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Abstract Book 15th Asian Bioethics Conference (ABC 15)

1-9 November 2014

Venue: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), Beppu; and Kumamoto University, Japan. Organized by the Asian Bioethics Association (ABA)¹, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), Kumamoto University, Eubios Ethics Institute & American University of Sovereign Nations (AUSN).

Saturday, 1 November²

12th Asia-Pacific Conference: Ethics, Human Security and Sustainability: Knowledge & Practices in Asia Pacific

Venue from 1st – 3rd: Building FII (Classrooms), 1-1 Jumonjibaru, Beppu, Oita 874-8577 Japan

Session 1: Bioethics Beyond Borders

Words of Welcome

Prof. Nader Ghotbi, Director, Ritsumeikan Center for Asia Pacific Studies (RCAPS); Professor, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), Japan

Ethics, Human Security and Sustainability: Knowledge & Practices in Asia Pacific

Prof. Francisco Jr. Fellizar, APU Vice-President of Research

Fifteen Asian Bioethics Conferences and the Emergence of the AUSN Masters in Bioethics and Global Public Health

Prof. Darryl Macer, Provost, American University of Sovereign Nations, Scottsdale, AZ, USA; Director, Eubios Ethics Institute; Secretary, Asian Bioethics Association (ABA)
Email: dmacer@au-sn.com

The first Asian Bioethics Association Conference was held in 1995 in Beijing, and in the past two decades bioethics has rapidly developed in Asia. The previous conferences have

been held in China, Japan, Korea, Turkey, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Iran and Taiwan. The conference brings together scholars and policy makers from many disciplines all around the world (beyond just Asia and the Pacific) to discuss and deliberate on the latest issues facing humanity. What is the future of the ABA? In the ABA Constitution:

'Article 2' (Definitions) In interpreting this Constitution the following definitions shall be used: Bioethics is the interdisciplinary study of philosophical, ethical, social, legal, economic, medical, therapeutic, ethnological, religious, environmental, and other related issues arising from biological sciences and technologies, and their applications in human society and the biosphere. Asia is the regions, peoples, and cultures which constitute the geographically largest continent of the world."

'Article 3' (Objectives) The basic objective of the Association is to promote scientific research in bioethics in Asia through open and international exchanges of ideas among those working in bioethics in various fields of study and different regions of the world. In order to achieve this end the Association will encourage the following work and projects: (1) to organize and support international conferences in bioethics in Asia; (2) to assist the development and linkage of regional organizations for bioethics; (3) to encourage other academic and educational work or projects to accomplish their goals consistent with the objectives of the Association."

Asian Bioethics Association (ABA) Presidential Address: Bioethics Beyond Borders: Responding to Challenges of a Globalized World

Prof. Aamir Jafarey, Asian Bioethics Association (ABA) President, CBEC, SUIT, Karachi, Pakistan
E-mail: aamirjafarey@gmail.com

Despite obvious differences and divisions on geographic, religious, ethnic, economic and numerous other grounds, we are all citizens of one world. Ease of travel and inexpensive communication have shrunk distances and we remain interconnected in numerous ways. We cannot remain dissociated with happenings even in the remotest corners of the globe since they may affect us in ways beyond the limits of our present vision, making it imperative to embrace the challenges of this rapidly globalized world.

Bioethics empowers us in many ways to do just that. It bridges divides and creates a space where the commonality of issues can be discussed and debated. This is important since seemingly regional problems have a global impact. Poverty, lack of healthcare and illiteracy, although ostensibly someone else's problems, can morph into global threats and should be regarded as global responsibilities.

