PHILOSOPHY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND GLOBALIZATION

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PREFACE

I gave a talk on philosophy, technology, and globalization at the University of Barcelona in May of 2008. It probably came as close as anything I had done up to that point to putting almost all the pieces of my philosophical approach to the issue of sustainability together in one place. Unfortunately, in doing so, it became more than a little unwieldy. So, to do a better job, I decided to build a "globalization" essay around the skeleton of that talk. Then I decided to put together this volume. Here I separate out an earlier piece incorporated in that collection, treating it as Part I, Philosophy and Sustainability. As Part II, I then present the full argument. I then add, as Part III, a separate essay on sustainability activism and experiential education – a presentation of an educational venture that offers an example of my approach in action.

Part I

SUSTAINABILITY

[*Original title: "Is There a Best Ethic of Sustainability? See note at the end on the publication history of the essay.*]

In this article, that appeared first in *Ludus Vitalis* (1997) I made an argument that there is no *best* ethic of sustainable development (thus no definitive argument against globalization), but there are things that can be done at the local level to combat its negative effects.

Over the past couple of decades [I began], the literature on development and the environment has been dominated by a new slogan, "sustainable development." Sustainability has many interpretations (see Cuello and Durbin, 1995), and by now there must be hundreds of definitions of sustainability or sustainable development. The author of each one surely believes that his or hers is the best, but not many authors have attempted to survey all the definitions and then propose his as the best of the best. That is exactly what Cesar Cuello Nieto has done. Focusing here on his work will allow me to draw some social responsibility conclusions about environmental ethics and the environmental movement generally.

To come up with his best of all definitions -- after summarizing all the rest -- Cuello (1997) has picked out the best features of the others and combined them into a holistic definition (as a framework for a best course of action to achieve sustainability). Cuello says the best approach is "an integrated, holistic conception of sustainability capable of incorporating within a single vision all of the social relations, the humans-to-nature relationships, and the entire axiological and ideological superstructure that supports such a vision."

Cuello recognizes that, "A holistic vision implies fundamental changes at all levels of social, economic, political, and cultural structures; that is, it requires a fundamental restructuring of present- day society."

Cuello further lays out a set of basic principles that he thinks will support a holistic vision. (He does warn us not to take them as absolutes.)

For sustainable development to take place, Cuello says, there must be:

(1) interaction and coordination among all of the agents in a locality, region, or country;
(2) a redistribution of wealth;
(3) a redefinition of the relationship between human beings and nature;
(4) intergenerational equity;
(5) a redistribution of global wealth and opportunities;
(6) nature's capacity for regeneration must be respected;
(7) communities must be self-sufficient; and
(8) there must be a dialectical uniting of theory and practice.

Cuello finds his source of inspiration in the writings of Hans Jonas, for whom "the monopoly of humans on ethical regard is breached precisely with their acquiring a near-monopolistic power over the rest of life" (see *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 1984). This leads Jonas to claim that, "Responsibility has become the fundamental imperative in modern civilization, and it should be an unavoidable criterion to assess and evaluate human actions, including, in a special way, development activities."

In general, I am leery of any and all foundationalist approaches to ethics, but for purposes of this paper I am willing to defend this thesis: *There is a way to interpret "best sustainability ethic" that can provide a general formula for an optimum sustainability strategy* (though only if we recognize that each real-world implementation will be radically different, unalterably localized).

REINTERPRETING "BEST SUSTAINABILITY ETHIC"

My formula begins with a guideline similar to Cuello's first principle: namely, to involve all the major groups with an interest in a particular development project (*any* interest, including total opposition to it) and attempt to get them to work together, first, to settle disagreements and then to support, modify, or block (as the case may be) the development in question. Since consensus can almost never be reached on such issues, a corollary guideline is to seek to please as many interest groups as possible and to have a concrete plan for dealing fairly with those who end up with views different from the majority. (Broadly interpreting William James, this is what he proposes in "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 1897.)

The formula would not begin with Cuello's overarching principle of responsibility. It is probably good to hope that all the actors will act responsibly -- at least as the members of each interest group see things. But at least some parties to any real-life dispute over a particular development project are almost certain to act irresponsibly, and that likelihood should always play a part in considerations of democratic control of a particular development project. Nor should we let Cuello's other overarching principle -- his definition of holistic sustainability as incorporating all aspects and all actors in a situation -- get in the way of particular efforts to achieve sustainability. Every development project with which I am familiar has had some parties to the dispute -- often major parties -- who simply refuse to play the game of democratic negotiation. Like minorities who end up losing out in consensus-building efforts, these renegade groups must be dealt with, and fairly. Waiting for all parties to be satisfied is a sure plan for failure.

Beyond the basic guideline of including as many interest groups as possible in democratic decisions -- and fair treatment of those who lose out in consensus building, as well as those who refuse to play fair -- most of Cuello's other principles can be turned into useful guidelines (though never absolute principles or duties). Any particular development project, if it is to be sustainable, should:

--include poor people (especially poor workers and their families) within the democratic process *on an equal footing* (even if a major redistribution of wealth is not possible in the short run);

--include consideration for future generations -- specifically, the offspring and heirs of those directly involved, but also others (and other things) directly or indirectly impacted within the foreseeable future;

--define the relationship between humans and non-human nature in a way that allows due consideration for natural phenomena in every case;

--heed scientific evidence about natural capacities for regeneration in the ecological niche involved;

--consider the relationship(s) between the particular development project and others elsewhere: in the region or nation, in international compacts or alliances, in the global economy (without ignoring the possibility of not choosing to be a part of that) and, including within this, issues of unjust disparities between rich and poor parts of the international community;

--encourage self-sufficiency of communities; and

--always link theory to practice and practice to theory.

In every case, guidelines should be viewed not as categorical imperatives but as useful lessons learned from prior experience with development initiatives that have (at least up until now) been perceived as sustainable.

This sort of transformation of general ethical principles into guidelines that may prove helpful in concrete (and local) efforts at social problem solving is in line with the general orientation of the ethics of American Pragmatism. (See John Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, 2d ed., 1948; *The Quest for Certainty*, 1929; and *Liberalism and Social Action*, 1935; as well as George Herbert Mead's "Scientific Method and the Moral Sciences," 1964.) And it depends, not on abstract theorizing, but on prior successful ventures. (One example in the USA would be the *de facto* moratorium on nuclear power plants, which has been at least partly the result of the efforts of a great many anti-nuclear activists.) Cuello worked earlier in Costa Rica trying to help that country's admirable forest conservation efforts to become more sustainable; now he is back at work in his native Dominican Republic doing the same things.

ISSUES AND ANSWERS

It is probably the case that as many objections can be raised against my guidelines as against Cuello's principles. I will here address four issues (or complaints) and attempt to respond to each in turn.

First objection:

The *tolerance of all viewpoints* that is at the core of my guidelines (and of Cuello's principles) is a recipe for disaster, opening the door for the most powerful interests to thwart sustainability efforts at every turn.

This is surely an issue to be reckoned with, and, for philosophers, relativism remains a perennial issue. (See Krausz, ed., *Relativism*, 1989) The particular version of anti-relativism that is relevant here is the "critique of pure tolerance" lament heard from radical critics of liberalism in recent decades. (See Wolff, Moore, and Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, 1965.)

A late colleague of mine, David Norton, made one of the strongest cases for this critique in the recent past. (See his *Imagination, Understanding, and the Virtue of Liberality*, 1995.) Norton's argument is complex and difficult to summarize, but his basic assumption would probably be shared by a great many people today. In the contemporary world, the main problems that threaten humankind -- war and terrorism, as in Kosovo or the Middle East; famine and genocide in parts of Africa; depletion of natural resources and the threats to the natural environment that have called forth a rhetoric of sustainability -- all of these problems have global impacts and require for their solutions (if any are possible) collaboration at the international level. And (Norton says) "merely diplomatic" recognition and tolerance of differences -- even if supplemented by a call for collaborative action -- is not enough.

What Norton offers as a remedy for ineffective tolerance is his "virtue of liberality" -- the cultivation, from childhood on, of the habit of seeing issues from other people's perspectives. Norton believes that this is not inconsistent with taking strong stands, with the sort of commitment that could lead to overriding the objections of others even after one has seen their point of view and has done so from their perspective.

I believe this is good advice, but I am afraid that it could be too idealistic; it will surely take a long time, in any case, for educational systems to begin to encourage the virtue of liberality. In the short run, and in local conflicts over whether a particular development project is truly sustainable, John Dewey's approach (see especially *Liberalism and Social Action*, 1935), of local progressive politicking, is more likely to work. As Norton recognizes, Dewey was also an advocate of the right kind of progressive education, but in the interim, before it can be implemented, he advocated democratic political action (including the political action needed to reform the education system).

So my answer to the first objection to my modified version of Cuello's approach is that tolerance of diverse views need not lead to inaction -- or, worse, to ceding the field to the overwhelming power of international pro-development forces. People can, generally, habituate themselves to see things from others' points of view. Total recalcitrants in a conflict can be brought into line, to some degree, if enough other parties can bring themselves to brand the recalcitrants as neglectful of local workers or of the local environment -- in some cases even branding them as imperialist exploiters or environmental outlaws.

Second objection:

Even if local consensus is possible, however, and even if it can lead to the isolation of some major bad actors, there are *structural* features of the international economy that guarantee the victory of the big developers -- and not just in the long run. The power of international capital can lead to the developers' victory over sustainability efforts even in the short run. This is the neo-Marxist sustainability critique of Michael Redclift. (See his *Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions*, 1987, and more recent works; the same sort of critique of the American Pragmatists' ventures into social action has been made in Feffer's *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism*, 1993.) And, like any Marxist approach with which I am familiar, this critique assumes that no true local success is possible as long as the worldwide power of international capital is not thwarted.

When I have faced this objection elsewhere (see my *Social Responsibility in Science, Technology, and Medicine,* 1992), I have conceded that the structural problem exists. One does not need to accept the entire Marxist theoretical apparatus -- of inevitable struggle between the exploiting owner class and the exploited working classes, of the economic substructure determining the social, cultural, and political superstructure -- to recognize that big capitalist developers almost always manage to win out over local resistance to development. Nonetheless, it is possible, at the local level and with concerted democratic action, to deflect the economic power of international capital. If I were involved in a local development dispute, I would try to involve as many local activists *on other causes* as I could: activists worried enough about ecological catastrophe, or biotechnology meddling with nature, or the increase of police power, to mount activist campaigns against those evils. Working with such activist groups strengthens their commitment to democracy and distracts the big developers and their local governmental collaborators from an exclusive profit-making focus.

If democratic activism succeeds in other areas, it might eventually lead to a direct confrontation with raw economic power. But in my opinion no one today should any longer

dream of worldwide Marxist revolution. All we can hope for is local social-democratic victories that can limit the power of -- can sometimes even squeeze out -- agents of international capitalist development.

A third set of objections: If we can assume that it is possible for local democratic forces to promote sustainability -- by distracting, isolating, branding as outlaws, etc., the giant global economic powers that would thwart it -- it nevertheless remains the case that even allegedly sustainable development (a) might *continue to threaten the environment* (for example, there might simply be too many people who are too destitute to avoid using the resources needed for sustainability), and (b) it will almost certainly be *inimical toward traditional cultures*, no matter what, because of their devotion to ancestral ways.

These are the objections of people Cuello labels "biocentrists" (including "deep ecology" advocates, but others as well) and "anti-development" radical critics. (For the former, see Drengson and Inoue, eds., *The Deep Ecology Movement*, 1995; for the latter, see Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *Development Dictionary*, 1992, especially articles by Sachs himself and Gustavo Esteva.) I will attempt to answer these third and fourth objections separately.

Third answer (to the continued-threat-to-the-environment objection): I would say that it is definitely *possible* that a particular development project that meets other criteria of sustainability might nonetheless still damage the local ecosystem involved -- especially if earlier development efforts had left the local population under extreme stress, including the stress of overpopulation and/or malnutrition. However, it is not *necessary* that this be so, and if local democratic procedures have been established -- including policies that give an equal voice to previously downtrodden workers and their families -- such democracies are likely to be open to readjustment when and as new problems emerge.

(I am not aware of any studies that would support this optimistic assessment, and that weakens my argument; however, it is an article of faith of the American Pragmatists' opposition to all creeds that when ordinary citizens are unburdened from the yoke of traditionally repressive ideologies, they will learn rapidly to act democratically *and* altruistically. What I would hope is that their altruism would extend to the protection of the ecological niche where they live.)

Fourth answer (to radical anti-sustainability critics): Here I would begin by conceding the main thrust of the objection. Development -- any kind of development -- depends upon an ideology of progress that is at odds with the conservative attitudes of many, if not most, pre-modern cultures (where "modernity" refers to attitude toward development rather than time period). This is the usual defining characteristic of pre-modern cultures (see Berger and colleagues, *The Homeless Mind*, 1973, and *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, 1974).

However, this need not mean that every local development project in an area that contains groups of indigenous peoples must inevitably run into opposition from them. And this for two reasons.

First, indigenous groups can be involved in the democratic process; indeed, some people have argued that the special kind of democracy found in some tribal cultures makes them easily

adaptable to the processes of modern democratic systems. (As one example, they cite Nelson Mandela, once a tribal chief, then the elected head of state in South Africa.) And where indigenous cultures are to some degree incorporated within a larger democratic society of the Western sort (examples might include Native Americans in some Canadian territories and in the Pacific Northwest in the USA), they have learned to make concessions for a common good *that treats them fairly*.

