『기독교사회윤리』 제46집
(2020) 275~308

An East-West Conversation on *Homo Technicus* and Religious Humanism*

- From AlphaGo to Avatar

Myung-Su Yang (Ewha Womans University, Seoul, South Korea)
William Schweiker (University of Chicago Divinity School, USA)
Ilsup Ahn (North Park University, USA)

I. Introduction (Ilsup Ahn)
II. Western Technological Civilization and Eastern Naturalistic Humanism (Myung-Su Yang)
  1. Homo Technicus
  2. Naturalistic humanism and philosophy of the body
III. Technology and Christian Theological Humanism" (William Schweiker)
  1. Introduction
  2. Premise and Leading Claims about Technology
  3. Responsibility, Theological Humanism, and Homo Technicus
IV. Ahn's Response to Yang and Schweiker (Ilsup Ahn)
V. Yang's Response to Ahn (Myung-Su Yang)
VI. Schweiker's Response to Ahn (William Schweiker)

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21050/CSE.2020.46.09

* 본 대담은 지난 2020년 1월 미국 워싱턴에서 열린 미국기독교윤리학회에서 발표된 것으로 양명수(이화여대)교수와 윌리엄 슈베이커(시카고대)교수의 대담을 안일섭(노스파크대)교수가 정리한 것입니다.

www.kci.go.kr

• ABSTRACT •

An East-West Conversation on *Homo Technicus* and Religious Humanism: From AlphaGo to Avatar

Myung-Su Yang (Ewha Womans University, Seoul, South Korea)
William Schweiker (University of Chicago Divinity School, USA)
Ilsup Ahn (North Park University, USA)

How does technology have to do with religious humanism? Should Christian ethicists support the unlimited development of all human technologies from genetic enhancement to robotics? What should Christian faith say about technology? The purpose of this panel is to engage these issues by inviting two leading Christian ethicists from the East and the West: Dr. Myung-Su Yang from East Asia (South Korea) and Dr. William Schweiker from North America (the United States). This panel is not for a debate between two scholars; instead, it attempts to facilitate mutual learning by intentionally creating an open space where different voices are to be heard with due respect and appreciation.

www.kci.go.kr

I. Introduction (Ilsup Ahn)

It is my honor to invite Professors Myung-Su Yang and William Schweiker to the 2020 Society of Christian Ethics (SCE) annual conference to have this mutually enhancing conversation event. Without a doubt, the mounting social, political, religious, and ecological significance of technological development is one of the most critical and pressing ethical topics of our time. Technology is now so deeply embedded in our daily lives that it is virtually impossible to make a living without depending on it. Technology seems to be no longer defined or categorized as a "tool" or "means," which human beings are entitled to create, utilize, manipulate, or even obliterate according to their needs and wants. Whether we like it or not, technology has already become its own world to which we are now fast migrating, by projecting a new type of life that has never been existed in human history.

At this critical juncture of this human evolution or devolution (whatever you call), it seems right for us to have this session tonight. In doing so, we particularly adopt a conversational style between the East and the West by inviting two senior scholars of these two different worlds. Professor Myung-Su Yang has been working on the development of what he calls "naturalistic humanism" by critically appropriating Korean Neo-Confucian scholarship, especially Toegye Lee Hwang, the greatest Neo-Confucian scholar of the 16th century. Across the Pacific Ocean, for past decades, Professor William Schweiker has been engaged in scholarly construction of what he calls "theological humanism"

www.kci.go.kr

by critically reinterpreting and reevaluating Western traditions in theology and philosophy. In this regard, this session is also about a dialogue between Eastern "naturalistic humanism" and Western "theological humanism" in a broader sense. Let me briefly mention how the interactive conversations are conducted. Dr. Yang will first present his paper, which will then be followed by Dr. Schweiker's presentation. Dr. Ahn will ask questions and Drs. Yang and Schweiker will respond to them, respectively.

II. Western Technological Civilization and Eastern Naturalistic Humanism (Myung-Su Yang)

1. Homo Technicus

Modern technology is a combination of science and technical skills. Until the middle ages, science was in the domain of the higher intelligence and skills of ordinary people. This was common to some extent in both the East and the West. However, a paradigm shift occurred in the West during the so-called 'modern age.' Combined with technology, modern science has become the advance guard of industrialization. As Habermas notes, technological interest involves scientific knowledge. With natural science related to industrialization being highlighted as the model of knowledge, scientific truth is taking over the whole area of truth, and value judgment is possessed by factual judgment. Instead of ontological reason, technical reason and, to use Augustine's term, the low-level reason of the human being is over-

www.kci.go.kr

whelming in modern society. Instead of the divine and transcendent viewpoint, the human view has become the standard of truth-seeking and questioning, and there would not be any truth without going through human experience.

In this respect, modern technology has something to do with the modern spirit of liberty and equality. The experimental truth of natural science and the experiential truth of the Reformation have collaborated to see every individual as an agent of cognition and the practice of truth. With natural science being predominant, education has transited toward mass-education that is focused on the visible, earthly, and objective fact, out of the medieval elite education for the invisible, heavenly, and value-oriented truth. Social science affected by natural science has focused on what is actually done, rather than what is to be done in human society. This results in pulling down the standard of social ethics from divine love to rational justice. This is an important aspect of secularization in the aftermath of the Reformation and is intimately related to increasing liberty and possessive individualism. The individual's liberation from the heteronomous ecclesial regulation had moral consequences concerning the liberation of human desire for an abundance of wealth that far outweighs the need.

