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## The Agricultural Ethics of Ninomiya Sontoku 二宮尊德的農業倫理觀

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**關鍵詞：**二宮尊德、社福倫理、環境倫理、世界觀、全方位健康生態水平

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## Abstract

Ninomiya Sontoku 二宮尊徳 (1787-1856) or Kinjiro 金次郎, was the renowned Japanese farmer-sage in the Edo Era (1603-1867). Sontoku's environmental thoughts and practices are based on the pre-modern, ecological world view that is characteristic of pre-industrial Japanese society; it consisted mainly of Shintoism mixed with Japanese Confucianism and Buddhism.

Sontoku's practical solution to the puzzling problem of the human-to-nature relationship lay in the symbiotic co-elaboration of both. Human beings owe gratitude (恩) to Heaven and Earth (our great father and mother), to our ancestors, parents, and lords, and so we are obliged to repay the debt we owe (恩). The main virtues he practiced and recommended for people were diligent labor (勤), frugality (儉), and concession (讓) in agriculture and economics, in order to increase natural produce by "assisting the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth" (贊天地之化育, 大學). This is Sontoku's teaching of "reward for virtue" (報德).

Sontoku eventually rescued more than six hundred villages and tens of thousands of people. He not only saved devastated farms, but also saved people from mental collapse by helping them to be independent financially and morally. Sontoku's achievements testified to his belief that Confucian moral politics (仁政) rather than modern Western power-politics and self-interested economics, can make people happy and restore nature at the same time. In pre-war Japan, Sontoku was a national hero who appeared in elementary school textbooks on moral education called "cultivating oneself" (修身), as a model of Confucian and other virtues. All national elementary schools had his bronze statue on a pedestal near the main entrance—carrying on his back a bundle of firewood gathered in the mountains, walking, and reading a book. In post-war, modernized and industrialized Japan he was neglected and his school of thought was almost forgotten. However, recently his thoughts and practices have been revived, and looked under fresh light of global environmental crisis.

## 摘要

二宮尊德（1787-1856），亦稱金次郎，是江戶時代著名的農聖。尊德的環保思想與實踐的基礎，乃是前現代的環保世界觀，這是前工業日本社會的特色；以融合了日本儒學和佛學的神道為主。

對於人與大自然的關係這個令人費解的問題，尊德務實的解決方案是讓兩者共生合作。天地、先祖、父母和君上都對人有恩，因此我們必須報恩。他身體力行、並建議人們仿效的主要美德，是在農業和經濟上做到勤、儉、讓，藉由贊天地之化育而增加大自然的物產。這是尊德的「報德」教育。

尊德最後拯救了六百多個村民和數萬名百姓。他除了挽救遭受天災的農田，也協助百姓達到經濟和精神上的獨立，讓他們免於精神崩潰。尊德的成就證實了他的信念：相較於現代西方的權力政治和自利經濟，儒家的仁政更能帶給人們幸福，同時讓大自然休養生息。戰前的日本把尊德奉為民族英雄，小學教科書也提到他認為「修身」這種道德教育是儒家和其他德行的典範。全國各小學的校門附近都立了他的銅像——背著從山上砍下的柴薪，一邊走路一邊看書。在戰後、現代化及工業化的日本，他不再受到重視，他的思想也幾乎被人遺忘。不過近年來，尊德의思想和實踐重新在日本社會興起，以全球環境危機的新角度重新審視。

"Heaven gave the virtue of production and reproduction to earth, which was generated owing to heaven's virtue. Parents nourish their children without thinking of gain and loss, and take pleasure in seeing them grow up, while children so nourished are loyally attached to parents. Husband and wife, enjoying each other, bring forth offspring to succeed them. Farmers work hard, taking delight in making plants grow and flourish, while grasses and trees, too, thrive joyfully. In all these cases, all parties have, without any grievances against each other, only the feeling of joy." (Ninomiya Sontoku, *Talks*, 42)<sup>1</sup>

## Introductory

Ninomiya Sontoku (二宮尊徳, 1787-1856), the renowned farmer-sage, lived during a time when people were fortunate enough to enjoy a highly sophisticated and nature-oriented culture, without the presence of environmental degradation. It was also a time, however, when devastation of agricultural villages had culminated in mass starvation. Famines owing to crop failures were ruining entire villages, particularly in the northwest and central agrarian districts of low productivity where Sontoku lived. In 1783, out of a total population of 30,000,000, five hundred thousand people died from famine owing to the devastation of many rice and vegetable farms. This picture somewhat anticipates, if enlarged on a global scale, today's environmental crisis and increasing world hunger. However, most people who live in affluent countries might not consider today's ecological crisis or famine relevant to their lives.

