

Hansalim Manifesto

한살림만장



HANSALIM

Mosim and Salim Research Institute

The Mosim and Salim Research Institute was founded in 2002 to continue and expand the “Cultural Life Movement” and to facilitate research and education dedicated to the “Cooperative Life Movement”

As life today faces crisis and approaches a moment of transition, we seek to share insight and knowledge that can help us create a new way of living and new type of civilization which is based on a worldview that places life itself at the center of everything.

**Hansalim
Manifesto**

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한살림언론



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Introduction to the English Translation of *Hansalim Manifesto*

With nature's destruction, climate change, and the pandemic spread of new infectious diseases, the earth's ecological system today faces a more serious crisis than ever before. The rifts caused by differences in ideology, religion, class, race, gender, and region are fomenting hate and distrust and destroying our communities. The hasty pursuit of revolutionary advances in science and technology like artificial intelligence, robotics, and genetic engineering threatens the dignity of human labor and even of life.

This small book called *Hansalim Manifesto* appeared thirty some years ago as an outcry in the midst of Korean society. It offers a fundamental critique of the crisis confronting world civilization, along with a message for new hope. Publicly delivered in October 1989, *Hansalim Manifesto* attributed the crisis of industrial civilization to “the mechanistic worldview” that has helped

rationalize human domination over nature while insisting on a dualistic separation of matter from spirit. The total amount of knowledge modern science has at its command is insignificant when measured against the infinite expanse of cosmic life. Yet with their intellectual arrogance, and with capitalism inflating their greed to no end, humans have brought the earth, whose history stretches back billions of years, to the brink of a precipice in a matter of a few hundred years. Now, as they face the abyss of the climate change, along with the scourge of the corona virus pandemic, humans are asked to choose between the road to perdition they have followed with arrogance and greed and an altogether new way—a way toward life and reconciliation and toward sustainable living. It could very well be the last question nature asks humanity to ponder.

To overcome the social, political, and

ecological crisis precipitated by scientism, materialistic fetishism, and the pursuit of growth at any and all cost, *Hansalim Manifesto* emphasizes that we must first regain the humility to accept and be guided by nature's own order, and recover a worldview that puts life back at the center of everything. In particular, *Hansalim Manifesto* draws on the philosophical tradition of Donghak, which emerged in Korea towards the end of the 19th century, as a source of wisdom and hope for a new world. Donghak teaches that everything in the universe contains a seed of life and is therefore equally precious. With the help of Donghak, *Hansalim Manifesto* thus offers the vision of a new civilization that unites nature, society, and people as one. The dawn of such a new world and new civilization, it further proposes, does not begin from the top down with some grandiloquent ideology, exceptional scientific and technological

breakthroughs, or musings of a great thinker, but is realized from the bottom up, as those who suffer today in the lowest of places cooperate and act in solidarity. The shared experience of the climate disaster has already set humanity on the road to such cooperation and solidarity. In every part of the global village, there is an ongoing rediscovery of ecological living, as well as movements of solidarity seeking to transcend isolation and separation. They provide us with grounds for new hope.

For more than thirty years, with *Hansalim Manifesto* as our premise, our organization Hansalim has carried out a “cooperative life movement” in the hope that we may become “food for the world.” All life forms require “food” as nourishment, and “food” ultimately teaches us about the web of symbiosis where life forms depend on one another to feed and nourish

them. With “food” as our medium, Hansalim’s cooperative movement enables the producer to help sustain the consumer’s life and the consumer the producer’s livelihood. We believe that when all those who agree with and participate in Hansalim thus strive to become “food that makes the world live,” we can realize a mutually supportive and hospitable community that transcends egotism and relationships based merely on materialistic give-and-take. Hansalim’s 750,000 members and producers thus continue on—as we, in the interest of keeping our “food” healthy, refuse to tolerate an indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, build and maintain an independent rural community of small to middling farmers, and facilitate direct transactions between rural farmers and urban consumers. To become “food for the world,” we also remain active in the movements to ban nuclear energy development and weapons,

expand solar and other forms of renewable energy, reduce consumption and minimize trash, and disallow GMO products.

Today *Hansalim Manifesto* is credited with providing a precious spiritual foundation not only for Hansalim's own Cooperative, Ecofriendly Organic Farming Movement, and Cultural Movement for Daily Living, but also for the historically significant Saengmyung ("Life") Movement in Korea and various co-op movements throughout the country. The document has been previously introduced to Japanese, Chinese, and Thai readership through translations. With this English translation of *Hansalim Manifesto*, we hope to promote a better understanding of Hansalim and its philosophy among farmers and urban consumers throughout the world, as well as all other members of the human community. We hope its publication may contribute to greater

cooperation and solidarity among them.

We would like to thank all who have worked hard to make this translation possible, with a special note of thanks to our translator and manuscript readers and commentators. To all our Saengmyung ("Life") friends throughout the world, we offer greetings of peace.

The Hansalim Manifesto English Translation

Publication Committee, 2021

CONTENTS

I	The Crisis of Industrial Civilization	15
II	Ideology of the Mechanistic Model	35
III	Holistic Life's Creative Evolution	55
IV	Cosmic Life Enshrined in Humans	77
V	Hansalim	115
A Historical Note on <i>Hansalim Manifesto</i>		153

I
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The Crisis of Industrial Civilization



In reaching the current state of civilization, humanity has been striving to uphold the banner of freedom, equality, and progress at the cost of its own sweat and blood. Yet in exchange for material abundance, civilization today oppresses and alienates people, and continues to damage and destroy the ecological order of the earth, their life-giving habitat. Early on, declaring themselves the rulers of the earth, humans set out to dominate nature. They became ensnared by machines and technology in the process, their own instruments of domination, and were reduced to live in a degraded state as machine parts and quantifiable units. Humans today cannot be said to be subjects of lives which are their own; they exist as objects to be managed and controlled in a world

order dominated by machines.

The advance of technology broadened and intensified the domination of nature. Continuing with the rationalization and mechanization of human labor, it brought about an astounding increase in productivity to pave the road to mass production. Under capitalism, material growth and abundance have reached a point where wasteful consumption is encouraged and even considered a virtue.

Yet, among those who enjoy the material comforts of affluent industrial society, many feel lost in the flood of consumer goods, as they seek to find an affirmation of their own existence in possession and consumption. Humans no longer exist as “subjects with their own thoughts, feelings, and activities,” but as alienated beings who sell their body and soul, knowledge and labor, as commodities so that they may go on possessing and consuming. The technocratic system that rules over

the control of matter, energy, and information now has the ability to manipulate and control human consciousness, especially with the help of mass media. Mass media is the dominant culture of our time: it tells society what to think, how to behave, and even decides for individuals what desires, hopes, and preferences they should have. In the end, capitalism has used science and technology—already proven to be useful in the conquest of nature—to subjugate the centrifugal forces of society through psychological manipulation and control, through other means besides overt violence. Thus, industrial technology has emerged as a new form of domination and control, now of humanity. Human freedom and dignity, on which industrial society placed so much value in the beginning, eventually succumbed to a technocratic ideology which values production and efficiency above all else. Humanity now seems all too ready to accept

the position of a subordinate, subject to the rule of machines, technologies, and systems. Advanced capitalist society has achieved material growth and abundance, but exhibits an innate tendency toward totalitarianism.

The domination of capital, absolute poverty, the alienation of labor—declaring humanity's liberation from all of these, communism carried out its fight against the capitalist ruling order. In so doing, communism installed the socialist mode of production and the dictatorship of the proletariat in large parts of the world encompassing nearly half of the globe. Communism, however, inherited the same science and technology that made the progress of capitalism possible, and also used them as the driving force of economic growth and modernization. In the early stages of revolution, the socialist mode of production used science and technology, along with the mechanization,

rationalization, and collectivization of labor, to achieve a considerable increase in productivity.

All the while, in its attempt to complete the socialist revolution, communism insisted on the dictatorship of the working class and pressed on with its establishment. As the revolution neared its completion, with the enemy class having perished and only the class of amicable workers and farmers remaining, a multiparty system was said to be no longer needed. In reality, the dictatorship of the working class has come to mean the concentration of absolute power in the party masterminding the revolution, and ultimately, in the hands of its officials and leaders. Instead of encouraging the initiative and autonomy of the people, the party and its leaders now demand their conformity and obedience to the system, and force them to be subordinate to the machine. People have been deprived of the freedom of thought and action, and alienated from

the very process where decisions concerning their own lives and destinies are made. No longer feeling an affection for or interest in work and community, they do not pursue what they are capable of, but work only reluctantly under compulsion. The reality of communism today is not, as Marxism ultimately intended, human liberation; its reality is human re-enslavement. Not only has communism been responsible for encouraging, with the concentration of power, the irresponsibility, corruption, and indolence of party and state bureaucrats. By weakening people's incentive to work, it has also incapacitated the economy, and with an indiscriminate development of natural resources, has hastened nature's devastation.

The Soviet Union is a superpower, but cannot produce enough food to feed its people. From electronics to food, it has to rely on imports for much of life's necessities, while raw materials

and arms sales remain its main exports. Such a humiliating state of affairs has become the very symbol of the socialist Soviet economy. Gorbachev's policy of perestroika, which in recent times helped stir winds of change throughout the communist world, may be said to be at once an innovative repudiation of outdated Stalinist legacies and a courageous acknowledgment of the contradiction of socialism and its failed economy.

Today's world is divided into capitalist and socialist halves that remain contentious rivals, but shares the same foundation as a civilization based on technological industrialism. That is what rules the world. Industrial civilization is a totalitarian world that uses technology and machines to dominate and control humanity and nature. Totalitarian oppression makes humans not truly human, society not truly social, nature not truly natural. No longer possessing human nature, humans have become alienated from

their true “selves”; no longer part of a community, they remain isolated from their “neighbors”; no longer connected to life-giving mother “nature,” they are forced to confront “death and killing.”¹ Industrial civilization is a system based on alienation from life, a civilization whose essence is not only anti-human but anti-ecological. At the same time, industrial civilization is a world based on confusion, where everything is mixed up and nothing is what it is supposed to be. It is by turning life into a machine, an autonomous being into a possession, a subject into an object, a master into a slave, knowledge into technology, freedom into conformity, labor into commodity, waste into a necessity, production into

1.“death and killing”: 죽임 [jook-im] is variously translated throughout the text as “death and killing,” “killing,” or “slaughter.” It can refer specifically to the killing of a life form or more broadly to a worldview or a civilizational tendency that condones or even encourages violence and the harming of life. See note 2(p.128) on ‘Saengmyung (생명, life) movement and Hansalim.’

destruction, prices into value—it is by so perverting things that industrial civilization has been able to create a world of its own. Moreover, with humanity divided against humanity, humanity against society, humanity against nature, industrial civilization is a world of conflict, where all battle against all as bitter rivals. Today, on the international front, the capitalist and communist camps confront each other and developed industrial economies in turn confront developing countries of the third world; in society, capital and labor continue their battle; within the human psyche, the conflict of reason and emotion rages on. And humanity and nature remain hostile on the ecological front. In truth, it is industrial civilization that has also severed the Korean people and their peninsula in half: it remains the historical premise behind the division of one people as enemies, each with a different ideology and system.

In the second half of the 20th century, industrial

civilization faces a crisis, which affects the daily lives of individuals, social, economic, and political spheres, and the ecological sphere of the entire earth. It is not a crisis that threatens only the material base or systems as such. It is an intellectual, ethical, and spiritual crisis, a crisis of unprecedented scale and urgency, one that could mean the destruction of the entire human race along with every living being on earth.

The crisis confronting industrial civilization today can be seen through the following symptoms.

First, nuclear threat and horror

After World War II, the US-Soviet-led ideological conflict resulted in the Cold War system, with each side seeking advantage over the other by racing to develop and stockpile more nuclear weapons. Nuclear war came to mean a possible annihilation of the earth and humanity. Fear has been escalating.

Even the nuclear power plants constructed under the slogan “Atoms for Peace” have given us reasons to grow fearful of yet another kind of nuclear horror. Following the two oil crises, nuclear power is nonetheless recognized as an alternative to depleting fossil fuels, and its usage is increasing throughout the world.

