Praxis of Care: A Path to Harmony

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A harmonious state of things is often perceived idyllic. It is devoid of cacophony, hostility, and dissension. It denotes peace, accord, and a relationship characterized by a lack of conflict. True harmony goes much deeper than absence of conflict or condemnation for the lack of peace. This paper presents the challenges to harmony using the theory of care ethics. It will unveil the possibilities of care, even if it was initially lodged at home and family. Using an expansive view, this paper claims that harmony is not farfetched if nations bring to the table the ethics of care. Hinged on care ethics are the principles of collective praxis, peace, and solidarity which enrich human potentials and makes interconnections, and solidarity possible. Thus, the paper will employ philosophical and theological analysis that addresses the following: 1) Care ethics as an ethical concept with myriad variants, yet praxis-driven; 2) Pope Francis' Laudato Si' as an appeal to foster care for all; 3) A theological reinterpretation of "rada", and 4) Care ethics as an injunction to revalue care as a social good. Incorporating Pope Francis' message in Laudato Si', this paper hopes to underscore promoting a culture of caring through collective dialogue.

Keywords: Care ethics, Harmony, Justice, Laudato Si', Praxis

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Harmony: A Challenging Concept

Harmony is a challenging concept because a harmonious state of things is often perceived idyllic. Deemed devoid of cacophony, hostility, and dissension, it denotes peace, accord, and a relationship characterized by a lack of conflict. True harmony, I believe, is much deeper than absence of conflict or condemnation for the lack of peace. Pope Francis, in his message for the celebration of the *51st World Day of Peace* in January 2018 urged everyone to draw inspiration from the words of Saint John Paul II: "If the 'dream' of a peaceful world is shared by all, if the refugees' and migrants' contribution is properly evaluated, then humanity can become more and more a universal family and our earth a true 'common home'. Throughout history, many have believed in this "dream", and their achievements are a testament to the fact that it is no mere utopia."[1] Similarly, *Thich Nhat Hanh*,[2] in his 2003 address to congress and in reference to his message of collective efforts for peace, said that "only deep listening, mindfulness, and gentle communication can remove the wrong perceptions that are the foundation of violence."

Harmony, which is defined as agreement or accord[3], is synonymous to congruence and peace. There is, however, ambivalence in the term "harmony" for in its fullest sense, harmony cannot rule out discord and wistful variance that arises in building harmony. Similarly, the art of harmony or building peace, tranquility, and accord goes beyond systemic structures or interweaving of organized elements.

Human relations are replete with conflicting interests, dissension, or strife. Working towards harmony doesn't mean eliminating discord in human dynamics because it isn't detached from the human condition. Besides, aspirations to forge harmony is intertwined with the day-to-day affairs of people. Thus, cognizant of the ambivalence of harmony, this paper locates harmony in the practice of caring. Though Care is perceived a weak concept and quite inferior to justice ethics, the author believes that it is a potent force that concretizes harmony and enables a rethinking of care praxis as a social good.

Care Ethics

Care ethics is just some-decades-old theory, which started out as an alternative moral framework.[4] It is a work in progress and a fledgling concept that challenges any attempt at *absolutizing* a moral theory founded on justice. Notwithstanding several attempts at making care relevant in society, care remains devalued because its discourse articulates the sentiments of the giver and the receiver—seemingly a deontologist's problem towards the universal application of care principles.

Care, understood as an engrossment, a form of empathy, and a personal disposition has been construed as parochial or limited in its scope. Care seems not to cut across varying cultures, beliefs, and systems because critical discourse on care begins and ends with what *it cannot* accomplish rather than on what could be derived from it as a promising theory.

[1] See Pope Francis Message at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20171113_messaggio-51giornatamondiale-pace2018.html/ retrieved Nov. 20, 2018.

[2] **Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh** is a global spiritual leader, poet and peace activist, revered around the world for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on mindfulness and peace. He is the man Martin Luther King called "An Apostle of peace and nonviolence." His key teaching is that, through mindfulness, we can learn to live happily in the present moment—the only way to truly develop peace, both in one's self and in the world. See https://plumvillage.org/about/thich-nhat-hanh/ accessed 12-5-18.

[3] See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/harmony/ accessed 12-5-18.

[4] The ethics of care, which has its origins in the work of moral and social psychologists such as Nancy Chodorow and most notably, Carol Gilligan, is an alternative framework for moral theory. See Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.7; Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983, 1992), hereafter referred to as Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*.

