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The Concept of Painless Civilization and the Philosophy of Biological Evolution

With Reference to Jonas, Freud, and Bataille

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1. Introduction

In this paper I attempt to open a new horizon in the field of civilization studies by examining the concept of painless civilization from the perspective of the philosophy of biological evolution. Since the space is limited, the priority will be given to the clarification of an overall structure.

Painless civilization is a concept first proposed in my Japanese book *Painless Civilization* (Transview, 2003). This book has been translated into multiple foreign languages (a Korean version [entire book], an English version [Chapter 1], and a Turkish version [Chapter 1]).[1] Although this book was completed and published in 2003, I have a plan to expand it and write a second part. This paper is written as a draft for the forthcoming book.

2. Painless Civilization and Self-Domestication

Modern civilization has created systems that seek "comfort and pleasure" and eliminate "pain and suffering" and has spread them to every corner of our society. It is progressing like a great wave in many developed countries. I have called a civilization advancing in this direction a "painless civilization." At first glance, the elimination of pain and suffering seems like a good thing. Of course, it is considered good if unbearable suffering (such as the pain of terminal cancer) that we encounter in our lives can be avoided through technology. This is not the problem. The problem is that modern civilization is moving in a direction where various forms of suffering that we might experience in the future are going to be

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[1] The English translation of Chapter One of *Painless Civilization* is available as an open access PDF: Google Scholar.

erased from our lives, one after another, through preventive technologies (preventive elimination of pain). As a result, we are deprived of the "joy of life" in exchange for the preventive elimination of pain and suffering. The "joy of life" is a sense of joy that comes to us in an unpredictable way when we attempt to internally dismantle our psychological or existential framework and wish to be reborn.

This sense of joy is essential for us to live a meaningful life, but a painless civilization deprives us of this joy in exchange for pleasure and comfort. We know this very well, but we cannot separate ourselves from the systems that provide us with pleasure and comfort. Any effort to oppose the trend toward painlessness is going to be utilized as a driving force to promote a painless civilization. Since modern civilization is still on the way of getting to a painless civilization, we often encounter unavoidable suffering here and there, but there is no doubt that our society is moving toward reducing such suffering as much as possible. Our society is steadily becoming painless, and there is no easy way to reverse this trend. We live in a society where we cannot refute the question, "What's wrong with eliminating pain and suffering, which abound everywhere in the world?" Our society has become painless to the point where we can ask with a straight face, "What's wrong with becoming painless?"

A society that has become painless is the society where we are supposed to drown in a sea of sugar. We have a wish to escape from it, but our "desire of the body" (see below) does not allow us to do so, and we will end up either justifying staying inside a painless civilization or struggling in vain to get out of it. The book *Painless Civilization* was an exploration of the question how to face a painless civilization and live our lives meaningfully under these circumstances. Here I want to briefly summarize the theory of self-domestication, which prepared our theory of painless civilization.

Self-domestication is a concept proposed by Egon von Eickstedt and others in the 1930s. The idea is that humans have domesticated animals in the process of forming civilizations, but at the same time, humans have domesticated themselves as well. Since humans domesticate themselves, it is called self-domestication. This concept was expanded by Japanese scholar Hideo Obara. In Chapter One of *Painless Civilization*, I further extended it and summarized the main characteristics of self-domestication into the following seven points.[2]

[2] In the book *Painless Civilization* I listed eight characteristics, but in this paper I think seven is sufficient.

Self-domestication (Extended by Morioka)

1) Humans have placed themselves in an artificial environment.
2) Humans have built a system that can automatically supply food.
3) Technology has enabled us to overcome natural threats.
4) Humans have managed their reproduction (e.g., family planning and reproductive medicine).
5) Humans have tried to improve their quality of life (e.g. eugenics and recent reproductive technologies).
6) Control of death (e.g., elimination of unexpected deaths and death with dignity).
7) The emergence of voluntary subordination (voluntary subordination to a comfortable modern civilization).

Painless civilization is a form of civilization in which a system of self-domestication such as the above extends to every corner of society and develops in such a way that even rebellion against it is to be incorporated as a part of its driving force. What drives a painless civilization is the "desire of the body," which is considered to exist inside all human beings. It has five characteristics.

