

Global Ethics, Ultrnationalist Populism, and Emotional Resilience

Kunihiko Terasawa, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Department of Religion and Philosophy
Wartburg College, Iowa, USA
kunihiko.terasawa@wartburg.edu

Introduction

Global Ethics and Universal Declaration of Human Right with the UN charters, collaborating with international organizations such as United Nations and EU have been fruits of wisdom of post WWII. However, the current rise of ultrnationalist populism in the Pacific region, and all the world as a reaction to globalism and universalism is a phenomenon that seems to re-emerge the situation of the 1930s and 40s before WWII including failure of the League of Nations: for example, The rise of far-right wing populism such as anti-immigrants/Muslims of AfD of Neo-Nazi in Germany, the National Rally of France, The Brothers of Italy Party, Brexit, Russia's attack on Ukraine supported by the Russian Orthodox Church, the rise of Hindu nationalism in India, the rise of white Christian nationalism in the US, and Chinese Communist Party's suppression on Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhism, Hong Kong people, and threat on Taiwan by their ideology and own patriotism, etc. Ultrnationalist populism, having been driven by some religious elements, is a great threat to universal global ethics, as well as the United Nations.

My paper examines how wisdom of Buddhist-Christian dialogue and its actions could overcome ultrnationalist populism, as well as create the foundation of Global Ethics.

I have lived in the United States for more than 30 years as a Japan born-Japanese American, now an associate professor at the college in Iowa, teaching World Religions in Dialogue, Buddhism and Islam. From 2019 to 2020, I received a one-year sabbatical and conducted research activities in Korea for the first half and Hong Kong for the second half. During this time, my research goals were "Interreligious and Transnational Solidarity of Religions as Resistance to Ultrnationalist Populism in East Asia and the Pacific Rim."

In my research so far, I have identified three opportunities and cases in which Japan could have prevented ultrnationalism and the Pacific War of WWII, if religious leaders, especially Buddhist and Christian leaders had pushed more strongly for dialogue and cooperation among them, and transnational solidarity across borders with Korean/Chinese Buddhists/Christians and American Christians.

The first was the possibility of religious freedom in education through cooperation between Christianity and Buddhism, which arose in the early Meiji era in the *lese majeste* case, 不敬事件 by Kanzō Uchimura.

It was an opportunity to put a stop to the full-scale intervention in public education by State Shinto. However, Christians and Buddhists could not cooperate, except for a few young men. Buddhism was persecuted for the abolition of Buddhism 廃仏毀釈 *haibutsu kishaku* in the beginning of Meiji era, but Buddhists were wary of Christianity and had a strong sense of competitiveness, and eventually sympathized with the non-patriotic theory of Christianity by Professor Tetsujirō Inoue of the University of Tokyo and sided with the state.

Second, through the rare cooperation of Buddhism and Christianity during the Taisho period, the government twice failed the enactment of the Religious Organizations Law, because Buddhism and Christianity were able to work together to preserve and develop their own causes. However, they failed further deconstruction of State Shinto and transnational solidarity with Buddhism and Christianity in Korea and China to prevent Japan's expansionism. Progressive Buddhist and Christian leaders lobbied the state to persecute new religions, such as Ōmoto-kyo and Hitono-michi, rather than protecting their religious freedom out of wariness and competition against the rise of new religions. The non-solidarity of the religious community led to the passage of the Religious Organizations Law in 1939 by the government, which was used to mobilize religious communities for the war.

The third was the youth anti-war movement led by Girō Seno'o (1889-1961) and Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960) in the early Showa period. In 1931, Seno'o formed the Youth Leagues for Revitalizing Buddhism as a trans-sectarian Buddhist youth movement. He pushed for the Popular Front in solidarity with Christians, socialists, and trade unions opposed to Japan's military invasion of Manchuria and China. Social Christian leaders Toyohiko Kagawa and Shigeru Nakajima also contributed to the promotion of Christian social movements in China and Korea by organizing labor unions, agricultural unions, and consumer cooperatives. In 1935, the U.S. government and the Church Council invited Kagawa to stay in the United States for a year to teach about social Christianity and the cooperative movement. Kagawa's lecture was attended by many enthusiastic audiences who sympathized with the New Deal policies of the time, and even Reinhold Niebuhr (*Radical Religion* 1936) discussed Kagawa. To prevent escalating tensions between Japan and the United States, Kagawa returned to the United States in 1941, where he lectured at churches and tried to meet President Roosevelt. However, the efforts of these religious leaders were unsuccessful, and the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 led to the United States entering the war in full.

