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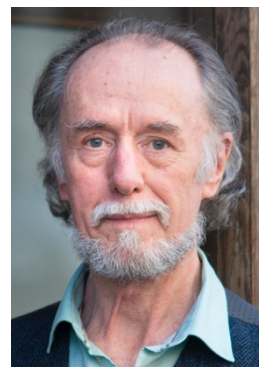
Tōbunken Seminar:

Former Prof. Graham Parkes (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) Lecture: “Managing Humanity’s Insanity: Rethinking our Place in Nature through Classical Chinese Philosophy”

Lecturer:

Graham PARKES

**Former Professor, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
(currently: Professional Research Fellow at University of Vienna)**



Title & Date:

2024 May 17th (Friday) 16:30 – 18:00 (JPN time)

**“Managing Humanity’s Insanity:
Rethinking our Place in Nature through Classical Chinese Philosophy”**

Venue:

Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo
Conference room on the 3rd Floor (* On-site only)

Language: English

Facilitator: Prof. Takahiro Nakajima (Director, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia)

Abstract:

Why the extreme term ‘insanity’? Well, because the way that we in the developed countries are currently living is beginning, through its impact on the climate and the biosphere, to render the planet uninhabitable. And only a very few among the ultra-rich are going to be able (they hope) to go somewhere else to live. This presentation examines the roots of this insanity and proposes some ways of managing it. We know how risky the global situation is thanks to the idea of ‘planetary boundaries’, elaborated by some of the world’s top climate and Earth System scientists. For nine of Earth’s subsystems they have identified a range of thresholds beyond which human pressure could trigger abrupt changes that would tip the entire system into a state that’s distinctly inhospitable for human existence. A large part of the problem is a prevalent idea of who we are as human beings. A right-wing libertarian (neoliberal) ideology has convinced many people that we are basically autonomous individuals at liberty to extract from the natural world whatever we need to satisfy our desires for material comfort, as assured by continued economic growth. Another factor behind our blindness to the severe risks of climate breakdown and the destruction of biosphere integrity is ‘the posthuman spectacle’. Our enthusiastic immersion in information technologies and social media tends to reinforce Cartesian ‘indivi-dualism’, keeping us narcotised in a virtual world of ‘representations’ and oblivious to the dangers of our physical situation. A more plausible and beneficial understanding of who we are regards us not as individuals but as relatives—related to other humans and myriad other beings on which we depend. Indigenous philosophies from numerous cultures share this kind of understanding, but for pragmatic reasons we do well to draw from the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition to heal our indivi-dualist derangement. After all, without enthusiastic cooperation from China it will be impossible to slow global heating and preserve the integrity of the biosphere. While revising our self-understanding to a saner mode, we can be making major changes in our social, political, and economic institutions, which would let us avoid the worst—and live more fully human lives.

This lecture is a part of the Tōbunken P4NEXT and co-hosted by the R4GREEN at University of Bonn

For attending the lecture,
please register from the link below:

<https://forms.gle/PFg9gkNW2AjQyv9z8>