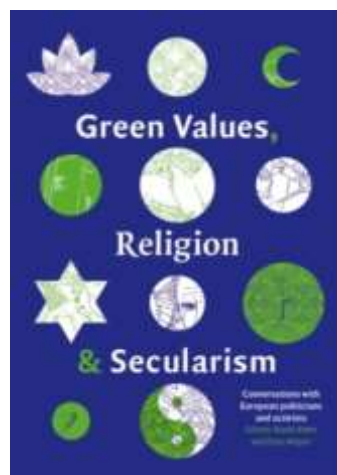


R E P O R T

Green European Foundation, with the support of Green Foundation Ireland and in partnership with the Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College Dublin, host a

S E M I N A R

"Green Values, Religion, Secularism and the ethical basis for social and environmental action"



Irish School of Ecumenics, TCD, Dublin 2

Thursday 10 November 2016

5:30pm – 7:30pm, followed by a reception

The panel of four speakers was chaired by **Iain Atack**, Professor of Peace Studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics; the speakers were: **Catriona Russell**, Lecturer in Environmental Ethics at Trinity College Dublin, formerly Director MPhil in Ecology and Ethics at All Hallows College, Dublin; **Erica Meijers**, Theologian and Editor of "*Green Values, Religion and Secularism*"; **Sorley McCaughey**, Director of Advocacy and Policy at Christian Aid; **Francis Duffy**, Green Party Councillor at South Dublin County Council, Lecturer and Architect.

Cathriona Russell began with a brief résumé of the ethic of stewardship, wise use, justice and fair share burden sharing. If the developed world consumes in a way that cannot be universalised, then this is unjust. Poverty and inequality compound biodiversity loss through competition for habitat. She went on to speak of justice as capability and agency according to Amartya Sen, the Bengali Indian economist and philosopher, who has written about the imperative to go beyond the idea of basic needs to also address agency and capability in the search for justice.

She concluded with a discussion on the necessity to not only engage in practical solutions to injustice but to also embrace a contemplative ecology which asks us to pay attention to the world and to love and be mindful of the world; love is a powerful source of motivation. An ethic of justice through love can be found not only in Christianity but also in Buddhism, Confucianism. Daoism.

Erica Meijers asked how we could bring values into public debate. Her answer was a story from her own religious tradition from the New Testament: The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18: 9-14 is about those who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else. In telling why this story was important, Erica said that Christian churches had chosen to identify with the humble tax collector; however, by doing so, she became just like the Pharisee from our story who thanks God for not being like the tax collector. Many clergy also designated the Pharisee as the exemplar of the Jew and the humble tax collector into the image of the Christian.

As a consequence Christians started to show exactly the behaviour which Jesus criticises; they looked down on Jews. This interpretation has contributed to the anti-Semitism within the Christian churches. Erica concluded by saying that this story teaches us not to judge others easily – and to be critical of all fanaticism and fundamentalism, a particular lesson for those in the Green movement who are sometimes disposed to view others through the lens of their own righteousness.

Francis Duffy gave an illustrated talk on his own experience as a Green Councillor and how his values both as a Green and as a human being were important for his political work.

Sorley McCaughey described how the work of Christian Aid depended on Christian values, which were often not articulated in its literature but, nonetheless, were the moving forces behind its work in the field.

When our panellists concluded their presentations, a lively, interesting and thought-provoking Q&A session between the audience and the speakers followed.

Nuala Ahern
Green Foundation Ireland

18 November 2016