Care, however, has been raised as important concept by two feminist political scientists, namely, Joan Tronto and Selma Sevenhuijsen.[5] Tronto argued that for care to pitch its own strength and integrity in society, we have to revalue care and change traditional paradigms that undermine care as merely a disposition and an attitude. Although her books have articulated more coherently the problem of genderizing morality, she left important questions on the adequacy of care which challenged the readers to make care a socio-political theory. We can reckon: How can this tiny germane idea, too utopic to be true, bring in change through social policies? Unless discussions shift to care practices, the concept remains a fledgling moral principle.

People, as moral agents, are accountable for their action. Consequentialist and deontological theorists have strongly emphasized the primacy of reason and objectivity of laws. From Lawrence Kohlberg's deontological bias to the universalistic approach to morality, several moral philosophers have put structure and order to moral thought. However, many have also been veering away from universal morality. Attention to concrete realities and various contexts opens discourses for justice and care ethics. Queries about, a balanced morality slowly attract attention to care ethics. We may ask: "How can we be just without losing our tenderness (or empathy)?"

This brings us to the problem with care ethics. Care, being a fledgling concept, renders the praxis of care limited to home, family affairs, and domestic concerns. It has, by far, no place in social or legal policies. Women's assumption of their role as women still steer confusion about their 'call to care' and their own personal gains. An ethics of care, which is generally built on a mother's affective connection with caring for the least and the weak (at home), are branded as virtues by a male-dominated/administered society. These virtues are well recognized as resources for the maintenance of the mainstream citizens' social order or amelioration of suffering. The association of Care to women renders care devalued as it tends to denote a practice that pushes us back to the private sphere. The public sphere, unfortunately, discounts caring as a social good because it puts more value on efficiency and objectivity—the cornerstones of modern bureaucracy and market. Such values which are mainly swayed by a culture predominantly constructed by male discourse could mechanically subordinate sympathy or compassion, the fundamental source of care—relegating them as complementary to men's capacities for asserting rights and justice. If the ethics of care builds on experiences of women caregivers, a built-in tension is thus, imported from the way the private and public realms (caregivers' platforms) are shaped and ordered. The tension in Care ethics, hence, produces perceptions of care as weak and parochial—an attitude, rather than a theory and praxis.

Praxis of Care among Ecofeminists

The ecofeminists, whose works have been based on a worldview that wedded the connection between environmental movement and feminist discourse have long argued about the inadequacy of care in our world. Drawing on the insights of ecological ethics, feminism, and socialism, ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology

[5] Joan C.Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*. See also "Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care" in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12,1987, 4:644–662; Tronto and Fisher (1990) "Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring", in E.K.Abel and M.Nelson eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press,1990), pp.35–62. A further elaboration of the integrity of care is found in E.K. Abel and M. Nelson, eds. *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives, (*Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). Selma Sevenhuijsen, *Citizenship and the Ethics of Care: Feminist Considerations on Justice, Morality and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.9. See also Sevenhuijsen, "Fatherhood and the Political Theory of Rights: Theoretical Perspectives of Feminism", *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 14,1986, Vol.3/4:329–340.

which perpetuates oppressions, such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature. The main agenda of ecofeminists is to denounce not only the visible acts of hostility of humans to nature but also those *invisible or implicit* assumptions that form as bases of discourse and action.

At the onset of Ecofeminism in the 70's, a number of theorists dealt with the interconnectedness between (and among) nature and women. Often the term connotes feminist movements in concert with environmental activists, which identify male as oppressors and culprits in the abuse and exploitation of the environment. The preponderance of abuse especially leaping out from the practices of male-dominated commercial society pushes the ecofeminist discourse to the interconnected relationship of ecological destruction to oppressions of race, gender, class, and nature.

In the Philippines, in which a culture is "overtly patriarchal and covertly matriarchal," women have taken the task of claiming their equal rights with males. Women have called for fair labor practices and opportunities. Through education, they have gone ahead (owing to the founding of *Asociación Feminista Filipina* in 1905)[6] in their battle against violence and exploitation. Hence, women activists, who rallied in the streets in 1986 (EDSA Revolution) sought for various economic, socio-political, and environmental reforms. One particular achievement of which ecofeminists are well known for, is their creative strategies to address the ecological problem.