The Fukushima nuclear accident of 2011 changed the lives of many people. This incident forced many individuals to begin to see that their lives were going

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1 Ninomiya Sontoku, *Ninomiya o yawa* [*Night Talks of Ninomiya*] 二宮翁夜話, in Kōta Kodama 児玉幸多 (ed.), *Ninomiya Sontoku* 二宮尊徳 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha 中央公論社, 1970), p. 234. The following numbers following "Talks" in the parenthesis are sentence numbers of *Night Talks of Ninomiya*.

in the opposite direction of Sontoku's original way of life. While Sontoku saved many villages and people, and worked to enrich the natural environment, the Japanese government of today has made the lives of many people increasingly miserable by destroying numerous cities and villages, thereby degrading the national environment. The government has also forcibly closed numerous nuclear plants, with only two plants still currently operating among the original 51 plants. While most Japanese people maintain their faith in the official policy of promoting industrialization, agriculture falls ever further into decay in Japan. Currently, most foods are imported with only 40% of all food products being domestically supplied by Japan. If one looks squarely at today's global environmental crisis and searches for a way out of the crisis, one cannot help but reflect back on Japan's old traditional society when the natural environment was not only preserved but often enriched, thereby nourishing the larger population on these rather small islands. (For this reason, Western environmental thinkers today, having criticized Western modernization, are starting to reflect on traditional Eastern environmental thinking.)

## 1. Three Worldviews

The following schema set up by Ralph Metzner shows the contrast between the industrial age and the emerging ecological age:<sup>2</sup>

	Industrial Age	Ecological Age
Scientific paradigm:	mechanistic view	organismic view
epistemology:	logical positivism	critical realism
role of human:	conquest of nature	symbiosis
values in relation to nature:	instrumental	intrinsic

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Metzner, "The Emerging Ecological Worldview," in Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim (eds.), *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), pp. 170f.

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relation to land:	land use	land ethic
human/social values:	patriarchy	Partnership
theology/religion:	transcendent divinity	nature as sacred
education/research:	specialized discipline	unified worldview
political systems:	nation-state sovereignty	transnational federations
economic system:	multinational corporation	community-based economies
technology:	exploitation/consumerism	restore ecosystem
agriculture:	factory farms, agribusiness	poly& permaculture

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Metzner writes, "A growing chorus of voices is pointing out that the fundamental roots of the environmental disaster lie in the attitudes, values, perceptions and basic worldviews that we humans of industrial-technological global society have come to hold. The worldview and associated attitudes and values of the industrial age have permitted and driven us to pursue exploitative, destructive, and wasteful applications of technology."<sup>3</sup>

One can find a model of the ecological age in Edo-era (1603-1867) Japan. During this era, the natural environment was not only well preserved but it was enriched. The above-mentioned schema looks as if one were juxtaposing contemporary and traditional Japan, which corresponds so well with the evolving Japanese experience of, and attitude toward, the environment. However, there is a gap between the emerging ecological age and the traditional Edo-era of Japan. While traditional Japanese thinking on the environment was actually lived and practiced, the emerging ecological ideals characterized by Metzner have not as of yet been realized. It would be difficult to accept these ideals for a majority of people because they are much too different from the current popular and prevailing worldview. In contemporary social ethics in Japan, most people would consider the unfettered pursuit of human interest (e.g. the prosperity of society itself) as a good thing. By contrast, environmentalists and environmental thinkers

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3 Ibid., pp. 163f.

consider it better to promote environmental wellness given that the industrial society has not only degraded the natural environment but has shown that the industrial society is not sustainable. Therefore, contemporary ethicists tend to be separated into two camps: those who believe in the traditional social ethics that pursue the social happiness (or human interests), and those who are concerned with the well-being of the natural environment (or natural welfare). If the former were to pursue human interest at the risk of neglecting natural welfare, then in the long term they could not help but fail to increase and even possibly destroy human interest by creating an unsustainable society. If environmentalists were to pursue natural welfare alone, and to neglect human interest, however, they would become so-called eco-fascists. This situation results in a moral dilemma, or conflict of sorts, between the values of "human interest" and "natural welfare," since one cannot pursue both at the same time. This sort of moral dilemma has not yet been resolved in today's environmental ethics, hence, contemporary approaches to ethics are separated into two camps: 1) the traditional social welfare-ethics, such as Richard Mervyn Hare (1919-2002), and others, and 2) the emerging environmental ethics based on the ecological worldview, such as Arne Naess (1912-2009), J. Baird Callicott, and others. As long as the two camps do not converge, there can be no soft landing from an industrial society into an ecological world.