The Industrial Revolution, absolutely supported by newly invented machines in connection with modern natural science, opened a new age of economism. Until the middle ages, it was a household that took on economic activity, as the Greek word ***oikos-nomos*** shows. However, as the political economy has emerged along with the technological rev-

www.kci.go.kr

olution, the state has been leading scientific research as a means of economic growth. As technocracy takes over government bureaus, politics have been usurped by the economy. Historically, new material or cutting-edge technology had been used primarily for military and religious purposes: weapons and ritual instruments. Today, the political economy has taken the place of religion. As French thinker Jacque Ellul says, technology related to national wealth has become the untouchable sacred of this age, which guarantees the survival of a nation in a world of unlimited competition. The individual's whole course of life is deeply affected by national economic policy and its standardization of human life in keeping with technological development.

It is beyond question that western culture is 'telos-oriented' with three types of diverging goals; to hope for God as the ultimate concern of Christian eschatology, to promote the idea of the true person of humanistic philosophy, and to achieve the economic efficiency of modern technology. Of these, modern technology is the most powerful and ambitious in its goal of achievement. This is why the Frankfort School scholars focus on modern technology and absolutely define it as *Zweckmäßigkeit*. Compared with the final cause of the Christian God that is not really a goal for the human being to reach on his/her own, and the formal cause of the philosophical true man, the achievement of which is ultimately impossible, the technological goal downright depends on human efforts. This technological goal is characterized by its negligence of the ultimate concern. In the technological civilization, the question of meaning has been reduced to that of utility or usefulness

www.kci.go.kr

in the here and now. To use once more Augustinian terms, the spiritual scheme of *frui* has given way to the material scheme of *uti*. The enforcement of competitive power has become an underlying theme of every sector of everyday work.

Accordingly, the question of 'for what' remains unquestionable. First of all, this is because the answer is already given. The answer to the question is provided by the state and the enterprises. It is commonly understood that the enforcement of competitive power by increasingly revolutionary technology has become a matter of life and death. That is, it is the matter of the survival of a nation, of commercial enterprise and of individuals. So, it is needless to question 'for what.' On the other hand, the question of 'why' is unquestionable in the sense that there is no room left for anyone to squeeze into life the seeking of the ultimate concern of life. People are so busy to adjust themselves to newly issued machines and technics. Otherwise, they are doomed to be left behind because of the weakness of their competitive power. For these reasons, the question of the ultimate concern remains an unquestionable question. Therefore, there remains only the short-term goal in technological civilization and no longer the fundamental question of the meaning of life. In this regard, the technological world can be called the world of means without an ultimate goal. This is apocalyptic, because absorbed in competition, nations, and humankind may end up captive to the order of necessity by the autonomy of machine that surpasses the human ability to control.

The related problem is that the human species is being increasingly

www.kci.go.kr

set apart from Mother Nature, which is to say, nature itself. Consumer society is a good example of modern civilization's alienation from nature. Apparently, the human being's awareness of being part of nature has completely gone away. Undoubtedly, Luther contributed to the anthropocentric development of modern society as it rejected scholastic natural theology. With the Reformers' limitation of divine revelation to each individual's soul, nature has lost its position of the locus of the revelation of God's will and definitely turned into the object of scientific research. Compared with eastern philosophy, western Christianity tends to take nature as inferior to the human being from the beginning. According to Augustine's ontological hierarchy, existing natural things exist less than the human being and are close to nothing. Aquinas' theory of natural law naturally accepts that natural things are given by God in order to be used by human beings. This type of mindset is very strange to eastern culture. It is unquestionable that both modern natural science and technological civilization have backgrounds of Christian belief.

The environmental crisis that has appeared in modern civilization has something to do with the exaggerated subjectivity of the human being. This is because, in the end, the anthropocentric subject-object relation of modernism eventually has objectified nature. With opposing moral freedom to natural causality and natural inclination of human desire, Kant considers Mother Nature the domain of physics and freedom the realm of ethics. In other words, Kant's individual freedom presupposes the objectification of nature. When Kant speaks of civil freedom coming

www.kci.go.kr

from outer legality and inner freedom from inward morality, he leaves no room for the imagining of the freedom given by Mother Nature. Thus not only natural science but also modern ethics of freedom contributed to the alienation of nature. And the Christian vision of the world constitutes the theological and philosophical background of these two.

One good example of the excessive subjectivity of the modern individual can be found in Hegel's philosophy. Hegel, in his *Elements of Philosophy of Right*, determines the starting point of freedom as being in property. Nature is by its very definition the external in itself; it is external not only to the person, namely the individual human being, but also to itself (§43). Hegel's rational aspect of property consists in the placement of the human will in an external thing that has no end in itself (§44). The human being has the reality of freedom firstly by transforming external things into his own. Property is seen in the light of human freedom, inasmuch as human will has power over things. This freedom refers to the freedom of putting things at one's disposal with the human spirit's superiority over external things. In a similar way, even my external body is possessed by my will. My life exists as long as I will it by maintaining the possession of my body (§47). Hegel's reduction of living life to the individuals' free will of keeping the organic body as his/her own drastically demonstrates the anthropocentric viewpoint of western thought. The excessive subjectivity of the human being led to the death of God and environmental destruction.

www.kci.go.kr

2. Naturalistic humanism and philosophy of the body

While western Christian humanism has strength in social imagination that seeks reformed power relations between human beings, eastern naturalistic humanism has developed an eco-friendly imagination that keeps an intimate relation between the human being and Mother Nature.

