

Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy: A Philosophical Analysis**

Choltis Dhirathiti*

Abstract

An analysis of the ideas and concepts of, and within, the “Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy” has been conducted on the presupposition that the ethics of Buddhism and the notion of science are two underlying tenets of this philosophy. The compatibility of ideas between Buddhism and science has been generally recognized, especially on the issue of causality in human experience, but it requires more than an assertion of this compatibility if one wishes to render it meaningful and practical. The philosophy of sufficiency economy is an example of such rendering. The main expression to be analyzed is that sufficiency is to have enough to live on. The key constituents of the analysis are moderation, reasonableness and the Middle Way. The idea of sufficiency entails the notions of moderation and reasonableness. Then, at the level of social ethics, these notions are further linked up with the idea that one must do one’s own duty according to one’s own expertise and in support of one another in a reciprocal manner for the interest of society as a whole if one were to find the good within oneself by one’s own reasoning.

Keywords: HM the Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, philosophy of sufficiency economy, scientific Buddhism

*Lecturer, Department of Government, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 46 Henri Dunant Rd., Pathumwan District, Bangkok 10330. Email: choltis.d@chula.ac.th

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ปรัชญาเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง: บทวิเคราะห์เชิงปรัชญา**

ชลธิศ วีระจิต*

บทคัดย่อ

ฐานคิดที่รองรับการวิเคราะห์มโนทัศน์และความคิดต่าง ๆ ภายในปรัชญาของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง คือแนวคิดที่ว่าปรัชญาของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงน่าจะประกอบด้วยความคิดพื้นฐานสองชุดคือ หลักคำสอนของพระพุทธศาสนา และ แนวคิดเกี่ยวกับวิทยาศาสตร์ ความสอดคล้องกันในเนื้อหาความคิดระหว่างวิทยาศาสตร์และพระพุทธศาสนา นี้ได้มีการกล่าวถึงมานาน โดยเฉพาะในประเด็นเกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ทางเหตุ-ผลในประสบการณ์ของมนุษย์ แต่ก็จำเป็นต้องยกระดับของความสอดคล้องนี้ขึ้นมา หากเราต้องการเข้าใจและเห็นผลในเชิงปฏิบัติของการเขื่อมกันของระบบความคิดทั้งสอง และปรัชญาของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงก็เป็นตัวอย่างของการยกระดับความเข้าใจในความสอดคล้องดังกล่าว ข้อความหลักในการวิเคราะห์นี้คือการกล่าวถึงความพอเพียงในแง่ของการมีเพียงพอต่อการดำรงชีวิต มโนทัศน์เพื่อการวิเคราะห์ที่สำคัญประกอบด้วยความรู้จักประมาณ (หรือความพอดี) การใช้เหตุผล และทางสายกลาง ซึ่งจะทำให้เข้าใจแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับความพอเพียง และในระดับที่เป็นจริยธรรมสังคมนั้น มโนทัศน์เหล่านี้ได้ถูกนำมาผูกโยงกับแนวความคิดเรื่องหน้าที่ของมนุษย์ที่มีต่อผู้อื่นและระหว่างกันเพื่อประโยชน์ของสังคม

คำสำคัญ: พระบาทสมเด็จพระปรมินทรมหาภูมิพลอดุลยเดช, ปรัชญาของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง, พระพุทธศาสนาเชิงวิทยาศาสตร์

*อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาการปักร่องคณรัฐศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย 46 ถนนรังสิต-ดูนังต์ เขตปทุมวัน กรุงเทพฯ 10330 อีเมล choltis.d@chula.ac.th

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This article seeks to explain the 'Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy' of His Late Majesty King Bhumibol of Thailand, from a philosophical perspective. The analysis proceeds into two major parts. First, the common teachings of Buddhism and the general notion of science are discussed. And secondly, the key ideas and concepts of the philosophy of sufficiency economy are explored and elucidated by and within the background of, the interplay between the basic teachings of Buddhism and the general notion of science. I hope to show that at the analytical level, there are two strands of thought underlying the 'Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy': the ethics of Buddhism and the notion of science. In analyzing these underlying tenets in His Late Majesty's philosophy of sufficiency economy, however exploratory, the implication is to set out a framework to facilitate further research on the use or misuse of this 'philosophy' in contemporary political discourse in Thailand.

