

Conference Report

Title of the Project: Power and Rights

Event: Celebration of UNESCO's World Philosophy Day 2008 and the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Narrative Report:

On the occasion of the celebration of World Philosophy Day and the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Social and Human Sciences Committee of the UNESCO National Commission, in cooperation with the Ateneo Human Rights Center's Children's Desk and the Ateneo Philosophy Department organized a conference on "Power and Rights," with special attention on the Rights of Children, held at the Ateneo de Manila University's Social Development Complex Auditorium last November 20, 2008.

The event was attended by more than one hundred participants from the academe, NGO and government sectors. After the welcome remarks delivered by Atty. Sedfrey M. Candelaria, Director of Ateneo's Adhikain para sa Karapatang Pambata (AKAP) and a reading of the special Message written by UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura on the occasion of World Philosophy Day, animated discussions on the conceptual relationship between "Power and Rights" were led by six eminent University Professors who presented academic papers that range from such titles as "Responsibility for the Other's Rights" by Dr. Leovino Ma. Garcia, "The Dialectics of Power, Rights and Responsibility by Fr. Ranhilio Aquino, "Safeguarding Human Rights through Restraint and Self-awareness" by Dr. Fernando Zialcita, and "Power and Rights" by Fr. Luis S. David, S.J. The two panel discussions were moderated by Dr. Jovino Miroy, President of the Medieval Society of the Philippines and Dr. Remmon Barbaza, Chair of the Ateneo Philosophy Department. Dr. Lukas Kaelin, Research Professor at the University of Vienna who was also invited to participate in the panel discussion, sent a copy of his paper entitled "The Intrinsic Violence of Rights: Derrida and Hegel," in lieu of reading it in public because he had to leave the country prior to the date of the conference.

The afternoon session began with a presentation of Ambassador Preciosa s. Soliven of the "Proposed Southeast Asian Center for Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development" followed by a panel discussion on "Children's Rights" led by Atty. Claire Clementir, Volunteer Lawyer of the Ateneo Human Rights Center, Atty. Ronaldo Gutierrez, Executive Director of Upholding Life and Nature Organization and Atty. Roberto Cadiz, Executive Director of the Libertas Foundation. This panel discussion was moderated by Atty. Ana Elzy E. Ofreneo, Director of the Education Division of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and Atty. Brenda E. Canapi. Atty. Ofreneo presented the current programs of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and invited the public in celebrating Human Rights Day at the Heritage Hotel in Pasay City on December 10, 2008.

Closing Remarks were delivered by Dr. Rainier Ibana, Conference Director, who emphasized the continuing discourse of human rights in the daily practices of our everyday lives. Certificates of Participation and Attendance were then distributed to the participants by the staff of the Ateneo Center for Human Rights. A special book sale of discounted Philosophy titles were also offered by the Ateneo de Manila University's Samahan sa Pilosopiya (Philosophy Association), in Cooperation with Aeon Bookstore, during the breaks and after the duration of the conference.

Post-conference feedback from the participants was encouraging with one of them offering to create a website about the conference. Prof. Ma. Alda Bayot, of the University of the Philippines and the University of the East, in particular, sent an email message expressing her gratitude for her attendance to the conference with special mention about the "courtesy and friendliness of the professional staff" along with her request to be added to the egroup of the Philippine Philosophy of Education for the 21st Century. Over one hundred members were added to this egroup as a result of this conference.

Rainier A. Ibana
Conference Director

Chrisianne Grace Salonga
Secretariat