

## ***The Three Ecologies* for True Ecology**

Book: Félix Guattari, Translated by Yoon, Soo-jong, *The Three Ecologies*, Seoul: Tongmunson Publishing, 2003.

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### **1. Can't Nature and Human Coexist?**

Science technology and development of industries changed the way humans live in all aspects. Development of production means brought about mass production and expanded array of consumable goods; advancement of medical technologies prolonged the life expectancy of people; development of transportation and all sorts of media allowed people to expand domains of information and experiences. However, such may be an outcome of endless exploitation of nature. Science technology and industries constantly consume abundant natural resources as the material for production and dump waste back into nature. Therefore, nature is more damaged and polluted as science technology and industries advance. On the other side of material abundance and convenience, a dark shadow in the name of exploitation and sacrifice of nature is cast upon. In *The Three Ecologies*, Guattari defines such ecological imbalance as internal rupture of subjectivity and its external relationship and regression to childhood. [page 7] That is why it is urgent to provide a new paradigm for humans and environment surrounding human lives.

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Scientific thought and pragmatic attitude view nature not as an ecological environment which should exist along with humans but as an object that must be exploited and developed for humans. Such scientific thought and attitude are rooted in absolute conviction and trust in reason of human. Trust in reason that has been solidified over the history of ideas strengthened the belief that humans must dominate nature through reason. Human reason divided what is “human” and “non-human” based on rationality, and began dominating every non-human being for humans. As a result, the distance between human and nature has increased until the relationship between two has been cut off and even reached the level where those two can exist only in ruler and subject relationship. Furthermore, severance of coexistence brought about retaliation. Environment pollution, depletion of natural resources and other issues are threatening all species including the humankind. If so, from where the solution to these problems can start? Is it possible through government’s active intervention or various measures or oversight by administrative agencies? Or is possible to come up with solutions through pro-environment social activities?

According to Guattari, the most fundamental problem of scientific thinking and attitude is that those standardize (unify) all ways of life or attitudes of the human. [page 7] Even if the modern society is more diversified than ever which is moving beyond confrontation of dualistic ideology or dominating and dominated class of the bourgeoisie and workers. Paradoxically, the capitalistic society operates its axioms to destroy, standardizing into a same old value structure of money-capital and connects that structure to hierarchic power structure such as the police or the military. [page 10] In a nutshell, scientific thinking and attitude unifies and standardizes diverse and multilayered elements of politics, culture, world history and race and eliminates singularities and multiplicity aspect of beings. This issue is not limited to capitalistic situations. In communitarian societies, socialistic egalitarianism is being substituted for similar ways of life and culture. [page 11] In many different parts of the world, science technology is used to deal with ecological imbalances, but at the same time, those who dominate science technology, in other words, those who form power groups, provide similar ways of living and request them. [page 12]

However, even in this unified and standardized ways of life, today's social circumstances call for more pluralistic internal explosions and singularities. Therefore, how we can be recognized as multiplicity beings and be placed and exist socially based on such social circumstances and demands is important. And for Guattari, this is more than just a simple issue regarding human beings. It is a matter of empathy and coexistence of all beings in the world. It is because issue regarding multiplicities is directly connected to social placement and existence, the existence is an issue of coexistence and empathy of all beings in the generative dimension which goes beyond human dimensions.

## **2. New Ecology as Empathy and Coexistence for All Lives**

Current ecologies have advanced into various forms with a common base of human-centric attitude and criticism on rationalism. Nevertheless, most of the established ecological movements or studies were limited to nature conservation or environmental issues. That is why most ecological studies asserted nature conservation or management or improvement through the intervention of social organizations or governments. But for Guattari, ecological relationship between humans and nature cannot be solved by political intervention or by administrative agencies. [page 8] Coming up with various measures to protect nature and to regulate industries and businesses which cause pollution and harm nature is a realistic approach but is not enough to fundamentally solve problems. The fundamental solution can only begin when one breaks away from reasonable thinking that separates what is essentially "human" and "non-human" and accepts a new way of thinking that allows all live movements of beings to be respected and to coexist and emphasize in the environment. Naturally, for Guattari, ecological issues are about worries and looking for ways to coexist in an ecological environment that is the earth, and these issues themselves are philosophical issues.

Therefore, he calls his ecology "ecosophy," which is a combination of "ecology" and "philosophy." Here, ecosophy refers to the ethico-political articulation of three ecological registers of human subjectivity, social relations, and the environment.