Second, there seems to be some evidence in historical anthropology that tribal cultures throughout history have been successful in borrowing new tools from surrounding cultures, without seeing this as hostile to their traditional cultural myths and rituals. Admittedly, over time, this has often led to complete assimilation within broader cultures, and to eventual loss of traditional myths or religions. And this clearly could happen in an area where sustainable development is tried out. But if the indigenous people involved carry out their borrowings, and become assimilated, within a democratic process -- especially one in which they received their fair share of the proceeds of sustainable development -- we ought not to deny them that opportunity in the name of the sanctity of indigenous culture. To do so, it seems to me, would be to doom indigenous cultures, reducing them to romantically revered museum show pieces.

Summarizing my answers, here is what I would conclude: (1) Agreement among parties to local sustainable development projects is certainly not out of the question -- even agreement on labeling some parties as outlaws or criminals. (2) Economic imperialists hiding behind a growth-is-good-for-all slogan can be isolated, made to fight on other fronts that distract them from unchecked rapaciousness. (3) Local democracies have the *potential* -- but no guarantee beyond that -- to deal with environmental problems when and if they arise in the wake of sustainable development projects. And (4) indigenous cultures ought not to be automatically relegated to the status of obstacles to local sustainable development projects.

CONCLUSION

Having said all of this, I want to make sure I am not misunderstood about my critique of Cesar Cuello's work (or, indirectly, my critique of those others he accuses of having only partial views). I remain skeptical about foundationalist approaches to ethics of any sort -- including foundationalist approaches to the ethics of sustainability in general as well as Cuello's holistic model. However, in his case and in the case of others, a definition of sustainability is not everything; many advocates of sustainable development have done excellent work in attempting to promote sustainability in particular cases.

Cuello is no exception to this rule. In the booklength thesis in which he proposes his holistic definition, he also discusses in detail the particular case of the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica, where a number of factors undercut efforts aimed at sustainable management of magnificent rainforests, as well as other features of the local ecosystem. Cuello ticks them off one by one: persistent gold mining in the rivers; continued insistence on traditional development initiatives by both government agencies and non-governmental organizations that have traditionally favored development; factional and turf differences among these agencies; technicist or expertocratic attitudes on their part, especially a general disdain for the beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge of the local campesinos; continued intrusions of foreign capital, not only aimed at expanding lumber or pulp production, but more recently supporting an ecotourism that benefits foreign investors more

than local communities; foreign-based agricultural development based on chemical fertilizers and pesticides; and so on.

After summarizing these and other anti-sustainable forces, Cuello lays out a specific strategy for dealing with each of them. He does refer back, at almost every point, to his holistic definition; but the real focus, in each case, is on practical, down-to-earth solutions for the problems *at the local level*. In practice, then, Cuello is much more pragmatic than his holistic definition might lead us to expect.

And it is this pragmatism that I would like to foster -- with respect to Cuello's proposals but also more generally. This is in line with my American Pragmatist, Dewey-based *progressivism associated with local activism.* (As I understand European politics today, this is similar to at least some social-democratic movements -- at least those that focus on local issues rather than new national or regional parties.)

This essay was originally addressed to an audience of philosophers, and I could have stopped there. But since I started with a thesis supporting a *general framework* of ethical *guidelines* (not principles) for sustainability, I will return to that now as my conclusion. However, I would also call to mind once again what I added immediately. The guidelines and framework are likely to be useful only if we recognize that each real-world implementation is going to be radically different, peculiar to its own region. In principle, there may be a general framework for ethical sustainability, but in practice there are only local democratic attempts to bring about some approximation of it.

[*Note: This essay was reprinted in slightly modified form in volume 3, number 2 of* Problemy Ekorozwoju/Problems of Sustainable Development *(in English and Polish). It was revised from my Puebla SPT 1997 paper in Jorge Martinez Contreras, Raul Gutierrez Lombardo, and Paul T. Durbin, eds.,* Tecnologia, Desarrollo Economico y Sustentabilidad (special number of *Ludus Vitalis*, Mexico City, 1997), *and only minor cosmetic changes have been made here.*]

PART II

TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: AN ESSAY

This essay, in its current form, has not been published elsewhere. Nonetheless, it borrows extensively – almost always word for word – from two sets of my "activist essays," 1989-1999 and 1999-2009, that appear (along with this one) on my University of Delaware departmental website. I do not apologize, here, for the numerous repetitions from those other essays, because I see this as a separate set of essays that might well be read independently. I do apologize to any readers who might try to read all three sets at once; in that case, I simply warn them in advance about the word-for-word repetitions – without pointing out, in most cases, where there are long repetitions.

What I present in this essay is an argument in only a limited sense. More precisely, it is a defense of an *activist political philosophy* in the tradition of the American Pragmatists John Dewey and G. H. Mead. I'm aware that pragmatism of this sort is not well known outside the USA, or is misunderstood if it is known. But I'm not going to try to explain those views here, or to try to remove misunderstandings. I'm simply going to offer my own ideas, following in their footsteps. And I begin with a favorite quote from Mead that I have used many times. According to Mead (1964, p. 266):

> The order of the universe that we live in *is* the moral order. It has become the moral order by becoming the self-conscious method of the members of a human society [to solve their problems democratically] . . . . The world that comes to us from the past possesses and controls us. We possess and control the world that we discover and invent. . . . It is a splendid adventure if we can rise to it.

That is, groups acting to solve their problems in a creative fashion are *by definition ethical*.

By whose definition? By Mead's definition, obviously, but he seems to mean that *any* ethics worth the name would find such communities to be acting ethically. His argument against Kant (which goes beyond what we will see Borgmann say) is that abstract theoretical duties do not help us at all in solving real-world ethical problems. Mead also argued against traditional utilitarianism, saying that what ethics calls for is altruism, whereas utilitarianism tends to be individualistic, depending on the satisfaction of individuals' interests. To complete the picture, I'm not clear about what he would have said about religious ethics, or the ethical systems of generations before Kant -- for example, natural law ethics -- though he was as much opposed to Aristotelians and Platonists as Dewey was. He might just have meant by the definition of the pragmatists themselves; or, with Dewey, of progressive democrats in the tradition of (their interpretation of) the American founding fathers.

This view needs a defense for at least two reasons. Even as staunch a defender of a pragmatist philosophy as Joseph Margolis, in *Reinventing Pragmatism* (2002), says that Dewey, the best known defender of this form of traditional American Pragmatism, is "epistemologically naive." His philosophy, especially his meliorist social philosophy, does not stand up well, Margolis thinks, by the standards of contemporary analytical philosophy. This is not because it lacks sophistication, but simply because it focuses, more than Margolis and analytical philosophers think is "philosophically correct," on social meliorism. In the tradition of American Pragmatism, Margolis much prefers Charles Sanders Peirce, the isolated loner, to Dewey the joiner in activist causes and activist groups.

The second reason is that Margolis is surely right on the point that nearly all academic analytical philosophers in the United States today would say that philosophers can get involved in social problem solving, if at all, only under an "applied" heading; and in working toward the solution of particular social problems in an activist fashion, only as a matter of "service," not philosophy proper.

One recent American Pragmatist philosopher who has been perceived as playing the cultural role of what I have called a "secular preacher," like Borgmann, is Richard Rorty (1997); but he

tends to look to literary figures rather than philosophers for such cultured vision. (Rorty, of course, ultimately left the camp of academic analytical philosophy behind entirely.) So presumably, in this dichotomy, Rorty thought of himself as more a literary figure, an essayist, than as a philosopher -- at least in the narrow academic sense. Many critics -- and I include myself among them -- do not see Rorty as sufficiently activist in the Mead/Dewey sense. Rorty exercised his culture-criticism -- especially his criticism of the contemporary culture of academic philosophy -- mostly at the intellectual level.

And on the "service" point, we would do well, in my opinion, to return to the early twentieth-century view of academic life, in which scholarship and teaching and research were all of a piece, not separated.

But the approach of Mead and Dewey is more than ethics, it is a *politics* that substitutes the *community solving its problems democratically* for traditional approaches to ethics and politics, whether theoretical or practical.

In an age of globalization, I need to say briefly why I don't prefer a radical politics, as so many do.

I don't think I need to add that I do not condone a politics that just lets the capitalist juggernaut -- free trade pacts and the like -- just go on unopposed. But opposing that juggernaut can take many non-radical forms. Here I consider two non-radical alternatives, one tending toward the moderate conservative, the other farther to the left, without being radical

A philosophical approach probably even less well known than American Pragmatism, that of neo-Heideggerian Albert Borgmann, especially in his new book, *Real American Ethics* (2006), is where I will begin this part. Borgmann has come a long way from his original neo-Heideggerian attack on our technological culture in *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (1984). In the new book he offers an antidote to mindless consumerism. Although I admire the book very much and think that it has much to offer in terms of describing the current situation not only in the USA but in a world increasingly entranced by the American model, the relevance here is that many advocates of globalization assume the North American model to be the ideal toward which a globalized world ought to strive. And he argues forcefully against that.

Martha Nussbaum, in *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (2006), offers an improvement on John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (1971) as a foundation for a philosophical theory (and, limitedly, practice) about justice at the international level that is relevant though not directly related to globalization issues. David Crocker, in *Ethics of Global Development: Agency, Capability, and Deliberative Democracy* (2008), applies the "capabilities" approach of Nussbaum and Amartya Sen explicitly to globalization. I will treat the two of them separately, Nussbaum first as a theory of the left, Crocker (later) as an application of that approach.

So my outline, where I divide the essay into sections, is this: (1) I first offer a brief argument against radical left approaches, whether theoretical or practical. On the theoretical level, I consider neo-Marxism in the version of Andrew Feenberg in *Critical Theory of Technology*

(1991 [later edition has new title]). At the practical level, the only realistic alternatives I see (at least some think they are realistic) are those proposed by the likes of Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales in South America (following a Castro-Cuban model).

Next (2) comes my argument against Borgmann, interpreted as preaching radical reform to people (Americans first) who are enamored of the thesis behind globalization. What I take Borgmann to be saying is that what we need is to get globalizers to change their ways.

(3) I then make my argument against Nussbaum on "capabilities" theory (interpreted as more egalitarian than Rawls) as applied (by me) to globalization. (As mentioned, I save my consideration of Crocker, who explicitly applies the capabilities approach to globalization, for later.) What I take Nussbaum to be doing is providing a "theory of justice" type argument which goes well beyond John Rawls, but (in my estimation) remains at the theoretical level.

I follow that (4) with an elaboration of my arguments against Nussbaum and Borgmann, thereby summarizing my general approach.

This is then supplemented by (5) a case study from Costa Rica that seems to me to follow the outlines of that approach.

(6) I then offer a sort of thought experiment, to test the approach in real time, so to speak. There I look at how the approach might play out in terms of another controversy in Costa Rica, pitting opponents against Nobel laureate Oscar Arias, once more president of Costa Rica, on the issue of entering or not entering into the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

My conclusion (7) is a play on the traditional refrain, "Think globally, act locally," where what I say is that to *think* effectively about confronting globalization, we must *act* locally . . . while trusting that many democratic victories at the local level can add up to some control of globalization in the not-too-long run. I will tip my hand here by saying that my closing comment will be that that's the only real choice any proposal has, even the most radical; and the chances are slim to none if those making anti-globalization proposals don't get activist at *many* local levels.

1

This is almost too short to include at all, but I don't really have anything more to say on the matter.

I offer two arguments against Marxists and others on the radical left who have become famous for opposing globalization. In the last decade or so, they have turned out in the streets throughout the world to demonstrate their opposition. I have sympathy toward their objectives, but what I talk about here is the possibility that they will succeed in their efforts.

My first argument is against a neo-Marxist theoretician, Andrew Feenberg, in his *Critical Theory of Technology* (1991 [and 2000, with a new title]). But my real argument is against

practitioners, not theoreticians, where I would single out Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

Andrew Feenberg, in *Critical Theory of Technology* (1991 [the later edition, 2000, doesn't change anything substantial]), thinks that some political leaders and corporate managers can be won over to more enlightened views. Feenberg takes Herbert Marcuse as his starting point. To put the matter briefly here, a new order can become a reality *if* workers are educated to recognize the clear benefits of a new socialized system, *and if* their consequent demands are met with a sufficiently sympathetic response on the part of at least some technical managers now imbued with a "culture of responsibility."

My counter to this is that the proposal, no matter how well argued theoretically, seems to me to lack the force of traditional Marxist revolutionary theory; that is, it fails to show how the revolution is going to succeed, how what I would call "ideological blinders" are going to be removed from the eyes of those who would benefit from the new order. (I assume that no one today would call for the bloody, ruthless suppression of Lenin or Stalin. Neither do I think it is worth discussing here the Chinese Communist way -- of co-opting capitalist methods alongside continued socialist state control.)

So what I have elsewhere proposed as the role for radical socialist theorizing today is that it be merged with an American Pragmatist progressive politicking. According to Dewey, for example, the solution of urgent social problems -- including technosocial problems such as the technological manipulation of public opinion that keeps the blinders on -- is to be sought by way of collaboration among all sorts of activists, from workers and union leaders, to corporate and civic and educational leaders, to intellectuals. Dewey had an ambivalent attitude toward Marxism in general and toward Communism in Russia; he recognized the need to unmask the ideological obfuscations of corporate leaders and their cronies in government but he was extremely leery of violations of civil liberties in the name of democracy. Though I am not aware that Dewey ever said this explicitly, the thrust of his thinking on the matter ought to lead us to conclude that the unmasking efforts of Marxist and other radical intellectuals can be a tremendous boon to progressive social activism. It is not necessary that everyone involved be radicalized; it is enough that the radicals among progressive social activists help the rest to see through ideological obfuscations.

