’ generates “discretionary time” among citizens to talk together, and makes possible a deliberate democracy in civil society. This is only way to make a true happiness in today’s Japanese society.

The success or failure of the idea of an emergent democracy depends on these basic questions.