

Confucius, Keynes and Christ

The role and opportunity for ethics and ethical systems as a driver for climate-friendly behavior change

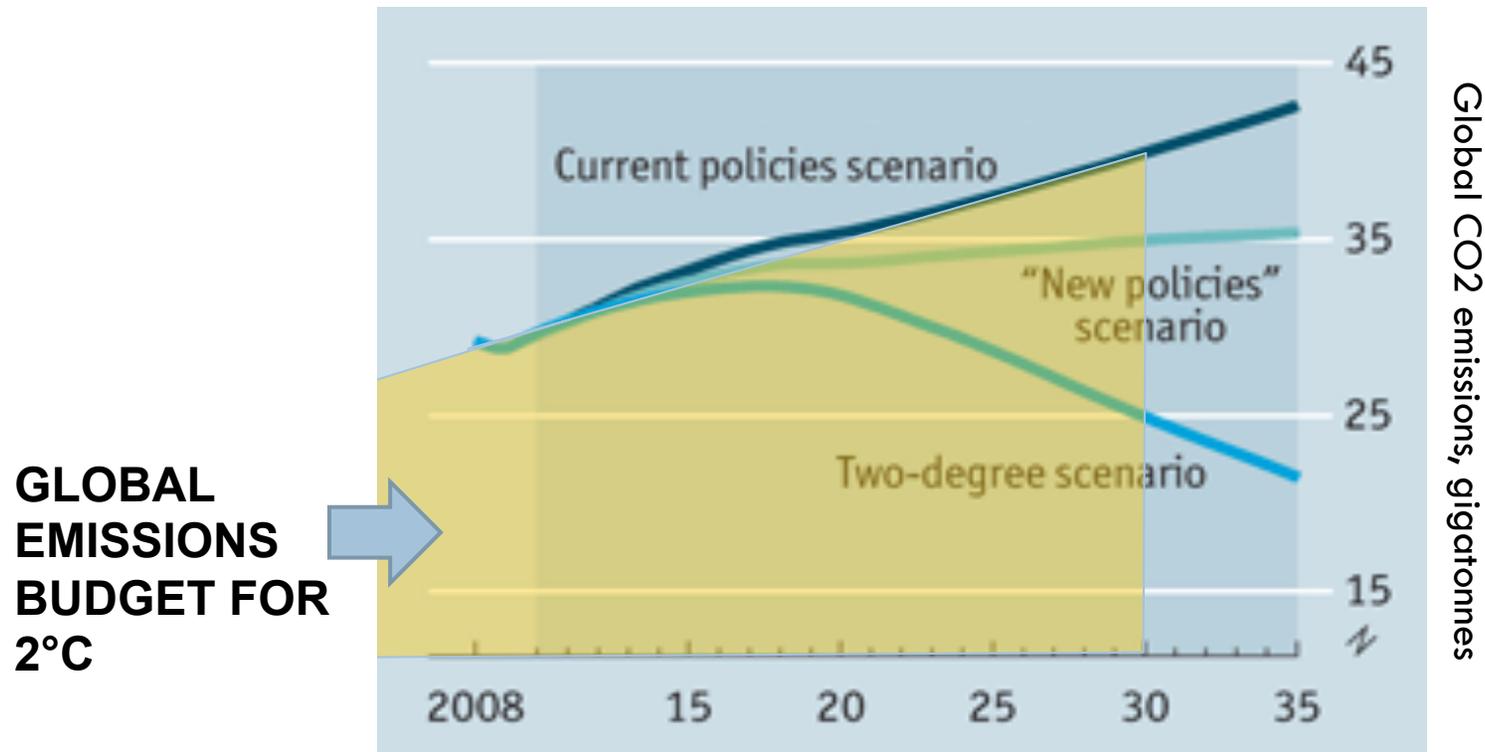
Max Wei

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- **Cumulative** emissions are key
- “We have to get to **net zero emissions** as quickly as possible.”