Climate change caused by environmental destruction threatens the survival of the human race. Many scientists believe that new technology cannot prevent the on-going destruction of nature. In other words, future technology is not the answer to the negative effect of the currently used technology. To lessen the problem in the face of potential devastation, the concept of the 'natural contract' appears as the counterpart of social contract theory in western countries. The study and discussion on the rights of nature in contrast to the natural rights of the human being are underway as well.

Facing the crisis of the survival of human species that has come from the excessive subjectivity of individuals and modern technology combined with economism, an examination of the naturalistic humanism of East Asia is needed. East Asian countries used to follow Confucianism until the late 19th century, which is before the influence of western civilization. This means East Asia was far behind in modernization. However, the fact that one philosophy had been prevalent for so long a period of time may prove the meaningfulness of Confucian philosophy for the human race.

Confucianism sees ultimate freedom in a person's union with heaven

www.kci.go.kr

and earth. There has been no ontological hierarchy where nature exists as less than the human being. Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary in China in the 16th century, was an apologist of Christianity in dialogue with Confucianism. In his writing, *The True Meaning of God*, following the European philosophy of Aquinas, he described the superiority of the human being as having a rational or intellective ability in comparison with plants (the vegetative) and animals (the sensitive). The human soul alone is spiritual, while the animal's soul is bodily. If the life activity of natural things other than human beings shows a rational pattern, it is not due to the internal intelligence in them but to God's providential intervention. The Hegelian conception of the externality of nature in itself and to itself has a long history, from Plato's comparison of the relation of soul and body to that of a captain and boat to Aquinas and Matteo Ricci's doctrine of the bodily soul of nature.

In contrast, Neo-Confucianism sees everything equipped with intelligence or a rational pattern in itself. In other words, all of the things in nature possess the ability to grasp and follow the heavenly truth. This is expressed with the phrase, "one Supreme Ultimate in everything." (各具一極) The difference between the human being and other natural beings is described with the concept of *Qi*, or material energy. Each thing, regardless of its specie, has *Li*, or universal reason or intelligence in itself, but varies in the communicational capability within its equipped intelligence. This all comes down to the problem of the transparency and opaqueness of *Qi* or the material energy of the body. The plant is not able to be in touch with the intelligence

www.kci.go.kr

because its compositional material of its body is completely opaque and blocked. The intelligence in the animal is partially active because its material is only partially murky and partially blocked. The intelligence of the human being is in its full activity and communicable every way because the material of the body is pure and transparent.

As long as this hierarchy between the human being and other creatures is recognized, Neo-Confucianism is a humanistic philosophy that speaks of human responsibility for good and evil. Using the concept of the different states of the material, Neo-Confucianism depicts somewhat the superiority of the human race. However, human superiority is not essential because it is not ontological. Neo-Confucianism recognizes the equal existence of reason and intelligence in all creatures. This leads to the recognition of an equal nature between the human being and other natural things. It is not surprising that even up until the early 18th century, Korean scholars debated over whether human beings and other creatures have an equal nature or not.

As far as Mother Nature is concerned, the virtues the human being must achieve are by no means external to nature. To the contrary, nature has assured that these virtues are being completed by nature. The word 'nature'(自然) in Chinese characters literally translates into 'so on its own,' which means the self-existence that is, to use Aristotle's term, the first cause. In this scheme, freedom is to be achieved by returning back to nature and faithfully hearing and following the voice of the body. The naturalistic imagining of Confucianism basically allows for the human being to near more closely the earthly body provided by

www.kci.go.kr

nature. This is especially the case in Korean philosophy. The body is not essentially inferior to the soul, but as a part of nature, it is an intermediary between nature and the human soul; the human soul that tends to move away from the natural will to live, pursuing the meaning of life through social achievement.

In the Korean language, the body and mind are expressed by the same word. In contrast to the Greek and Christian freedom that can be achieved by the rule of the mind over the corporal body, Korean philosophy found freedom in the mind's faithfulness to the basic demands of the body. This is the way of making life vivid and fully alive and avoiding the excessive desire for possessions that comes from the desire of imitation. To be sure, the excessive natural desire of the body has led to unnatural perversion because of this repeated wrong habit to imitate. That's why the discipline of self-cultivation is needed, so that the heavenly mind may overcome the human mind. The Korean philosopher Toegye (1500-1570) built this very sophisticated thought (that is comparable to Aquinas' thought), and there were long theoretical debates for several hundreds of years among several different schools in Korea in order to find the most effective way to reach the heavenly will. Despite the difference of schools, their common ground is that what counts for the mind to be in union with the heavenly will is not to dominate the body but to return to the original natural demands of the body.

