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How then can we reverse the distancing of ethics from our lives – our normal lives?

Four precise problems come to mind.

There is the ever – growing difference between theory and practice – that is, between theories of ethics and the ethical reality we know and understand. The result has been “... the irrelevance of much of ethical theory to the ethical lives that people are actually striving to lead”, The ever-increasing ‘professionalism’ of philosophy resembles that of any other corporation.

It shuts the subject in upon a dialect of narrow use. This accentuates the distance between the language, which is supposed to help us out ethically and the choices we have to make.

Of course the Sophists were accused a few millennia ago of accentuating the same distance. And Jefferson said: “State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well as, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules”. Jefferson’s point is that shared knowledge – common sense – also has ethical value. That of the jury is a perfect example, as they ponder probability and justice, rather than truth through exact measurement. Surely memory also plays a role in ethics. Perhaps imagination as well. Perhaps instinct. So the reflection of our other qualities maintain our ethical reality.

But **there is also the very real fear that, if you let ethics off the rational leash, it will turn into ideology.** Certainly it can and has. That fear is a second distancing factor. Our histories are full of romanticism and good intentions which turn into ethically motivated injustice, violence and murder. And these are highly personalized whenever ethics is confused with morality. Of all our qualities, ethics slips the most easily into extremism. There is a Christian or Islamic fundamentalist, a witch-hunter, sometimes even a further, lurking in the

shadows of every ethical principle. As if from nowhere, good intentions are converted into misplaced certainty as to moral rectitude. This certainty convinces the holder of the truth that he has the right to harm others.

But then ethics is not about good intentions. It is not moralistic or romantic or wishful thinking. “The trouble with transcendental good intentions...” Joseph Conrad wrote, is that they “cause often more unhappiness than the plots of the most evil tendency.”

That’s why it is so important to anchor the ethical reflex in normal life, where it can be exercised daily.

We exercise it with our reason, but equally with our common sense, imagination and memory. These three maintain the daily existential nature of ethics. How? They give us context and the ability to imagine the consequences of an action. Why? Because we know what has happened before and

... it is important to anchor the ethical reflex in normal life, where it can be exercised daily.

this helps us to consider what might happen in this case.

Ethics on its own is a justification for almost anything. On the eve of the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia, Christopher Hill, the U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia, met with Slobodan Milosevic, the then President of Yugoslavia. Milosevic said to the Ambassador, “You are a super-power. You can do what you want. If you want to say Sunday is Wednesday, you can. It is all up to you.” Justice Louise Arbour, then the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, pointed out the implications of Milosevic’s statement. He believed that if you have the power to control understanding, then truth is whatever serves your cause. This is pure isolated ethics.

The job of an international war-crimes tribunal is to establish justice beyond causes. But in wider

terms it is to moderate the extremism of pure ethics by holding this quality up to reflection before our other qualities.

A third distancing factor is the fear that if ethics is embraced by any one party, then the difference between the many religions, groups, societies, indeed within the societies, will be accentuated. Ethics seen this way is a source of division, because each major group appears to believe in different basics.

But what are these different basics? There are virtually no major ethical differences between the basic texts of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Greek and Roman applied philosophy.

The four Confucian qualities are goodness, conscience, reverence and knowledge. You may debate these, but they reflect the same concepts, and when carefully translated, the same words as the various European traditions. Phrases generally attributed to the Buddha can be used interchangeably with those attributed to Christ. Most of the Koran is a direct reflection of Judaic and Christian texts.

The standard cliché has it that Islam is violently militant, promotes its martyrs to paradise and admires revenge. But Christianity has precisely the same tendencies within it. In both cases these are their expressions of “transcendental good intentions”, not of their ethics. And if you look at the sweep of history, Christian militancy has wreaked far greater destruction than anything managed by Islam. There are continents of people who were subjected to Christian soldiers marching onward and who are therefore not terribly sympathetic when we complain of Islamic militancy.

The meditative, reflective, social tendencies within Islam reflect the equivalent tendencies within Christianity. Sufi meditations bring to mind those of Asian and European monks, filled with peaceable thoughts and ethical justice.

I might add that it was Islamic respect for the differences of the other which led Spanish Jews to flee to North Africa in the fifteenth century, along with most of the defeated Moors, rather than stay to be butchered by the victorious and monolithic-minded Christians. I sometimes feel that European and North American aggressivity towards Arabs over the last half-century has had less to do with Middle Eastern politics and more

to do with an almost psychotic attempt to forget that it was the Christian civilization and no other which massacred six million Jews.

What about the daily questions we must deal with? How many are ethically unresolvable within the western tradition? Very few. Of course

there is endless room for disagreement and debate, but not to a degree which must fracture societies.

