A Preliminary Attempt to Give a Birdseye View on the Nature of Traditional Eastern (Asian) and Western (European) Environmental Ideas

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I was born and bred in a small Korean village soaked in traditional East Asian environmental ideas. I learned cultural geography and Western-European environmental ideas at Berkeley, California, especially from Carl Sauer and Clarence Glacken. In New Zealand, I studied Maori environmental ideas which are an important tradition of the indigenous people of the land. I wish to use what I have learned from these three cultures in an attempt to discuss some critical points on the nature and origin of Western and Eastern environmental ideas.

This paper is merely a preliminary attempt to understand environmental ideas from a cross-cultural perspective. It is not a final version; it is an interim report on my research. However, I present this paper out of my desire to communicate some of my thought with others. The four specific aims for this paper are: (1) to present all environmental ideas discussed here in diagrams for easier communication; (2) to review Glacken's view of the structure of Western environmental ideas and to provide an alternative perspective; (3) to explore some important types of East Asian environmental ideas; and (4) to provide a tentative comparison of Eastern and Western environmental ideas.

My discussion on Western ideas mainly represents my learning from Professor Clarence J. Glacken's work and a critical reflection on his approach. Consequently, conceptualisation of Western ideas are somewhat different from that of Glacken's.[48] My discussion on Eastern ideas comes mainly from my own observations and research.

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[48] Glacken in his posthumously published work in 1992 presented a different categorisation of the Western ideas into "four vital and powerful ideas" (Glacken, 1992, 103):

1) The relationship of the human race to other forms of life, particularly to the higher animals.
2) The study of interrelationships in the natural world, almost universally known today as ecology.
3) The transformation of nature by humans, interpretations that have been made of it, and the ideas it has engendered.
4) Subjective, emotional, and aesthetic reactions to nature. We can trace these back to the ancient world, but here I am concerned with only one phase of this history,

Glacken seemed to have reorganised, revised and added new perspectives to his new reflections on the history of western ideas concerning humanity-nature relationships. In his article, he did not fully trace and document these ideas from ancient times, but was mainly concerned with "the efflorescence of such ideas in Western civilisation from about the middle of the 18th to the middle of the 19th centuries". Glacken's new attempt has yet to be fully examined and thus is not considered in this essay.

1
Western (European) Environmental Ideas

Glacken listed three important environmental ideas in Western culture that originated in ancient times and persisted until the end of the 18th Century. These are the ideas of environmental influences, of a designed earth, and of humanity as a geographic agent. Glacken treated these three as equally distinct and important environmental ideas. There were a number of other important ideas, such as the particle theories, but they did not consistently appear in the history of Western ideas. Glacken discussed these three important and persistent ideas in his monumental work, "Traces on the Rhodian Shore".

1.1
The Idea of a Designed Earth

The idea of a designed earth is that humanity and nature are both created and controlled by an artisan deity for a divine purpose. This idea could be called the idea of final causes or teleology, and owes its ancient origin to theology, mythology and philosophy (Glacken, 1967, vii). In reading Glacken's work, it becomes clear that there are three particularly important sources which have influenced the development of this idea, although he does not identify them as such.

The first is Xenophon's three famous proofs of divine providence (Glacken, 1967, 42–43). By examining human physiological conditions, cosmic order (such as day and night), and also the wide abundance of resources for human beings, he tried to prove that God created earth, and that it is divine providence. This Xenophonian approach has been frequently used by later thinkers in presenting their version of the idea of a designed earth.

The second important source is the Bible, especially the concept expressed in Genesis that God created everything and gave it all to human beings. Humanity was created just below the angels, but above everything else in the hierarchy of God's creation, and had dominion over nature. This doctrine became a cornerstone of the Idea of a Designed Earth. In Genesis,1:28, God said to Adam and Eve:

> *Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.*

In my view, the third important contribution to the idea of divine design, comes from St Francis of Assissi. He put forward the rather unorthodox Christian concept of replacing human monarchy over nature with democracy among humanity and other natural objects (White, 15). To him, birds, wolves, and other natural phenomena were not just objects created to teach human beings, but were equal to human beings in their own capacity to praise God and participate in his divine works. St Francis's view was seen as somewhat heretical, but his spirituality of humility and simplicity made a tremendous impact on Christianity.

These three sources are quite independent of each other, but merged together to explain the earth as a divine creation under divine control. The idea of a designed earth has been the single most important environmental thought in Western history.

1.2
The Idea of Environmental Influences

Glacken's second idea is what he calls the idea of environmental influences, which may be better known as the idea of environmental determinism. This idea's main thesis is that nature determines and controls human behaviour, which originates from early medicine, travelogues, and religion (Glacken, 1967, vii). Glacken argues that in classical times, these ideas were most clearly discussed by Hippocrates in his book; *Airs, Waters* and *Places* in which he presented two distinct environmental deterministic ideas, one based on physiology, the other on geographical location (Glacken, 1967, 80–82).

1.2.1
Environmental deterministic idea based on physiology

The environmental theory based on physiology is the well known Humor theory which believes that the mixture and state of the four humors – blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile – determine the health, sanity and temperament of people. The essence of the theory is that the conditions of these humors are influenced by the environment. This implies that the environment controls and determines human characteristics and health. This ancient idea has persisted throughout Western history in different contexts and applications in new situations. The humor theory is in fact a micro-scale observation of environmental influences on human physiological conditions, namely health and temperament.

1.2.2
Environmental deterministic idea based on geographic location

The environmental theory based on geographic location is a macro scale observation of environmental influences on human society, or the fate of city and state. Ancient Rome is a popular example of how a favourable environment enabled it to become the most prosperous and important city in the world. These two ideas form the basis of environmental deterministic thinking and were reiterated by many later thinkers and scholars throughout Western history, including Jean Bodin and Montesguieu.

