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Hokkaido-Kuala Lumpur Science Symposium at IAIS, 27-28 July, 2009



Participants of the Dialogue at IAIS

On 27 and 28 of July, 2009, a group of academicians, professionals and business people, including **Dr. Elisabet Sahtouris** as a guest of honour got together at the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) to discuss the foundational elements of modern science in light of the epistemology and worldview of Islamic science. The Symposium was co-sponsored the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue and the Department of Science and Technology Studies of the University of Malaya, the Technology University of Petronas (UTP), and the International Institute of Islamic Thought, Malaysia (IIITM). Participants numbering 40 people came from Qatar, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Canada, and the United States. The symposium was a follow-up to the pioneering Hokkaido Science Symposium held in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan in July 2008. There was a consensus that a number of assumptions of modern western science are at odds with the Islamic worldview. These assumptions need to be reappraised in light of the Islamic worldview.

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Conference on "The Role Of NGOs: Promoting Dialogue Across Values & Cultures" August 18-19, 2009

The Conference on "The role of NGOs: Promoting Dialogue Across Values & Cultures" held on 18-19th August 2009 was organized by the Department of National Unity & Integration together with the University of Malaya Centre for Civilisational Dialogue in collaboration with Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (ISESCO) & Kuala Lumpur City of Islamic Culture (KLCIC). The conference was officiated by Senator Datuk T. Murugiah, Deputy Minister at Prime Minister's Office. The



Prof. Azizan gave her respons in the last session

conference was deemed important because in our increasingly interconnected existence, violent conflicts and untold human suffering are constantly presented in

our living rooms. In a world of unrooted identities, shifting values and clashes between tradition and modernity as well as between moderation and extremism, the voices of reason and harmony seem to be marginalized. Negative stereotypes and the politics of fear and suspicion tend to polarize perceptions and deepen divides, making bonds of friendship difficult to sustain across ethnic lines. NGOs have the potential to address some of these issues especially in the context of dialogue towards greater understanding of different cultures and values. To this end, the United Nation

declared the year 2001 as the year of the dialogue of civilizations (DoC). This UN year of the DoC was initiated by Iran. Together with ISESCO's desire to promote the peaceful spirit of Islam, the Department of National Unity and Integration and the University of Malaya Centre for Civilizational Dialogue (UMCCD) have taken the initiative alongside ISESCO and KLCIC to organize the conference on the Role of NGOs in Promoting Dialogue Across Values & Cultures. The conference had the following objectives:

1. To educate and promote dialogue as a means to manage issues and conflicts;
2. To bring together NGOs and organizations to share experiences and work on dialogue across cultures;
3. To build a network of NGOs for more effective dialogue across cultures and values;

To link with international initiatives to promote dialogue as a culture of peace.

"Dialogue is not selling your soul. It is about finding our commonality and it is our big challenge. To the religious, dialogue is part of 'iman'/ faith. Dialogue is religious duty and it is not easy and secular minded should also be included. Dialogue should respect certain limits but it must be followed by action and NGOs have a lot to contribute." **Professor Datin Dr. Azizan Baharuddin**

Dialogue is universally recognized as one of the civilized means of bringing about mutual understanding between people of different cultures, ethnic groups and religious beliefs. Dialogue server many noble societal goals. One of these goals is to know and understand where we share similarities and have

differences with others. We need to expand our similarities and decrease our differences. This can be achieved through an ongoing dialogue. We should be guided by the following philosophy: we must strengthen our similarities and we must respect our irreducible differences. This is a key to social peace. It is a pillar of peaceful coexistence in a multi ethnic and multi religious society and nation. Another major objective of dialogue is to come to an agreement on the meaning of the common good. We need to identify the nature and scope of our common good. Then we have to work together to help realize this common good our society. It is in the contact of this kind of understanding of dialogue that we see the NGOs in particular and civil society in general as a major player who can help to make dialogue a culture taking deep roots in society and thereby transforming a conflict-ridden society into one that values mutual respect and understanding, peaceful coexistence, and the quest for the common good. The state and civil society ought to complement each other in the task of community development and nation building.

The conference was successful in making the NGOs aware of their roles in terms of promoting dialogue as an instrument of peace.



Closing Plenary session with Professor Taniguchi as the last speaker

Professor Dr Fumiaki Taniguchi, a Visiting Scholar of the Centre from 5th -20th of August 2009.