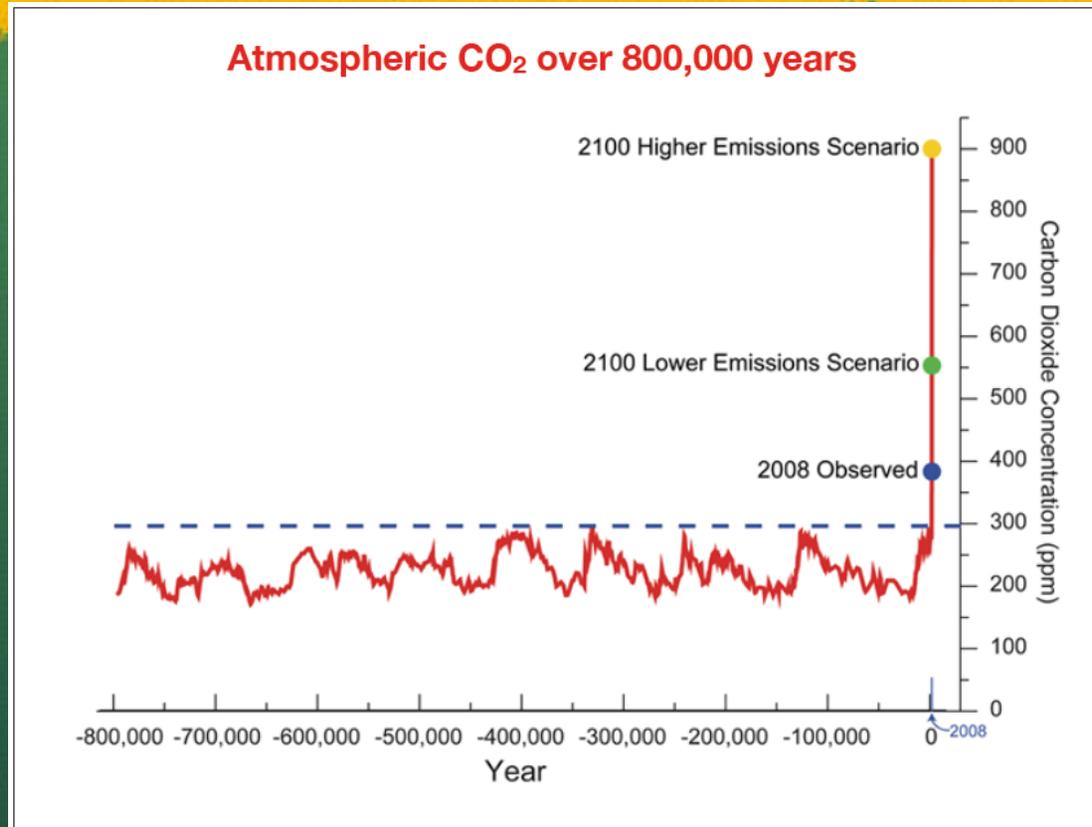
Dan Schrag, Harvard, LBNL seminar 11/9/12

Global CO2 emissions by year



**Carbon Budget of 500 trillion tons to stay within 2 degrees C Scenario.
On current path, this is exceeded in less than twenty years.**

Carbon Dioxide Concentration



Rate: 100X higher than past

350ppm 500,000 yr high; 500ppm 35Ma high

People and the planet

Summary and recommendations
April 2012



THE ROYAL SOCIETY

Royal Society Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The international community must bring the 1.3 billion people living on less than \$1.25 per day out of absolute poverty...

Recommendation 2

The most developed and the emerging economies **must stabilize and then reduce material consumption levels** through: dramatic improvements in resource use efficiency, including: reducing waste; investment in sustainable resources, technologies and infrastructures; and systematically decoupling economic activity from environmental impact.

Efficiency

Waste reduction

Investment in sust. resources

Technology

Infrastructure

....