However, this traditional idea of environmental determinism could not adequately explain some critical aspects of the culture-nature relationship. As early as in the 18th Century Voltaire pointed out that while Greece's climate (environment) remained the same, the culture had changed (Glacken, 1967, 582). The general view is that traditional environmental deterministic ideas could not adequately explain the following three points: (1) The occurrence of cultural changes within the same environment, (2) the existence of different cultures within a similar environment and (3) the existence of similar cultures in quite different environments. Therefore, alternative theories were suggested to modify or even oppose this traditional view. The following three are examined here: Stop and Go determinism, Probabilism, and Possibilism.

Stop-and-Go determinism

Stop-and-Go determinism was proposed by Griffith Taylor on the assumption that the basic tenet of the traditional environmental determinism was correct, but needed to be modified and its theoretical shortcomings be complemented. Taylor argued:

... the best economic programme for a country to follow has in large part been determined by nature, and it is the geographer's duty to interpret this programme. Man is able to accelerate, slow, or stop the progress of a country's development. But he should not, if he is wise, depart from the directions as indicated by the natural environment. He is like the traffic-controller in a large city, who alters the rate, but not the direction of progress; (quoted in Tatham, 160)

This idea is essentially the same as the traditional environmental deterministic stance, but it acknowledges some freedom of humanity in the way it reaches its destiny. However, humanity can not reverse the direction of this destiny which is determined by nature, which can be represented in a diagram as follows (Fig. 1).

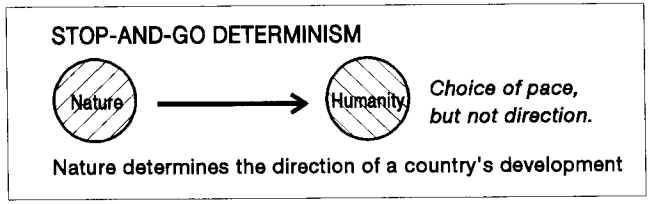

Fig. 1

Probabilism

Probabilism has never been a widely used term and a strong view point in geographic thought. O.H.K. Spate, in his article comparing the environmental deterministic views of E. Huntington and A.J. Toynbee, a well known cultural historian, proposed probabilism as a solution to geographers' disputes over environmental determinism and possibilism (H. & M. Sprout, p.100). Probabilism, as described in the following diagram (Fig.2), assumes that the choices provided by nature do not have the same probability, and people are capable of making rational choices by sorting out more probable choices from less probable ones (H. & M Sprout, p.109).

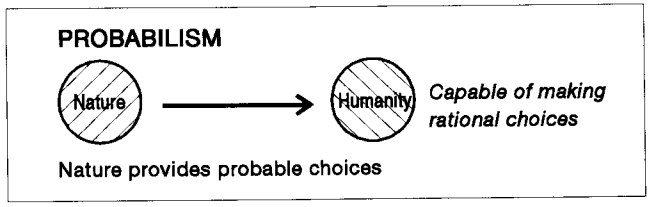

Fig. 2

Possibilism

Possibilism is perhaps the oldest and most popular theory among these three, promoted by the French School of Geography, led by Paul Vidal de la Blache. Here, the

environment does not determine human fate, it simply provides possibilities for humans to choose from. This is attested in the famous dictum of Lucian Febvre, probably the most powerful proponent of possibilism "Des nécessités, nulle part. Des possibilités, partout" (Necessities nowhere and possibilities everywhere) (Febvre, 284). It is not suggested in possibilism that some possibilities provided by nature are more suitable than others, which can be represented in the diagram below (Fig. 3):

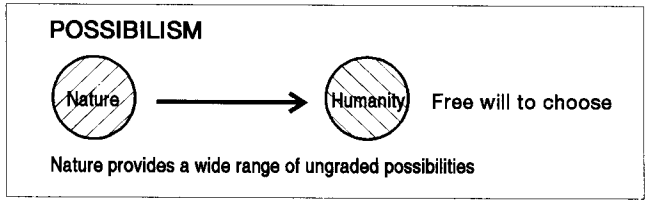

Fig. 3

It is generally accepted that possibilism is the contrasting perspective to environmental determinism (Sprout, 83, Leuthwaite, 8 & 23). However, this conventional view and interpretation needs to be re-examined. In my view, possibilism is not in opposition to environmental determinism but is a modified version of it for the following reasons:

1) No possibilists have ever claimed that humanity can free itself from all environmental influences, for even Febvre wrote "Man can never entirely rid themselves whatever they do of the hold their environment has on them" (Tatham, 155).
2) Humanity's choices are still limited to the range of various possibilities provided by the environment.
3) Moreover, in possibilism, the environment and humanity still remain as two separate and opposing entities, the epistemological stance of traditional environmental determinism. So in this sense, it still shares the same dualism of the environment and humanity as environmental determinism does.
4) Similar to this is the assumption of a unidirectional influence between the two entities. Humanity does not affect nature, but nature influences humanity by providing a range of choices (possibilities) for humans to choose from.

These four points may well justify one's classification of possibilism as a modified version of environmental determinism, rather than its antithesis.

Epistemologically, the real opposition to environmental determinism may be the concept of ecosystem. This is where the dichotomy of opposing entities, humanity and the environment, is resolved into a single interacting entity. In this sense, the concept of ecosystem that assumes an interaction between various natural and cultural elements within a single entity is qualitatively different from environmental determinism, which assumes a dichotomy of humanity and nature as well as a unidirectional influence from the environment. However, in the debates of conservation movements, ecology and ecosystem are understood as a synonymous concept to environmental determinism.