That there are periodic unresolvable issues does not mean that ethics doesn't work. And why should an unanswerable question be treated as the most important one? The few unresolvable issues are an indication that ethics works most of the time.

The fourth distancing factor is the dominant role of reason. Again and again over the last 2,500 years we have been subjected to the assertion that reason alone allows us to identify and use ethics. The intention has often been good. But the effect, each time, has been to turn ethics into a creature of reason.



If anything, it is reason which can be made reasonable if seen in the reflection of ethics. Am I exaggerating the problem? Here is the philosopher Stuart Hampshire:

There are two faces of morality: the rational and articulate side and the less than rational, the historically conditioned, fiercely individual, imaginative, parochial, the less than fully articulate side.

Note how ethics, memory and imagination are presented by Hampshire as being inferior to reason. Note how imagination is paired with parochial, an astonishing idea; how only reason can make ethics articulate.

And here is John Rawls, the American theorist:

Having defined a person's good as the successful execution of a rational plan of life...

This is embarrassing in its naivete. For example, how would Rawls explain the rational

plans of the Nazis or of apartheid? Instead of instituting a "less than rational ... less than fully articulate" dictatorship, the South African regime was able to institute a rationally articulate and articulated system, down to the smallest legal details: the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Native Labour Act, the Black Affairs Administration Act, and so on and so on.

Jurgen Habermas, conscious of this contradiction, has tried to reconstruct "an ecumenical conception of reason" by arguing that it is not instrumental but communicative; a way of explaining that we

would be in ethical agreement if we were able to fully explore our ethical doubts together. The problem is again the obsessive desire to approach ethics as a sub-genre of reason. It is this assumption about intellectual form which is central to distancing ethics from real use.

Compare these three philosophers to Voltaire's prudent,

It only remains therefore to use our reason to discern the shades of goodness and badness.

In other words, reason is one of the tools which

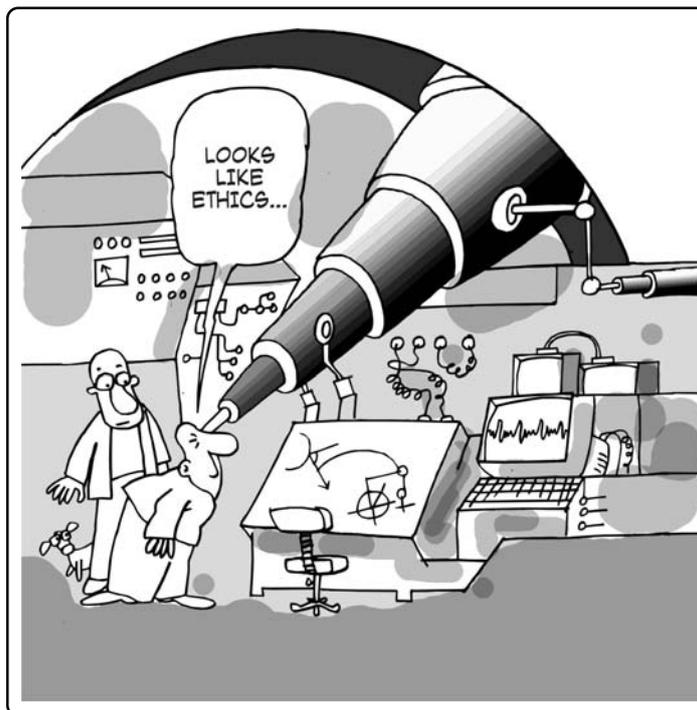
can help us deal with the shades of ethics. It is not the source of truth. It is not therefore liable to deform ethics, as if manipulating a plaything designed for rational pleasure.

"Reason alone no longer suffices," Jung said. With hindsight we can see that it never did. Reason is not a filter through which to shape ethics. To treat it as if it were is to go down the

road of relativism, where there are no choices, only process and interest. It leads you to U.S. President John Kennedy's disastrous formula of "situational ethics", which perfectly described the new managerial, instrumental approach towards power.

All relativism can do is deform ethics. Reality is the solid base from which we choose in the context of uncertainty. Context and reality help us to understand the real costs of striving to live in an ethical manner. They are part of knowing and choosing.

John Ralston Saul, On Equilibrium - The Six Qualities Of The New Humanism, Penguin Books, India 2004



KYOTO — Jinxed at birth?

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL on reduction of emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) came into force on February 16 under circumstances that do not reflect well on policy-makers in many countries. They swear by a 'globalising world' when it comes to economic phenomena but are hesitant to recognise the common threat to humanity from global warming, the causative factors behind which do not respect national borders or customs gateways.