At the analytical level, it may be suggested that there are two strands of thought underlying the 'Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy' initiated and proposed by His Late Majesty: the notion of science and the ethics of Buddhism. These two ideas are represented in terms of 'knowledge and virtue as guidelines in living'. Two sets of biographical background of His Late Majesty provide the key context in understanding the foundation of His Majesty's philosophy. Both could be termed as His Late Majesty's educational background. One was the study of science (and technology) which took place during the largest part of His Majesty's education programs in Switzerland, up to the time that the Thai Crown was bestowed on him in 1946. The other was His Majesty's lifelong interest and non-stop learning of Buddhist teachings that perhaps started when His Majesty served his monkhood at Wat Bowonniwet Vihara in 1956, though a short period of time, but with an intense and systematic program of study provided by the top Buddhist scholars and senior Buddhist monks at the time. It may be also suggested that these two strands of thought could not be combined without another set of educational background, the study of Political Science and Law, which took place after His Majesty's succession to the throne with the decision to 'equip himself with the proper knowledge for government' (Kanchanapisek Network 1999, 1).

The teachings of Buddhism

As a set of ethical teachings and institutional practices, it might be suggested that Buddhism in Thailand has been blessed with stability and minimum doctrinaire controversies. Religious education organized within the monastic schools has been following the framework, or the 'curriculum', and the contents laid down during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) under the academic as well as administrative leadership of Somdet Phra Maha Samana Chao Krom Phraya Vajirananavavaras, who was the Lord Abbot of Wat Bowonniwet Vihara for 28 years and the Supreme Patriarch of the Siamese Sangha (Thailand) for 12 years. Among many of his contributions to Buddhism in Thailand, Somdet' Krom Phraya Vajirananavavaras, with full power and responsibility to manage ecclesiastical affairs, reformed and systematized Buddhist education in the country. The new measures that he introduced, among others, were textbooks, teaching methods, handbooks and method of written examination. Wat Bowonniwet Vihara, it might be said, was then the biggest center of these Buddhist educational activities, providing both monastic schoolings and also Buddhist study for laymen and laywomen.

All the great 8 world religions, it is commonly claimed, share the common ethics of doing good in one's life, not doing harm to others, and purifying one's own mind, regardless of whether that religion is a monotheistic religion such as Christianity and Islam, or an atheistic religion like Theravada Buddhism. The most cited and commonly known principal teachings of Buddhism are the principles of the Four Noble Truths and the notion of Karma. These teachings are associated with the characteristics of Buddhism as believing in the universal moral principles about how to live one's life and to cope with everyday life sufferings, and as a religion of choice that open to one's own judgment without the policy of compulsory conversion. As a result of these characteristics, there is an implication that the teachings of Buddhism are compatible with science, particularly science comprehended in terms of scientific method, truth based on empirical facts and the use of reason. And the teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the idea of Karma provide examples of this compatibility.

'Karma' stands for the idea that we are according to our actions and past actions. In other words, we are taking to ourselves the results of certain actions we have done. This is seen

as a natural law of cause and effect, actions and their consequences that may not be only physical, but also mental. That is to say, what we do may also result in some effect on our consciousness and sub-consciousness whether we are aware of those consequences or not. According to the Buddha, in the **Advice to Rāhula**, action encompasses mental action, verbal action and physical or bodily action, all of which may be further classified in terms of the act of contemplating the action (intention), the act that is actually taking place (action in ordinary temporal sense), and the act that has been completed. All these actions or doings, considered either by kind or by the temporal stage of doing, yield certain results. The results of action may be towards oneself, towards other persons, or towards both oneself and others. In this sense, good deed yields good consequences, and bad deed yields the bad ones, to ourselves, to others, or to both ourselves who committed the actions and other people (Thera 2008). It is a simple cause-effect relation placed in a very comprehensive classification of individual action, and aimed at the propagation of good deeds.

