

HYPOCRISY AT THE LECTERN DO OUR PERSONAL LIFESTYLE CHOICES REFLECT OUR SPOKEN COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY?

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Abstract. Do our actions model a genuine commitment to global sustainability? Or do they belie that spoken commitment? These questions are addressed in this article, drawing on bodies of substantive research tying personal behavioral choices to global warming, fresh water scarcity, energy resource management, the absorptive capacity of the earth to sustain life, and a viable sharing of the earth's resources to assure a basic level of social justice. A compelling case is made that our personal lifestyles are not in congruence with our avowed concerns for an environmentally sustainable earth and a just sharing of its bounties. The article treats environmental sustainability and social justice as co-imperatives, thereby offering a future scenario that demands lifestyle adjustments and shared sacrifices.

Keywords: social justice, climate change, global warming, sustainable lifestyles, environmental stewardship, energy conservation

A PROMISING NEW FORUM FOR ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY

Let me begin this discussion by congratulating the editors and reviewers of the *Journal of Management for Global Sustainability* for creating an academic forum to address the most pressing issue of our time: the survival of planet earth as an inhabitable ecosystem that “works for everyone with no one left out” (Stoner, 2013). I am honored to be in-

cluded in this inaugural issue and genuinely hope that my contribution is worthy of the noble and ambitious goals that the editors have set and, in my view, are certain to achieve.

In the spirit of the *Journal's* mantra—“*doing nothing is not an option*” (Stoner, 2013)—I humbly offer a discussion that is provocative, uncomfortable, and, for some, offensive. I have shared earlier drafts of this article with colleagues and friends, as well as given a short presentation of its essence at the 2011 meeting of the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools (IAJBS) in Lima, Peru (Weis, 2011). Based on feedback from those who have read or heard the message you are about to read, there is a fair chance you will become uncomfortable with that message and, if hindsight is predictive, angry with the messenger.

But “*doing nothing is not an option,*” and recognizing and embracing reality is foundational “*to help all of us move more rapidly toward a sustainable and socially just world*” (Stoner, 2013). Knowing the raw truth about where we are today is not the enemy of change; it is the precondition for change.

We begin on a day not long ago when the vivid and recurring spectacle of hypocrisy reached a tipping point in my life.

INTEGRITY ON THE PODIUM?

Two years ago, I attended a Seattle University-hosted forum called *Working Collaboratively for Sustainability*, which focused on global warming and sustainable business practices (Seattle University, 2009). At the risk of oversimplifying, the two primary concerns at this forum were: 1) taking concrete and substantive steps to reduce, and wishfully reverse, global warming, and 2) taking similarly concrete and substantive steps to modify our consumptive culture such that all human beings can survive and thrive in a world of scarce sustainable resources. Basically we could lump these two categories of issues under the banners of environmental sustainability and social justice—both familiar themes in Jesuit academies like Seattle University.

Predictably, both speakers and participants exuded high-minded commitments to promote sustainable business behaviors and to promote a socially just stewardship of global resources. In a word, we were all in *solidarity* over both the magnitude of threats we were facing and in our resolve to be at the forefront of the movement to ensure a survival of the human species and a fair sharing of the fruits of a sustainable planet.

When it was all over, many attendees walked to the parking garage and drove away in single-occupancy vehicles—some even in sports-utility vehicles (SUV's). Many drove to free-standing houses, some located over 50 kilometers from campus, comprising over 300 square meters of living space and standing on 1000 square-meter lots. Some of those houses are heated by furnaces in the winter and cooled by air conditioners in the summer, despite the mild climate of the Pacific Northwest. And while I rarely ask about personal hygienic practices, I suspect that many of these colleagues take frequent showers whether they need them or not, some perhaps as often as daily. Many probably flush their toilets after even minimal usage (otherwise known as urinating). Some may even water their lawns, and yes, some, despite all we know today, may sit down to meals that include meat and dairy courses.