The United States, which has four per cent of the world's population but contributes one-fourth of the emission of all heat-trapping GHGs, including carbon dioxide, withdrew from the protocol during the first term of President George W. Bush.

China and India, which are expected to play the role of engines of economic growth in the 21st century and contribute to accelerated GHG emission, have been exempted from the obligation of targeted reduction in the first phase of the treaty, running up to 2012. Thus the burden of carrying the Protocol — a child of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — rests largely on the shoulders of the European Union, Canada, Japan, and Russia.

The Bush administration, which sees threats to U.S. economic growth from emission reduction targets and objects to the exemption of potentially large economies such as India and China from targets, ignores the fact that such exemption is nothing but a form of "special and different treatment" of developing countries that has been enshrined in the Uruguay Round of negotiations, which led to the creation of the World Trade Organisation.

It is doubtful if the WTO would have seen the light of day if the special and different treatment principle had not been written into the Marrakesh agreement. The WTO's stature as the forum for future trade negotiations would have been undermined had the principle not been reiterated in the Doha Development Agenda.

By ignoring this reality and keeping itself out of Kyoto, the U.S. has not only weakened a global effort at tackling what is perceived as a major factor behind desertification, floods, and other disasters but has also impaired its own capability to intervene in a positive and desirable manner in the implementation of the Protocol.

India and China are likely to face mounting pressure to undertake reduction targets in future despite their stance (never stated in unequivocal terms) that the U.S., as the biggest polluter in human history, should first accept such an obligation. Although this looks like a principled defiance of a hegemonic attitude, in effect it may amount to a confession that U.S. leadership is required for any worthwhile global endeavour.

Australia has so far chosen to follow the U.S. example while the European Union's own commitment seems to have weakened, with Italy saying it will review its membership if the U.S. does not join by 2012. Tony Blair is reported to have declared his intention to do his "damndest" to ensure that Washington joins the treaty.

What is lacking in all these pulls and counter-pulls is a recognition that in general, environment-friendly policies tend to be pro-poor by protecting the access of the poor to natural resources; and that if nation states continue to define economic growth in terms of the inevitability of the depredation of natural resources, the underdogs of the world may one day reject the very concept of economic growth as understood at present.



Editorial, The Hindu. Wednesday, Feb 16, 2005

The Kyoto Protocol

Status of the agreement

At the treaty's implementation in February 2005, the agreement has been ratified by 141 countries, representing over 61% of emissions (<http://unfccc.int/resource/kpstats.pdf>). Countries do not need to sign the protocol in order to ratify it: signing is a symbolic act only. An up-to-date list of those who have ratified is available (<http://www.climnet.org/EUenergy/ratification/calendar.htm>).

According to the terms of the protocol, it enters into force “on the ninetieth day after the date on which not less than 55 Parties to the Convention, incorporating Parties included in Annex I which accounted in total for at least 55 per cent of the total carbon dioxide emissions for 1990 of the Parties included in Annex I, have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.”

Of the two conditions, the “55 parties” clause was reached on May 23, 2002 when Iceland ratified. The ratification by Russia on November 18, 2004 satisfied the “55 percent” clause and brought the treaty into force, effective February 16, 2005.

Revisions

The protocol left several issues open, to be decided later by the Conference of Parties (COP). COP6 attempted to resolve these issues at its meeting in the Hague in late 2000, but was unable to reach an agreement due to disputes between the European Union on the one hand (which favoured a tougher agreement) and the United States, Canada, Japan and Australia on the other (which wanted the agreement to be less demanding and more flexible).

In 2001, a continuation of the previous meeting (COP6bis) was held in Bonn where the required decisions were adopted. After some concessions, the supporters of the protocol (led by the European Union) managed to get Japan and

Russia in as well by allowing more use of carbon dioxide sinks.

COP7 was held from 29 October 2001 – 9 November 2001 in Marrakech to establish the final details of the protocol.

Current positions of governments

As of February 2005, 141 countries (plus the self-governing entities of New Zealand - Niue and Cook Islands) have ratified the protocol, including Canada, People's Republic of China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and the twenty-five countries of the European Union, as well as Romania and Bulgaria. (From “Kyoto Protocol Ratification List (http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/kyoto_protocol/application/pdf/kpstats.pdf).” *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Accessed on February 16, 2005.)

There are six countries that have signed but not yet ratified the protocol. Of those, three are Annex I countries:

- 1 Australia (not intending to ratify)
- 1 Monaco
- 1 United States — The US, the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, does not intend to ratify the protocol.

The remaining countries that have signed but not yet ratified are: Croatia, Kazakhstan, and Zambia.

The United States, Australia, Italy, China, India, and the developing countries have teamed up to oppose any strategy for a Kyoto Mark II or any similar arrangement with binding commitments.