Second, the destruction of the natural environment

Material growth, pursued in excess, is not only causing economic disasters like overproduction, wasteful consumption, inflation, recession, and unemployment, but is also destroying the physical and psychological health of humans and ecological balance in nature. Industrial waste, especially from the excessive use of fossil fuels, has polluted the atmosphere, seas and rivers, land and mountains, to threaten us today with the destruction of the ozone layer and extreme weather. Acid rain caused by air

pollution, the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, have disrupted the organic soil cycle. The contamination of food and drinking water poses a fatal threat to human health.

Third, resource depletion and population explosion

The pursuit of unlimited growth and expansion will exhaust metals and minerals, forests and fish, oxygen and ozone, which are essential for human survival; it will also deplete fossil fuel reserves, which are unrenewable. The explosive growth of the world population, in combination with ongoing resource depletion, cannot help being a grave threat to humanity's future. Once colonized by countries representing the vanguard of capitalism, the third world continues to suffer from absolute poverty after wealth extracted under colonialism has been siphoned out. The wealth drained from the third world might have helped the population in advanced

industrial countries reach an equilibrium, but is accelerating the explosion of population growth in the third world.

Fourth, endemic “diseases of affluence” and dysfunctional society

Environmental pollution, social conflict, and psychological stress have weakened the human immune system and the body's ability to heal itself, causing degenerative diseases like cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and even AIDS to become widespread. They are also making the social and cultural environment more toxic and conducive to mental or behavioral disorders like depression, schizophrenia, and autism, and the recurrence of violence, crime, drug addiction, catastrophes, and suicide as symptoms of a dysfunctional society.

Fifth, the economy's structural contradictions and

vicious cycle

The market principle pursued by capitalism makes it into a system dependent on wasteful consumption and overproduction. The contradiction inherent in capitalism also makes its economy subject to the vicious cycle of inflation, recession, and unemployment on a periodic basis. As an answer to the contradiction of capitalism, socialism rejected the market economy at the heart of the vicious cycle, and adopted a system of production and distribution based on social control and central planning. Yet, unable to supply even basic necessities in sufficient quantities, it has proven to cause lack and inefficient production as its contradiction.

Sixth, the control and rule by a centralized technocracy

The technocracy—especially the government, the party, and the big corporations—that rules over

and manages resources, energy, and human labor is making itself more professionalized, more massive, and more centralized in the name of rationality, efficiency, and growth. Thus growing bloated with centralization, the technocracy wastes more energy and uses up more management expenses, and passes them on as social and ecological costs in the form of inflation and unemployment, environmental pollution, and resource depletion. At the same time, it is strengthening the grip that holds humanity under its domination and control, only to cause more inefficiency and immorality, more corruption and indolence.

Seventh, the crisis of the outdated mechanistic worldview

Every day, in our daily lives, we encounter manifold aspects of the crisis brought on by industrial civilization. Inflation and unemployment,

the energy crisis, the health crisis, environmental disasters, rising violence and crime are among what we experience daily. Yet today's economic experts do not understand the true meaning and causes of inflation and recession, while pathologists and doctors remain anxious because they do not know what really causes the increase of cancer and AIDS. Psychoanalysts have no cure for schizophrenia, law enforcement agencies and legal experts stand helpless before rising violence and crime, and environmental experts only offer superficial solutions to our environmental problems. For all of this, there remains a reason: they try to understand the world through the framework of an outdated mechanistic worldview, while the world itself remains interdependent and holistically interconnected—that is, dynamic in ways that cannot be accounted for through such a worldview. The symptoms of crisis, seen thus far as those of industrial civilization, are

symptoms of one and the same crisis in the end: the crisis of the outdated worldview.

As narrow and tendentious as they are outdated, the current social organization, value system, and worldview cannot help us identify the true causes of our crisis or find solutions to its symptoms like nuclear horror, environmental pollution, cancer and schizophrenia, inflation and depression, resource depletion, and population explosion. Not only have their limitations become evident, but they may be said to be the very source of our problems. For about three hundred years, since the 17th century, the world order has been led by the West. The time has come for a thoroughgoing review and reassessment of that world order and its supporting worldview, value system, and cultural model.

II

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Ideology of the Mechanistic Model



The destruction of nature, human alienation, social conflict, vicious economic cycles, tyrannical oppression, and ideological confusion—these are symptoms of a world in crisis. The current crisis situation needs to be understood in a historical context. The world order the West has dominated in recent centuries is a historical legacy: it was created by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, empirical science,¹ the industrial revolution, and the people's revolution. Industrial civilization, which today oppresses and alienates humanity, and rules over nature while destroying it, was once identified

1. “empirical science”: Here translated as “empirical science,” *실증과학* can also refer more specifically to “positivism” in Korean. The text makes clear that the authors are here referring more broadly to “empirical science.”

with a gospel promising freedom, equality, and progress. Then, with the emergence of monopolistic capitalism, technocracy, and imperialism in the 19th century, it started to construct a world order resembling a gigantic mechanical device. Providing the ideological foundation and scientific basis for this undertaking were none other than analytic rationalist philosophy and empiricist science.

In Descartes's philosophy, Newton's physics, and John Locke's views of society, humans and matter are understood as isolated, discrete, and atomistic entities; nature, society, and the universe are explained accordingly, in terms of a mechanistic model. In their view, while the mind resides within the body, it remains distinct and separate, and isolated from the external world. Thus equating the mind with the human essence, their view encouraged people to lose a sense of their own physical and affective nature, and also to become

forgetful of living in society and nature through cooperation with their neighbors and other living beings.

Going further, Western rationalism, empiricism, and industrialism placed emphasis on analytical knowledge over intuitive wisdom, dissection over synthesis, confrontation over harmony, competition over cooperation. Such a one-sided orientation and perspective helped produce a culture lacking in balance—a balance of humanity and nature, reason and emotion, existence and values—and precipitated the crisis of industrial civilization, with social, political, and ecological confrontations and conflicts. The mechanistic ideology emphasizing only the scientific method and analytic rationality is deeply ingrained in today's industrial society.

The dominant ideology now guarding industrial civilization takes on the following forms.

First, faith in science as the only road to truth

The modern period is called the scientific age. In this period, rationalistic philosophy remains dominant. There is widespread faith in the scientific method based on analysis and empirical evidence as the only way of attaining true knowledge. Spiritual exercises like philosophical intuition, ethical reflection, and religious meditation are dismissed as mysticism and their legitimacy is generally not recognized. The faith and attitude some characterize as "scientism" have deeply penetrated not only scholarship and education, but also social, economic, and political institutions.

Second, ontology based on a dualistic analysis of reality

"I think, therefore I am (Cogito, ergo sum)." Descartes's famous saying states a proposition which can be seen as symbolic of modern rationalism.

This proposition regards mind and body as separate, and expresses the philosophy that the certainty of existence is to be found in the mind, not the body. Dualism, to be sure, existed before Descartes as a deep-rooted movement in Western philosophy. Yet after Descartes, it came to be applied to practically every sphere of existence, including humanity and nature, mind and matter, reason and emotion, individual and society. So it has come to be espoused as the dominant philosophy of industrial society.

Third, classical mechanics where matter and the universe are understood through a mechanical model

The mechanistic model associated with modern science originated with Newtonian physics, which posits that matter is composed of indivisible particles and the universe is a gigantic machine running on precise mathematical principles. It pictures a three-

dimensional universe that exists in absolute space and time, where discrete and isolated material particles move about because of gravitational forces. So all physical phenomena can be reduced to a movement of matter driven by gravity, while this movement is governed by a deterministic causal principle that can be stated in precise mathematical equations. Newtonian mechanics became the theoretical foundation not only in natural science but also for making social science into a study of people and society based on a mechanistic paradigm. Entering the 20th century, concepts like absolute space and time, material particle, and deterministic causality, which are fundamental to Newton's classical physics, came to be shattered, and the mechanistic worldview also began to be shaken at its foundation as a result. According to Einstein's theory of relativity, space and time are not absolute, but relative to the position and speed of the observer,

and matter is not made up of isolated particles but is simply another manifestation of energy. Quantum theory further explains that, at the subatomic level, quantum particles that make up matter do not exist independently but only represent temporary forms constantly assumed and discarded by energy—in short, changing processes of energy fields. Moreover, quantum properties can be changed by an observer simply by choosing to be present as an observer.

Fourth, reductionistic biological perspective that does not view life as an organic phenomenon

Since cells have been discovered to be a basic component of life, biology has prepared the ground for a mechanistic understanding of phenomena at the heart of life processes such as anatomical structure, genetics, reproduction, and evolution. Modern molecular biology in particular has helped dispel the mysteries of DNA, by discovering the

molecular structure of the genes in the chromosome. Because of their successes from considering and studying life forms as machines, life scientists are not exempt from the tendency to trust only the mechanistic model. Still, the modern molecular biologist cannot clarify what makes a life form breathe, maintain temperature, digest, and perceive, or explain how the human embryo, starting out as a single cell, grows tissues and organs as it matures and why a life form, when injured, feels pain and goes about healing itself. Numerous unsolved problems persist in life sciences today because they ignore the integrative function and environmental interaction essential to all living beings, and use an inorganic and fragmentary approach to analyze holistic living beings in terms of reductive components.

Fifth, soulless behavioral science and bodiless psychoanalysis that view the human mind through the mechanistic model

The representative theory of human psychology today is found in behaviorist psychology and psychoanalysis. While the two differ in methodology and perspective, they stand on the same logical foundation in looking at human consciousness from a mechanistic point of view. Behaviorist psychology claims that psychological phenomena are simply forms of behavior, and behavior is governed by a machine-like mechanism. Human psychology and behavior are hence understood as responses generated by a complex mechanical structure in response to external stimuli. Because human behavior is generated as a response to stimulus, behaviorism claims, it can also be reinforced by offering the satisfaction of certain needs as a reward, and thereby manipulated and controlled

under artificial conditions. Thus regarding humans as susceptible to external manipulation, behaviorist psychology denies the human image as a self-driven subject and considers it possible to control human behavior through scientifically administered conditioning.

While behaviorism refuses to recognize, not only the existence of the unconscious, but even human consciousness itself, psychoanalysis explores the human mind apart from the body. Its founder, Freud, tells us that our normal wakeful consciousness is only the tip of an iceberg, a thin layer sitting on top of the unconscious, which is hidden, vast, and controlled by instincts. The unconscious can refer to psychological powers we are not conscious of because they have been forgotten or repressed, or to instinctual sexual desire. The deep substratum of the human psyche where instinctual desire resides is the id, and all phenomena of psychopathology

are believed to originate with the id's conflict with the superego, its repressor. Our normal wakeful consciousness, the ego, is only a psychological field where the two powers confront and struggle. Psychoanalysis views the mental world of humans as quantifiable and governed by a linear causality, and thus believes that mental disorders can be analyzed and treated scientifically. In the end, psychoanalysis is a form of psycho-physics, which views human consciousness through a mechanical model.

Sixth, economic theories that pursue only linear growth

Today's economic theories overlook the fact that economic phenomena are essentially metabolic processes, with matter, energy, and information circulating from person to person and from people to nature. They thus overlook the economy's dependence on the social and ecological. In

refusing to see the economy as a dynamic process, whose changes reflect changes in the ecological environment and human society, they also deny that the progress of society, including its economy, is driven by human values. Thus, they tend further and further toward a lopsided theoretical specialization and quantitative abstraction. The study of economics finds itself in a severe state of conceptual confusion, as it becomes more and more estranged from the concrete realities of the economy. Despite its deep connections to problems of value, economics neglects values that are qualitative, and which can render the economy meaningful in ecological, social, and psychological terms. By reducing the discussion of value to strictly monetary terms, it regards the economy only through the mechanistic model.

Whether capitalist or socialist, today's economic theories are obsessed with linear growth. Their obsession with growth has made capitalism and

communism similar in the end. If humanity continues to pursue unlimited growth while the environment remains finite, both the ecological system and humanity are certain to face an imminent disaster. Still, capitalism and communism both single-mindedly pursue economic growth and technological progress, while the control and rule by the centralized technocracy intensifies economic conflict, destroys social equilibrium, damages the environment, and depletes resources.