In terms of the flow of influence, the opposite of environmental determinism's theme 'the environment moulds human destiny' is not possibilism's 'human choices

within the wide range of possibilities that nature provides', but the theme, 'humanity moulds (transforms and modifies) nature', held by the idea of humanity as a geographic agent.

1.3 The Idea of Humanity as a Geographical Agent

The idea of humanity as a geographic agent still assumes a dichotomy of the environment and humanity, and a unidirectional influence from one to the other. However, this time the direction of influence is from humanity to the environment by regarding humanity as a modifier of earth surface. This idea evaluates human impact on the environment by emphasising humanity's role in changing the face of the earth. According to Glacken, this idea owes much to the plans, activities and skills of humans in every-day life, such as agriculture, irrigation work, expansion of settlements, etc (Glacken, vii). Glacken suggested that two views have been important in the development of the idea: one is a utilitarian view of the environment, that sees humanity as the highest being of creation with the ability to manipulate and utilise the environment. The second view is the idea of humanity serving God as his partner. God created the environment, but gave the task of managing and improving his own creation to humanity, as stated in Genesis 1: 28.

Ancient literature on the idea of humanity as a geographic agent is sparse, but there has recently been an exponential growth in the volume and intensity of discussion on this line. Most eco-crisis and conservation related literature is of this kind. The 18th Century French scholar Comte Buffon, who was also a farmer and nurseryman, made a significant contribution to this idea by bringing people's attention to the sharp distinction between soils formed by natural processes and those changed through agriculture, and pointing out that humans made domesticated animals almost like feudal serfs. However, it was G.P. Marsh, a diplomat and scholar, who made the first general and extended study of humanity as a modifier of the environment and highlighted the unanticipated alarming consequences of uncontrolled and unplanned human impact on the environment (Glacken, 1956, p. 83).

1.4 A Review of Glacken's Position on Western Ideas

Glacken made significant contributions to the study of the history of Western environmental ideas. His book, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* largely centres around the Western environmental ideas in the elite or great tradition based on academic writings, while gives little attention to the environmental ideas held by folk tradition or commoners. The history of Western ideas in folk tradition or little tradition has yet to be written and it is even more difficult to document and interpret, for it is mostly reflected in folklore and the oral traditions of common people. Some collections of folklore materials, including that of Brothers Grimm's fairy tales and oral traditions of commoners are still alive. The famous collections of Irish folklore may be fascinating sources for the study of the Irish concept of the environment and

Irish attitudes toward nature.[49] Based on such analyses, the history of Western attitudes toward nature held by commoners could be written which would complement Glacken's study on Western environmental ideas in the elite or great tradition to make a more complete picture of environmental ideas in Western civilisation.

Out of many Western ideas, Glacken chose three that are persistent in Western history as three equally distinct ideas. His choice was justified and supported by his scholarly investigation, documentation and interpretation. Without disparaging Glaken's scholarly achievement, one can review Glacken's stance based on his own study and suggest what could be an alternative perspective to the Western environmental ideas (see diagramatic representation of Glacken's view, Fig. 1, and alternative view, Fig. 2). By (re)reading Glacken's work, his three ideas could be seen as a single idea with two subsets within it, as the two minor ones are embraced by the main idea, and all are based on common epistemological assumption. An alternative structure suggested here is that both the ideas of environmental influences (determinism) and humanity as a geographic agent are parts of the idea of a designed earth. Based on Glacken's own work in which he implicitly acknowledged the possibility of this alternative perspective, I would attempt to substantiate this alternative structure on the Western environmental ideas.

Environmental determinism may not contradict the idea of a designed earth because 'environmental influences' could be seen as God's influence on humanity through the environment that was created by God himself. Therefore, we can consider that the ideas of environmental determinism may well be a subset of the idea of divine design (a designed earth) in the Western culture. Glacken would not object to this view for he commented:

> *These theories [environmental determinism] thus fit well into the Christian theology and philosophy of the Middle Ages. There need be no conflict if they are regarded as generalisations of regional or local significance elucidating the plan and the design of God. (Glacken, 287)*

Glacken in his book also implicitly mentioned that the idea of humanity as a geographic agent is associated with the idea of a designed earth:

> *Like the environmental theory, it (idea of man as a geographic agent) could be accommodated within the design argument, for man through his arts and inventions was seen as a partner of God, improving upon and cultivating an earth created for him. (Glacken, viii)*

Despite his acknowledgment of this situation of the three ideas, Glacken still chose to present the three important Western environmental ideas as three equally distinct sets. It was probably his privilege and choice as a scholar as he said in the conclusion of his book, "A historian of ideas throws his own pebbles into the water, and the concentric ripples he creates naturally are different from those of another." (Glacken, 706).

Glacken's choice of the idea of humanity as a geographic agent may reflect presentism, rather than the idea's true historical significance as one of the most impor-

[49] In August 1995 I had the chance to visit the impressive collection of Irish folklore housed in the University College Dublin.