The worldview of the Edo-era Japanese thinkers is a bit different from the emerging worldview expressed in Metzner's chart. The environmentally enriched society in the Edo-era continued for close to three centuries until Western modernization was introduced into Japan during the Meiji Restoration in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By looking back at the Japanese traditional way of thinking, which combines Shintoism, Confucianism, and Japanese Buddhism, it is clear that there was no moral conflict or dilemma like the above-mentioned one at that time. Possibly, this was due to the division of levels in their moral thinking, even if they did not express it clearly. There were no sharp lines that divided the social and environmental ethics, nor were there clear distinctions

between intrinsic and instrumental values. If only the levels of moral thinking could be distinguished, thinkers with different views from different traditions would be able to agree at some level, while disagreeing on another level. Such a way of thinking can be documented in Sontoku's practice and thinking, which is explained below.

Three world- views are currently present:

- 1) The worldview of the industrial age,
- 2) The emerging ecological worldview, and
- 3) The traditional Neo-Confucianism of Edo-era Japan.

Before delving into this problem, the founding fathers of Japanese Neo-Confucianism Kaibara Ekken (貝原益軒, 1630-1714) and Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666-1728), whose influence on Sontoku was immense, should be briefly introduced.

## **2. Two Forerunners of Sontoku: Kaibara Ekken and Ogyū Sorai**

Kaibara Ekken's organismic view of nature is introduced as follows:

Heaven and earth give birth to and nourish all things, but the deep compassion with which they treat human beings is different from (the way they nourish) birds and beasts, trees and plants. Therefore, among all things only humans are the children of the universe. Thus, human beings have heaven as their father and earth as their mother, and receive their great kindness. Because of this, to always serve heaven and earth is the human way. In what way should we serve heaven and earth? Humans have a heart of heaven and earth, namely, the heart of compassion, which



gives birth to and nurtures all things. This heart is called humaneness (仁, Ch.: "ren," Jpn.: "jin"), humaneness is the original nature implanted by heaven in the human heart.<sup>4</sup>

This citation, taken from Kaibara Ekken, is from the author's book, *Yamato Zokkun* (大和俗訓, *Precepts for Daily Life in Japan*). It suggests that "heaven and earth are the great parents, [whereas] our parents are a small heaven and earth." This parallelism between macro and micro-cosmos is arguably Ekken's favorite theme, and appears again and again in his main writings.<sup>5</sup>

Sontoku was by no means a deeply learned scholar; rather, he was an autodidact-practitioner. Thus we can only guess, interpret, and reconstruct his various writings using an integrated systematic moral theory as collected by his followers. He was well read and possessed a deep understanding of the traditional Confucian classics, which he liked to corroborate by his own experience of operating farms and households. Intellectually, Sontoku was most influenced by the Neo-Confucianism of Ekken. In addition, another Confucian scholar who greatly influenced Sontoku was Ogyū Sorai.

Ogyū Sorai's basic attitude was that of agnosticism, meaning that he argued that no one could really know about cosmos or heaven, that the only thing human beings could do was to worship heaven, which was not a transcendent personal God, but rather a symbol of nature (i.e. "Heaven-Earth-Nature"). This view reflected the Shintoist nature-worship religion. Sorai argued that the way (i.e. human morality) is not the way of heaven-earth-nature (i.e. not heaven-given morality), but rather was created by ancient sages for the purpose of the general happiness of the people (安民).

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4 Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The Life and Thought of Kaibara Ekken* (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1989) (Japanese text with English translation and introduction), p. 136.

5 The original source of this idea is in the Chinese Neo-Confucian essay entitled *The Western Inscription* 西銘 by Chang Tsai 張載 (1020-1077), a Chinese Neo-Confucian and one of the forerunners of Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130-1200).