Desire of the Body[3]

1) Seek pleasure and avoid pain.
2) Maintain the current state of affairs and plan for stability.
3) Expand and increase itself if there is an opening.
4) Sacrifice other people.
5) Control lives, life, and nature.

The "desire of the body" built into us has created the driving force toward a painless civilization. Painless civilization is not a system that someone we do not know has created. It is something we ourselves have created. In this sense, a battle against a painless civilization is a battle against the desire of the body, and a battle against ourselves. To overcome it, a new type of desire, that is, the "desire of life" is introduced in the book. (See Chapter 5 of *Painless Civilization* for more details.)

By the way, when did a painless civilization begin? In the book *Painless*

[3] I use the word "desire" in singular because there is only one desire and this desire have five aspects.

Civilization, I have given two answers. One is that a painless civilization emerged at the beginning of the modernization of human society—when modern science, technology, capitalism, and industrial society began to develop on a large scale, specifically from the 19th to 20th centuries, and then spread to developed countries around the globe. According to this view, the movement toward painlessness can be understood as a kind of modernization. This is a fairly persuasive view. But if we think in this way, then it would mean that pre-modern human civilizations did not have painless civilization-like aspects, but is this correct? The second answer is the one that takes the beginning of a painless civilization even further back into the past. Humans started on the path to a painless civilization at least as early as the beginning of agro-pastoral civilizations. This is because the collective practice of managing nature for the purpose of maintaining the preferred environment and stability can be found in the beginning stages of agriculture and cattle raising.

I thought in this way for some time, but recently I have begun to harbor the idea that the beginning of a painless civilization may be much older than that. I have come to think that the sprout of a painless civilization actually dates back to the birth of life on earth, long before the birth of humankind. This means that the sprout of a painless civilization existed not only in human civilizations, but also in the life forms of pre-human creatures. This may seem like an outlandish idea, but there are some important points to which we must pay special attention. It was Hans Jonas' philosophy of biological evolution that inspired this idea.

3. Hans Jonas' Philosophy of Biological Evolution

Jonas published his magnum opus *The Phenomenon of Life* in English in 1966, followed by a German edition of the same book *Organismus und Freiheit* in 1973 (which was later retitled as *Das Prinzip Leben*). The German edition was substantially enlarged and revised. The following is a summary of his theory based on the German edition.[4]

Jonas views the four billion years of biological evolution on earth as an adventure in pursuit of greater freedom. At the forefront of this biological evolution, the human species has achieved the greatest breadth and depth of freedom. In mainstream European philosophy, it has been believed that what

[4] I have read the Japanese edition of the book, which is a splendid translation from the German book by Kazuyuki Hosomi and Ryo Yoshimoto. I have checked the important parts in German.

separates humans from other animals are reason and freedom. Humans are endowed with them, whereas other animals are not. Jonas, however, partially rejects this view. Freedom, he says, was already given to biological cells when they emerged in cellular form four billion years ago. Of course, this is no more than a sprouting form of freedom, but it is certain that it was freedom in a genuine form. The freedom that emerged on earth was brought elevated in the process of evolution. Jonas describes them in roughly three stages.[5]

The first stage of freedom is the "emergence of the cell" described above.

Primitive cells emerged on the primitive earth. (Current knowledge suggests that some of its components may have been flown in from outer space). It was like a single-celled bacterium. Its interior and exterior were separated by a cell membrane. Through this membrane, the cell took nutrients from outside into inside, produced substances and energy necessary for life, and expelled useless wastes to the outside of the cell membrane. This is called metabolism. Jonas sees the beginning of life in the emergence of cell metabolism. A closer look at the metabolic system reveals that this metabolic process eventually replaces all the substances that have made up the cell; however, even if all the constituent substances are replaced, the form of the cell remains the same and continues to exist. Here, a completely new mode of existence is born. Using Aristotle's distinction between matter (hyle) and form (eidos), Jonas argues that the identity of the *form* of the cell is established by the dynamic circulation of *matter* in the system of metabolism.