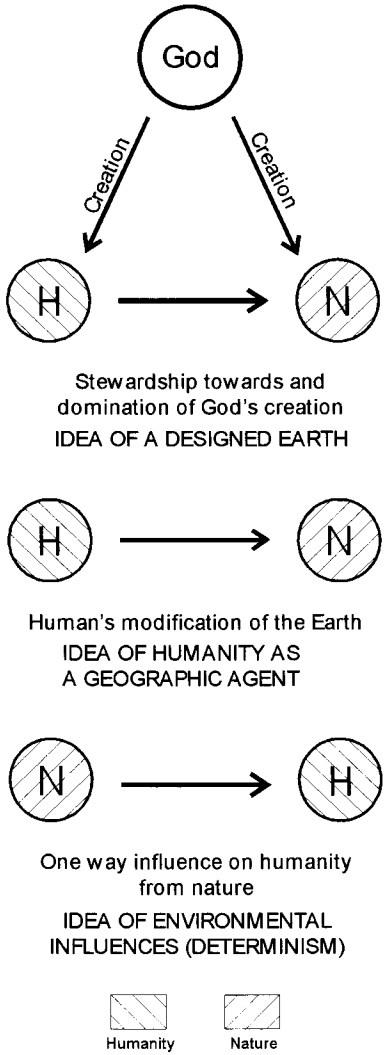

Fig. 4. Diagrammatic representation of three distinct Western environmental ideas according to Clarence J. Glacken

tant and persistent environmental ideas of the west. In fact, Glacken wrote that it was not until the works of Comte Buffon and Marsh in the 18th and 19th centuries that the idea of humanity as a geographic agent was well established:

> *The third idea was less well formulated in antiquity than were the other two; in fact, its full implications were not realised until Buffon wrote of them, and they were not explored in detail until Marsh published* Man and Nature *in 1864. (Glacken, viii)*

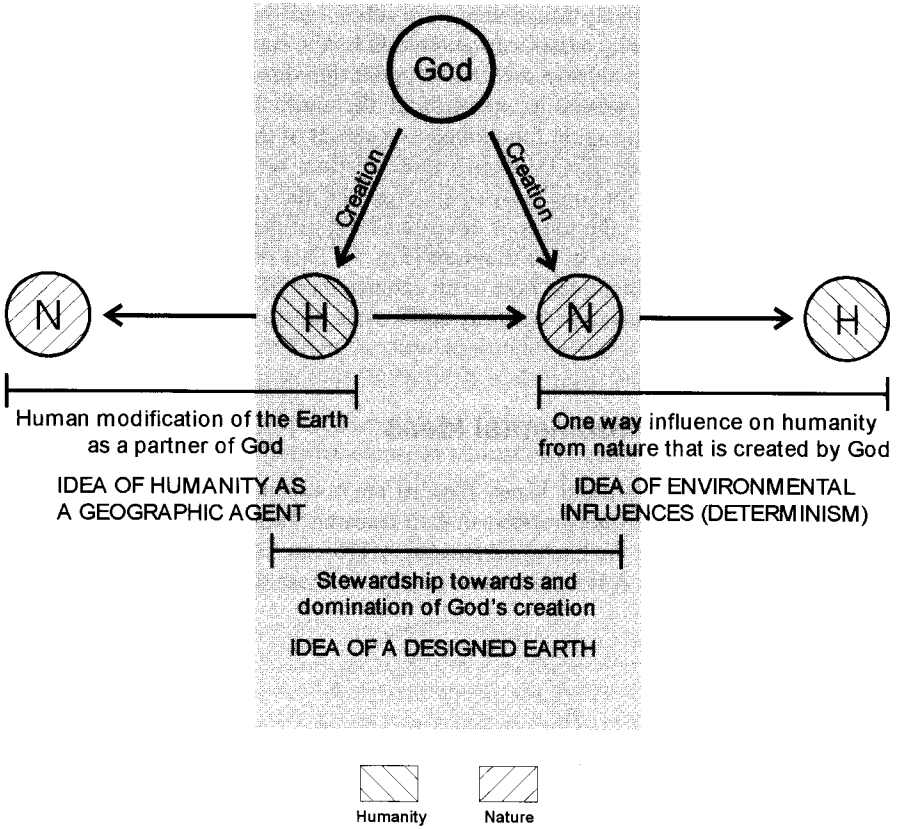

Fig. 5. Alternative view of the three Western environmental ideas

Therefore, one can wonder whether Glacken's choice of the idea of humanity as a geographic agent indicates an element of presentism reflecting the time he lived in and his concerns for the world's growing environmental problems caused by humanity and the sensational growth of ecological ideas. Glacken did not manipulate historical facts to support the contemporary situation of the Western environmental ideas by exercising unrestrained presentism, but he might have been influenced by the growing environmental concerns and ecological movements of his time in selecting ideas and asking questions as he was writing the history of Western environmental ideas; thus reflecting an unavoidable element of presentism. Some say that people are captives of the time they live in and their works are consequently the products of their time. Glacken and his work on environmental ideas may be no exception from this humble truth.

In the diagram of the alternative structure of the Western environmental ideas, the ideas of environmental influences (environmental determinism) and of humanity as a geographic agent both assume that God created nature and humanity. When nature influences humanity, it can be seen as God's influence on human beings through nature. Therefore, the idea of design embraced the idea of environmental

influences which effectively functioned as a subject of the idea of design. In the same logic, when humanity transforms and modifies the environment, it can be seen that God is transforming his own creation to perfection through humanity, which he himself created and appointed as stewards of the earth. In this way, the idea of humanity as a geographic agent functioned as a subset of the idea of design. Therefore, one could consider that Glacken's three distinct sets of Western ideas can actually be restructured into one body of an idea, "the idea of a designed earth" with two subsets (branches) - the ideas of environmental influences and humanity as a geographic agent as shown in the diagram (Fig. 5). This review and suggestion of the alternative view is attempted here as an extension of Glacken's work rather than disparaging his contribution to the study of Western ideas.

2
East (Asian) Environmental Ideas

Unlike Western environmental ideas, Eastern environmental ideas have not been developed or employed by geographers in their research. Four important environmental ideas can be listed in the East Asian tradition: Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Chinese Geomancy. A brief comment on each of these four are as follow.