In order to clarify his thought, it would be convenient to separate Sorai's thought into three facets of moral thinking as follows:

- (1) The environmental philosophy based on the organismic view of nature, which could be called "the eco-holist level."
- (2) The social ethics that aims at the general happiness of people that is very similar to the British utilitarianism, which could be called "the humanist level."
- (3) The teachings, or general moral principles, of various virtues that were created for the purpose of general happiness, which could be located at "the institutional and instructional level."

In these three facets of moral thinking, one finds three levels of the Confucian key word *ren* in play.<sup>6</sup> The three levels of *ren* are explained as follows: 1). *Ren* is the virtue of heaven's virtue of production and reproduction (天地生生之德).<sup>7</sup> Here *ren* is understood as a heavenly virtue in comparison to a human virtue. That *ren* is usually rendered as "humanity" or "humanness," meaning that the translation is misleading since humanity does not cover the heavenly virtue of *ren*. 2). *Ren* corresponds with utilitarian "impartial benevolence" as it is translated into Japanese "*jin-ai*" (仁愛). Sorai said that *ren* is what embodies the sage king's way of peace and contentment for all who reside under heaven.<sup>8</sup> He also emphasized that *ren* is a generic virtue that is above all virtues and consistently governs them.<sup>9</sup> This theme coincides well with "the increase of the general happiness" of utilitarianism. (This is perhaps the reason why the Japanese

6 Cf. Yamauchi Tomosaburo, "The Confucian Environmental Ethics of Ogyū Sorai," in J Baird Callicott and James McRae (eds.), *Environmental Philosophy in the Asian Traditions of Thought* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 2014), pp. 337-357.

7 Shimada Kenji 島田虔次, *Shushigaku to Yoimeigaku [Chu Hsi Learning and Yang-ming Learning]* 朱子學と陽明學 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, 1967), pp. 45, 49 and 51.

8 Ogyū Sorai, *Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠*, Masahide Bitō 尾藤正英 (ed.) (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha 中央公論社, 1974), "*Bendō*," p. 17.

9 Ibid., p. 33, "*Benmei*," pp. 54f.

Confucian philosophers introduced English utilitarianism into Japan when they first introduced the modern philosophy and began to accept the Western modernist way of thinking.) 3). *Ren* is a generic name for all virtues. Sorai believed that the five relationships and divisions of social classes were not the natural way, but rather the way created by the sage kings to contain the relationship ethics *of loyalty, filial piety, and other virtues (of which, in a narrow sense, ren is a part)*.<sup>10</sup>

Another similarity between Sorai's ethics and Western utilitarianism is the indirect appliance of the utility principle (of general happiness). In Hare's two-level utilitarianism, simple general principles for everyday practical usage—called intuitive or prima facie principles—are derived from the utility principle. Thus, practical rules, political and legal institutions, and other kinds of systems were chosen and justified based on the criterion of contributing to the increase of people's interest (i.e. the general happiness). General moral precepts, or principles, such as "honesty" and "kindness" were considered as being created for the purpose of the maximization of people's interests. In this regard, people do not need to constantly think critically about the course of action that would lead to general happiness. Rather, they need only to obey the accepted, simple, and general principles—the general principles that would make society better and help people to possess an upright character. This rough sketch of the division of the fundamental utility principle and secondary intuitive principles should be sufficient for our purpose of comparing two utilitarian views: Western philosophers' and Sorai's.

When Japanese philosophers began delving into modern philosophy, they accepted mainly British utilitarianism. The Japanese version of Mill's *On Liberty* was enthusiastically read, indicating that Neo-Confucian thinking had similarities with the utilitarianism; that is, Neo-Confucian social ethics coincided well with utilitarianism at the above mentioned *humanist level* of moral thinking. Both

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10 Ibid., "*Measures on Great Peace*," p. 467, "*Tomonsho*," pp. 351f. and "*Bendō*," pp. 13f.

morality pursued the increase of people's general happiness in society. Thus began the Japanese modern philosophers' trial of combining the Western and traditional Japanese Confucianism. Nishi Amane (西周, 1829-1897), Nakamura Keiu (中村敬宇, 1832-1891), and Katō Hiroyuki (加藤弘之, 1836-1916) were originally Confucian teachers. Having accepted Western philosophies, Nishi, Nakamura, and Katō combined these philosophies with traditional Japanese Confucianism, and started eclectic modern Japanese philosophy. Katō, a founder and president of Tokyo University, published a book entitled *The Rights of the Stronger*. This book was later translated and published in German. He developed a new theory of human rights on the basis of an organismic view of nature, criticizing, like Professor Tu Wei-ming in many influential writings, the enlightenment thinkers and praising much of Sontoku's Confucian view, declaring that Sontoku's philosophy was superior to such philosophies as Thomas Hobbes' (1588-1679) and Ogyū Sorai's.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Sontoku's Method of *Bun-do*