The main aim of Buddhist teachings and practices, for both laypersons and those in the monastic order, is to overcome suffering in oneself and others. The state of suffering is associated with harm resulting from bad deeds. The opposite state refers to that which is beneficial to oneself, to others, or to both oneself and others. The fundamental principle that explains human sufferings is the Four Noble Truths, put simply thus: (1) all life is suffering, (2) the cause of suffering is the craving or the desire to be and to have, (3) suffering ends with the cessation of craving or desire, and (4) the practices that will bring about the ceasing of suffering are to follow the 'Middle Way' in all actions of a person and to avoid both extremes. Kyabgon (2014) suggests that the Four Noble Truths are both descriptive and prescriptive. They are descriptive in the sense that 'they describe the condition we are in – what sort of conditions are prevalent and what the problems are' (Kyabgon 2014, 9; see also in details Harvey 1992, 47-72). The Four Noble Truths together with the idea of Karma are the general framework in explaining the causes and results of human sufferings in terms of the conditions related to each individual's life, particularly the actions or doings that lead to his or her own sufferings, or the doings that create the conditions of sufferings. In other words, by our own actions or doings, as well as others,

we and others cause to happen our own sufferings. All sufferings can be explained by going back to their causes.

The Four Noble Truths are also prescriptive by providing the goal and the means in achieving individual happiness, and reducing sufferings in one's life. The most common teaching related to the Middle Way as the path to the cessation of suffering is the Holy Eightfold Path, or the Path Which Has Eight Factors. This comprises Right Understanding, Right Thought or Intention, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Occupation or Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. These 8 factors are usually grouped and summed up as a person who acts ethically. This involves having moral virtue or moral sensitivity (morality), right state of conscious mind or concentrated mind (meditation), and right understanding of the world and the states of our lives (wisdom). Through the Holy Eightfold Path, with the individual trainings or practices in morality, meditation and wisdom, each individual may improve his or her own situation, coping with dissatisfaction in life, and attaining peace of mind.

As mentioned above, human sufferings are explained in the simple cause and result relation, the common view is that there is the structure of causal relation among the four components of the Four Noble Truths mirroring scientific causality, or scientific mode of explanation. Suffering must have a cause, and the cessation of suffering must also have a cause. Thus, the compatibility between Buddhist teachings and scientific mode of explanation can be appreciated here. It will be illustrated later that the ethics of the Middle Way plays the key role in the main contents of the philosophy of sufficiency economy.

One of the Buddha's teachings, in regard to the aspect of epistemology, emphasizes that understanding and wisdom should be derived by each individual through the thorough assessment of certainty and truth based on one's actual experience and analysis. An account of skepticism in Buddhism is most recognized in the **Lord Buddha's Discourse to the Kalama People** or the **Kālāma Sutta** (Khantipālo 1986). It is the view that one should not accept any claim as certain too easily without questioning. The text, which merits are to be shown at length, are as follows:

Do not make the basis for religious beliefs an authoritative tradition maintained by oral repetition having its origin in some revelation from a God; do not make the basis for religious beliefs an unbroken succession of teaching or of teachers; do not make the basis for religious beliefs conform with the scriptures; do not make the basis for religious beliefs speculative metaphysical theories or reasons and arguments; do not make the basis for religious beliefs a point of view, perhaps inference; do not make the basis for religious beliefs the reflection on reasons; do not make the basis for religious beliefs acceptance of a statement as true because it agrees with a theory of which one is already convinced; do not make the basis for religious beliefs grounds for the competence or reliability of a person; do not make the basis for religious beliefs respect, thinking, "our teacher says thus and thus". (Khantipālo 1986, 9)

Essentially, the key argument of this skeptical attitude is that in assessing any belief or claim of certainty one should not accept as true simply by, or because it is from, revelation or repeated hearing, traditions, scriptures, metaphysical or logical conjecture, a point of view or inference, an accepted reasoning or axiom, accepted theories, a reliable or able person, and our prestigious teachers. Certainty should come from our own careful inquiry, observation and analysis in which the results agree with reason and the criteria of ethical conduct.