As to Chavez and Morales, I can wish them well without being convinced that they are likely to succeed against globalization.

Venezuela clearly needed a shake-up, to break the power of the anti-democratic elite there; but the most recent events seem to me to have shown that these elites have merely been pushed to the sidelines temporarily. Some seem to be fleeing to the USA, as happened with the middle classes of Cuba at the beginning of Castro's revolution, but wherever they are they stand ready to restore power to the multinational corporations as soon as they get an opportunity.

As for Bolivia, I am even more sympathetic toward Morales and his attempt to empower the indigenous peoples of that poor land; but an electoral victory by no means assures a victory over globalization. And, as anyone knows who follows world events in the newspaper or on television, recent events show that Morales may not even be able to continue to wield power inside of Bolivia, let alone to control the multinational companies that have bled the country of its riches.

My sympathies -- like those of Mead and Dewey -- tend toward the radical end of the political spectrum. But it is important to think clearly about means and the realistic possibility of success. Some radicals say that is wrong: we should never give up in a revolutionary struggle, but continue doggedly to work for a worldwide socialist (preferably a Marxist) revolution. I think, instead, that we need to do what we can do now.

2

I think it is necessary first to summarize Borgmann's *Real American Ethics* before criticizing it as not being an adequate response to globalization.

For Borgmann in his first chapter, the meaning of "real American ethics" includes his answer to the question, why American? And he answers himself in terms of the spreading global reach of the USA and its institutions of all sorts; of the generosity of Americans, for example, in the rebuilding of Europe and Japan after World War II; as well as what he calls their (our) resourcefulness, especially in an attitude of refusing to take no for answer. To these characteristics Borgmann adds a uniquely American "fusing" of friendship, grace, justice, stewardship, wisdom, courage, "economy" (in a special sense) and design -- all of which virtues he thinks have unfortunately been "shrunk" by technology. There he is thinking of his earlier approach (Borgmann 1984) in terms of his distinction between "devices" and "focal things and practices."

After Borgmann's introductory chapter, he turns to deficiencies in our (recent) American character, where he emphasizes that a general decency has given way to too much partisan passion. He focuses on examples: social justice broadly conceived (where he emphasizes the negativity of the recent debate over reforming welfare), environmental issues, and the abortion debate (where he takes a liberal side, while trying not to be partisan himself). He thinks that, since 1989 and the demise of Soviet Communism as a commonly compelling enemy, most passion has been exhibited by extremists. And this is where he brings in the need for a *compelling moral vision* that will get the broad center to do something beyond the demands of mere decency. In a single paragraph, he allows that the attacks that go under the label "9/11" could have offered the broad center an opportunity, but says it hasn't done so.

In this chapter he touches on many other issues that do not get full treatment in the book: globalization and indigenous rights, for one, or environmental damage broadly speaking, or the continuing denials of their rights to women, homosexuals, prisoners and ex-prisoners, immigrants (legal or illegal, it doesn't matter), including those too poor to afford health care (not just immigrants), exiles for example from the war in Iraq or the horrors subsumed under the heading Darfur, and on and on -- all mentioned, but mostly as asides, hinted at in a sentence or two or even just a clause.

His book then turns to ethical theory and what it might do to help us focus on these issues, and where he begins is with the different kinds. After talking about them as "moral landmarks," he puts together Thomas Jefferson (a "sense of what is right") and Immanuel Kant (reason-based

categorical imperative). Both offer helpful "broad orientations," but he concludes that they are too far removed from the "quandaries of daily life."

Borgmann emphasizes, when talking about utilitarian ethics, its "dark sides" -- including the "commodifications" that he will talk about in later chapters. He also goes beyond other surveys in mentioning evolutionary psychology as a possibly promising new approach to ethics, but he ends up concluding that it is another "piece of the skeleton that fails to give us the tissue on the bones."

Clearly Borgmann's favorite theory is Rawlsian justice, but that too is, for him, too general and falls short of the needs of a "real" ethics.

He next contrasts such theories with the *practice* of virtue ethics -- though he laments that its defenders too often get lost in theoretical discussion rather than offering models of actual practice. Under this heading he makes a standard distinction (based on Aristotle) between personal and political virtue. Under personal virtues, he emphasizes wisdom (for him, especially Platonic), courage (he says the heroic kind championed by Aristotle is rarely called for today), friendship, and "economy." There Borgmann asks himself an important question: "What is the central ethical issue in building and dwelling?" And he answers: "We can take our cue from Aristotle who was one of the first to discuss economy [as household management] and did so in his *Politics*. But, Borgmann goes on, in his treatise *On the Soul*, Aristotle "framed two propositions that point us in the right direction. Aristotle's first proposition says: 'The soul is the form of the body'; the second says: 'The soul is somehow everything.' Together these two principles provide a fair definition of the human condition. The vital force of a human being has a material center and a potentially all-encompassing comprehension of reality." Borgmann ends here by saying this is threatened in today's America, especially by the way Americans typically make TV sets (and computers, etc.) the center of their homes.

I like the virtue Borgmann talks about next, grace (where he again gives it a special nuance), but I will not summarize what he says on the topic here.

Under political virtues, Borgmann emphasizes justice, stewardship, and design -- all important but also threatened by the "commodifications" he then takes up in the next chapter. And that's where he finally turns to "real" ethics, under the heading: "recognizing reality."

In this central chapter of the book, Borgmann discusses various *commodifications* (plural) versus ethics. But I will focus this summary on his ending (pp. 158-160), where he again brings in his device-versus-focal-things thesis. Here I want to be absolutely fair and quote his own words:

> Once moral commodification [defined as an economy detached from the moral restraints of "time, place, and community"] has alleviated misery and provided for the fundamentals of life, and when it begins to sweep everything before it and to colonize the centers of our lives, it becomes ethically debilitating and objectionable. A life, typically divided between labor, reduced to a mere means, and leisure, devoted to the consumption of commodities, is not worth living (p. 158).

He goes on:

> The availability of commodities . . . leads to an epidemic of depression and a decline of happiness.

And asks:

> What should we do? Lead a life devoid of pleasure? Draw another line? This time between moral commodification and what? The answer is not to find a line, but to remember and invigorate those centers in our lives that engage our place, our time, and the people around us. In the personal sphere these are focal things and practices such as the culture of the table. In the public sphere they are centers of communal celebration such as farmers' markets.

And:

> Here too the empirical evidence is illuminating and in fact encouraging. Enduring joy is intrinsic to the engagements of focal practices and communal celebrations. Moreover, pleasures embedded in engagements will not betray us. And finally, if we in the affluent countries lead lives that are good as well as pleasant, we can get off the hedonic treadmill and use our resources to be a global force of genuine liberty and prosperity (pp. 159-160).

Borgmann then moves rather succinctly toward his conclusion, with chapters on modifying commodification through the "economy" of planning our homes -- where he uses the examples of Thomas Jefferson (again) and Frank Lloyd Wright -- and discusses economy, again, in conjunction with friendship, wisdom, and grace. All are threatened today, he thinks. Then, talking about the designing of public space (again in opposition to commodification), he praises "celebratory" spaces, which he finds to be too often lacking.

Finally Borgmann comes to "realizing this real ethics" through "dispersion" (in limited, "fragmented" positive examples) and a "Jeffersonian life" (minus racism, of course). He closes with a poetic meditation on "the culture of the table" as what he thinks individuals can still do to be "really ethical" -- presumably not only in America but wherever people emulate this better American culture.

An adequate representation of my reply must wait until I give my full view in chapter 4. But for now, my most important disagreement is over our starting points: individual *virtues* under an overarching order ("compelling *moral vision*") reflected in *wisdom* (or, concretely, wise choices) versus the "complaints of the downtrodden," where I refer not to Dewey and Mead but all the way back to William James (1877, see 1967, p. 625).

I would paraphrase James as saying the "moral philosopher" is wise, in general, to be conservative, to abide by the social rules that have withstood the test of time. But (he adds): "Every now and then . . . someone is born with the right to be original, and his revolutionary

thought or action may bear prosperous fruit. He may replace old 'laws of nature' by better ones; he may, by breaking old moral rules in a certain place, bring in a total condition of things more ideal than would have followed had the rules been kept." For James, this means a "better social order," one that will be more inclusive, that will give rise to fewer of what he calls "complaints"; that would lead to less social and political resistance -- and I would add, though James doesn't do so explicitly, less resistance from minorities, from those heretofore excluded from and thus "complaining" about the old order. I would further add that, reading this passage from James in recent decades, one can hardly avoid thinking of Martin Luther King Jr. and civil disobedience.

So for me the most important starting point of my activist philosophy is the *urgently felt social problems of our technological age* -- problems that call out for philosophers to join with other activists to try to do something about our technosocial problems in a conception of democracy as opening up opportunities to segments of society previously left out of the mainstream.

I am, in short, urging Borgmann to join me in activism if he would do anything about globalization, to move beyond preaching to doing something (without abandoning his philosophical stance). Or, put differently, where Borgmann laments the lack of activism today (except in the limited "focal" groups he acknowledges), I think what we need to do is increase it.

3

I here summarize -- again all too briefly -- what I see as the radical egalitarian but not radical leftist theory of Martha Nussbaum in *Frontiers of Justice.* (I admit that she ends her books with what she thinks are limited practical proposals, but to the extent that they are worth discussing here, they are better represented, in chapter 6 below, by Crocker.)

My all-too-brief summary here is based on a review by Michael Corrado (in *Essays in Philosophy*, online journal, volume 9, January 2008.)

However, any discussion of issues in these terms presupposes some knowledge of recent ethical theory, especially utilitarianism and more especially the neo-Kantian "contractarianism" of John Rawls. And, as a foil for Nussbaum, Rawls is the one that needs to be summarized here. I borrow shamelessly Borgmann's summary because it seems to me to capture not only the thrust but the spirit of Rawls.

Borgmann summarizes thus:

"Rawls saw his enterprise as a renewal and development of Kantian ethics. Not surprisingly then, Rawls's first concern was to honor and protect the dignity of every individual. Right at the start of the book [*A Theory of Justice,* 1971], Rawls put it this way: 'Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override.'"

"This concern for the individual's dignity [Borgmann continues] was spelled out in terms of the other two Kantian landmarks -- equality and liberty -- a the first principle of justice: 'Each

person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a scheme of liberties for others.' Rawls followed Kant in conceiving of equality as a moral rather material issue. Hence equality of material circumstances for each person or household is not required by the first principle of justice. At the same time, inequalities of income, wealth, and consequently of political power and social standing can be terribly injurious to the dignity of the poor and powerless. Rawls's task, therefore, was to find a concept of inequality that was bounded by the moral concern for equality, liberty, and dignity. Put differently, the question Rawls had to answer was this: What kinds of material and social differences among individuals are acceptable from the standpoint of justice? Rawls's reply was the celebrated difference principle, the second principle of justice, the one that embodies the spirit of openness and generosity: 'Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.'

Rawls thought we would see the wisdom of these two principles if we set aside our particular advantages or burdens of natural endowments and social status and imagined what principles of justice we would choose if we considered ourselves exclusively as equal and rational members of an assembly, each concerned about his or her welfare without wanting to pursue one's well-being at the expense of others. This situation of the primal choice of principles of justice Rawls called *the original position.* In such a situation, Rawls reasoned, you would realize that of all imaginable social scenarios the one of greatest concern to you is the situation where you are weak, ill, poor, and plagued by misfortune. You would therefore choose the social design that best protects you in such circumstances -- Rawls's principle of justice (Borgmann 80-81)."

Borgmann does not accept Rawls's ethics completely, and I would characterize his main critique in terms of three "significant oversights" he finds in Rawls's account, the most important one being this: "The superficial and to my mind detrimental affinity between Rawls's theory and present cultural reality protects contemporary culture from critical scrutiny" (84). And the critical scrutiny he wants to provide focuses on how our indifference to social justice "has as much to do with the character of the material culture we have been busily putting in place over the last generation as with the individual decisions people have made in the polling booth."

His book is a challenge to us to put in place a better material culture, but his way of stating it is as a challenge to individuals to undertake the needed change. Nussbaum's challenge to Rawls is different; she wants to challenge the very principles his theory is based on.

Returning to Nussbaum, then, here is Corrado's summary:

"In *Women and Human Development* (2000), Nussbaum set out to distinguish the 'capabilities' approach from utilitarianism, and to show its superiority. In *Frontiers of Justice*, her target is Rawls and contractarianism generally. The theoretical conclusions of the book can be summed up in three propositions:

1. The traditional social contract approach to political theory, based upon the idea of mutual advantage among roughly equal contractors, does not adequately deal with the problem of securing justice for the disabled, for underdeveloped nations, or for animals.

The three categories all pose challenges to the contract tradition, since the disabled and animals are not equal in power or resources to fully capable and competent human beings, and the nations of the world are not even roughly equal.

2. The addition of Kantian restraints upon the contractors [Corrado goes on], as in Rawls' Veil of Ignorance, is not enough to mitigate the harshness of the outcome of the contracting situation for these problem areas.

Among other things, the Kantian conception of the person requires that the contractors be fully rational, a requirement that excluded the mentally disabled and animals from participation.

