



## EXPLORING THE ISSUE OF ECOLOGICAL CRISIS THROUGH THE FOUR PATHS OF MATTHEW FOX'S CREATION SPIRITUALITY

*This paper examined the causes that affect the people's behavior toward the environment and their response to the increasing ecological crisis of our country. It explored the specific contributions of people to the crisis and the possible measures that each can do to help somehow lessen if not resolve the problem. The Four Paths in Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality were helpful tools in determining the various characteristics of people in relation to creation and the challenges that beset it. The analysis of this exploration includes the problem of nonchalance, laziness, materialism, greed and a lack of knowledge on the interconnectedness of human beings and other living beings and non-beings.*

*In dit document worden de oorzaken onderzocht die van invloed zijn op het gedrag van de bevolking ten aanzien van het milieu en hun reactie op de toenemende milieucrisis van ons land. Zij heeft de specifieke bijdragen van de bevolking aan de crisis onderzocht en onderzocht welke maatregelen elk van hen kan nemen om het probleem op de een of andere manier te helpen verminderen of op te lossen. De vier paden in Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality waren nuttige hulpmiddelen bij het bepalen van de verschillende kenmerken van mensen met betrekking tot creatie en de uitdagingen die het worden. De analyse van deze verkenning omvat het probleem van nonchalance, laksheid, materialisme, hebzucht en een gebrek aan kennis over de verwevenheid van mensen en andere levende wezens en niet-wezens.*

*In diesem Dokument werden die Ursachen untersucht, die das Verhalten der Menschen gegenüber der Umwelt und ihre Reaktion auf die zunehmende Umweltkrise unseres Landes beeinflussen. Er untersuchte die spezifischen Beiträge der Menschen zur Krise und die möglichen Maßnahmen, die jeder tun kann, um das Problem irgendwie abzumildern, wenn nicht gar zu lösen. Die Vier Pfade von Matthew Fox-Creations Spiritualität waren hilfreiche Werkzeuge, um die verschiedenen Charakteristiken der Menschen in Bezug auf die Schöpfung und die Herausforderungen, die sie bewältigen, zu bestimmen. Die Analyse dieser Erforschung umfasst das Problem der Nonchalance, Faulheit, Materialismus, Gier und ein Mangel an Wissen über die Vernetzung von Menschen und anderen Lebewesen und Nicht-Lebewesen.*

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**Dates:**

Received: 14 June 2019

Accepted: 30 Aug. 2019

Published(Online): 30 Sept. 2019

Published(Printed): 30 Oct. 2019

**Keywords:**

Creation Spirituality,  
Interconnectedness, Stewardship,  
Original blessing and  
Anthropocentrism

**How to site this article:**

Gabatbat, Ma. Emperatriz,  
"Exploring the Issue of Ecological  
Crisis Through the Four Paths  
of Matthew Fox's Creation  
Spirituality", *Scientia* Vol 8 no. 2.  
(2019), p. 46-58.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The ecological crisis in our country has always not been given much serious consideration. Piles of trash on streets, overflowing trash bins, candy wrappers on public staircases, black smoke emitted from moving vehicles and factories, denuded mountains, felled trees to give way to roads and bridges, polluted air and rivers - these are a common sight in almost all areas of Metro Manila and even in some provinces. The several typhoons have brought about tons of trash and floating logs around and they have made an alarming impact on many areas in our country, yet every time, people seem not affected at all. The aftermath may create havoc and anguish for a while but when people recover, they easily forget the ugly realities that it brought about. There may have been measures made, from talks and conferences to serious ones such as promulgating laws like ban on illegal logging and mining but weak at implementation. The same scenario is seen around every time. People seem to forget the horrors of typhoon Ondoy, Yolanda, and Ruby which were supposed to be an opportunity for learning and reflection on how we have badly contributed to these problems. Actions are done mostly to address the aftermath but very weak on measures to prepare for such calamities. Could it stem from a very deep issue, within the individual himself? It is about time to deal with the root cause, and to come up with a clearer explanation as to how this crisis seems to become already a part of our system.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and perhaps other government agencies have created steps to address this problem. However, there may be a better answer to address this issue than create physical solutions which only bring about temporary relief to the problem.