No matter how much the constituent substances are replaced, the cellular form itself remains identical. Jonas argues that life as a *form* is liberated from the dimension of the material circulation. This liberation from *matter* can be interpreted as the "freedom" that the cell has acquired. The first step of freedom, says Jonas, was the emancipation of *form* from its direct identification with *matter*. At the same time, however, we should note that cellular life ceases to exist once the material circulation stops. When that happens, the cell membrane ruptures, and all that remain will be a mere aggregate of discrete matter. In this sense, cellular life is crucially dependent on the material circulation. The life of a cell is on the one hand liberation from matter, but on the other hand, it is totally dependent on that matter. Jonas calls this sort of freedom "dependent freedom" or

[5] The three stages of biological evolution described below are those that Morioka summarized by reorganizing Jonas' ideas. Jonas himself did not use the term "three stages."

"impoverished freedom (bedürftige Freiheit)."[6] The life of a cell is nothing more than fragile dependence on the material circulation. This vulnerability or fragility is the most essential characteristic of life. Jonas' focus on cellular metabolism was influenced by the dynamic equilibrium model of organisms developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist contemporary with him. However, Jonas' idea of introducing the distinction between matter and form, and discovering the emergence of freedom there, is extremely original.

The second stage of freedom in biological evolution is the "emergence of the animal."

Animals perceive the outside world, move their bodies, and feel emotions. Unlike plants, animals must catch food located at a distance. To do that, they must perceive food that is located far away, chase it if it moves, and eventually catch and eat it. This is a hard labor, but it is a new kind of freedom that was acquired for the first time by animals. In order to chase food over a long period of time, they must have an inner desire for the food. Jonas argues that perception means an interest in spatially distant objects, and desire means an interest in objects to be acquired in the future, that is to say, an interest in temporally distant objects. This kind of interest in "distance" is what makes an animal, animal,[7] and this interest brought about waking consciousness in animals. This consciousness made animals know "the pain of hunger, the whip of fear, and the anxious toil of escape," and it brought about "pleasure (Lust)" and "pain (Leid)" in animals.[8] Let us note that pleasure and suffering, two of the central concepts of the theory of painless civilization, appear here in an impressive fashion.

The third stage of freedom in biological evolution is the "emergence of humankind." Here, Jonas focuses on "sight." While sight had already been acquired by animals, humans dramatically developed it to a new dimension.

First, humans became able to precisely predict the future. For example, we can predict where a visually captured moving prey will reach if it goes on in the same direction, and we can wait and catch the prey at the predicted location. While other animals also have this ability, humans have exceedingly sharpened it.[9]

Second, humans have developed the ability of intentional movement,[10] that is to say, the ability to move their body as they intend. Jonas associates this with

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[6] Jonas (1973), S.150.
[7] Jonas (1973), S.186-187.
[8] Jonas(1973), S.192.
[9] Jonas (1973), S.256.
[10] Jonas (1973), S.262.

the sight, but on the other hand, he seems to have interpreted it in an embodiment-like way. He writes that seeing is a function of the whole body, which can be expressed as a dynamic embeddedness in the environmental world.

Third, humans have the ability of abstraction.[11] This is the ability to separate *form* from *matter* and perceive the former, which is the decisive ability that has made humans what they are. This ability enabled them to draw the image of the perceived object. Jonas uses the words *homo pictor*[12] to emphasize the nature of humankind that paints images. The act of capturing images is a free creation, which can be found especially in painting and dancing. The important point here is that both are made by the hands of humans. This shows that the form captured by imagination can be expressed by the intentional movement of the human body. Jonas argues that this is the basis of all image formations and all technologies that humans have created.[13] Jonas suggests that today's technology was made possible by the ability of the bodily control, in other words, the ability to perceive abstract forms and draw images with their hands.[14] This is the goal of the adventure of freedom in biological evolution. However, this goal has not necessarily brought happiness to humankind. Today, humankind is threatened by technologies it has created. This is the underlying theme in Jonas' philosophy of technology.

4. Biological Evolution and Painless Civilization

The above is a summary of the three stages of the adventure of freedom in Jonas' philosophy of biological evolution. Let us examine this from the perspective of the theory of painless civilization.

The first stage is the "emergence of the cell." In this stage, the cell's form is maintained through metabolism. As long as metabolism through the membrane proceeds smoothly, the cell can maintain the current state of affairs and plan for stability.

The second stage is "the emergence of the animal." Jonas thinks that this is the stage where pleasure and suffering came into being. He also states that animals have desires and needs.