Sontoku stands among the Japanese Neo-Confucians. He called his teachings *hōtoku-kyō* (報徳教), where *hotoku* means repayment for heaven's virtue. Heaven is often expressed as heaven-earth-nature (天地自然). Heaven's virtues include the virtue of nature, ancestors, and society. The so-called Japanese love of nature (自然愛) stemmed from their primordial nature-worship (自然崇拜) religion of Shintoism (神道), which developed into a form of nature-service (自然奉仕). Hence, this was the origin of Sontoku's theme of "assist in the transforming and nourishing process of heaven and earth (贊天地之化育, 中庸).

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11 Cf. Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之, "Venerable Ninomiya Sontoku as a Philosopher 哲學者としての二宮尊徳翁," in *Katō Hiroyuki bunsho* 加藤弘之文書, Vol. 3 (Kyōto: Dōhōsha 同朋舎, 1990), pp. 168f.

In this context, Sontoku's *hotoku* can be regarded as a kind of nature-service through farming.

Sontoku declared that *heaven's way* and *the human way* are different, and that there is no good and evil in heaven's way; thus good and evil exist only for those humans who create it. (Cf. *Talks*, 2)<sup>12</sup> Therefore, humans play a decisive factor in anything that is profitable for human existence and society, and determine that anything that is harmful for humans must be evil. Heaven's way is quite different from the human way; and if we leave farming to heaven's way, all land will become wilderness. Consequently, human beings must take care of rice in order for it to grow and for it to do so, eliminate any weeds. Additionally, human beings must also protect their farms from wild pigs and deer. (Cf. *Talks*, 2) Sontoku also said that when the fruit trees bring abundant harvest, this will surely result in a poor harvest the following year. This is called "*nen-giri*" (年切, yearly limitation). In order to avoid this extreme change in the yearly harvest, the farmer should trim the branches off, pick up buds, and fertilize in order to achieve constant annual crop harvests. (Cf. *Talks*, 153)

"Therefore, the human way," Sontoku explained, "consists of restraining desires and feelings, and making effort after effort. Humans want to have, by nature, delicious meals and beautiful clothes. The human way (i.e., human morality) involves refraining from such desires due to the limits of one's income. It is the same with material ease and luxury. One should refrain from alcohol, ban delicious meals, and beautiful clothing, and instead be diligent, frugal, and concede, from one's own income, money to other people and to one's own future." (*Talks*, 4)

He called his method "*bun-do*" (分度). Sontoku's method of financial accounting consists of delegating the average of ten years income, one fourth of

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12 "Heaven's Way 天道," "Heaven's-principle 天理," and "Heaven-Principle-Nature 天理自然," are used here.

which one must concede for one's own future and for society. In this way, one must live on the remaining three fourths of one's average income. He applied this method to his farming, as well as some samurai families and domains (i.e. a feudal territory of his lord). He strictly opposed debt, alleging that debt and deserted land are the disease of the country. He lent money without interest to people who would work. His success not only made him famous but also helped to increase his followers.

Such were Sontoku's teachings of social morality. He recommended the three virtues of "diligence" (勤), "frugality" (儉), and "concession" (讓) and asserted that their opposites are "laziness" (怠), "luxury" (奢), and "deprivation" (奪). For example, imagine a baseball team whose manager practices Sontoku's *hotoku* teaching (like K. Matsusita who founded the world famous electric company following *hotoku* teachings). Imagine that this team wins every time due to their hard training, cooperation, teamwork (e.g. players not taking credit individually), and effective managing. After the team clenches the championship, they become relaxed, feel proud of themselves, become arrogant, lazy, and addicted to luxury, thus causing the team to weaken and making it difficult to restore the glory of the olden days.