A naturalistic philosophy of the body enables the mind to gain freedom from meaninglessness, which is achieved through intimacy with

www.kci.go.kr

bodily life itself. Flying wild geese are already free from the meaninglessness of life. We may find them ignorant of the meaning of life, yet at the same time, they are ignorant of the meaninglessness. Inasmuch as they are ignorant of meaning, they can be considered inferior to the human race. However, being away from the enervated meaninglessness of life, they live more vital and less destructive lives. They experience neither the fear of death nor a death instinct but adhere to life until they die.

In this naturalistic viewpoint, there is little concerning the concept of 'substance' that is central in western ancient and medieval philosophy, and the concept of 'subject' that already appears in Christian theology to describe the three persons of the trinity of God and becomes predominant in the western modern philosophy. The individual's identity was not clear: the individual is but a part of the great circle of life within Mother Nature. That's why one's death was naturally accepted, and why the Christian understanding of death as the fruit of sin is very strange to East Asian people. Whereas Christianity sees the will to live of the human being completely replaced by the will to dominate, the diagnosis of the Korean philosophy of the body is that the human mind should be closer to the original bodily will to live. The body is the home to the vitality of nature.

Living in tune with the vital rhythm of the body can keep away the excessive desire for property and prevent this destructive evil power. This is because the body doesn't need much. Eating too much causes health problems and harms the vitality of life. So does eating greasy

www.kci.go.kr

food. For the sake of the body's health and vitality, small amounts of food and possessions are sufficient. The naturalistic philosophy of the body opens a way to liberation from the confusing and complicated appetite for overabundance. Modern technology related to economism has endlessly boosted the possessive desires of the human being and developed an excessive consumer society. The tremendous waste of resources and excessive consumption pose great threats to the survival of humankind. It seems urgent to change everyday lifestyles and habits to move in the direction of alleviating the desire to over-consume. From the viewpoint of the philosophy of the body, reducing the desire for overconsumption is needed to pay attention to the eco-friendly philosophy of life that developed in East Asian countries.

In conclusion, the issue is how to make Christian humanism and naturalistic humanism collaborate so that, on the one hand, the value of the individual's liberty and dignity may be respected for the sake of human rights and, on the other hand, the intimate relationship with nature may be recovered for the deliverance of the human race from the potential of perishing. This is the matter of spirituality beyond modern rationality that eventually turned out to be friendly with technical reason. Therefore, a dialogue between the East and the West is urgently needed. Especially Korean Neo-Confucian philosopher Toegye gives plenty of insights for that matter. His original arguments about the depth of sin of human beings, the cosmogony and the epistemology of truth show both common concern with Christianity about self-negation and fundamental difference about nature.

www.kci.go.kr

The order of necessity that modern technology and economism have brought about jeopardizes the survival of the human race and the basic values of humanity, such as liberty and equality. Considering that it results from an exaggerated subjectivity of the modern autonomous individual, the theonomous freedom of Christian spirituality needs to come into play to correct the exaggerated subjectivity. In doing so, the morals initiated by civil society through secularization should be put into question in terms of moderation and responsibility. If the issue of the preservation of humankind is a top priority, and naturalistic humanism and the philosophy of the body must be taken into consideration for the purpose of conserving resources and promoting anti-consumerism. The Korean philosophy of the body to receive nature as a partner requiring a harmonious response helps to revolutionarily reformulate current moral conceptions.

III. Technology and Christian Theological Humanism[1] (William Schweiker)

I want to thank Professor Ilsup Ahn for inviting me to participate in this important session and to Professor Myung-Su Yang for joining me in this event. I have decided this evening to focus on the relation between technology and what I have come to call Christian Theological Humanism.

1) I want to thank Sara-Jo Swiatek for helpful discussions on the topic of these remarks. All errors are my own, of course.

www.kci.go.kr

1. Introduction

After some years of reflection and writing, I want to begin with what I judge are some leading claims—five to be precise—a Christian theologian humanist must, I believe, make on this topic. I know, of course, that these claims are disputable, that is why they are claims! What is more, I cannot in the time allotted to me make a defense of these claims and therefore call them, if you want, points to be debated. We can in fact debate them later, if you like. Consistent with those claims about being human, my constructive and normative argument in these reflections is that we are technological beings, come what may, since human action is free and rational in some way. But what I also want to insist is that the fact of *Homo Technicus* cannot and ***must not*** be used to demean or destroy the full integrity of our being finite, equal and free moral beings in this world. Technology is made for humans not humans for technology, as we used to say about the Sabbath. To begin: a methodological premise of my argument and with that in hand my central claims.

2. Premise and Leading Claims about Technology

The methodological premise of this argument is that the question of technology, or any other moral challenge, must draw on diverse sources of moral knowledge if we wish to speak to contemporary people. Those sources, roughly stated, are the so-called Methodist Quadrilateral: scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. As a Christian humanist, I believe that these are, whatever else they are, human constructions

www.kci.go.kr

through which we seek to understand ourselves and the claims that others, the living God, and our own lives place on us. We interpret in order to understand a calling, a claim, not of our making and to which we are responsible.