2.1
Daoism

"What is Daoism?" is an age old question which has been difficult to answer. Some argue that the concept of *Dao* (literally, "way" or "road") in Daoism as philosophy has little to do with Dao in Daoism as a religion. Dao has been translated as principle, way, road, truth, universe, etc, but none are satisfactory and now the Chinese term 'Dao' is used in English without any translation. The supreme Daoist Scripture, *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu declares that the Dao that can be spoken of is not the real Dao; nevertheless Dao is the central concept of Daoism as a religion as well as philosophy.[50]

Some may comment that the relationship between Daoism as a philosophy and a religion is as remote as a dog to a hot-dog. However, all Daoist sub-traditions share the following common environmental attitudes which are elegantly discussed by Arthur Wright (Wright, 248–9):

1) An organic view of humanity and nature which views all phenomena including humanity as being knit together in a seamless web of interacting forces.
2) Primitivism – the view that individual humans and society would be better if they returned to a state of primitive simplicity.

[50] C.D. Lau's translation of the relevant phrase from Tao Te Ching by Lau Tzu (p. 57) reads,
"The way that can be spoken of
Is not the constant way;
The name that can be named
Is not the constant name."

3) The belief that some people can attain transcendence which is characterised by longevity, invulnerability and the ability to know and manipulate the forces around them mainly through the practice of special breath control, adhering to special dietary regimens and taking alchemical formulas.

Achieving a perfect union with nature was the ultimate goal of Daoistic attitudes toward nature. An important Taoist Scripture presents the following anecdote which describes this desired union with nature and attempts to remove differentiation of nature and humanity,(trans. from Chuang-tze, quoted in Yi, 173):

> *Once Chuang-tsu had a dream that he was a butterfly and flew around merrily, quite unaware that he was Chuang-tsu. When he woke up suddenly, he realised that he was in fact Chuang-tsu. Then, he came to wonder whether Chuang-tsu had dreamt that he was a butterfly, or that the butterfly had dreamt that it was Chuang-tsu.*

This Daoist epistemology puts forward the virtue of minimising the differentiation of humanity and nature (environment) as a means of achieving oneness with nature (Fig. 6).

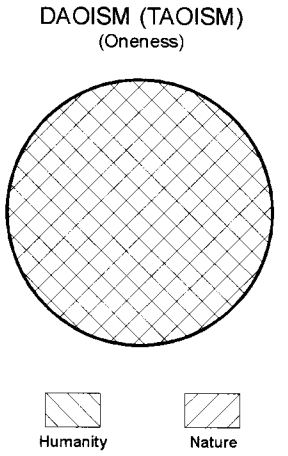

Fig. 6. A diagramatic representation of the Daoist seamless unity between humanity and nature

The modern word for 'nature' in East Asia (ziran in Chinese, shizen in Japanese and chayon in Korean) is based on the Chinese term ziran (*zi* meaning 'by itself' and *ran* meaning 'it is so'). This Chinese concept was derived from traditional Taoist tradition and found in the two most important Taoist Scriptures, Taoteching and Chuang-tsu. In such Scriptures, ziran did not mean nature as it is understood in modern days, but meant "that exists by itself", "it is so by itself" or "the existence that is not caused by something" . As of now this term in East Asia came to be used to indicate nature or natural landscape that is approximately equivalent to the Western term, "nature" in the natural world sense. Modern readers of Taoist Scriptures who attempt to understand ziran as nature in modern usage are bound to misinterpret the original meaning of the phrase and bound to commit the fallacy of interpreting the

past from the present point of view or to justify present usage. In my opinion, there is no concept of nature in the East Asian tradition that is against or separated from culture or artificiality as in the West. The natural landscape or nature that is a subject of study in natural science is only a part of nature, and culture is never separated from nature in a holistic view of nature in the East Asian tradition.

Daoists advocated naturalism arguing that one should respect the way nature acts. One should not attempt to understand nature from the anthropocentric point of view. This idea is perhaps well explicated by the anecdote of a horse trainer who killed a horse by binding parts of the horse's body, artificially regulating its food and training it too harshly and in doing so, ignoring the nature of horse (Chuang-tze, 80). From the above story, one can see the Daoistic attitudes of despising the anthropocentric view and the application of artificiality. Such behaviour in dealing with nature may bring disaster. In a similar vein, Chuang-tze tells us the following story (quoted in Lee, 157):

> *Once upon a time, a seabird nested in a suburb of the State of Lo. One day, the Governor of the State escorted the bird to the palace by chariot and gave it a big feast with beautiful music. The seabird, however, was so confused (at the strange scene and food) and sad that it could not eat or drink at all and died in three days.*
>
> *The governor had treated the bird as a human, not as a bird. If he had wanted to honour the bird the way it should have been, he should have let it nest in a remote mountain, play by the lakes, catch fish and remain free with other birds.*

Here, the Daoist attitude that nature should not be understood from the human point of view but follow its own natural course is clearly expressed. Likewise, the best way to govern a nation is not by imposing the ruler's wishes on the people, but to accommodate their wishes. In brief, Daoism admires naturalism and pursues oneness with nature (union with nature).

2.2 Buddhism

Buddhistic environmental ideas are perhaps best summarised in the early Buddhist concept of dependant co-origination or '*yuanqi*' in Chinese, '*yonki*' in Korean and '*engi*' in Japanese. This fundamental Buddhistic concept is a translation of the Sanskrit term, '*pratityasamutpada*' which is a compound word made up of *prati* which means with or about; *itya*, state; *sam*, together and *uppada*, arising things. The literal meaning of the word is; things which arise together due to other things, namely dependent co-origination (Yi Kiyong, p. 105). In Buddhism, neither humanity nor the environment are independent entities nor absolute real substances, but only relative phenomena which are conditioned by each other. The well known original Buddhist formula of dependant co-origination summarises this attitude. The commonly accepted English version of the original formula is as follows[51]:

> *If this exists, then that exists. And if this arises, then that arises. If this does not exist, then that does not exist. And if this ceases to exist, then that ceases to exist.*

[51] see next page.