This focus on wisdom is crucial for individual conduct. Kyabgon, for example, puts it that Buddhist morality is essentially concerned with what is beneficial (kusala) versus what is harmful (akusala). We should judge our actions in relation to whether we ourselves and others are benefiting or are harming ourselves and others. In this way Buddhist morality is grounded in human experience (Kyabgon 2014, 15).

Each individual has to use his or her own judgment all the time in understanding or knowing about his or her own action which may be either good or bad, in intention, in the action itself, and in the results of that action. Wisdom enables the effective judgment. The lack of wisdom hinders the ability of the individual to see or foresee the consequences of the action. With the emphases on wisdom and the use of reason, Buddhism comes into contact with some aspects of science.

The notion of science

Having dealt with the basic teachings of Buddhism, it is important to look briefly at the ideas of science, to point out its compatibility with the Buddhist way of understanding the world.

Science in general may be defined as the method in advancing knowledge and understanding of the world around us. In this sense, science consists of scientific methodology and the system of reasoning. Scientific methodology is about observation and experiment for the construction of scientific theory. The scientific system of reasoning is mainly induction. Moreover, science is usually considered in terms of knowledge as well as method. Science and technology, discovery and invention, have always been the driving forces that change the world and human lives.

According to modern views about the nature of science, what is special about science is that scientific knowledge and method are based on the 'facts', or the 'facts of experience', rather than on personal opinion. The commonsense view of science, as summarized by Chalmers, is that scientific knowledge is based on the facts established by observation through the careful use of the senses, and by experiment which is observation in a careful, unprejudiced way. Science is not the knowledge that mainly comes from personal opinions or speculative imaginings. As a result, science, through the scientific method, provides the securely established and objective knowledge (Chalmers 1999, 1).

The primary emphasis of science in terms of method can be traced to Francis Bacon, particularly his work, **The New Organon**. For Bacon, science is the inquiring into truth, or the discovery of nature, by employing the method which is reliable in gaining the experience, without relying on individual talent. Understanding must come from experience, and not from metaphysical abstraction. The task of science is 'to find for a given nature its form, or true difference, or causative nature or the source of its coming-to-be' (Bacon 2000, 102). Understanding can be from, and on the basis of, the accumulation of information or experience acquired through experiments of different methods that advance experience (Bacon 2000, 80-82).

In *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method*, Cohen and Nagel (1968, 391) declares that scientific method is 'the most assured technique man has yet devised for controlling the flux of things and establishing stable beliefs'. One of the fundamental features of scientific method is that it aims 'to discover what the facts truly are, and the use of the method must be guided by the discovered facts' (Cohen and Nagel 1968, 391). It does not seek 'to impose the desires and hopes of men upon the flux of things in a capricious manner' (Cohen and Nagel 1968, 391). Irrespective of what our desires are, science seeks to recognize and make use of the process, structure and change of things. But this does not mean that facts are equivalent to knowledge. Knowledge of the facts requires reflection.

With regard to reflection, Derry (1999, 303) warns against any attempt to define what science is, which usually ended up in the failure to 'capture some crucial element of the total picture'. According to Derry, science can be loosely defined as 'the active and creative engagement of our minds with nature in an attempt to understand'. And beyond this broad general definition 'lies the enjoyment of exploring a variety of particular paths in science' (Derry 1999, 304). There are many aspects of how science works, as Derry points out that it consists of

starting with ideas and concepts you know, observing the world, trying different things, creating a coherent context, seeing patterns, formulating hypotheses and predictions, finding the limits where your understanding fails, making new discoveries when the unexpected happens, and formulating a new and broader context within which to understand what you see. (Derry 1999, 303)

On the one hand, science refers to facts and their explanation on how they are related. On the other hand, science is taken to be the methods of investigation and thought processes (Derry 1999, 3-4). Kuhn (1996) in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, which focuses mainly on the development of science, characterized the work of scientists or researchers as the practices done within, as well as on the foundation of, a single paradigm and past achievements. Paradigm provides to the scientists the legitimate problems and methods of a research field, i.e. rules and standards for scientific practice, first principles and concepts and so on. Within a paradigm, there are criteria for choosing problems, accepted theories, successful applications, and exemplary

observations and experiments (Kuhn 1996, 10-11). Science is seen as involving the successful discovery of the facts that solve recognized scientific problems and the knowledge that increasingly extends as a result of that discovery (Kuhn 1996, 23-26). Facts, as well as the methods, are always necessary for science even though the scientific discovery itself may be limited within the scope of a particular paradigm. Facts and methods must always be there.

