

BOOK REVIEW

Anthony Le Duc (ed.). *Religion, Culture, and Ecological Flourishing in Asian Contexts.*

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Ecological flourishing has recently been a crucial part of the discussion for those who study environmental ethics. In this edited volume entitled *Religion, Culture, and Ecological Flourishing in Asian Contexts*, Fr. Anthony Le Duc compiled works that highlight how the growing discourse on ecological sustainability can truly be part of the discourse that highlights flourishing. This book is an addition to the efforts of Le Duc to promote the need to integrate virtue ethics into environmental ethics. With this, this book offers a timely and deeply contextual contribution to the growing field of religion and ecology by centering Asian religious, cultural, and Indigenous perspectives on ecological crisis and sustainability. At a moment when environmental discourse is often dominated by technocratic, Western, or policy-driven frameworks, the book makes a compelling case that ecological flourishing in Asia cannot be understood, or achieved, without engaging religion and culture as formative moral forces. The book's narrative then accentuates how the Asian context always provides a different perspective from the West.

The volume's central strength lies in its interdisciplinary and intercultural approach. Drawing from theology, philosophy, anthropology, religious studies, communication, and Indigenous studies, the contributors demonstrate that ecological degradation is not merely a technical failure but a moral, spiritual, and civilizational crisis. The book consists of 18 chapters that feature Asian voices that provide a more diverse view on environmental ethics. The diversity of voices is important as it highlights the tenet of environmental ethics that highlights the universal call to aid efforts to protect the environment. Since a sustainable environment is a universal good that everyone lives in, taking care of it means collaboration among different voices. Also, the collected essays collectively argue that dominant paradigms of development—anthropocentrism, consumerism, and extractivism—have eroded older relational worldviews in which humans understood themselves as embedded within a living community of beings.

Anthony Le Duc's introduction provides a strong conceptual framework, situating Asia as both a region of acute ecological vulnerability and a repository of profound ethical and spiritual resources. His framing of ecology through interwoven lenses of religion and culture is not romantic or nostalgic; rather, it is critically aware of how colonialism, modernization, and globalization have disrupted traditional

ecological wisdom. Importantly, the book avoids reducing religion to instrumental green ethics and instead treats it as a source of moral imagination, virtue formation, and cosmological meaning. With this, the diverse voices of the contributors play a role so that a more nuanced understanding of environmental ethics can be provided.

Several chapters stand out for their theoretical depth and contextual richness. Essays on Buddhist environmental humanism, Islamic ecological ethics, Confucian relational cosmology, Shinto ritual ecology, and Catholic engagements with *Laudato Si'* show how different traditions converge around themes of interconnectedness, restraint, and responsibility, even while maintaining distinct metaphysical commitments. Particularly noteworthy are the chapters on Indigenous ecological knowledge (e.g., Ifugao, Acehnese, Manggarai, Cordillera, Papua New Guinea), which illustrate how ritual, land practices, and oral traditions function as lived ecological ethics rather than abstract principles.

The volume is also commendable for foregrounding often-marginalized voices and themes. The chapters on ecofeminism and women's ecological leadership in the Philippines and Vietnam challenge patriarchal assumptions embedded in both culture and environmental policy, while the sections on religious communication and education emphasize the urgency of translating ecological ethics into public discourse, pedagogy, and digital spaces.

Running themes from the essays include: ecology as a moral and spiritual crisis; a critique of modern anthropocentrism and consumerism; religion as a resource for ecological transformation; traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous wisdom, interconnectedness and the "community of beings;" virtue ethics and self-cultivation, gender and ecology; *Laudato Si'* and Christian ecological praxis in Asia; communication, education, and prophetic voice; and toward a moral ecology of hope. These themes were derived from chapters that consistently framed ecological degradation not merely as environmental damage but as a failure of moral imagination, spiritual vision, and cultural values. It is then important to stress that technical solutions alone are insufficient without ethical transformation. Also, many chapters critique modern development paradigms that treat nature as a commodity. These paradigms are linked to colonial legacies, global capitalism, and technocratic rationality, which undermine relational worldviews.