Seventh, an anti-ecological philosophy of nature that regards nature as an object of conquest

As the modern period began, the aim of science remained the acquisition of knowledge to dominate and control nature. Earlier on, Bacon had cruelly compared the experimental methods of science to an interrogation by torture to extract secrets that would allow humanity to "subdue the insubordination

of matter” and make nature “slave to humans.” Using such methods of analysis and empirical demonstration, science went on to bind nature in a mechanical model, while providing a basis for rationalizing and accepting its conquest, domination, and exploitation. In the end, science helped turn life-nurturing mother nature into a slave.

Though capitalism has used science and technology to extract enormous wealth from nature in the name of production, it does not recognize nature as having value. It recognizes the value of only those things that can transform nature and produce what does not occur naturally. Thus, only labor, technology, machines, and capital are seen as having value. In advocating human liberation from alienated labor, the young Marx once expressed his ecological perspective on nature saying, “Humanity is part of nature, and the worker cannot create anything without nature, that is, the external

sensory world.” Yet while claiming to be a successor to his philosophy, communism today mistakes the domination and exploitation of nature for productivity and remains anti-ecological in its stance toward nature. North Korea’s philosophy of juche² stipulates nature as an object to be transformed and battled and humanity as “the leading force” in nature’s domination.

The mechanistic ideology which rules over industrial civilization has turned the open and evolving world of humans into a gigantic mechanical system which remains closed and isolated. Industrial civilization has become characteristically antihuman, antisocial, and anti-ecological. There are, to be sure,

2. “juche”: The juche philosophy (주체(主體) 사상) is the official state ideology of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea). Juche literally means becoming one’s own master and making one’s own decisions, thus placing an emphasis on autonomy and self-reliance.

budding movements within contemporary science to free it from the outdated mechanistic model and see humanity, nature, and the universe from a fresh perspective. The mechanistic ideology nonetheless remains entrenched in industrial civilization as its dominant principle. Industrial civilization uses the principle and order of a machine to oppress and dominate life represented by humanity and nature, and pursues growth in the name of rationality and efficiency, only to make itself more massive, more professionalized, and more centralized. All the while, it remains a machine—a closed and isolated machine that cannot operate without fossil fuels, finite and unrenewable as they happen to be. The world of the machine is a dead world governed by the principle of entropy. The crisis of industrial civilization today recalls the fate of the dinosaurs, which once ruled the earth, but failed to adapt actively to environmental changes and became extinct. In

the end, mechanistic civilization is a denial of life, a disease that is killing people. It is death itself, threatening the total destruction of the human race.

III

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Holistic Life's Creative Evolution



A system that remains isolated and cut off from its environment produces and accumulates entropy or used-up energy. As its structure goes from order to disorder, it eventually succumbs to heat death. So goes the dismal truth taught by thermodynamics.

Today's industrial civilization is a world that resembles an isolated machine: it remains cut off from its environment, which is to say the ecological system. Living within such a civilization, humanity also appears to lead an isolated existence cut off from its social and ecological environment. According to thermodynamics, an isolated system inevitably experiences death. That the sad fate of industrial civilization, which is governed by the principle of entropy, can only end in destruction was thus

already implied in the mechanistic model; its eventual implosion had been predictable from the outset. Still, what implodes and is destroyed is the outdated shell of mechanistic civilization, not humanity itself. That is because human beings represent life, which continues to evolve creatively.

New forces are burgeoning within science.

Since Newton, science has been straining to explain everything by analyzing and reducing it into simplistic units. Analytic science has today reached its limits, with industrial civilization itself now in twilight.

The everyday natural phenomena we experience do not come to us in the form of an individual atom or molecule, but complex phenomena made up of teeming bundles of molecular compounds. They seem chaotic because molecules interact with molecules and with the environment in numerous ways.

Composite phenomena like these cannot be explained simply by reducing them into simplistic units and

components. The transformation of a cloud cannot be explained simply in terms of its water molecules nor a building simply as a collection of bricks. This is why in science there is a new tendency to try to view nature in its reintegrated holistic form. New science has given us astounding new interpretations of entropy and is laying before us a new model for evolutionary process.

According to the new scientific perspective, an open system that continues to exchange matter, energy, and information with the environment absorbs energy from the environment while releasing entropy back to the environment. When the amount of energy and entropy absorbed and released by an open system is in balance, the system remains in a state of equilibrium, and when the two are not in balance, the system falls into a state of disequilibrium. While a state of equilibrium has a structure that is stable, a system in a state of

disequilibrium is unstable and agitates constantly. When the agitations become intense enough to reach a certain juncture, they make the old structure collapse on its own and help organize a new order. Thus, in a state of disequilibrium, what starts out as a small agitation can actually dismantle an outdated structure and evolve toward a new order through amplification and intensification.

Unlike classical mechanics, thermodynamics is very much interested in the phenomenon of time. The principle of entropy means there is an unavoidable loss in the amount of energy we can use: while the total amount of energy present in the universe remains constant, the amount of usable forms of energy decreases over time because of heat loss. If the universe is something that eventually comes to a standstill because of heat death, each moment in time is different from the one just before. In the world of thermodynamics, the concept of

absolute time, where each moment is identical to all others, does not hold. Because no one can turn the clock back to reabsorb entropy, the arrow of time is irreversible. As energy dissipates, the universe cannot maintain its stability, and order must give away to disorder. The universe ages and dies in the end, and the principle of entropy predicts a pessimistic future for the universe and humanity.

Yet from the perspective of evolution, an alternative view of the universe and the world is also possible. The universe does not simply age toward a disorder with the dissipation of energy; as time passes, it organizes itself into a more mature structure and evolves toward a higher quality of order. In a closed system, the increase of entropy just means time is irreversible. Yet closed systems are known to be very rare and temporary phenomena in the evolution of the universe. In open systems, irreversible time, entropy, actually becomes the

creator of order. Through self-organizing processes driven by agitations, such systems go from disorder to higher dimensions of order and structure. Entropy is thus not necessarily a downhill slope toward death: it becomes the very basis for an evolution where previous limitations are transcended and a higher order is achieved.

According to the evolutionary model, equilibrium in the case of stationary structures does not mean stability, but a lack of movement and death. For a mechanical system that remains cut off from its environment, maximum entropy accumulated in irreversible time means a perfect equilibrium where everything stops moving. It signifies permanent death. A living being can temporarily rest in a stable state while it interacts with the external environment—but it goes against its very nature to stay locked in a stationary structure. A living being experiences unending agitations and movement.

From time to time, it may resist changes and choose to stay within the existing structure. But it could also amplify and intensify changes to discard the old structure and evolve toward a new order and thereby undergo self-transcendence. From the perspective of evolutionary process, living beings do not remain isolated, but continuously interact in a universal web. They form a holistic totality; each is a carrier of cosmic life. So the universe remains alive with movements: its true image is a boundless spread of vast cosmic life, which evolves by encompassing all living beings. Living beings coevolve as they move in concert with their environment, and together represent the ultimate life of the universe.

Today, under a machine-like order, humanity and nature remain cut off and isolated from each other. They thus remain alienated from their true image, which is to say the true image of life. Their original nature has been repressed. A communal, ecological,

and cosmic awakening about life is needed today more than ever. Only a new awakening about life can take humanity toward a new horizon. As we look toward a new civilization, we need to train a new light on the meaning of life.

First, life “grows” while a machine is “made”

Life grows on its own; it is the very definition of “the state of becoming.” Life has the ability to organize its own structure and order as it matures. In contrast, a machine is manufactured by someone else, and its movement is dictated by a predetermined structure and order. In traditional Western philosophy, everything has been long regarded as a being, and much of its debate has focused on the unchanging structure behind beings. Changeless “something” amidst changes has been thus pursued as the ultimate reality in Western philosophy. From a certain perspective, a manufactured machine can be regarded

as a being. Life, on the other hand, can be viewed from the perspective of its evolution. Instead of existing as a being, it is in a continuous state of becoming.

Second, life is an organic “whole” teeming with parts while a machine is a mere “collection” of parts with rigid regularity

While all living beings are parts of a bigger whole, they are in turn wholes containing parts. Each, as it were, is a scaled-down holistic organism mirroring larger ones. Whole in themselves, and also parts of another, living beings interact in a circular web made up of stratified layers. All living beings are thus independent wholes and dependent parts simultaneously. Being holistic, life cannot be divided into parts, and living beings in fact combine to form parts of an integrated whole. Being so integrated, the parts of life pursue expressions of their individuality

while at the same time they maintain unification with the whole. The two tendencies are opposite but complementary. They help maintain balance, and keep that balance dynamic, not stationary. The dynamic balance of collective unity and expressions of individuality in turn gives holistic life its characteristic flexibility.

Third, life represents a “flexible” order while a machine represents “rigid” control

Life is innately elastic and flexible. As a unified whole, life appears as one. Yet its parts can vary in appearance to some extent and be characterized by diversity. No two living beings possess identical parts. Life as a whole has a uniform order and consistency of rules, but the activities of its parts are free and irregular. While stressing order and rules for the whole, life does not intrude forcefully on the autonomy or expressions of individuality of its

parts, but manages their orderlessness and diversity tolerantly and flexibly. That is how life joins with the evolving environment to undergo its own evolution. In contrast, a machine is manufactured according to a strict plan and assembled from predetermined parts. So the movement of its parts is controlled strictly according to the overall design, and the parts themselves are characterized by rigid regularity.

Fourth, life evolves “autonomously” while a machine moves “heteronomously”

Life is a system that organizes itself. Its movement is not determined by the external environment alone. The movement is propelled autonomously from within and as it acts upon the environment it is also acted upon. So life is free in being able to organize itself autonomously, while its interaction with the environment also makes it deterministic. When a living being is driven to an evolutionary

juncture through intensifying agitations, whether it will perish or evolve toward a new order cannot be predicted. Thus, random occurrences like mutations can intervene in the evolution of life. Still, life chooses the direction of its own evolution, and once a direction is decided upon, evolution takes place as a necessity until the next juncture arrives. Freedom and necessity thus act, not as oppositional, but synergistic forces in life's evolutionary process. In contrast, movement in the case of a machine is fixed according to an external necessity, and is thus heteronomous.

Fifth, life is an “open” system while a machine is a “closed” system

All living beings exchange matter, energy, and information with the environment through a metabolic process. Through such exchanges, they release their worn-out parts while accepting

something new in return. Life uses a self-renewal process like this to maintain its structure and order: it protects the whole from the harm that damaged parts could bring and at the same time goes about healing the damaged parts. Nor does life always stop at the partial self-renewal of exchanging its old parts for new. To transcend its limitations and create itself anew, it also undergoes creative adventures to renew itself whole. Life's creative evolution is not undertaken alone, but in cooperation with the environment, which represents a more macrocosmic form of life. The evolution of life is thus not simply a Darwinian process where life forms adapt to the environment through natural selection. Rather, it is a creative act where microcosmic representations of life go about organizing themselves, while coevolving with their more macrocosmic environment. In contrast, a machine is a system which remains cut off and isolated from the external world. Once it is

supplied with the energy required for operation, it no longer needs to maintain a relationship with the external world. Once it runs out of energy, however, it stops operating. Until someone supplies it with new energy from the outside, it cannot restart.

Sixth, life's movement is guided by circulatory feedback while a machine's operation is based on linear causal relations

Whether it is a metabolic or evolutionary process, life's movement always relies on circulatory processes. A circulatory process involves a feedback loop with a constant input and output of energy. Energy thus circulating leads life to experience agitations and disequilibrium within. Disequilibrium is the driving force that makes life "go to work." For its own self-preservation and renewal, life experiencing disequilibrium is motivated to become diligent in its metabolic exchanges with the environment, and to

cross over its old limitations into a new order. When life experiences internal changes that disturb the existing equilibrium, it can, as a safety mechanism, repress them and allow the equilibrium to recover. This is passive "feedback" whereby life regulates temperature, blood circulation, and other similar metabolic processes. In the case of active "feedback," however, changes and agitations amplify to eventuate in a crisis where the collapse of equilibrium becomes imminent. It is at this juncture that life dismantles the old order and transforms crisis into creative evolution. Life evolves, not through passive feedback, which represses changes, but through active feedback, which amplifies the changes. Active feedback is a remarkably effective process where even a small input can lead to evolution. In contrast, machines only obey a linear cause-and-effect relationship. When there is energy, they operate; when it runs out, they stop.

