

From Design as Making to Design as Becoming

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INTRODUCTION

Assume a conceptual scale where one end is marked by the extreme case of human artificiality, known as the making; and the other extreme being the self-change of nature, or the becoming. In theory, all kinds of environmental development can be placed on some point of this conceptual scale. All cultures seem to possess a position on this scale depending on the degree of human effort in the act of creation and the degree of harmony with nature. The challenge is in the development of a balanced system between the artificiality of man and the self-change of nature. The degree of inclination toward a particular scale depends much on the perception of the man-environment relationship of the culture.

It is my thesis that modern environmental development has been too heavily inclined towards the side of making. We understand that the development of mechanical devices such as telephones and refrigerators owes much to man's effort in the aspect of making. However, modern man utilizing new science and technology will build a house as if he were making an automobile, and his cities as if he were making a chessboard. In the past, the development of traditional societies had more tendencies towards the concept of becoming. Currently, the way of becoming seems to have been forgotten since the arrival of modernization. The spirit of making has dominated the development of the Western cultures and on into the entire modern world. Without a doubt, such an attitude in environmental design has much to do with the present problem of environmental instability and sickness. Considering that an unhealthy environment can not be produced by a healthy mind, it seems urgent to recover the way of becoming for the health of both man and his environment.

MAKING VS. BECOMING

Within the model of making, the division between the maker and the made is inevitable. It is only man who can be the maker. Man becomes the subjective creator with consciousness which then designates the made objective things without consciousness. Thus, there is a clear value distinction between the maker and the made. Within this hierarchy, the made object can never be of a higher value than the maker. The attitude of making is based on the conception of a dualistic value division between the subject maker and object made. This is a subtle scheme to assign the maker a higher value than that of the made. This maker-centered model of making provides a sound base for an anthropocentric view. As a result of this self-esteemed position, nature becomes a simple material background for man.

From the perspective of becoming, things are not created out of nothing but are generated out of the process of self transformation. In such a case, things become through the process of self-change

instead of being made by a maker. All things change through self initiative, which, in fact, is the process of self design. Because there is no maker, there is nothing made. The absence of a subjective maker results in the absence of a division between the conscious subject and the unconscious object. Man's role in this model of becoming is not as maker but as a participant or co-operator. He is invited or requested to join in the process of mutual becoming. In this process of becoming, man is neither independent nor at the center. If he becomes detached from nature as an independent maker, as in the model of making, he would hinder the natural process of becoming. Interdependency and co-operation instead of independence and anthropocentrism enable the mutual becoming of the two. Man can design as nature also designs.

The notion of nature as designing subject as opposed to designed object is not new. It has existed in traditional East Asian thought and in various branches of modern science. Recent scientific advancements in all areas from cosmology to biology support the concept of nature as a creative subject with intention of self-organization in contrast to the concept of nature as a passive mechanical system. Accordingly, the conception in classical science of a deterministic universe has been suggested to be in a paradigm shift towards that of a new understanding of nature and the universe that designs itself. The model of making, in this sense, is the model of classical science of a deterministic universe. In this model the environmental world is a mechanical system and man's development process is to simply place another man-made machine into it. Such an environmental machine might function for anthropocentric purposes, but is bound to conflict with nature as it cannot function with nature's method of self-becoming. Environmental design which cannot become one with that which already exists can only become a foreign system that plays a role similar to an environmental cancer of varying degrees of seriousness. Houses and cities can be made in a completely artificial manner but man's body and health maintenance depend completely on the laws of natural systems. In the present situation of global environmental sickness, it is urgent to replace a culture of making with a culture of becoming.

EXISTENCE VS. RELATIONSHIP

The act of making pursues spatial experience. This is because making is a one-time action as opposed to a perpetual process. Therefore, making leaves the scale of time but remains inside the domain of space. As soon as something is made, the action of making ceases and the made object may remain frozen in time taking only a spatial position. To date, man has not created a perpetual process of self change or spontaneous regeneration. Man is limited to the extent that what he makes is bound to exist only in spatial form. Even machines such as clocks and watches which operate in time are

nothing but a mechanical continuation of spatial operations. Since there is a beginning and end in man's making, to change the made is to remake what is temporally fixed.

On the other hand, the way nature exists is as a self motivated perpetual process of change. Therefore, a temporal gap exists between a natural, continual process of change in environment and man's making of the made environment. Perhaps this gap is the cause of the present global environmental instability. As long as the act of making is temporally fixed it conflicts with the continuous flow of natural change. Nature is change itself. Man's making causes change to cease. According to the view of becoming, to live is to change and to cease to change results in death. Also, to change is to be in time. Thus, the point of differentiation between making and becoming lies in the fact that one is spatial in conception while the other is spatio-temporal.

Since making is basically an individualistic action, it pursues individual freedom. When man makes, he makes things as if the right and freedom of making is at his hand. As a result, the made is a reflection of the mental condition of the maker and tends to be complete as an independent object. It seems inevitable that as things become making-oriented they will become more separate from their surroundings, and as they become more complete there remain less space for self change. It can be agreed that modern environmental design, including architecture, has developed as the most individualistic form of representation in history. Accordingly, it has become the least relational to its surroundings.

On the contrary, the way of becoming is relational and collective. Nature's parts or subsystems, including man, can exist only in interdependent and interactive states. In an organic system of becoming, there is no freedom of detached individuality. If one part becomes detached from the whole, it simply means death for that part. Each cell in an organic body can never be free from the body as a whole. If an individual cell perceives itself to be at the center or to be independent it weakens its relationship with the others and its own life.

Consider that all living organisms, except man, relate to nature through natural instinct. It follows that man's anthropocentric and egotistical use of the reason of making has caused a deviation from the natural way of relating. In conception, the attitude of making pursues material existence and neglects any metaphysical aspect of relationship that is inherently inevitable for existence. In other words, the greatest error on man's part is to choose to ignore the fact that existence is a basically relational phenomena. Existence means relational existence. This is the case in all existence in the natural universe, which includes man. It is only in man's individualistic and

exclusive perception where existence could seem to be non-relational.

CONCLUSION

Man's existence as well as his living is a relational phenomenon by nature. Environmental development which has used a making-oriented approach has resulted in the disconnection of man's relationship to nature. The root cause of such disconnection seems to be the habitual use of a hierarchical value judgement which defines man as a superior subject and nature as an inferior object. This attitude of making was strongly motivated through an anthropocentric way of thinking. Living is relating as viewed from the attitude of becoming. Therefore, a disconnection of relationships eventually means death. Becoming is a self-operative phenomena of life, which exists in time as well as space. In this sense, the culture of making tends to reduce the quality of both time and life when compared to the culture of becoming.

The beneficial condition which I am recommending is not a complete return from making to becoming. This does not seem to be possible. Rather, it is the recovery of balance between the two which must be achieved. The condition required for this balance is to leave behind the mental structure of a hierarchical valuation of domination-subordination. As outlined, nature is not a machine but the mechanist. The balance between making and becoming is not to simply achieve a mathematical equilibrium between artificiality and naturalness. This balance can be reached by not positioning man as superior to nature and to then allow for man to participate and cooperate with nature. This is the best way man can recover the quality of time and life needed in environmental development.

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