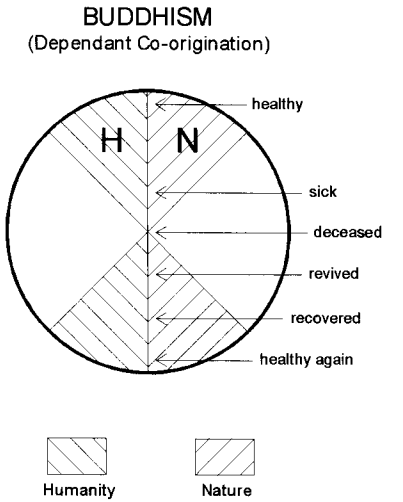

Fig. 7. Diagrammatic representation of the Buddhist formula of dependent co-origination, explaining humanity-nature relationships

In Buddhism, this formula was used to explain causality or causation in general covering all aspects of human life and natural world phenomena. It is elaborated in Buddhist writings. Recently this causal relationship has been explained with four main characteristics: objectivity, necessity, invariability and conditionality (Kalupahana, 91–97). However, expounding the nature of dependant co-origination in Buddhist faith is beyond the scope of this paper and I will only attempt here to adopt this formula as an environmental idea explaining aspects of humanity-nature relationships (Fig. 7).

If we substitute 'this' and 'that' with 'humanity' and 'nature', the above formula becomes

> *If nature exists, then humanity exists. And if nature arises, then humanity arises. If nature does not exists, then humanity does not exist. And if nature ceases to exist, then humanity ceases to exist.*

According to this Buddhist formula, nature is conditioned by humanity and humanity is conditioned by nature. Nature and humanity do not exist independently, but are inseparable, for their existence is mutually dependent and share the same destiny. Therefore, nothing exists independently, but everything is interrelated. In

[51] The original Buddhist Sanskrit version, from Madhyamikavrtti, Prasannapada, p. 9 is quoted in David J. Kalupahana, p. 90. After presenting the Buddhist formula in Pali Version, Buddhist Sanskrit version and two different Chinese versions, he rendered the formula into English as follow (ibid):
"When this is present, that comes to be;
from the arising of this, that arises.
When this is absent, that does not come to be;
on the cessation of this, that ceases.

this sense, nature, humanity and the relationship between the two is an epistemological issue rather than an ontological one.

This complex interrelationship between various 'existence and phenomena' including humanity, animals, plants, etc., in the world is somewhat similar to the present day concept of ecology or ecosystem. However, while the concept of dependent co-origination is more comprehensive and advocates freedom from this causal relationship of suffering, the concept of ecology is mainly concerned with the interrelationships between living things and their non-living environment. Cutting off this complex interrelationship in ecology is seen as detrimental to the well-being of the environment.

The causal relationship between culture and nature (if nature is healthy, culture is healthy; if nature is sick, culture is sick, and vice versa) can be documented in world history. For instance, it seems certain that Easter Island's decline of the megalithic culture is closely related to the ecological disaster caused by total deforestation (Flenley & King, 50). Excessive palm logging for statue moving and canoe building is suggested to have caused the decline of palm trees and fishing, and brought about an eventual food shortage (King & Flenley, 21). This ecological disaster (sick nature) meant a cultural disaster (sick culture) causing the decline of culture.

2.3 Neo-Confucianism

Classical Confucianism is basically concerned with human societies of this world with little concern for life after death or the environment of the world. It was only during the 11th Century of the Song Dynasty that Confucian metaphysics explaining the evolutionary process of the world formation was established by Chou tun-I (1017–1073). His formula of the evolutionary process of the world and humanity was strongly influenced by Taoism, and quite possibly by Buddhist doctrines as well since he was "a great admirer of Buddhism" and practiced Zen (Chan, p. 462). The Essence of Neo-Confucian attitudes toward the environment as formulated is summarised in *An Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate (T'ai-chi t'u-sho)* by Chou Tun-I as follows (see Fig. 8) (Chan, p. 463):

> *The ultimate of Non-being and also the great ultimate (T'ai-chi)! The great Ultimate through movement generates yang. When its activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquillity the Great Ultimate generates yin. When tranquillity reaches its limit, activity begins again. So movement and tranquillity alternate and become the root of each other, giving rise to the distinction of yin and yang, and the two modes are thus established.*
>
> *By the transformation of yang and its union with yin, the Five agents of water, fire, Wood, Metal, and earth arise. When these five material forces (ch'i) are distributed in harmonious order, the four seasons run their course.*
>
> *When five agents constitute one system of yin and yang, and yin and yang constitute one great Ultimate. The great Ultimate is fundamentally the Non-ultimate. The five agents arise, each with its specific nature.*

> *When the reality of the Ultimate of Non-being and the essence of yin, yang, and the Five agents come into mysterious union, integration ensues. Ch'ien (Heaven) constitutes the male element, and k'un (earth) constitutes the female element. The interaction of these two material forces engenders and transforms the myriad things. The myriad things produce and reproduce, resulting in an unending transformation.*

The yin and yang forces and the Five Agents that have developed from the same source of the Ultimate of Non-being mysteriously unite and transform to produce everything in the world including humanity and the environment. Although the above theory has nothing specifically Confucian in its cosmology or concept, Chou extends his theory to explain Confucian social ethics. Chou's cosmology explaining the evolutionary process of world formation and its extension to explain the Confu-