(<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=2899>)

What is the Kyoto Protocol?

The Kyoto Protocol is an amendment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international treaty on global warming. It also reaffirms sections of the UNFCCC. Countries which ratify this protocol commit to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases, or engage in emissions trading if they maintain or increase emissions of these gases. A total of 141 countries have ratified the agreement. Notable exceptions include the United States and Australia.

The formal name of the proposed agreement, which reaffirms sections of the UNFCCC, is the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1997/global.warming/stories/treaty/>). It was negotiated in Kyoto, Japan in December 1997, opened for signature on March 16, 1998, and closed on March 15, 1999. The agreement came into force on February 16, 2005 following ratification by Russia on November 18, 2004.

Supporters of the Kyoto Protocol note that even if it is fully and successfully implemented it is predicted to reduce the average global temperature by somewhere between 0.02°C and 0.28°C by the year 2050 (source: *Nature*, October 2003).

Critics believe that at an estimated cost of \$100 trillion to lower the average global temperature by a fraction of 1°C over 45 years, it is not an effective solution to the threat from greenhouse gas emissions.

Emissions trading

Each Annex I country has agreed to limit emissions to the levels described in the protocol, but many countries have limits that are set above their current production. These “extra amounts” can be purchased by other countries on the open market. So, for instance, Russia currently easily meets its targets, and can sell off its *credits* for millions of dollars to countries that don’t yet meet their targets, to Canada for instance. This rewards countries that meet their targets, and provides financial incentives to others to do

so as soon as possible.

Countries also receive credits through various shared “clean energy” programs and “carbon dioxide sinks” in the form of forests and other systems that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Financial commitments

The Protocol also reaffirms the principle that developed countries have to pay, and supply technology to, other countries for climate-related studies and projects. This was originally agreed in the UNFCCC.

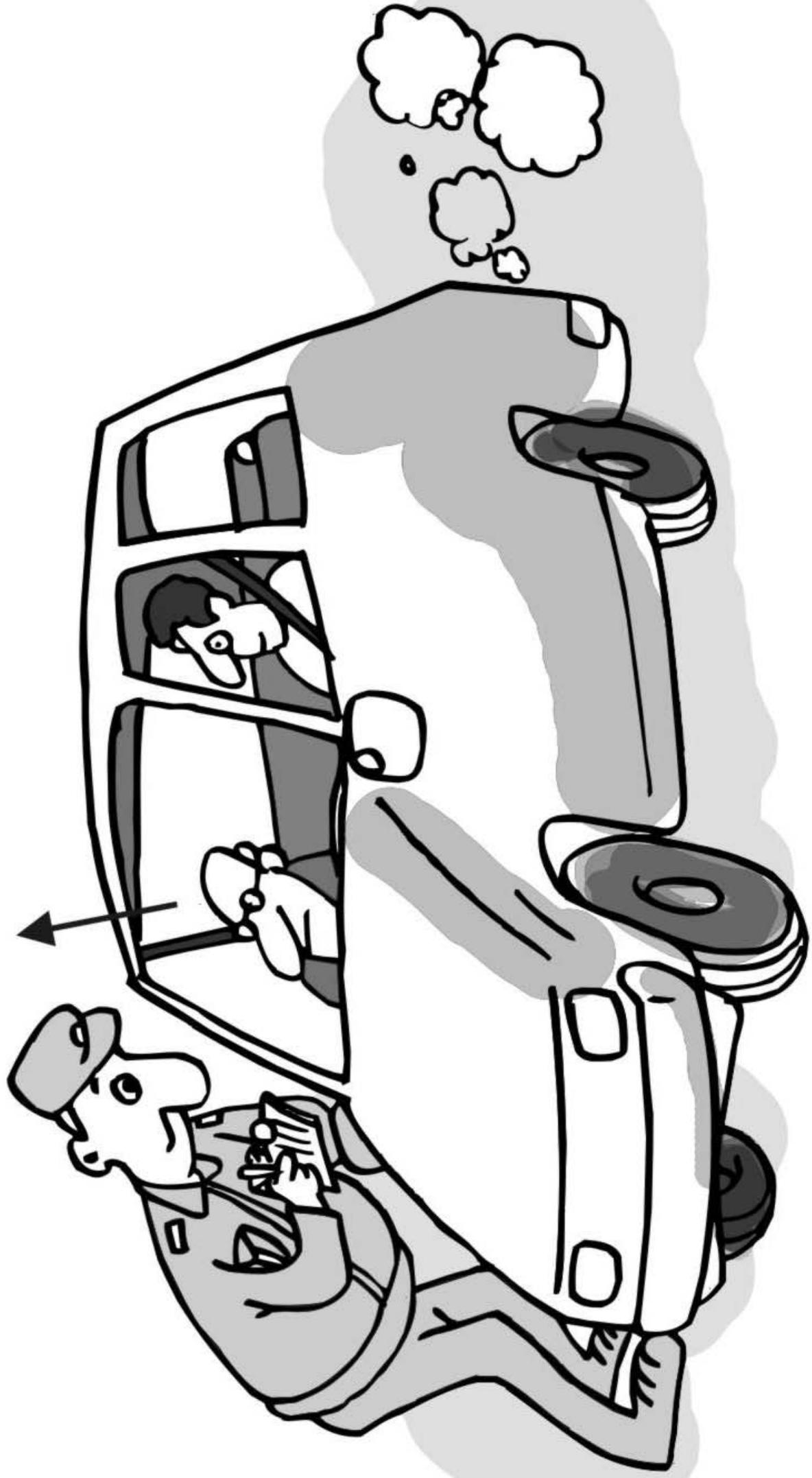
How effective is the Protocol?