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[11] Jonas (1973), S.281.
[12] Jonas (1973), S.286.
[13] Jonas (1973), S.287.
[14] Jonas (1973), S.296.

In the third stage, the "emergence of humankind," humans created technologies to manage the external world and themselves as they wished. Their ability to predict the future prepared the act of preventive elimination of pain that is found in current civilization.

Viewed from this perspective, the two aspects of human "desire of the body" that drive painless civilization had already existed in living organisms before the advent of humankind.

Desire of the Body

1) Seek pleasure and avoid pain.
<< The emergence of the animal.
2) Maintain the current state of affairs and plan for stability.
<< The emergence of the cell.
3) Expand and increase itself if there is an opening.
4) Sacrifice other people.
5) Control lives, life, and nature.
<< The emergence of humankind.

As is evident, the aspects 1) and 2) already existed at the stages of the emergence of the cell and the animal. When I was writing the book *Painless Civilization*, I was thinking only of the things created by humans, and therefore I considered all five characteristics of the "desire of the body" to be unique to humankind, but I was mistaken. It was not the advent of humankind that enabled some aspects of the "desire of the body" to appear on the earth for the first time. When primitive cells appeared four billion years ago, the aspect of the "desire of the body" to "maintain the current state of affairs and plan for stability" emerged, and then, when animals appeared, the aspect of the "desire of the body" to "seek pleasure and avoid pain" emerged. And it was in animals that desires and needs began to appear. Thus, if we broaden our perspective, the development of characteristics of the "desire of the body" must be investigated not only in the history of human civilization, but also in the four billion years of biological evolution.

By the way, if we consider the history of the formation of characteristics of the "desire of the body" in the context of biological evolution on the earth, we must say that Jonas' three-stage theory does not suffice. Of course, Jonas' viewpoint is different from mine, because Jonas tried to look at biological evolution from the viewpoint of the adventure of *freedom*. However, from the

viewpoint of this paper, Jonas' theory must further be supplemented by the following two perspectives: "cell division and proliferation" and "the predatory behavior of a cell."

First, let us consider "cell division and proliferation."

Single-celled organisms do not live forever in their original form. After a certain period, they actively divide into two cells. At that time, the DNA set and cytoplasm inside the cell membrane are passed on to the two new cells. This is how cells proliferate, and it must have been the same for primitive bacteria that emerged on the earth four billion years ago. Primitive bacteria may have started out as a single cell encased in a cell membrane, trying to exist for as long as possible. At some point, however, they began to divide into two cells and multiply. Cell division is considered to have occurred one after another in favorable environmental conditions, and the number of primitive bacteria is considered to have increased rapidly. Cell division was a major event, comparable to the emergence of a cell encased in a cell membrane, because cell division made it possible for a single organism to survive beyond its individual survival limit and to dramatically increase its population. Cell division allows the same life form to survive in other lineages even if one of the cells dies after division. The more cells proliferate after division, the greater the probability that the same form of life will survive. If cell division had not occurred in primitive bacteria, there would have been no life left on earth. The cell membrane would have ruptured over time and the cell would have returned to a mere collection of matter.

If the emergence of cells enclosed by a cell membrane is considered the first major event of life, then cell division is the second major event. Without this second event, primitive bacteria would have ended up as a mere "metabolic machine." It would have been nothing more than a self-identical automaton that simply maintained its own form and function by taking in nutrients from outside the cell membrane and discarding wastes back out. Even if this self-identical cellular activity had continued for a billion years, it would have been nothing more than a metabolic machine that repeats the same thing endlessly and cannot be called life. It would be like an automated doll that takes in solar energy and repeats the same actions forever. Of course, as Jonas says, it may not be wrong to think that life as a form emerged when material metabolism through the cell membrane was established. Nevertheless, I believe that this was only a preparatory stage for life, and that we still had to wait until the activities of division and proliferation began in order for it to be called life. Since ancient times, it has been believed that

procreation is one of the necessary conditions for life. We must deeply reconsider its meaning.

Cell division is not merely the bisection of a cell that has grown in volume. Cell division is the creation of two new cells with nearly identical genomes, which is a precisely programmed, active event. It is unlikely that such a precise event was established out of the blue in primitive bacteria, but rather that after a long period of trial and error by a large group of bacteria, at some point a basic form of cell division was established.