In this paper, I explored the factors that affect our relationship towards the environment through the four paths in creation spirituality as presented by Matthew Fox in his book, *Original Blessing*, namely, VIA POSITIVA, VIA NEGATIVA, VIA CREATIVA AND VIA TRANSFORMATIVA. These will be the model in exploring the issue with these tasks in hand first, to identify the root causes of ecological problems; to know the specific participation of human beings in ecological degradation; to discuss and determine how the Four Paths in Creation Spirituality can be linked to human activities which affect the ecological system; and to identify specific measures which will be of help to address the problem of ecological degradation in the light of the Four Paths of Creation Spirituality.

## II. THE FOUR PATHS OF CREATION SPIRITUALITY

### VIA POSITIVA

The earth is our home. It is a place given to us, our sanctuary, our refuge, our identity, a gift to us and a place to be. Creation, as Matthew Fox says, is original blessing. How it has been prepared long before we came into being is a blessing and how we came to be is a blessing. We could only stand in awe and wonder at the many blessings we see and experience. How many people are struck at the mystery of a baby being conceived and born? And when tourists get close to nature, they would cry in amazement and express their feeling of closeness to God. The sight of landscapes with those fauna and flora can waken anyone's apathy. A friend of mine had his first time experience of nature tour that from then on, it became one of his passions because he said he fell in love with nature the first time he saw it. According to Fox, this falling in love is the





“Via Positiva, is a way of tasting the beauties and cosmic depths of creation, which means us and everything else.”<sup>1</sup>

Truly, the world is full of beauty and wonder. If we gaze at them, we can only utter in awe like how David praised God, “I praise you, so wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works! My very self you knew. How precious to me are your designs, O God. How vast the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sands. To finish, I would need eternity.”<sup>2</sup>

The awareness of the sacred presence not only of people but of the gifts around us is essential. Renate Craine on St. Hildegard’s being a prophet of the cosmic Christ, tells that like St. Benedict, she might urge us to “listen to the ear of our heart”; to look for the intricate beauty of the whole, where all is meant to be in a relationship as a loving God ordained it; and to open the ears of our hearts to the reality of life on earth and to the Gospel.”<sup>3</sup> This is because despite the various efforts that have already been done to solve ecological problems, still, we do not seem to show that genuine sense of awe and longing to serve our part in the cosmos. There is a need to re-evangelize the faithful of the reality that creation includes other living beings that are in fact, a part of our being. We can strongly agree with this creation-grounded spirituality. Fox says, “A creation-centered spirituality is cosmic. It is open, seeking, and explorative of the cosmos within the human person all creatures and of the cosmos without, the spaces between creatures that unite us all.”<sup>4</sup> A creation-centered spirituality is more holistic, integrated, strong, more Godly and humane. It helps us become

more sensitive of other’s existence and the vast cosmos that we are in. Our constant words would be that of appreciation, “thankfulness, gratefulness. True holiness, full hospitality, leads to gratitude. Appreciation becomes the awesome, reverent mystery that it is. Not control; project-planning; but being still with the gift. Savoring. Thanking. Our thanks at the pleasure that the blessings of creation are about is itself our return of blessing for blessing.”<sup>5</sup>

### OUR RESPONSE

Today, people in the cities become boxed in that atmosphere of individualism, nonchalance, apathy or indifference for personal advancement and competitive attitude where they no longer see the essence of real living and the beauty of existence with other beings. Everybody seems to be a victim of consumerism which makes practically everyone a commodity. Everything becomes man’s subject of control as only a tool for survival.

Oftentimes, we fail to see the beauty and grandeur of our gift of creation like how we often criticize more rather than appreciate first, to fall into negativity than trust in God’s loving assurance, or to justify violence than extend openness and compassion. This path of affirmation as Fox says, “is what has been most lacking in society and religion in the West for the past six centuries, the Via Positiva, the way or path of affirmation, thanksgiving, ecstasy.”<sup>6</sup> This, perhaps, is what is lacking in our local society today, our sense of appreciation and awe, our sense of genuine gratitude that we fail to see the real beauty of what has been given to us. This can lead to apathy, insensitivity, and materialism that can escalate to greed and violence and further

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing, A Primer in Creation Spirituality* (Bear and Company, Inc., 1983), p.34

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 139:14, 17, 18 NAB

<sup>3</sup> Renate Craine, *Hildegard Prophet of the Cosmic Christ*. (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1998), p. 68

<sup>4</sup> Fox, 69

<sup>5</sup> Fox, 115.