¹ http://www.eubios.info/asian_bioethics_assn

² 1-3 November in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), Beppu (concurrent with the 12th Asia-Pacific Conference: Ethics, Human Security and Sustainability: Knowledge and Practices in Asia Pacific organized by Ritsumeikan Center for Asia Pacific Studies (RCAPS), Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU))

and attitudes have to be changed towards more austerity and frugality through questioning of the consumerist myths of market economies. If we want to allow every human being to have equal access to energy, we have to understand that there are limits to sustainable energy provision. Intergenerational equity requires us to secure the energy needs of future generations, as well as consider the injustices to those alive in our own generation. There is a lot of work to be done by social sciences and humanities in every tradition to challenge all the assumptions of what is a good life, and our reliance on energy to achieve this.

Humanizing ethics: the synergy between environmental ethics and human security

Prof. Ravichandran Moorthy, ABA Vice President for South-East Asia; School of History, Politics and Strategy, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia; President, Asia Pacific Forum on Ethics & Social Justice

E-mail: drravi5774@gmail.com

Environmental ethics primarily concerns the 'ethical relationship' between human beings and the natural environment. Even though many scholars have addressed this relationship throughout history, it was only in the 1970s that environmental ethics began to develop into a specific philosophical discipline. The environmental ethics discourse began to take center stage with the increasing awareness, globally, of the disastrous effects that rapid industrialization, depletion of natural resources, population overgrowth and economic expansion have had on the environment and the survivability of mother Earth. The fundamental question answered by environmental ethics is basically: what moral obligations do we have concerning the natural environment? Although the question appears simple, it may lead to several other more probing questions. What are our environmental obligations for the sake of human beings living in the world today, for humans living in the future, or for the sake of entities within the environment itself, irrespective of any human benefits? Discourse on environmental ethics is also often politicized, because it demands for change in life style and consumption patterns, and the way we conduct our usual business. Environmental degradation due to human activities has placed enormous pressure on livable habitats and ecosystems, resulting in a decline in the quality of life. In line with this, the paper will examine the relevance and implications of environmental ethics to human security.

Ethical issues: Energy sector in Union of Myanmar

Ms. Yamin Thu, Graduate School of Technology Management, Ritsumeikan University, Shiga, Japan; Myanmar

E-mail: yaminnthu@gmail.com

Myanmar energy consumption mainly depends on traditional energy such as fuel wood, charcoal and biomass. Domestic conventional energy sources such as oil and natural gas have recently been increased a bit though new discoveries and improved technological developments, though they may not fully satisfy the demand of the country of Myanmar. Myanmar's government has been setting up the energy policy guidelines and emphasized on renewable energy sources which have less environmental impacts in comparison to traditional energy types. This paper will discuss the current energy situation in Union of Myanmar, and the environmental impact and ethical issues related to energy sector. Finally, the future plan for energy conservation is highlighted.

Thoughts on Improving Ecological Ethic Education in High School

Liu Xiaoyan, The High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University

E-mail: liuxiaoyan@bjxdfz.com

Ecological ethics education is carried out in various forms in many schools, but we also found some common problems in the process of practice. This paper is on how to solve these problems in the secondary education level perspective, and summarizes several measures to enhance the effect of ecological ethics education, including clarifying the ecological ethics theory, applying "positive energy" case and paying attention to practical activities. Try to find the practical opportunity, and strive to implement long-term planning of ecological ethic education.

Teaching plan on understanding of wetland and wetland protection

Liu Xin, The High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China

For lack understanding the ecological value of the wetland the phenomenon of damaging wetland is very serious in China. It is necessary to popularize ecological ethics education on wetland for students. In the process of teaching first of all to lead the students to study what are the value of wetland and the concept of wetland, discuss the reasons for Chinese wetland destruction and wetland development case. Then analyze and discuss some controversial cases. Finally summarize how to reasonably use and protect the wetland and achieve the teaching objective of understanding of wetland and wetland protection.