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Kyoto protocol, it is necessary to compare global warming with and without the agreement. Several independent authors agree that the impact of the Kyoto protocol on global warming is likely to be very small. Even some defenders of the Kyoto Protocol agree that the impact of it is small, but they view it as a first step with more political than practical importance, for future reductions, perhaps of up to 70%. The UNEP says *the effectiveness of Kyoto really depends on whether it lays a good foundation for the climate convention process, which might lead to greater reductions later.* (<http://climatechange.unep.net/jcm/doc/emit/kyoto.html>).

The Kyoto Protocol can also be evaluated by comparing costs and gains. Several economic analyses were made that show that the Kyoto Protocol is more expensive than the global warming that it avoids. Defenders of the Kyoto Protocol argue however that while the initial greenhouse gas cuts may have little effect, they set the political precedent for bigger (and more effective) cuts in the future. Also, they demonstrate commitment to the precautionary principle. (<http://216.239.37.104/search?q=cache:vcHByDeqePUJ:www.uoguelph.ca/~rmckitri/research/australia.pdf+sepp+balloon+1958&hl=en&ie=UTF-8>) 

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (on the net)

LOOK, WE ARE POLLUTING ALRIGHT, BUT WE ARE ALREADY LATE FOR OUR BUSINESS... WHY DON'T YOU CATCH HOLD OF THE GUYS COMING BEHIND CYCLING?...THEY'LL GET SCARED AND SIMPLY PAY UP.



Kyoto Protocol means green energy projects for India

The coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol, on Wednesday, entailing the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by developed nations is expected to lead to greater investments in green energy projects in India.

The Kyoto Protocol will bring into force a clean development mechanism (CDM) wherein developed nations would be able to trade part of their commitment to reducing greenhouse gasses by buying green energy credit from projects in developing countries like India.

“This is an important day for us, as now it would make business sense for investors to put in their money in clean energy projects like biomass, cogeneration, renewable energy, recycling of municipal waste for power generation and other such projects,” said Ajay Mathur, president and CEO of Senergy Global Pvt Ltd.

An environment expert who was formerly with



the World Bank, Mathur is among scores of experts who have received India's ministry of environment and forests endorsement for handling the trade in green energy for green bucks through a process known as certified emission reduction (CERs).

So far, the government has endorsed 46 out of the 150 projects submitted for CDM credit to help

India Eyes Role As Big Seller of Pollution Credits

AMSTERDAM - India can become one of the biggest sellers of greenhouse gas credits under the Kyoto Protocol, a government official said on Wednesday.

“India has the potential to supply more than 30 percent of global demand for Certified Emissions Reductions (CERs) under the Clean Development Mechanism,” said S.K. Joshi, an official at India's ministry of environment and forestry.

Joshi told a carbon trading conference that India was one of the most attractive host countries for Kyoto's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

“The government is fully supportive of CDM projects,” he said, adding that India creates about three percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

CDM allows richer nations with emissions reduction targets under Kyoto to buy CER credits from poorer countries which have signed up to Kyoto but do not have reduction goals.

Under the mechanism, which was designed to promote the transfer of environmentally friendly technology to poor countries, all credits bought and sold must be linked directly to projects that reduce emissions in the developing, or host, country.

India's first CDM project to gain full approval was waved through last week by the CDM Executive Board, which is accountable to Kyoto Protocol parties, said Joshi.

India has approved 54 projects but they need backing from the executive board, he said.

Joshi said there was huge potential for CDM projects in the Indian energy sector. India reckoned it could potentially operate about 45,000 megawatts of wind power capacity, compared to an existing capacity of only 1,870 megawatts, he said.

