

The Human Predicament: Walking Backwards Into The Future.

by
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In this article, Dr. Németh has written his diagnosis of the global sickness, many of the reasons for it and the challenges it presents. The article presents his opinions on a large number of related topics. Many readers may share his views. It is likely that some will challenge them. On our part we challenge readers to submit their critical comments in the form of a response to this paper for publication in the September issue and on our Web Site. John McRuer's critique of the Whole Economy paper, in this issue, is an excellent example of what we seek. Ed.

Predicament: Past, Present And Future

The end of the current century and the second millennium is rapidly approaching. In countries where only the Roman calendar is used, this causes boundless excitement. In others, it may be just another year drawing to an end. In intellectuals the excitement translates into expression of concern, reflections on the past, missed opportunities and genuine fear of the future, if profound changes are not brought about in the way mankind manages its own affairs and halts ravaging the planet.

One thousand years ago the global carrying capacity was much less burdensome than it is today, or will be in another century. Concern about global carrying capacity is part of the human predicament we don't seem to be able to break. A new century, or millennium will not magically resolve the conflicts between national/ethnic units of our own species and between our species and the rest of the ecosystem. The awesomely beautiful Blue Planet, viewed from a spaceship is in fact ill. Seriously ill. Its condition continues to deteriorate while mankind, the witless perpetrator, appears to remain indifferent, inactive and fatalistic.

Perhaps deep down we feel that our strange nature and behaviour is responsible for making our history an endless sequence of conflicts, blunders and catastrophe. Even with the dizzying scientific developments, if not used with foresight, disasters are only delayed. We may sometimes feel the need for change, but often resign to helplessness. In seeking

changes, we tend to overlook the critical factors which prevent us from resolving seemingly endless conflicts and the foreseeable collapse of the ecosystem.

Changes accomplished so far in re-establishing a more sustainable balance between the ecosystem and the global economic activities are small and incremental. Historically evolved economic and military systems and their supporting administrations are opposing changes, because it threatens the temporary security of the status quo. To cure this paralysis will need the assurance of

unbiased diagnosis, monitoring world events and predicting opportunities. The persisting hiatus between developing and developed economies and the uneven distribution of resources will demand security and an orderly protection of achievements from destructive outbreaks of emotionally motivated, but economically derived political upheavals.

Preparedness for an orderly transition, driven by rational and realistic values will be a key future challenge. It will require an entirely new strategy which incorporates the problems of overpopulation and protection of vital global resources.

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The Burden Of The Past

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global life support system. Without radical changes in our bearings, the past will hauntingly become our future. The human race is burdened by an enormous inertia, which even with political motivation is rather reluctant to accept the rational need for change in the prevailing anthropocentric mindset.

Finding remedies for a better future will require a determination and acceptance of past wrongs. Professor Taylor's study, reprinted in the May 1997 CACOR *Proceedings* about Global Transformation in connection with the third millennium, is commendable, because it provides a graphic summary of the past and the "progress"(?) mankind has made through major periods of transformation in the past. It also contains some poignant recommendations for changing our behaviour. However, it does not examine the human capacity and the disturbing split between our emotional and intellectual makeup which historically often chose a path to disaster.

The key phrase must be changing human behaviour. Little is known of past efforts successfully tackling this challenge. The future will not be easy either. However, inactivity will only entrench a fatalistic drift toward a doomed future. There are two parts to the quest. One is the symptoms, shedding light on our behaviour and the other the probable and speculative causes for such behaviour symptoms. Ultimately, we have to test the possibilities for collective behaviour modification within the existing constraints of the human predicament.

We are always warned that time is running out and we must act. However, we lack both the power to go beyond immediate commitments and also lack a process which could take us out of the conventional routine and move us to another plane of problem solving and prevention. This will only be possible if economic policies and activities will be integrated with such critical elements of global problems as overpopulation and resource overuse and with sharp focus on long term consequences. Unfortunately, in humans, logic, intellect and emotion seldom work in harmony.

The Obstacles Within Us

We have acquired a reasonable knowledge of what is wrong in our world. With the help of concerned intellectuals we have even identified intelligent options for remedies. We are blessed with seemingly unlimited intellectual powers which moved us from the caves to landing on the Moon, from tribal rain-dance to accurate weather forecasting, from magic potions to organ transplant and the ability to probe the secrets of deep space.

