

As a high school student, I had honestly resigned myself to the belief that solving large-scale issues like sustainability and peace was beyond my reach. However, after reading Wangari Maathai's writing, I began to think that by holding such a view, I might actually be pushing these problems further from their solutions. Of course, I am not arrogant enough to believe that I alone can resolve these issues. Yet, it is an undeniable fact that if I give up, there will be one fewer person working towards their resolution. Therefore, I believe it is important for me, as well as for everyone who will take on future responsibilities, to think about these issues. At the very least, for those who have the capacity to think.

However, merely thinking is not enough if done aimlessly. Although thinking is undoubtedly better than not thinking at all, it will not lead to progress or initiate action. So, what should be done? I can answer this question with firm conviction: it is to accumulate knowledge. Before contemplating issues, one must absorb and digest information in their own way. Knowledge is necessary for thought. For example, in literary studies, knowing that mid-19th century French literature had many realist works or that aestheticism was an antithesis to progressivism can broaden and deepen one's thinking. Additionally, understanding how people in the past thought is also beneficial.

Currently, this is what I am doing—learning about Wangari Maathai's thoughts, interpreting them in my own way, and writing about them. Through the repetition of such activities, I believe we, as humans, are nurtured. At the same time, the intentions of our predecessors are carried forward. Those who inherit this knowledge and mindset expand it to the world, and activities based on their beliefs in what is right begin. This is how the future is created. Even if starting as just one person or as a high school student, there is something we can do for a better future. That is exactly what I have just described. Initially, starting from one person, if that spreads to the world, it can create a significant wave that involves the world, much like Wangari Maathai did. Therefore, first, I will follow in the footsteps of those who came before me and acquire knowledge. Thinking will come afterward. Believing that such steps will lead to room for future contemplation, I, at least, wish to continue learning.

Additionally, as she said, we have the energy and creativity to shape a sustainable future, but at the same time, we also run the risk of using them in the wrong direction or missing the opportunity to use them. To avoid that, I believe we need knowledge.