Buddhism and science

The question on the compatibility between Buddhism and science is not new. Many Buddhists have been suggesting that Buddhism is not superstition, but science. As Lopez (2008) points out, in his survey of the long history of the discourse of Buddhism and Science, that this claim is neither new, nor has it changed in its assertion over the past 150 years. 'The claims for the compatibility of Buddhism and Science have remained remarkably similar, both in their content and in their rhetorical form. This similarity has persisted despite major shifts in what is meant by **Buddhism** and what is meant by **Science**'; he wrote (Lopez 2008, xii).

Arguments against the compatibility between Buddhism and science, that is to say against the interface between Buddhist theories and practices and scientific theories and modes of inquiry, have been summarized by Wallace (2003) into two major viewpoints. First, it has been argued that religion and science are autonomous, with different and incompatible areas of concern, and there is nothing to be said to or about each other. And the second viewpoint is that both Buddhism and science are cultural specifics, that each is unique in its cultural origin and incommensurable in itself, and hence fundamentally incomparable (Wallace 2003, 2-7). However, Wallace suggests that these two viewpoints are not tenable. Buddhism and science have both similarities and differences. On the similarity he wrote:

Buddhism, like science, presents itself as a body of systematic knowledge about the natural world, and it posits a wide array of testable hypotheses and theories concerning the nature of the mind and its relation to the physical environment. These theories have

allegedly been tested and experientially confirmed numerous times over the past twenty-five hundred years, by means of duplicable meditative techniques. (Wallace 2003, 8)

The difference is that 'scientists largely exclude subjective experience from the natural world and attribute causal efficacy only to physical phenomena. Buddhism, in contrast, takes subjective mental phenomena at least as seriously as objective physical phenomena and posits a wide range of interdependent causal connections between them' (Wallace 2003, 8).

Thereupon, if Buddhist teachings begin with the Four Noble Truths, Buddhist truth claim is similar to the framework of causal relations. That is to say, Buddhism is 'centrally concerned with causality within human experience' (Wallace 2003, 8).

To His Late Majesty King Bhumibol, Buddhism is a religion which is compatible with science. This is so because Buddhist teachings are based on the facts of lives that could universally be explored and explained by the guidance of reason. As His Late Majesty pointed out in the Royal Speech on December 6, 1975:

Buddhism points to the harmless way of living a life, leading to the real peaceful prosperity, because of the teachings are wonderfully special in that they rest on true and fact-based reasons as well as provide clear and complete explanation. Anyone can use one's own reason, according to one's capability and disposition, in considering and practicing those teachings to achieve happiness, prosperity and purity. Accordingly, it is a religion that is compatible with the principles of science, and truly beneficial to everyone who is attentive in studying and selecting the suitable teachings for one's own appropriate practices.(Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 2009, 23)

But the use of reason may not be the same for everyone as it is up to each person's capability in the exercise of reason. This is also one of the main ideas in the philosophy of sufficiency economy.

The Philosophy of sufficiency economy

In understanding the philosophy of sufficiency economy of His Late Majesty King Bhumibol, it is crucial to clarify the meaning of the term 'sufficiency'. His Late Majesty himself took

a great care in making its meaning clear, partly out of concern over the possibility of misunderstanding by the general public. The term 'sufficiency' performs two functions in His Late Majesty's thought. One is the specific definition in His Late Majesty's theory and practice of 'sufficiency economy'. The other is the more generally understood definition of the term. His Late Majesty's definitive account of the term came out in 1998 in the Royal Speech given on the occasion of the Royal Birthday Anniversary, after the practices of sufficiency economy have been carried on the ground for over 25 years, in a variety of the development projects under Royal Patronage and supervision. His Late Majesty deemed it necessary to spell out the idea of philosophy of sufficiency economy.

