



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung



Environmental Values Emerging from Cultures & Religions of the ASEAN Region

One Day Conference

Thursday, 18th September 2014
8.00-17.30

Organized by
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Thailand, Bangkok
&
Assumption University of Thailand, Bangkok
Guna Chakra Research Center - Graduate School of Philosophy & Religion

Venue: FourWings Hotel: Room Srinakarin 1, Level 9
Srinakarin Road, Hua Mak, Bangkok, Bangkok

No registration fee
For registration please contact: 02-300-4543 ext. 1325
email: philo_religion@au.edu

Conference Rationale and Objective

Climate change is being experienced in many parts of the world. At the same time there is a continuous increase in the demand of energy. The availability of alternative, green, or sustainable energy production and technologies have not reversed the economies' growing external effects on ecosystems. Many analysts argue that an increasing awareness of environmental values can lead to changes in consumer behavior and policy. This conference is especially interested in cultural, religious and philosophical/ethical values related to sustainable, intergenerational, caretaking, organic, and holistic approaches to nature that are currently (and had been traditionally) emerging in the ASEAN region. This conference aims at detecting, discussing, (r)evaluating, and disseminating environmental values emerging in the ASEAN region in 1) current interdisciplinary discourses and in 2) traditional contexts of religions and cultures. The conference hopes to explore possibilities for promoting alternative/sustainable energy production and responsible energy consumption.

DRAFT 2014-08-27--1400 Programme:

08.00-09.00	REGISTRATION	
09.00-09.45	OPENING	
	Master of Ceremony: Aj. Glen Chatelier	Director, International Affairs, Assumption University
	Asst. Prof. Dr. Warayuth Sriwarakuel, Dean Graduate School Philosophy & Religion, AU	Opening Remarks on behalf of Graduate School of Philosophy & Religion, Assumption University
	Mr. Michael Winzer, Resident Representative, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung	Opening Remarks on behalf of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
	Rev. Bro. Dr. Bancha Saenghiran , f.s.g., President, Assumption University	Presidential Address
09.45-10.15	Morning Tea Break	
SESSION 1	Moderator: Dr. John A. Barnes	Program Director M.B.A. (T.M.), Graduate School of Business, Assumption University
10.15-11.00	Prof. Dr. Somparn Promta, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand	The Metaphysics of Buddhist Environmental Ethics
11.00 -11.45	Dr. Charn Mayot, Director, St. Martin Center for Professional Ethics, Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand	Deep Ecology on Alternative Energy – Eastern and Western Perspectives
12.00-13.15	Lunch Break	
SESSION 2	Moderator: Dr. Jean Dautrey	Assumption University, Graduate School of Business
13.30-14.15	Assoc. Prof. Remmon E. Barbaza, Ph.D., Acting Dean, School of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines	“Katapatan sa Kalikasan”: On Being True to the Environment
14.15-15.00	Aan Rukmana, MA, Head of Department, Philosophy and Religion, Paramadina University, Indonesia	A Muslim Perspective on Environmental Issues Currently Emerging in Indonesia
15.00-15.30	Afternoon Tea Break	
SESSION 3	Moderator: Aj. Glen Chatelier	Director, International Affairs, Assumption University
15.30-16.15	Ms. Khom Sakhan, MA, Philosophy Department, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia	The Cost of Greed for the Cambodian Future – a Focus on Energy Issues
16.15-17.00	Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD	Buddhist Soteriological Aims and Their Contribution to Environmental Well-Being
17.00	Rev. Bro. Dr. Amnuay Yoonprayong, Vice President for Moral Development Education, Assumption University	Closing Address
17.30		Departure
18.00-20.00	Dinner	For Paper Presenters, Moderators and Organizers

25 min. presentations, followed by 15 min discussion --- Organizer: Roman Meinhold: rmeinhold@au.edu

Abstracts & Presenters' Profiles

The Metaphysics of Buddhist Environmental Ethics (Somparn Promta)

I consider 'metaphysics' in two senses: the strong and the weak senses. The Buddha seems to reject being involved in the discussion of metaphysical problems. I think the metaphysics that the Buddha rejects is the one of the strong sense. This kind of metaphysics is mainly characterized by the firm belief in things which are not completely verified by sense experience of a normal person—for example, personal God; and it is hard or not possible to relate such a thing to empirical phenomena in the world.

However, the Buddha believes in the natural norm of the universe. The Buddha's teachings such as 'Co-dependent Origination' are taught by him to state that behind the order of things in the world, there exists 'something' playing the role as the unseen provider of the norm of the universe. I call this kind of metaphysics as the one belonging to the weak sense. The best way to understand what I call the metaphysics of the weak sense is to compare it with the seemingly metaphysical concepts like 'Natural Selection' of Charles Darwin. In the paper, the detail of Buddhist metaphysics will be explored and linked to the environmental ethics of Buddhism, as the foundation of it. To understand deeply why Buddhism has such a kind of environmental insight and ethics, the understanding of the metaphysics of Buddhism is needed.