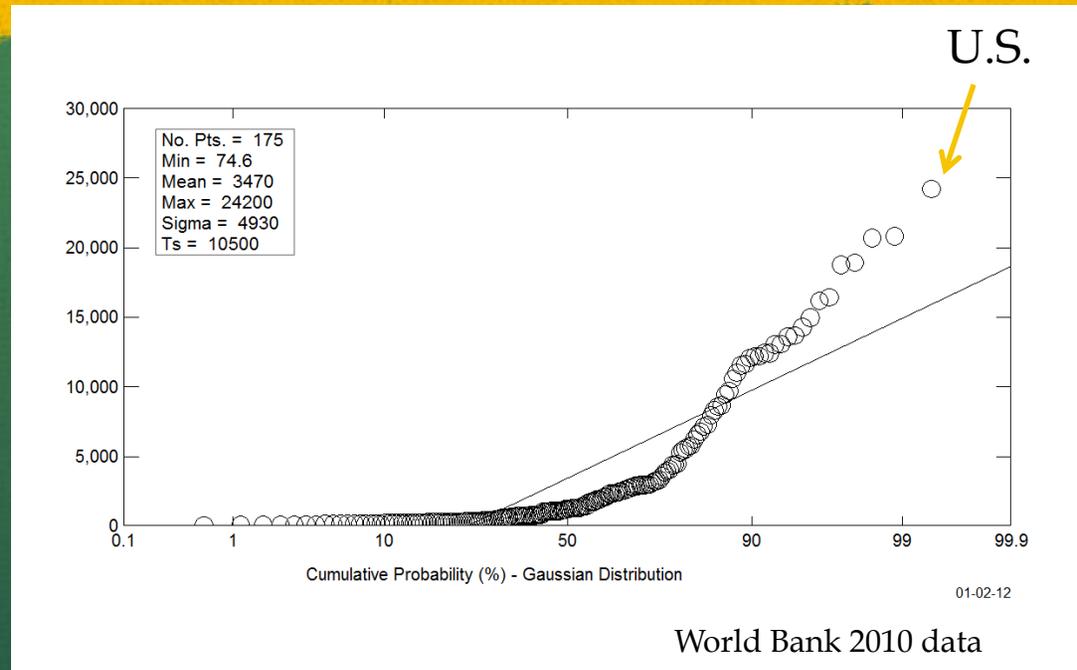
Values?

Problem [for Climate]: Society's Figure of Merit is Output and Consumption

- Much of output is carbon intensive.
- **“Metrics matter... if we have the wrong metrics we will strive for the wrong things” - Joseph Stiglitz**
- Problems with GDP metric (Gross Domestic Product) are well documented:
 - Environmental externalities, carbon impacts, ecological damages missing.
 - Credits inefficiency and waste e.g. U.S. health care and financial industry
 - GDP does not consider “natural capital.”
 - ...

We're #1 -- Consumption

Household
final
Consumption
expenditure
in 2000
(constant
2000 US\$)



Household consumption: India \$290; China \$439; U.S. \$24,207

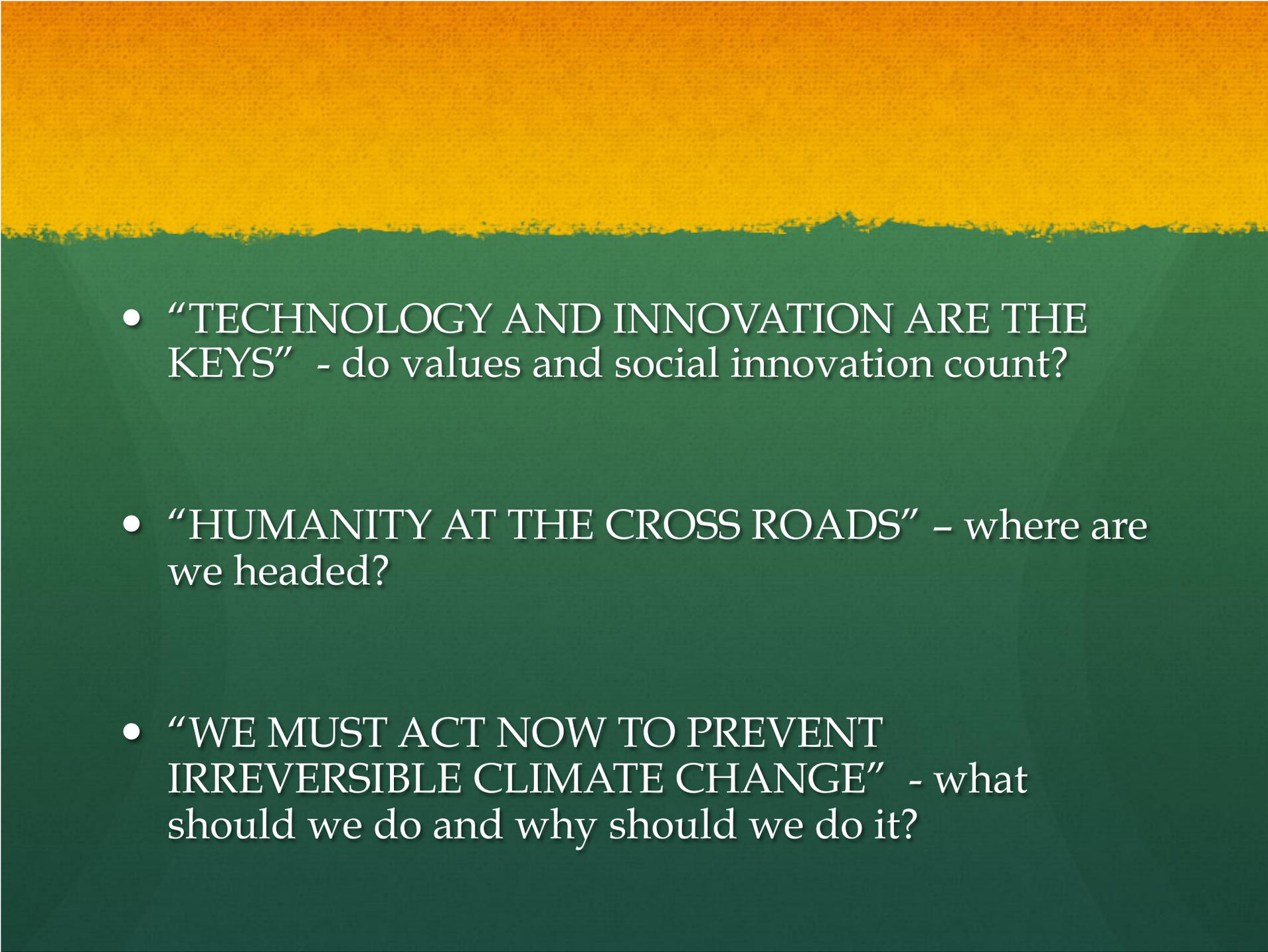
We're #1 -- Income inequality and Social problems