*Originally posted at: <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/29803/story.htm>
Source: [Reuters](#) March 3, 2005*

them earn extra dollars.

Every tonne of carbon dioxide reduction through use of clean technology like wind, hydropower and biodegradable waste can fetch anywhere from \$5-\$6.

In the case of projects that reduce emission of methane gas, generated from municipal waste, the returns are expected to be 20 times more, while in the case of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are 6,000 times more harmful than carbon dioxide, the returns are proportionately higher.

“With the carbon trading mechanism expected to bring in anywhere between five and six paise per unit of clean power generated to as much as 50-60 paise per unit, green energy will now be a profitable venture,” Mathur said.

He cited the example of how Gujarat Fluorochemicals Ltd, by investing in a project to burn the HFCs being emitted into the air, is now getting revenue that will soon pay off its investment while helping to clean environment pollution.

Gujarat Fluorochemicals was one of the first projects to be certified for CDM by Britain.

All clean energy projects that have been commissioned after January 2000 are eligible for certified carbon trading.

India has emerged as the largest supplier of projects followed by Brazil. China is expected to enter the market soon, with a difference, as the Chinese government would sell the emission reduction credits through mega projects, said Mathur.

“In the 46 projects that have been endorsed so far, there is no foreign funding upfront. But there are contracts in place that will bring in extra revenue apart from the income the project would have anyway generated,” said Mathur, who is a key member of the Indian Carbon Market Group.

The largest players seeking to do carbon

trading with India are the European Union, Japan and Canada.

Over the next few years till 2012, the first phase of commitment for developed nations under the Kyoto Protocol, an estimated two to three billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions is to be reduced through energy efficiency, clean technology and other project like afforestation.

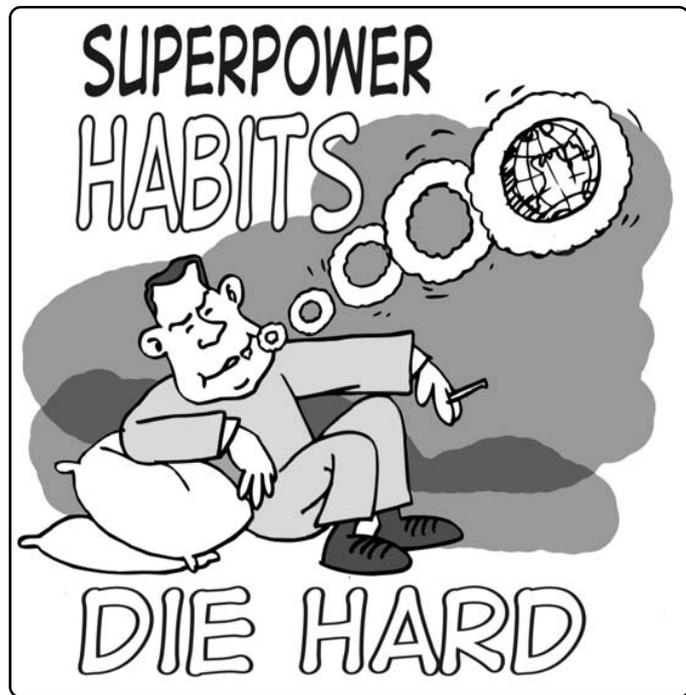
“These efforts are expected to generate around \$12-\$15 billion additional revenues for new clean energy projects. This should leverage investments of over \$100-150 billion in clean energy globally. Given the present trend, India can expect at least one-third of the estimated investments,” said Mathur.

An important facet of the CDM is it would help promote waste management projects on the the lines of the Lucknow, Hyderabad and Chennai experiments to generate power from municipal waste.

This would not only help tackle growing mounds of biodegradable city waste but also reduce methane emission.



GG2.NET NEWS [17/02/2005]



Kyoto Protocol : Too little, too bad

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says there must be an immediate reduction of 50-70 per cent just to stabilise concentrations in the atmosphere. Kyoto merely demands a 5.2 per cent reduction below 1990 levels by 2012. What is more, Kyoto (through heavy corporate lobbying) made “emissions trading” the key mechanism for addressing the problem. That is to say, the atmosphere is “parcelled out” and “permits to pollute” are established and can be traded.

The National Institute of Public Health and the Environment of the Netherlands has calculated that actual reductions under such a market driven mechanism will lead only to a reduction of 0.1 per cent instead of the already 5.2 per cent target.