My first claim is that despite all cultural, religious, gendered, sexual, and ethnic and racial differences, human beings are, at least biologically, of one species. Further, while the idea of species, and so too nature, are just that, ideas we humans use to make sense of their lives and world, they nevertheless pick out something about human beings that withstands the texts of the sciences and history. To be a humanist of any sort, then, means to stress our humanity as the ground and warrant for any adjectives we want to ascribe to people, like cultural or racial or religious ones. It is a terrifying idea that most ancient and indigenous culture's word for their community is "human being" reducing all others to some other form of animal life.

Claim two: human beings at all times and all places have striven to make their lives better, to enhance and protect their own lives in relation to themselves, others, ideals, and even gods or a supreme God. Humans are relentlessly aspiring creatures even when those aspirations may not be shared by a whole culture or people at large. To put this differently, human beings are evaluating beings. Our aspirations are linked to what is taken to be good or desirable and, what is more, our capacity to aspire can create via the imagination its own ends, goods, or (theologically put) idols.

My third claim is that while "technology" is usually seen as rooted

www.kci.go.kr

in the human ability to apply reason to practical problems, emblematically seen in tool-making, we need to insist that to be human beings are technical beings, ***Homo Technicus***, that is, we are problem-solving creatures precisely because we are aspiring creatures. This means that technology, interwoven with human reasoning and production, is never morally neutral. The basic problems we have to solve are about basic needs and how to enrich our lives in relation to those needs: shelter, food, reproduction, communication, defense, and the like. In this respect, humans have always dwelt in a technological world—that is, cultures and societies.

A fourth claim: the denial of the first claim about our shared humanity, and so the denial of some measure of moral equality, does not necessarily affect technological innovation or use or human aspiration. However, the denial of shared humanity is one of the drivers of the use of technological can lead in two morally problematic directions: (1) The attempt to enhance human powers (trans-humanism) to mitigate suffering and even death (see assumption 5) that can increase the gap between peoples—socially, economically, politically. And (2) it provides warrant to harm and destroy other peoples not seen as human and, when coupled with our aspiring nature, to more refined weapons of destruction.

My fifth claim is that human beings have a basic and profound fear on their finitude and the unknown. This can lead, given humanity's imaginative and evaluative powers (assumption 2), to a denial of the goodness of finitude, a kind to nihilism that devalue finite life while

www.kci.go.kr

imagining some transcendent or future state as good. This is found in some forms of post-humanism, on my account. If this nihilism is coupled with assumptions 3 (about our technological nature) and assumption 4 (about the denial of shared humanity), then, again, the most horrendous forms of violence become possible and warranted.

So, in terms of these five claims, a humanist ought to stress the value and goodness of human beings (contra-assumption 5), insists on common humanity and so moral equality (assumption 1), focus on shared human needs in order to enhance life (assumptions 2 and 3), seek rational ways of solving human problems (assumption 2), and, finally, understand peace to be the highest human good, the proper object of our aspirations. And a Christian humanist will want to show how Christian faith can and must inform human life with respect to these assumptions—and other derivative one's as well.

Now, with these initial reflections in hand, let me turn to the question of the Christian responsibility in our technological age from the vantage point of Theological Humanism.

3. Responsibility, Theological Humanism, and *Homo Technicus*

If one considers the current reach of technology into Artificial Intelligence (e.g., AlphaGo) or debates about trans-humanism and post-humanism (e.g., Avatar) in the light of the claims just made, then certain normative judgments pertain. The first is that technology is never morally neutral since it is necessarily part of human action. This means that the use of technology to enhance human power is morally

www.kci.go.kr

warranted only when it respect the very condition and nature of human action, that is, reasonable deliberation, intention, choice, judgment, and some measure of freedom. This means that the post-humanist agenda of escaping our finite embodied being is morally wrong. Artificial Intelligence if it countervenes those aspects of action is also morally problemative. Trans-humanist enhancements of life, for their part, must be judged case by case, but always in order to respect the structure of action as a limit on its enhancement.

As I have put it elsewhere, the imperative of responsibility is that in all actions and relations we are to respect and enhance the integrity of life before God. I have claimed today that normative demands are embedded in actions and relations aimed at the integrity of peoples' lives. But in our technological age, the thorniest issue might be the necessary ordering of respect and enhancement. The desire to enhance life springs from our being aspirational and imaginative creatures, *Homo Technicus*, and as such is necessarily indeterminate. Respect is a felt acknowledgment of the worth of any finite life in its need and vulnerability, *Homo Technicus*, that as such makes a categorical claim on us.

If enhancement is given normative priority over respect in thinking about responsibility, then, I worry that two possibilities follow. First, the bonds of human solidarity and moral equality can be severed such that inequality and also paternalistic intervention can take place. We would start to make decisions for the lives of future generations in ways that those who come after us will not be like us, as Paul Ramsey once put it. Second, it also opens the door, as noted before, to the ex-

www.kci.go.kr

ponential growth in machines of violence and also social and political structures that are systematically unjust and thereby violent.

In a word, if the drive to enhancement is untether from and made prior to the demand of respect, then, I worry that we fall into forms of hyper rationalism in AI and nihilism in post-humanism that undercut our embodied ways of knowing and the call to respect finite life in all of its vulnerability. Put in ancient theological terms, the threat is of Gnosticism, or a kind of secret technical knowledge not available to everyone, and Doceticism, that is, the denial of embodied existence as real and of genuine and unalienable worth.