3. The capabilities approach can do better [Corrado thinks], at least with respect to these three problems, but only if a certain list of capabilities is privileged over others.

"The capabilities approach starts from two premises: (1) that all *should be brought to* a position of rough equality (rather than that all *are* roughly equal); and (2) that equality is to be measured not in subjective states or in material goods, but rather in the capability to be and to do various things. . . . [Corrado concludes] Any theory, whether a maximizing theory like utilitarianism, or a maximin theory like Rawls's theory, or an egalitarian theory, which measures social progress in terms of material goods or subjective satisfaction, therefore falls short of an adequate theory."

In spite of that conclusion, Corrado seems to think that Nussbaum is almost as egalitarian as he seems to be. In any case, he provides a list of Nussbaum's capabilities, and in doing so notes how similar it is to various lists of fundamental egalitarian human rights that we find in international documents of recent decades:

"Nussbaum . . . gives us a list of ten central capabilities. The capabilities on the list, in my words and in much abbreviated form, are these:

1. Being able to live a life that is worth living for a normal period.
2. Being able to have good health.
3. Being secure against assault, and being free to move from place to place.
4. Being able to use the senses to think, imagine, and reason.
5. Being able to develop emotional attachments to persons and things.
6. Being able to form a conception of the good life.
7. Being able to associate with others, and having the basis of self respect.
8. Being able to live with animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. Being able to enjoy recreational activities.
10. Being able to participate in politics; being able to hold property."

[End of Corrado quotes.]

My argument against Nussbaum is different from both Corrado's and Borgmann's. I admire Nussbaum tremendously for her willingness to point out the limits of Rawlsian theory, so long in the USA taken to be *the* statement of a liberal theory of a just democracy. But when, at the end of

her book, she gets around to some halfway practical proposals, they do not go nearly far enough in talking about how they might be implemented. She seems to me to be taking the too-common academic attitude among philosophers in the USA that that kind of work belongs to others; it's not a properly "philosophical" task.

I am, as I said, very sympathetic toward Nussbaum's views, and I argue against them only in the sense that she has not -- at least not yet -- gotten practical enough. I will be saying more, at the end of my essay, on what I see as the *philosophical* activism needed; I will do that when I get to David Crocker and his version of capabilities theory as tied to a "development ethics" and the issue of globalization.

4

I have summarized my approach a number of times, and will repeat one version here before moving on to the presentation of a case study that, I think, illustrates it. (I published this summary in the Mexican journal *Ludus Vitalis,* volume XV:27, pp. 195-197.)

1. How has the development of knowledge within your professional discipline modified the possibilities for human action [the editors asked]?

Philosophy of technology -- which overlaps significantly with science and technology studies, as well as with environmental philosophy -- probably offers more possibilities for human action than almost any other discipline (disciplines) in academia today. On the other hand, many of these possibilities have yet to be realized.

First, what I see as the possibilities. In my *Social Responsibility in Science, Technology, and Medicine* (1992), I invited technical professionals to get more heavily involved in the solution of technosocial problems than they had up to that point. It was addressed to technology educators, medical school reformers, media professionals, biotechnologists and bioengineers, computer professionals, nuclear experts, and environmentalists -- as well as, paradigmatically, social workers and the "helping professions." About 10 years later, I edited a group of my "activist essays" (available on my University of Delaware website), addressed to fellow philosophers and especially philosophers of technology; the message was the same, to get more involved in solving the problems of our technological world.

In both cases, I based my approach on that of philosophers in the American Pragmatist tradition -- most especially John Dewey and his friend and colleague G. H. Mead -- for whom there is no split between professional and civic work. Indeed, activities ought to flow smoothly in both directions, from academia to the "real" world and from there to academia -- seamlessly.

This view is not shared by all philosophers calling themselves pragmatists, and certainly not by all philosophers in general -- even those in fields like bioethics or applied ethics generally or even environmental ethics. But mine was not a program -- not even an invitation -- for all. It

was aimed only at increasing the number of activists, in academia or in the professions, who might have the expertise and the will to help solve social problems in our technological age.

2. How to choose between the possibilities? [The editors asked]

Presumably this question seeks an answer in the "ought" category, perhaps something like an ethical or social or even political obligation. But that's not what I think is called for here.

The problems calling out for action in our troubled technological world are so urgent and so numerous -- from global climate change to gang violence, from attacks on democracy to failures in education, from the global level to the local technosocial problems in *your* community -- that it isn't necessary to talk about obligations, even social obligations. No, it's a matter of *opportunities* that beckon the technically trained -- including philosophers and other academics -- to work alongside those citizens already at work trying to solve the problems at hand. And when academics do get involved, they can't go in as though they had all the answers; they have to work as equals in a true democratic fashion.

Why? Can I offer a general answer to the question about how to choose among the numerous possibilities? I suppose I could try, but I don't feel the need to do so; certainly no urgency to do so. The problems are just there for all to see. And democratic societies have a right (there is a traditional ethics term, but I am not going to defend it) to expect that experts will help them, experts from all parts of academia and all the professions. I would even go so far as to say that there is at least an implicit social contract (another ethical/social/political term that I won't define here) between professionals and the democratic societies in which they live and work and get paid for their professionalism.

This may sound like rampant relativism: just get involved in any crusade you choose, as long as it "improves" society. To avoid this implication, I need again to fall back on American Pragmatism. It was the view of Dewey and Mead that there is at least one fundamental principle on which to take a stand: that improving society always means making democracy more widespread, more inclusive, inviting more groups -- not fewer groups -- into the public forum; elitism, "my group is better than your group," and all other such privilegings are anti-democratic. This "fundamental principle," however, is not just another academic ethics principle; it is inherent in the nature of democracy -- at least as the American Pragmatists understood it. As I understand it.

I'm always happy when fellow philosophers try to provide academically respectable answers to questions of social obligation, of social contracts on the part of professionals, of the need to keep democracy open to ever wider inputs. But if we wait for them to provide such answers, it will typically be too late. Global warming proceeds apace. Loss of species diversity, of life on Earth, proceeds apace. Threats to local communities in the so-called "developing world" in the face of economic globalization proceed apace. And so on and on. These and others like them are not issues of academicism. What I have in mind are *urgent* social issues that cry out for answers *now*.

I have been accused, on these grounds, of favoring activism over principle -- even of abandoning the traditional role of philosophy as theoretical discourse. But I don't mean to do that. I believe Dewey was right in opposing all dualisms, including the dualism of principle versus practice or theory versus action. I welcome academic work on my issues; I just ask academics to accept activism as a legitimate part of philosophical professionalism.

The issues seem to me that important.

And I begin by listing some:

Borgmann offers (and opposes) his own "liberal agenda" list: "Reinstate a substantial estate tax. Make the federal income tax more steeply progressive. Reinstate a vigorous capital gains tax. Reduce military spending. Use the revenue to institute universal health care patterned after the Canadian and British systems. Establish a minimum annual income. Build public housing. Rehabilitate the schools of the inner cities. Increase the pay of teachers in those schools. Raise the minimum wage and make the federal government the employer of last resort. Programs of environmental stewardship and international cooperation" (p. 192). [I would note that almost all of these (so like my own list in *Social Responsibility*), however pressing, require long-range planning and the enactment of laws by the Federal government -- as opposed to beginning with grassroots efforts in local communities or associations, as I recommend.]

In my *Social Responsibility* (1992), within the list of (classes of) problems I referred to as a touchstone, some have the urgency of sheer survival -- e.g., nuclear proliferation or worldwide ecological collapse -- and others are related to fears about the survival of human values in the face of genetic engineering or possible new advances in applications of artificial intelligence or "smart" programming of computerized systems that escape human control. But others are keyed to threats to the good life in a democratic society: technoeconomic inequities or disparities between rich and poor (nations or individuals); hazards of technological workplaces or extreme boredom in high-technology jobs or widespread technological unemployment even among highly trained professionals; extreme failures of schools -- including universities and professional schools -- to prepare their graduates (or dropouts) for the jobs that need doing today, or for a satisfying and effective political/civic life; the widely-recognized but also confusing health care crisis; even technological and commercial threats to the arts and traditional high culture.

I said, further, that I believe one can make a positive defense of a social ethics of technology. What this meant for me was to demonstrate that there is some hope that some of the major social problems of our technological age are in fact being solved. And I cited a study, some years earlier, of reform politics and public interest activism (McCann, 1986, p. 262). McCann says just that about activism in the 80s:

> Throughout the [United States], myriad progressive groups have been mobilizing and acting on behalf of crucial issues largely outside the glossy mainstream of media politics: the variety of church, campus, and community organizations mobilized around issues of U.S. policy in South Africa and Central America as well as nuclear arms policy; the increasingly effective women's and gay-rights movements; the growing numbers of radical ecologists and advocates of "Green Party" politics; the renewed

> efforts to mobilize blacks, ethnics, and the multitude of the poor by Rev. Jesse Jackson and others; the diverse experiments of working people both in and out of labor unions to reassert themselves; and the legions of intellectuals committed to progressive economic and social policy formulation -- all have constituted elements of an increasingly dynamic movement to build an eclectic base of progressive politics in the nation.

This put the case for progressive reform generally.

In my *Activist Essays 1989-1999* (2000), I concentrated on the contributions that fellow philosophers might make, and I referred to "a small number of philosophers who have exempted themselves from the normal promotion-ladder process in academia [in the USA] -- often against extreme pressure not to get involved -- to devote themselves to *integration* work, including a small but important band of interdisciplinarily-inclined philosophers who have worked with others to establish integrative programs that help otherwise bewildered, career-oriented undergraduates to see some connections in the facts (and specialist hypotheses) they are so pressured to absorb. Another example has to do with philosophers who have ventured completely outside their academic roles, joining with others in ethics committees, technology assessment commissions, and so on."

In a nutshell this was my claim in both attempts. There are a great many social problems in our technological world. So my "pragmatist ethics" -- really a social philosophy, a "social work" philosophy of technology or technological culture (compare it to Bent Flyvberg's "qualitative social science," e.g., as applied by him in town planning) -- would begin, in a sense, where Borgmann ends. Not with his hoped-for better new "compelling moral vision," but with his "phenomenological" descriptions of what ails our culture -- where I would underscore the Jamesian "complaints" that, for a Pragmatist, are the triggering problems to be dealt with in an activist way, *by philosophers along with other activists on an equal footing.*

Many ethical solutions have been proposed, I said in *Activist Essays* , but in the end none of them seems as likely to offer solutions as an approach like that of Mead and Dewey that would urge philosophers to work alongside other activists in dealing with the real problems that face us. Other ethics-of-technology approaches might also work, but in my view that can only happen if their practitioners become as actively involved as Mead and Dewey were.

A recent American philosopher who has been perceived as playing the cultural role of a "secular preacher," like Borgmann, is Richard Rorty (see especially 1989); but he tends to look to literary figures rather than philosophers for such vision. Presumably, in this dichotomy, he thought of himself as more a literary figure, an essayist, rather than a philosopher -- at least in the narrow academic sense. On the other hand, many critics -- and I include myself among them -- did not see Rorty (who died recently) as sufficiently activist in the Mead/Dewey sense. Rorty exercised his culture-criticism -- especially his criticism of the contemporary culture of academic philosophy -- mostly at the intellectual level. And even at that level, some critics (e.g., Cornel West) accuse him of lacking the conviction that a preacher, even a secular preacher, needs.

So it seems to me that what it comes down to is a social responsibility argument -- a demonstration of the urgency of social problems in our technological world combined with the

opportunity that exists to do something about these urgent problems.

It seems to me that this is a good lead into the following case study.

5

I here offer an example of countering globalization. It was a successful challenge to a multinational company in Costa Rica in the mid to late 1990s. (What follows is a summary of two items I have published elsewhere.)

"Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica: A Biological Corridor Is Saved from a Wood Chip Mill in the Late 1990s"

My case study focuses on saving Osa's biodiversity corridor, linking two national parks, and there is an excellent study that tells the story, Helena van den Hombergh's *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce* (1999; see especially chapter 7, section 5).

Van den Hombergh's cast of characters is large and diverse. The struggle she focuses on is the campaign to prevent Ston Forestal, S.A., the Costa Rican subsidiary of the multinational paper company, Stone Container Corporation (based in Chicago), from building a wood chip mill — for exportation — in the northwest corner of the Golfo Dulce, which separates the Osa Peninsula from the mainland. The mill would have impacted a proposed biological diversity corridor intended to link Corcovado National Park with Piedras Blancas National Park (originally a separate section of Corcovado) in one of two ways. One path of the corridor would have run right past the mill. The other, a few kilometers farther north, would have been impacted by road building and the moving of large trucks and construction equipment. Either way, the corridor would have been effectively breached, and Corcovado would eventually have become an ecological island. (That may still happen.)

Van den Hombergh's story centers around the activities of the Asociación Ecologista Costarricense (AECO, ecological association of Costa Rica), aided by the Asociación para la Defensa de los Recursos Naturales y el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Peninsula de Osa (Pro Defensa for short: association to defend the natural resources of and sustainable development in Osa) and various international environmental organizations--Dutch and German, especially, but also including Greenpeace. AECO was a radical environmentalist organization which had already waged several environmental and anti-pollution battles in Costa Rica before this one; its ideology, van den Hombergh says, was overtly socialist and opposed to corporate capitalist depradations of the environment (and impoverishment of workers). Leaders of AECO in the Osa campaign included Maria del Mar Cordero Fernández and Emile Rojas--who were killed in a suspicious fire in San Jose just days after the limited victory over Ston Forestal.