Similarly, in case of households, Sontoku said that when parents become rich by hard work, sons tend to become lazy and addicted to luxury. Then, the next generation, now poor and depressed, will change its attitude and begin to work hard and be frugal. In contemporary Japan, the law of inheritance has been switched from the old system under which the eldest son (or son-in-law) inherited and took care of other members of family into a new system under which sons and daughters inherit the property equally; this system along with the decay of agriculture has broken up the traditional family-centred human relational ethics; and society has become more individualistic, more self-interested than ever. Confucian relationship ethics (親義別序信) is disappearing and society is turning from community (as it is termed by Tönnies:

"*Gemeinschaft*") toward self-interested society ("*Gesellschaft*"). Hence, in the case of a state, if people remain diligent, frugal, and concessive, then certainly the state will become rich and prosperous. However, if after people become rich, they tend to become lazy, addicted to luxury and depraved; then, the state will decline and become poor, similar to contemporary Japan after the initial growth of the economy in the 1960s-1980s.

Sontoku's three virtues were, as we saw, applicable effectively to a person, a family, a state, a local economy, and also a whole state. It may be said that these virtues were not applicable in cases where people were competing. For example, individuals cannot concede to their rivals; rather, they must, in cases of games and artificial institutions, compete with one another. Similarly, when states are economically competing with one another, an increase in concessions may lead to a loss of the game. When we consider the global competition of economy, if the competition becomes cutthroat beyond the due degree, it will destroy the global economy. If one imagines two worlds where people in one world follow the *hotoku* teaching, and people of another world are lazy, addicted to luxury, and depraved, which would represent the better world in which to live?

It is true that when a country is both economically and politically powerful and competitive, its people tend to be happier—however, this is only if allocation is fair. But, when powerful capitalist countries start to compete in international power politics, they not only cause the global economy to become unstable, but also deepen the gulf between the rich and the poor, and heighten the global environmental crisis.<sup>13</sup> It is here that one can find the fatal defects of capitalism itself.

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13 Cf. Nakatani Iwao 中谷巖, *Shihon shugi igo no sekai: Nihon wa "bunmei no tenkan" o shudo dekiru ka* [*The World After Capitalism*] 資本主義以後の世界：日本は「文明の轉換」を主導できるか (Tokyo: Tokuma shoten 徳間書店, 2012).

Sontoku's *hotoku*-teaching contributed, contrary to today's capitalism, by making the economy stable, reducing the difference between the rich and poor, and enriching the natural environment. Thus, it is arguable that one way that could serve to save the Japanese economy from today's impasse would be by following Sontoku's *hotoku* teachings.

*Hotoku*-ism could, following Sorai's ethics, be further divided into three levels beginning with the basis of the organismic view of nature, which is further referred to as the "eco-holist level." *Hotoku* (報德) means repayment for heaven's virtue, as well as service for heaven through farming which enriches nature. Hence, Sontoku's *hotoku*-ism should be located on the eco-holist level.

The second level is where humans are separated from the natural environment and what is to be considered relies solely on human interest, which I called "the separated or humanist level." Sontoku's method *bun-do*, whose aim lies in "ruling the country and making the people happy" (治國安民); can be happily located at the humanist level. If the final goal of our human morality is to make people feel content and happy, then such various moralities converge at the humanist level, as Sontoku's *hotoku*-ism, Confucian ethics of *ren*, Buddhist ethics of *maitra* (慈悲), and traditional Japanese Shintoism.

Sontoku's three virtues of "diligence," "frugality," and "concession," which originated from the method of *bun-do*, can be located on the third "institution and teachings level." If all virtues, customary moralities, religious teachings, laws, and rules could be considered as being created for the purpose of the general happiness of people (according to the two-level utilitarianism of Hare and M. Singer), then one can locate these precepts and teachings on the third "institutional and teachings level."

When we converge on the humanist level, even if we diverge in other respects, we can *agree* (on the humanist level) to *disagree* (on the institutional level).



#### 4. Is There any Way to Integrate Industry and Agriculture?

"Good and bad luck, happiness and unhappiness, pain and pleasure, anxiety and joy are all relative to each other because while it is the greatest pleasure for a cat to catch a rat, the ending is usually most painful for the rat. Similarly, the greatest pleasure for a snake is the greatest pain for a frog, and the greatest joy for a hawk is the greatest pain for a sparrow; the pleasure for a fisherman is nothing but a pain for fish. Such is the way the world is." (*Talks*, 41)