The next issue to consider is "the predatory behavior of a cell."

Humans and animals engage in predatory behavior. It is also observed in unicellular organisms such as amoebas. The behavior of unicellular organisms eating other unicellular organisms is called phagocytosis.

How far back in the history of biological evolution can this behavior be traced? Organisms are classified into eukaryotes, which have a nucleus inside the cell membrane, and prokaryotes (eubacteria and archaea), which do not have such a nuclear structure. In biological evolution, prokaryotes appeared first, followed by eukaryotes. The prevailing view is that the emergence of eukaryotes occurred when a unicellular prokaryote predated another unicellular prokaryote (endosymbiotic theory). A part of the cell of the eaten organism remained in the cell of the predator and they entered a kind of symbiotic relationships. (Similar events are believed to have occurred when unicellular eukaryotes predated cyanobacteria.) Researchers at the University of Tsukuba captured the scanning microscopy images of unicellular prokaryotes predating other prokaryotes in 2019.[15] In their images, prokaryotes were eating other prokaryotes by indenting the surface of their cells. This suggests that predation by unicellular prokaryotes may have occurred at a very early stage of biological evolution. In any case, there is no doubt that predation by unicellular prokaryotes and eukaryotes occurred before the emergence of animals.

The above correspond exactly to the two aspects of the "desire of the body," that is to say, with the emergence of cell division and proliferation, the aspect of the "desire of the body" to expand and increase itself if there is an opening was born, and with the emergence of predatory behavior of cells, the aspect of the "desire of the body" to sacrifice other living organisms was born. (The fourth entry in the "desire of the body" included the words "other people," but these

[15] https://ura.sec.tsukuba.ac.jp/archives/19938 (Visited on March 14, 2022.)

words should be replaced with “other living organisms” in this context.)

Desire of the Body

1) Seek pleasure and avoid pain.
<< The emergence of the animal.
2) Maintain the current state of affairs and plan for stability.
<< The emergence of the cell.
3) Expand and increase itself if there is an opening.
<< The emergence of cell division and proliferation.
4) Sacrifice other living organisms.
<< The emergence of predatory behavior of cells.
5) Control lives, life, and nature.
<< The emergence of humankind.

Thus, all five characteristics of the “desire of the body” are considered to have come into being at different times in biological evolution. For the sake of clarity, let us rearrange this in chronological order.

History of the Desire of the Body

The emergence of the cell.
>> 2) Maintain the current state of affairs and plan for stability.
The emergence of cell division and proliferation.
>> 3) Expand and increase itself if there is an opening.
The emergence of predatory behavior of cells.
>> 4) Sacrifice other living organisms.
The emergence of the animal.
>> 1) Seek pleasure and avoid pain.
The emergence of humankind.
>> 5) Control lives, life, and nature.

We can see from this that those five aspects of the “desire of the body,” which are the driving force of a painless civilization, were not something that emerged simultaneously with the advent of humankind. Surprisingly, as many as four of the five aspects of the “desire of the body” had emerged before the advent of humankind. That is to say, the four aspects of the “desire of the body” had been built up, one by one like building bricks, during the four billion years of biological

evolution from the emergence of the cell to the emergence of humankind, and the fifth aspect of the "desire of the body" was finally added with the emergence of humankind; thus, today's "desire of the body" was completed. Readers might wonder whether a cell, which does not have self-consciousness, can have inner desires. Of course, a cell cannot have desires, hence, strictly speaking, I should say instead that the "desire of the body" belongs only to humans, though four characteristics that correspond to the four aspects of the "desire of the body" can be found in cells and animals.

In the book *Painless Civilization*, we discussed the overwhelming strength of a painless civilization from all angles, but the fundamental cause of its strength remained a mystery. I believe that this paper has provided a strong hypothesis for revealing the secret of its strength. A painless civilization possesses overwhelming strength because it is supported by the five aspects of the "desire of the body," which has been accumulated through four billion years of biological evolution leading up to the emergence of humankind. In the book *Painless Civilization*, I have advocated struggling against the stream of a painless civilization. This is to struggle against the accumulation of four billion years of biological evolution flowing into our civilization and our society.