My guess is you know people—even *colleagues and friends*—who drive by themselves to work, some long distances, occupy free-standing, single-family homes, flush toilets after every use, routinely heat and air condition when it's not necessary, consume meat and dairy products, and take daily showers, and you've probably been planning to have a little chat with them to let them know that none of these behaviors—except possibly the excess toilet flushing—is even bordering on sustainable.

This brings us to the basic contradiction and questions of this article. Can we credibly promote sustainable business practices and global-warming sensitivity if our personal behaviors are profoundly unsustainable and contribute to the scourge of global warming? And who are we to preach social justice if we model lifestyles that are not replicable by the world's population given global resource scarcities—that is, if we consume at levels that the earth could not support for everyone? Are we the *chosen people* who are entitled to lavish living standards that are not sharable by the unwashed and undeserved masses?

Being sensitive to my reading audience, I want to emphasize that I'm using the generic "we" in these questions in reference to our miscreant colleagues and acquaintances—certainly not to those who are reading this article. I'm confident that you, devoted readers of the *Journal of Management for Global Sustainability*, walk to work, live in multi-family residences, take all necessary precautions to conserve water (you certainly don't shower daily, water your lawn, or flush after every pee!), eschew air conditioning in favor of acclimatizing when it gets a bit hot, eat only a plant-based diet, and use office lighting only when it becomes too dark to work under natural lighting.

But be honest here. You know you have friends and colleagues who stray from this commitment to truly sustainable and global-warming-

neutral behaviors. Indeed, we all have colleagues who have yet to make those modest lifestyle adjustments that are requisite to modeling a serious concern for either environmental sustainability or social justice, and we must have that little chat with them soon!

MY EMPLOYER'S OFFICIAL COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

I happen to teach management at a Jesuit university. As such, I am called upon by the decrees and conclusions of General Congregation 35 of the Society of Jesus to embrace both environmental sustainability and social justice. Those conclusions specifically note that “environmental concerns have challenged our traditional boundaries and have enhanced our awareness that we bear a common responsibility for the welfare of the entire world and its development in a sustainable and living-giving way.” Furthermore, we are warned that “the drive to access and exploit sources of energy and other natural resources is very rapidly widening the damage to earth, air, water, and our whole environment, to the point that the future of our planet is threatened. Poisoned water, polluted air, massive deforestation, deposits of atomic and toxic waste are causing death and untold suffering, particularly to the poor” (Society of Jesus in the United States, 2008).

The International Association of Jesuit Business Schools (IAJBS), to which my employer belongs, is inspired by its Sustainability Task Force which formally defines global sustainability as “the broad set of interconnected issues that encompass, but are not limited to, achieving environmental preservation, poverty eradication, social justice, desirable production and consumption patterns, species preservation, and spiritually rich lives at this time in our species’ history on this planet. To realize or achieve global sustainability we need to create socially just and spiritually-whole ways for our species (and all other species) to thrive ‘forever’” (IAJBS, 2010).

Maybe we need to take a few steps back to get us focused on what these commitments require—and perhaps what they preclude. I cannot claim to be an advocate of social justice and behave in ways that the world could not support if we all were to emulate my behaviors. I cannot argue credibly for social justice as long as I still eat meat, knowing that it’s not possible for everyone to eat meat and humankind to survive. I cannot be a *chosen people* social justice advocate—one who wants everyone to live a bit better than they do if they are at the subsistence level, but not so well that it would curtail my living standards—and that, in

a nutshell, is where most of my colleagues are at this moment in time. They want to wave the banner of social justice, but haven't yet made the commitment to change their personal lifestyles to enable a more just and humane world. Make no mistake about it—eating meat, driving cars, living in single-family homes, and wasting water are the actions of the *chosen people* who want to pretend to care about social justice, but who really haven't faced the realities of the earth's limited capacity to deliver that lifestyle to even a minority of the world's seven billion human inhabitants (ABC News, 2011).

