

# ***Laudato Si'* and the Family-School Complementariness in Japanese Society: Towards A Culture of Encounter and An Ethics of Ecology**

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**Abstract:** In the final chapter of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis speaks of the importance of family as the primary locus for ecological education in that for him the family offers a context in which respect for the other, order, and self-restraint are learned practices of social hygiene that protect and foster a culture of shared life. It is this culture of shared life, which the Pope understands to be a culture of encounter, that is both created and shaped by the primary community of family and its determinate power.

Looking beyond the family, however, the community of school since the Showa era has become a critically important social institution for the fundamental cultural and attitudinal development of persons within Japanese society. Schools therefore occupy a place of formation paralleling, and in many ways surpassing, the importance of the family for the moral development of Japanese children. This is not to say that family life in Japan is non-influential in shaping the character and identity of Japanese children in significant ways. Rather the recognized importance of school life in Japan for the formation of socially acceptable behavior from a very early age—in some situations teachers assuming the role of parents to adolescents in a traditional Western sense—should be considered a symbiotic social construction in relation to the family for which the development of an ethics of ecology in Japan must take account. Care for the environment therefore and its rehabilitation through sustainable ecological attitudes and practices calls for mutually reinforcing and cooperative education in both the home and school in Japan.

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Together with the family, which Pope Francis quoting Saint John Paul II believes is the heart of the culture of life, schools shoulder a large share of responsibility in Japanese society for the formation of authentic human growth. The intimacy of schools in the rearing of the Japanese calls for a collaborative response to the current environmental crisis between these two important social constructs. In consideration of these matters, this paper offers a cultural perspective from Japan on the evolving pedagogical importance of *Laudato Si'* and its message of ecological conversion to the world for a civic and political love that includes nature. By recognizing the symbiotic relationship between family and school in Japanese society, educators and parents can be in a better position to develop and promote an ethics of ecology for an island nation whose cultural traditions praise the harmony and beauty of the natural world.

**Keywords:** *Laudato Si'*, Catholicism, education, Japanese society, Catholic social ethics

## Introduction

Japan is an archipelago comprised of four main islands surrounded by thousands of smaller islands. From Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south, the country's diverse landscape has provided a fanciful setting for a proliferation of folk stories and fables whose characters bridge the worlds of the natural and supernatural. The environment in Japanese mythology is infused by the presence of kami or spirit, which animates all life.<sup>1</sup> From this central metaphysical belief is derived a rich cultural tradition that expresses the nation's aesthetic ideals and deep identification with its natural surroundings. With an appreciation for nature characterized by an emotional sensitivity to change and the impermanence of life, the Japanese have held that human beings and nature are essentially the same, rooted, according to Saito, in a single "principle of existence."<sup>2</sup>

Today, as Japan faces the crises of ecological destruction and cultural deterioration which mark consumer capitalist societies around the world, the Catholic Church has issued an urgent appeal "to seek a sustainable and integral development" for the future of the planet.<sup>3</sup> With Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, *On Care for Our Common Home*, a new horizon has been reached in Catholic social teaching. The document's reparatory intent, with respect to conventional

<sup>1</sup> Juliet Piggott, *Japanese Mythology* (London: Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> Yuriko Saito, "The Japanese Appreciation of Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 25, no. 3 (March 1985): 239-251, accessed June 7, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/25.3.239>.

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Church and Francis, *Praise Be To You: Laudato Si', Encyclical Letter*, (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), par. 13, accessed June 7, 2017, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

Christian views on human dominion and redemption challenges what Pope Francis describes as the “obstructionist attitudes” and resistance to a “universal solidarity” that stand in the way of global change.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the Pontiff’s insistence in the encyclical on developing an integral human ecology required for balancing the interactions between human social systems and environmental systems grounds itself in a theological anthropology of authentic human growth which begins in the community of family.

