

Module 7 : LECTURE 39

New Ethical Codes for New Technologies

Why we new ethics ? This question is to be understood in the background of ‘what is ethics?’ We all know that the "is" does not always justify the “ought” and that we are often passionately committed to what we perceive to be “good”. Our ethical decisions would require balancing competing "goods." How do we balance competing interests of the people living in poverty who cut down trees for fuel wood just because they have no other alternative and our interest in protecting our forest area and our environment? Our perception of our “good” differs drastically from the perception of those starving millions for whom getting enough food for the day or cutting firewood to cook their food is more important than worrying over global warming or bothering for forest protection. If we want them to focus on long term goals there should be urgent solution to these burning questions that are so crucial for safeguarding equal human rights and for safeguarding democratic values.

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“The global shift of September 11, 2001 has changed almost everything around us. The UN Secretary General expressed the situation so well on November 10th, 2001 (2 months after September 11), QUOTE "Let us remember that none of the "Issues" that faced us on September 10, 2001 has become less urgent ----- and he went on saying ----- we face two possible futures: a mutually destructive clash, ----- based on exaggeration of religious and cultural differences, or a global community, respecting diversity and rooted in universal values. The latter must be our choice ----- but we can achieve it only if we bring real hope to the billions trapped in poverty, conflict and disease."¹

¹ EI-Sharkaw, Emad 2002. Fighting Global Warming: A New North-South Rift? Conference Report. World Energy Council held at the Second FES-SWP North-South Dialogue. Berlin, Germany. <http://www.worldenergy.org/wecgeis/publications/default/archives/speeches/spc0202188es.asp>

In order to eradicate terrorism and the causes of terrorism, one must attack the poverty which helps generate it. If we identify poverty as the root cause of all evils, from terrorism to environment degradation, it now becomes obligatory on our part to make sincere efforts for eliminating poverty. There cannot be a distinctively third world perspective, or a first world one, on any such global issue that needs global attention. This is the paradox of our times that on the one hand we have made abundant and remarkable scientific achievements, but on the other hand, violence, conflict, uncertainty and poverty overwhelm the world.

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This wide disparity can be found within each country. That way we should better talk about a ‘developing and developed’, ‘North and South’ dichotomous world within all apparently homogenized one ‘developed’ or ‘developing’ world. The one billion in the developed world have eighty percent of the assets; the five billion have twenty percent. 2.8 billion people live under two dollars a day, and 1.2 billion under one dollar a day. Even in India, one part of the economy has been growing reasonably well and, perhaps, 200-300 million people are moving ahead. But there are 700-800 million people who are not participating properly in the growth process. India has at one level intellectual elite - but the challenge is, how do you get the benefits of that to filter to the rest of India?

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Why it has become a moral scandal for civilized people on this earth is the exploitive dimension of this in equal relation between these two worlds and the growing complexity of man made environmental hazards that has penetrated all aspects of life. Depletion of the ozone layer, the dwindling of the rain forest, the loss of animal habitat, toxic runoff into lakes, streams and rivers are just a few of the environmental challenges we all face. The environment is a global problem that no one nation can address on its own. The developed nations and the developing nations should be able to address some

basic environmental issues from a common perspective. However, those in the world of want are often so poor that all their energies are focused on procuring the minimum necessary for survival. It is beyond their ability to make the necessary individual and societal choices that would protect the environment, even as regards proper land use and the avoidance of water pollution. They actually increase the degradation of an already damaged environment. They do not consciously choose to do so. This extreme deprivation of many basic facilities of life has its own de-humanizing effect on this poverty stricken under developed masses of the globe.

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We live in a house divided with many poor and few rich. We live in a world where there is apprehension that the rich population will consume most of the world's resources whereas the poor people have to face more hunger-caused deaths. "Efforts to feed the hungry are not causing the environmental crisis. Large corporations are mainly responsible for deforestation creating and profiting from developed-country consumer demand for tropical hardwoods and exotic or out-of-season food items. Most pesticides used in the Third World are applied to export crops, playing little role in feeding the hungry, while in the U.S. they are used to give a blemish-free cosmetic appearance to produce, with no improvement in nutritional value".²

² Moore, Frances- Lappé, Joseph Collins, and Peter Rosset with Luis.1998.*World Hunger: 12 Myths*. 2nd ed., A Grove Press Book New York. .

³.Dimpleby,Jonathan.2004."Thecomingwar"
:*TheObserver*.<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0,1340175,00.html>

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Unless something is drastically done to resolve this gap the problems faced by the rich and the problems faced by the poor will remain different in nature and these would need different solutions. There is no doubt that what the poor nations urgently need is to develop their national economies, establish their own modernized industries, improve their agricultural methods, obtain their economic independence, as well as to maintain and consolidate their political independence and sovereignty so that they themselves can bear the main responsibility for their development and, with help from the international community, create open, democratic, inclusive and accountable political systems. Then and only then will third-world countries be able to exert their utmost efforts towards improving the environment making sincere efforts to prevent man made disasters.