This also means to fight against my own "desire of the body." By projecting the five aspects of the "desire of the body" that have developed in biological evolution onto my personal human body, I may be able, for the first time, to give some explanation for the tough feeling I experience when I fight against my own desires.

The human body is made up of myriad diverse cells. These cells are imprinted with "metabolism," "cell division and proliferation," and "predatory behavior," all of which were acquired through the process of biological evolution. All cells that make up the human body maintain themselves through metabolism. Cells divide to renew themselves, and old cells are destroyed and removed. The unbalanced proliferation of cells is suppressed. When the balance is violated, they proliferate like cancer cells. Some immune cells engage in predatory behaviors. These behaviors of the cells are not considered to be directly connected to the "desire of the body" at the personal human level (that is, for example, the desire to pursue self-interest at the sacrifice of strangers). However, it may be possible that various aspects of the three "desires of the body" at the cellular level are deeply embedded in the human body and have some actual influence on human behavior, since human beings were born as a result of the formation of complex

structures created by a large number of cells equipped with those tendencies. Humans are cellular beings, having evolved from cells. It is often said that humans are animal beings, but the fact that humans are cellular beings is not so often discussed. In the theory of painless civilization, however, not only must the question of what should be done at the level of humanity as animal beings that avoid pain and seek pleasure be asked, but also the question of what should be done at the level of humanity as cellular beings that seek to maintain the current state of affairs and plan for stability, to proliferate at any opportunity by pushing others away, and to predate on others, must be asked.

I have spoken of the "desire of the body" in two ways. One is to plot the timing of the emergence of the five aspects of the "desire of the body" on the history of biological evolution, and the other is to see them inside an individual human being. Although the former is the straightforward interpretation of the "desire of the body," I believe that the latter can also be meaningful when considering painless civilization.

As we have seen in the above discussion, the four characteristics that correspond to the four aspects of the "desire of the body" found in humans were not ones created by humans. Those four characteristics were created in the process of biological evolution long before humans, and with the emergence of humans, they were brought together by the fifth aspect of the "desire of the body," namely, the desire to manage people's lives, life, and nature. At this time, the integrated desire of the body was finally established and a painless civilization was launched.

Thinking in this way, we can shed new light on the difference between "painless civilization" and the "desire of the body." What drives a painless civilization is the "desire of the body." However, a painless civilization does not exist in the world of bacteria or animals. Some characteristics clearly existed in them, but they did not launch a painless civilization. Only humans were able to launch it. In Chapter 2 of this paper, I wrote that the sprout of a painless civilization may have been present in the process of biological evolution prior to humankind. However, this is incorrect. What emerged prior to humankind were not the sprouts of a painless civilization, but rather some characteristics that correspond to the four aspects of the "desires of the body." We must say that a painless civilization emerged after the advent of humankind.

With this in mind, let us return to the original question of when a painless civilization began. We can say that a painless civilization began when humankind invented technologies to manage human lives, life, and nature. Those technologies

are ones that predetermine a preferred path for human lives, life, and nature, and then drives them to follow that path. These technologies are operated by collective human beings and passed on from generation to generation. And when technologies take root in a society, they begin to adversely affect the perceptions and behavioral patterns of the people living in that society. Herein lies the difference between individual skills and technology. Technology extends beyond time and space, transforming the very people and society that created it. The first technologies that humans acquired were probably river improvement and water flow management, agriculture to selectively grow and harvest the plants they wanted, and stockbreeding through the management of animal reproduction. Thus, we can assume that the primitive form of a painless civilization was launched when humans began flood control, agriculture, and stockbreeding. Of course, humans invented stone tools and other instruments, and with their advanced intelligence, they built complex hunter-gatherer societies. But that never led to a form of a painless civilization.[16]

The above discussion may provide a new answer to the fundamental philosophical question, "What makes a human being human?" In mainstream Western philosophy since ancient Greece, what makes a human being human, or what separates human beings from animals, has been considered reason and freedom.[17] From the perspective of the theory of painless civilization, however, what makes us human is painless civilization. Looking at it in more detail, the fifth "desire of the body," which was the direct driving force to launch a painless civilization, that is to say, the combination of the desire to control human lives, life, and nature, and the technology that makes such a control possible, is what makes us human. Of course, it is true that humans have maximally developed reason and freedom, but reasoning abilities are widely found in the animal world (recent studies have discovered advanced reasoning abilities in various animals), and according to Jonas, freedom has existed since the primitive cell. Taking this one step further, we can say that what makes us human is the ability to unite the five aspects of the "desire of the body," which has been gradually formed over four billion years of biological evolution, by using a controlling reason to manage