Pro Defensa was a committee of locals promoted by AECO in 1993 to help carry on the public campaign.

Numerous international environmental organizations got involved, including Greenpeace --which sent one of its ships into the Golfo Dulce at the height of the anti-Ston campaign.

Several government agencies were directly involved. Principal among these was the leadership of the Area de Conservacion de Osa (ACOSA), the branch of the Sistema Nacional de Areas de Conservación (SINAC), under the Ministerio del Ambiente y Energía (MINAE), which had conservation responsibilities for the Osa Peninsula, including Corcovado, Piedras Blancas National Park, and the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve. (The Reserve included the area where the biological corridor was planned.) The safest thing to say about ACOSA's role is that it was ambivalent; the leaders clearly supported the creation of the corridor--and hence blocking the chip mill--but they were hamstrung by government policy, which favored development in the area. The political parties, including the Liberationist administration of the famed Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias, straddled the fence between development and conservation.

In the end, it was other government bodies, the Controlaría (an agency overseeing public works) and the Defensoría (the government ombudsman), that tipped the scales against Ston Forestal.

Scientists were active on both sides of the debate, with the renowned biologist Gerardo Budowski championing Ston Forestal's plans for reforestation--although, in this case, that meant large plantations of gmelina, a fast-growing non-native species. Even Daniel Janzen, mentioned earlier as one of the saviors of Corcovado from the gold miners, at first sided with the reforestation plans, though he later came around to defend the biodiversity corridor idea.

Among quasi-scientific groups, the most important champion of the corridor was the Programa Bosques de Osa (BOSCOSA) of the Fundación Neotropica, which produced a valuable report spelling out the merits of the corridor idea. (Unfortunately, according to van den Hombergh, the authors hid behind a mask of scientific objectivity and would not go public, officially, against Ston Forestal. Still, the BOSCOSA report turned out to be decisive in a way.

The most important scientist in this case was Hans Hartmann of the University Blaise Pascal in France, who was called in to do an in-depth study of the biological impact of a chip mill on the Golfo Dulce. He proved beyond doubt that the impact would be devastating, not least on a coral reef in the middle of the gulf. More generally, the mill would have devastated mangrove forests on the banks of the gulf, all sorts of fish species, marine birds and mammals (including whales and dolphins), reptiles, and so on. The report, "Golfo Dulce 2000," produced by Hartmann and his team, turned out to be *the* decisive scientific report.

The locals who became involved covered a broad range, from AECO's Pro Defensa supporters to fishermen in the gulf, to local farmers and others lulled by the promise of jobs.

And of course, Ston Forestal cannot be left out of the story. In the early days, the company seems to have been committed simply to profit; later, it took on a "green" image, both

in terms of idealistic depictions of the advantages of reforestation over further tree cutting for farms and an explicit company plan of environmental protection.

In the end, Ston Forestal lost and the mill plans were scrapped--leaving the biodiversity corridor still unofficial but a dream for the future. Or rather, Ston was merely slowed down: it was given permission for a mill on the mainland side of the gulf, near Golfito, where its operations were supposed to be less damaging--and would not directly impact the corridor. (At the moment, the chip mill is still not operating, and wood pulp is not being exported from Golfito, though another company is making pencils using Ston Forestal wood.)

What can be said about Earth Charter-type principles and their impact on this struggle [my focus in the already published version of this]?

Clearly the international environmental organizations were motivated by the highest principles--as was the case with AECO, the group of radical activists leading the campaign. On the other hand, Pro Defensa locals supported AECO as much to preserve jobs as to preserve the forest.

Government agencies, from the top down, remained ambivalent -- torn between the promise of development for Costa Rica's poorest region and conservation ideals -- right up to the point when the Controlaría and the Defensoría agencies acted decisively against Ston's plans. Probably ACOSA's local leaders were, at heart, against the chip mill plan, and to that extent supported conservation ideals; but they were hamstrung by government policies. And the two major political parties were, as usual, ambivalent.

The BOSCOSA project authors probably expressed the highest ideals of biodiversity -- and they were backed up by Hartmann's devastatingly negative assessment of the impact on the biodiversity of the gulf. But, perhaps because of the Fundación Neotropica's quasi-governmental status, they remained "scientifically neutral" to the end. And, as mentioned, other scientists took stands on both sides of the development/conservation divide.

In this case, Ston Forestal is perhaps the most intriguing actor. The company was, from the beginning, painted as the "heavy" by the AECO activists and their international environmentalist supporting groups. But Costa Rican officials, supported by scientists, always presented the company and its plans as environment-friendly. And, by the end of the campaign, Ston was promoting itself as a truly green corporation.

As in other cases, Earth Charter-type principles were clearly important, and AECO's defenders might even say they were decisive. But many other actors were involved, and their motives were decidedly mixed.

[Note: The above is taken from my contribution to P. Miller and L. Westra, eds., *Just Ecological Integrity* (2002); I supplement it and draw lessons in the following, from my "Small Steps to Save the Rainforest" (2006, online in my U of Del website):

I referred to the book by Helena van den Hombergh, *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce* (1999). Talking about warriors might suggest that there must have been winners and losers in the campaign to stop Stone Container/Ston Forestal from building a chip mill on the northwestern corner of the Golfo Dulce, directly in the path of the proposed corridor linking Corcovado National Park with Piedras Blancas National Park. At least you might have thought that at least the parties fought to a draw. But that's not what happened. After a several-year campaign; after the intervention of Greenpeace and other international NGOs along with some internationally-recognized scientists; after Costa Rica's national ombudsman had decided in favor of the environmentalists (including local activists); and after a law guaranteeing a healthy environment for all Costa Ricans -- after all of this (and more) you might assume that Ston would simply be declared the loser (whether its managers agreed or not). But that's not what happened. The process continued for a couple of years, and during that time Ston was provided with another plot of land across the Golfo Dulce in a less environmentally sensitive area. The company had to meet new environmental restrictions, but doing so allowed them to demonstrate how environment-friendly the company had become.

Many people concluded that "This is the Costa Rican way. No one should be declared a loser."

Under the heading, "The Conflict as a School for All," Van den Hombergh details at length how all the many parties involved in the campaign against Ston – from international to local activists, from women's groups to local farmers, from international to national NGOs, from scientists to government officials in Costa Rica – all these groups had learned how to deal with a campaign against a powerful multinational corporation. The effort was ongoing, but government functionaries had to learn how to implement the new legal requirements, including better environmental assessments. Even Ston learned, including how to deal with conflict within Costa Rican culture; and the company could now parade itself before the world as a "green" company. (See *Guerreros*, pp. 320-325.)

Of course not everyone was satisfied; indeed, it could be said that no party to the conflict was completely satisfied. But it was "the Tico way."

What lesson for the world do I draw from this? Clearly Costa Rican culture cannot be exported to other parts of the world. But there is much to be said for a democratic process that attempts to be fair to all parties, even those otherwise considered the "heavies" in a conflict.

6

And that brings me to a test case that I think couldn't be more topical.

I once wrote to David Crocker, criticizing his article in *Philosophy & Public Affairs Quarterly* (Winter/Spring 2006), "Ethics of Global Development: Agency, Capability, and Deliberative Democracy -- An Introduction." I offer the gist of the ensuing discussion, including his reply, as an up to the minute test case of my approach.

Given his caution, it was surprising to me to see Crocker [I wrote to him] make a move toward a "second stage" of providing "major" evaluative *concepts and theories* to guide development theories and actions once ethics "has been put on the development agenda" (in the first stage). Crocker expands on, and, he thinks, improves on the theories of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, to provide such a critical theory to be applied in development ethics. And he goes further than Nussbaum, to provide "new directions: deliberative democracy, participation, and [a critique of] globalization" to enhance his development ethic as a guide to development policy.

All of this came at what seemed to me an interesting time, as Oscar Arias was once again taking up the reins of government in Costa Rica, facing a whole series of major policy choices for the future development of that already fairly developed Central American country.

These choices had been outlined in "The Trouble with Costa Rica," by Stephen Kinzer, in *The New York Review of Books,* June 8, 2006. Kinzer, a former *New York Times* bureau chief in Nicaragua in the 1980s, who had visited Costa Rica numerous times, tried to summarize the challenges Arias faced as he began his new administration: "Besides having lost its reputation for honest government, Costa Rica is also losing its longstanding position as a land of social equality. . . . Surging immigration from Nicaragua has strained the labor market and the national budget. . . . Neither the lumbering bureaucracy, the atomized Congress, nor the highly unpopular outgoing president, Abel Pacheco, has managed to confront these challenges."

Kinzer maintains that the only issue that separated Arias from his rival in a razor-thin electoral victory -- after a hand count of all the votes, the election was so close -- was CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement. Arias favored it, and Otton Solis opposed it.

In his inaugural speech on May 8, Arias put the matter this way:

"To turn our backs on economic integration, to return to protectionism, to undervalue foreign investment -- all of these would, day by day, constitute the surest ways to condemn the young people in Costa Rica to unemployment and the country itself to economic stagnation. They would as well constitute the surest way to dissipate the human and institutional capital that the country has accumulated over the past 50 years -- something that has allowed us to integrate ourselves within the world economy to our advantage.

(My translation of the speech as reprinted in Costa Rica's *La Nacion*.)

But Arias, in that speech, didn't ignore Kinzer's other concerns. For example, though in Arias's mind this is related to free trade, Arias called for "Social investment: Beginning today we're going to issue a clarion call for a war on poverty and inequality. We will not remain impassive in the face of the suffering of a million Costa Ricans who live in misery. We won't remain impassive in the face of the social chasms that divide the Costa Rican family. We won't remain impassive in the face of the daily discrimination suffered by the most vulnerable groups in our society, in particular people with disabilities, the elderly, children, and single mothers."

And Arias ended with what he considered the most important issue, one that Kinzer and his sources echo:

"The ethical path: I leave for last my final promise, because it's the most important. Starting today we need a clarion call that is unalterable: to fight for honesty in public affairs.

"This ethical path begins by speaking openly to Costa Ricans, speaking the truth, always telling them what they need to know, even if they don't want to hear it. I didn't come to this point by pandering to any particular group but by defending Costa Rican society as a whole -- as I understand it given my human limitations. I may err in my decisions -- indeed it's clear that I will often do so -- but I will never make any decision except according to the principle of seeking the well being of my people.

"This ethical path begins by fulfilling my campaign promises, and that's the minimum that Costa Ricans can expect if they are going once again to have faith in the political system."

It's this appeal to ethics that I want to focus on, and here is Arias's first mention of it in the speech:

"None of this will be resolved simply by recognizing that neither economic progress nor scientific progress will necessarily advance the ethics of humankind. Ethical advance is not inevitable. We shouldn't wait for it like the passing of a comet. We have to want it and construct it with all our might."

So, to test Crocker's stance as what he has called (same quarterly, Summer 2004) an "insider-outsider cross-cultural communicator" (or, in this case, outsider-insider), I wrote to him, saying we might imagine that Arias had turned for advice on ethical decisionmaking -- whether in the case of CAFTA or any of the other issues vexing Costa Rican life and politics today -- to insiders within Costa Rica, professors Edgar Roy Ramirez and Luis Camacho, and they in turn invoked Crocker as a friendly outsider. This is, in fact, not totally farfetched in Costa Rican culture, and Crocker worked with both of them in establishing the International Development Ethics Association (IDEA).

I suspect that the advice Arias might get from his insiders, professors Roy Ramirez and Camacho, could well be divided, representing different political orientations within Costa Rican politics. But in any case it would be subject to the liabilities and temptations Crocker finds among insiders -- *either* too ready resistance to outside aid *or* too ready acquiescence.

How should Arias (or his political advisers) react to Crocker's development ethic as elaborated in his recent article and the forthcoming book? Would he find this "outsider-insider" friendly communicator helpful, especially in terms of the elaborate development-ethics theory that Crocker has so painstakingly developed? Or would Crocker's general theory more likely come across as just another outsider theory, either to be resisted or too readily accepted?

In one sense, this is simply the old question of how general ethical theories can, or can't, be applied concretely to particular cases. But the question has particular resonance for Crocker's

development ethics because in almost every case (even with globalization, one of his foci), development takes place -- or doesn't, or does so in fits and starts -- in a particular country or region. So the issue here is how successfully Crocker's general theory could be applied in a country like Costa Rica -- especially at this juncture when Arias says he is looking to "construct" a new development ethic for the country.

Crocker replied to my doubts by sending me a selection from his forthcoming book, *Ethics of Global Development: Agency, Capability, and Deliberative Democracy* (2008), where he explicitly addresses my concern over concrete practicalities. As I do, Crocker explicitly invokes Deweyan Pragmatism, and here is the way he responds to the "unrealistic" objection:

"We do know enough . . . to challenge both versions of the realist objection. Some democratic innovations, especially those in Kerala, India, and Brazil, are redistributing both power and opportunities. Moreover, we are learning ways to improve democratic practice so that new institutions more fully approximate the ideal. The ideal is something to guide action and remedy shortcomings, not an impossible dream. Where members of a group are more or less willing to deliberate, they often find institutional designs for improving the quality of deliberation. These devices are most successful when group members are similar and relatively equal, as was the case with Sabina Alkire's three communities. The arrangements, however, are also effective—if there is willingness to deliberate—in overcoming inequality of various sorts. For example, participants in a deliberative exercise may be randomly selected or invited from underrepresented groups. Seats for women or historically discriminated groups are set aside in assemblies. Skilled facilitators fairly distribute chances to participate in deliberative give and take. Agreed upon rules give women, junior members, or those who have not yet spoken the right to participate first. Higher level structures "capacitate" members of lower level groups, monitoring and improving their deliberative skills. Deliberative exercises provide information on the issues to less informed or less educated participants. These arrangements, whether employed in setting up or improving a democratic body and whether used in groups with unequal or equal members, all presuppose that group members are of good will and willing to deliberate. . . ."