[page 8] Also, the ethico-political articulation does not simply refer to ethical conduct or intervention by national or political bodies. It is about seeking ways to coexist in the earth as micro-multiplicities with desires from a micro-political perspective as Guattari claims. Therefore, Guattari's ecology is a new analysis and new combination of his previous arguments on micro-political and social action and revolution from an ecological perspective that is humans and the environment surrounding human. [Refer to page 35.] In that sense, his ecosophy forms a unique territory of being philosophical and sociopolitical at the same time. Also, his ecology is both ecosophy and an execution of new type of political movement, so-called "eco-democracy" which induces changes in three ecological territories. [page 61]

### 3. Three Ecological Environments of Human-Society-Nature and the Issue of Practice

For Guattari, ecosophy is not a discussion about ecological conservation or protection but is an ethico-political attitude based on his unique ideas. Guattari expands the meaning of ecology into society and human mentality and defines it as an issue about power groups and subjectivity of societies. [page 37] Here, the most important thing is the practice by subjects and for the condition of practice, Guattari divides conditions into a multi-layered ecological environment of mental ecology, social ecology, and environmental ecology, which are mutually complementary categories. [page 23] These three domains are a type of existential territories that decisively affects ways of life of human subjects. That is, human subjects interact with each other and form relationship networks based on mental domain, social relationships and environmental relationship with nature. Setting such ecological composition is an aspect of an entirely new kind of ecology which is different from previous ecological philosophy or environmental philosophy.

First of all, mental ecology is an existential territory that occurs in the unconscious domain of human subjects. In an entirely different area from psychoanalysis, this existential territory provides a model that produces new

subjects that resist standardization by mass media or information and communication. Social ecology is a dimension for communication and interaction among human groups of various sizes and relationships. Here, subjects can either be buried in the social system and become so-called subordinates or form independent groups to open up oneself to society and space. For example, a capitalistic society makes humans passive with the influence of media and consumerism and codes humans as capital-oriented beings. In this context, the gist of the primary creed of social ecology is to lead media-era capitalistic society into de-media era society. [page 49] Finally, environment ecology is an existential domain of relationship between nature and humans. This is to prepare environmental conditions to prevent damages of natural soil and to protect natural soil so that human can move beyond oneself and accept all beings as pluralistic beings and coexist with them.

What is notable in Guattari's ecosophy is that three ecosophical prospects and criteria of mental, social, and environmental ecology propose practical conditions and requirements for humans to escape from the standardization swamp of modern society. Actions of humans can be made in three domains according to each domain's requirement; however, the common fundamental goal of three ecologies is for human to overcome one's human nature and to produce so-called subjectivity that is newly defined in all domains. According to Guattari, subjectivity is not a self-identity that is established based on certain beings based on absolute belief in human reason or subjectivity process. Subjectivity is a "productive being" that becomes such in coexistence and pluralistic disposition. Moreover, that is a newly defined human nature based on posthuman perspective, and that is why Guattari always uses "producing subjectivity" rather than subject which is a traditionally used term.

#### **4. How Do Three Ecologies Produce Subjects?**

Eventually, Guattari's focus in raising ecosophical issues is how to produce subjects that are not buried in the unified and standardized social system. For the multiplicity subject to be produced, one must focus on so-called ecology-logics

that articulates three domains. As the modern society can no longer be explained by ideas or economic polarization, likewise, ecology-logics cannot be concluded to an issue of conflict between two parties and solution to the conflict. [page 36] Particularly humans have taken ecological soil that is natural environment as an object of exploitation or constantly confronted it. But is nature an object of confrontation? Maybe nature's production process is a true example of production.

Even before *The Three Ecologies*, Guattari claimed in *Anti-Oedipus* that humans and nature are not confronting each other and production process of nature is not different from industrial production or social production. In other words, if the concept of "human and nature," "industry and nature," "society and nature" have been assorted and formed production, distribution, and consumption, respectively, Guattari argues that all such concepts are in the production dimension. Production is a result of the production of human activities against nature, distribution is the production coordinates that distribute and register such production results, and consumption is the production of pleasure, fear, and pain felt while consuming such production results. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Guattari regards the relationship between humans and nature as two essential realities of identical production processes, and furthermore, by claiming that production process of nature is identical with industrial and social production process of human, proposed a new paradigm on the relationship between humans and nature.

According to Guattari, an ecological crisis can only be solved by setting a new goal of producing material and non-material goods at the global level. [page 9] In this context, the way for coexistence and symbiosis of all beings can begin not by resolving the conflict but by proposing a new paradigm about "production." Such logic of production overcomes black or white logic and is connected in an ecological-logical way in which all beings have singularities in the dimension of production and creation, in other words, where all beings are multiplicity beings and their differences are acknowledged. Therefore, the key to solving today's ecological problems are practical efforts to articulate heterogeneous activities, which are the needs of the earth's ecological environment which are "human-society-nature" based on ecology-logics. Here, the requirements refer to the needs of mental ecology which produce subjectivity, social ecology which

forms continuously changing social system, and environmental ecology which recreates nature that goes beyond the confrontational relationship of nature and human.

Guattari's ecosophy is significant as it showed the world a new ecological paradigm by proposing new relationship network among human-society-nature which is different from existing ecological discussions. Even though his three ecologies clearly provided practical needs of each ecological environment, he failed to explain fully how those needs articulate and interact. Moreover, even though his ecosophy contributed to expanding the domain of ecology, such expansion brought about ambiguity in the meaning of ecology. That is, even though Guattari separates ecology into mental ecology, social ecology, and environmental ecology, since ecosophical goals come down to "production of subjectivity," his ecology is much more focused on human subjectivity and social relationships than the natural environment. That is why from the general ecological perspective, Guattari's ecosophy is often understood as social philosophy or political movement than ecological studies.