[16] The hunter-gatherers who have continued to the present day may in this sense be said to be the people who did not follow the path to a painless civilization. Further research is needed on this point.
[17] Of course, this is not always the case in non-Western philosophy. In ancient Indian philosophy, for example, the ontological boundary between humans and animals is not so clearly drawn, since it is based on the assumption of reincarnation of sentient beings. If there is a difference, it is in the fact that only humans can achieve enlightenment.

human lives, life, and nature, in other words, the ability that has transformed the five aspects into a huge trend called painless civilization.[18] It is not the presence or absence of reason that separates humans from animals. Rather, what separates humans from animals is whether their controlling reason has succeeded in uniting the five aspects of the "desire of the body." The dynamic ability to raise what has been accumulated from the starting point of biological evolution to the unity of a painless civilization by means of controlling reason is what makes human beings human.[19] In this sense, we can say that painless civilization is the most fundamental possibility of humankind, which makes humans especially unique in their place in biological evolution. This is a new answer to the question, "What is human being?" A painless civilization is the result of 10,000 years of human civilization, which is now in the process of depriving humans of the "joy of life," and is driving them to a state of collective living corpses. This is my view of contemporary civilization and its relation to the philosophy of biological evolution.

By the way, there are two other thinkers who advanced their thoughts by focusing on the cells of living organisms: Sigmund Freud and Georges Bataille. I would like to take a brief look at their arguments here.

In his paper "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud speculated on the birth of life on earth. He argues that at a certain time on the earth, the sprout of life emerged from lifeless matter. However, because the sprout of life had the desire to return to a lifeless state, the sprout of life simply died out being guided by this desire, and this cycle was repeated continuously over a long period of time.[20] At some point, however, this primitive life deviated greatly from this repetition, gave birth to a new life, and finally came to reach the goal of death.[21] Here arose a new desire, the desire to live for as long as possible and then die. This was a desire that attempted to resist the "desire for death (Todestrieb)." Freud calls this the "desire for life (Lebenstrieb)."[22] Freud writes that the desire for death moves forward,

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[18] Of course, we can say that the fifth aspect transformed the four aspects of the "desire of the body" and established a painless civilization.

[19] If ancient hunter-gatherer societies had never developed a painless civilization, does that mean that the people living there would have not been human? Not necessarily. They had the ability to develop a painless civilization at the level of brain function, but they did not actually develop it. They were categorically human, but they did not actually choose to be the bearers of a painless civilization. This point also deserves detailed consideration. The argument that hunter-gatherer societies were better than agro-pastoral societies also needs to be examined.

[20] Freud (1925), S.228.

[21] Freud (1925), S.228-229.

[22] Freud (1925), S.245.

trying to achieve the goal of life, that is death, as quickly as possible; however, conversely, the desire for life attempts to return from the path toward death and prolong the period of lifetime before death.[23] It is not clear what point in biological evolution Freud refers to in his theory. From our point of view, the stage at which life was created anew and then simply died out referred to the emergence of primitive single cells. There, metabolism in a single cell was established, but if the function of metabolism stops for some reason, the cell was supposed to be dismantled and return to the aggregate of its original substances.

The next event, a deviation from the pathway of primordial life, can be interpreted as signifying the cell division and proliferation. By dividing itself, the cell resisted death and tried to keep its form alive for as long as possible. Freud considers this to be "sex," but since sex (sexual reproduction) appeared much later in biological evolution, we must say that Freud's idea of seeing the sex in cell division is simply wrong. Nevertheless, Freud's insight should be highly evaluated in that he attached great philosophical significance to the events of cell division and proliferation. And from Freud's perspective, the origin of neurosis in humans could be identified at the moment when cells began to divide and multiply, in defiance of the primitive cell's desire to die as soon as possible. The influence of Schopenhauer's birth negation (antinatalism) on Freud was apparent, which I pointed out in my 2020 Japanese book, *Is It Better Never to Have Been Born?*[24] Freud's ideas above are closely connected to my theory of the "desire of the body."