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Broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby argues that terrorism, climate change and world poverty are inextricably linked. Dimbleby considers global poverty to be the root cause of most evils that needs to be combated on a war front. “ As with winning the war on poverty, so with global warming: it is a matter of political will. Which is why a deeply frustrated president of the World Bank says: If someone came here from Mars and looked at the way we run the place, he'd get back in his spaceship and go back to Mars and say, 'You don't have to worry about them, they are going to destroy themselves'.Which means, as I argue in *The New World War*, we had better get serious about global terrorism, global poverty, and global warming” .³

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“A Pentagon-commissioned study warned in 2003 that climate change could bring mega-droughts, mass starvation, and even nuclear war as countries such as China, India, and Pakistan battle over scarce food and water. These are just some of the reasons why David King wrote in *Science* in 2004, ‘Climate change is the most severe problem that we are facing today—more serious even than the threat of terrorism.’ By no means does King underestimate terrorism; advising the British government on that threat, he says, “is a very important part of my job.” But the hazards presented by climate change are so severe and far-reaching that, in his view, they overshadow not only every other environmental threat but every other threat, period,”⁴ Dimpleby adds. Jonathan Dimpleby continues: “Take India,” King says. “Their monsoon is a fact of life that they have developed their agricultural economy around. If the monsoon is down by 10 percent one year, they have massive losses of crops. If it's 10 percent over, they have massive flood problems. [If climate change ends up] switching off the monsoon in India, or even changing it outside those limits, it would lead to massive global economic destabilization. The kind of situation we need to avoid creating is one where populations are so de-stabilized—Bangladesh being flooded, India no food—that they're all seeking alternative habitats. These, in our globalized economy, would be very difficult for all of us to manage.”⁵

⁴ . HERTSGAARD ,MARK. May 2006 .“While Washington Slept”. *Vanity Fair*. Green issue **United States**
<http://www.markhertsgaard.com/Articles/2006/WhileWashingtonSlept/>

⁵ HERTSGAARD, MARK. May 2006 “While Washington Slept”, *Vanity Fair*. Green issue **United States**
<http://www.markhertsgaard.com/Articles/2006/WhileWashingtonSlept/>

6. Reuters.May 16, 2006. *I n d i a s a y s t o t a c k l e p o v e r t y b e f o r e g l o b a l w a r m i n g . H i n d u s t a n - T i m e s R e p o r t .* http://www.hindustantimes.com/news/181_1699581,00050003.htm, Bonn, Germany.

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New Ethics for environmental degradation ? Third World Concerns

Both terrorism and climate change has its fatal effects on the third world countries. Terrorism in all its dimensions has a long history in India; the attack at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, was only the latest incident. Identifying poverty and underdevelopment as the root causes of all their problems, from global warming to terrorism, the most challenging task for the developing countries now is war on poverty. The Hindustan Times report says: “India said that rich nations must lead a fight against global warming, telling a 189-nation UN conference that developing countries should instead give priority to ending poverty “⁶

The solution to the devastating poverty and environmental problems of Third World countries is often seen as ‘development’, i.e. the development of Third World countries towards the First World ideals of economic growth through industrialization and high consumption patterns. This model of economic growth is based on certain notions of ‘utility’ and ‘welfare’ - such as ‘preference satisfaction’ and ‘happiness’ which are inherited from certain utilitarian philosophers.

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The path to development and its cost-benefit assessment

Taking the tragic explosion of the Union Carbide insecticide plant in Bhopal, India, as his point of departure, George Bradford, in his article” We all live in Bhopal”, recounts a tale of corporate negligence and moral culpability. Calling the large corporations “corporate vampires”, Bradford accuses them of turning industrial civilization into” one vast, stinking extermination camp.” Some 3,000 people were slaughtered in the wake of the deadly gas cloud, and 20,000 will remain permanently

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disabled. The poison gas left a 25 square mile swath of dead and dying, peoples and animals, as it drifted south east away from the Union Carbide factory.” We thought it was a plague,” said one victim. Indeed it was: a chemical plague, an industrial plague, Ashes, ashes, all fell down!”⁷ To quote Bradford ,“Countries like India do not import the benefits of industrial capitalism; those benefits are exported in the form of loan repayments to fill the coffers of the bankers and corporate vampires who read the ‘Wall Street Journal ‘ for the latest news of their investments. The Indians only take the risks and pay the costs; in fact, for them, as for the immiserated masses of people living in the shantytowns of the Third World, there are no risks, only certain hunger and disease, only the certainty of death squad revenge for criticizing the state of things as they are.”⁸

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Rather than empowering the poor and the down trodden, the development of the economy has turned out a problem-maker. This tension between formal support for growth while expressing doubts about its benefits is particularly worth exploring. It provides an opening for a re-statement of the need for economic growth as part of a broader development of a new humanism. Guided by utilitarian principles of preference satisfaction, this type of economic growth failed to combine the need for the developing world to grow. “The process of globalization with economic liberalization as its hallmark, has created further environmental harm, increased concentration of wealth in a handful of big corporations in each industry, and undermined the authority and autonomy of national governments to make policy. Third World Network argue that " instead of fulfilling its commitments under the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the North has turned to the World Trade Organization in particular, to promote and obtain international rules that are increasingly acknowledged to be counter to the Rio spirit, principles and commitments. The unilateral rejection of