Yet in an ironic contradiction, we are still functioning in the most primitive and barbaric way in dealing with each other and the ecosystem. Therein lies an irreconcilable contradiction in our behaviour, making us victims of greed, power hunger and the collective murderous drive to settle our conflicts. Recognizing the mystery of this contradiction may lead to a better definition of a control mechanism for behaviour modification.

To introduce this problem, I draw on an interesting book by Arthur Koestler entitled: *Janus – A Summing Up*. Janus, as students of Roman history recall, was a minor deity, with two faces in charge of doors and passage ways. The title may be more appropriate than it seems at first glance, because we, humans, are also of two faces emotional and intellectual. Two-facedness of humans is not an arbitrary choice we made, but the unalterable fact of a less than perfect evolutionary process of our species.

The Overlooked Culprit

Koestler is known to be a controversial author with a chequered political background and similarly unorthodox views on a broad range of subjects. In *Janus*, he turns his attention to the problems, contradictions and inherent conflicts of the human mind and within this framework offers plausible explanations for our tragic history and challenges the justification to designate us as *Homo Sapiens*.

We in CACOR, like others, often ask ourselves how can a species as intelligent as ours remain capable of the most callous cruelty and sustained brutality to each other, and continue the most mindless, dangerous abuse of our universe and its resources. Humans are more complex than their intellectual accomplishments would lead us to believe. This aspect exists in parallel with an unchanging history of destruction. Conventional diagnosis for this contradiction usually fails, because it does not take into account the possibility that such a glorified end product of an evolutionary process, as *Homo Sapiens* may well be the victim of serious evolutionary irregularities, i.e. serious evolutionary design faults. That evolution can be erratic, is richly demonstrated by the countless discontinued species and other misfit species still found among cohabitants of the globe. According to Koestler, the symptoms of generic human mental disorders can be demonstrated by:

- the ubiquitous rites of human sacrifice, present from prehistory to pre-Columbian civilizations; from the South Sea Islands to the Scandinavian bogs, practised by Etruscans as well as Aztecs two thousand years later and is glorified in the Bible by Abraham's love(?) for his God, in the willingness to sacrifice his son. The phenomenon is universal and indicates a definite paranoid element in the human mind,

- the persistent pursuit of endless warfare within the human species. No other species have anything like it on the scale humans practice it. Individually we are more benign and rational, but collectively we can be turned into raging mobs, or armies of doom. The practice goes well beyond the call of hunger, or the preservation of the species. Motives can range from sexual jealousy to quibbles about metaphysical doctrine. Permanent warfare is a central feature of the human condition, intimately joined with torture which can take the form from crucifixion to electric shocks and chemical alteration of the mind.
- the evidence of a paranoid split between rational thinking and irrational belief in the human mind. This is well demonstrated in the chronic quasi-schizophrenic split between **reason and emotion**; between rational faculties and irrational beliefs,
- the incredible contrast between the human genius in conquering **nature** (and destroying it in the process) and the mind boggling ineptitude to manage its affairs/conflicts locally, nationally and internationally, is evident in individual and collective confrontations. Science and technology grew along an exponential curve, starting about 2000 years ago by some inquisitive Greeks embarking on a scientific adventure that provided us with the ability to probe deep space. The emotional curve shows a steady state, representing the dismal inability of humans to maintain harmonious coexistence within the family, within nations and with other species cohabiting the globe with us.

All the above symptoms are interconnected. Human sacrifice is a subset of the schizophrenic split between reason and emotion. The variance in growth curves for technological and moral achievements is a consequence of it.

The Causes Of Our Predicament

Some biologists attempt to draw parallels between species of the animal world and our own species by extending the mechanics of animal behaviour to human activities. They failed to realize that the demonstrated similarities represent only a lower order, non-specific aspect of human behaviour which we, in fact, share with rats, dogs and geese. However, human pathology is exclusive to humans, therefore, according to Koestler, there is no point in seeking similarities and explanations outside our own species. Koestler outlines a diagnostic approach for the symptoms of the human predicament which includes:

- an explosive growth of the human Neocortex and

its insufficient control of the older reptilian and lower mammal-brain structure with which it coexists,

- an extremely long period of helplessness of the newborn and an uncritical submissiveness to authority resulting from its conditioning effect,
- the twofold curse of the language as a rabble-rouser and builder of ethnic barriers,
- a mind-splitting fear of death.