<sup>6</sup> Fox, 33.





result to crimes, fraud, corruption, dishonesty in the industry and destruction in the environment due to industrialization and for personal gain.

The magnificence of the sunrise lurks behind high-rise buildings and the vision of the busy man in haste is clouded by the dark smog and his oblivion. The trees are made as sacrificial objects to give way to roads and skyways and the simple man who longs to breathe clean air suffers from diseases brought about by pollution. That basic sense of wonderment is robbed from every man's heart and the joy of being is taken away from him. He no longer sees beauty but rather became used to passivity and resignation.

In the Via Positiva, we are reminded how beautiful the earth is, that each of what is there in creation is a gift and therefore, worthy of beholding it! If we have lost the sense of awe and wonder, we are encouraged to awaken it and develop the habit of appreciation for whatever is bestowed upon us by the Divine Creator. We are reminded to get in touch once again with the gifts of creation, the original blessing. We are to become more sensitive on how dependent we are upon other beings, and it is time to acknowledge their existence and our connection with them.

## VIA NEGATIVA

Creation is our gift, a blessing, a sign of love from the Giver. We could only wish for it to be there, just where it is, safe and unharmed. We would do anything to keep its beauty and protect it. Being awed with its beauty connects us with creation. It is interconnectedness that draws us and binds us to it. And it is precisely the main reason why other people are uncaring of creation, because there is no sense of connection, no feeling of oneness and if there is any sense of connection at all, it is his flawed belief as the ruler of creation,

misinterpreting that of first creation story in the Scriptures, to "subdue" it and "have dominion"<sup>7</sup> over all creation.

Just exactly what wrong is happening to our mother earth? Illegal mining, "deforestation, soil erosion, air and water pollution, improper disposal of solid and toxic wastes, loss of coral reefs, mismanagement and abuse of coastal resources and overfishing."<sup>8</sup>

We know how abusive human activities are, their carelessness, apathy, selfishness and greed for money and power have contributed to ecological degradation. To enumerate a few, "water pollution is essentially caused by oil spills, urban runoff and ocean dumping. Air pollution rises from burning of fossil fuels, hydraulic fracturing and gases emitted by vehicles. Deforestation involves permanent end of forest cover to make that land available for residential, commercial or industrial purpose."<sup>9</sup> All these point to human's misuse and abuse of the gifts bestowed upon him.

Pope Francis in his *Laudato Si* tells that "there have been a lot of efforts done to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis yet they proved to be ineffective, not only because of powerful oppositions but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions."<sup>10</sup>

We may be unaware of it, but we are part of the problem in one way or another. It could be

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 1:28, NAB.

<sup>8</sup> *Conserve Energy Future. Current Environmental Issues*. Accessed January 11, 2017. <http://www.conserve-energy-future.com/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Conserve Energy Future. Current Environmental Issues*. Accessed January 11, 2017. <http://www.conserve-energy-future.com/>.

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si, Encyclical Letter ON Care for our Common Home*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015) p. 10.





from the simple throwing of trash anywhere, our laziness to do something about it or consenting to other's abuses and non-action towards it. This is our own struggle, the "dark night of the soul" which the mystics talk about according to Fox. We suffer altogether the effects of our nonchalance. We enter in the Via Negativa, where there is nothingness, emptiness, pain and dryness and when we let it be, it eventually opens us up to this longing to see the light. We start to be enlightened, it rouses our spirit and we take action. This is where compassion starts.

It is either we deny to see the reality of man's pervert actions and even justify them or we refuse to harken the call to renewal. In the Via Negativa, we are led to enter the dark. We usually despise it for we may have already been used to our comfort zones and do not want to be disturb by changes. Furthermore, Fox says, "The dark is all that we are afraid of, all that we don't want to see-fear, anger, sex, grief, death, the unknown."<sup>11</sup> But we can never be freed from this bondage of darkness if we will not let loose, and let go. In this path, we are to be purified, stripped off our façade and crushed off our egoistic attitudes. Here, we practically go through the effects of our own weaknesses and folly. If we become open to it and not deny it, we would let it enlighten us and transform us. We need to let go of our materialistic desires in order to effect change. Ecological degradation is very much a product of these tendencies, which only tolerates greed, dishonesty, corruption, politicking, and even violence. Mining in the Philippines have long been operating despite their violation to mining laws precisely because authorities have fallen to the lure of money. In an interview with the then appointed DENR Secretary Gina Lopez a few years back, she was offered Thirty Million Pesos (P30,000,000.00) a month by these mining firms