[Crocker's selection from his book goes on.]

"To meet the realist objection more adequately [Archon] Fung considers cases where there is both significant unwillingness (and even hostility) to deliberate and inequality among group members. The deliberative democrat seeking to advance the prospects of deliberative democracy in an unjust world may choose nondeliberative methods but only when he (i) initially acts on the rebuttable presumption that those opposing deliberation are sincere, (ii) reasonably exhausts deliberative methods, (iii) limits nondeliberative or nondemocratic means by a principle of proportionality, analogous to a proportionality principle in justification of civil disobedience. The more extreme the hostility to deliberative democracy and the more entrenched are power asymmetries, the more justified are political mobilization and even coercive means, such as political pressure and public shaming. Just as the person engaging in an act of civil disobedience is willing to be arrested and tried, rather than flee the law (because he is protesting one law or policy and not the rule of law), so a deliberative democrat in an unjust world limits how far he goes in pursuing his goal. What Fung has given deliberative democrats is not only a model of deliberative democracy that indicates how unjust and undemocratic structures can be

transformed. He has also provided a compelling 'political ethic that connects the ideal of deliberative democracy to action under highly hostile circumstances.'"

[Crocker here references Archon Fung, "Deliberation before the Revolution: Toward an Ethics of Deliberative Democracy," *Political Theory,* 32, 2 (2005); and, earlier, Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms*, *Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction* (date?).]

Crocker had begun his "development ethics" work in Costa Rica -- he even told me in our e-mail exchanges that he had once met Arias, and found him to be "arrogant" -- and it seems clear to me that his model closely parallels the struggle reported above, against a "nondeliberative" Ston Forestal (even including shaming). It is also clear to me that in Costa Rica many of the "deliberative methods" Crocker and his sources talk about are already in place -- though multinationals like Ston will, as always, resist deliberative democracy.

In the end, we will have to wait and see whether democracy will in fact win out over globalization in Costa Rica. It is an ongoing saga. But I am ready to place my bets on even an arrogant Arias, given the possibility of democratic deliberation, rather than on an equally arrogant radical socialist like Chavez.

[In a report in *La Nacion* Tuesday March 25, 2008, it seems clear that the Costa Rican people have sided with Arias. Whether that can be translated into a legislative victory or not has not yet been decided. Nor is it clear that, if Arias ends up winning, the new Costa Rican laws can mitigate the worst impacts of CAFTA that Solis and his followers feared.]

7

This is more of an epilogue than a proper conclusion. And I begin with . . .

A summary:

I started this essay with a reference to Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia as the current embodiments of a Marxist challenge to globalization. I concluded that I could wish them well without being convinced that they are likely to succeed in their struggles against globalization in their countries -- let alone worldwide. Marxism, whether in their form, in the form of the leftist agitators against globalization in cities throughout the world in the last decade or so, or in the neo-Marxist theorizing of an Andrew Feenberg -- in whatever form, it seems as useful to me as any utopian ideal; but it does not seem to offer the concrete means adequate to the challenge. Some radicals say that it is wrong to focus on the realistic possibility of success: we should never give up in a revolutionary struggle, but continue doggedly to work for a worldwide socialist (preferably a Marxist) revolution. I think, instead, that we need to do what we can do now.

My reaction to Albert Borgmann's as a moderate response to the challenge of globalization is simple: he should join me in activism if he wants do anything effective in terms of limiting the ideology that leads to the pursuit of globalization; he needs to move beyond preaching, to move on to doing something (without abandoning his philosophical stance). Or, put differently, where Borgmann laments the lack of activism today (except in the limited "focal" groups he acknowledges), I think what we need to do is increase it.

With respect to Martha Nussbaum's "capabilities" approach, I argued against it only in the sense that she has not -- at least not yet -- gotten practical enough. She seems to me to be taking the too-common academic attitude among philosophers in the USA that activism to implement a theory belongs to others; it's not a properly "philosophical" task. I say that activism -- the service dimension of professional philosophizing -- should be joined seamlessly with theorizing. Teaching, research, service -- all should be combined, linking thought with action, following the example of John Dewey and George Mead.

What that comes down to, I said in the next chapter, is a "social responsibility" argument: a demonstration of the urgency of social problems in our technological world combined with the opportunity that exists to do something about these urgent problems. By philosophers, by other professionals, by all working alongside citizen activists already trying to solve the problems (typically at a local level). Guidelines and a framework are likely to be useful only if we recognize that each real-world victory over the globalizers is going to be radically different, peculiar to its own region. In principle, there may be a general framework for ethical sustainability, for a just international society, as Nussbaum and Amartya Sen and David Crocker seem to be saying. But in practice there are only local democratic attempts to bring about some approximation of it.

I next turned to one such successful effort in Costa Rica in the 1990s -- the containing (at least partial, and possibly only temporary) of a multinational corporation, Stone Container Corporation, that would have destroyed a magnificent tropical forest to make paper. I asked at the end of that chapter: What lesson for the world can we draw from this? Clearly Costa Rican culture cannot be exported to other parts of the world. But there is much to be said for a democratic process that attempts to be fair to all parties, even those otherwise considered to be the opponents of the "democratic deliberation" that Crocker says is the best way to implement anti-globalization efforts.

Crocker (I said at the end of the last chapter) had begun his "development ethics" work in Costa Rica -- he even told me in our e-mail exchanges that he had once met Arias, and found him to be "arrogant" -- and it seems clear to me that his model closely parallels the struggle against the Stone subsidiary in Costa Rica, against a "non-deliberative" Ston Forestal. Crocker even includes public shaming as a last-ditch means. And it seems clear to me that in Costa Rica many of the "deliberative methods" Crocker and his sources talk about are already in place -- though multinationals like Stone will, as always, resist deliberative democracy. But in the end, we will have to wait and see whether democracy will in fact win out over globalization in Costa Rica.

A conclusion for the essay as a whole?

My conclusion is a play on the traditional refrain, "Think globally, act locally"; and what I maintain is that to *think* effectively about confronting globalization, we must *act* locally. It is *possible* that many democratic victories at the local level can add up to some control of globalization in the not-too-long run; but we cannot wait for that.

My closing comment is this: local activism is the only real choice any proposal has, even the most radical, like Chavez or Morales or the anti-globalization crusaders. And the chances are slim to none if those leading the anti-globalization struggle don't get activist in the Dewey-Mead sense at *many* local levels.

Part III

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN A GLOBAL WORLD

[SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVISM, THE CENTER FOR ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING Note: This article, including an appendix, was published in Problemy Ekorozwoju/Problems of Sustainable Development (2009) 4:1, pp.15-32.*]*

INTRODUCTION

In my second set of activist essays, 1999-2009, I concluded with a look at the appropriate kind of education for a broadened approach to ethics in engineering. (I never wrote a similar essay for the other aspects of a broadened professional ethics, but I trusted the reader there to see the applicability of the approach in fields other than engineering.) Here I conclude with a similar essay on what I take to be the best kind of education of the next generation – not just of philosophy students but others as well – taking up the banner of the fight for a sustainable ethic in an era of globalization.

The article, as I said in introducing it to the readers of the Polish journal, Problems of Sustainability, *builds on, and incorporates, an earlier one, in which I used four examples of doctoral theses at the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy to show the advantages of experiential learning in dealing with real-world problems of sustainable development. The purpose of the present paper is to expand that message, offering the Center as a model of the way a sustainable development program could be patterned, not only within the United States but worldwide. What this paper adds is nine more examples of doctoral theses, based on or eventuating in, real-world solutions in locales throughout the world, where experiential learning is once again the key.*

I wrote a short book, *Small Steps to Save the Rainforest: A Plea for Experiential Learning,* focused on the rainforests of Costa Rica. (It is available on my website at the University of Delaware: www.udel.edu/Philosophy/sites/pd.) There I say that the path that I have chosen is one described by another philosopher, David Crocker of the University of Maryland, who has also spent time in Costa Rica. In the quarterly newsletter of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy (Summer 2004), where Crocker now does his research and writing, he makes a case for what he calls "insider-outsider cross-cultural communicators" (Crocker 2004): non-resident outsiders with appropriate views and attitudes who are willing to work with like-minded people in a country or region to bring about change for the better. They don't need to move to the country, but they must make a commitment to work, with those who live in the region, in activist efforts to bring about positive change. What I add to Crocker's view is that they can't come with the attitude that they have the answers; they must be open-minded and willing to learn.

In this essay, I broaden that plea, looking at environmental activism in many parts of the world where I have contacts or where the University of Delaware's Center for Energy and Environmental Policy – my home base for such efforts -- has contacts. And that covers many parts of the world indeed.

My idea is to continue to look at the advantages that *experiential learning* offers, in particular its advantages by contrast with traditional lecture-based classroom teaching. As one would expect, there is plenty of classroom instruction in an academic unit such as CEEP, some of which is enlivened with the use of various media and computer-based instruction. But part of the guiding philosophy of CEEP from its inception has been to do as much learning as possible in the field, onsite where the problems are that are to be investigated -- with the hope of discovering concrete solutions for real-world problems. No student ends up graduating from one of the CEEP-related graduate programs without some work in the field.

And this focus has tended to draw students, from all over the world, who, often, have been involved in activist efforts to improve life in their home countries, whether the USA (students from all parts of the country) or elsewhere.

Someone might ask what advantage there is in broadcasting to a larger audience the lessons learned over the years in this one program in one institution -- particularly broadcasting it to a European audience. My reason for feeling that it is important is related to my philosophy, derived in large part from the educational philosophy of John Dewey and the American Pragmatists, for whom there is really only one way to learn -- the experiential way. Traditional modes of classroom teaching, as well as the aimless discussional approach that is often, *erroneously*, lumped together with Dewey's approach (under the misleading label of "progressive education"), are opposite ends of an educational spectrum -- polar opposites. Dewey opposed both extremes, the one because it stifles the natural desire to learn not only of the young but of lifelong learners who want to connect their learning to their work life or other adult experiences; the other because it is by nature aimless, it has no sure sense of where it should be leading the learner, or what goals it offers the would-be learner. Experiential learning, on the other hand, ties learning to real-life experiences; it takes advantage of learners' desire for help in getting where they instinctively want to go. It's not that no one learns anything in educational settings

using traditional methods or the method of open discussion; it's that if they do so it's in spite of or going against the grain of these methods.

I do not mean to suggest that the guiding philosophy of CEEP, from its beginnings, was explicitly Deweyan or "progressive." But for various reasons, John Byrne, the founder of the program, and I and the others associated with CEEP from the outset -- all of us were convinced that education *must* be related to problems in the real world; that all graduates of the program should have hands-on experience trying to solve real problems of the real world outside academia.

Though this guiding philosophy distinguished the program from almost all others with which we were familiar at the time, there seems to me to be ample reason to try to move more traditional energy and environmental programs in this direction. In my view, environmental programs especially (and energy programs in academia share many features with environmental programs) should go beyond academic interests, to actually *do something* to improve the environment; not just theorize about it. And that means more than merely offering better policies for environmental protection. It also means *moving toward implementing those policies.*

In this essay I argue, by examples, that *experiential learning* is the *uniquely valuable* component of an environmental policy program that aims to go in that direction.

I

In 1995, I wrote an essay along these lines for a conference, "Sustainable Development and Disequilibrium," in Barcelona, Spain. (See Xercavins, 1996.) It includes short sketches of the doctoral theses -- and the research on which they were based -- of Subhod Wagle, Shih Jung Hsu, Bo Shen, and Cesar Cuello. I repeat that essay here to show what I have in mind. My focus at the conference (Durbin, 1996) was on graduate education in sustainability, and I think the approach I espoused there fits my broader focus here.

For over a hundred years, graduate education in general but particularly graduate education in philosophy has been subjected to criticism. Among American Pragmatist philosophers, it was William James who first attacked American graduate education, at its very beginning (James, 1903). For almost all the philosophers in that tradition, graduate work in philosophy has seemed problematic. Among James, Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, only Mead had a significant number of graduate students, and those were in sociology; and, though several of them achieved prominence in the field, none generated a school to match the so-called "Chicago School" of sociology that was so strongly influenced by Mead (see Bulmer, 1984).

All of this makes sense if we accept Ralph Sleeper's (1986) characterization of Dewey's philosophy (shared in all its main lines by the other two), namely, that this philosophy is "fundamentally meliorist." Sleeper contrasts Dewey's approach with two other philosophers sometimes called "pragmatic" in some sense, though definitely not activist: Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger, both of whom have had legions of graduate students follow in their footsteps. Here is what Sleeper says:

"Although Wittgenstein and Heidegger share something of Dewey's concern for the release of philosophy from the constraints of tradition, they share little or nothing of Dewey's concern with the application of philosophy once released. They have none of Dewey's concern regarding the practice of philosophy in social and political criticism" (p. 206).