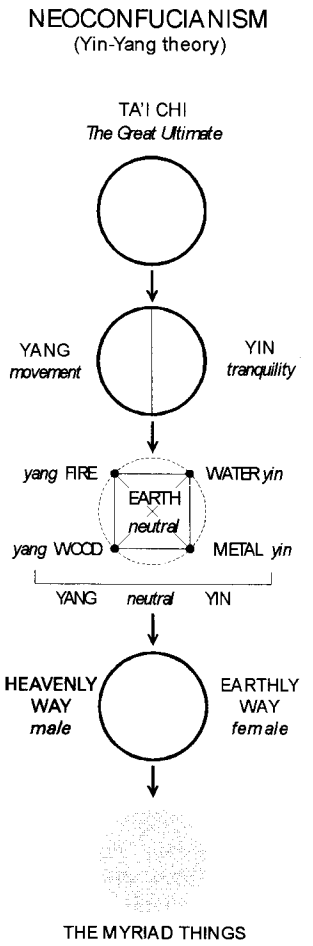

Fig. 8. Diagrammatic representation of the evolution of environment and humanity in Neo-Confucianism, according to Chou Tun I

cian concept of humanity and social ethics became the backbone of Neo-Confucianism. Chou tun-I's explanation of the Confucian view of humanity's place in nature, and the basis and the source of their moral conducts are justified in the succeeding paragraph from the same book (Chan, p. 463):

> *It is man alone who receives (the five Agents) in their highest excellence, and therefore he is most intelligent. His physical form appears, and his spirit develops consciousness. The five moral principles of his nature are aroused by, and react to, the external world and engage in activity;*

As above Chou extends the yin-yang theory to explain the Confucian concept of humanity as the highest being in Confucian world view. This Taoistic Confucian idea of humanity and the environment became the mainstream and representative view of the world in East Asia from the 11th Century until intellectual Westernisation became prevalent during the early 1900's.

2.4 Chinese geomancy

Few ideas in the world are more closely related to the natural environment-humanity relationship than Chinese geomancy. Geomancy is defined as a unique and comprehensive system of conceptualising landscapes to select propitious sites and build harmonious structures on them, in order to derive good-fortune from the auspicious location (modified from Yoon, 1). The basic attitudes toward nature in Geomancy are:

a) There is no clear boundary between humanity and nature, for both are formed from vital energy (*sheng-ch'i* in Chinese) that gives birth to and supports all living things, albeit in different ways and with different degrees of concentration (Fig. 9).
b) Nature is conceived as "a magical and mysterious being by which humanity can be either auspicious or adversely influenced" (Yoon, 344). This is because of the flow of vital energy underground, and only certain locations meet the geomantic requirements.

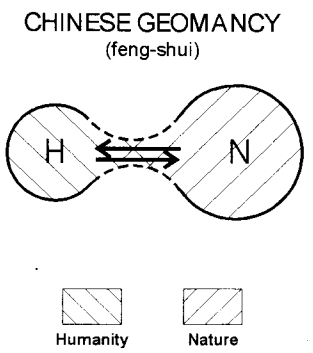

Fig. 9. Diagrammatic representation of a geomantic relationship between nature and humanity (Yoon, 1982, 79)

c) Nature is personified. "Every landscape surrounding an auspicious site was considered a functioning system which produced a magical power to influence" and these landscapes were perceived as animate or inanimate objects such as an ox, or a boat (Yoon, 1980, 345). The types of magical powers were different according to their types of personification.
d) Nature is vulnerable and the harmony of landscapes can be destroyed or remedied by humans. This is because: firstly, vital energy is actually a particular phase of the vulnerable yin-yang energy, which only becomes vital energy when it flows underground. Secondly, it is only available in places having auspicious landscapes that can be easily disturbed by humans and natural forces. Finally, the personification of nature renders it open to interference by humans. (Yoon, 1980, 346).

The basic geomantic principles regarding the requirement of auspicious sites are mainly that: a site should be sheltered by surrounding hills in a horseshoe shape, have water in front of the site (but not on the site itself), and face an auspicious direction (usually Southward). When we examine the landscape composition of an auspicious site, it is postulated that Chinese geomancy was developed by cave dwelling builders in their search for comfortable cave sites in the Loess Plateau in Northern China.

3 Two Worlds, two Sets of Ideas: A Comparison

A broad generalisation of the Western and Eastern ideas are attempted here which could partly reflect my humble understanding. However, I have decided to go ahead with this attempt, hoping that this will provoke further thinking and provide some momentum for a more enlightened view on the East and West environmental ideas.

Epistemologically speaking, the Western ideas in general are based on the dualism of humanity and the environment. The two are seen as inherently different and with a clear boundary between them. Therefore dichotomy of humanity (culture) and nature (the environment) is an important characteristic of the Western ideas.

In contrast, Eastern ideas are based on monism and assume that people and the environment are two different expressions of the same entity. Eastern ideas in general admire the oneness between the environment and humanity, and the boundary between the two is unclear. In the West, the notion of humanity against nature has been important, while harmony between the two has been important in the East.

In terms of relationships between the two, Western ideas have assumed to have a unidirectional influence either from humanity or from the environment, to the other. Environmental determinism assumed that the environment influences humanity, while the idea of humanity as a geographic agent was the reverse. In the Eastern ideas, interaction was always assumed and mutual interdependence was acknowledged. The influences between the two were always assumed to be bi-directional.

In terms of the framework of these environmental ideas, Western ideas are based on the idea of a divine design and the idea of progress, while the Eastern ideas are based on the idea of a somewhat cyclical and evolving change, although the change is not like the Darwinian idea of evolution.

Glacken concluded his book by stating that

> *in exploring the history of these ideas from the Fifth Century B.C. to the end of the eighteenth century, it is a striking fact that virtually every thinker ... had something to say about one of the ideas, and many had something to say about all of them. (p.713).*

A future historian of East Asian environmental ideas might be able to make similar remarks, for it is common in China, Japan and Korea for a traditional person educated with Confucian classics and social ethos occasionally go to a Buddhist temple to worship Buddha, to practice geomancy in seeking auspicious sites and to admire the tales of Daoist supernatural beings. Chou tun-I who theorised the Neo-Confucian world view of the Yin-Yang Theory might be a good example of such a scholar.

