

"The quest for (global) ethics: researchers in dialogue"
Symposium Sept. 14, 2023, 10.00-13.00 at Stockholm university

Monika Gänssbauer and Torbjörn Lodén:
Welcome

10.00-11.00: The Pandemic and Ethics

Tony Hsiu-Hsi Chen, National Taiwan University:
"COVID-19 Pandemic Transcends Ethics from SDGs Landscape"

Hans Ingvar Roth, Stockholm University:
"Human Right Lessons from the Pandemic"

Moderation: Monika Gänssbauer, Stockholm University

11.00-12.00: Ecology and (global) ethics:

Julia Grimm, Stockholm University:
"Layered Spaces for Substantial Collaboration to Tackle Grand Challenges: A Case Study of the Fossil Free Sweden Initiative"

Giuseppe Di Capua, Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Rome:
"Etiology of the Ecological Crisis: Building New Perspectives for Human Progress Through Geoethics"

Moderation: Johan Lagerkvist, Stockholm University

12.00-13.00 (Global) ethics and religious traditions:

Susanne Olsson, Stockholm University:

"Islamic ethics (*'ilm al-akhlāq*): historical development and main teaching"

Zhang Longxi, City University of Hong Kong:
"Mercy, Religious Toleration, and Global Ethics"

Moderation: Torbjörn Lodén, Stockholm University

Torbjörn Lodén and Monika Gänssbauer:
Conclusion

Abstracts:

Tony Hsiu-Hsi Chen, National Taiwan University: "COVID-19 Pandemic Transcends Ethics from SDGs Landscape"

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped four ethical considerations associated with containment measures (such as quarantine and social distancing) while the society around the world was faced with preparedness, protection, and response to a series of the emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants and subvariants. The four ethical principles are considering *Harm*, *Proportionality*, *Reciprocity*, and *Privacy*. A lot of controversial issues during the COVID-19 pandemic have made the four ethical principles very complex in terms of a race between human beings and viruses. The characteristics are heterogeneous and dynamic because a wide range of themes have been involved and are interplaying with each other. These are pertaining to how the implementation and the lifting of NPIs, the policy and the delivery of vaccine and anti-viral therapy, and the provision of health care are related to the educational system, industrial development, political confrontation, economic crisis, social equity, digital technology, and the ecosystem of the planet. The dynamic characteristics are attributed to the biological evolution of SARS-CoV-2 variants and subvariants, which can be mainly divided into two parts using Omicron infection as the landmark. Most importantly, the repercussions from the emerging ethics codes attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic have been gradually extended from health aspects to aspects related to the goals of sustainable development (SDGs). Few reports on these ethical considerations have been highlighted from the viewpoint of SDGs. Here, we provide new insights into the four ethical considerations, ranging from basic needs of life, quality of education, reducing inequity, safe and clean environment, good economic development, green energy, one health, peace and social justice, and partnership.

Hans Ingvar Roth, Stockholm University: "Human Right Lessons from the Pandemic"

Different catastrophes and crises evoke various critical questions concerning what lessons should be learned and how to act in the future in the light of the new experiences. The Corona catastrophe is special in the sense that mankind as a whole has experienced these dramatic events. As the Chinese philosopher and diplomat P.C. Chang claimed at a meeting of the Economic and Social Council at the UN in 1946, epidemics and pandemics do not care about borders, subsequently this catastrophe had affected people all around the world. In the case of the recent Corona pandemic, we can roughly distinguish between *four* critical questions or challenges concerning a post-pandemic world: 1) what should be rebuilt or restored, 2) what should be changed and improved, 3) what should be deleted, diminished or decreased and 4) what should be “ newly ” created from scratch on the basis of the current dramatic experiences.

Many fundamental rights and freedoms have been put into parenthesis during the pandemic – and - in the post-pandemic world they have to be reintroduced and strengthened again. Striking examples are freedom of movement, freedom of association and possibilities to enjoy cultural life. Many social activities have also been diminished during the pandemic given the extraordinary measures such as curfews and lock downs. More generally one could ask the following questions: which human rights have been especially affected or challenged during the pandemic - and - during the period of “state of emergency policies”? This presentation aims to analyze some of the more salient challenges to human rights with reference to the pandemic and similar catastrophes.

Julia Grimm, Stockholm University:

Fostering Deliberation for Sustainable Organising: The Role of Brokers in MSIs

The capacity of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) to tackle grand social and environmental challenges depends on successful and substantial collaboration among actors with diverse interests. As private governance mechanisms and in the absence of global legal frameworks, MSIs rely on reaching collective agreement on sets of rules that all parties are willing to follow voluntarily. To explore how competing stakeholder interests can be overcome and common ground can be established, we draw on the cases of the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles and the Fossil Free Sweden Initiative. Our findings show that common ground among MSI participants proved crucial as the foundation for deliberation and subsequent collaboration. Importantly, our study reveals that the creation of common ground can differ, depending on cultural peculiarities as well as the temporality of the issue at stake. We identify the mechanisms via which brokers can navigate towards the creation of common ground for deliberation and collaboration to occur.

