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Buddhist Economic Thought and Action

“Buddhist Values and Economics: Investing in a Sustainable Future”
April 13-14, 2019
The University of Hong Kong
Overview

1. Buddhism and Economics
2. Principles of Buddhist Economic Action
3. Mindful Markets
4. Conclusion
1 Buddhism and Economics
Buddhist Economics

conceived by

E. F. Schumacher
Middle Way Economics

Venerable P.A. Payutto

Realization of true well-being by activities that do not harm oneself and do not harm others.
ECONOMICS WITH A BUDDHIST FACE

The First Conference of the Buddhist Economics Research Platform
August 23–24, 2007, Budapest, Hungary

Business Ethics Center
Corvinus University of Budapest

&

East-West Research Institute
Budapest Buddhist University
Business within Limits
Deep Ecology and Buddhist Economics

edited by
Laszlo Zsolnai
and
Knut Johannessen Ims

Ethical Principles and Economic Transformation – A Buddhist Approach
2 Principles of Buddhist Economic Action
Principles of Buddhist Economic Action (1)

Minimize suffering of human and non-human beings.
Principles of Buddhist Economic Action (2)

Simplifying desires

Materialistic value orientation destroys well-being.
Principles of Buddhist Economic Action (3)

Practicing non-violence ("ahimsa")

Market-driven violence in society and nature.
Genuine care responsible organizations can be rewarded for the higher cost of caring.
Principles of Buddhist Economic Action (5)

Generosity
giving without expecting any return

“Homo reciprocans”
people tend to reciprocate what they get
Western Economics versus Buddhist Economics

Western economics represents a maximizing framework. It wants to maximize profit, desires, market, instrumental use, and self-interest.

“bigger is better”
“more is more”

Buddhist economics represents a minimizing framework where suffering, desires, violence, instrumental use, and self-interest have to be minimized.

“small is beautiful”
“less is more”
3 Mindful Markets

Mindful markets consist of

(i) mindful consumption
(ii) mindful entrepreneurship
(iii) mindful economic policy
Mindful Consumption

Mindful consumptions is **wise** (it serves one’s true well-being), **non-violent** (it does not hurt other sentient beings), and **compassionate** (it helps others to satisfy their needs).
• Vegan food  
• Efficient use of water  
• Ecological housing  
• Ethical clothing  
• Preventive and natural medicine  
• Eco-literacy  
• Sustainable energy  
• Fair trade product  
• Ethical banking
Mindful entrepreneurship is the application of **Buddhist virtues** in business activities including **production and trade**.

Production is only truly justified when the value of the thing produced outweighs the value of that which is destroyed.
Buddhist Business (1)

DON'T BUY THIS JACKET

COMMON THREADS INITIATIVE

REDUCE
WE make useful gear that lasts a long time
YOU don't buy what you don't need

REPAIR
WE help you repair your Patagonia gear
YOU pledge to fix what's broken

REUSE
WE help find a home for Patagonia gear
you no longer need
YOU sell or pass it on

RECYCLE
WE will take back your Patagonia gear
that is worn out
YOU pledge to keep your stuff out of
the landfill and incinerator

REIMAGINE
TOGETHER we reimagine a world where we take
only what nature can replace
Buddhist Business (2)
Buddhist Business (3)
Mindful Economic Policy

Buddhism suggests to evaluate economic performance holistically by measuring how well people live (prosperity), how fairly resources are distributed (justice), and how well the ecosystems are functioning (sustainability).
4 Conclusion

For the development of sentient beings (human and non-human alike) we need economic actors who behave in ethical ways. In doing so economic actors should avoid vices such as greed, hatred and ignorance, and exercise the virtues of generosity, non-violence, compassion, contentment, wisdom, and mindfulness.
Let all sentient beings be happy.

Peace for all beings.