so they can continue with their operation. Her aide, according to reports was likewise offered Six Million Pesos (P6,000,000.00) a month just to get his approval. Had it not been for her very strong willpower and advocacy, she would fall into the same trap as some former leaders who did not even make an exemplary record of civil service and got even involved in corruption issues. If there were only more of her in the Philippines, those who will not be enticed by the blinding temptation of wealth, leaders who have genuine care for the welfare of the people and promote common good, then our environment would have all the justice it deserved.

The simple throwing of trash anywhere is a blatant sign of carelessness and laziness. From a random observation in classrooms and streets, it is somewhat difficult for the students pick up their own pieces of trash on the floor and bring them to the trash bin just outside the classroom. They could not pick-up the trash on the floor when it is theirs in the first place! Once I saw a couple of women peeling off their oranges inside the Jeepney and they unconsciously just threw the peelings outside the window of the vehicle. Some bypassers then were taken aback and even leapt to avoid being hit by those peelings. That alone shows our carelessness to our surrounding.

### OUR OWN DOING, OUR BURDEN

How many wraths from typhoons should we allow before all make a stand to go against human abuses towards the environment? The typhoons that struck the country in the previous years have claimed a lot of lives. Typhoon Yolanda aftermath did not only kill humans but also showed the evil of illegal logging in my province, Eastern Samar. There were thousands of floating logs found during the heavy raining and flooding at that time. The year after, typhoon Ruby hit

<sup>11</sup> Fox, 135.





the same province with the same scenario. Until when people would become victims of their own folly? Now, this same province is facing the crisis of both legal and illegal mining.

The overcrowding of population and the people's undisciplined behavior in major cities of Metro Manila have caused harmful damage to the Pasig River. The daily human activities of informal settlers along the riverbanks such as bathing, washing the laundry and dishes and other human wastes have caused eutrophication of the river. It grows more water lilies and algae which suffocate the river and can cause gradual death of the water.

We are all called to heed this call of letting go, to let go of our concupiscence, the tendency to sin especially towards our Mother Nature. We have been so confident of our title, the 'crowning glory of creation' and 'co-creators of' God that we take for granted our duty to equally connect with all beings. We need to let God be God in our lives, to let His power control us so that we would be able to enter into this transformation stage. Then, we would "cease our questing for pyramids of immortality in money, fame, power, militarism; we would cease the sexism and racism by which we need to project our death fears onto those different from and supposedly less immortal than ourselves. And we would become the images of God, the birthing, creative, real co-creators we were all meant to be."<sup>12</sup>

The Via Negativa explores on our own entering into darkness which challenges us to go through it in order to let go and learn from it. In this path, we allow ourselves to experience that dark realities of our own deeds, the pains of our greed and apathy as well as the pangs of our abusive actions towards the environment. In here is the

hope to learn from it and allow ourselves to rise from it in order to create something new to compensate for what has been destroyed and lost. We have been given so much and after suffering from the consequences, we rise into going through the process of birthing once again. May the wrath of nature always remind us that, "Hey, you are not the only beings here! We are here, too!," said the other creatures. For how long will there be greed for money at the expense of the lowly who suffers from the effects of environmental degradation? When will we cease to control our whims for wealth, fame and power yet destroy living things essential to the life of every generation ahead?

We have to let go of our laziness, greed, insensitivity, dishonesty, pride and arrogance and even playing god to allow God's Spirit to change us. May our prayer and worship and the other sacraments continually form us into becoming more holistic persons, so that eventually, we will be able to relate well with other humans and other creations in a more integrated way. The Via Negativa summons us to moments of introspection, to enter into the dark in order to see our real selves, then hopefully, rise from it with new perspectives.