"The argument about good and evil is so difficult that if one argues about the basic fact, there is neither good nor evil. If one traces the origin, there is no good and evil. Because one separates the good from the origin, the evil will appear. The good and evil is the human way that humans think out. Hence, there would be no good and evil, if there were no humans. There are humans, so there is good and evil. Therefore, humans consider it good to develop the wilderness and evil to damage farms. Yet, for wild pigs and deer, development means evil and the devastation of the farms is good. The law will forbid theft as evil, while for thieves theft must be good and those who prevent it must be evil. Therefore, it is hardly clear what is good and what is evil." (*Talks*, 26)

Viewing these words, Sontoku only saw the relativity of moral judgments and failed to offer a solution to this dilemma. There must be, at a certain level of moral thinking at which moral judgments are so relative; yet, it is not the case because Sontoku believed in a common good and evil. It is true that there is no common criterion of good and evil between rat and cat, snake and frog, hawk and sparrow; yet, this occurs because humans bring human criteria of good and evil into cases where they are not appropriate. In human society, when it is peaceful and people are contented, individuals are able to accept the common criterion of good and evil according to the common social norms, values, customs, and laws. Within such a society, their values and moral judgments could not be said to be just relative. However, when we think of the natural environment separately from

human social values and moral judgments, then these values and judgments could not be applied to nature; and there may occur a sort of moral dilemma between human and natural values; that is, when human society thrives neglecting the natural welfare, nature will deteriorate and when people endeavor to recover nature, people cannot achieve it without any cost to society.

In order to avoid such a dilemma, one can shift the arena of argument towards the eco-holist level. In his cosmological schema, Sontoku expresses the whole world through a circle, and says, "all things fuse into one in a circle" (一円融合). To Sontoku, the circle seems to represent the cosmos in which everything is involved and implicated; outside of it nothing exists. His circles include, mystically, many things within them. For instance, in one circle Sontoku includes heaven and earth, however, in another circle he includes all four seasons. Similarly, another circle represents the rich and poor, while yet another circle refers to natural things and human affairs at the same time, and so on. Thus, his cosmic circles mean that our world and cosmos are limited, and all existence within it has a limit.

One cannot imagine there being no world (where nothing exists), however, we can imagine that all existence, natural world and human society alike, wishes that the world exists. It is a common good for the human society and natural world that both continue to exist. Here, then, is a common criterion for both humans and nature. It is good for both humans and nature that both survive.

For Sontoku and the Neo-Confucians of the Edo-era, heaven-earth-nature was an organism that bore everything; that is, the cosmos was their father and mother, and everything lived in a land community (if I borrow the land ethic terms of Aldo Leopold [1887-1948]). Then, what was urgent and most important for them was the prosperity of the land community and the sustainable society. In this eco-holist (or eco-humanist) level, there is neither anthropocentrism nor eco-centrism; accordingly, no moral dilemma occurs, since humans and nature are

one. (The *ren* of making everything as one body was the favorite theme of Wang Yang-ming 王陽明 [1472-1529].) There is one thing that is separated from the totality of humans and nature even at this level; that is, the human as *a moral agent*. As humans who serve as moral agents, we make the world (as *a moral patient*) better or worse. It is human beings who degrade the natural environment and cause the crisis; yet, it is also humans who can restore the environment. (If we can do nothing about changing the world, then, originally, the moral question as to how we are to restore the environment would not have arisen.)

There is, on the other hand, a different level from this eco-holist one. It is the level at which humans and nature are separated thus allowing humans to pursue human interests and natural welfare separately; hence, the moral dilemma will occur between human interest and natural welfare. It was once believed that it was acceptable for nuclear plants to make people happier at the cost of degrading the natural environment; for industrial society was believed to be better than agricultural society.

Such beliefs have made it easy to accept the degradation of the natural environment, which has ultimately resulted in the dying of nature today. Granted, it is possible for humans to restore nature, what ultimately must be done is that limits to industrialization must be enforced and sustainable agriculture must be carried out. To dominate and use nature for human purposes is only *partly* permissible; if humans were to conquer the *whole* globe and misuse the *whole* of nature, there would be no future for human beings any more. Yet, to switch from the industrial age to the ecological age is not a practicable ideal, but only a utopian ideal because we cannot live without industry. Naturally, the next problem to be faced is how to mix up industry and sustainable agriculture and how to put limits on industrialization (i.e., how much, by what standard, and to what degree)?