The Causes Of The Symptoms

Looking for the causes of the symptoms of our peculiar behaviour, Koestler turns to, and believes to be quite well served by some speculative hypotheses of neuropsychology, anthropology and psychology. The theory he uses was formulated by Papez and McLaren as the Theory of Emotions. It is based on the fundamental differences in both anatomy and functions between the archaic structures of the brain, shared with reptiles and lower mammals e.g. horses, and the specifically human Neocortex, the product of a relatively recent accelerated evolutionary process. The inexplicable rapid evolution of the Neocortex in humans was, in fact, compared to a quasi-cancerous growth. In any case, it is definitely an evolutionary irregularity and it is believed to be the cause of frequently erupting acute conflicts within the human brain.

The deep ancestral structures of the brain are the centre for instinctive and emotional behaviour. The Neocortex "endowed man with language, logic and symbolic thought". This in essence defines our ultimate predicament. The result of this situation is that our nervous system is operated by three distinct brain structures which coexist and function without central co-ordination. It can be likened to biological computers, each with its peculiar form of subjectivity, its own intelligence, its own sense of time and space, memory and motor function.

The "old" brain composed of the reptilian and paleo-mammalian, form the Limbic System, which remains untouched by evolution. The "new" brain, the Neocortex, on the other hand has expanded and evolved at explosive speed. Such disproportionate evolution in the brain certainly did not create a harmonious brain functioning. The neural pathways connecting the Neocortex with the archaic brain structures have not evolved adequately, thus guaranteeing endless conflicts in the human mind between emotions and intellect.

The inevitable result of this ill co-ordinated brain functioning is a mentally unbalanced species in which emotions and intellect, faith and reason are constantly in conflict. The validity of this hypothesis is eminently demonstrated by the symptoms recorded in the history of

the human race, which justifies the use of a somewhat vulgarized expression: evolution has left a few loose screws between the Neocortex and the Hypothalamus.

Another aspect of the human predicament is due, in no small part, to the long, restrictive confinement we are subjected to after birth, when the helpless human offspring is totally dependent on its parents. A pointed, valid summation is that brainwashing starts at the cradle. Such early preconditioning makes us humans in general, willing recipients of ready-made beliefs, resulting in the zeal with which we can become fervent Christian crusaders, fervent Moslem warriors engaged in holy wars, Roundheads, or Cavaliers, or blind believers in Hitlerism, Stalinism, Maoism as well as devotees of countless other sects. This mass affinity for following unquestioningly an idea, a faith, or a political trend is the reason that in history, mass crimes dominate, while individual crimes are negligible in comparison. All this is driven by an excess human capacity for fanatical devotion.

Language also plays an important role in making us not only different, but deadlier than other species. Brainwashing is impossible without the use of language. By no means can the observation that throughout history language was man's deadliest weapon be considered an overstatement. We are extremely susceptible to being hypnotized by slogans just as we are susceptible to infectious diseases.

In the epidemics of political upheavals, the individual mind is swept aside and the group mind takes over, as passions are ignited. Although, the individual may, or may not be a committed killer, under the spell of an ordered group it can readily be transformed into one. The sole catalyst that promotes this is the hypnotic power of language in both spoken and written form. Dictators use this as well as prophets and poets. The irony of the human predicament is that without words there could be no poetry, but would be no wars either.

The role of the fear of death is possibly the least appreciated cause of the symptoms of erratic human behaviour. Symbolically, it expresses the "divided house" syndrome of the mind and the conflict between faith and reason. Although, death being a natural phenomenon readily accepted by the intellect, it is forcefully rejected by the instinct and emotion department.

Faith, being the older and more powerful part in the human neurological structure, it is also the more powerful when conflict arises and thus, is capable of forcing the reasoning part of the brain to enter into elaborate rationalisation in refusing to accept terminal

mortality. The old brain simply cannot accept the paradox of consciousness emerging from a prenatal void and terminating in post-mortem darkness, or nothingness. Therefore, the emotional brain has created and rationalized a world of ghosts, angels, gods and devils. The ultimate manifestation of this unreal world was brought about by the compulsory worship, appeasement and placating the various figures of the spirit world, often by nothing less than human sacrifice, holy wars and burning heretics.