Furthermore, the contributors highlighted that Asian religious traditions, such as Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, Shinto, and Indigenous faiths, are presented as active moral agents, offering cosmologies, rituals, and virtues that foster ecological responsibility rather than domination. This perspective highlights how ecological knowledge is already present in Asian traditions and religions. Also, Indigenous practices are shown to embody sustainable living through ritual, land ethics, and intergenerational stewardship. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is framed as both practical knowledge and moral-spiritual wisdom, now endangered but urgently relevant. With this, TEK contributes to ecological flourishing by informing and forming the human persons.

In addition, the chapters presented a shared theme across traditions is relational ontology: the belief that humans, nature, ancestors, and the divine are interdependent. This idea challenges individualism and supports an ethic of care, reciprocity, and belonging. If this relational ontology is done, further improvements on how humans

relate with nature and human beings become more authentic and integral to being. Also, the contributors had a common theme of ecological renewal. Ecological renewal is linked to personal and communal moral formation. Virtues such as compassion, moderation, humility, justice, and mindfulness are seen as prerequisites for sustainability. This perspective calls on the need to go back to self-cultivation, which highlights the need for virtue ethics in the time of environmental crisis. In this way, the person is formed so as to aid the environment not out of rules or requirement, but because it is part of the virtues cultivated among human beings.

A noteworthy contribution among the chapters is the inclusion of women's voices. Women's ecological roles are highlighted, particularly in ecofeminist perspectives from the Philippines and Vietnam. With this, the book chapters provide a critique of patriarchal structures and affirm women as guardians of ecological wisdom and action. This idea shows how caring for the environment is a duty of everyone, and it is an opportune time to also highlight the role of women who are often set aside in these kinds of discourse. Moreover, several chapters engage Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*, showing how Catholic social teaching is being locally embodied, especially among Indigenous and marginalized communities in Papua New Guinea. The inclusion of these essays points out how the Catholic faith actively involves itself in the environmental ethics discourse because it is a necessary call to be a steward of God's creation.

Apart from this, the contributors accentuate the importance of ecological awareness. Ecological awareness must be communicated through culturally rooted education, storytelling, ritual, and media. Religious leaders and educators are called to exercise a prophetic role in confronting injustice and ecological destruction. The goal to help the environment will never be achieved if awareness is not promoted among individuals. Everyone has a role to play; therefore, everyone must be aware of their roles.

Finally, the volume ultimately proposes a moral ecology grounded in hope, pluralism, and dialogue—one that integrates policy, spirituality, culture, and community for the flourishing of all life. This holistic approach to ecology was highlighted by the authors so that it becomes a reminder that environmental care is not only a concentrated effort by the few; rather, it is a universal call for human effort so that the common home can be saved.

As an edited collection, the book's diversity is both a strength and a limitation. While the range of contexts enriches the discussion, the theoretical density and methodological variation across chapters may challenge readers seeking a single unified framework. Nonetheless, the coherence is sustained through recurring motifs: relationality, virtue ethics, community, Indigenous wisdom, and moral ecology. If one wants to read on different perspectives on environmental ethics, this book is highly recommended. However, if one prefers a more unified perspective, this book is a limitation since it aims to highlight the diversity of voices of the authors.

Overall, *Religion, Culture, and Ecological Flourishing in Asian Contexts* is a significant contribution to ecotheology, comparative religious ethics, and Asian studies. It will be especially valuable for scholars and students of theology, philosophy,

environmental humanities, religious studies, and social communication, as well as for pastoral leaders and faith-based environmental practitioners in Asia and beyond. The volume does not claim to solve the ecological crisis, but it convincingly shows that without religion and culture, solutions will remain incomplete.

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