## VIA CREATIVA

Our current government through the DENR is creating measures to help protect the Filipino people from the negative impacts of climate change. Even after having rejected by the Commission on Appointments, Gina Lopez is very strong against illegal mining even small-scale mining. Once in her speech in the town of Paracale, Camarines Norte, small-scale mining, according to her is not allowed at the moment because it uses mercury that threatens the environment and public health. There have been

<sup>12</sup> Fox, 168.





mine workers who lost their jobs from suspended mining firms who are now being tapped for the government's planned expansion of bamboo and mangrove plantations to fight climate change and poverty. She also urged miners and government officials to stop illegal mining and help the government by growing bamboo and mangrove seedlings. It is said that both bamboo and mangroves can stabilize embankments and prevent erosion brought about by sea level rise, which is one of the identified impacts of climate change. On February 2, 2017, she ordered for the closure of more than twenty one (21) mining operations for violating mining and environmental laws.

While we appreciate the effort of the government to solve our ecological problems and the cry of a handful of environmentalists and other groups like the Ecological Society of the Philippines (ESP) who lobby and partner with private sectors such as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) to support the fight against climate change, we can still agree with Pope Francis' words. While there have been a lot of efforts to solve our ecological crisis, they proved to be ineffective and insufficient. If we will rely mostly on a few people's advocacy, how far can we go with our fight against ecological degradation? It is not just the fight of a few but of every Filipino and everyone must be taught and empowered to do so.

Matthew Fox's says, a creation-centered spiritual person is sensitive and aware, alive and awake to the ever-flowing, ever-green, unfolding of the divine Dabhar (Word of God).<sup>13</sup> This awareness is what is lacking in most individual's consciousness. Many people have already been involved in environmental advocacies but some for only a specific period of time, others as a

fad or part of bandwagon and some others as a superficial response to the call of stewardship. Perhaps, it is about time to internalize this relationship and interconnectedness. In John Seed's "Beyond Anthropocentrism", he describes the transformation of the man's relationship to other species and in his commitment to them. "That is, the change is a spiritual one, thinking like a mountain, sometimes referred to as deep ecology."<sup>14</sup> How good it would be if every Filipino Christian would transcend from "I am protecting the rainforest" to "I am part of the rainforest protecting myself." It is not merely acting on behalf of Mother Earth, as he puts it, but starting to think that we are a part of it, not apart, separated nor alienated. Thus, the principle of interconnectedness. He continued that, "to survive our current environmental pressures, we must consciously remember our evolutionary and ecological inheritance. We must learn to think like a mountain."<sup>15</sup> Creation is not something that we just look upon for we consider ourselves as 'crown of creation'. Seed makes us aware that "every atom in our body existed before organic life emerged 4000 million years ago. Why do we look down on them with such a condescending air? It is they that are the immortal part of us."<sup>16</sup>

People, young and old alike, need to have a deeper awareness of what is happening in the environment. Seed says, "if we are to be open to evolving a new consciousness, we must fully face up to our impending extinction (the environmental pressure). This means acknowledging that part of us which shies away from the truth, hides in intoxication or busyness from the despair of the human, whose

<sup>13</sup> Fox, 40.

<sup>14</sup> Seed, John, et.al. *Beyond Anthropocentrism, From Thinking Like a Mountain-Towards a Council of all Beings*. Accessed June 14, 2019 from [http://www.rainbowbody.net/Ongwhehonwhe/beyondanthro\\_seed.pdf](http://www.rainbowbody.net/Ongwhehonwhe/beyondanthro_seed.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Seed, John, et.al. *Beyond Anthropocentrism, From Thinking Like a Mountain-Towards a Council of all Beings*. Accessed June 14, 2019 from [http://www.rainbowbody.net/Ongwhehonwhe/beyondanthro\\_seed.pdf](http://www.rainbowbody.net/Ongwhehonwhe/beyondanthro_seed.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.





400-million-year race is run, whose organic life is a mere hair's breadth from finished."<sup>17</sup> It is to open our eyes, to connect, to reflect, to be moved and to do something. It is the battle of every individual if we are seriously concerned with the problem. It is to deal with our weakness, to replace the seven capital sins with cardinal virtues, to combat our concupiscence with works of mercy and to transform anthropocentrism to everything as the image of God. Hence, we are called to "enter the Creator's realm", to co-create with God, to "assist nature and history in carrying on the creativity of the universe."<sup>18</sup> It is the *Via Creativa*.