In Japan where the traditional social virtues of cooperation, harmony, and self-restraint are still highly esteemed and taught, schools play a critical role in instilling these values in the minds of students. The development of an ethics of ecology therefore if it is to be effective in leveraging a morality, which is deeply part of Japan’s cultural consciousness, must seek a pedagogy that utilizes the interdependent relationship between the community of school and that of the home. Considering the importance of both family and school in Japanese society for the development of social ethics, this paper offers a cultural perspective from Japan on the evolving importance of *Laudato Si’* and its message of ecological conversion to the world for a civic and political love that includes nature. By understanding the connection between family life and school life in Japan, educational policies can be developed that aim at teaching environmentally sustainable living to children for the future of the Japanese nation and the planet.

### **A Culture of Shared Life**

The dignity of the human person within Catholic theology requires a careful consideration of the forms of social arrangement in which people find themselves. Since Catholicism is also transnational when considered against the backdrop of the modern sovereign nation-state system in which it is embedded,<sup>5</sup> a critique of the use of political power and economic distribution as well as the structural causes of social dysfunction by Church leaders is legitimated when understood from this vantage point. The current tradition of Catholic social teaching, inaugurated by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 with the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor), has sought to address both Catholic clergy and laity alike on the challenges of establishing social justice between peoples and societies. At a time when the political world system is being pressured by the contemporary process of globalization, with

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., [14].

<sup>5</sup> José Casanova, “Globalizing Catholicism and the Return to a “Universal” Church,” in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, ed. Susanne H. Rudolph and James Piscatori, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 121-144.

its attendant nuclear and environmental challenges, the Catholic Church has sought through its social teaching to expand its influence by eliciting the cooperation of not only “all men and women of good will” but of “every person living on this planet.”<sup>6</sup> In building a future that recognizes the intrinsic worth of every human life, the Church believes that all human beings must cooperatively see themselves as dependent upon the environment and a part of it. “Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.”<sup>7</sup>

In the view of the Church, therefore, interdependency as a natural law that binds the freedom of persons to one another as well as to the environment entails the scrutiny of “lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies” that would curtail authentic human development.<sup>8</sup> An integral ecology according to the Church is a pattern for human living capable of honestly reflecting and thereby supporting genuine collective and personal growth; growth that is in harmony with the laws of nature and thereby sustainable. The linkages between the environment and the economic, social, cultural, and what the Church calls the daily life conditions or settings in which men and women live and work, mutually impact and reinforce the challenges humanity faces. These challenges require systems thinking that supports the normative principle of the common good as the foundation for a practice of morality and a culture of shared life that foster the health and welfare of societies. The common good is “the central and unifying principle of social ethics,”<sup>9</sup> since it allows individuals to achieve fulfillment as creatures encountering one another within the interdependent systems of order found in nature.

### **Family: The Primary Social Group**

Encouraging “a culture of encounter,” rather than “a culture of fragmentation,”<sup>10</sup> between persons whereby social norms support an authentic process of discovery in human relations is a way of life that begins as stated in *Laudato Si'*, in the family. The family as the primary social group is the essential community according to Catholic teaching from which the institutional character of society gradually evolves from the personal and local to the national and international.<sup>11</sup> The family therefore is the

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<sup>6</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si'*, par. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 139.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 156.

<sup>10</sup> Catholic Church and Francis, *Family and Life: Pastoral Reflections* (Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press, 2015), 124.

<sup>11</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si'*, par. 142.

genesis of community life and an incubator for a social ecology outside of the home, which ultimately impacts the environment. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes:

In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures. In the family we receive an integral education, which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity. In the family we learn to ask without demanding, to say “thank you” as an expression of genuine gratitude for what we have been given, to control our aggressivity and greed, and to ask forgiveness when we have caused harm. These simple gestures of heartfelt courtesy help to create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings.<sup>12</sup>