How does this system work? There is a major article on “*Climate Fraud and Carbon Colonialism*” by Heidi Bachram in the December 2004 issue of *Capitalism Nature Socialism* that explains

Kyoto made 'emissions trading' the key mechanism for addressing the problem. The atmosphere is 'parcelled out' and 'permits to pollute' are established and can be traded. Reductions under such a market driven mechanism will lead only to a reduction of 0.1 per cent instead of the already miserable 5.2 per cent target.

this. Emission credits measured in units of gases (one tonne of CO₂ is one credit) are given to countries as licences to pollute up to a level 5.2 per cent below that country's 1990 emission level.

It is the countries that are historically the world's biggest polluters till 1990 that, therefore, get the highest quotas, subject to the nominal reduction target. The governments of these countries then distribute these “licences” nationally, giving higher proportions to the biggest polluting industries. Since credits can be traded, the polluter can do the following: (i) Not use the whole allowance in the given time period (bank them) and go over the limit in the next time period, or sell the saved credits to another polluter in the open market. (ii) The polluter uses all its allowance and buys more from a “saver.” (iii) The polluter can invest in pollution reduction schemes

in other countries or regions and thus “earn” credits for selling, banking or using.

Poorer developing countries do not have to meet any reduction targets and are now the focus of companies in richer countries aiming to put up “credit earning projects” for themselves: monoculture tree plantations, promoting renewable energy (wind and solar) sources, improving environmental efficiencies in existing industries. The amount of credits thus earned are calculated as the estimate of the difference between what emissions would have been if the said project had not been undertaken and what they are with the project. Since this difference is

based on an imaginary estimate level, huge credit margins can be calculated, allowing companies to pollute heavily as well as sell, enormously excess credits to other polluters. This system leads to increased emissions and increased profits from enabling such pollution.

What is worse, verifiers of emission reductions like Price Waterhouse Coopers act as accountants and consultants for the polluting firms!

A particularly popular Western technique is promoting monoculture plantations in the South to “sequester” or “eliminate” CO₂ although the science of such sequestering is still very uncertain. That is, there is no clear understanding about how effective such techniques are for reducing greenhouse gases though there is a scientific consensus that carbon stored above ground (in trees) is not equal to carbon stored below ground (unmined/unused fossil fuels).

This has not stopped the crusaders for emissions trading to claim “carbon neutrality” and “carbon offsetting” through tree planting and other means. Indeed, a new and profitable industry of “carbon



neutral” products has developed with producers targeting environment conscious consumers through claims that their products are made from, say, “carbon offsetting” plantation wood.

This carbon offsetting approach means that the destructive consumption ethic of Northern consumers is not challenged though it is precisely the growth obsession (reinforced by current neoliberal economic dogma) that demands high, continuous and growing consumption levels that constitutes the principal danger to the global ecosystem.

This approach also leads to diversion of land use in the South under Northern pressure. There is social devastation, often forced eviction, as land used by local communities for a variety of other agricultural and living purposes is now diverted towards monocultural tree plantations (the often corrupt nexus between government and outside investor) which cause, in their own way ecological problems such as biodiversity loss, water table declines, salinity, pesticides-herbicides pollution.

The Kyoto Protocol, Bachram points out, declares that “carbon sinks” such as forests and oceans, etc., can only qualify for emission credits if their management is “officially” done. Old growth rainforests where indigenous peoples have lived for centuries do not qualify though corporate-run tree plantations do. What is going on here? It is not at all difficult to understand. The approach to tackling the issue of global warming is of a piece with the general approach of the WTO and of the new neoliberal economic dogma: private ownership and control plus market allocation is the key to everything. That is to say, just as General Agreement on Trade in Services is about

privatizing water, education, health, social security, etc., emissions trading is based on the principle that the best way to tackle environmental problems (and promote, profitable “green capitalism”) is to move towards privatising the global commons and resources, i.e., promote the institutionalisation of a property rights regime for the atmosphere itself. And since emissions trading is the key mechanism for tackling environmental problems, it is hardly surprising that there is growing pressure for the rules of such trading to conform to the general rules for governing trade as embodied in the WTO system. Not only does this make corporate polluters and neoliberal economists (whose very discipline treats the

... just as General Agreement on Trade in Services is about privatizing water, education, health, social security, etc., emissions trading is based on the principle that the best way to tackle environmental problems (and promote, profitable “green capitalism”) is to move towards privatising the global commons and resources, i.e., promote the institutionalisation of a property rights regime for the atmosphere itself.

environment with theoretical contempt as “natural capital”) happy, but will also most likely lead to further reducing regulation of emissions trading so as to avoid trade conflicts.

The alternatives to emissions trading are government regulations in various forms, from taxation to penalties to imposing technical “fixes” such as scrubbers and filters on smokestacks, subsidies to tax breaks for promoting research into, and use of renewables in small-scale projects. The importance of smaller-scale projects is that they allow for greater local community participation, monitoring, and control.