Wilkinson RG, Pickett KE 2009, Ann Rev Sociol 35:493-511

Consider...

- “TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ARE THE KEYS”
- “HUMANITY AT THE CROSS ROADS”
- “WE MUST ACT NOW TO PREVENT IRREVERSIBLE CLIMATE CHANGE”

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- “TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ARE THE KEYS” - do values and social innovation count?
 - “HUMANITY AT THE CROSS ROADS” - where are we headed?
 - “WE MUST ACT NOW TO PREVENT IRREVERSIBLE CLIMATE CHANGE” - what should we do and why should we do it?

Impacting key decisions

A small set of key decisions for individuals
can make a large carbon impact

Home Size and Housing Type

Home Location

Size of family

Type of car, etc.

What set of factors shape these decisions?

Three levels for (energy related) behavior

ACTION	VMT, Travel choices	Consumption, Services, Home energy use	Food Purchases, Consumption
DECISION	Home location Vehicle Type	Home type	Eating habits, Family size, etc
ROOT	Socio-political economic factors Cultural: Social-normative, Values Religious Philosophical-ethical		

Building demand for density



vs.



- Example: higher density housing mandates
- More walkable, healthier and closer to services

Ethical systems in Western Philosophy

- Libertarian – freedom, liberty
- Utilitarian – calculations based on greatest good for the greatest number
- “Virtue Based” Ethics
 - Note that these may be in conflict with each other
 - Note these are all anthropocentric

“Virtue-Based” Ethics

I) Ideals of the good-life

- Ideals of self-restraint, moderation
- Beyond work: volunteering, hobbies,... (Keynes)

II) Meeting intrinsic and spiritual needs (Christian ethics)

- Inspiration and joy
- Friendship, community

III) Ideal that there is something larger than yourself

- Good citizenship feeds better government, harmonious society (Aristotle, Confucius)

The Role for Ethics in reducing carbon

- Ethical obligation to future generations e.g. “we must not cause serious harm to future generations”
- Ethical duty to preserve the natural environment
 - Stewardship, secular or faith-based
 - E.g. animals, habitats, hunting grounds
- “Virtue-based” Ethics

Some Key Differences

- Ethical obligation to future generations e.g. “we must not cause serious harm to future generations”
- Ethical duty to preserve the natural environment.
- **“Virtue-based” Ethics:**
 - Extrinsic, Distant in space and time, and predicated on accepting climate change and global warming.
 - Intrinsic, Immediate, and independent of climate change and global warming

What has primacy? End state and path?

	<i>Primacy</i>	<i>End state</i>	<i>Path</i>	<i>Motivation for followers</i>
Keynes	? Live wisely, agreeable and well?	Less work from greater productivity; More Leisure	Capitalism as a necessary but imperfect institution	na
Christ	Serve God	Heaven / Hell	Follow me, faith and trust in Christ ...	Intrinsic
Confucius	Achieve Humanity or Ren	Sagehood; Secular "Sainthood"	Personal morality, Reciprocity, Sincerity, ...	Intrinsic
Today	??	??	??	??