It may be suggested that the **philosophy** part is both an extension of and an elevation from the **practical** part of the field experiences done widely as regards to not only the development programs for the poor but also in His Late Majesty's interactions with various sectors of Thai society. It is the extension of meaning in the sense that the philosophy summed up the general principles and lessons learned from the actual practices. And it is an elevation in the sense that the philosophy provided the general and abstract guidelines for various kinds of people, thereby reflecting the wider meaning of the term. As His Late Majesty put it on December 4, 1998:

The word sufficiency has another meaning, a wider meaning. It does not only mean self-sufficiency but also means to have enough for the individual to live on. [...] To have enough to live on, of course, means sufficiency economy. If everyone has enough to live on, everything will be all right. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1999, 10)

It is often and commonly claimed that the philosophy of sufficiency economy is the former King's philosophy of life, providing the guiding principles of living to the people of all sorts. The term 'sufficiency' does not carry the pejorative sense of "stopping" at what one already has. Nor does it mean being static, refraining from progress and development. That would be a distortion of the essential meaning of sufficiency, although there is room for interpreting 'sufficiency' in a conservative sense. The core meaning of sufficiency is 'enough to live one's life'. It is not an ascetic life, but an affordable life suited differently to each individual. In His Late Majesty's own words:

Sufficiency means to lead a reasonably comfortable life, without excess, or overindulgence in luxury, but enough. Some things may seem to be extravagant, but if it brings happiness, it is permissible as long as it is within the means of the individual. This is another interpretation of the sufficiency economy or system. Last year [in 1997], when I mentioned the word sufficiency, I mentally translated it and actually spelled it out as self-sufficiency; that is why I said sufficiency for the individual. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1999, 10)

Why is sufficiency important to His Late Majesty? It might be suggested that the realization of sufficiency, in the sense already discussed above, would bring about the achievement in the common aims of society that are peace, stability and social justice. If everyone has enough to live on, it would entail that a certain condition for attaining social justice has been generated. And this would support a peaceful and stable society, or country, which has been constantly under threats, for example, the threats of communism and regime changes in the past, or the current global economic crises. The main concern of His Late Majesty has always been about socio-economic development of the country whereby sufficiency is the key. In His Majesty's own words:

If the whole country can subsist, the better it would be, and Thailand at that time [1970s] was on the verge of insufficiency. Some individuals had plenty, but some had practically nothing. In the past, there was enough to live on, but today, impoverishment is creeping in. We must, therefore, implement a policy of sufficiency economy so that everyone will have enough to live on. This sufficiency means to have enough to live on. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1999, 10)

This meaning of sufficiency, as 'to have enough to live on', is broader than the sense of 'to stand on our own feet which means to be independent', which is the sense more specific to the economic notion of sufficiency economy, conveying the idea that 'our two feet are firmly set on the ground, so we can stand without stumbling', and that 'we don't have to borrow other people's feet to support us' (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1999, 12). The indication that sufficiency in the philosophy of sufficiency economy carries the meaning beyond that of 'to stand

on our own feet' suggests a certain moral value beyond its initial value in economic terms. To put it another way, the philosophy of sufficiency economy, although resting on the notion of standing on one's own feet or being independent in the economic sense, gains additional moral value in abstracting itself from economic theory. His Late Majesty, in elaborating further the philosophy of sufficiency economy, ascribed 'moderation' to sufficiency, saying that 'sufficiency, to have enough, has a meaning more extensive than this'. 'The word to have enough is sufficient; sufficiency is moderation' (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1999, 12). This concept of moderation was accounted for in relation to the idea of the Middle Way, It merits quotation at length:

If one were moderate in one's desires, one would have less craving. If one were to crave less, one would take less advantage of others. If all nations held this concept – I don't mean sufficiency economy – but the concept of moderation, without being extreme or insatiable desires, the world would be a happier place. Being moderate does not mean to be too strictly frugal; luxurious items are permissible, but one should not take advantage of others in the fulfillment of one's desires. Moderation, in other words, living within one's means, should dictate all actions. Act in moderation, speak in moderation; that is, be moderate in all activities. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1999, 12)