### DO WE CREATE OR DESTROY?

We can make use of the spirituality that has been planted in us to birth more gifts in so far as service for others is concerned. More than 90 percent of the Filipino population are believers in God and more than 80 percent are Roman Catholics. With this great number of believers, and perhaps, half of them practicing Christians, it only requires them a nudge towards formation on interconnectedness, to re-orient and catechize once again the relationship of humanity to his environment. Pope Francis in his *Laudato Si* even says, "if the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are part, Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith."<sup>19</sup>

Science and Social Science textbooks offer the same traditional cause and effect information regarding environmental degradation from level one up to the last level. Still, no

deep-rooted explanation as to why after many years of discussing it, we face the same crisis. The sense of interconnectedness, which is lacking in our effort to engage people, "this genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature" is what will make us bind with "fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others."<sup>20</sup> They go altogether, inseparable. It is our hope that more and more would boldly proclaim that everything is the cosmos is interrelated. It is about time that everyone thinks and acts in a cosmic perspective. If we truly desire to care for one another, it is by thinking and acting cosmically that can prod us to. Paul Dejillas beautifully expresses it in his book, *Our Cosmic Origins*:

*As I float with the clouds, chirp with the birds, sway with the trees, feel the rocks under my feet, I realize that I am not alone. I'm in communion with Mother Nature, throbbing with the power and vitality of the entire universe, the cosmos...I explored the cosmos. After all, we came out of it; we are made of the same atoms and molecules that produce the stars, star-seed beings, so to say. Our thoughts, feelings, and actions obey the rules that govern the behavior of atoms and the planets. And so is our relationship with our surroundings and with one another. I believe a fuller understanding of ourselves depends so much on our knowledge of this place we live in.*<sup>21</sup>

Thoughts like these will only come from someone who has already integrated himself to his environment, treating all other creations as equal. He said that "thinking cosmically might help us experience what seems to be the human part of the universe."<sup>22</sup>

As for mining, legal or illegal, they both pose a problem towards the environment and it is for this reason that all the bishops in Region VIII are working together to fight mining in the region so as to protect it from future hazards such as landslides and floods.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Fox, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Pope Francis, 42.

<sup>20</sup> Pope Francis, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Paul J. Dejillas. *Our Cosmic Origins*. (Tatay Jobo Elizes, USA. 2017) pp. 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Dejillas, p. 4.







The growth of waterlilies along the stretch of Pasig river does not alarm authorities. It does not take action towards the informal settlers who create the damage. The least that they do is to remove the water lilies when it is already covering up the entire river. There is no better solution yet than to free the river sides of inhabitants for their daily activities contribute to this condition of the rivers. But this is not to discount the efforts of the city government of Pasig which is doing its part in rehabilitating the floodway Manggahan area after its demolition in December 2017. Again, it takes a firm leader who has genuine concern both for people and environment to not allow anyone from residing along the sides of the river and transfer them instead to a more dignified place which they can call home.

In the *Via Creativa*, it is a matter of putting our perspectives and attitudes into the right place. How creative are we? Do we create to flaunt, exploit and profit alone? Or do we create out of the gift of creativity that God has bestowed upon us and offer them as a gift to others as a sharing in God's own creativity? How beautiful God's gift of the world is for us to tarnish it with our drama of self-centeredness, greed, and playing God! "An image of God who is also beautiful is not passive and is not despising of self or of one's gifts. An image of God does what God does, which is to birth beauty in all its forms."<sup>23</sup> As co-creators, we are endowed with talents to create and recreate so as to participate in God's on-going act of creativity, to create out of what He has given and restore whatever man has intentionally or unintentionally harmed. "Do you create or do you destroy?"<sup>24</sup>

The *Via Creativa* helps us to reflect on the gift of creativity each of us have. A more prudent

consideration on what we create, how we create, for whom we create and why we create should be dealt with because now it will always be a question as to whether we really create or destroy. Our intentions of creating should be in congruence with God's original plan and anything with depravity should be purified and if irreconcilable, be dropped. We use our talents, especially our gift of creativity to serve for the benefit of all.

Our schools are the best avenues for such integration to form human consciousness in as far as creation-centered spirituality is being dealt with. Continuous holistic formation to make individuals more sensitive to ecological issues is crucial. It has to be integrated in every year level's curriculum to concretize its implementation.