Deforestation, loss of biodiversity, monocropping, chemical pollution, dumping problem have been raised by ecofeminists, underlining the negative impacts to humans, especially to women and children. Supported by religious groups and non-government organizations, they called for collective action to address the problem of environment depletion and degradation. Ecofeminists strongly argue that male-dominated commercial and utilitarian activities perpetuate exploitation and destruction. The felling of trees, helter-skelter mining, the over-fishing of seas, the expansion of industrial zones, which are pushed in the name of progress, perpetuate the perennial problem of ecosystem's destruction. Exacerbated by poverty and minimal attention of government leaders, environmental degradation is often addressed superficially. The government's efforts to reduce natural and man-made disasters are colored by political agenda that prioritize economic growth and development over protection of the environment.

On the other hand, Filipino ecofeminists pose alternatives that are geared towards women welfare, health care, protection and care of environment campaigns and recently, some variations in the appropriation of *Gaia* spirituality[7] (cf. James Lovelock, Rosemary Radford Ruether[8] and Sallie McFague) have been adopted by women groups. Interestingly in the Philippine setting, the creation of *Women and Ecology Wholeness Farm*[9] has prompted similar activities as a form of corporate social responsibility. The rehabilitation of 1.2 hectares fruit and coffee orchard in Cavite was initiated in 1997 by the *Institute of Women's Studies*. The farm now serves as venue for seminars of alternative lifestyle that is ecofriendly (eco-caring). The use of organic farming and traditional fish-breeding technique are being taught and fostered. The

[6] See http://womensuffrage.org/?p=696; http://www.ssc.edu.ph/sscweb/other%20links /wewf.html/accessed June 20, 2012.

[7] See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1994).

[8] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism and the Bible," in in *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, David L. Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, eds. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), pp. 230ff. (229-241).

[9] See http://ssc.edu.ph/outreach-and-advocacies/institute-of-womens-studies/accessed 2-1-2017.

Institute also offers a modular course on *Women and Ecology* of which a unique feature is the daily inclusion of Shibashi and paneurythmic dance.

Furthermore, symposia and fora on protection and care for the environment and ecological theology are some of the annual initiatives in local colleges, universities, and cause-oriented groups. However, despite the sensitization of the academic communities on the points of convergence between women cause and nature there are only sporadic efforts to profoundly address persistent questions about unabated exploitation of natural resources and globalization impacts.

Apparently, the ecofeminist language of Care is slowly emerging among advocates and yet, this is not energetically tapped as a rallying cry—a principle—for this generation. It faces a formidable alternative in the language of commerce, production, and consumption.

Care in *Laudato Si'*: An Appeal to Praxis of Care

The shift to Care is reiterated anew by Pope Francis in the document, *Laudato Si'*[10]. It is not a new concept. It has been in use since the 70's in the advent of ecofeminists' creative response to ecological problem. The 191 pages of the of the encyclical *Laudato si'* express the key points which are interestingly aligned with the principles long clamored for by the ecofeminists.

The six chapters in the encyclical point to critical questions: "What is happening to our common home," "The Gospel of Creation," "The human roots of the ecological crisis," "Integral ecology," "Lines of approach and action" and "Ecological education and spirituality". These are challenges to a community in search of utopian harmony. In the encyclical, Pope Francis asks, "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?"[11]. This question is at the heart of *Laudato si'* (May You be praised). It is a timely question that presents an urgent concern about our existence and social responsibility. In a world marked by apathy and consumerism, how can caring become relevant?

Pope Francis' encyclical aptly underlines the interconnections that exist between private and public domains. He remarked, "This question does not have to do with the environment alone and in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal." He urged us to look at our existence which is intertwined with our social life. By asking relevant questions, he reminds us that the earth, our common home "is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us." This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (*Rom* 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen* 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.[12]

[10] See the encyclical http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html/accessed 12-6-18.

[11] Pope Francis *Laudato Si*, 160ff.

[12] See http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html/accessed12-12-18.

Pope Francis pointed out the root of ecological problem as he lamented on how the earth has been mistreated and abused. He explained that "The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in "lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies".[13] He calls for proponents of change by challenging the international community – to an "ecological conversion," according to the expression of St. John Paul II. Such conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness.[14] The admonition to "change direction" echoes the call of ecofeminists to "care (ing) for our common home."

The next section provides a theological link to the importance of care through rendering of the term 'rada' to take the term further to mean 'caring.'