Professor Dr Fumiaki Taniguchi obtained his Bachelor's degree in Economics at Konan University in 1969 and his Master degree in Philosophy and Ethics at Osaka University in 1977. He was appointed Professor in 1995 at the Department of Literature, Konan University. Professor Taniguchi has published papers in the areas of environmental ethics and environmental education. He is a trustee member of the Japan Academy for Health Behavioral Science since 1993 and a trustee member of The Nature Activity of Osaka Prefecture since 2002. Professor Taniguchi is also president of the International Association of Earth-Environment and Global Citizen since 1999 and president of the Society of Information Exchange for Environmental Education between Japan and China since 2000. Professor Taniguchi also travels abroad frequently, giving lectures and speaking at seminars and conferences. He has been working as a visiting Professor at the Centre of Environmental Education, Rajabhat Institute Phranakhon, Thailand and also School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria, Canada. He also worked as honorary visiting Professor at The School of Education, Hebei University, China in 1997 and at the Centre of Environmental Science, Peking University, China since 2001.

Public Lecture : Professor Dr. Fumiaki Taniguchi **Environmental Education in Japan and in the West**

Professor Taniguchi gave his Public Lecture on Philosophy of the Environment: Comparison between Japan and the West on 7th of August 2009 at Seminar Room, Department of Science and Technology Studies, University of Malaya. He began by explaining the meaning of dialogue. Dialogue is from two Greek words, "Dia" which means "through" and "logos" which means "speak". Hence, dialogue is a conversation where partners speak alternatively. Divided persons (dualism) should be unified. "I" and "You" can be respectively thesis and antithesis, however through dialogues we could stand on the third position ("us"), synthesis. Dialogue not only proposes a division between two or more persons or groups such as among people, among humans and nature, among diverse cultures and civilizations, etc, but also it proposes a common platform or communication in different and diverse situations and helps us move to higher truths. Sustainability is a state of dynamic and mutual balance; which could be an equilibrium of the system of natural, social and (mind) human environment. Sustainability is a self-maintaining, self-restoring, self growing state of balance so as to sustain dynamic systems such as ecological system or life system. Hence, sustaining living system is a basis of ethics of dialogue.

The concept of development does not embrace only the economic but also the social and human. A sustainable system is also spontaneous and growing maintain itself. Sustainable development might be called endogenous spontaneous development.

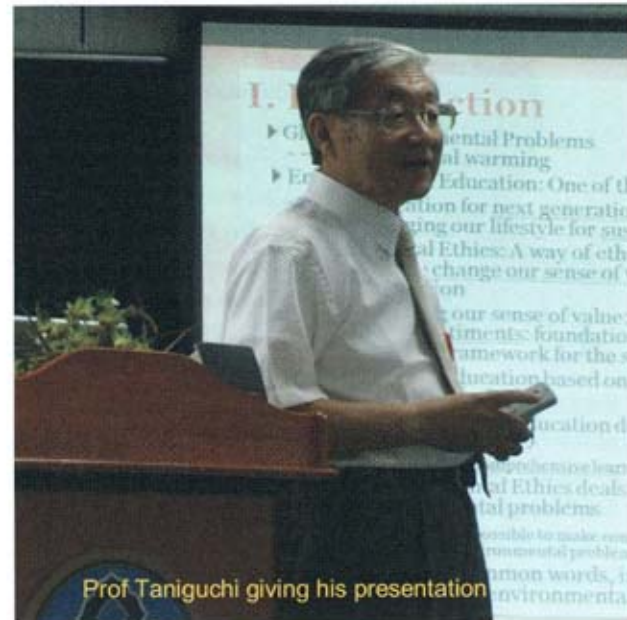
For the sustainable development of life and environment, the life system is a self-forming system. Living systems cannot be reduced to parts because they are living as a whole system. Life is a self-performing system and all lives are connected with each other through the life history of 4 billion years. An environmental system is a self-organizing system. In an ecologic system, broadly speaking, there exist three kinds of ecological system including nature, society and human. Life and environment in earth ecology are in the same relationship as the face and back of a coin.



Dr. Zaidah from Department of Science and Technology Studies asking a question to Professor Taniguchi

Life – Environmental Education according to the principles of the Earth Charter are;

- Respect earth and life in all its diversity.
- Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love.
- Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful.
- Secure earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.
- Protect and restore the integrity of earth's ecological system, with special concern for biological diversity and natural processes that sustain life.
- Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
- Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard earth's regenerative capacities, human rights and community well-being.
- Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.
- Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social and environmental imperative
- Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
- Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care and economic opportunity.
- Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.
- Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making and access to justice
- Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for sustainable way of life.
- Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
- Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence and peace



Prof Taniguchi giving his presentation

Structure of Human Mind regarding Ego-I and Self-I

Total-I looks like a ball containing Ego and Self: where Ego-I is a conscious world or external world, which is a way of Modern thinking or Western Self-I is the unconscious internal world, which is a way of intuition/instinct-feeling or Asian thinking. It is connected with ecological system and it is Eco-centric thinking.

Environmental education needs to be applied like Partnership Circulation from the bottom dimension to top dimension and vice versa. The activities of life-environmental education have involves many NGOs/NPOs. This networking is easily adapted to other NGOs' activities according to the Earth Charter. But do not forget that the opinions of local people should be most respected because of necessity of bottom up circulation.

Needless to say, dialogues of inter-faith and inter-civilization (quantity) are necessary but we emphasize the importance of inter-culturization (quality) to deepen and create local peculiar culture. Besides, the basis of ethics of dialogue is balance and cooperation in doing good, justice, humility and patience. Networking in daily life, local community and policies of local and central government is important according to the Earth Charter. Finally, we should go out of narrow ego-consciousness to broader eco-consciousness through dialogue.

Professor Fumiaki Taniguchi on
Environmental Education based on Environmental Ethics
(Lecture with students of Environmental Ethics Course)



Words of Hope and Struggle: International Declarations

Professor Taniguchi started his presentation by going through the main global declarations and charters concerning the environmental problems; the Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), Declaration of Thessaloniki (1997), UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and the Belgrade Charter: Environmental Education Objectives (1975) and highlighted the educational initiatives and directions in them. He drew attention to this inspiring and relevant part of the Stockholm declaration: "Man is both creature and moulder of his environment, which gives him physical sustenance and affords him the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth. In the long and tortuous evolution of the human race on this planet, a stage has been reached

when, through the rapid acceleration of science and technology, man has acquired the power to transform his environment in countless ways and on an unprecedented scale."

Environmental Education: Re-Creating the Sense of Wonder and Spontaneous Action

The rest of Professor Taniguchi's presentation was focused on how we can develop environmental education in the context of international environmental problems and environmental ethics. He started with the definition of Environmental Education, dividing it into 3 different stages; first, maturing personality formed through integration of knowledge, sentiment and action; second, education on ecological systems in natural environments by acquiring of a sense of wonder, nurturing sentiments and studying system theory which are the foundation of environmental ethics; and third, education for the solution of environmental problems by creating a sense of responsibility for nature and spontaneous action and studying unsound environments through scientific knowledge to educate problem-solving abilities and a moral ethical imperative. He believed the sense of wonder toward nature is the origin of intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth in every human being which leads to environmental ethics. Professor Taniguchi showed some beautiful films of his fieldworks in Canada in an alternative ecoforestry project and also a field course on "ethnoecology and environmental philosophy in southern British Columbia" at a University of Victoria. He said that environmental ethics is a way of thinking about the solution to environmental problems and change our sense of value. Traditional ethics deals with human relationships with normative imperative while environmental ethics deals with not only human relations but also environments such as ecological systems, rights of animals and plants and intergenerational ethics and sustainability.

Environmental Education and Ethics: A Vast Pulsing Harmony

He illustrated of environmental ethics by this beautiful quotation from Aldo Leopold: "This song of the waters is audible to every ear, but there is other music in these hills, by no means audible to all. To hear even a few notes of it you must first live here for a long time, and you must know the speech of hills and rivers. Then on a still night, when the campfire is low and the Pleiades have climbed over rim rocks, sit quietly and listen for a wolf to howl, and think hard of everything you have seen and tried to understand. Then you may hear it- a vast pulsing harmony- its score inscribed on a thousand hills, its notes the lives and deaths of plants and animals, its rhythms spanning the seconds and the centuries."

In Professor Taniguchi's view environmental education should be based on environmental ethics. The technical terms should be the common language between the natural, social and human sciences for the people in general to understand what the environment and it's processes so that we can make agreements through discussion on the solutions environmental problems. He concluded his presentation by stating that in order to realize a sustainable future we need common guideline for international environmental education which is being developed by the collaboration of University Malaya and Konan University as APN (the Asia-Pacific Network of Global Change Research) CAPaBLE project.



Professor Taniguchi with the students of Environmental Ethics Course