The more purposeful leader should continue to punish the wayward by creating concrete rules against environmental degradation. Still, those who violate should be given proper sanctions, within due process of law, to lessen such problems. If there is a need for the closure of mining firms to restore creation, then, so be it. Planting of trees in the local setting should already become part of the culture of every city or municipality.

Filipinos should bring back that sense of awe, appreciation, relationship, interconnectedness, creativity and compassion. Let these be incorporated more fully in school curriculum, whether religious subject or not. Learners should be bombarded with this consciousness as they spend more hours in the classroom. In-service formation on Ecological awareness for teachers need to be frequent and strengthened. The value of compassion for the learners need to be reiterated to do away with just sticking to the usual mode of instruction in order to comply and finish the required number of teaching hours. All educators should work together so that

<sup>23</sup> Fox, 242.

<sup>24</sup> Fox, 182.





these environmental issues would not remain a repetitive information with no meaning at all. The sense of creativity should be enhanced in educators as they carry out their instruction to help their learners become more conscious of their role to the environment. To plan and create strategies that will be included in lesson plans for effective classroom interaction is a must. Every educator and learner should be empowered to do something and ensure that all efforts against ecological degradation would not be fleeting and futile.

How many of the Christians are aware of the principle of interconnectedness? Too many perhaps, specifically on stewardship which are incorporated in Christian Living subjects in Catholics schools. Yet, no emphasis on relationship and interconnectedness. Christians should be the first movers for they have received the spirit who vivifies and empowers. More catechesis should be conducted to the various ministries in parishes. Catechists assigned in public schools should emphasize it in their modules.

The government's effort to plant more mangroves and replace those that have been destroyed for they are protection against storm surges in coastal areas is commendable. Many areas in Easter Samar with still thick mangroves were safe from storm surges during typhoons Yolanda in 2013 and Ruby in 2014 and some coastal towns with destroyed mangroves were swallowed in waves. Local leaders should also engage families to plant more mangroves and strictly implement laws banning their destruction and punishing the offenders.

Other cities in our country should adapt Pasig City's concern for the environment. Pasig City is one and strong on implementing the Green Pasig City program which preserves trees at the

heart of the city and converts some industrial lots to parks.

More lot spaces should be given ways for parks and leisure. More and more children nowadays get stuck to virtual games for there is no more space to play with their friends. Many retired individuals long for parks where they can jog, read and breathe fresh air. The sense of awe is getting lost because people do not see the natural view of the world anymore. The government has given the public spaces away to private companies for commercial and industrial purposes. It takes a purposeful leader who has compassion and love for his constituents to preserve our nature for the good of many, and not to give in to the whims of greedy investors. And, at the same time, a firm leader who would strictly and consistently implement the laws particularly on logging and mining with justice and fairness.

#### VIA TRANSFORMATIVA

A more authentic action for the protection of our environment and people is the heaven's cry. Compassion has to be given more emphasis here. For Fox, it is creation spirituality that helps recover the meaning and importance of compassion.<sup>25</sup> Compassion would be our battle cry towards mining firms and other businessmen who take advantage of natural resources for their own gain. They who want to amass wealth and bully the weak and the poor have lost the sense of brotherhood and justice. They have belittled the poor's opportunity for genuine creativity by offering them temporary relief and wealth as workers. They have cut themselves from their relationship to other human beings for they have exploited them. Now is man's cry for compassion, for "compassion is the moral law of

<sup>25</sup> Fox, 23.





interconnectivity, the cosmic law of responding to another's pain and suffering as well as to another's joy and celebration."<sup>26</sup>

### THE CHALLENGE FOR EVERY JUAN

From the Via Creativa, we tread upon the Via Transformativa. This metamorphosis leads us to a way of promoting peace, justice, equality, love and compassion. They become our advocacy for saving the ecology and battlecry to combat malevolence. We all promote a creation-centered spirituality where total equality and love for the least is embodied. In this path, we become new persons in Christ, transformed, and like a prophet, crying out in the desert, bold, unafraid and ready to take part in the recreation of the world.