This becomes a way of recognising and promoting the importance of the link between ecological sustainability and protection and democratization of a meaningful kind, whereby those most directly affected by polluting activities have the greatest say over the activities themselves. But corporate polluters and the governments that most strongly back them will oppose such a needed shift in the way we tackle the problem of global warming. ☹

Achin Vanaik, Deccan Chronicle, 23rd March 2005

The Earth seems to be convulsing recently with a variety of natural and weather-related disasters. Many people have died. Are tsunamis and climate change related and where is God in all this?

We are vulnerable to forces beyond our control. To acknowledge that, is to become more humble and respectful toward this terrestrial home of ours. But just as humans are the victims of some unexpected cataclysms, we also are the actual perpetrators of other types of ecological changes that are wrecking havoc.

The earthquake under the Indian Ocean which produced the devastating tsunamis on December 26, 2004 was part of a geophysical process of the Earth that predates human existence and which will continue longer than our human species does.

In this sense, the tsunamis are absolutely independent of human-induced climate change.

We cannot prevent tsunamis.

We can prevent climate change – or at least, we know enough to reduce the degree of human-induced climate change.

Regardless of the protestations of the sceptics, current science demonstrates that the atmosphere is warming as a result of human-produced emissions largely from the burning of fossil fuels. A warmer atmosphere results in many sorts of climatic changes including rising sea levels, more intense and frequent storms, erratic and extreme weather events in summer and in winter, extended droughts followed by torrential floods. Sound familiar? If we cut back dramatically on the amount of atmospheric pollution, we can slow the pace of global warming and limit the degree of catastrophic climate change.

While tsunamis and human-induced climate change are distinct, there are profound connections. The loss of so many lives and the destruction of communities by the raging ocean waves on December 26th are illustrative of the same impacts that are already resulting from rising sea levels and increased tropical storm activity. Coastal

communities, low-lying island states and river delta areas are among the most vulnerable to tsunamis and climate change.

Secondly, poverty rates and development models contribute to people's levels of vulnerability. The high death toll in impoverished Haiti from the hurricanes in September 2004 relative to that of other Caribbean islands and the United States can be in part explained by the lack of warning systems and protective infrastructure and by the mud slides from the denuded hills with their massive tracks of deforested lands. One of the lessons from the tsunamis in Asia is that communities suffered more where the natural mangrove forests along the coasts had been eliminated to open the areas for international tourism, large-scale commercial fisheries and other industrial development.

Thirdly, many of the strategies that can help communities adapt to expected climate change can also reduce their vulnerability to the devastation of tsunamis: early warning systems, structurally sound community facilities to retreat to for protection, tree stands that reduce erosion and retain soil fertility and small-scale water harvesting projects that safeguard drinking water for times of crisis.

Why did God let the tsunamis happen? *We have a malevolent deity if we attribute them to an "act of God". Many people devastated by the impacts of December 26th are surely asking, in a variety of spiritual languages, what have we done to deserve this? or why has God abandoned us? To say that the love of God is manifested in the unprecedented global out-pouring of relief efforts is true but of little comfort to those who have lost families, homes and livelihoods.*

For many people, a spiritual faith does help them to pick up the pieces of their lives and in community with others, to go on. Nonetheless, the question asked for aeons remains unanswerable – where was God in all this?

Not so with climate change. God is front and centre giving us plenty of signs of the times.

CAUGHT BETWEEN



TSUNAMI AND TOURISNAMI

Science is showing us that polluting emissions are changing the atmosphere's composition and leading to climate change.

Ethics underlines that these emissions have come overwhelmingly from the richer industrialised societies and elites and yet it is the world's poor and vulnerable both human and non-human and future generations who will suffer disproportionately from the impacts.

Alternate economic approaches point us beyond economic globalisation toward models of sustainable communities with enough for a good quality of life for all and in which we use energy much more efficiently and develop cleaner renewable energy sources.

And spiritual discernment forces us to recognise that an energy efficiency revolution must be accompanied by a sufficiency revolution through which we value relationships with God, Creation, our families and all the human community rather than focusing on a lifestyle seeking satisfaction primarily through every-increasing material

consumption.

Maybe that's where God is in all this. By taking action on climate change where we are pretty sure that we can discern God's will for us, we can reduce our collective vulnerability to some of those unpreventable natural disasters where it is harder for us to find God.

Regardless of the type of disaster, our response should reflect our commitment to each other. We need to accompany those who are suffering over the long-term of rebuilding their lives not just providing aid in the immediate disaster response. We can make the changes in our lifestyles and economic systems that will reduce the potential for some types of 'natural' disasters as one manifestation of our solidarity with those most affected.

We find God most poignantly in community and it is in community that God seeks to find us. ☪

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