Seventh, life is “spirit”

From the evolutionary perspective, the true essence of life can be said to be spirit. Spirit is what distinguishes life from a machine. Both life and spirit organize themselves through interaction with the environment. Both are thus characterized by dynamism. Spirit's innate nature is to be creative. Nor does matter necessarily represent its opposite. Matter merely shows another side of cosmic processes. Spirit does not reside only in humans or life forms as such, but permeates everything in the universe, while remaining the source of all of life's activities. Just as all life forms organize themselves through metabolic processes, molecules organize themselves through chemical reactions. From subatomic particles to the Milky Way, from primitive cells to humans, from reproduction and digestive processes to self-consciousness, the worlds of matter, biology, and human spirit all represent “self-

organizing activities of the universal spirit,” dynamic expressions of an evolving universe. By creating a reflexive consciousness for themselves, humans gave themselves the ability to reflect external reality. They became capable, not only of receiving environmental influences, but also of transforming the environment. Reflexive consciousness allowed humans to sense, experience, and think about the world external to them, and then to reach a stage where they became aware of themselves. The awareness, perception, and experiences of the external environment, combined with self-awareness, helped create human culture.

Science tells us that the biological evolution of humans was all but completed in about 50,000 years and their evolution thereafter became sociocultural. With their awareness, reason, and linguistic capacity, humans moved on from a biological evolution to a spiritual one.

Ever striving to transcend itself, the human spirit participates in representations of life that are bigger than its own, such as community and the ecological system. Going further, it unites with the spirit of the earth, and ultimately becomes one with the divine universal mind. Going beyond mere survival through adaptation, life remains divinity itself, which experiences joy from the creative act of transcending its limitations and evolving. Divinity permeates all living beings that includes the universe itself, and divinity that is life is what is meant by Hanul.¹ Hanul

is not some transcendent or absolute being. It is life itself. For self-actualization, it risks every danger so that its creative evolution could continue endlessly. The divine universal mind is present within the human spirit.

1. Hanul ([hahn-wool]한울) literally means one enclosure that embraces everything. In some later passages, the Korean text adds the honorific suffix “nim(님)” at the end of the word. In Chondogyo, which interprets Donghak more as a religion, “Hanul” often appears to refer to a personified deity and is also conventionally translated as “heaven.” *Hansalim Manifesto*, on the other hand, essentially de-personifies Hanul, despite its occasional references to “한울님.” As the passages that follow make clear, Hanul here refers to “cosmic order which is in the process of becoming” or “life’s order which knows no bounds.”¹⁾

IV

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Cosmic Life Enshrined in Humans



Traditional Eastern philosophy does not use the image of a transcendent god standing above its creations to represent the ultimate universal reality.

It relies on more intuitive wisdom. It explains the ultimate reality in terms of an immanent universal force that remains present in every transient movement, and which constantly changes itself to assume myriad appearances—cosmic life, as it may be called.

In Hinduism, Brahman is the name given to the highest “god,” which is said to signify life, movement, growth, and progression. Brahman is at times known to express itself through the dances of Shiva, the god who presides over the cycles of formation and destruction. Hinduism regards organic

growth and rhythmic movements as the essence of the universe. Conversely, it regards what remains fixed in isolation as maya, that is to say, no more than illusion. Thus, Hinduism teaches, it is only when humans experience everything—including themselves—as Brahman that they can be finally liberated from the clutches of maya.

A similarly dynamic worldview is fundamental to Buddhism as well. Buddhism originated from the realization that everything in the world turns out to be impermanent. To say that everything appears and disappears, inherits certain situations and then goes on to change, is to describe the universe and life in their true, original image. Human suffering, so it is taught, results from not accepting the ever moving and changing world for what it is, and remaining fixated on immovable phenomena and concepts.

In China, Daoist philosophies of *I Ching* and schools of Laozi and Zhuangzi also regarded all

reality to be permanently in transit and in a state of flux, as reflected in the very term dao (“way” or “road”)¹ chosen to designate what they regarded as the ultimate principle. Whether psychological, social, or natural, every phenomenon is said to participate in the dynamic process of the universe. One can observe the true workings of the dao in yin and yang,² which are oppositional and yet complementary, and which rotate with periodic regularity. Yin and yang form the two poles of taichi,³ the ultimate life force of the universe. All changes emanate from the alternating waxing and waning of yin and yang, which also cause changes to occur endlessly without interruption. Changes do not come about because of externally applied forces.

1. “dao”: 도(道), here after used interchangeably with “do,” after the Korean pronunciation of the character

2. “yin and yang”: eum yang(음양(陰陽)) in Korean

3. “Taichi (Taegeuk (태극(太極)) in Korean)” means the ultimate source of the universe or the ultimate reality.²⁾

They are natural tendencies inherent in all things, which follow an order governed by the balance of yin and yang.

The Korean people have traditionally used the expression “han”⁴ to describe the original life of the universe. “Han” contains simultaneously contrasting meanings. “Han” means one—“collectively one” and “individually one.” “Han” could also mean spreading out as one in “centrifugal expansion” and gathering as one in “centripetal convergence.” “Han” could thus be said to signify integrating many individual elements into a whole, while alternating between expansion and convergence—in other words, a fitting description for Hanul, which is known to encompass all such activities.

Since the Gojoseon period,⁵ the philosophy of

4. “han”: 한 [hahn]

5. Gojoseon is an ancient dynasty which is believed to have been founded more than two millennia BC on or near the Korean Peninsula.

“han” has been part of traditional beliefs held by the Korean people. The school of Poongryu-do (“the Way of the Flowing Wind”)⁶ founded by Choe Chiwon⁷ is based on a form of “han” philosophy. While Poongryu-do combined doctrines of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, it had something more. That something is the philosophy of “han.” Poongryu-do, it is written, is the most authentic way toward connecting with the oneness—the “han”—of cosmic

6. Poongryu-do: 풍류도(風流道). The character poong refers to wind, ryu to flow, and do to way. It provided a founding ideology for Hwarang, a core military and social institution for the male youths of Shilla’s elite class. Originally emphasizing harmony and unity, Poongryu later lost much of its religious overtone, and the word came to be associated with aristocratic entertainment, especially the enjoyment of the arts in inspiring natural settings.³⁾

7. Choe Chiwon was a Korean scholar (857-900 AD) of the Shilla Dynasty. “There’s a subtle do (道, ‘way’) in this country called ‘Poongryu,’ he is recorded as saying, “and Poongryu-do builds on indigenous traditions of belief as its foundation and incorporates Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.” See note on “Poongryu-do” above.

life undergoing evolution. It represents the process whereby one becomes united with life that is the ultimate universal reality. From “han” or one cosmic life, the sky, land, and people are created, become imbued with life of their own, and then become united again with cosmic life as one. Thus, “han” means being everywhere and not leaving out anything.

In modern times, as the West’s imperial expansion began to threaten East Asia, and the Korean people suffered under the yoke of feudalism as well as foreign oppression, the philosophy of “han” reemerged in a magnificent form as the philosophy of Innaechun (“Heaven inside Man and Woman”),⁸ also known as Donghak (“Eastern

8. “Innaechun”: a concept central to Donghak whereby people are equated with heaven itself

Learning”).⁹ While Donghak’s founders Choe Je-

9. Donghak was founded in 1860 in the late Chosun Dynasty by Choe Je-u and further propagated by Choe Sihyeong. In 1894, rebelling against the long-standing exploitation by the governing class and demanding a social reform, farmers of Chosun embraced Donghak’s philosophy of universal equality, and formed a national movement to stage what became known as the Donghak agrarian revolution. The armed uprising lasted more than a year and was quelled with the help of armed forces dispatched from Japan. Donghak and the Donghak agrarian revolution are usually interpreted as a mass protest movement against imperialism and feudalism. Donghak is generally known by the literal translation of the term: “Eastern Learning.” Yet rather than signifying an opposition to the West or even the geographical East, some interpret “the East (dong (동(東)))” here as figuratively signifying life, revitalization, light, luminosity, and so on.⁴⁾ Donghak is a philosophy of universal egalitarianism characterized by its pursuit of equality beyond the discrimination of rank, gender, or economic class, and an ecophilosophy emphasizing a universal respect for life and harmony. *Hansalim Manifesto* and the Hansalim Movement draw especially on Donghak’s “life-centered philosophy.” For the principal organizers of the Hansalim Movement, Donghak has been a philosophy that teaches “that everything and everyone is a carrier of cosmic life, Hanul, and is therefore to be revered and served as the holiest manifestation of life. Our daily social and ethical practices should reflect our respect and care for life and its uninterrupted growth.”⁵⁾

u¹⁰ and Choe Sihyeong¹¹ spoke of Hanul, they were

10. Choe Je-u (최제우 (崔濟愚) (1824-1864), sometimes transliterated as Ch'oe Che-u) or Su-un (수운 (水雲)). As the founder of Donghak, he taught catechism based on the principle of Innaechun. His advocacy of equality made him a popular religious teacher and leader among the oppressed masses. Arrested on charges of seducing and inciting the masses, he was executed in 1864. His teachings have been collected and published as *Donggelyong Daejeon* ("Great Scripture of Eastern Learning") and *Yongdam Yusa*.⁶⁾

11. Choe Sihyeong (최시형 (1827-1898)), also known as Hae-wol (해월), was initiated into Donghak in 1861 and appointed its second leader to succeed Choe Je-u in 1864. In 1894, along with Jeon Bongjun as the military commander, he led the Donghak agrarian revolution, and was executed upon his capture in 1898. Choe Sihyeong made particularly notable contributions in making the core teachings of Donghak accessible to women, slaves, and children, and thereby further popularizing Donghak throughout Korean society. He exerted a particularly strong influence on *Hansalim Manifesto* and the Hansalim Movement. Jang Il-soon, who helped lead the Hansalim Movement as a pioneer, admitted his deepest respect for Choe Sihyeong, and said of the latter's teaching on Hanul, "He always lived to serve—farmers, the poor, children, and even what others regarded as insignificant beings. He taught never to spit on the ground, saying it is like spitting on one's parents. ... The place to house eternal life is within all of us, he said. Everything that we need to do today, Choe Sihyeong already said it all."⁷⁾

not the first to reach an understanding of it. The image of Hanul had been evolving in the minds of the Korean people for thousands of years. Now at a particularly difficult juncture in their history, Hanul's image crystallized to become an object of devotion, reverence, and faith. Hanul had been called by other names like "han," "do," "taegeuk," and "gi."¹² The Korean people had not tried to conceptualize Hanul. In their minds, Hanul has been felt to be abundantly present in all things—an intimate companion to humans that can also be profound and extend into far away reaches as the ultimate universal reality. Rather than trying to grasp it intellectually, Hanul, as life in its most expansive form imaginable, can only be experienced through participation and partaking. Inheriting the traditional philosophy of Hanul, Donghak developed it further. It began with a cosmic

12. Gi(氣): 기(in Korean), roughly meaning life energy.

awakening where the sky, people, and objects were seen as “one life.” As a carrier and cultivator of universal cosmic life, Donghak began teaching a way to embrace it so that life can be truly life-like.

Today humanity stands at a juncture where it can evolve or perish. Evolution allows humans the freedom to choose. With civilization in transition, humanity demands that lost life and spirit be regained through a new awakening and decision. The time has come for us to shed our existing worldviews and values and consciously change our act. From cultural legacies accumulated throughout humanity’s evolutionary process, we need to find and use wisdom that can help us choose our path sensibly. Given the juncture we find ourselves in, Donghak philosophy can provide us with hope and wisdom.

First, people and objects are all Hanul and should be revered

The philosophy of Donghak does not regard Hanul as a transcendent god who rules over humanity and nature as their master. Hanul is present in all human beings and even inanimate objects, and as the cosmic life of the universe, actualizes itself by integrating them as one life. Life that is present in people and objects is Hanul and hence divine. People should revere Hanul. As they revere Hanul, they will realize that other people and objects are brothers and sisters who belong to one life. According to Donghak’s teaching, “people” and “nature” form one life, which remains integrated as “life in Hanul,” with Hanul literally meaning one enclosure that embraces everything. We should revere them, just as we revere Hanul.