The fear of death syndrome also presents us with another remarkable irony. The absolute refusal to believe in death and refusing to accept the non-existence of an after life gave us the pyramids, attesting to the coexistence of creativity and pathology in humans.

This is, more or less, the essence of a practical diagnosis of man's schizophysiology. Accepting or rejecting it outright may depend on individual and institutionalized views and convictions. However, rejecting it outright may not be sensible, especially, since its validity is irrefutably demonstrated in our daily lives just as much as in the collective, historical human behaviour patterns. Knowledge of our schizophysiology may provide us with an entirely new appreciation and view point of the hitherto hazy impressions we had of dehumanized and globalized conflicts. The tool this provides us with can adjust the view of our past, but more significantly, it can add a realistic approach to preparing for the future and putting in place remedial processes which are designed to bring about changes and improvements.

Knowing what our problems are can help us manage our actions better and make our planning more effective. The large problems are still awaiting solutions, but knowing the problems better, can help finding our ways to overcome them more effectively. Unless we include our split-brain functioning, in our planning, we shall go on forever talking in terms of empty phrases about technological innovation, peace, universal brotherhood, and control of social ills. At the same time we continue to be subjected to ever increasing populations, devouring irreplaceable resources at an ever increasing rate and resort to deal with conflicts in endless warfare and blood sacrifice. Hardly an intelligent approach to satisfy our craving for a better millennium.

While science and technology have consistently provided solutions to a broad range of problems for 2000 years and their benefits are expected to increase in the future, we must keep in mind that part of our brain will often not cooperate with the rational part. We also have to be aware that unless science is applied with foresight and prevention of undesirable effects, it can badly backfire.

Technology, The Misunderstood Panacea

Within the complex and emotionally unstable history of mankind we always look at the scientific achievements with great pride and as the cure for all ills. No doubt, the progress in the last two thousand years is truly astonishing, but it also had some nasty long term side effects. We have ignored in the long continuum, of scientific technological benefits the boomerang effect which, sometimes hits back with vengeance.

For example, the first major shift in social evolution was the change-over from a gathering, hunting/fishing lifestyle to the introduction of **agriculture**, and within it, the use of fertilizers, creating a major jump in productivity. Food surpluses, and luxury items appeared, followed by industrial developments, trade and unnoticed, steadily increasing populations, slavery, greed and wars, for the acquisition and protection of wealth and the urge to dominate and to possess power. By the end of the XIX-th century the large scale industrial production of **chemical fertilizers** created a quantum leap in agricultural production, again with the inevitable increase in population and the corresponding increase in demand for a host of goods and services. To illustrate: the population of England increased from 2.1 million in 1430 to 4.1 million in 1690. Nowadays, populations can double in decades with the consequent increases in demand for food, industrial products and social services.

However, this is only part of the negative impact. The real tragedy is continually increased **land exploitation** and chemical saturation causing desertification and poisoning of the land and waters. The boomerang, indeed, hits with vengeance in gradually and irreversibly diminishing food production. So the improvement in agricultural technology brought about by the use of fertilizers at two distant historical periods was first a great advancement which gradually turned to large-scale disaster.

Advances in **medical science** offer similar patterns. The response of medical science to such epidemics as cholera, TB, the plague and others was a relatively short term relief. Now we have strains of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and viruses, that defy medication. New drugs will have a period of usefulness, then nature will again respond with still tougher and more resistant diseases. The initial success of advances in medical science in controlling diseases also ensured hefty population increases and the inevitable increases in demands.

The **history of fire** has its own boomerang effect. Cooked food improved the taste but fire also allowed humans to leave the stone age behind and enter the age of metals, producing it in greater and greater variety and alloys for tools and weapons. High temperature metallurgy made the production of very effective mass-killing modern weapons possible. Two World Wars in this century alone, demonstrates the misuse of pyrometallurgy in the hands of an emotionally unbalanced species turning the blessing of fire into means of self destruction.