Teaching the Islamic worldview of environmental ethics to students of science in Malaysia

Maisarah Hasbullah, Siti Nurani Mohd Noor, Mohd Hazim Shah, Suzana Ariff Azizan, Rosnah Sadri

Department of Science & Technology Studies, Faculty of Science, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

E-mail: maisara@um.edu.my

Religion is an important cultural resource in Malaysia particularly for environmentalists who are engaged in creating new paradigms of thinking about managing the current ecological or environmental crisis. This paper presents the course content of an undergraduate course for science students entitled 'Philosophy of Islamic Science and Technology' of which a component on the 'Islamic Philosophy of Environment' is emphasized. The course is designed to particularly groom students who recognize the importance of environmental conservation and hence would act ethically towards nature. The Islamic view of nature perceives the environment in a rather different way from the modern view of nature. While the modern view of earth systems and humans may be divided into human-centric views or anthropocentrism, and nature-oriented ones, or eco-centrism, Islamic environmental ethics encourages humans to see the interconnection and interdependence of all elements in the universe. It emphasizes and expounds the harmonious relationship between humankind and nature in concordance with Islamic teachings. This course also highlights an Islamic epistemology of the environment as practiced in Malaysia that has been translated in many institutions, as presented by the term "Islam Hadhari". Islam Hadhari calls for Muslims to be progressive, modern and dynamic, and yet moderate in behavior and attitude.

Teaching the Islamic worldview of environmental ethics to students of science in Malaysia

Maisarah Hasbullah, Rosnah Sadri, Mohd Hazim Shah, Suzana Ariff Azizan, Siti Nurani Mohd Noor,
Department of Science & Technology Studies, Faculty of Science, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: maisara@um.edu.my; rosnahsadri@um.edu.my; drhazim@um.edu.my; suzana_ariff@um.edu.my
; sitinurani@um.edu.my

Abstract

Religion is an important cultural resource in Malaysia particularly for environmentalists who are engaged in creating new paradigms of thinking about managing the current ecological or environmental crisis. This paper presents the course content of an undergraduate course for science students entitled '*Philosophy of Islamic Science and Technology*' of which a component on the '*Islamic Philosophy of Environment*' is emphasized. The course is designed to particularly groom students who recognize the importance of environmental conservation and hence would act ethically towards nature. The Islamic view of nature perceives the environment in a rather different way from the modern view of nature. While the modern view of earth systems and humans may be divided into human-centric views or anthropocentrism, and nature-oriented ones, or eco-centrism, Islamic environmental ethics encourages humans to see the interconnection and interdependence of all elements in the universe. It emphasizes and expounds the harmonious relationship between humankind and nature in concordance with Islamic teachings. This course also highlights an Islamic epistemology of the environment as practiced in Malaysia that has been translated in many institutions, as presented by the term "*Islam Hadhari*". *Islam Hadhari* calls for Muslims to be progressive, modern and dynamic, and yet moderate in behavior and attitude.

Keywords: environmental ethics, undergraduate course, Islamic view of nature, *Islam Hadhari*

Introduction

This paper presents the course content of an undergraduate course for science students entitled '*Philosophy of Islamic Science and Technology*' of which the component on the '*Islamic Philosophy of Environment*' is emphasized. In discussing global environmental issues and the future of our world, the aspect of ecological and environmental thinking from Islamic perspective is often overlooked. While the modern view of earth systems and humans may be divided into human-centric views or anthropocentrism, and nature-oriented ones, or eco-centrism, Islamic environmental ethics encourages humans to see the interconnection and interdependence of all elements in the universe. It emphasizes and expounds the harmonious relationship between humankind and nature in concordance with Islamic teachings.

Syed Hossein Nasr (1977), Osman Bakar (2007) suggest that the environmental crisis is due partly to an intrinsic spiritual crisis in modern man and partly humankind's neglect of the spiritual feature of modern science and technology. An understanding of the spiritual foundations of the Islamic philosophy of environment may be a way out of the current ecological crisis as total reliance of science and technological applications will not necessarily overcome the effects of global warming and other associated changes for which human beings have been claimed as being responsible.