A more recent follower of Dewey, Richard Rorty (1998), aimed a Pragmatist's attack specifically against current graduate education in the United States, first in philosophy departments, and more recently in literature departments. To contextualize his concerns about recent developments in literature departments, Rorty first talks about philosophy and philosophy graduate programs:

"Analytic philosophy still attracts first-rate minds, but most of those minds are busy solving problems which no nonphilosopher recognizes as problems: problems which hook up with nothing outside the discipline" (p. 129).

Then he adds:

"As philosophy became analytic, the reading habits of aspiring graduate students changed in a way that parallels recent changes in the habits of graduate students of literature. Fewer old books were read, and more recent articles" (p. 130).

And he concludes:

"Romance, genius, charisma, . . . prophets . . . have been out of style in anglophone philosophy for several generations. I doubt that they will ever come back into fashion, just as I doubt that American sociology departments will ever again be . . . centers of social activism" (p. 131).

Bruce Kuklick (1977), chronicler of the professionalization of American philosophy, maintains that after the rise of philosophical professionalism the role of public intellectuals came largely to be scorned by academic philosophers. And they have imparted that scorn to graduate students ever since. Any exceptions have tended to be clustered in departments that have included Marxists -- for example, Boston University when Robert S. Cohen and Marx Wartofsky were the most important influences there.

Although my graduate training was in Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy of science, rather than the customary analytical approach, I was as academically driven as anyone else at the time. But two things happened to keep me from a narrow academic path.

First, I chose for my dissertation a topic on the logic of discovery in science (later published as Durbin, 1968), and research on it led me to the writings of Mead on the social nature of the scientific method. At first, I thought of a Meadian approach as complementary to the social version of a Thomistic philosophy of science that I was developing, but after a sort of philosophical conversion I began to see myself as falling within the American Pragmatist tradition. Coincidentally, I began -- after graduating -- to focus on problems associated with applications of science and engineering, exemplified at their worst in the Vietnam War; and this

moved me even further away from a narrow philosophy of science toward what I have focused on ever since, philosophy of technology.

The second fortunate happenstance was that I moved to the University of Delaware precisely at the time when what was supposed to be a high-powered program in philosophy of science folded. As the only philosopher of science left, I was given complete freedom to focus on applied science and engineering in the land of DuPont, "the chemical capital of the world." The failure of the proposed doctoral program in philosophy of science, and of any other Ph.D. program at Delaware, pretty much kept me from doing any graduate training for awhile. That did not bother me as I got involved in establishing the Society for Philosophy and Technology, where several of my colleagues welcomed my Pragmatist approach.

When, after a few years, I was able to start mentoring graduate students, it was in the University's Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, where activism on the part of graduate students was encouraged rather than discouraged as it would have been in a philosophy department.

In that setting my focus has been primarily on graduate students from the less-developed world. All of them have had a deep and abiding interest in issues of sustainable development.

Here I highlight -- and give credit to -- four of these doctoral students. They have managed admirably to integrate sustainability concepts within the research projects that formed the basis of their doctoral dissertations.

Two things are notable about their research. In each, a definition *and application* of notions of sustainability is central. Also, in each case, democratic *activism* is an integral part of the application process -- which is what ties their work to my own philosophical emphasis.

This seems to me to be a direct way of saying something concrete -- and, I hope, valuable -- in response to the central question that I addressed at Barcelona, and that I address here. Namely, how can sustainability concerns be integrated into graduate programs, whether in environmental ethics, science and technology studies, or science/technology/society programs?

Here are my examples:

1. Subodh Wagle's thesis, "Toward a Praxis of Sustainable and Empowered Livelihoods" (1996), focuses on his native India, and in particular on Maharashtra Province, where Bombay is located. The theoretical issue that Wagle faces is that, as traditional development theory has come to be challenged, the theoretical challenges themselves have come under attack -- including attacks by Wagle himself. What he says we need is only partly theoretical: we need a challenge based on what he calls "the grassroots standpoint," activist efforts of villagers in his part of India both resisting classical development efforts and attempting to devise their own alternatives for village-level sustainable development. His examples are resistance both to the building of a dam on the Narmada River and to the efforts of the Enron Development Corporation to construct a large-scale thermal power plant.

Wagle has either worked in these resistance-plus-alternatives efforts or been in close contact with the activists who have. His thesis is openly activist in orientation, but it has a strong intellectual focus. Toward the end of the thesis, Wagle says:

"We now come to the third objective of this dissertation -- an examination of efforts of grassroots groups to evolve development alternatives. Evolution of grassroots development alternatives essentially means translating the grassroots standpoint and its underlying theory into the design of a practicable alternative to the current conventional development model" (Wagle, 1996, p. 316).

Although the effort has met with many difficulties, and it is not clear that resistance will ultimately prevail -- let alone that practicable alternatives will be found -- Wagle and his colleagues persist. And he ends his dissertation with words of hope from Mohandas K. Gandhi:

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be any use to him."

2. Shih Jung Hsu's "Environmental Protest, the Authoritarian State, and Civil Society: The Case of Taiwan" (1995) is my second example.

As Hsu recognizes, Taiwan has commonly been touted as an economic miracle because of its rapid economic growth over the last three decades. But the Taiwanese state has been willing to sacrifice the natural environment for its spectacular economic growth. In recent years, popular protest has emerged in different communities to challenge the state's single-minded economic development policy. A new civil society emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, pressing the government to take action against widespread environmental pollution.

Hsu's dissertation focuses on petrochemical-based pollution in one metropolitan area, Kaohsiung. It examines three polluted communities as case studies of collective action. The method is in-depth interviews. Hsu identifies three major factors as explaining the emergence of Taiwan's environmental movements:

"(1) a collective sense of violation by the state-industry pro-growth alliance with a corresponding lack of belief in mainstream politics as an effective form of redress; (2) a strengthening of community identity and its use to mobilize residents; and (3) political opportunities created by the state's relaxation of authoritarian controls."

In Taiwan, activism is still not easy. But after graduation, Hsu returned to Taiwan to begin a professorship, and he has continued to work with the activists he studied.

3. Bo Shen's "Sustainable Energy for the Rural Developing World: The Potential for Renewable Energy" (1998) is my third example. The situation in China, of course, is different from that in Taiwan. And even if Shen had wanted to promote activism there, he would have had to keep in mind Tiananmen Square -- an experience that affected him and his family personally. But Shen's intentions were different anyway.

What Shen does in his dissertation is demonstrate two things. First, he summarizes the data to support the following claim:

"Although China has made significant progress in alleviating rural poverty and improving rural life in past decades, it still has over 50 million rural people below the country's official poverty line — less than US $55 a year."

And he shows how the poverty of rural villagers leads to overuse of wood fuel, and then to the use of dung and crop residues for their basic energy needs — with devastating impacts on the rural environment. His primary example is the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

Shen's second point is that extending urban electrical production through power lines to rural areas is no solution. It would be extremely costly, and preliminary efforts have mostly failed. Besides, expanding energy production in China, for urban areas, is contributing significantly to the build-up of greenhouse gases worldwide, and will contribute still more as production increases.

Shen's conclusion is that what Inner Mongolia and other rural areas need is renewable energy resources. He focuses on photovoltaics, wind systems, and especially PV/wind hybrids. And the bulk of the dissertation is a demonstration that such systems can supply these areas' energy needs, and that resistance to the effort can be overcome.

Even before Shen's dissertation was finalized, his work had been praised by William Wallace of the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Lab. Staff of that program visited Inner Mongolia, to see the hybrid systems at work, and recommended that President Clinton should comment on these developments in his historic visit to China in 1998.

Shen recognizes that this move toward sustainability is possible only with support from the central government, and is neither a grassroots initiative nor a result of citizen activism. But this may be all that is possible in China at the present time. And his point is that the effort can contribute to sustainable development.

4. Cesar Cuello Nieto's "Sustainable Development in Theory and Practice: A Costa Rican Case Study" (1997), is my final example. Elsewhere I have talked about how he went to work, after he finished his dissertation, protecting the rainforests of the Osa Peninsula from depradations.

Costa Rica is often taken to be a shining example among Latin American countries of how to go about sustainable development. And the focus of Cuello's dissertation was on contrasting public statements of the Costa Rican government (along with supporting documents in the private sector) with what is actually going on, especially in the Osa Peninsula. When Cuello did most of his research, he was working for the Fundacion Neotropica, one of the leading internationally-funded environmental non-governmental agencies in Costa Rica. Osa is just one object of their efforts.

What Cuello and the Fundacion have encountered is a reality very different from what the sustainability rhetoric of governmental statements would suggest. But they have also found that continuing deforestation and other environmental ills can be dealt with through educational and activist measures. Development of the Osa Peninsula, including eco-tourism and similar ventures, may never fully match the ideal of sustainability as spelled out in official documents (let alone as modeled in Cuello's ideal/holistic scheme). But the right kind of citizen action can make a difference, and Cuello is continuing his efforts. (He is now doing so in his native Dominican Republic.)

All four examples demonstrate that it is possible, in a technology teaching and research program that focuses on sustainability, to incorporate these concerns within theoretically rigorous research projects that also manage to *accomplish* something in terms of sustainable outcomes.

With one of these students, Cuello, I have argued elsewhere (Cuello Nieto and Durbin, 1993) that "sustainability" and "sustainable development," as slogans, may be almost bereft of meaningful content. Each user of the slogans gives them a meaning in line with his or her own intellectual or political interests. Nonetheless, the examples discussed here -- and the overall research thrust of the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy at the University of Delaware -- seem to me to demonstrate that, when a researcher defines sustainability appropriately, it is possible to use sustainability concepts in a way that can bring about *real* social reform -- the tailoring of development to the real needs of Indian villagers as expressed in local grassroots movements; environmental protest movements (and a concomitant strengthening of civil liberties and civil society) in Taiwan; renewable energy policies for rural China as that vast country moves toward rapid development (with the potential for enormous and worldwide ecological damage because of China's large population); and genuine protection of rainforests in Costa Rica (without sacrificing local citizens' interests).

Sustainability may run the risk of becoming an empty slogan. But the right kind of sustainability-related graduate education, *if joined with real-world progressive activism*, can have good consequences for our troubled world.

I think that my experience in this program is generalizable. Graduate programs in engineering, for example, or biomedical ethics, environmental ethics, applied ethics generally, even in philosophy of technology (in the few cases where such programs exist) *could*, if managed appropriately, train both competent scholars and activists dedicated to the solution of urgent technosocial problems. The problems will certainly never be solved by graduate student efforts alone, but appropriately humble professors can contribute their support to the graduate students and to related activist groups that might possibly be able to do something about these problems.

II

The above is a repetition, almost verbatim, of what I said in 1995 -- and which can already be read by anyone who has access to that paper (Durbin 1996). What I try to do in the remainder of this paper is broaden my report on the approach at the Center for Energy and Environmental

Policy by reporting on additional doctoral theses with which I have been involved, along with the research *and activism* that led to or followed from those theses.

Some more examples:

There have been projects in many countries. Carolyn Bitzer's project, "Multidimensional Gender Equity in Sustainable Development" (2003), involving teenage girls in an Indian village, is one of the closest to my model in *Small Steps to Save the Rainforest.* What Bitzer studied was the impact on local families of better water storage in dry areas. With a background in soil sciences, and more particularly water resource issues, Bitzer travelled to India to study a promising water conservation project, where one would assume that everyone would benefit. What she found, using an interview technique and a translator, was that, because of cultural and familial customs, teenage girls ended up not better but worse off. They had always been married off to families in other villages, but now these families were in villages that had not benefited from the new technology; and they continued, as before, to have no say in what happened to them.

Bitzer is an excellent example of an "outsider-insider cross-cultural communicator," a variation on David Crocker's theme. But, lamentably, it seems to me unlikely that her study will bring about any changes in that village's centuries-old culture.

A third Indian case (counting Subodh Wagle's, in my first set, above) was Chandra Govindarajalu's study, "Toward Sustainable Energy Development in the Indian Power Sector: A Critique of Fifty Years of Power Development in India and an Analysis of Sustainable Energy Alternatives" (1997). Among other things, it looked at an effort to block a contract that had, probably through bribes, given Enron (the energy bad actor in recent years) an electricity distribution monopoly in one province of India that would have allowed the company to charge rates far beyond the possibility of normal citizens to pay. The aim was to benefit large companies, not ordinary citizens.

As far as I know, the monopoly was blocked, but it is not clear to me that Govindrarajalu's study had an impact on the decision.

It was particularly fascinating for me to work with Bosire Maragia on Kenya and the legal status of women in relation to environmental preservation there. One would have thought, Maragia argued in his thesis, "Gender, Tradition and Sustainability: Evaluating the Applicability of Indigenous Knowledge in Post-Colonial Societies: The Example of Kenya" (2004), that a Western-style environmental movement -- tailored somewhat along the lines of a Western eco-feminism -- would be beneficial to everyone in Kenya, with its massive environmental problems. But Maragia's detailed legal-historical analysis showed convincingly that any return to the past would in fact work to the disadvantage of Kenyan women, and thereby to the environment, because of historical inequities in land distribution. Going back to a romanticized past would be a recipe for disaster.

I could not, in any sense, be considered either an insider-outsider or a co-activist in his project. And Maragia's own efforts, though they have the potential to lead to legal changes in

Kenya, were principally scholarly -- though in the future he could return there to work with, say, a United Nations agency to help change the legal situation.