Theological Reinterpretation of 'Rada' (to tend)

If harmony were to happen in our time, paradigm shift is vital in reinterpreting the meaning of "dominion".

Males in the Genesis account are believed to have received a special privilege from God to "have dominion" (Gen. 1:26) over everything. A literal reading of the text is enough to legitimize destructive exploitation. It emphasizes androcentrism, favoring males who have been given the privilege to "subdue" the earth.

This privilege of dominion has, nevertheless, received a good amount of whipping from feminists who unlocked the basic assumptions, principles, and limitations of biblical interpretation. It manifests that language always delimits meaning. This limitation is due to the problem with interpretation embedded in the mediated message through language. The linguistic gap between the text and the present readers can create problems in interpretation. Take for instance, the verb "kabash" (שַׁבָּכ=subdue) that always connotes power over the other. Even if one speaks the same language as the author of the text, a temporal distance, for example, already raises many problems as language attains a diachronic mutation. One's thought about the text can only be expressed through one's own language. The linguistic difference or distance in time may either hide or distort meanings.

According to Ernest Klein in his 1987 *Etymological Dictionary of Hebrew for Readers of English*, "domination" is a conjugation of *rada* (הָדָר) of which definitions can vary. *Rada* can mean to tread, to rule, to have dominion or dominate. Judeo-Aramaic *rada* means "drove, ruled, chastised"; Syriac *rada* is similar to the former with definitions such as "he went, moved along, drove, chastised, it flowed"; Arabic *rada*(y) "he trod" and Akkadian *radu* is "to drive, tend the flock" or related to "radad" which means, "he ruled, had dominion over, dominated or subjugated" understood in post-biblical Hebrew. The myriad definitions of the text could make the interpretation rather fuzzy. Could "dominion" refer to "ruling" as a thing of the past or allude to a dynamic meaning, that is tending or moving along as what the Arabic and Akkadian imply? The root word becomes a point for contention rather than a point for unity. Hence, a term

[13] Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 38: AAS 83 (1991), 841.
[14] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 220.

becomes a notion and the notion can extend it to a sustained bias.

A Hebrew lexicon similarly defines *kabash* as "subdue, bring into bondage;"[15] and it defines *radah* as "have dominion, rule, dominate." These words, taken in and out of context, connote an aggressive, forceful stewardship. If we critically examine the text, beyond the borders of semantics, the text and its reference can affirm or negate the original patriarchal view that permits subjugation and abuse.

Likewise, Ruether[16] clearly points out how the term "man" carries with it a subliminally-imposed androcentrism:

> The term "man" is an androcentric false generic which really means the elite male as normal human, with women as lesser human or subhuman, identified as standing between mind and body, human and animal, closer to the lower pole in this dualism than the male.[17]

To fully derive the meaning of the term, a reader has to see the link between language and thought. The relation between language and thought is expressed by two schools of thought. One school, represented by Ferdinand de Saussure and majority of the modern linguists, claims that thought is not really determined by language. They argue that thought has no inherent dependency on language conventions and differences. The other school (Cassirer, Heidegger, Gadamer and Wittgenstein) speaks strongly of the decisive influence of language on thought and worldviews. This is expressed in the Heideggerian fore-structures of understanding or the Gadamerian prejudices. These two schools of thought, as A. Thiselton[18] pointed out, are not mutually exclusive but expressive of two tendencies. Language shapes our views as much as it serves conventions. It is, however, in the conventional use of language that the shaping of thought is realized.

Pluralism in worldviews is not explained by the linguistic accidents in morphology and grammar but in the differences of language-uses (Wittgenstein's "language games"). The creative development of concepts occurs, therefore, in language-use as new vistas are opened up for the creative imagination.

Claus Westernmann similarly posits that the primeval events about humanity and the world have been handed down to us in an unbroken line from antiquity to modernity. The genealogies in Genesis have not reached us in pure state. Stories sketched worldviews and thus, have to be understood according to the socio-cultural milieu. Taking that into account means acknowledging that the Yahwist, Elohist and Priestly traditions have played a role in retelling a reconstructed past. Westermann avers:

> The story of primeval events should be thought of primarily as an element in the structure of the Pentateuch. The central part of the Pentateuch tells the story of the rescue at the Reed Sea, Ex 1-18. This event was the basis of the history of a people. It gave both parts of the book of Genesis the character of an introduction. Both the story of primeval events, Gen 1-11, and the stories of the patriarchs, Gen 12-50, are placed before the central part like two concentric circles. The relation of each circle to the central part is different. Hence, their introductory functions are different.[19]

[15] See http://www.reasons.org/articles/what-does-a-very-good-world-look-like-part-1-of-2/accessed June 28, 2012.
[16] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism and the Bible," in in *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, David L. Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, eds. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), pp. 230ff. (229-241).
[17] Ibid.
[18] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), pp. 133-139.
[19] Claus Westermann, *Genesis: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 1.