What then of the contribution of Theological Humanism drawn from Christian sources? I can note, briefly, two contributions, one humanistic and the other theological. As I claimed before, peace is a central good for the humanist rooted in the worth of life and seeking to enhance the creativity and flourishing of life. From this perspective, any technological advance that exacerbates inequality and the possibility of violence must be morally challenged on the grounds that it does not in fact enhance human life. And the theological contribution, one I think that can find warrant not just in scripture, but experience as well, is that to be human is to be claimed, called, by other powers than our own, including divine creative power. We are not our own makers but interdependent with those who came before us and will follow after us as well as other forms of life on this fragile planet. That our existence does matter to us is a testimony not just to our vulnerability but also a good that exceeds our striving and is manifest in the community of

www.kci.go.kr

life, including the Living God.

IV. Ahn's Response to Yang and Schweiker (Ilsup Ahn)

Professor Yang first offers us a critical stance that modern technology in the West has to do with the modern spirit of liberty and equality. Hence, technological development should not be separated from the birth and growth of modern rationality. This view is largely in line with the Frankfurt School's critical philosophy, especially that of Jürgen Habermas. As a result of the Western modernization, as Yang claims, the "political economy has taken the place of religion," leading humanity to the state of "negligence of the ultimate concern." Technology played a key role in this progression in that humanity has more focused on its own efforts only to attain the technological goal. In doing so, humanity gradually rendered the question of "for what" nearly unquestionable because the answer has already been given. For this reason, Yang says, "the technological world can be called the world of means without an ultimate goal."

Yang also points out that humanity is not only separated from God or the Ultimate Concern, but also from Nature or the Environment. As a result of the modernization, the Western self has become an "exaggerated subjectivity." Again, technology has played its key role in enabling humanity to exploit Mother Nature and its natural resources for our economic gaining and convenience. Unfortunately, Western theology and philosophy (from Augustine to Hegel) cannot escape from blame because they provided a theological and philosophical justifica-

www.kci.go.kr

tion for humanity's continual dominance over nature rendering the emergence of exaggerated subjectivity inevitable.

By pointing out this critical issue, Yang offers his naturalistic solution by introducing the eastern "Naturalistic Humanism.' He claims, "facing the crisis of the survival of the human species that has come from the excessive subjectivity of individuals and modern technology combined with economism, an examination of the naturalistic humanism of East Asia is needed."

According to Yang, Neo-Confucianism offers us a critical solution because it recognizes the equal existence of reason and intelligence in all creatures helping us recognize the equal nature between human beings and other natural things. The Neo-Confucian naturalism enables humanity to overcome hierarchical binaries such as the body and the mind, civilization and nature, human beings and other creatures, the heaven and the earth, and so on. When we overcome these binaries, it may help us discover new meaning from our bodiliness and natural life because it frees our mind from meaninglessness. As Yang claims, if we would live in tune with the vital rhythm of the body, we may free from the excessive desire for property, preventing the destructive and colonizing evil. The philosophy of the body, as Yang calls it, then correct the exaggerated subjectivity.

I have a lot to appreciate Professor Yang's naturalistic humanism and the Neo-Confucian philosophy of the body; but, for the sake of our discussion, I would like to raise the following question: Going back to his original concern that the modern mind loses sight of the im-

www.kci.go.kr

portance of the ultimate concern, "how could Yang reconcile between humanity's ultimate concern and humanity's naturalistic concern? How does the theonomous freedom of Christianity come to terms with the naturalistic freedom of Neo-Confucianism?"

From the perspective of the western Christian theological perspective, Professor Schweiker presents an idea of how we can realize uneasy yet required reconciliation between technology and what he calls Christian "theological humanism." Unlike Yang, who approaches the issue in light of Western modernization, Schweiker contextualizes the problematic of human technology in terms of diverse Christian sources of moral knowledge, such as Methodist Quadrilateral: scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

Out of these theological sources, Schweiker develops his five phenomenological claims on theological anthropology. The first one is about universal or shared equality of humanity; the second is aspiring nature of humanity; the third is problem-solving nature of humanity; the fourth is the propensity or tendency of humanity to deny moral equality; the fifth is the vulnerability of humanity caused by the fear of finitude and the unknown.

According to Schweiker, technological development is an inevitable aspect of humanity because of humanity's aspiring nature. Human beings are technical beings—*Homo Technicus*—because we are problem-solving creatures. Given that any form of technology is necessarily interwoven with human reasoning and production, technology is also "never morally neutral," and *Homo Technicus* cannot but be a moral

www.kci.go.kr

agent.

How could we, then, conceive the moral aspect of *Homo Technicus?* Schweiker answers this question by turning to the question of Christian responsibility. That is, how is the idea of Christian responsibility possible in an age of exponential technological development? According to Schweiker, the Christian notion of responsibility is situated between two equally important moral claims. Positively construed, human technology should be appropriated in such a way to enhance the integrity of life before God; negatively put, human technology should not violate the categorical moral injunction to respect the worth of any finite life.

Schweiker worries, however, if the drive to enhancement is disconnected from and thus made prior to the demand of respect, we fall into forms of hyper rationalism (AI) and nihilism of post-humanism (which depreciates human finitude). According to Schweiker, only when technology serves what he calls the "central good of peace," its use is justifiable. Peace is illustrated as an opposite idea to exacerbating inequality and the possibility of violence.