The family is identified by the Pope as the locus for ecological education since it is the first context for the formation of community values. The norms of the family should be inclusive of environmental concerns since the attitudinal structuring of the family’s morality, which unites the two dimensions of the human person, “the personal and the familial-communitary-social,”<sup>13</sup> embraces a respect for all life reflected in the development of the virtues. According to Benedict XVI, “family life is the first and irreplaceable school of social virtues, such as respect for persons, gratuitousness, trust, responsibility, solidarity, cooperation.”<sup>14</sup> A social hygiene that fosters a culture of shared life is created and shaped by the primary community of the family and its determinate power to influence the ordering of larger social norms and practices based on the personal acquisition of virtues such as responsibility, solidarity, and cooperation. “The law of the family,” according to Francis, “is the law of conjugal love, it is communion and participation, not domination.”<sup>15</sup> Family life according to Church teaching should find its center and guiding compass by this law, which is “free gift and love,”<sup>16</sup> thereby determining the sustainability of human cultures, economies, and the footprint of human life upon the environment.

### **Cultural and Attitudinal Development of Persons within Japanese Society**

School is the first organized community outside of the home which individuals in economically developed nations such as Japan experience over

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., par. 213.

<sup>13</sup> Francis, *Family and Life*, 58.

<sup>14</sup> Catholic Church and Benedict XVI, *Pastoral Visit to the Archdiocese of Milan and 7<sup>th</sup> World Meeting of Families*, (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, June 1-3, 2012), 2, accessed May 20, 2016, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20120603\\_milano.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120603_milano.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Francis, *Family and Life*, 59.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 60.

an extended period of their lives. According to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Students in OECD countries attend an average of 4,553 hours of instruction during primary school and an average of 2,922 hours during lower secondary education.”<sup>17</sup> Excluding extra-curricular activities, outside classroom instruction and/or after school classes, etc., the average total compulsory instruction time for primary and lower secondary students of 7,475 hours only partially captures the importance of school in terms of time spent in community outside the home. In Japan, where students spend approximately two full months more time in school than American students and generally longer days including cleaning as well as Saturday activities depending on grade level, school life takes on the critically important function of socializing children to the demands of group cooperation and compliance with authority, adaptive dispositions, according to Hess and Azuma, favored in Japanese society.<sup>18</sup> Sugarman posited three areas critical in human development for morality: “impulse control, playing secondary roles, and acquaintance with the dominant culture/cultural initiation.”<sup>19</sup> In a sense, schools in Japan become a second home in which key social values continue to be learned, expressed, discussed, and shared as students study and play as a community comprised of individual personalities encountering one another and adjusting to life together.

In general, the Japanese method of education and socialization, according to Hess and Azumi, typically relies on modeling as a way of drawing students’ “attention to and close identification with others” while Western methods rely more heavily on “reward-based training strategies.”<sup>20</sup> What Hess and Azumi label the “osmosis” mode of cultural transmission preferred by the Japanese is an approach to schooling that leverages in their view nurturance, interdependence, and close physical proximity of teacher and student as a way of exposing and instilling in children adult values. The goal of the osmosis method it seems is to generate “a readiness on the part of the child to imitate, accept, and internalize such values.”<sup>21</sup> More Western styles of cultural transmission in education that include “direct instruction, injunctions, frequent

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<sup>17</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Indicator D1: How Much Time Do Students Spend in the Classroom?”, (OECD Publishing, 2014), 430, accessed May 30, 2016, [http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG2014-Indicator%20D1%20\(eng\).pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG2014-Indicator%20D1%20(eng).pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Robert D. Hess and Hiroshi Azuma, “Culture Support for Schooling: Contrasts Between Japan and the United States,” in *Education and Training in Japan*; Volume II, ed. Thomas Rohlen and Christopher Björk (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1998), 3-17.

<sup>19</sup> Barry Sugarman, *The School and Moral Development*, (London: Croom Helm, 1973), 12-17.