Somparn Promta is a philosophy professor at the Department of Philosophy, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. His work is centered on the applications of the teachings of Buddhism to everyday life and everyday practice. He has written several books and articles on issues such as Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhism and Contemporary Problems and Buddhist Ethics.

INSERT: Abstract Charn

Charn Mayot, Ph.D., is currently director of St. Martin Center for Professional Ethics and Service Learning, Student Affairs and program director of Religious Studies, Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion, Assumption University. He wrote his MA thesis on Business Ethics and doctoral dissertation in environmental philosophy. He has been in charge of teaching professional ethics seminar, supervising a service-learning program for undergraduate students at Assumption University, and arranging international service-learning in Thailand for overseas students for many years. He is also an ethics trainer for administrators of some corporations. He has written a number of articles and book chapters in the areas of business ethics, environmental philosophy, moral education, moral development, service-learning and sustainable development. He used to collaborate with UNESCO to organize projects and promote peace and harmony in six countries in the Mekong River Basin between 2001 and 2005.

“Katapatan sa Kalikasan”: On Being True to the Environment (Remmon E. Barbaza)

The undeniably vulnerable human condition in the face of climate change and its often devastating effects invites us to reflect upon how we human beings might stand in relation to the environment in a way that prevents mutual destruction. Proceeding from the Heideggerian insight that it is language, above all, that tells

us the nature of things, this paper proposes to inquire into how the Filipino primordial experience of *katapatan* (honesty, fidelity, etc.), which is often taken within the context of interpersonal relationships, might also be extended to the relationship between human beings and the environment. Expressions in ordinary language, such as “nature fights back,” or the call to “listen to nature,” seems to indicate an awareness that nature, or the (natural) environment, is not just a passive entity, but in many instances can be said to be acting directly in response to human activities (e.g., excessive anthropogenic carbon emission). *Katapatan* offers one possible model of such a mutually sustaining and mutually respectful relationship. Its root word *tapat* (adj., “true,” “loyal,” “faithful,” “fair,” “in front,” or “across,” etc.) as well its cognates, for instance *tapatan* (vb., “to offer something fair in exchange for something or as a sign of gratitude”), *tapatin* (vb., “to confide”)—to name only a few—all point to a mutually sustaining and respectful relationship, one that, when applied to humans and the environment, might yet offer a path that will lead, not to annihilation, but to the flourishing of both.

Remmon E. Barbaza is an Associate Professor of Philosophy, and currently serves as Acting Dean of the School of Humanities, at the Ateneo de Manila University-Loyola Schools. He earned a BA in Linguistics from the University of the Philippines-Diliman in 1988, an MA in Philosophy from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1994, and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the Hochschule für Philosophie-München in 2002, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Gerd Haefner, S.J. His dissertation, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, was published in 2003 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang). His essay, “There Where Nothing Happens: The Poetry of Space in Heidegger and Arellano,” appears as a chapter in the second, expanded edition of *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). He also served as the Chair of the Department of Philosophy, editor of the *Loyola Schools Review*, and associate editor of *Budhi: A Journal of Culture and Ideas*. His research interests include Heidegger, technology, language, the city, environment and translation. He is currently working on a translation of Heidegger texts into Filipino and an interdisciplinary research project on human dwelling in a disaster-prone city.

A Muslim Perspective on Environmental Issues Currently Emerging in Indonesia (Aan Rukmana)

Islam recognizes that God has created human beings as vicegerent (leaders or caliph) on earth. God has also created the universe and entrusted human beings with the task of preserving it. Therefore, human beings have a cosmic duty. God gives men the freedom to manage the world, which has been designed with various potentials and materials required to sustain their life until the end of days. However, such freedom always involves responsibility. Accordingly, men are also responsible for the well being of all living creatures. This paper discusses the development of environmental awareness and conservation issues through Islamic teaching in Indonesia. There is discourse in Islamic Boarding Schools (*pesantren*) that the application of religious teachings must result in good impacts on daily life. Since Islam has a strong message ordering the protection and conservation of the environment, the implementation of natural conservation is in line with Islamic teachings. Furthermore, such activity requires good alliances and support from government decision makers, mosque imams, *ustadz*, and *ulema*, as well as informal leaders in various communities. We discover that, in Indonesia, there is no resistance in trying to mobilize Muslim to participate in natural and environmental conservation, and this lack of resistance is largely due to the *ulemas'* awareness of the severity of environmental damage.