The concept of creation is not isolated from the message of the story of faith of the people of Israel who have been "re-created" from the destructive history of slavery. This representation of an abstract idea about God who crafts the universe and humankind from void or chaos, however, keys in elements that manifest the whole account as anthropocentric. "Dominion" is a term that carries a long history of linguistic system. The use of such a term with a generalized meaning delineates difference. Domination's antithesis is subordination. God who is omnipotent and omniscient, delegates the "power" to subdue the earth to "man". This impressive power-sharing which is inextricably linked to incessant power of males inflates the ego while females are bereft of the same privilege of lording over other creatures. The language lurks in the subconscious and creates patterns of meanings. On the one hand, it can be interpreted that males are given the license to pillage, destroy, subjugate and exploit at their whim or on the other hand it could mean tending and being caring stewards of the earth. Stewardship is rarely used interchangeably with dominion, maybe because it also warrants utilitarianism that overlooks Caring as an option.

The significance of this "remembering" of the absent difference is to point to the ambiguity of claims of knowledge or interpretations that must now recognize *impossibility of certainty and of being present to everything*. The interpretative task will have to take such anamnestic antidote (like, memory of suffering) seriously as it strives to make every text alive.

Harmony's Path: Praxis of Care

Recognizing the fragility of the human planet and ecosystems is a great contribution of the ecofeminists. They have denounced the reduction of the ecosystem into an everyday utility instead of treating it as sacramental and sacred (sacred=ie., taken apart [because it is special] from everyday routines of production and consumption). They have demonstrated varied ways of finding solutions to the problem. For them, sacredness also functions as message that we can direct our glimpse towards the Creative Creator as we ourselves are Co-creators. Ecofeminists turn to the plethora of ecological problems not with quick-fix solutions but with more re-creative interventions as they clamor that only through caring can we make a better world for the future generations. The ecofeminists, and the encyclical Laudato Si' affirm the need to rethink what we do with Mother Earth.

It is admittedly futile to think that people can just curb their appetite to offer a more habitable earth for the future generations. Humans have wants concomitant to their needs. Rather than adopting male utilitarianism by capitalizing on dominion, hook line and sinker, the female affirmation of mutual custodianship (Care/Use-Create), can replace the notion of dominion with stewardship. To adopt a notion of custodianship is to allow caring to redefine control over all living things. This means a building up of the notion and praxis of care as a valuable social good.

Therefore, tinkering with nature, biosphere and the ecosystems is no longer a natural stance. Both males and females assume a shared task of mutual custodianship. This principle is succinctly raised by N. Habel:

> The principle of mutual custodianship: Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over, Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community. [20]

[20] Norman C.Habel and Peter Trudinger, *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics, (*Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 2008.

Furthermore, the verb "subdue" (kabash) which reflects the exercise of force would not in any way suggest stewardship or care. Thus, "rada"[21] which implies stewardship gives way to mutuality and partnership. Coupled with dialogue, any steward becomes a carer, ready to take responsibilities for an entrusted task. To replace "dominion" with "tending" (caring) I believe, is congruent with the message of the encyclical *Laudato Si*: 1) Caring is a human quality that shows a profound identification with the other. One who cares sees the other (non-human/human) as another who is stamped by a steward (human) who is an *imago Dei*. Thus, caring is able to regard the other as a gift thus, reducing the prospect of harm. 2) To care is to recognize there is a limitation to personal freedom. Extinction of animal species, storage of nuclear wastes, destruction of natural habitats will definitely cause ecological imbalance within a peculiar ecosystem. A caring stance to the other is an affirmation of the boundaries of human freedom and power. 3) To care is to "tend". The task of seeing to it that everything is in its proper order is incumbent to human beings mandated to "tend" the earth. Tending can also mean bending towards the other in order to listen and fully understand the other and the other person's social milieu. If people were quite clear about the mandate to care, placing oneself in one's shoes becomes a compassionate stance. Such a stance enables genuine empathy. Furthermore, in the Benedictine tradition, "bending" also means listening with the ear of the heart, similar to the expression, "to lend one's ears". In caring, it is not merely a passive stance, we also lend our hand, even without being asked to, more convinced that the other is stamped in God's image. When, a person fully attends to the other, s/he becomes a blessing to the other.