<sup>20</sup> Hess and Azumi, 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

dialogue, and explanations” are used as well.<sup>22</sup> However, Japanese preferences in teaching cultural values favor socialization “without injunctions and intentional teaching” in the area of social ethics and cultural values.<sup>23</sup>

There can be however incongruences between home life and school life in terms of pre-adolescent and adolescent behavior in Japanese society due not only to variations in the stages of human development with respect to personal identity (Erikson), but also due to the profoundly important group distinctions made by the Japanese between the conceptual worlds of *uchi* (inside-group) and *soto* (outside-group). Lois Peak points to the different behavioral expectations placed on preschool children and the allowances made at home (*uchi*/inside-group) compared with school life (*soto*/outside-group). He asserts:

Because the two environments are so different, Japanese believe that it is the school’s responsibility to socialize children in-group behavior. By observing the transition from home to preschool, we have a window on the first major experiences in acculturation to group norms for individuals in Japanese society.<sup>24</sup>

School therefore offers a realm of social understanding for what it means to be Japanese that only begins to be encountered by the child in a significant way outside the home. The development of acceptable social behavior and a sense of cultural identity is provided through education, which will later be incorporated increasingly, but in varying ways based on the dynamics of personality and temperament, etc., back into the family.

According to Pope Francis, “Schools do not replace parents, but complement them.”<sup>25</sup> In Japan, however, despite the clear delineations that are made between private and public behavior, or in-group and out-group behavior such as life inside and outside of the home, schools are tasked with the indispensable job of instilling within children the social behaviors and attitudes required of adults who are to integrate themselves productively into Japanese society. Although the Pope sees in today’s world a crisis between schools, families, and the institutions of civic society where there should be a strong educational alliance,<sup>26</sup> in Japan fundamentally a tight

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>24</sup> Lois Peak, “Learning to Become Part of the Group: The Japanese Child’s Transition to Preschool Life,” in *Education and Training in Japan*; Volume II, ed. Thomas Rohlen and Christopher Björk (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1998), 35-65.

<sup>25</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si’*, par. 84.

<sup>26</sup> Catholic Church and Francis, *The Joy of Love: Amoris Laetitia, Apostolic Exhortation*, (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), par. 84, accessed June 7, 2017, <https://w2.vatican>.

coupling still exists between schools and families in terms of cooperating for the transmission of cultural values and social habits that support the individual's growth and acceptance into community life. One possible explanation for this tight coupling is that unlike many Western cultures that esteem the right to individualized values and preferences above group needs, Japanese social norms reward those who seek to achieve a sense of civic consensus and group harmony since these states of social consciousness are regarded as more important for community life. They are therefore valued above personal beliefs and desires. Pope Francis, reasoning from a Western perspective, that is a Western set of cultural traditions and assumptions, writes that education as delivered by the state in the form of schools should do so "in a subsidiary way, supporting the parents in their indeclinable role."<sup>27</sup> However, in addressing the commonly expressed objection that informal education given in the home by parents may be undermined by instruction provided by schools in Japan, Imamura states:

This objection is in direct contrast to the position of the Japanese mother who becomes the agent or delegate of a school who seems to have renounced her privilege of being a home educator juxtaposed with school teachers. Whereas the Japanese mother will accommodate to the principles of the school, the foreign mother may deliberately work to undermine principles with which she does not agree.<sup>28</sup>

The alliance between the family and school in Japan whereby parents, particularly the mother who assumes authority over domestic life from the father, delegates responsibility to the school for the education of her young in the cultural values of society is a social compact that is symbiotic; living in symbiosis, or having an interdependent relationship that is mutually supportive for the healthy socialization of the individual. The values of the home, that is the culture inside the home or family (*uchi*/inside-group) insofar as personal behavior may deviate from that which would be considered socially acceptable in public (*soto*/outside-group), are consistently transcended by the maintenance of a tight boundary separating these two worlds in Japanese culture. The boundary itself allows for personal expression within the strictly delineated space that is the home. Since most of the average person's life in Japan, from school to work, however, is carried out through long hours spent outside the home in community with others, personal viewpoints and wishes are

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<sup>27</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, par. 84.