Schweiker's theological humanist approach to *Homo Technicus* is in high demand because it provides us with practical ethical guidelines on how we should conceptualize ethical responsibility in an age of exponential technological development. I attempt to raise a question, though, for further theological exploration of *Homo Technicus* and theological humanism. "If Christian theological humanism supports the ethical goal of enhancing life whereby humanity embrace technology without necessarily exacerbating inequality and the possibility of violence,

www.kci.go.kr

how does theological humanism differ from anthropocentric moralism (making all lives flourished and peaceful without discrimination and violence) as an ethical project? How could Christian ethics of theological humanism not fall into a type of anthropocentric moralism?"

V. Yang's Response to Ahn (Myung-Su Yang)

I appreciate Dr. Ahn for giving me an opportunity to further clarify my ideas by answering his question. First of all, I would not say that Christian tradition must be blamed for its vision of eventual destruction of nature. I don't believe that the problem is that simple. Struggling for human freedom and equality which unfolded in Christian culture is still priceless. I don't denounce my teachers, such as Augustine, Luther, and Kant. They have done their parts for the humanization of the power-seeking world. With the doctrines such as Trinity, Christology and original sin, Christianity has set up the iconoclast and critical mind without falling into historical pessimism and ended up desacralizing political power and made the way to the freedom and dignity of individuals. The doctrine of the kingdom of God in tension with the actual world represented by the state as a political community has been effective as well.

From as early as in the medieval church, Christianity has succeeded in institutionally relativizing secular authority with spiritual authority under the pretext of the salvation of soul. Even before the Reformation that made the first step toward modern freedom and definitely strengthened the individual's status as a cognitive and practical subject with in-

www.kci.go.kr

dependent self-determination, Christianity had been inclined to think in a more individualistic way than any Asian philosophy and religion, by using the substantial and subjective terminologies in its explanation of God and humanity. For Augustine, the capital I who live, think and love is a pivot of his theology so that his thought can be noted to be the origin of Descartes' idea or modern existentialism. For Aquinas, God is the ***maximum individium***. He describes the relation of three Persons in one God with the concept of subject.

The combination of the desacralization of public power and the individualistic way of thinking in the Christian world surely paved the way for modern democracy and human rights. Even though modern liberalism historically stood against Christian orthodoxy and ecclesial authoritarianism that monopolized the truth of life, modern political and legal liberalism undoubtedly owes much to the religious individualism of Christian tradition. Kant's philosophy of freedom is the second step toward individual freedom that started with Luther's Reformation, which Philip Schaff calls the first step for modern freedom. The philosophy of Kant and Hegel are nothing else than the secularized version of Luther's theology. Hobbes and Locke, who are recognized as founders of modern liberalism, imagined an ideal society beyond the actual state, something that is unimaginable without the biblical teaching and Augustinian argument that human being is not political but social by nature. Modern democracy and human rights developed under the influence of the Christian spirit are invaluable for the sake of justice and peace of the world.

www.kci.go.kr

The problem is that the religious individualism of Christianity has been reduced to possessive individualism in the process of modernization, that the fundamentally relational and communitarian subjectivity of Christian faith has been transformed into excessive subjectivity of western individuals. The excessive subjectivity in the mode of legal liberalism turned out to bring the isolation of individuals from one another and historical immanentism that is well shown in Hegel's philosophy of history and its materialistic shift by Marx's communism. The modern atomism is the result of the exclusion of theonomous grace of Christian faith in the pursuance of securing individual autonomy. The historical optimism or historicism that eventually led to the most inhumane totalitarianism of Hitler's national socialism and the Soviet Union's communism is largely due to the neglect of long-standing dualistic tension between society and nation, namely distinction between the kingdom of God and kingdom of the world. Actually, Hobbs and Locke in the 17th century who thought of ideal society in distinction with the state already demonstrate an inclination not to keep the tension between the two as seriously as Luther did in the 16th century. From this, we can see from whence the problems of possessive individualism and excessive subjectivity have come. They have emerged in the process of realization of the ideal of individual freedom and dignity, of which Christianity offers the spiritual and theological source. Now that western individualism has gone too far, linked with materialistic avarice and indifference to each other, Christianity can and must play the role of healer. Modernity must recover its abundant source of freedom that the

www.kci.go.kr

Christian faith contains. The church must be ready to be the counter-force of the state that leads to unlimited technological advancement for the purpose of economic growth based on possessive individualism. Regarding the restoration of the communitarian aspect of human life and the modification of excessive subjectivity, I believe that Christian theonomous spirit can do many things without hurting individual freedom and dignity.