J.M. Keynes (1931)

“Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren”:

- Much higher productivity by 2030 will enable us to work far less
- Key themes:
 - Plenty instead of scarcity
 - Leisure instead of work
 - “Post-profit” world: capitalism as a necessary “evil” to a greater end.
- Keynes missed the following
 - Insatiability aspect of greater wealth and consumption
 - Wealth is a societal marker for success and thus engenders ongoing striving.

Christ

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, **it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.** Matthew 19:23-24

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, **he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.** Matthew 16:24

Gratitude, service, love

for example I. Thessalonians 5:16-18;
Hebrews 13:16; 1 Corinthians 13:13

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Not "What would Jesus drive, but would he drive?"

Confucius, 550 BC

- Perfection of man as ultimate goal in life: sagehood.
- Humanity is key – what is it that makes us human?
 - Reciprocity, kindness, sincerity
 - Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself
- Self-regulation of the individual the root of a harmonious society
- Education is key

Mencius, Book 1, Chapter 1

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

THE SATURDAY ESSAY | November 9, 2012, 7:05 p.m. ET

China's New Boss

Xi Jinping has charisma, a common touch and a beloved pop-star wife. Can he reform a Communist elite accustomed to the fruits of corruption?

Article

Video

Interactive Graphics

Stock Quotes

Comments

By JEREMY PAGE, BOB DAVIS and TOM ORLIK



Enlarge Image

Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

Xi Jinping has already charmed some of his hosts overseas. Above, Mr. Xi kicks a Gaelic football during a February visit to Ireland.

Where is a new leader of China to turn for advice? Xi Jinping, who takes the country's top post on Thursday, knows better than to look to Mao, the revered founder of the Communist regime who vowed never to take "the capitalist road." Tell that to the hundreds of millions of Chinese who, in the past three decades, have risen from poverty thanks to market-oriented reforms.

Mr. Xi might instead dig deeper into Chinese history, to the austere ancient wisdom of Mencius, the Confucian scholar who advocated the "mandate of heaven" principle that an unjust Emperor could be overthrown. "Why talk of profit?" Mencius asks a ruler in his most famous work. If a king seeks profit over

9 November 2012

Where is a new leader of China to turn for advice? Xi Jinping knows better than to look to Mao. ...might instead dig deeper ...to the austere ancient wisdom of Mencius, the Confucian scholar...

"Why talk of profit?" Mencius asks a ruler.

"If a king seeks profit over humanity and duty, so will his lords and common people,"

"Then everyone high and low will be scrambling for profit, and the nation will be in danger."

Recent authors, similar themes

THEMES

Move from Growth and GDP focus
→ ideals of the good-life and good society; alternative metrics for well-being

Hyper consumption → Social capital and less material focus

Me → We

RECENT BOOKS

How much is Enough, R. Skidelsky and E. Skidelsky;

Justice, M. Sandel

Happiness, R. Layard;

The Spirit Level, K. Pickett, R.G. Wilkinson

Policy Examples

Consumption and luxury taxes?

Advertising limits for Children?

- Sweden, Norway prohibit domestic advertising that targets children.

Greater emphasis in K-12 education on traditional ethical systems?

- Religious traditions
- Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, etc

Summary

- Ethics/ethical systems can be an important contributor to behavior and decision-making.
- Themes contained within major philosophical and religious traditions quite consistent with “low carbon” living” and material restraint.
 - Inspire and appeal to people’s intrinsic values
- A greater role for ethics in education?
- A call for more debate and discussion on these topics.



Thank you.

Questions?

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New Economic Models -- Gross National Happiness NY Times 4/17/12

The New York Times

Dot Earth

ANDREW REVKIN

APRIL 17, 2012, 9:21 AM

Young People Tire of Old Economic Models

By *ANDREW C. REVKIN*

At the recent United Nations conference on "gross national happiness," a scattering of young others pondered ways to gauge progress that go beyond traditional monetary measures. One 9 Billion. He received one of the most enthusiastic rounds of applause when he let it slip th

Also on hand was Michael Sandmel, who is graduating this year from New York University and included briefings from economic luminaries including Jeffrey Sachs and the economics No

It's great to see new paradigm slowly making its way into the mainstream. I think this four years ago, I would have expected to reference the [Easterlin Happiness Paradox](#) or

But he added that his generation was not taking a transition for granted, pointing to the stu