Aan Rukmana MA, is Lecturer of Islamic philosophy and religion at Paramadina University, Indonesia. He is the author of several Islamic books such as 1) Ibn Sina, Pemantik Pijar Peradaban Islam, 2) Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Penjaga Taman Spiritualitas Islam, 3) Islam Jalan Tengah, 4) Islam dan Perempuan di Ruang Publik, 5) Peta Filsafat Islam di Indonesia, etc. Aan finished his study from Paramadina University and his master (MA) from Islamic College for Advanced Studies. He joined short course on comparative religion at Gregoriana University, Vatikan and on Islamic Philosophy at Qum, Iran. He is very active dealing with leadership programs, such as the Islamic leadership program in Australia, the Philippines and Malaysia. He established a school of nature (the growing garden) in responding the ecological crisis issue. He can be reached at: aanrukmana@gmail.com.

The cost of greediness for Cambodian future with a focus on energy issues (Khom Sakhon)

There was a beautiful poem for primary school students to memorize during late 1980s about the richness of Cambodia. The poem depicted a vivid picture of resources that existed in every corner of the country including those on the ground, under the water and underneath the earth. Children in that generation knew so well that the poem was not an exaggeration. With our own eyes, we saw that Cambodia had many forests in which people could find a variety of plants and animals. When we looked up into the sky, we saw different types of birds flying in flocks across the countryside. We had abundant fresh water to cultivate crops and support lives. We had the sea to provide us with tons of salt. We had countless fish and aquatic bio-diversity. And when we looked deep underground, our earth embraced many types of precious gem stones and other types of minerals desired by people from near and far lands. Moreover, our air was fresh and our climate was very favorable for the growth of lives. We knew so well in our hearts that our country was rich.

Yet, when you open your eyes and look at the reality of Cambodia, you feel that the opposite is true. The country is raged by poverty and it was classified as one of the poorest countries in the world. Until recently and with a lot of international support, people in this country still do not live up to what is considered a decent life.

With realization of such contrast, this paper argues that greediness is one of the main causes of the misfortune of Cambodia and its people. The paper will attempt to define the term “greediness” and compare it with the concept of “self-interest” in Adam Smith’s philosophy. Then it will proceed to reflect through Cambodian history how greediness has influence the bad fate of the country. Finally, the paper will move to focus specifically on the area of energy production and distribution in Cambodia. It will look at current energy situation in this country and how greediness has already impacted and hindered a healthy development of this sector. At its conclusion, the paper will attempt to provide a possible picture of energy sector in Cambodia where greediness is minimized and people’s interests are upheld.

Khom Sakhon is a lecturer in Philosophy Department, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia since 2009. In this role I teach different philosophy subjects which also include philosophy of economics and history of Khmer Political Institutions. In addition to my teaching job, I’m also an interpreter. This job has given me opportunities to attend many events organized by different national and international NGOs including KAS Cambodia discussing about energy issues.

Buddhist Soteriological Aims and Their Contribution to Environmental Well-Being (Anthony Le Duc)

In the face of modern day ecological problems, various religious systems are turned to for inspiration to support environmental conservation. Buddhism is often employed as a resource since it is perceived as an environment friendly religion that provides an alternative to strongly anthropocentric views and attitudes that perceive the value of nature in merely instrumental terms, and thus would justify wanton exploitation of natural resources to benefit the needs of human beings. The secular environmental ethic notion of intrinsic value in nature is often applied to Buddhism in which Buddhist textual sources are examined for evidence to support the assumption that if nature is seen to possess intrinsic value or at least positive value, it follows that nature has rights that must be respected by human beings. This paper sets out to briefly review the application of the intrinsic-value-in-nature concept to Theravada Buddhism, and argues that such a task is problematic in this case because Buddhism with its doctrine of not-self is incompatible with the project of ascribing intrinsic value to nature. Rather, in Buddhism, the ultimate value is liberation from samsaric life. This paper argues that the soteriological aims of Theravada Buddhism prescribe a lifestyle that steers away from greed, hatred and delusion which characterize an unwholesome life. As one goes about eliminating unwholesome states from one's life, one needs to develop various virtues that would contribute to spiritual progress and achievement of personal salvation. Many of the virtues aimed at achieving liberation from samsara can be framed in context of environmental concerns to reflect their connection to ecological well-being. Thus, promoting environmental well-being can be seen as part and parcel of the overall Buddhist agenda to achieve spiritual progress, personal well-being, and ultimately, nirvanic bliss.

Anthony Le Duc is a Vietnamese American missionary priest in the Society of the Divine Word. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley in the fields of Molecular and Cell Biology and Asian Studies. He went on to complete his Master of Divinity concentrating on Global Missions at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois. Presently, he is doing his doctoral studies in Religious Studies at Assumption University of Thailand, where his area of research is in Buddhism and environmental ethics. In addition to his academic research, Le Duc has accumulated eight years of experience living and working as a missionary in Thailand as well as a number of years in Vietnam, the country of his birth.