Another problem of modern technological society is the environmental crisis. The autonomy of modern technology and climate change alike are the apocalyptic matter of life or death of human species. As far as natural destruction is concerned, the limit of Christianity is clear. To be sure, I do not agree with the simple claim that Christianity is the culprit of the environmental crisis. The claim may not be absolutely groundless in as much as the natural environment alone is concerned. However, the enhancement of democratic human relations is still basic and crucial not only for freedom but also for the preservation of humankind. Many thinkers have been finding the apocalyptic crisis of demolition of the world on the whole in the potential battle of all against all. In this regard, the contributive force of Christian doctrine of original sin cannot be too much recognized; it has brought to light in many different ways the layers of fundamental violence that abide in human nature and are clandestinely implemented through social structure of life such as custom, lawful institution and morals. It's no exaggeration that Marx's critique of ideology is also considered the product of a Christian spirit.

www.kci.go.kr

At the same time, it is undeniable that Christian humanization of the world has provided a reason for denaturalization or rather dehumanization of nature. Heidegger is correct when he says humans only face humans in the modern humanistic civilization. Source and sphere of imagination in western civilization is confined to human relation. While Christianity has been making progress in social imagination for the freedom and equality of individuals, it is profoundly short on natural imagination that sees human being a part of the entirety of nature. If the environmental crisis is an urgent issue for humankind to deal with in order to secure the sustainable life, a philosophical paradigm shift is needed, the reason I suggest the attempt to take into account the naturalistic humanism that has been developed in East Asian countries. Christian humanism of the West and naturalistic humanism of the East share humanism in common. Again, absolute naturalism is not the answer. Even in Neo-Confucianism, there is a hierarchy between human beings and animals or plants. The human being is a responsible being for the good and salvation of the whole creatures, including humans and nature. This is the basic meaning of humanism both in the East and the West. The difference consists in to whom the responsibility of a human being is to respond first, whereas Christianity found the clue to the salvation of the world in human being's response to the transcendent God's calling, eastern Confucianism in responding to the calling of nature's life cycle. The eco-friendly aspect of the naturalistic humanism of eastern Confucianism leaves us a lot to reflect for the future of human species facing natural destruction. This is really so be-

www.kci.go.kr

cause it has developed a very sophisticated metaphysical system that is comparable to the western medieval philosophy. The reason I mention Korean philosophy is that Korean neo-Confucianism tends to be the most naturalistic among other Confucian cultures such as Chinese and Japanese. Korean naturalistic humanism is best reflected in Korean arts, including architecture, painting, furniture and so on.

How to harmonize the East and the West in one system is a challenge. What is clear is that we have to have an awareness of the problem. What is to be done first is dialogue. The Spirit centered theology, or Christian theology of creation may be helpful to some extent. However, Christian theology needs the help of the eastern philosophy of the body. As far as the future of human species is concerned, I'm not optimistic, but I hope. Speaking or talking means hoping. The essence of language is to be found in hope. If there is no longer hope, there is no more talk. I'm thinking of the Christian doctrine of original sin. People do not know what is right or wrong, and even though they know, they don't do it and cannot do it. This message, I believe, extends well beyond the moral sphere. Actually, it may be that we don't know what is good for us. This explains why dialogue is required. Language is but a dialogue.

VI. Schweiker's Response to Ahn (William Schweiker)

Three brief responses to an exceedingly important question for the position I have outlined in these remarks. First, I think we need to distinguish between epistemic anthropocentrism, that is, how we come to

www.kci.go.kr

know the world and ourselves, and axiological anthropocentrism. Epistemologically, the position of Christian Theological Human is anthropocentric in the sense that as human being we can only know things in human ways. That is why the four sources of reflection noted above are important: they are indexed to how we come to know what we ought to be and to do. As medieval thinkers put it, things are known according to the mode of the knower. I can see no reason to deny that fact. Even divine revelation must be interpreted and understood in human terms. However, Christian Theological Humanism is *not* axiologically anthropocentric. We are to respect and enhance the integrity of life, and that means all life even divine life.

Second, the position sketched in these pages is not a form of moralism in that instead of advocating a moral cause certain of the truth of that cause, at issue here is ethical reflection, argument, and judgment about the truth of our convictions, religious or not. Of course, ethical discourse is practical discourse and thus seeks to inform human individual and social conduct. Yet it special task is the critical interpretation and interrogation of moral beliefs and values for the sake of the responsible life. I have tried to provide a framework for that work. That being said, if the anthropocentric moralist wants to have common cause with the account of responsibility for the integrity of life, I would gladly join forces while also recognizing our differences.

Finally, the Christian theological perspective of the position I have advocated cannot be circumscribed within an anthropocentric outlook. To interpret, understand, and orient human life before God, which is

www.kci.go.kr

that Theological Humanism does, means that the ultimate space of existence is not just intra-human relations but *coram deo*. Whether one speaks of God as *ipsum esse* (Aquinas), Being-Itself (Tillich), the system of being (Edwards), sovereign Father (Calvin), loving Parent (Wesley), Highest Good (Augustine) the theological point is that goodness is real because God is God. This widens the scope of moral responsibility, the depth of moral value, and the pointedness of the claim of others on us, and the limits of our powers. It is this kind of theological outlook or stance that finds expression in Christian Theological Humanism.

Such then is my argument on the topic before us. That being said, one last prescription is in order. I worry that too much contemporary Christian theological ethics is sitting on the sidelines of the major debates of our time, using outdated and too often facile claims to address major issues. I think, for instance, we need a moratorium on the use of the Trinity and the *imago dei*, to answer all moral questions! It is time to engage the best of current thought while drawing on the real wealth of this tradition in order to speak to the questions of our age. If not, we fade into self-righteous obscurity or jump on the bandwagon of whatever fad is traveling by, say, the bandwagon of unleashed technology. In both cases, we are doing little good for the age.

www.kci.go.kr