At this point, the concept of sufficiency is associated with moderation, and moderation is predicated on the Buddhist teachings of the Middle Way in all actions, or Karma, of a person. That is, a person should be moderate, or avoid all extremes, in all actions. As a result of being moderate, it follows that a person is acting rightly. As we saw earlier, there are three kinds of a person's action according to Buddhist teachings: mental, verbal and physical. These kinds of action are then considered in connection with the temporal stages of action and with the impact of such action. Good deeds are actions with good intention, good means of execution, and good results towards oneself, others, or to both oneself and others. These criteria of good action can only be achieved by a person who follows the Middle Way as a means to think, to speak and to do the right things. The conditions on which a person is able to direct his or her own

action along the middle path and with right results are moderation and reasonableness. In talking about good action, His Late Majesty said:

One must act moderately. The same thing applies to thoughts, not only to physical actions. An individual who has any opinion, which may not be right, should not impose it on other individuals. Such action is not a moderate action. Moderation in thought consists of expressing one's own ideas and opinions, and allowing others to speak out too, and then carefully considering what they say and what we say in order to find the way which is more moderate or reasonable. [...] Thus, sufficiency also means moderation and reasonable thinking. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1999, 14)

This is possible, it could be suggested, only if the person has certain self-control mechanisms and the capacity to exercise his/her own reason. They are the conditions along the Buddha's line of teachings, that is in having moral virtue, right state of conscious mind, and wisdom.

The early public presentation of the idea of 'sufficiency' may be traced back to 1974 when the idea was mainly associated with the economic notion, or the economy of self-sufficiency, that promoted reasonable, sustainable and peaceful conditions for the country. The main concerns during this period (1970s) were peace and security, in the context of the world economic crisis and the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia. For His Late Majesty, Thailand had 'enough to live on and to live for, and this should be the wish and determination of all of us to see self-sufficiency in this country'. The common collective aim of the country should be directed toward 'a sustainable and peaceful country', to 'keep this sustainability', which is the reasonable way of life, while other countries in the world 'beset as they are by crises and decline due to greed and rivalry for power, economic and industrial progress and in matters of ideology' (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1998a, 12). The stress on social cohesion or unity was noticeable during this period.

It was His Late Majesty's wish to see in the Thai people, particular policy makers, 'the determination to preserve the community so that we are able to enjoy this reasonable way of life'.

And His Late Majesty stressed 'the reasonable, sustainable, and peaceful conditions – defending ourselves against anyone who may want to rob us of our innate qualities' (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1998a, 12). Here the reasonable way of life, in which everyone has enough to live on, when considered in terms of a society, is one where everyone is doing his or her own duty according to his or her expertise and in a reciprocal way that supports others. In His Late Majesty's own words:

We must consider that those who have any duty should do it well. Moreover, in the discharge of these duties, each one must do it without disturbing others so that they in turn do theirs unhindered. Another thing is everyone has duties to perform, and has different degrees of expertise; one has to rely on others in doing the things that one is not familiar with. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1998b, 52)

The basis of this social cohesion is goodwill and mutual cooperation whereby each is relying on and supporting others. Mutual goodwill is also a condition that could cultivate mutual consideration toward others, the loving care of others. As His Late Majesty said:

Therefore, people have to rely on one another for support, and it is a good thing that there can be mutual reliance; this is mutual goodwill. If there is mutual goodwill, we can have what is most needed, that is, the loving care of others. If we are considerate toward others, others will also be considerate toward us. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1998b, 52)

Analogy was also drawn to the functioning of every part of the body. Everybody is a part of this body, the society. And everybody must function well, with integrity, to maintain the normal life of the society. Society is like a human body that consists of many parts. Life is in a normal state only when all parts of the body are functioning in unison, or when they are united. His Late Majesty told us that:

For each one of you, as individuals or as members of a group, you must work with integrity, without squabbles, without deceit. This line of thought is applicable to the body. If the body has what we could call unity, if all parts of the body are united, the situation is under

control, life would be normal. If any part is defective, there would be trouble, some serious, some not so serious. Sometimes, when even a minute part is defective, not working in concert, or out of control, the whole body would obviously collapse, because the whole system would be out of order, out of control. Life could no longer exist: the body could not survive. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1998c, 98)