⁷ Bradford, George. “We All Live In Bhopal”. In. Louis Pojman (Ed.), *Environmental Ethics*, pp, 391-4. Wadsworth USA

⁸ Ibid.

international agreements, including MEAs., by some countries is yet another move that jeopardizes the multilateralism needed to meet the challenge of sustainable development. The Bretton Woods Institutions, especially the IMF, have also promoted and drawn many Southern countries into macro-economic policies that are adverse to the environment, destabilise national economies and create social disruptions” .⁹

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India, for example, gained a lot of new jobs in Information Technology (IT) and call centers. That way Indian economy is witnessing a boom as a result of opening up its borders to the agents of globalisation but not even all the people in countries like India have been. Globally, inequality rose to the levels of seventy years earlier and underemployment, job insecurity and loss of benefits increased. Farmers in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh are committing suicide as their crops fail one after the other. The agents of globalization gave them high-yield varieties of seeds, which also needed a lot of fertilizers, and pesticides, which too were supplied by the same agents. The crops were not as successful as the farmers were taught to dream of.

⁹ Bretton Woods Project 25th March 2002 Sustainability Requires International Institutional Reforms
<http://brettonwoodsproject.org/art.shtml?x=16291>

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The moral dimension

As the international environment continues to deteriorate, the third-world states will be less and less able to clean up their own environments. This is further complicated by the indifference of the developed countries toward the developmental problems of third-world countries.” For example, several delegations at the ninth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, in May 1981, called attention to the problem of ‘hazardous chemicals being exported to developing countries’ and ‘to the need for co-operation with relevant international programmes, particularly the International Programme on Chemical Safety’¹⁰ "This report exposes clearly and starkly the devastating impact that human induced climate change will have on many of the world's poorest people," said Sir John Houghton, former co-chairman of the scientific assessment working group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change "That realization exposes an inescapable moral imperative for those of us in the developed world, who have benefited so much from cheap energy from fossil fuels. We need to respond with urgent and determined action.”¹¹

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Perhaps one dollar per day is not enough to cover all the costs of providing fresh air, water and food, education and medical care. But in places where people do operate outside the money-based economy, what is the value of one dollar a day if in return to that money they become victims of environment pollution? But the irony is that despite sharing this religious bond with nature most of these third world countries have no

¹⁰ West, Larry. May 15, 2006. “Global Warming Expected to Kill Millions of Poor People This Century”. *Environmental Issues*. <http://environment.about.com/b/a/256737.htm>

¹¹ Ibid.

alternatives but to interact with the environment in a destructive manner in this transition to a money-based economy.

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Poverty is a limit to our right to choose freely our sense of destiny. It is an unconditional good for mankind that all man be treated as ends in themselves. Poverty dehumanizes man and makes him sub human. It is widely accepted that "poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon consisting of mental, political, communal and other aspects", together with a material dimension (normally expressed in terms of monetary value). We have to re define poverty not in terms of standard of living or in any other relative manner.” For poverty is not a fate to be alleviated by international charity or aid. Nor does poverty reflect poor people's lack of self-reliance or their inability to compete in a free-for-all of supposedly equal opportunities. Poverty does not persist solely because of incompetent, corrupt governments that are insensitive to the fate of their population. No. Fundamentally, poverty is not a standard of living or even certain kinds of living conditions: it is at once the cause and the effect of the total or partial denial of human rights.”¹²

¹² Pallares, Pedro. October 2003. “The Poor As A Person: Roots Of The Roads Against Poverty”. Conference Report. Formation on Renewal Conference held at University of Notre Dame

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John Paul's II wrote: 'Now is the time for a new "creativity" in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by "getting close" to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters.'¹³ Sometimes efficiency should be sacrificed for principles if we accept the fact that the person is not just a bundle of preferences, to be judged in cost benefit analysis. It follows that environmental improvement requires not only a measure of economic power for individuals but also the broader freedoms of individuals to set priorities for themselves, their families, and their society that countries and people in the earliest stage of development tend to have little. It is our moral obligation to eliminate poverty and to help all man as equal always. Kantian perspective, which treats humans as ends in themselves, should override utilitarian cost benefit analysis.

¹³ Pallares, Pedro. October 2003. "The Poor As A Person: Roots Of The Roads Against Poverty". Conference Report. Formation on Renewal Conference held at University of Notre Dame
<http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:NOVLRgAz9ZEJ:www.nd.edu/~ndethics/archives/documents/PedroPallares.doc+Pedro+Pallares+The+Poor+As+A+Person:+Roots+Of+The+Roads+Against+Poverty+&hl=en&gl=in&ct=clnk&cd>