Chinese Buddhist leader Taixu (1890-1947) and Korean Buddhist leader Han Yong-Woon (1879-1941) called on Japan Buddhists to confront Japan's military aggression and oppression in China and Korea. Methodist Christians Song Mei-ling as Mrs. Chiang Kai-shek knew and respected Kagawa's contribution to the development of social service programs in the Chinese churches. Therefore, she hoped that Kagawa would mobilize Japan Christians to stop Japan's military invasion of China. Seno'o could not establish solidarity with social Buddhism in Korea and China and was arrested under Martial Law during the February 26 Incident, uprising by right-wing young military officers before he could cooperate with Kagawa's transnational movement. My research historically elucidates why and how enlightened Buddhist and Christian leaders and their movements failed to prevent Japan's ultranationalism and war despite these three opportunities.

Using these historical lessons, I aim to overcome ultranationalism through the problems of today's interreligious dialogue and cooperation through interfaith solidarity across countries.

There are three kinds of interreligious dialogues; dialogue of the head (cognitive), dialogue of the heart (emotion and beauty of religious art) and dialogue of the hands, dealing with practical issues, this Buddhist-Christian dialogue in hands and action is important. Religious wisdom often manifests itself not only in the discussion of doctrines or philosophy but also in responding to the practical, critical issues of reality, such as climate change, violence, war, human trafficking, the environment, racial discrimination, and so on. Christianity especially has quite excellent examples of resisting the social injustices of ultranationalism, racial discrimination, alike.

The Confessing Church in Germany led by Martin Niemöller, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer denounced the Nazi policy of asserting Aryan racial superiority and anti-Semitism and the New National Church's cultural interfusion with German-ness by insisting on transcendental God's sovereignty. In Japan, as mentioned above, although mainline Buddhist institutions followed national war policy in the 1930s and 1940s, a few Buddhists, such as Girō Seno'o and Shōgen Takenaka, and Christians, such as Tadao Yanaihara, denounced the government-ordered invasions. However, none succeeded in preventing war. One reason for that was the lack of grassroots interreligious dialogue and cooperation between Christianity and Judaism in Germany, and among Buddhism, Christianity, and the New Religions in Japan. Eventually, ultranationalist state propaganda demonizing other races and nations prevailed over universally religious human solidarity and compassion.

That is why it is critical for world religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity, to work together (dialogue of the hands), despite doctrinal disagreements, to resist ultranationalist ethos at the grassroots level. Ultrationalism is a nostalgic, romantic reinvention of the origins of a people's nation and race when a nation and a race feel threatened and lose confidence. It is an emotional ethos. That was why in Germany during the Weimar Republic (1919–33) and in Japan during the Taishō period (1912–26) liberal intellectuals were helpless to stop grassroots, ultranationalist romantic populism. Today Global Ethics, Universal Human Rights seem abstract principles departing from everyday people's lives and emotions. Unless there is some appeal to a higher emotional level, transcending a narrow ultranationalist ethos by strong emotional resilience, ultranationalist populism prevails. Patriotism is nothing wrong. Everyone has to love one's own nation. However, unless your patriotism is backed by religious, transnational compassion promoting one's nation to serve entire humanity, one's patriotism would easily become xenophobic exclusivism or triumphant conquerors over other nations.

Christianity and Buddhism as world religions, must work together, since they teach universally transnational love of agape and compassion (global compassion), and at the same time, they are rooted at the local level, pastoring people at the grass roots (local engagements). This is the emotional battle between religious transnationalism of compassion and ultrationalism of xenophobic hatred at the grass roots. Buddhism and Christianity can work together as a dialogue of the hands with an emotional resilience to overcome ultrationalism and totalitarianism. For these reasons, Buddhism and Christianity and other religions can help enhance not only dialogue of the hands but also dialogue of the head and heart to create 'G-local Compassion' creating foundation for Global Ethics and Universal Human Rights as an emotional resilience beyond intellectual circle of dialogue.

As mentioned above, the challenge is that if ultranationalist populism is the usual way to appeal to the emotional of the masses, then religious dialogue and cooperation also need something that appeals to the masses beyond the intellectual circle. Gandhi's nonviolent movement for Indian independence and Martin Luther King Jr.'s success in the civil rights movement appealed to and mobilized the collective unconscious of the masses, as Jung called it. Gandhi's Gita's Satyagraha and Martin Luther King's Sermon on the Mount, 'Love thy enemies' in the Civil Rights Movements are examples of success. How can we create phrases that appeal to the hearts of the masses based on the creative emptiness and integration of Buddhist-Christian dialogical wisdom, and the gentle purity of the heart? Is there a danger that this will also become another manipulative religious language? Is there no other way but to hurry up and turn around, and to be aware of each one of us? I would like to learn of the wisdom of everyone in this ICCGC.