This paper shares the lecture contents of the topic '*Islamic Philosophy of Environment*' which has been developed from a systematic literature review on Islamic perspectives and values related to environmental protection and which has been adapted to suit local Malaysian undergraduate science students needs. An understanding of Islamic philosophy on nature is believed to create some awareness in these future scientists who will then ultimately tread cautiously in their scientific activities and endeavours related to policy making on research in S&T. The paper ends by highlighting an Islamic epistemology of the environment as practiced in Malaysia that has been translated into a form of corporate policy and practices in many institutions, as presented by the term "*Islam Hadhari*".

Islamic philosophy on Nature and the Environment.

A historical overview of current environment crisis and the impacts from developments which are onsets of contemporary science and technology is first presented. In the West, the development of society's ecological and environmental concern is the result of a systematic culture of awareness that has been ingrained in modern man - pollution is the direct cause of modern man to the environment. On the other hand, Islamic philosophy makes no division between man and nature but rather emphasizes the interconnectedness of the relationship between humans and nature. The Islamic sources of environmental ethics are from al-Quran and *Sunnah/ Hadith*.

The infusion of Islamic values and environmental ethics can reshape the orientation of development in science and technology. For example, attention to the need to balance between spiritual and material worldview may be seen in organic farming. The idea of unity and interdependence of all entities in the universe is the thrust of ecological principles in Islam. Aspects of the Islamic worldview and environmental ethics may be connected to the following:

Tawhid (Oneness of Allah or Unity of Existence)

The fundamental principle of Islam is *Tawhid* (Oneness of God). God is the Owner and Creator of the whole thing in the universe. It affects every component of life including environmental ethics. This emphasizes a science of ecology which encourages humans to see interconnection and interdependence of forms of life in the universe. Nature is a sign (*Ayat*) of God's creation and represents an element of symbolism. The sun, the oceans, mountains, and air are among the creation of God and each symbolises the greatness of the Creator. This understanding can bring us closer to God, and the world cannot exist without its Creator. *Tawhidic* science also implies the element of the sacredness of nature, and its exclusive relations with God.

(i) *Khalifah* (Vicegerent or Trustee).

Man as *khalifah* (vicegerent) and guardian for God's creation does not have absolute rights to dominate over nature. Man as representative and servant of Allah has to obey the command of Allah. Man carries on him certain responsibilities and does not have absolute ownership on nature with Al-Quran and *Hadith* as the guidance. God created the universe in perfect balance and measure, and human beings as *khalifah* should maintain and protect the environment and use the natural resources in moderation.

Islamic Approach to Environmental Issues.

In Malaysia, the concept of "Islam Hadhari" underlies many governmental efforts to instil good governance that is based on the values of the Quran and *Hadith*. In fact, the activities and programmes initiated by the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia (JAKIM) together with the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) emphasize a rediscovery of the spiritual values of nature which establishes ten core values (Fig. 1), including safeguarding the environment, which is on interest in our presentation.

- 1) Faith in and piety towards Allah;
- 2) A just and trustworthy government;
- 3) Free and liberated people;
- 4) Rigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge;
- 5) Balanced and holistic approach towards economic development;
- 6) Quality of life for the people;
- 7) Protection of the rights of minority groups and women;
- 8) Cultural and moral integrity
- 9) Safeguarding the environment; and
- 10) Strong defence capabilities.

Fig. 1: Ten Principles underlying the Philosophy of Islam Hadhari

In brief, efforts in 'safeguarding the environment' is centralized around (i) an awareness and responsibility of man as "khalifah" and servant, (ii) effective conservation of natural environment, (iii) avoiding wastage of natural resources, (iv) preserving water and air quality, and (v) protecting flora and fauna.