Giuseppe Di Capua, Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Rome:

"Etiology of the Ecological Crisis: Building New Perspectives for Human Progress Through Geoethics"

The socio-ecological crisis is a global polycrisis, which needs to be answered on a scientific-technical level (identifying most probable scenarios and sustainable solutions), cultural level (building a society of solidarity, respect, and responsibility) and aesthetic level (redefining the human sensorial perception of the environmental reality).

Humanity has become the main engine of climate and ecological change on a global scale, in turn fuelled by a general homogenization of the economic models adopted and of people's social needs and expectations. Anthropogenic global environmental changes have produced further transformations in human communities, prompting them in turn to conform to the same concerns and hopes. Now, we are witnessing an epochal transition, in which increased environmental awareness, especially on the part of the younger generations, can lead

humanity to a more fruitful coexistence between a local/regional community dimension and a (global) cosmopolitan one, which is not based on ideological-political beliefs of individual parts, but on the sharing of a common destiny of species by all, as an effect of an increased perception of the physical, chemical, biological limits that underlie human life on the planet and of the precariousness of the social-ecological interrelationships that characterize the Earth. A human community is not a simple aggregation of individuals, but a system of relationships that binds people to the physical, biological, technological environment, virtual and material, through organizational, cultural, social, economic and moral constraints. It is through the sharing of ideals, values, languages, meanings, rules of conduct, traditions that the collective identity is structured and the material and spiritual existence of each individual can be enriched with sense.

Geoethics can represent the way for a cultural renewal of society, orienting human choices and decisions starting from a common framework of shared principles and values, capable of responding to global environmental and social changes in a functional and responsible way, by promoting a solidarity, intercultural and interethnic vision, and respect for the environment.

Geoethics is substantially an ethics of the global socio-environmental responsibility of a planetary citizenry, grafted onto geoscience (the science that studies the Earth system and its subsystems) which not only has a self-realizing purpose, but is above all the means by which:

- a) responsibly assisting society in the great contemporary and future challenges of the Anthropocene by promoting policies of mitigation and adaptation to global environmental changes;
- b) contributing to the development of a culture of knowledge of the common home and to the modification of the aesthetic dimension through which human beings perceive the Earth, thanks to its educational and training potential.

Geoethical thought is the tool for guiding our technological societies towards authentic humanistic-ecological progress, which modifies the aesthetic dimension that human beings have of themselves and of Earth.

Susanne Olsson, Stockholm University:

"Islamic ethics (*'ilm al-akhlāq*): historical development and main teaching"

The paper addresses the development of Islamic ethics (*'ilm al-akhlāq*) as a separate discipline. There was early on a stress on the importance of basing all Islamic disciplines on Scripture, i.e. the Qur'an and the example of the prophet Muhammad, which was gathered

in the Sunnah-corpus. This was the case in juridical and theological affairs, but it was constantly challenged by those who wished for a more rationalist inclined reasoning to be the foundation for developing Islamic jurisprudence or theology. This debate between traditionalism and rationalism also affected ethics. In the early Islamic era, there were traditionalists who stressed literal readings of scripture as the basis for all Islamic disciplines, and there were dogmatic theologians and philosophers influenced by Greek thought. These were often in conflict and the rationally inclined thinkers had to strive to appear as true Muslims who conformed to the basic tenets of Islam. This conflict also affected the development of Islamic ethics.

Al-Miskawayh (d.1030) is credited with contributing to the actual establishment of ethics as a separate Islamic discipline. He was a historian and philosopher most known for his work on ethics "The Refinement of Character" (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). The paper will address how he managed to handle the Traditionalist criticism towards the use of Greek thought and philosophy. We will look at how he defined Islamic ethics and his arguments about why ethics is important to all Muslims, and how it differs from Islamic "etiquette" (*adab*). Al-Miskawayh's ethics was adapted by al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and with him it found its way into mainstream Islamic ethics and it has dominated the discipline since then. The paper will also briefly address contemporary Islamic ethics, which has become more activist in orientation, both among those of a more rationalist as well as traditionalist/fundamentalist view.

**Zhang Longxi, City University of Hong Kong:
"Mercy, Religious Toleration, and Global Ethics"**

From the speech on mercy in Shakespeare's famous play, *The Merchant of Venice*, to Nicolas of Cusa's concept of *docta ignorantia* and to the need to embrace different cultures and traditions in our own time, I shall reflect on the issues of religious toleration and global ethics and propose a way to come to the reconciliation of different positions in religious faith and political stance, a reconciliation and mutual understanding that are vital for the peaceful coexistence of different countries and nations in our world today.