Our God, a caring God has given humankind this tremendous power of co-creativity. He entrusts to everyone the mandate to "tend" --extending the hospitality, generosity, attentiveness, concern, and solidarity that are hinged on care.

St. John Paul II similarly raised the need to act to foster ecological balance:

> It must also be said that the proper ecological balance will not be found without *directly addressing the structural forms of poverty* that exist throughout the world… Rather, the poor, to whom the earth is entrusted no less than to others, must be enabled to find a way out of their poverty. This will require a courageous reform of structures, as well as new ways of relating among peoples and States.[22]

Hence, the task of caring enjoins all to adopt a sense of solidarity with nature and with people. When we care, we unleash our deepest powers to create, preserve, and protect. On the other hand, without care, the world reverts to its chaotic state.

Indeed, our praxis of care stamps God's image and validates His trust in our innate propensity to be responsible creatures and stewards of Creation.

Pope Francis, concludes the encyclical with an appeal to forge social love:

> Social love is the key to authentic development: "In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity". In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation

[21] Here a preference to use the term 'rada' may be considered a sachritik. *Sachkritik*, is a critical assessment of what a biblical text says in the light of the gospel that the author intended to communicate. It became an issue in modern theology and scriptural interpretation in 1922—26 with Bultmann's discussions of Barth's theological exegesis of Romans and 1 Corinthians. Since the gospel is itself heard in and through the witness of scripture this implies a dialectic between them. Bultmann could override some of Paul's formulations in the light of the apostle's basic intention, and so find a contemporary Christian meaning in texts from a distant culture. His later demythologizing the New Testament applied the same principle to large swathes of the biblical language without calling it *Sachkritik*, but some of his followers used the word for their critical assessment of one biblical writer in the light of the gospel as understood from another.

[22] Paul II, John. 1990. *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility,* Washington, DC: Nunciature.

> and to encourage a "culture of care" which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us.[23]

Harmony is God's grand plan that unfolds every time we make use of our ability to care. In caring, we can turn to the other as equal, whether it is human or non-human. Social love or care as a social good can then recreate patterns of care in the whole cosmos. To re-commit to caring like the ecofeminists and to think of the well-being of the future generations coalesce with the mandate of '*rada*'. Human race, therefore, is called to explore stewardship as a dynamic call to forging harmony with God, nature, and others.

Conclusion

The ecofeminists' mettle with the notion of anthropocentrism and androcentrism are played out in the linguistic and philosophical analysis of 'rada'. The reinterpretation of 'rada' is a rediscovery of a path of mutual responsibility in the care of creation. This task is not to regain the original meaning of the term but to bring out a possible hidden meaning of the text. Deconstruction as a linguistic tool provided a different stroke to hermeneutics. Deconstructing the term, 'rada' has helped surfaced what could be (in)advertently left out in the mandate of 'rada'. This reinterpretation, which is aligned with the ecofeminists' reinterpretation of God's act of Creation provides a possible entry point to a constructive dialogue between the State and green advocates about sincere and viable ways of caring for the planet and ecosystems. 'Caring' as a theory and praxis can serve a symmetrical or countervailing force against subjugation and subordination. This value, however, needs a repositioning in the hierarchy of values, particularly of the Filipino people, through a collective paradigm shift.

Pope Francis has repeatedly called for community networks that promote love, "overflowing with small gestures of mutual care… and makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world." He encourages everyone to build a culture of care which should permeate all sectors of society. He claimed that analyses are not enough: we need proposals "for dialogue and action which would involve each of us individually, no less than international policy." This mandate to build a caring culture has also been clamored by the ecofeminists. Hence, *Laudato Si'* is a reiteration of the ecofeminists call to care. However, the premise that it is a social good has to have a solid global support and recognition.

Pope Francis' call for 'social love' can be interpreted as a call for collective caring. If it is fully appreciated and re-valued, it can impel people to stop reducing individuals into injured agents or the earth as a mere object of domination. Harmony is not thereby, farfetched or impossible if care becomes a social theory and a collective praxis.

[23] Ibid.

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