<sup>28</sup> Anne E. Imamura, "The Interdependence of Family and Education: Reactions of Foreign Wives of Japanese to the School System," in *Japanese Schooling: Patterns of Socialization, Equality, and Political Control*, ed. James J. Shields, Jr. (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1989), 16-27.



regularly transcended in an effort to achieve a cooperative balance between persons and the maintenance of authority. Ultimately, public values become from an early age instilled increasingly into the character of Japanese children whereby children harmonize themselves to the expectations held within the home as well since the mother herself represents the embodiment of Japanese social values and authority having been raised and incorporated productively into the norms of the culture.

### **Egocentrism and Transcendence**

According to Catholic teaching, men and women live truly human lives because of culture, and cannot exist apart from culture, which determines the communicative and social dimensions of life, shaping human coexistence.<sup>29</sup> The profoundly dynamic nature of culture emerging out of human creativity requires dialogue as an intrinsic facet of the openness of Being in Catholic theology. Moreover, the ability to create culture as a living relationship with the world reflects the divine communion of the God of Love in whose image humanity, including the primary community of family, was created.<sup>30</sup> As essentially relational, therefore, men and women do not exist in isolation, but rather as persons living upon vertical and horizontal axes of engagement with God and the world. Living these dimensions of encounter authentically requires a going out from oneself to enhance one's identity.<sup>31</sup> With this view in mind, the Church reminds us that, "interdependency and globalization among peoples and cultures must be centered on the human person" as a transcendent potentiality.<sup>32</sup> It is only the human person that can recognize and further the development of the unity of the world as relational beings called to realize the profound potential of their lives when lovingly expressed in care for others and creation.

The paradigm of human life offered by the Church is based on the conviction that individuals are capable of living authentically insofar as they learn to give themselves over continually to an expanding horizon of awareness and concern,

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<sup>29</sup> For the importance of culture in the view of Catholic social teaching, see Congregation for Catholic Education (for Institutes of Study), *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), par. 30, accessed June 7, 2017, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20131028\\_dialogo-interculturale\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20131028_dialogo-interculturale_en.html); and Francis, *Laudato Si'*, par. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, par. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education (for Institutes of Study), *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools*, par. 38.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 38.

a disposition of character that is a mature orientation to living in the world. Self-transcendence is an expansion in consciousness that “has as its chief aim the going-beyond one’s present state in accordance with the transcendental imperatives: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, develop and, if necessary, change.”<sup>33</sup> Fostering a culture of dialogue and mutual transformation for the greater civic good of community pedagogically requires that we educate ourselves and our children to both “overcome prejudices by living and working in harmony” and “educate oneself by means of the other to a global vision and sense of citizenship.”<sup>34</sup>

According to the Congregation for Catholic Education:

This educational process, the search for peaceful and enriching co-existence must be anchored in the broadest understanding of the human being [*that is, as an interdependent and relational being*]. This must be marked by a continual search for self-transcendence, seen not just as a psychological and cultural effort to supersede all forms of egocentrism and ethnocentrism, but also as spiritual and religious fervor, in harmony with an understanding of integral and transcendent development, of both the individual and society.<sup>35</sup>

Building upon this theological anthropology of the essentially transcendental nature of human personhood, Pope Francis in Chapter 6 of *Laudato Si’* which addresses ‘Ecological Education and Spirituality’ writes that, “Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning.”<sup>36</sup> By this the Pope underscores his belief that the meaning of an ecological ethics which makes possible an environmentally sustainable ordering of human life is achieved through solidarity and love; the product of selfless sacrifice build upon a cultivation of “sound virtues” and “a new way of thinking.”<sup>37</sup> This alone will combat “the paradigm of consumerism” and “the throwaway culture” that he believes has taken hold of our societies.<sup>38</sup> “For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 96.

<sup>34</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education (for Institutes of Study), *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools*, par. Intro.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 45; [italics mine].