The 9th principle in Islam Hadhari (safeguarding the environment) may be equated with the philosophy of sustainable development as stated in the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* in 1987 that highlights social, economic, cultural and environmental issues. Islam Hadhari is also associated with the infusion of Islamic values in the Malaysian policy. Most of the criticism

from the political perspective emphasizes that Islam Hadhari is a national agenda to strengthen the position of government as a party to defend the rights of the Malay Muslims. However, the 9th principle in Islam Hadhari emphasizes on the environmental protection, which has the element of universalism that can be shared by different society and religion. In the aspect of dialogue civilization, the Islamic principles also have been highlighted in environmental protection and promote environmental awareness. Some of the values emphasized by Islam such as use the natural resources in moderation; protecting and maintaining environment are also emphasized in the other traditions, cultures and religions. Therefore, the similarity values on environment should be highlighted and the aspects of difference values between various traditions must be understood and respected. As stated by Shah, M.H. 2009: 21-22:

The various religious communities that subscribe to different beliefs and values with regards the proper relationship between man and nature. No doubt differences in terms of beliefs and worldviews among Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Taoists and Buddhists in Malaysia do not pose a problem in the attempt to create and heighten environmental awareness among the masses since no religion advocates the destruction or excessive exploitation of the environment. However, it is important that they do not look at the religious discourse on environmental conservation that are mounted by particular religious leaders or groups as attempts to project their own religions.

Thus, although there is criticism of Islam Hadhari as it is considered more to fulfil the political agenda, aspects of universalism in the care of the environment in Islam Hadhari is a good principle to be shared and understood by all.

In addition, the exposure of science students to the philosophy of science and technology is important to explain the epistemology of science and technology which are not value free and as the result from a secular world view. Secularism is the product of long history of philosophical and metaphysical conflict in Western and it has eliminated mystical and spiritual element in science and nature.

There are competing Islamic approaches by Islamic scholars on the issue of the acceptance of S&T, for example Muslim modernists suggest Muslim should accept modern S&T to become more advanced and developed countries. On the other hand, there are also responses from Muslim scholars who are adopted critical approach to S&T suggest that the aspect of epistemology of modern S&T need to be understood before embracing modern S&T. S&T is a product of social construction. It does not reflect the ultimate truth about the universe, but it is merely constructed by particular culture or society by incorporating its own ideologies and cultural characteristics into its system of knowledge.

Therefore, to overcome the excessive dominance of secular modern man through the use of modern S&T, we need to revisit the Islamic world view and change the mechanistic world view of man. Muslims can play their role in restoring the Islamic environmental ethics for example

through preserving traditional modes of agriculture production, traditional urban design of Islamic cities and technologies which affect human relationship, modes of transportation, the use of energy and many other forms of sustainable technology.

The following undergraduate courses are illustrative of efforts to instil awareness in students on the importance of future sustenance of nature.

SFES1151 Science, Technology and Sustainable Development

The student is exposed to the concept and philosophy of development in several dimensions – economy, human-nature relationship, social justice, human development, community and society.

SFES2134 Science, Technology and Religion

The application of universal value of religion in life is introduced defining the role of religion within the philosophy of science.

SFES1335 Philosophy and Environmental Ethics

Discussion on the environmental crisis is studied from a philosophical and ethical perspective.

SFES3363 Policy and Management of Environment

Concepts associated with the idea of sustainable development as a model in solving the environment crisis/problems is delivered. The role of ethics and cultural worldviews, politics and economy will also be discussed creating an avenue for ideal and practical solutions to address sustainable development and environmental concerns.

Conclusion

Islamic countries through the process of modernization have inherited problems created by Western empires – global warming and climate change which are effects of industrial pollution are notable examples (Nasr, 1994). Muslims must not adopt science and technology uncritically, and they can do this by revisiting the essence of the Islamic philosophy of science.

Religion is an important cultural resource. In Malaysia, in particular, the Islamic philosophy of nature has become one of the important sources for environmental protection. The value is widely adopted by environmentalists who are engaged in creating new paradigms of thinking about managing the current ecological or environmental crisis. The teaching of the course on an *Islamic Philosophy of the Environment* is aimed at producing students who will not only

thread cautiously in scientific activities and endeavours and who will reflect on sustainable policies on research in S&T but it will create a Muslim generation that is progressive, modern and dynamic, and yet moderate in behavior and attitude as envisioned by Islam *Hadhari*.

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