Thus, everyone must do his or her own duty for the survival as well as the progress of the nation, which is likened to the main body. Everyone, when doing his or her duty constructively, could contribute to the development of the nation. One should refrain from doing bad and dishonest things which cause destruction to the main body. As His Late Majesty pointed out:

We all have our duties; we may have a part in slowing the progress of the main body, that is the nation. We may also help to develop the main body, that is, the nation. Some who work constructively can help significantly in the development of the nation. [...] Everyone who does good things, meaning someone who does things that are good and constructive, and refrain from bad and dishonest actions will contribute greatly to the community. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1998c, 98)

Then His Late Majesty concluded with the idea of the united nation, where everyone is doing his or her duty and good actions, by defining the words ‘unity’ and ‘control’. This merits quotation at length:

I would like to define the word “unity” as the effort of each one to do good actions and to refrain from bad actions, striving for mutual understanding among individuals. Thus, if the nation is united, the nation would not crumble down; it would be under control. The word “control” is perhaps disliked, because it sounds like “restriction”, or “confinement”, but in this case, “control” means “hold together” as a nation. If the nation exists, all the components of the nation would undoubtedly benefit. It is the same with the body; if it is under control, every part would benefit, meaning that the body would be healthy and able to live happily. (Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand 1998c, 100)

To sum up, it has been shown that His Late Majesty's philosophy of sufficiency economy emphasizes sufficiency, or the idea of having enough to live on, as the guiding principle in living one's life. And as a result, sufficiency entails the notions of moderation and reasonableness. Then these ideas were associated, at the level of social ethics, with the idea that one must do one's own duty according to one's own expertise and in support of one another in a reciprocal manner for the interest of society as a whole. It may be suggested that the idea of sufficiency presupposes understanding and wisdom. The reason for this is that to be moderate and reasonable is to have an understanding of one's own concrete situation at a particular time as well as in the general context of one's own life. To know is to understand. And understanding leads one to make a reasonable judgment about one's own action. It may be suggested also that to know is to use of one's own reason in line with the scientific mode of inquiry, so that one could gain the required understanding and wisdom.

Concluding remarks

Having explored the main ideas of the philosophy of sufficiency economy and discussed them in relation to the interface between Buddhism and the general notion of science, as the two main tenets of that philosophy, I am tempted to suggest that His Late Majesty's clear formulation of the account of the philosophy of sufficiency economy was an attempt to formulate a certain version of 'citizenship' by the head of the state who knows at first-hand, from a variety of experiences, the limitations of his people, of the political system, and particularly of political ethics in Thai society. It would seem, therefore, that further investigations are needed in order to put the philosophy of sufficiency economy in the proper context in relation to those limitations. This is a subject matter that is beyond the scope of this article. However, to resume the philosophical analysis, I would also like to suggest that comparisons could be made between the core teaching of the philosophy of sufficiency economy, as it has been elucidated here, and some general aspects of the philosophy of Stoicism.

Earlier it has been shown that the essential meaning of the concept of sufficiency is that of having enough to live one's life in accordance with the ideas of moderation and reasonable thinking. And it is generally taken to be obvious that the philosophy of sufficiency economy is a

philosophy of life, i.e. the guiding principles of living. A parallel could be made with Stoicism which is above all 'an attitude or way of life, with primary concern on how one should live' (Sellars 2006, 2). In Buddhism, life is the process of suffering, but each person can choose the path of his or her own life by living a moderate or reasonable life of righteousness. In Stoicism, it is possible to attain happiness in this unhappy life. 'The aim of life is identical with a life of virtue, the only true good is the moral good. Goodness or happiness consists in an inner attitude, in the good will' (Edelstein 1966, 1). What is most important to the Stoic way of life is not what happens to a person, but 'that he wants the right, that he does the right, that he makes the right use of the things that befall him' (Edelstein 1966, 1). Moreover, the reasonable way of life for each person is the one that everyone is doing his or her own duty according to the expertise which could contribute to the society as a whole. This echoes the Stoic teaching of (wo)man's duty as being part of the greater whole within the unity of the universe. These issues are areas for future research.

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