## **5. How Are We to Solve the Moral Dilemma?**

It is impossible to turn back our course of industrialization; however, we still may consider whether destruction of the natural environment can be ameliorated, since we do live in a mixed society of industry with agriculture. We cannot choose agricultural society as preferable to industry, because we cannot live without industry any more. Therefore, our ethical choice cannot help us to choose between the purely industrial and the purely agricultural society. Thus, our choice must be between a mixed society (of agriculture with industry), or an alternatively mixed society. In the case of the people who lived during the Edo-society era, they could choose to live in a better mixed society living within a closed country. However, this is no longer an option for us in today's society; we cannot freely choose, because industry and agriculture are fully involved in the global interdependent international relations. Suppose we lived in a closed society like the Edo-society, our choice would be between a mixed society and an alternative mixed society. Then, the criterion of the choice would be the wellness of mixture; that is, the quality of the mixture as seen from the viewpoint of the welfare of the whole of humanity and of nature. Here, we are shifting the level of moral thinking from a separated level (of humanist ethics) onto an eco-holist level.

We humans were originally born from heaven-earth-nature (so it was considered in the organismic age and ours). Humans and nature are so interrelated, interdependent, and interpenetrating that both could be separated not in this level, but only in the humanist level. When we see the matter from this organismic viewpoint, we see everything as a part of the limited whole—the whole family, the whole society, the whole state, and the whole cosmos. The world we live in includes within it "the human interest" and "the natural welfare." At the same time, both must be well balanced; when the balance decays, the world will be degraded. When human interests and natural welfare are thus seen from the organismic viewpoint, both are mixed and fused into a whole. It is here

that we can remember Sontoku's world where "all things are fused into one in a closed circle."

"The world (天下, all-under-Heaven) has its own 'shared limit' (分限, limitedness as part), all district, all villages, and all families have their own 'shared limit'. This is a 'natural part given by heaven' (天分, heaven-given-part). To decide the degree of outgoings is to be defined by *bun-do* (分度). Today, in a degenerate age, all people pursue luxuries and people who keep *bun-do* are only a few. Yet, if people do not keep *bun-do*, they will become financially deficient, even if they dominate a large country. If they do not know *bun-do*, that makes the matter worse; they will not be able to remedy the deficiency, even if they dominate the whole world, because luxury does not know limits while the heaven-given-part is limited. The state is to *bun-do* what a house is to a founding stone. Like a house can be built on the basis of foundation stones, the state can be managed on the basis of *bun-do*. If only people preserve *bun-do* in awe, the fund will increase from day to day, which will again enrich the state and make people happy and peace."(*Talks*, 4)

In Sontoku 4 worldview the whole (whole family, whole area, whole state, and whole cosmos) comes first and the various parts, second. The whole is always prior to its part.

We saw that our approach to ethics is separated from both camps of the traditional social welfare-ethics similar to that of Hare, M. Singer, and others, as well as newly emerging environmental ethics based on the ecological worldviews of Naess, Callicott, and others. According to Professor Peter Singer's animal liberationism, human beings (including sentient beings) possess intrinsic value, while non-sentient beings possess only instrumental value. Although this is true on the humanist level where humans are separated from nature, it is not the case with the eco-holist level where humans and nature are fused into one within a limited circle as with Sontoku. In order for humanity to be viable, it must be

founded on a sound environment. Therefore, humanity cannot be separated from the natural environment; however, it may be separated on the humanist level. In this sense, humans cannot help being symbiotic with nature. Human interests that are increased beyond the due degree (i.e. *bun-do*) could be defined as anthropocentrism, while human interests that share a fair degree, as well as have a balanced relationship with natural welfare is to be called humanism. Thus, humanity is destined to be symbiotic with nature.

Today, humankind is being threatened by an ecological crisis; the feeling of crisis was exacerbated after the 3/11 nuclear accident of Fukushima; it is as if we were clinging to a huge sinking ship much like the people aboard the Titanic. In order to save the earth, some sort of earth-first ethic is necessary. People today are sharply divided by political and economic systems, various religions, and ideologies, yet the environmental crisis must be shared by all mankind since people cannot survive without a sound environment. Thus, to save the earth from crisis, there must be a common supreme morality for humankind, let alone for all living beings on the world. Traditional Confucianism, Sontoku's *hotoku*-ism, and today's utilitarian ethics share the common aim that humanity should survive. Whichever viewpoint or worldview we hold, humanism is our common faith. Therefore, there is a possibility here that human beings as a species can be integrated. If people converge on this point, there is hope for the restoration of nature.♦

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