The **discovery of wheels** dates back to about 1700 BC. Historians tell us that it was brought to Egypt by the Hyksos people a mysterious warrior race. Here, the wheels were already used for war. Practically nothing compares to the importance of discovery of the wheel. Without it we would not have any technology known today. However, with the benefits it has brought, it also made it possible to refine and make warfare more effective in terms of destruction. The air pollution due to transportation is only one example. But it is by no means the fault of the wheel or the fire. It is the human brain, misconstrued as it is, always finds a way to turn almost anything to disaster to satisfy the schizoid nature of this nervous system.

The **genetic evolution of language**, spoken and written, was soured by institutionalizing intellectual control, censorship, book burnings and demagoguery. The ruling classes felt threatened by the power of language by some of the thoughts expressed. Thus, language began to equal the power of the sword and used in combination it became twice as deadly. Religions used this combination with destructive efficiency. Zwingly died in battle fought with the Catholic cantons, Calvin created a reign of terror in Geneva well ahead of Stalin. Luther was urging the landowners to destroy the murderous hordes of peasants who threatened their wealth. Misuse of language is not exclusive to leaders of Christian faiths. Religious fanaticism is alive and well and seemingly increasing in our very age. Religions, the custodians of peace, harmony, love and kindness quite willingly used and are still using language to incite hate, intolerance and conflicts.

With all the scientific knowledge and technology at our disposal, we even attack the very base of our existence, the ecosystem. Without consideration for any other species, or even future generations of our own species, we continue the wasteful exploitation of resources poisoning the air, water and soil with the production of all the goods science and technological innovation made possible and to add insult to injury, we choke everything with the inevitable waste resulting from it.

Let us make no mistake, we feel guilty. At least some of

us do. But the number of the concerned compared to the ignorant, indifferent, or the callously manipulative, for irrational profits and power, is negligibly small. Politicians use language to appease the concerned, and mislead the public at large. At first glance it may not be as deadly as past uses, shown above, but in a more hidden way, it can amount to the same, and perhaps even more dangerous effect, because of the scale of damage it can bring.

The alarm is often sounded with the slogan, that the existence of the human race is in danger. One cannot, but feel that this implies that the human race is acting with divine approval and consequently it is acceptable, whatever it commits against its own species and against the ecosystem, because its existence is and will be guaranteed by some miraculous intervention. Nobody has so far dared to elaborate on this fallacy. Our continued presence is only a function of our own misbehaviour just as much as the existence of other species, we have already sent into extinction, was.

Our behaviour as a species makes us global macroparasites, the product of an evolutionary blunder. If continued unchanged, we may have already signed our very own genetic death sentence. Given our inglorious past and present performance, and our split-brain schizophysis, it is interesting to speculate what our options are going to be for the much awaited century, or millennium?

Constants And Variables

The most persistent constant of the past, and possibly the root cause of a host of related ills, is the relentless growth of global population. International Institutions will continue to carry on as ineffectively as ever before, but with diminishing funds. The core problem is simple. So is the theoretical solution: education and effective birth control. Not by outside forces, but by inner religious, moral, cultural and economic drives, which needs the effective educational programs. It is a critical passage from the path of least resistance of external imposition to the understood and accepted inner motivation, a prerequisite to success. The Janus syndrome is valid, and should always be kept in mind.

With growing populations, economic disparity leading to endless conflicts will also continue. The danger of armed confrontations remains high, but its scale may be limited. The best antidote to this problem is education with national political support. Again the passage between emotions and rationality must be unblocked. The two faced Janus should help us decide which direction is the right one. Trained and trusted local organizations can replace outsiders. With an entirely new organization and management, this

constant global problem can be tackled successfully. Sound ideas are needed first. They will have to be tested and adopted to special cases. It is certain that vested interests will fiercely resist any move to change the status quo radically.

The so called "free market economy", comfortably couched in the dominant and flexible political systems, disguised as democracies, can continue to rape the ecosystem in the name of the bottom line, or it can face the fork in the road and decide which choice to take. Technological progress will help to re-establish an ecologically more sound and economically rewarding shift. Otherwise there will be trouble. There are already signs of trouble with the conventional free market economies when such an ardent supporter of the free-market capitalism as George Soros is hinting about the urgent need to reform capitalism, for a better future.

Education as a globally effective tool remains the only means to initiate change. It is simpler and more cost effective than violent abrupt changes. Yet, an effective workable educational effort on a global scale, but with local specifics, is systematically eluding us. A competent study with new approaches by relevant participation of the concerned people is long overdue.

