

In the Tension between Potentiality and Limitation: Search for Responsible Mutuality

Kil Sang Yoon
Center for Pacific and Asian American Ministries
Claremont School of Theology

Abstract

The first part of the Hebrew scripture tells the story of the creation of the natural world and humans. In this text we see how the Old Hebrew understood the world and humans in it. Among the created, humans have a special place as the beings created in the likeness of God. In this descriptive reality of being human, we are confronted with the tension between potentiality and limitation. Similarly, Methodist-related Institutions of Higher Learning have faced serious ethical and moral challenges. The traditional borders disappear and yet a new system of checks and balances in individual/family life, the nation state and the global village is not yet formed to domesticate unbridled humans and their corporate desire for hegemony and exploitation.

The first part of the Hebrew Scripture tells the story of the creation of the natural world and humans. In this text we see how the Old Hebrew understood the world and humans in it. Among the created, the humans have a special place as the beings created in the likeness of God. To be created in the likeness of God implies that humans are endowed with creativity. However, humans as physical beings are bound within space and time.

In this descriptive reality of being humans, we are confronted with the tension between potentiality and limitation. Tension between yearnings for limitless creativity and yet bounded finiteness. In the same text we find a very interesting story of human attempt to sever themselves from the very fabric of which they are part and to manipulate it to the point of destruction not knowing that they erode the very ground on which they exist.

Then and now, humans are tempted by the subtle seduction to claim God-likeness as finite beings and to undermine the very ground on which they stand. In the last century, human capability in creativity and desire to utilize (conquer) the created have achieved scientific and technological breakthroughs. The invention of the Internet has exploded the information technologies. Human ingenuity has made the vast planet of earth seem like a small global village.

Due to such breakthroughs the conditions of human life in many areas have been improved. While certain and smaller segments of the global populace have been benefited immensely, larger portions of them do not have access to such means of advanced knowledge and instruments.

The haves, whether they are individuals, corporate entities, or nation states, have used their advanced know-how to exploit the have-nots in the entire realms of cultural, socio-economic, political and military capabilities.

Yet, the haves and their appetites for wealth, power, and hegemony have not shown their willingness to curb their limitless desires. Such inventions like the Internet have become cruel tools and vehicles to manipulate and control the minds, souls, attitudes, behaviors, cultural lives, productivity, markets and consumerism of all people including the haves and have-nots.

Humans have been tempted to reach even higher capacity to possess more at the expense of others and the natural environments. We are inspired to explore new things and ideas – driven by the desires to fulfill potentiality and feasibility without considering the realistic, finite and limited nature of ourselves, and the desirability of new ventures for the common good of all the inhabitants on this planet.

The Methodist-related Institutions of Higher Learning have faced serious ethical and moral challenges. The traditional borders disappear and yet a new system of checks and balances in individual/family life, the nation state and the global village is not yet formed to domesticate unbridled humans and their corporate desire for hegemony and exploitation.

Yes. While humans are endowed with the potential for creativity and productivity with the givens of the created, yet we are finite, limited and bound by time and space. We are called to be responsible stewards and caretakers of the world and ourselves.

How could we Methodist Christians be agents of forming a new order for the global community with a higher sense of mutuality of all people and the natural environment using and utilizing the Internet – information technology we have at our disposal?