CEEP has hosted quite a few African graduate students, beginning very early in the history of the program. Felix Edoho's study of traditional food sources in Nigeria, "Technology Relocation and Structural Dependency: The Nigerian Experience with the Petroleum Industry" (1991), is an early example. One of his main points was that technological changes -- including new kinds of fertilizer-based food production -- had made it nearly impossible to return to traditional crops that could have fed an ever larger population with little environmental damage.

Lawrence Agbemabiese's more recent case study, "Toward a Political Economy of Sustainable Energy in Ghana: A Paradigm Analysis of Energy-Development Relations from the Eleventh Century to the Present" (2002), is another interesting example. It focused in part on dams and electric power in Ghana. There one main issue was the lasting impact of a decision to build a dam and use one electricity source when it was clear that the other option would have been more sustainable.

However, although Edoho and Agbemabiese based their work on their personal knowledge of their countries -- and contacts there -- neither of them returned to Africa to get involved in activism on their issues.

Jesse Manuta's case study, "Negotiating the Political Economy of Dispossession and Commodification: Reclaiming and Regenerating the Ancestral Domains of the Lumad of Mindanao, Southern Philippines" (2001), focused on how "progress" threatens a mountain forest that is sacred to indigenous peoples there; and it has great potential, since he is definitely an insider willing to work with the right kind of outsiders, and he did return to the Philippines to continue his efforts to mitigate serious environmental problems there.

William Smith's case study, "The Human Right to Water: From Theories of Global Neocolonial Commodification to Low Cost, Low Tech and Participatory Alternative Practice in Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia" (2003), shows -- using new techniques such as GIS surveying -- how careless pollution on watersheds in the South Pacific island of Chuuk (sometimes referred to as Truck) could lead to disaster. He demonstrates that practices there are rapidly polluting the limited water resources available on the atoll.

Smith was an outsider-insider if there ever was one; he visited the island several times and also became thoroughly familiar with the American governmental agents in Guam. Unfortunately, his current faculty position in the USA may not allow him to follow up on his thesis in any activist way. But he is very likely to visit his old friends on Chuuk again, to see what is happening there.

The first two CEEP graduate students with whom I had the privilege of working, Cecilia Martinez and Jong-dall Kim, support my thesis in a different way.

Cecilia Martinez's thesis, "Energy, Technics and Postindustrial Society: The Political Economy of Inequity" (1990), had a strong undertone emphasizing Native American --

especially women's -- rights. She had grown up on Taos Pueblo in New Mexico, but arrived at CEEP (at that point it was still the Center for Energy Policy in the College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy) by way of Stanford University. Martinez would unquestionably be an insider-outsider, in Crocker's terms, when dealing with Native American issues.

Nuclear power was a major issue in the early days of the Center -- especially opposition to nuclear power as an energy source, specifically in terms of the claims of its defenders that it was environmentally friendly. One problem among many, in Native American areas of the American West, was uranium mining and the terrible "mine tailings" left behind. Over the years, that has been just one among many Native American environmental issues with which Martinez has dealt. Though she was not involved in those efforts while in graduate school, it is clear that her experiences at CEEP led directly to these efforts later.

In South Korea, where imitation of the American economy and American technology in the wake of the Korean War were "progressing" at full speed, the problem came to be seen as a wholesale "nuclear economy" -- with the same environmental catastrophes, including the problem of nuclear waste disposal, as in the USA. Kim's thesis, "The Political Economy of Energy-Corporate-Urban Integration in South Korea" (1991), did not relate to that specific issue; and what he has worked on more than anything else, since his return to a professorship in his native country, is "solar cities."

Martinez's thesis was the more theoretical, but its conclusion came down firmly on the side of Native American rights, particularly those of women. Kim's focused on the large industrial complexes, owned by powerful traditional Korean families, that were driving the South Korean economy; and he wrote it at a time when popular political resistance was beginning to stir in the country.

Neither of the two, however, went, with fresh doctorate in hand, directly into political activism. That came later. Martinez is now Senior Research Adviser to the Women's Environmental Institute, working on Native American rights (and she is also back working at CEEP).

> Kim, in his turn, hosted the International Solar Cities Congress 2004. (See his "The Daegu Declaration: 1st International Solar Cities Congress, Daegu, South Korea, November 16, 2004" (Kim 2006).
>
> The solar cities project is interesting because it combines an almost Deweyan range of actors, from politicians to normal citizen activists, a wide variety of technical experts, and so on; also because its aim is to bring about change for the better within a relatively short time frame.

These are student projects. But the director of CEEP, John Byrne, has led by example as well as encouraging the graduate students in their projects. And the important thing to note, in the present context, is that from the beginnings of the Center for Energy Policy, now CEEP, the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, *all* Center graduate students -- no matter how theoretical the leanings with which they entered -- are required to collaborate on concrete

projects. These have ranged from projects for the local power company (which came to recognize the value of the Center's work), or the State of Delaware -- see final example, below -- all the way up to the Intergovernmental Task Force on Climate Change. Byrne, as a member of one of their committees, was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (alongside Al Gore) in 2007. He regularly involves graduate students in the international meetings of that important project.

CONCLUSION

I believe that these examples, along with those summarized in my earlier article, amply demonstrate the value of experiential learning not just as attached to, but at the very heart of graduate education at the University of Delaware's Center for Energy and Environmental Policy. In my opinion, it is a model not only for the USA but for the world.

I add an appendix to give further support. The approach can have immediate benefits for the local community in which such a graduate program functions -- in this case the State of Delaware.

APPENDIX

At the local, State of Delaware level, John Byrne was the driving force behind an exemplary governmental initiative. This is the way the University of Delaware's public affairs office reported on the program (June 7, 2007):

"Green" plan aims to cut energy costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Delaware

A proposed statewide “green” initiative developed in part by John Byrne, Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and director of UD's Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, and seven of his graduate students and a postdoctoral fellow, has the potential to cut Delaware's carbon dioxide emissions to 2003 levels and save average households approximately $1,000 a year in energy costs.

Known as the Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU), the plan would establish a state-supervised nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Delaware residents and businesses conserve energy and expand their reliance on renewable energy sources through funds initially seeded by a $30 million bond. Citigroup has expressed its view that the program is financeable and has offered to underwrite the bond. The Delaware Senate voted 19-1 on May 10 in favor of the legislation. [It was later passed in the House of Representatives and signed into law by Governor Ruthann Minner.]

According to Byrne, who, along with State Senator Harris B. McDowell, co-chairs the 14-member SEU Task Force, the plan was initiated last spring after electricity and gasoline prices rose sharply.

“We thought about what would be an approach that could address the needs of Delaware residents and businesses, while also making improvements in our environment,” Byrne said, “and what we focused on were five basic tools.”

Those five tools -- helping low- and moderate-income families make their homes more energy efficient; helping consumers and businesses switch to energy-efficient appliances; helping residents and businesses create “greener” home and building designs; helping households upgrade to high-efficiency “green” vehicles, such as hybrid cars; and, through the use of renewable energy options, such as solar systems, helping residents and businesses boost their reliance on customer-sited/customer-generated sustainable energy sources -- could have far-reaching effects, Byrne said, and would offer Delawareans better options than they now have.

UD environmental policy graduate student Jason Houck, who has worked for the past year on the Senate Energy Transit Committee with McDowell, said that the SEU draws on initiatives that have proved successful in other states and that the task force that did the state-by-state comparative research drew from several ideas already in place elsewhere in the nation.

“There are a lot of states in the Northeast that at the policy level are working to create changes that are necessary to shift toward better environmental protection and clean energy, and Delaware has not been among the leaders,” Houck said. “But it's important to begin somewhere, and what we're trying to do with the SEU is to follow the leads of other states. In the past decade, Senator McDowell has spearheaded many efforts with energy policy, and now that we have a policy in place, it's easier to build momentum.”

Rebecca Walker, an environmental policy graduate student who worked as a researcher for the SEU task force, said that in the course of preparing materials for the proposal, she'd examined measures other states had successfully implemented that seemed promising for Delaware, as well.

“I think the model we have now combines some of the best features from other states,” Walker, a former resident of environmentally progressive Oregon, said. “We looked at what adjustments had been made and in what direction they'd been moving, and that really helped create a portrait of what programs are out there that will work for our state.”

The SEU task force, Byrne said, “conceived of an organization that would come in and provide assistance to a citizen who wanted to upgrade to a more energy-efficient appliance or to a more energy-efficient building or home.”

For example, in the case of a resident's upgrading to more efficient household appliances (which due to design principles typically cost more than standard models), Byrne said the SEU would pay the difference and then ask the consumer to share 33 percent of the energy savings with the nonprofit for the next 3-5 years.

The SEU's assistance with weatherization for low- and moderate-income families and for “green” building design for new buildings, Byrne said, would follow a similar premise. “When you upgrade a building or build a new one, it costs more to do it with green building principles than with conventional building practices,” he said. “So, again, the SEU would come in and cover the difference in cost, and again the consumer would share the energy savings with the SEU.”

Byrne added that for the purposes of both weatherization and green building design, a web site would be created specifically for consumers seeking SEU contractors.

A focus on 'renewables'

The fourth initiative -- providing Delawareans with customer-sited renewable energy options, such as solar systems, is perhaps the most ambitious component of the SEU in that it would harness renewable energy.

Because of [local electric company] Delmarva Power's current practice of buying renewable energy credits (RECs) to meet its legal requirement to generate a portion of its power from renewables, Byrne explained, electricity derived from the sun and other renewable energy sources can pay Delawareans as much as 25 cents per kilowatt hour compared to 15 cents per kilowatt hour consumers now pay for electricity derived from conventional fossil fuels.

“With the initiative, the SEU would pay for 50 percent of the renewable energy system's initial cost,” Byrne said. “Then for every kilowatt hour that you the customer generate, the electric company would give you 25 cents for the REC, so you'd get a revenue flow from having the system.” The SEU, he added, would then take 25 percent of that REC value.

In this approach, there are no new taxes, no hikes in electricity or other energy prices, and no need to pay for a government bureaucracy, while Delaware gains all of the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable energy.

As fossil fuels become less readily available and prices continue to rise, Byrne said he believes the financial -- and environmental -- rewards of sustainable energy have far-reaching potential. “There's a growing consensus that energy efficiency and renewables are our best economic and environmental choice,” he said.

Federally certified Energy Star programs and products help save the environment and save consumers money by using less energy through advanced design or construction.

While the SEU was waiting for approval, some Delaware residents have lobbied hard for other “green” initiatives, such as Newark's Green Energy Incentive, enacted January 1 of 2007, and have given unqualified support to SEU.

Steven Hegedus, an associate scientist at UD's Institute for Energy Conversion (IEC) and CEEP, is one University colleague and Delaware resident who has taken a particular interest in conservation measures.

“I think the SEU is a really valuable idea,” Hegedus, who recently had a solar system installed in his home, said. “I've been working with solar energy for 25 years at the IEC and talking about it and lecturing about it, so I figured I should put my money where my mouth is. Our moderate-sized solar system now provides 75 percent of our electricity and our monthly electricity bill has been between $6 and $8, compared to [former bills of] $40-$60.”

As satisfying as the dollar savings are, however, Hegedus was quick to add that his decision to install the system was influenced to a large degree by his desire to conserve energy. For even with the 50 percent rebate he received under Newark's Green Energy Incentive and the Federal tax credit of $2,000, the system and its installation cost him $8,000.

"Most days we are making much more electricity than we use," Hegedus said, "so we're putting it out into the grid, and that's a little bit less electricity that the utility company has to make and transmit upstate from the Indian River plant. But just putting renewable energy on a house or in a utility district really only makes sense if it's coupled with conservation measures. You have to reduce your intake and then be smart about how you're getting your energy."

To address this, Hegedus also stopped using a clothes dryer years ago, wrapped his hot water tank with insulation and switched to all-fluorescent lighting.

Now living with meters on his kitchen wall that reflect exactly how much electricity he and his family are using -- and generating -- Hegedus said that he's become a much more conscious consumer.

"By generating the electricity where it's being used -- either in a residence or on a commercial rooftop or in a school -- you are saving the transmission and distribution of that electricity from a distant power plant," Hegedus said. "That saves energy from being lost in transmission and saves wear and tear on the distribution and transmission system, which is getting to be fairly antiquated and fragile. When you start making your own electricity and you have a meter that shows how much you're using and how much you're making, you also become very aware of your energy usage, because it's staring you in the face. That makes you a very aware consumer."

The bottom line

With the SEU in place, Byrne said he anticipates that consumers tired of paying high energy bills and eager for change will be a driving force behind new ideas.

"The SEU has the potential to become much bigger," Byrne said. "All kinds of new ideas are going to come forward -- new ideas where we would find different ways to reduce our energy use and reduce our pollution."

So many new ideas, Byrne added, that Citigroup, when presented with the initial bond proposal, said that the amount was too small. "We had originally written the bond for $23 million," Byrne said, "and Citigroup said it should be increased to $30 million at the minimum, because they think there are so many new ideas like this that would work, and they believe that people are going to participate very strongly."

"Another very important thing that will happen out of the SEU is its environmental benefits," Byrne emphasized, "because when we reduce our energy use, we cut back on the greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming."

As a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a science body advising the United Nations on the dangers of global warming, Byrne said that the SEU has the potential, during its first seven years in place, to cut carbon dioxide emissions in Delaware back to 2003 levels. “That's a big change for us to actually reduce reducing our emissions,” he said.

Article by Becca Hutchinson [see UpDate, the University's news publication: www.udel.edu/update]

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