We join the bishops of Region VIII who cry for compassion towards its people and the natural habitat to protect it, preserve it and nurture it. We have to purify our intentions for genuine creativity, for in our hands lie the "power of creativity-unique in their capacity for the demonic and the destructive."<sup>27</sup> We have to watch out our true nature for creativity for "creativity in the human is where the divine and the demonic meet,"<sup>28</sup> as Fox puts it. It is for this reason that we can either be truly creative or fearfully harmful and abusive. Both people and the environment need a new image so as to put the entire picture of life into its original state. Old systems, old thoughts, habits and practices must be discarded in order to create anew. Although it is not an easy task, for we will not be free from Via Negativa, we let ourselves be under the yoke of the Spirit who moves, vivifies and sustains us. In this way,

we are sure to fulfill God's will because "we have the work of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of transformation."<sup>29</sup> As we carry it out His will for the new creation, we are assured that our work, is the work of the Almighty. There is a need for a continuous stronger and more purposeful integration of doctrine, moral and worship in every religious instruction or formation and even the basic catechesis in communities or Christian living subjects in Catholic schools. We are urged to walk along the paths that advocates of ecological safety are treading, that of compassion and justice for the poor, that of genuine service for social transformation, that of birthing a new creation, that of recreating and restructuring, that of preserving and keeping an unwavering love for the gift of all of life.

Compassion is the call of every Filipino to be served with honesty and integrity. Our people long for leaders who are real servants - dedicated and selfless. The cry of every poor Juan Dela Cruz to the leaders of the country is not to exploit them and rob them of their rights to live normally, free from false hopes and vain promises of wealth.

Pope Francis strongly calls us to be "united by the same concern", to engage all families together to "protect our common home"<sup>30</sup>. We agree with his appeal for a "new dialogue, a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Fox, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Fox, 254.

<sup>28</sup> Fox, 254.

<sup>29</sup> Fox, 254.

<sup>30</sup> Pope Francis, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Pope Francis, 10.





### III. CONCLUSION

Upon exploring the four paths of creation spirituality, we have realized how each path concerns the condition of both man and his environment. The perspectives of each path in the creation spirituality of Fox clearly speaks of and applies to the Philippine setting. Each creation is dependent of each other and whatever one does to the other, whether positive or negative, poses a corresponding effect that could either be creative or destructive. Indeed, man, causes ecological degradation. The ecology and other human beings become the victims of his greed, indifference and materialistic attitude. Because of individualism and money, he already became the power tripper, controlling and separate from others. He has lost the sense of connectedness, of being one with other people and living things. His laziness causes him to be insensitive of those around him, leaving the simple cleaning up to others. Other living beings become objects of his sovereignty, thus, an opportunity to enjoy his game of destruction in exchange for wealth and fame.

The efforts being done both by government and non-government organizations are commendable, yet a thorough, more committed and consistent implementation must be considered. We acknowledge the fact that every member of our society must work hand in hand to save ourselves from this decay.

We all need to cry out to the people in our government to prioritize this problem and encourage active participation in dialogues. We also cry out for more financial support to carry out the task of bringing back our original home, our original gift. Pope Francis says, we are not God and the earth was here before us and it has been given to us. Let us try to put it back altogether, to care for it, preserve it, protect it

and cultivate it according to the “original good purpose for which it was given.”<sup>32</sup>

On a more personal note, I am starting my journey towards:

The Via Disciplina. I believe that it is every man’s initiative to manage our own waste products. In as much as we enjoy the resources of the world, we must be responsible, too, for everything that can contribute to the ugliness of our surrounding. This self-discipline is something that we should start within ourselves, not an automatic phenomenon or magic by which we obtain change without any effort. It is a force which will compel us towards transformation, not only for ourselves but for the many.

The Via Cura, Kalinga (The Caring Way). Our efforts as co-creators should be towards a genuine care for others as our KAPWA-katulad, kawangis, ka-kapwa. We do everything in the spirit of love, to express our care and concern, not to strip them off their rights to exist but to acknowledge their presence as something that completes our whole being. Despite our weaknesses as humans, we try to be holy persons towards other human beings, the land, air and sea creatures, land and vegetation and the entire solar system that are all part of our existence. We treat them according to how they have been before we came to be and be more creative enough to be more sensitive to their presence, not hurting nor destroying, but healing, preserving, cultivating and enhancing.

<sup>32</sup> Pope Francis, 79.





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