<sup>36</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si’*, par. 210.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 211; 215.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 215; 22; 43.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 217.

## Sensibilities and Ideational Contexts

The transcendent aspect of human life is deeply rooted in the Catholic educational vision and its intellectual tradition, which, according to Elias and Nolan, is open to all areas of human endeavor and culture.<sup>40</sup> Environmental ethics and sustainability as modern branches of knowledge being advanced at universities and research centers around the world offer the hope of transcendence in the human capacity to care for creation in ever more technologically sophisticated and resource driven economies with burgeoning populations. The drive to understand the impact of modern human economies on the environment is beginning to pay off; the sense that ecological concerns are gaining ever-increasing public attention and media exposure is hopeful. According to Paul Wapner, at the level of discourse and values, “shared understandings among people throughout the globe [which] act as determinants for present conditions on the planet,” is “a form of soft law” that can be harnessed to produce social change.<sup>41</sup> The sensibilities of whole societies, the beliefs and ideas that inform and direct human behavior, must be influenced if change is to occur. Wapner continues,

People process experience into action through general conceptions or interpretations of the world. It involves persuading them to abandon their anti-ecological or non-ecological attitudes and practices, and to be concerned about the environmental well-being of the planet. In short, it requires disseminating an ecological sensibility.<sup>42</sup>

An ecological sensibility, that is an understanding and concern for the well-being of the environment in which a person lives, is a way of being which needs to be scripted into the dominant cultural narrative to which society ascribes. As Stevenson notes, within Western liberal cultures, the democratic freedoms and individual liberties that inform thinking and the ascription of personal identity often eclipse the reality of human interdependency with the earth’s ecosystems, the recognition of which is fundamental to the long-term survival of the human species.<sup>43</sup> If conditions on the planet are to change both environmentally and socially, an authentic human ecology in the words of Pope Francis that recognizes human interdependency must be incorporated into the larger cultural traditions and collective narratives of our

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<sup>40</sup> John L. Elias and Lucinda A. Nolan, “Introduction,” in *Educators in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, eds. John L. Elias and Lucinda A. Nolan (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 2009), 1-19.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Wapner, “Greenpeace and political globalism,” in *The Globalization Reader*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, eds. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (Malden, MA. and Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 502-509.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.

<sup>43</sup> Nick Steven, *Education and Cultural Citizenship*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2011).

societies at all levels, which are taught and passed on from one generation of children to the next. Alasdair MacIntyre states:

A living tradition is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute tradition. Within a tradition the pursuit of goods extends through generations, sometimes many generations. Hence the individual's search for his or her good is generally and characteristically conducted within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual's life is a part.<sup>44</sup>

In Japan, the values of cooperation, harmony, and self-restraint are socially expressed as part of a larger tradition of Japanese identity and culture that is collectivist in character and therefore are seen as exceeding in importance individual liberties. Given this tradition, an opportunity exists to build within a culture that already places great importance on the critical need of self-limitation for human health and social well-being as prescribed in *Laudato Si'*.<sup>45</sup> The cultural traditions that we inherit from our past can assist in defining our future direction only if they are made to serve the greater goods of which they can potentially speak. Moreover, in Japan, where a deep interdependency with nature is already present within the sensibilities of the Japanese people in virtue of the cultural traditions they have received from their past which express the belief in the fundamental unity of human beings with their environment, the social narrative is already in place for the development of educational policies that would seek to leverage this tradition, and the public sentiments formed by it, for the transformation of society to more sustainable patterns of living.

### **Conclusion: A Symbiotic Relationship for a Sustainable Future**

Together with the family, schools shoulder a large share of the responsibility for the formation of character and social behavior in Japanese society. According to Goodman, “The assumption, held since the modern education system was founded in the early Meiji period (1868-1912), [is] that education should serve the interests of the state rather than the individual.”<sup>46</sup> It is ultimately in the interest of the state that moral education in Japan is still today centered officially on instilling “Japaneseness” in the minds of its young,<sup>47</sup> despite recent controversies over the exact content,

<sup>44</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), 222.