Choe Sihyeong teaches that, as humans develop reverence for nature, ecological balance in nature

becomes possible, and humans can participate in the evolution of the universe. He urges an ecological awakening in saying, “The forest can grow abundant only if the sapling is left unbroken,” “If you break the flower stem yourself, you also won’t be able to pick the fruit,” “If you throw away the scraps, you won’t grow rich.”

Second, people carry Hanul within them

According to Choe Je-u, divine Hanul is present in every person, and so everyone can be Hanul.

Choe Je-u did not explain Hanul conceptually.

By not explaining, he said, Hanul’s true image becomes clearer. That is because Hanul is cosmic life in motion, with reaches so vast as to defy conceptualization or definition. Thus, he said, people do not know Hanul so much as they carry it inside them. By carrying the divine life of the universe within, people can live a cosmic life and unite with

the universal mind. To carry Hanul is “to become spiritual within, energetic without, and to realize that everyone in the world is Hanul and therefore cannot be displaced.” To carry heaven within is thus seen as being true to human nature. It is when people forget and stop serving Hanul inside them that they experience alienation, that is to say, “displacement.” Choe Je-u thought that, when people keep their minds pure and conduct upright, they evolve exhibiting Hanul’s character and according to its teaching.

Third, people should cultivate Hanul

Choe Sihyeong said that Hanul’s presence in people’s minds is like life stored inside a seed. Just as people plant seeds to grow and cultivate the life they contain, they should grow and cultivate cosmic life, Hanul, which is present in their minds. Those who do not know that Hanul exists, he said, are like

people who toss seeds in the water and drown the life they contain without planting them. Those who cultivate Hanul have Hanul and those who do not do not have it in the end, he said. Those who do not plant seeds also cannot harvest grains, which are providers of life. Only those who know how to cultivate Hanul are thus capable of properly carrying Hanul. To grow the seed of life inside them, people must feed it with grains and meals earned through work. If one person carries and cultivates divine life inside, another does also. As Hanul, people should thus live symbiotically while revering and cooperating with one another. It is when people do their utmost and do not spare efforts to grow the seed of life in themselves, others, and nature that they can be said to carry heaven within¹³ and become united with the life of the universe. From the

universal perspective, “nurturing heaven”¹⁴ signifies that, in order for Hanul to grow Hanul as a whole, it enables similar life forms to progress through mutual cooperation, while allowing dissimilar life forms to grow and progress by interacting in a food chain. That is how Hanul makes itself evolve. Choe Sihyeong describes it as Hanul eating Hanul.

Fourth, a bowl of rice is the fruit of the universe, nature’s own milk

To grow Hanul inside them, people must eat. To earn a bowl of rice, people should sweat, without exception. Still, rice and grains cannot be said to be the product only of human labor. In fact, they may be called the fruit of the universe grown in nature’s own field, milk provided by Hanul and the land. A human child conceived by its parents is also a child

13. “to carry heaven within”: 시천(侍天)

14. “nurturing heaven”: 양천(養天)

of heaven and earth. Mother's milk it suckles on is the milk of Hanul and the land; grains it feeds on as it grows are the milk of Hanul and the land also. Choe Sihyeong called rice, grains, and milk Hanul and the land's stipend.¹⁵ Eating a bowl of rice is no ordinary act. It is Hanul that is eating rice as its own milk and stipend. The act of eating thus becomes a cosmic event, uniting people with cosmic life.

While a bowl of rice is the fruit of Hanul and the land, it is at the same time a milk distilled from our neighbors' sweat. A bowl of rice thus may be said to contain a profound truth about the universe and at the same time be full of significance for communal cooperation in society. Humans eat rice cooked in a big collective pot called society; they are family who share the same meals. It is said that

15. "stipend": 농(祿), a form of salary (grains and so on) given out to government officials and workers in traditional Korean society

knowing everything, understanding every truth, boils down to knowing and understanding the principle contained in eating a bowl of rice. If we know that a bowl of rice is the milk of Hanul and the land and sweat of our neighbors, we should always be grateful and willing to do our share to repay them. The willingness to repay becomes a confession of gratitude toward Hanul, the land, and neighbors. Choe Sihyeong calls such a confession prayerful eating¹⁶ and further explains it as "the principle of feeding back."¹⁷ Life's movement is all about circulation through a "feedback loop." "Feedback" signifies a loop of circulation and symbiosis where all living beings in the universe, the ecological

16. "prayerful eating": 식고 (食告), literally meaning "prayer or confession for or about a meal"

17. "the principle of feeding back": For clarification, the authors invoke the traditional dictum "bahn-po-ji-ri (반포지리 (反哺之理)), which refers to the crow feeding its parent after growing up, as an act of filial piety and gratitude.

system, and society exchange and sympathetically share matter and information, energy and spirit. Thus Choe Sihyeong's principle of feeding back can be interpreted as meaning "feedback." It signifies the loop of circulation where Hanul, the land, and people exchange life, energy, and spirit. Prayerful eating is a pledge of gratitude and loyalty where one promises to put the food of life one has received from Hanul, the land, and neighbors back in circulation.

Eating can be said to be a ceremony offered to divine cosmic life. In eating, we submit a bowl of rice, which is life itself, as an offering to Hanul within us. In the traditional Korean ceremony honoring ancestors, the rice and tablet containing the names of ancestors are always placed on the other side of the table. Choe Sihyeong reversed the placement of the rice and put it right in front of those bowing—as an offering to themselves, the living. Instead of reversing the tradition, he could

be said to have corrected it. This philosophy—known as hyang-a-sul-we ("celebration given in my direction")¹⁸—allowed daily meals to recover their original meaning as holy ceremonies. As a source of life, rice should become an offering to those living, who carry and cultivate cosmic life "here and now." The minds of ancestors live on within the living as part of Hanul. Within my mind here and now the souls of ancestors from long ago and the minds of descendants of the distant future remain united as one with the spirit of the universe, Hanul.

Fifth, people should practice Hanul

As carriers and cultivators of Hanul, people become active subjects who carry and nurture heaven. People thus also come to carry the social

18. "hyang-a-sul-we": 향아설위(向我設位) means here an act of revolution that defies all conventional religions through reversing symbolic rituals of prioritizing the dead and ideal.

and ethical obligation to implement Hanul's order on earth. Embodying heaven through practices signifies people's obligation as carriers and cultivators of Hanul to act ethically, socially, and ecologically. They should make the world evolve so that it becomes Hanul-like, and they should do this by becoming Hanul-like in their own actions. The current world, that is, the world that has yet to experience the embodiment of heaven, is a world of death and oppression, alienation and conflict. As people strive to create a new order based on life and remake the world into Hanul's world, their actions cannot help taking the form of fight and negation. They have to battle against killing and oppression, and negate alienation and conflict. That is Hanul's justice. Their fight becomes an ethical and political battle fought against an order that allows killing and oppression, a socioeconomic battle against alienation and conflict, a verbal and psychological

battle against the culture of manipulation and deception. The ethical battle is not a battle that kills but one that makes life live, a battle fought so that all—I, you, and nature—can live together, which is to say a battle fought to defend and spread the greatest truth of all time. The economic battle can be described as a battle for a bowl of rice. Starting with the realization that a bowl of rice is the fruit of the universe and society, the battle is fought so that the fruit can be shared and fed to all living beings so they can live. The verbal battle, or battle of words, is fought to spread Hanul's truth throughout the world: that it is everyone's responsibility to have the cosmic awakening that Hanul, people, and objects are all Hanul and to live so that they may carry and cultivate life represented by humans and everything else in nature. Since "words" are vessels of truth, the battle becomes a cultural battle fought to purify them and imbue them with new life. As

people actively battle the world of death and killing, their daily lives should never cease to reflect the dignity and awe they should maintain toward life. People should never shackle, separate, oppress, or destroy life. Embodying heaven may be more modestly described as adhering strictly to the “Ten Never-Principles.” They are: 1. Never deceive life 2. Never be arrogant before life 3. Never wound life 4. Never disrupt and disturb life 5. Never kill life before its time 6. Never defile life 7. Never starve life 8. Never destroy life 9. Never hate life 10. Never enslave life.” The three types of battles and “Ten Never-Principles” provide concrete ways to implement Hanul’s order in this world and realize the embodiment of heaven.

Sixth, the dawn of a new world¹⁹ is creative evolution

As both Choe Je-u and Choe Sihyeong explained, the world before the embodiment of heaven stands for an order based on killing, one that shackles, displaces, and divides life. In order for life to become more life-like, the old order has to be dismantled and a new order based on life must be created. This is what is meant by the dawn of a new world embodying heaven. But Donghak philosophy did

19. “The dawn of a new world,” “the dawn of a new world embodying heaven”: 개벽(開闢), 후천개벽 (後天開闢). “The dawn of a new world” is the closest literal translation of 개벽. In Korea, Won-Buddhism translates the term as “the Great Opening Era of the Latter Heaven” and modern Chondogyo as “the New Beginning of Spiritual Civilization Era,” which both contain proprietary interpretations of the term. Looking at human history from “a cosmic point of view,” Choe Je-u said that humanity is at the last stage before the arrival of the new world. He regarded rampant chaos and degeneration as signs of such a stage, and urged that the era of new civilization or “a new world embodying heaven” must be made to come.

not believe that humans could achieve such a world through a forced revolution. A world that embodies heaven cannot arrive by forcing. The old order changes with the flow of evolution whereby the old naturally give away to the new. Humans do not evolve by relying on contrived violence but by cooperating with the evolution of the universe, which does not seek to contrive or force anything.²⁰ The dawn of a new world becomes possible as humans actively and whole-heartedly seek to evolve their own lives through such a cooperation.

As part of the natural, unforced evolutionary process of the universe, human evolution results from the awakening and observed practices of people carrying heaven within. A remaking of the world order can only be achieved through the active and creative participation of humans carrying the life

20. “which does not seek to contrive or force anything”: “moo-we-ee-hwa (무위이화(無爲而化).”

and mind of the universe. The creative evolution of the universe and humanity is made possible through cooperation and coordinated changes between the two, who grow more unified as a result. Humanity’s creative evolution thus becomes a new beginning for the universe and the universe’s evolution brings for humanity the dawn of a new world that embodies heaven.

Seventh, “from negation to affirmation”²¹ is the logic of creative evolution

Choe Je-u uses his unique concept of “from negation to affirmation” to flesh out the philosophy for the dawn of a new world and human evolution. It may be said to be an evolutionary perspective offered as an answer to traditional theories of being

21. “from negation to affirmation”: The Korean text invokes “bull-yun-gi-yun(불연기연 不然其然),” roughly meaning “no-yes.”

in Eastern and Western philosophy. Throughout the universe, things are in a constant state of becoming and evolving. Looking at their current manifestations, says Choe Je-u, one can affirm that, yes, they appear to be such and such. But once one starts to think about how they were formed in the first place, it now appears that, no, they were not always such and such. A yes-no opposition is inevitable, according to Choe Je-u, as long as one insists on looking at things from a static point of view rather than from the perspective of their evolution. If something exists, it can also not exist. Thinking in terms of “being,” rather than “becoming,” thus leads to a dualistic opposition of the “yes” and “no” of things, so to speak. Choe Je-u suggests that our conception of time is based on such a dualistic opposition. There is the past and there is the future: time gone and time which is yet to come. The two cannot occur simultaneously—

as though if one is “yes,” the other has to be “no.” While thus pointing out the opposition of negation and affirmation as a problem of dualism, Choe Je-u sought a solution from the evolutionary perspective. When all things are perceived as in a continuous state of becoming and evolving, it becomes impossible to negate that they belong to a larger evolving reality—known ultimately as Hanul. Those who wish to say “no” lack here proof—the conventional ontological perspective demands proof when making such assertions—while those who believe “yes” is the right answer, according to Choe Je-u, do so because they know it is. So they affirm it. In the end, people “negate” things their thinking has not reached “yet,” and “affirm” what they know “already” because their thinking has reached it. In the course of uncontrived and unforced evolution, says Choe Je-u, “there have been, in the past and present, instances where Hanul has remained

unreached.” Negation suggests something remains unreached in thinking; affirmation suggests it has been reached to the point of becoming self-evident.

The universe is said to have begun as the symmetry of matter and antimatter was destroyed with the Big Bang and has been pulsating and evolving thereafter. As it continues to evolve, the universe has formed stratified layers comprising a microcosmic level with material particles like atoms and molecules, a macrocosmic level with humans and other biological life forms, and an even higher macrocosmic level with the ecological system and the universe. Evolution in this context means going from simple to complex through differentiation—that is to say, “one” becoming “many” as it differentiates. Conversely, evolution is a process whereby the disorder of chaotic complexity moves toward order—that is to say, “many” becoming integrated

as “one.” So evolution is a dynamic process where two apparently contradictory tendencies, one toward complexity, the other toward order, alternate. Evolution is also a process where all levels of life transcend the limitations of their existence and extend forward and far—“self-transcendence,” in other words. At the same time, evolution becomes a process of “self-organization” where all levels of life, driven by agitations, organize themselves into a new order. So evolution combines the transcendence of an old order with the organization of a new order. Also, evolution creatively integrates live experiences of the past with projected plans for the future. Not only does evolution thus unify different time horizons, but it also integrates space and time into a space-time continuum. As all levels of life thus join in an interconnected web of coevolving microcosms and macrocosms, the universe spreads through boundless space-time. The universe that

evolves by thus integrating everything within it is present within the human spirit. The human spirit has the inborn capacity to accumulate past experiences and information, engages in metabolic exchanges of energy with the ecological system surrounding it, and even has the capacity for self-consciousness where it becomes aware of itself while comprehending and internalizing the entire evolutionary process of the universe. So humans carry within their self-consciousness, it may be said, the boundlessly evolving universe—Hanul. And thus Choe Je-u spoke of carrying heaven within. To carry heaven within does not refer to a state of mind that worships a transcendent god while remaining stationary and inactive; it signifies the human spirit that evolves with Hanul, by carrying within oneself the universe that continues to form and evolve.

Choe Je-u's “from negation to affirmation” theory, which explains the logic whereby a “no”

can become a “yes,” suggests how to think about evolution itself. Relying on their sensory experiences and analytic thinking, humans can perceive reality only as something static and unchanging, and negate what goes beyond such experiences and thinking: namely, reality as a dynamic process, as something that continues to form and evolve. When humans thus try to grasp the macrocosmic reality, which evolves with developments in microcosmic dimensions, their ultimate judgment becomes limited to what they can affirm from a static perspective. The dualistic division and opposition—the “yes” and “no” of things—emerge as a result. Though reality continues to form and evolve, people thus tend to see only what their analytic thinking can affirm for them while negating all else. Negation, however, can change into affirmation—if people trust their intuition about the ultimate reality. Concerning the evolution of the ultimate reality, negation and

affirmation can move toward a synthesis, so to speak. While the macrocosmic dimension of reality can never be reached through sensory experiences and analytic thinking, it can be through intuition. Intuition means what the word says: in-tuition, learning that arises from within. When, in the maelstrom of cataclysmic evolution, humanity had difficulty finding a path relying only on accumulated genetic information, interaction with the environment, and the analytic mind, it is intuitive wisdom that has provided guidance. Intuition is not structured knowledge, but a knowing that emerges with historical process, and can be said to be the memory of the universe's holistic process. It is what is meant by the awakening that arises when people carry heaven within. When people fully understand that they carry life's ultimate reality, Hanul, inside them, their "no" becomes a "yes." Through such a "realization," people come to know that humanity

and the universe, humanity and nature, individual and community, matter and spirit, negation and affirmation, remain unified as one. They finally come to understand how, from the awakening that begins with carrying heaven within, by putting nurturing heaven into practice, and without contriving or forcing, evolution finds a context for progression toward the dawn of a new world.

The attempt to see nature and humanity from a historical perspective, not as beings but in terms of their becoming, existed in the West in the 19th century. As the West modernized to lead the world order, Germany once remained a backward peripheral power. The philosophy of German Romanticism helped it overcome the situation, and in helping it pursue a new order, promoted dialectical thinking. Whether it is Hegel's dialectic or Marx's dialectical materialism, the dialectical method is characterized by its acceptance of

contradictions. The contradiction here signifies the synthesis of “thesis and antithesis” as one of opposites. Hegel and Marx regarded the synthesis of such opposites as the true nature behind everything, while also regarding it as the motor of history and a reasoning principle. They thought that all changes involve gradual quantitative changes leading to a qualitative leap, and called the logic behind such a principle “the negation of negation.” By Lenin’s time, the dialectical method came to emphasize, not the synthesis of opposites, but their struggle. According to Lenin, the synthesis of opposites was conditional, temporary, and relative, while only “the struggle of opposites” involving mutual antagonism and clash was absolute. So claiming, Lenin developed his own dialectic of struggle. While the dialectical method explains the dynamic process of becoming and change in terms of the synthesis and struggle of opposites, it overlooks the fact that opposites are

more complementary than contradictory, and thus fails to escape a dualistic structure. In understanding becoming and change as “the transmutation of quantity into quality,” the method also remains trapped in a mechanistic framework. In the end, Hegel’s “concrete totality” came to be understood, not as a holistic integration of the individual and the totality, but mistakenly as “uniform totality” to conclude with the rise of fascism and Stalinism. Though the dialectical method attempted to free human understanding from a static ontological framework, the attempt ran aground. As a new grammar for understanding creative evolution, Choe Je-u’s “from negation to affirmation” principle suggests ways of overcoming the failure of the dialectical method and reaching an understanding of the history of humanity, nature, and the universe.

V
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Hansalim



Seen in retrospect, all civilizations throughout human history have walked the path of birth, progress, decline, and extinction. Such a historical pattern could very well be part of the universe's dynamic cycles. After reaching its apogee, a civilization typically shows a tendency to lose vitality and head for a downfall, as its ways of thinking, customs, and social structures lose flexibility and become sclerotic. In the second half of the 20th century, with the 1970s as its apex, industrial civilization now appears to have entered a road to decline. Flexibility is the principle of life itself. As the antithesis of flexibility, the mechanistic order now stands at the precipice of a hopeless crisis facing survival or doom, does it not? Yet while crisis is a dangerous situation that

can eventuate in doom, it is also pregnant with possibilities for change that can become a context for evolution. It could represent a new opportunity, in other words.

From the depth of crisis, signs of change are gradually emerging. In social, economic, and political spheres, and especially in geopolitics and the global economy, the dominant powers are losing their strength. From their fiascos in Vietnam, in the case of the United States and China, and in the case of the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan, superpowers have learned that force is ineffective. As the first country to equip itself only with an unconventional military called the Self-Defense Forces, Japan is making its marches as an economic superpower. Though the United States commanded the world economy following the two world wars, it entered a path of decline starting in the 1970s, as it struggled with the so-called twin deficits of fiscal

and current account deficits. A bizarre situation was created when the world still opted to use the dollar, the currency of the country with the largest debt, as its first ever common economic currency. In addition, multinational corporations, with their ability to hop freely across national borders, came to manipulate sovereign nations, along with the global economy. Such corporations now possess assets that are worth more than the GDPs of most countries and have more economic and political power than most governments. Yet even the domination of multinational corporations faces challenges throughout the world, thanks to the growing strength of public opinion worldwide, and with the reorganization of the world economy into powerful economic blocs. As authoritarian regimes that repress human rights and freedom with violence implode, the world also shows a gradual tendency toward democracy. Within industrial society, as the

technocratic systems—big corporations and systems based on party rule—face increasing critique, movements for partial reforms are percolating.

Signs of change include growing environmental awareness. Today, as environmental concerns mount throughout the world, the thinking that economic development cannot be contemplated apart from environmental problems is taking root. Some go so far as to claim that environmental destruction and pollution problems mean an end for both the capitalist market and socialist planned economies and that active environmental policy is indeed needed. To be sure, even as environmental destruction threatens the survival of humanity, the view that, in order to promote economic growth, some environmental destruction is unavoidable so far remains dominant.

In the realms of ideas and ideologies as well, changes are discernible. After dividing and ruling

the world between themselves, capitalism and communism appear increasingly unrealistic as ideologies and in actual policy. People worldwide are verging on the realization that, neither the problems of class nor ideologies, but humanity's common good is more realistic and important. After their disappointments with the laissez-faire illusions of the 19th century, intellectuals once turned their focus on Marxism. Today they pin their hopes on a merger between capitalism and communism. Among capitalist countries, many now go beyond the paradigm of classical capitalism to show an interest in social and welfare policy concepts, while the Soviet Union and other Eastern-bloc countries have begun to show a tendency toward openness and liberalization.

So humanity and the world today greet a civilization undergoing a major transition. At this juncture, it is impossible not to return to the

historical situation of the Korean people.

In retrospect, the history of the Korean people in the modern period has been one of unyielding resistance to foreign oppression.¹ Before their self-consciousness as a modern nation could properly germinate, they began to experience internal agitations, and at a time Western imperialism began

1. In the late 19th century, Korea experienced, along with intensifying foreign incursions, devastating political and economic turmoil, and in 1910, ceded its sovereignty to Japan. Until 1945, as a colony of Imperialist Japan, the country was subjected to diverse forms of economic, political, and cultural expropriation and exploitation. With Japan's defeat in WW II, Korea was liberated, but was placed under the protective rule of the United States and the Soviet Union, with the former occupying the southern half of the country, and the latter its northern half. In 1948, the partition of the country became official, as the South became the Republic of Korea, and the North the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). On July 25, 1950, the Korean War started, claiming the lives of millions of innocent civilians, and devastating the country's infrastructure. Though an armistice was reached in 1953, the war never officially ended, and with the country still divided, the South-North relationship became one characterized by deepening distrust and antagonism.

moving eastward, were exposed to an external shock of their own. With Imperialist Japan's violent oppression and barbarous lootings, the ordinary folk lost their livelihoods and became deprived of their true identity as a people. The Korean people did not succumb but continued to resist Japan's colonial rule. Though resistance and fighting were fierce, and the desire for independence and liberation remained fervent in their minds, they were liberated without having achieved independence on their own. Instead of an independence won autonomously as a result of their own fight, liberation remained heteronomous, in the sense of being given to them by the United States and the Soviet Union, foreign powers that had displaced Japan.

After World War II, in the name of maintaining the balance of power, the so-called US-Soviet Cold War system turned the liberation of the Korean people around and followed it up with

their heartbreaking division. In the end, their division intensified to eventuate in a tragic war fought between the same people. Even after 40 years of armistice, the South and the North still have not been able to heal their wounds. They remain enemies, under ideologies and systems of heteronomous origin. Meanwhile, under the ideologies of capitalism and communism, the South and the North each achieved industrialization after its own fashion. Despite sizeable economic growth, the military dictatorship in the South continues to threaten and violate the survival and rights of the people. As for the North, in an attempt to domesticate outdated Stalinism, it has focused on the philosophy of juche, as it is called, as a pretext for constructing a closed totalitarian society where the people remain oppressed and alienated.

With the regimes of the South and the North remaining politically and militarily hostile, they

cry “unification” in words only. Neither shows a remorse for its current system or ideology, and both exploit the unification problem as a way of gaining and maintaining power. While the yearning for unification appears to grow among the people of the South, even they remain in a state of ideological confusion, as they lack a proper understanding of what keeps their people divided. What mechanical force has artificially divided one life that is the Korean people and keeps them as enemies? What has bisected the Korean peninsula’s natural landscape with an artificial geometric line that cuts off its *gi*, life force? The answer is none other than the same mechanistic civilization responsible for dividing and oppressing humanity and the world.

The true unification movement starts with an accurate realization of what is obstructing the historical evolution of the Korean people. Industrial civilization keeps life oppressed, alienated, and

divided under a mechanistic structure and order. It is by striving to understand at what juncture in human evolution such a civilization finds itself that we can find a doorway toward unification. What has divided the Korean people and keeps them fighting as the South and the North is the passive “feedback” that helps maintain the lifeline of mechanical civilization, and holds back human evolution.

Today agitations shaking industrial civilization from within are becoming too great for the old structure and order to hold. Soon, through active “feedback,” they will be amplified and grow more intense, and crossing over the evolutionary juncture, culminate in a revolutionary moment. It seems certain that human evolution’s creative transcendence will start on the Korean peninsula. The Korean peninsula has been a stage where the tragic fate of industrial civilization has been orchestrated in its full intensity, and the current state

of its people is a condensed symbol for humanity’s true state under alienation. Thus, as humanity stands at an evolutionary crossroads unable to decide its direction, the tragic fate of the Korean people can serve as the launching platform for a bold adventure that is to be humanity’s creative evolution. If the Korean people help initiate human evolution by spreading the seed of life to entire humanity and throughout the entire world, not only will their unification be achieved, but they will also help proclaim the dawn of humanity’s grand evolutionary march. At that point, the Korean peninsula will become a shrine dedicated to cosmic life, to Hanul. The true unification movement is not a movement simply in pursuit of the unification of the Korean people, but part of the Saengmyung (“Life”) Movement, seeking unification with humanity as a whole, the ecological system as a whole, cosmic

life as a whole.² As an ideology and movement for life, Hansalim is based on this cosmic, ecological, and communal awakening: that all individuals and peoples, humanity and the ecological system in its entirety, are brothers and sisters, who are born from the same womb of cosmic life which is Hanul, and who suckle on the same milk that is Hanul's.

Hansalim seeks to derive its worldview from the authority of new science, which suggests that

2. “Saengmyung (생명, life),” “Hansalim”: Jang Il-soon once said of the Saengmyung Movement and Hansalim, “Life is one, not two, and cannot be divided. The existence of living beings cannot be discussed apart from heaven and earth or the universe, without which not a single fly can exist. A blade of grass, an insect, or even a piece of rock is of the same class and family as me. There is no distinction between the divine and the profane.”⁸⁾

Hansalim is part of the Saengmyung Movement. The term “Hansalim” refers to the life’s activities as a unified whole, and the Hansalim Movement is a movement that seeks to create a life-centered worldview and lifestyle, and thereby move beyond a civilization based on “death and killing” to one truly based on life. It is a movement for the realization of a life-nurturing and peaceful world.⁹⁾

life, matter, and spirit integrate with cosmic life in a dynamic process, and that humanity, nature, and the universe all partake of the process whereby life experiencing agitations organizes itself toward a new order. For its system of values, Hansalim finds its social, ethical, and ecological foundations in Donghak’s philosophy of life, which inherits and continues traditions of the Korean people. Donghak urges us to recognize that objects and people all carry universal cosmic life that is Hanul and are therefore themselves life divine. To carry and cultivate them all within us, so to speak, we should observe appropriate social and ethical practices. As carriers and nurturers of heaven, we humans in the end have the responsibility to unify nature and humanity within ourselves and thereby allow Hanul, which coevolves with all living beings, to become embodied. Such is the teaching Donghak offers us today.

First, Hansalim is a cosmic awakening about life

While living beings are parts of a whole, they are also each a holistic structure with integrated parts. They are independent wholes and dependent parts at the same time. People, other life forms, and even inanimate objects thus all remain interconnected in one universal web and coevolve through cooperation as one life.

All living beings remain connected to a vast tree that is the universe, which branches out to fill Hanul, the all-embracing enclosure, as its branches, trunk, and roots. Any living being that becomes disconnected from the tree of cosmic life cannot survive. Hanul, as cosmic life, integrates all living beings within itself and continues to cultivate them. Humanity is only a small fruit hanging near the tip of a branch in the boundlessly growing universal tree of life. Disconnected from cosmic life, humanity cannot live on. While humanity is a small part of

the tree and hence a smaller form of life, it is also a bigger form of life in its own right, integrating living beings smaller than itself. This is the true place and image of humanity in the universe. Fruit contains seeds of a tree, and the seeds have the universal tree of life conceived in them. Evolving cosmic life is latently present in the minds of living and evolving human beings, and when human culture continues to evolve, it embraces the universe's entire space-time. The universe as a whole lives in and breathes through individual humans—as Donghak called it carrying heaven within. Every person has Hanul inside. If humans today are alienated from their true nature and participate in the rapacious and cruel domination and exploitation of nature, their very sibling, it is because they have forgotten they have Hanul inside them. If people renounce desires that come from greed, and choose to revere Hanul within them, if they thus reconnect with their true nature,

they can become a life wise and holy.

Second, Hansalim is an ecological awakening about nature

The ecological system organizes itself autonomously, while embracing humans, other life forms, and inanimate objects as one life. It is a larger form of life than humanity. The earth, as an ecological system, is said to be a living being, and possesses a mind of its own as Gaia. Integrating the atmosphere, the seas, and soil, along with humans and other life forms, as one life, the earth has kept itself whole as it weathered agitations caused by chemical and thermodynamic imbalances, and has formed a new ecological order through a long evolutionary process. If the earth were simply an inanimate solid, how would it have been possible for it to adjust its surface temperature the way the human body maintains its temperature and

create other life forms while enduring geological and climate agitations? New science today offers a remarkable revolutionary perspective on matter in suggesting that even at the molecular levels of matter there are phenomena that can be interpreted as life and spirit. Choe Sihyeong, who has taught us that even objects are permeated with Hanul, once confided that it brought him pain to hear the earth resound.

The evolution of life has much to teach us humans. Prokaryotes, which were the first forms of life on earth, used photosynthesis to create oxygen, and by allowing the atmosphere to contain current levels of oxygen, created an ecological order where eukaryotes and other higher life forms that require oxygen could live. Prokaryotes still survive in the ecological system and live symbiotically with animals and plants, often inside them along with their own cells. Even today they help manage the

respiration of oxygen and synthesize nutrients from inorganic materials. In so doing, they function as “the household managers of energy for the entire ecological system,” while also remaining responsible for dismantling and purifying organic waste from biological life forms. Our life as humans is based on “energy circulation” and “self-purification” provided by prokaryotes as “producers,” “managers,” and “sanitation engineers.” As a member of the tree of cosmic life, we humans should live symbiotically and coevolve with the branches, leaves, and roots. What is demanded of people throughout the world today is to combine their own independence with a mature sense of responsibility toward the ecological system.

“The earth’s needs are human needs, and human rights are the earth’s rights.”

Third, Hansalim is a communal awakening about society

Humans cannot live alone. Just as humans cannot live apart from nature, they cannot live apart from society. Humans are born into a community and continue to live in it. Yet in industrial society, not only is humanity losing an ecological balance with nature, but also a genuine sense of community with other human beings. As part of the mass, humans live as atomized individuals cut off from their neighbors. Society is losing its characteristics as community and is only strengthening its functions of domination and control. Humans scatter as nuclear families and isolated individuals, and are collectively managed and controlled by centralized powers. As the powers that decide and distribute social values become more centralized, specialized, and monopolized, humanity becomes more and more alienated. So society has turned into a field of

conflict and battle between individual and individual, individual and collective, collective and collective. Within such society, humans egotistically pursue materialistic values and spin their wheels only chasing the satisfaction of desires. What is missing in human life today is not material comfort, but communal cooperation and harmony with nature.

Society is a society of living humans and its true image is life in the process of becoming. Among humans, there is an endless exchange and circulation of matter and energy, information and knowledge, emotion and spirit. Society is therefore not simply an aggregate of individuals but has to be a community where individuals as parts and society as a whole become holistically integrated. While humans live symbiotically by cooperating with their neighbors, they should not lose their autonomy but find a path that leads to true self-actualization. As true community, society can maintain an ecological

balance with nature and respond actively to changes and the evolution of the environment. Choe Sihyeong says that when people treat other people as Hanul, they can make the world sublime—thus emphasizing that the evolution of human society requires life lived as a community.

He teaches that a society that cannot respond to the evolving times is as good as extinct. Humans must recover their sense of community. A genuine communal awakening is required of us today—one that pursues frugality over waste, cooperation over competition, spiritual maturity over material growth, symbiosis over selfishness, social justice over egotistical self-assertion, unification over division.

Fourth, Hansalim is a “cultural movement” seeking new awareness, values, and lifestyles

With its destruction of nature’s ecological balance and human community, industrial

civilization has created tremendous amounts of division, conflict, and agitation. Intensifying agitations within civilization have amplified to reach a crisis point of survival or ruin, implosion or creative evolution. Which way things will go depends on the choice humanity makes. Humans today may appear very greedy and foolish. But as their true nature, they carry wisdom and divinity inside them.

The oppression of mechanistic civilization made humans abandon their true nature and live in the image of alienated beings. Forgetting cosmic life inside them, humans in the end lost connection to their true nature, and the result has been a world that alienates not only humans but life itself. Humanity has thus reached a crisis that could lead to its own ruin and ecological destruction.

At this moment of crisis, the first thing humans have to do is to recover their alienated true nature. They must come to an understanding of cosmic

life inside them. Such an awakened understanding opens a new path of hope for humans and represents a road to true human recovery and liberation. As awakened beings, humans perceiving their oneness with cosmic life will come to see that humanity and nature both remain united with the universe as one life. Thus, humans as awakened beings will live symbiotically, cooperating with their neighbors in a community and seeking a balanced life in harmony with the ecological system.

We require a total transformation of awareness, values, and lifestyles today. We must transform industrial civilization, which regards nature, humanity, and society through mechanical models, according to life's true image. We must create and spread throughout society a lifestyle based on a new worldview and a new set of values.

Fifth, Hansalim is “social practices” that help realize a life-nurturing order

The evolution of life does not signify adapting to the environment and preserving the existing order. On the contrary, it signifies life’s activities that serve to amplify the shock and agitation of change to create a new environment and order. Internal agitations and external shocks have now brought industrial civilization to the threshold of evolution.

In order for humanity to steer collapsing industrial civilization in the direction of creative evolution, creative activities of awakened people are needed. Such activities take the form of social practices that help dismantle today’s outdated society, economy, and politics and seek a new order based on life.

By concentrating power in the hands of a minority of technocrats, industrial civilization oppresses and alienates the vast majority of

citizens, promotes social conflict and economic disequilibrium, and mass-produces bureaucratic immorality, corruption, and incompetence. The economy dominated by big corporations is creating unemployment and cyclical recessions through the increased concentration of capital and technology, destroying the ecological balance through wasteful uses of resources and energy, and intensifying social disequilibrium and conflict through the monopolization of wealth. The current political order and economic structure is a mechanical order that oppresses and alienates humanity and destroys nature. It is an order based on killing.

So creative humans who have become conscious of the vast life of the universe must help stage life’s battle against the political regimes, technocrats, and big corporations that are anti-ecological and against community. This fight for the collective survival of humanity and nature, individual and community, the

people of Korea and of the whole world, is a battle for love, peace, and life. Life's battle does not signify reliance on contrived violence to destroy the existing social order. Life's battle refers to creative activities to prepare humanity for the coming new civilization in its evolution. It signifies the dawn of a new world embodying heaven.

Sixth, Hansalim is “daily practices” leading to self-actualization

Putting the life-based worldview and values into practice begins with the understanding that life that belongs to humanity and nature, individual and society, remain unified as one cosmic life. According to Choe Sihyeong, those who do not cultivate Hanul do not have Hanul. As with any living being, however, humans already have cosmic life present in them. Choe Je-u said that carrying Hanul requires purifying one's mind and rectifying the life energies

of one's body. Carrying heaven requires training one's mind so that internally one becomes pure in spirit and externally active in ways that are consistent with the spirit. Choe Je-u further taught that, if one carries Hanul with utmost sincerity, reverence, and faith, and maintains the pure mind and right conduct, anyone can reach the great road to boundless truth.

If a person is a divine life carrying Hanul inside, he or she must cultivate Hanul. People have the ethical responsibility to grow not only Hanul within themselves, but Hanul in their neighbors and nature as well. That is what nurturing heaven means. By helping cosmic life within themselves, their neighbors, and nature grow, people make the coevolution of “themselves,” “community,” and “the ecological system” possible.

Thus Choe Sihyeong said that only those who know how to cultivate Hanul can carry Hanul.

The cosmic awakening of carrying heaven and the practice of purifying one's mind are achieved through practical activities of daily living that are devoted to cultivating life. Activities of daily living mean just that—to live and act day by day. Daily living for people boils down to the act of feeding dependent living beings, including themselves, “a bowl of rice” as a form of life energy. Those who understand the oneness of cosmic life remain conscious that they, their neighbors, and nature are all one life. So they feed life present in others as well, with “a bowl of rice” made from their own sweat. The awakened ones know that carrying and nurturing heaven remain inseparable.

Because every person is a divine life carrying “life in Hanul” within, it is also everyone’s responsibility to devote sweat and blood to make sure life in oneself, one’s neighbors, and nature is kept alive and growing. An ethical awakening

like this becomes not only a path of training toward true “self-actualization.” It becomes the spiritual foundation for “communal life” based on cooperation with one’s neighbor, and marks the beginning of activities devoted to practices that can help achieve “social justice” and “ecological balance.”

Seventh, Hansalim is “life’s unifying activities” that will create a new world

For the Korean people, the reunification of their nation and homeland remains an absolute necessity. Formed as one of life’s unifying activities, one nation cannot remain divided by physical powers and geometric lines. It goes against nature’s ways and represents a step backward in life’s evolution. Yet the Korean people still find themselves in the middle of a painful division. Their pain is perhaps like the pain an oyster endures while creating a brilliant pearl

inside. It is likely a creative pain, in other words. As the basis for the true unification movement, one might begin by recognizing the role the Korean people are to play in the evolution of human history. That role is demonstrating how a history filled with pain and suffering can be converted to serve as a creative platform for making a new history—a role model for human evolution.

The mechanistic sociocultural model on which industrial civilization rests partitions, confines, immobilizes everything, and enslaves, alienates, and pollutes everything. It is a paradigm based on killing. Yet mechanistic civilization was originally a product of the human spirit, a manifestation of life. After leaving its mother and cutting off the umbilical cord connecting it to life, it turned on life and humanity, its mother, to oppress and persecute them.

The prodigal son that is industrial civilization can no longer keep life repressed. Having cut off

its umbilical cord, it has lost its vitality. Now slave to entropy, it faces a death sentence. The machine needs to return to the birthplace of its life, and by harmonizing with humanity, recover its original life.

Hansalim seeks to achieve the unification of the Korean people by starting the work of unifying all that has been partitioned, cut off, and closed off by the power and logic of the machine. Emotion and reason in human mind; analytic knowledge and intuitive wisdom in human consciousness; body and spirit in human life; individual and community in human society; nature and humanity in the ecological system—by reunifying all of these, Hansalim seeks to help unfold life's grand unification movement, which seeks to integrate everything meant by "life in Hanul." Keeping the entire universe, ecological system, and humanity in mind, Hansalim seeks to engage in practices and activities for the unification of the Korean people; keeping the

unification of the Korean people in mind, it pursues the road to ecological balance, social justice, and self-actualization for all living beings.

Choe Je-u has given us a great principle on unification—the philosophy of carrying heaven within. By awakening to the fact that they carry cosmic life inside them, humans can participate in the grand unification project that is the evolution of the universe. The dawn of a new world is the aim of the project—creative evolution that will change the current, outdated world order that oppresses, alienates, divides, and kills life. Such a new world is a common project for Hanul and humanity. Cosmic life that is inherent in everyone is human nature itself and cannot be displaced.

What is demanded of us today is to restore our forgotten and alienated human nature and put it back in its rightful place. That is the true road to human liberation. Only when the spirit of the

Korean people, no, the soul of the entire human race, awakens and embraces heaven within, life's ultimate unification becomes possible, where nature and humanity, matter and spirit, individual and society, nations and humanity, unite as one mind. Thus a world embodying heaven approaches, and life's new horizon dawns before us.

The great “Axial Age” of humanity gave the world the light of “love” and “compassion” taught by Jesus and Buddha, and that light has guided humanity through darkness for more than 2000 years. Entering the age of industrial civilization, the light dimmed. Today, as killing continues to make darkness grow, the lamp of life must be rekindled with a brighter flame of love and compassion.

In 1848, with the “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” Marx declared human liberation and held up the banner of revolution to lead the world’s

oppressed and alienated classes and peoples. The banner of revolution is fading today. Marx remained unshaken in his belief that human liberation can be realized through implementing revolutionary new approaches to material production, distribution, and possession. What we need today, however, is not bread, but a new awakening. We need to understand what bread as life means and what life's creative evolution means. We need, in short, an awakening that comes from carrying heaven within.

Keeping a new world in insight while preparing for its arrival, the awakened and liberated human spirit understands that “one exists within the universe that exists within oneself.” Standing at an evolutionary crossroads, our age drifts. The time is ripe for a new philosophy containing the new self-image of “humanity within the universe” and “the universe within humanity.” At this juncture, here and now, we unfold Hansalim as life’s new philosophy

and activities.

“The boundless principle, boundlessly beheld,
Is it not, inside this boundless enclosure,
boundless me?” (Choe Je-u)

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A Historical Note on
Hansalim Manifesto

The history of modern Korea has been shaped by a succession of developments that began with half a century of colonial rule lasting until the end of WW II, which was followed by the country's partition into two halves, the Korean War, and a long period of authoritarian rule. As witnesses and actors in this history, the ordinary people of Korea, while putting up an extended and brave resistance to the oppression of unjust powers, also continued to cultivate a tradition of community living based on sharing. At the heart of the intellectual and social background of *Hansalim Manifesto* lies the Korean people's long history of resistance to slaughter and injustice and yearning for democracy and community. More specifically, the violent process of "modernization" pursued by the country's authoritarian government from the 1960s to the 80s forms the immediate societal background of *Hansalim Manifesto*. As protesters against the

authoritarian regime, a group of intellectuals, writers, and agrarian activists that included, among others, Jang Il-soon, Kim Chi-ha, Park Jae-il, Choe Hye-sung, Kim Young-won, Lee Soon-ro, and Kim Min-gi set out to reflect on “death and killing” caused by forced modernization as a dominant characteristic of their time and began exploring changes that could bring about a new type of society.

On June 25, 1988, they formed the “Preparatory Meeting Group for the Hansalim Research Society,” which, after five rounds of discussion, was changed in January 1989 to the “Preparatory Committee for the Founding of the Hansalim Federation.” After eleven study sessions and four additional rounds of discussion, they finally delivered on October 19, 1989, *Hansalim Manifesto* consisting of more than eighty pages and 45,000 characters to accompany the official formation of the “Hansalim Federation” in the city of Daejeon on that day.

While making note of the new movements in science, systems theory, and the growing environmental movement in the West in the second half of the 20th century, the founding authors of *Hansalim Manifesto* criticized both capitalism and socialism as governing ideologies that help support contemporary mechanistic industrial civilization by providing a rationalization for the domination and exploitation of nature by humans. Today’s industrial civilization, they also noted, “pursues growth in the name of rationality and efficiency, only to make itself more massive, more professionalized, and more centralized. In the end, mechanistic civilization is a denial of life, a disease that is killing people. It is death itself, threatening the total destruction of the human race.”

Foreseeing the crisis of industrial civilization and the eventual decline of the antagonistic ideologies of both the left and the right, the authors stressed that

we must first establish a new worldview that puts life before and above all else in order to escape from materialistic fetishism, human alienation, and the predatory destruction of nature. The life-centered worldview referred to in *Hansalim Manifesto* begins with three realizations.

First, all living beings combine to form one cosmic life. Because human beings cannot live apart from the totality of cosmic life, they must abandon greed and other forms of egotistical desires and return to their original true nature, which is to coexist with others.

Second, the ecological system called the earth is a system of symbiosis and balance that includes not only humans but other life forms and inorganic materials. As sentient, intelligent beings, humans have been given a responsibility and role to help sustain the earth's ecological system.

Third, "the invisible hand" cannot regulate the

indiscriminate pursuit of egotistical desires in human society. The only way to harmonize individual autonomy with the good of the whole is for us to cooperate voluntarily with our neighbors.

A transformative awakening like this contains not only a distillation of insights arising from Korea's unique historical development; it is based on a more broadly sympathetic recognition of the predicament confronting human society, as it seeks a way to overcome the crisis of industrial civilization. More specifically, *Hansalim Manifesto* seeks in the traditional philosophy of Donghak an exit toward a benign form of postmodernity.

In the late 19th century, threatened with the invasive advances of Japan and other imperialistic powers, the people of Korea (then called Chosun) held up the banners of "no foreign interference," "no more feudalistic exploitation," and "the realization of a world of equals" to stage the Donghak agrarian

revolution that stood up to imperialism and feudalism. In 1860, towards the end of the Chosun Dynasty, Choe Je-u founded Donghak, where he explained that everything in the universe carries cosmic life (Hanul) within them and are hence equally precious, and advocated a way of living that accords with nature's own order. Teaching that not only humans but animals, plants, and even inorganic materials must also be respected and treated as heaven itself, Donghak went beyond religious catechism or moral indoctrination to sketch the coming dawn of a new world.

Hansalim Manifesto further sublimated Donghak to become—beyond a religious or ethical doctrine—the basis for the Saengmyung (“Life”) Principle and Movement in Korea. In particular, Donghak teaches that becoming an awakened carrier of cosmic life and conscientiously observing practices that accompany such an awakening are both necessary as

complementary pillars sustaining the universe and nature, humanity and society. *Hansalim Manifesto* is thus grounded in Donghak’s spiritual teachings as its own social, ethical, and practical foundation.

Hansalim Manifesto proposes, along with the life-centered worldview, the Hansalim Movement as a way of putting a new system of values and lifestyle into practice. As a practical strategy, the Hansalim Movement first focused on agriculture, an industry dedicated to cultivating life, as its starting point, and especially on propagating ecofriendly organic farming. Also, by supplying ecofriendly agricultural products directly to urban consumers without the “middlemen,” it has helped producers and consumers become, not those who compete to pursue their own interests through market transactions, but partners who depend on one another.

Jang Il-soon, a Saengmyung thinker, who exerted

a major influence on the Hansalim Movement, said, “To make the world sufficient and abundant by embracing humility, to delight in becoming frugal so that no one in the world has to starve, to enable even those who do us wrong to find a sanctuary in our love of humanity, that is the Hansalim spirit.” To spread this message even in the middle of a desolate, corrupted city, he said, is the meaning of Hansalim.

Park Jae-il, an agrarian activist who served as the first president of the Hansalim Movement, also said, “Let the producer take responsibility for sustaining the consumer’s life and the consumer for sustaining the producer’s livelihood.” In so saying, he advocated and led the movements for the unity of producers and consumers, direct rural-urban transactions, and ecofriendly organic farming.

The very name “Hansalim” consists of the words “han,” meaning one or all-encompassing,

and “salim,” meaning the act of resuscitating life or a set of activities that allow life forms to live symbiotically. “Hansalim” thus signifies individual, free living beings combining to form one great life community. In short, the Hansalim Movement is a comprehensive movement for a community of life and freedom that seeks to usher in a new epoch.

Starting out with one small rice market in the outskirts of Seoul in December 1986, the Hansalim Movement expanded nationwide following the public delivery of *Hansalim Manifesto* in 1989. As of 2021, more than 2,200 Hansalim agricultural producers and 120 some processing centers work together to produce and process ecofriendly organic agricultural products. At 226 Hansalim markets located in cities throughout the country, ecofriendly organic agricultural products and traditional foods made from them are supplied to tens of thousands of consumers daily. In 2014 the International

Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM – Organics International) awarded Hansalim its 4th One World Award in saying, “Most likely it is the most impressive and successful organic project in the world.” “A movement of farmers and consumers…based on mutual trust,” “Hansalim is not only cultivating—in the best sense of the word—its radical roots, but also manages to stay truly radical on its road to a huge federation,” as it fights to leave the future generations “a world free of nuclear power plants and GMO” among other legacies.

As of 2021, Hansalim operates as a global non-profit cooperative corporation with 750,000 members, and *Hansalim Manifesto* has been made available in English, Japanese, Chinese, and Thai translations.

Citation for Footnotes

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Hansalim is a community that brings together 2,300 producers dedicated to life-nurturing farming practices that help preserve nature and 780,000 cooperative members who as consumers share their dedication and concern.

The expression “Hansalim” signifies that, just as all living beings form one continuation of life, nature and humanity continue to live on together.

Hansalim represents a new cultural movement that seeks to realize in the midst of our daily living a life lived in harmony with nature and in cooperation with our fellow human beings.

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