In 1957, Bataille published one of his major works, *Eroticism*. This book speculates on eroticism in the human body, mind, and sanctity, and there we find a huge Freudian influence. As a preparation for clarifying eroticism, Bataille discusses the cell division of unicellular organisms. Let us take a brief look at his discussion.[25] A cell divides itself and two new cells are born, but the two new cells are not identical to the first cell, Bataille argues. The first cell dies after division, and in exchange for its death, two new cells come into being. According to Bataille, a cell in the process of dividing has a very strange mode of existence. First, in the process of division, the first original cell is continuous with the two newly born cells. However, once division is completed, the two newly formed cells become discontinuous with each other. In more detail, the pre-dividing cell

[23] Freud (1925), S.231.
[24] Morioka (2020), Chapter Three.
[25] I would like to thank Professor Isao Fukushima for informing me that Bataille talks about cell division in that book.

is an independent, discontinuous entity, separated from other cells. When cell division begins, the pre-dividing cell is in continuity with the two cells that are in the process of being newly formed, but at the same time, the pre-dividing cell can also be considered to be in the process of disappearing into the two new cells. Bataille calls this mode of existence "the suspended moment (un moment suspendu)."[26] When division is over, the disappearance of the pre-dividing cell is finished and two new, discontinuous cells emerge. In the process of cell division, there occurs a change in the mode of existence from discontinuity to continuity to discontinuity. And this, Bataille argues, affects the human psyche as well. He believes that humans have this kind of "nostalgia for lost continuity (nostalgie de la continuité perdu)," and this is the cause of eroticism.[27]

Bataille says that living cells are continuously becoming more and more charged with energy, so there is always an "excess (surabondance)" inside these cells. The cell with accumulated energy moves from a peaceful calm to a state of wild upheaval, invoking "the violence of separation," which causes the cell to split into two. By this violence of separation, the first cell dies and new cells are born.[28] Bataille's view that the cell division means the death of the pre-dividing cell is important.[29]

Let us compare this with Freud. Freud considered that the death of a cell occurs when the cell returns to nothingness through the "desire for death." Bataille, on the other hand, considered that the death of a pre-dividing cell occurs when the cell divides itself due to an overflow of energy. The two thinkers have completely different views of the death of a cell. However, it is striking that both Freud and Bataille thought that cells can positively *choose* to die from their own internal necessity.

According to Bataille, nostalgia for lost continuity that was established in the process of cell division is embedded in the human psyche, and this nostalgia constitutes the basis of our eroticism. Bataille also suggests that the reason why human eroticism is always associated with death can be attributed to the fact that the first cell dies through cell division. In any case, it is revolutionary that Bataille found in the event of cell division an important meaning different from Freud. And I further differ from both of them in finding an aspect of the "desire of the

[26] Bataille (1957), p.97.
[27] Bataille (1957), p.19-21.
[28] Bataille (1957), p.97-98.
[29] Of course, contemporary biology does not think so. They think that the division allows the first cell to replicate itself and survive.

body" in cell division.

Bataille says that in the act of sexual love, humans attempts to erase themselves into the state of continuity through intercourse. Of course, it is impossible to actually melt into the other, but eroticism may be an attempt to reach such an annihilation of the self. Bataille writes that what is at work in eroticism is always the dissolution of a social and solid form of life.[30] Bataille's theory of eroticism, which has dissolution and annihilation of self at its core, goes in the opposite direction of the "desire of the body," which defends the current state of affairs and stability, and in this respect, Bataille's idea of eroticism is in line with the theory of painless civilization. The "desire of life,"[31] which I advocated in the book, has something in common with Bataille's eroticism. The "desire of life" and eroticism can be a source of possibility to dismantle the movement toward painlessness in our society. I would like to discuss this point further in the future.

In the above, we have made a rough sketch of a new idea about the relationship between painless civilization and the philosophy of biological evolution. Twenty years have passed since the publication of the book *Painless Civilization*. Although there is no need to change its basic arguments, I believe that it is high time to summarize, in English, the development of my speculations since then. This paper is a first step toward that end.

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[30] Bataille (1957), p.24.

[31] The "desire of life" is a different concept from the "joy of life." See Morioka (2003, 2021).

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