<sup>45</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, par. 208.

<sup>46</sup> Roger Goodman, “Japanese Education and Education Reform,” in *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, eds. Victoria Lyon Bestor and Theodore C. Bestor, with Akiko Yamagata, (London and New York: Routledge Press, 2013), 52-62.

<sup>47</sup> Hideki Maruyama, *Moral Education in Japan*, in the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 4, accessed June 8, 2017, <https://www.nier.go.jp/English/educationjapan/pdf/201303MED.pdf>.

intention, and meaning behind slated education textbook reforms as to what such nationalism may imply.<sup>48</sup>

The adaptive attitudinal and behavioral dispositions expected of the Japanese adult seem to be formed through a symbiotic relationship between home and school that sets expectations in the direction of conformity to cultural values and norms which are seen as representing the ideal, 'Japanese' person in continuity with a collective identity derived from the nation's history, traditions, and founding mythology.<sup>49</sup> Catholic social teaching emerging out of the Christian metanarrative of redemption that speaks of the inherent dignity and uniqueness of each individual life as created and loved by God offers complimentary lens for thinking about individual responsibility and conversion towards mannerisms and ways of being that harmonize personal desires, and the radical value of every human life, with the common good and healthy national and cultural interests. The message of *Laudato Si'*, if there could be just one, might be that human beings stand in a unique position to alter for better or for worse the conditions of life on the planet and it is up to every person to recognize the deep truths of collective interdependency and solidarity with the natural world (that is, a culture of encounter) for transcending a crisis that threatens all. An ethics of ecology that would incorporate the best of Japanese tradition and cultural values with the unifying vision of *Laudato Si'* should begin with the practical recognition that the educational goals of the state are accomplished by teachers and parents working in cooperation to instill in children ecological sensibilities through concrete policies and curricula that stress environmental preservation and sustainability and activities discussed and practiced at school as well as in the home. Pope Francis has continually stressed his stance that a practical application of gospel values based on concreteness and realism is to be favored over abstract norms.<sup>50</sup> Eco-

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<sup>48</sup> For the education textbook reform debat in Japan, see Michael Fitzpatrick, 'Japan's Divided Education Strategy,' *New York Times*, October 12, 2014, accessed July 8, 2017, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/13/world/asia/japans-divided-education-strategy.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/13/world/asia/japans-divided-education-strategy.html?_r=1); and Hakubun Shimomura, "Statement by Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan on the October 12 International New York Times Article "Japan's Divided Education Strategy,"" Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology – Japan, October 31, 2014, accessed July 8, 2017, <http://www.mext.go.jp/en/news/topics/detail/1372644.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> Hakubun Shimomura, "Statement by Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan on the October 12 International New York Times Article 'Japan's Divided Education Strategy,'" Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology – Japan, October 31, 2014, accessed, July 8, 2017, <http://www.mext.go.jp/en/news/topics/detail/1372644.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Antonio Spadaro S.J., "The Joy of Love: The Structure and Meaning of Pope Francis' Post-synodal apostolic Exhortation," *Cyberteologia*, April 8, 2016, accessed July 8, 2017, <http://www.cyberteologia.it/2016/04/the-joy-of-love-the-structure-and-meaning-of-pope-francis-post-synodal-apostolic-exhortation>.

friendly living requires a practical transcendence of self-interest in the day-to-day in favor of encountering the needs of others, which is a virtue attractively prominent in the Japanese system of cultural values. Given the principle role schools play in teaching children the social ethics of the culture and the supporting role of the family in affirming and reinforcing those values in Japanese society, a collaborative strategy would elicit from parents a more active, rather than passive, engagement in building awareness for environmental sustainability that bridges both social worlds. In light of a globalization that is changing Japan, and the Earth, this would be an encounter worth pursuing.<sup>PS</sup>

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