These two different sets of the Eastern and the Western environmental ideas form two different sets of geomentalities which are expressed in cultural landscapes. Geomentality is "an established and lasting frame (state) of mind regarding the environment, and is necessarily translated into a particular behavioural pattern in dealing with the environment and is reflected in the pattern of cultural landscape (Yoon, 1991, 388). The best examples of the reflection of geomentality on cultural landscape may be illustrated by the gardens in the East and West. In the West, the French formal garden exemplified in the Garden of Versailles emphasises the idea of human dominion over nature and the reorganisation of nature in geometric forms in an expression of human mastery over nature. It is a bold contrast to nature. However, Eastern gardens exemplified in the Japanese garden in the Shogenji Buddhist Temple Garden, retain natural shapes and imitate nature by reflecting the Taoistic oneness with nature and naturalism, geomantic values and the Confucian yin-yang concepts.

The French formal garden is only one of several prominent Western garden types. The innovative English landscape garden is indeed a striking contrast to the French one. However, it is my contention that the French garden's reorganisation of nature in geometric forms best represents the traditional Western idea of "human dominion over nature", which is completely foreign to the traditional East Asian garden designers in Japan, Korea and China.

For interest's sake, the following comparison of the Eastern and Western environmental ideas could be tentatively suggested, although it is certain to be subject to revision:

West (Europe)	East (Asia)
Dualism (dichotomy), clear boundary between humanity and environment	Monism (oneness), unclear boundary between humanity and environment
Unidirectional traffic of influences	Bi-directional influences between humanity and environment
Based on the Idea of Divine Design and the Idea of Progress?	Based on Daoism and the Idea of Transformation?
Geomentality of reorganising nature in geometric forms, as in the Garden of Versailles, France	Geomentality of imitating nature, as in the Shogenji Japanese Buddhist Temple Garden, Okayama, Japan
The development of the modern Western concept of ecology (ecosystem) as a unifying force of some aspects of the Eastern and Western environmental ideas	

4 Conclusion

This paper has attempted to present the major environmental ideas of the East and West in diagrams for easier communication of their underlying basic concepts. Although such diagrams may present the danger of over-simplifying and inadequately representing those ideas, they are easier to compare.

I have reviewed Glacken's view of the structure of three equally distinct Western environmental ideas and provided an alternative perspective of a single idea with two subsets within it, as the two minor ones are embraced by the main idea, and all three are based on common epistemological assumption.

In an exploration of some important types of East Asian environmental ideas, I found that Daoism provided the basis of the East Asian environmental ideas, while it was synthesised and evolved into the Neo-Confucian formula. Buddhism provided a fresh intellectual challenge and enhancement of the Eastern ideas, while Chinese geomancy became a powerful way of applying and realising the Eastern environmental ideas in the East Asian landscape.

A tentative comparison of traditional Eastern and Western environmental ideas was attempted in this paper. Although making sweeping generalisations is a sin and bound to attract criticism, comparing and contrasting the East and West environmental ideas are useful and necessary in an attempt to understand the general characteristics of those ideas in the two contrasting cultures.

The development of the modern Western concept of ecology (ecosystem) seems to be a unifying force of some aspects of the Eastern and Western environmental ideas by being monistic and removing the dichotomy of humanity and nature, while remaining analytical and scientific. Is it a synthesis of Eastern and Western characteristics of environmental ideas? We need further study before we can give an enlightened answer to the question.

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Are there Universal Environmental Values?

Dieter Birnbacher

1
Introduction: the diversity of environmental values

If one were to judge from the present state of environmental ethics there is more plurality, diversity and heterogeneity to be found in environmental values than in any other field of human valuation. *Plurality* means that there is great number of separate values which coexist not only in the value systems of cultures and societies, but even of groups and individuals and for which it is doubtful whether they can be reduced to some one overarching monistic principle. *Diversity* and *heterogeneity* mean that these values are of different origins and belong to very different traditions, religious and secular, philosophical and popular, and that they are sometimes diametrically opposed to each other in content and direction. Even if they are compatible in theory they easily conflict in practice, calling for rules of priority to determine their relative weights and order of precedence.

The fact that environmental values are strikingly more diverse and more controversial than social values can be explained by at least two circumstances. The first circumstance is that environmentalism is a rather recent movement. There has not been enough time to stabilise value intuitions and to establish an authoritative tradition handed over to the next generation by education and habituation. The second circumstance is that environmental values are much more bound up with religious and non-religious world views and fundamental metaphysical beliefs than social values. Since there is a pluralism of world views it comes as no surprise that there is a corresponding pluralism of environmental values. Though a theist and an atheist, for example, may both make use of the metaphor of "stewardship" to characterise the role of man vis-a-vis non-human nature, this metaphor has a different metaphysical background in each case. For the theist, "stewardship" is a role defined (and possibly sanctioned) by God, for the atheist it is a role, defined (and sanctioned) by himself, by his society or by the chain of human generations reaching into an indefinite future.

Environmental ethics has developed alongside environmental values in a complex interactive process. It had an impact on these values and was acted on by these values, mirroring and reconstructing them and thereby bringing out their systematic import. At the same time, environmental ethics has done much to clear the tropical growth of environmental values, especially by providing categories by which the complexity and interwovenness of these values can be sorted out for purposes of description, discussion and meta-evaluation. As a result of this it has become apparent that there is more than one dimension in which environmental values fundamentally differ. The three most important of these dimensions are indicated by the following questions: