

Earth-Friendly Technology

Past Mankind, Future Mankind

As I explained before, the traditional manner in which the Japanese used whales as resources was imbued with a spirit of gratitude for the gifts of nature, which was retained even after Japanese whalers started Western-style whaling. Especially before the second World War, this habit of using nature's gifts to the full prevailed not only in whaling but also in other areas of fishery and agriculture. Moreover, people were brought up not to waste resources through over-extraction. In other words, people took great care not to exhaust valuable resources, and to avoid affecting other resources. Also, they were always warned not to make it difficult for the seas and fields to survive after they had been used for human activities.

Such wisdom for living existed in Europe, just the same as in Japan. A good example in Europe was crop rotation, in which three different crops were planted in turn year by year in a field divided into three parts.

However, such methods and attitudes have disappeared rapidly. The starting point for the change was none other than the Industrial Revolution and the accompanying increases in food production. We came to put too much trust in our ability to produce industrially anything we wanted, and to grow whatever food we wanted. We became overconfident in handling the natural environment as we wished. A sense of values was introduced based on economic efficiency and the exclusive pursuit of profits, as a result of which people started to chase higher and higher profits and cheaper and cheaper goods.

Our overconfidence and subsequent behavior have destroyed the natural environment by extracting everything from nature to the extent that its very ability to renew itself is threatened. We are ourselves biological beings, and yet we have destroyed and lost the biological environment that supports us. No sense of values can have absolute validity for ever. Yet we have become bound by a sense of values which we have created for ourselves, and which puts us all in great danger.

Utilization of DOW, such a superior resource, should have begun a long time ago. The Abidjan Project which Professor Claude initiated in Côte

d'Ivoire developed almost as far as actual operation, but it was abandoned in 1955 on account of the independence movement in Côte d'Ivoire, then a French colony, and the fall in the price of oil. Both originated in human behavior chasing only after economic advantage.

The total population of the Earth has already reached 6 billion and is increasing by almost 100 million every year. This makes mankind the most numerous species amongst all the animals. For the sake of this overwhelming population, many creatures have lost their habitats, and whole species have become extinct. If we were gods, we might be able to do what we liked with nature, but no matter how scientifically or technologically advanced we get, we will never be gods, or even anything close to gods.

Worse, we have a tendency to cheat or use others whenever we find the chance, and no code of ethics, morals or laws seems to work against that. What is most important for such an immature species as we are is that each one of us should be aware of our weakness, nurture a return to the old attitudes toward nature, and set that in the center of our system of values. This does not mean that we have to return to the uncomfortable days of the past when so little was available. What it does mean is that it is necessary for us all to choose a way of life that involves an effort to live in greater harmony with our natural environment. Unfortunately, this way of life has almost been forgotten. It is urgently necessary that, with the high technology that has already been achieved, and with the advanced techniques of future agriculture that can renew our natural resources for us, we all evolve into what I have earlier called "ecocrats."

Toward Real Wealth

It is quite right that we should seek to improve our lives. But "improvement" does not mean having whatever we want readily available and being able to get hold of it without any effort. That might lead to material wealth, but it would give no sense of satisfaction or achievement. Only those things that have taken serious effort to obtain can properly be enjoyed. That is what gives a sense of satisfaction. Real wealth is not materialistic, but spiritual. It should be spiritually fulfilling. This spirit, I am sure, is the key factor in our progress from simple technocrats to ecocrats.

We should reaffirm that, on Spaceship Earth, we may be far, far greater than any other living creatures, but we can only live because they are there with us. Living creatures that are known to have disappeared from the earth as victims of our prosperity number 40 species of mammals out of 4,226, and 95 species of birds out of 8,682 in the 370 years from 1600 to 1970. What is more, it is said that almost half of all current living creatures will be extinct within a hundred years from now as a result of the activities of modern humanity. Tropical forests, veritable treasure-houses of living creatures, are

being felled at an alarming rate. When one species disappears, nature is deprived of the role which the extinct creature played. If this continues, nature, which includes us, will be so badly interfered with that it may be impossible to continue.

Therefore, we should think of other animals, plants and fungi in the same way as we think of other people, and live our lives together with them on Spaceship Earth. These companions of ours are all members of the organic chain that supports whole communities of creatures, of which we ourselves are members. It is essential that each of us should acknowledge our own membership of nature and evolve into ecocrats.

Recently, so much of the waste we throw away goes unused. Some cannot be recycled; some we just can't be bothered to recycle. This problem must be re-considered before Spaceship Earth overflows with garbage. If renewable resources were used, waste would not be produced. We ignore that simple fact when we are deceived by the lure of economic efficiency, which pays attention only to money.

One result of insisting on economic efficiency is that cheap food is imported from foreign countries far away. This means that the nutrients from the soils where this food was produced are taken away, while the soils in the places to which the food is brought are over-fertilized by its waste: all kinds of difficulties arise from the resulting imbalanced bio-community.

Our greatest task for the future is to bear all of this in mind, and seek a kind of wealth that is based on the concept that we are all companions on Spaceship Earth, rather than be blinded by a false sense of economic efficiency.

The human community would become far more gentle to the earth than it now is by utilizing DOW, a huge, renewable resource. For this purpose, the value of DOW as a resource should be studied in detail and fully acknowledged. Then we should immediately put DOW to practical use wherever we are sure that no harm will come of it.

The reason why I believe this is that DOW is now the only resource that could maintain the gigantic human community. We must immediately stop our stupid behavior of using non-renewable resources such as oil and uranium which create dangerous and unnecessary waste — CO₂, heat and radioactivity. We must stop destroying Spaceship Earth for the simple reason of getting something on the cheap. It may be expensive to begin with, but we must develop the technology to utilize DOW.

An international conference, entitled the International Forum on Deep Sea-Water, was held for three days from 9 August 1991 in Kochi Prefecture (Figure 82). A Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in actively exchanging information was signed between three regions that have already shown interest in DOW: Kochi Prefecture in Japan, the State of Hawaii in the



Figure 82. The author, in the chair at the International Forum on Deep Sea-Water, Kochi, 1991.

U.S.A, and the county of Hordaland in Norway. This is a small but certain step forward for mankind in exploiting DOW as a resource.