Rising religious fundamentalism will remain and probably will grow as a destabilizing factor in Asia, Africa and possibly in Europe. With it, the problem and sensitivity of international political/economic security will be a dominant international challenge still awaiting creative ideas.

Controlled wars will remain an extremely persistent problem. The standard reasons remain valid: resource supply security, with energy as a key issue, ethnic/religious rivalries and economic control of world markets.

The uni-polar world economic system will face new sets of conflicts. They will be the result of multinational profit optimization, reduced social services, even in the most advanced industrial countries and the ever upward spiralling unemployment. Disappearing work opportunities and job security are already causing alarming social stress. There is a major mental transformation in the work places in industrialised countries on such vast scale that if it leads to large scale explosions it may well shatter established social orders with unpredictable consequences.

Free trade blocks may run into trouble by not preventing the perception of unfair and unjust trading practices. There is a blocking mindset in the way of optimum functioning of these blocks. Established labour protective institutions refuse to accept that there is a global challenge to their comfort and complacency. The high labour-cost

regions are already losing out to lower labour cost developing countries. This trend, if anything, will intensify in the future. Janus, guarding the passage to a still uncharted future is issuing a challenge.

Europe is in the process of charting a new course to the future. It may turn out to be an unprecedented success, or a megablunder. Uniting the economies of an ethnically fragmented Europe is a rationally sound move. Forcing a monetary union, mostly by hasty, ill perceived political motives may backfire. There seems to be a split jury on this issue. The world's leading economists, Friedman, Mundell et al. cannot agree on the sound rationale for monetary union at this time. Disregarding rock-solid traditions and cultural sensitivities, if not given a proper time frame for changeover, run by faceless bureaucrats in Brussels may be a recipe for constant discontent, conflicts and upheavals.

Among the predictable variables we find the rising economic powers of the Pacific rim, eventually leading to similar rivalries that Europe and North America experienced with different intensity at different times. Its giants will face obstacles which could be resolved rationally, but if emotions prevail over reason, it can have disastrous consequences.

An extremely large variable will be the fallout from the turbulence Russia is in and will be facing with impact upon the rest of the world economics of friend and foe alike. There are signs indicating that things will get much worse, before they get better in Mother Russia. Firstly, because it is difficult for outsiders to understand the mentality of the Russian population and their emotional reaction to continued suffering insecurity, and real or perceived humiliation, which can always be inflamed with demagoguery. By its sheer geographic dimensions and demographic masses Russia may, under continued, increasing stress become unglued and become the victim of manipulated catastrophe. Whatever it may be, it will send shock-waves throughout the world. The world should heed the caveat: global economic trends must not ignore the national sentiments.

Challenges

The ultimate challenge will be to face and manage a future, with a rather heavy luggage from the past. There is no way the slate can be instantaneously wiped clean. Partial cleaning is possible and challenging. A lot of new concepts will emerge and implementing them will be a challenge of intuition, innovation and pragmatism with an eye on the mistakes of the past.

The most likely functional model to improve upon the past will be based on economic priorities. Changes will have to be gradual and tested for effectiveness. The world will run in the currently accepted pattern of developed and developing countries. Conventional wars will more likely prevail in developing countries. In developed countries the new challenge to security will be played out in a high technology warfare in which the tangible physical assets will not undergo destruction, but will be taken over, imperceptibly, by means of manipulating the opponents electronics and artificial intelligence-infrastructures. This will become more acute as the economic strength and competition for markets and resources reach critical mass, and some of the standard international institutional haggling, proves to be ineffectual, as in the past.

Economics, more than ever, will be controlling international affairs and traditional diplomacy may lose its role as channels of communication. It has never been effective in resolving conflicts, but in the future most conflicts will be resolved, or deactivated by some invisible forces and operations still to be designed and tested. Information, its acquisition, protection and guarded availability will be at the centre of global functioning. Because of its all encompassing power, it will have challenges for possession. Both defence and pre-emptive attack-strategies for information will need be worked out.

Most of the global problems that are of high priority in the minds of international organizations will continue to be a subset and function of major economic trends. Therefore, controlling population growth, saving the rainforest and some threatened animal subspecies will be resolvable within that overall economic framework, and at whatever rate the overall system permits.