SOCIAL JUSTICE, GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY— AND IMPLICIT CLASSISM

Social justice and environmental sustainability are mutually conjoined. We cannot address justice in isolation from resource scarcity and environmental stewardship. Although there are “limits to growth” (Meadows, Randers, & Meadows, 2004) apart from concerns about social justice, the reality of our *limits* becomes amplified when we impose any concept of a *just sharing* of the benefits of growth. It is imaginable to see a distant horizon for growth if we assume that only five percent of the world's population can enjoy its bounties, while 95% passively subsist on poverty rations. But that horizon gets very close if we impose any rational theory of justice on the sharing of those bounties of growth, and this is really the sticking point for many. The developed nations are by no means the only class-layered cultures on earth. Indeed, acceptance of disparate class-layered lifestyles is the norm in every country served by the reach of this journal.

Let me bring this closer to home. In the midst of a recent conversation with one of my colleagues who is promoting the *Sustainability Specialization* in our MBA program, he responded to my line of inquiry with a dismissive “to be honest, whether I drive to work today, or eat meat tonight, will have absolutely no impact on social justice or global warming”—and he was right. His eating only plant-based foods today will not feed a hungry peasant tomorrow.

However, if we think critically about this *truth*, we begin to see the *class* assumptions implicit in this belief. Without saying it or even thinking it, our casual apathy assumes a steady-state disparate division among economic and social classes such that our personal behaviors may be rendered irrelevant to the big picture of global survival and social justice. But no coherent theory of social justice subsumes a disparate human class system (DeBerri & Hug, 2010). Despite that, we can simultaneously

hold these two diametrically opposing beliefs without being conscious of the incongruity. Even in the most exhaustive exploration of varying theories of justice (Rawls, 1971), layers of cultural classes are not superimposed on a model and regarded separately, as if we could apply one coherent theory of justice to the upper class, another to the middle class, and yet another to the poor, destitute and starving classes. No coherent commentary on justice does this—and yet the existence of (and expected continuation of) disparate classes is inherent in our own *truths* when we wrestle with choices around personal behavior.

But before we address *if* and *when* our behaviors should change, let's look at the key behavioral issues that call into question our integrity and credibility. The basic question is: how must we live if all humans on earth could live at that same level? In other words, are we engaging in behaviors and lifestyles that, if all other humans on earth were to emulate these same behaviors and lifestyles, the earth would be able to sustain for everyone? After all, as proffered in the mission statement of this journal, "Global sustainability involves the creation and maintenance of a world that works for everyone with no one left out" (Stoner, 2013). Let's break this down to specific questions that relate to the "tipping point" scenario that opened this discussion.

LIFESTYLE QUESTIONS—AND CHOICES

Could Everyone on Earth Drive a Single-Occupancy Vehicle to Work?

No. Our earth has neither the energy resources nor the environmental absorptive capacity to support this behavior for everyone. We clearly must stop driving to work if we are truly concerned about social justice and environmental sustainability.

The issue of sustainable transportation "is becoming acute in the developed countries of the world that are already feeling the negative consequences of transportation use, and it will intensify soon in developing countries as they acquire the resources to build and expand their transportation systems" (Richardson, 1999).

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) estimates that the number of vehicles on the earth's streets and roads will increase from one billion today to two billion by 2020, thereby doubling in one decade. The transportation sector already causes 27% of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States and accounts for 70% of the country's oil consumption—half of which is used to fuel cars and trucks (Environmental Defense Fund, 2010).

The social and environmental consequences of our dependence on automotive transportation are legion. Social consequences include “severe air and water pollution, accelerating land consumption, worsening traffic congestion, record expenditures of public funds for road projects and far-flung development, isolation of senior citizens and others who cannot drive, lack of access to jobs for low income individuals, deteriorating older suburban and urban areas, and threats to national security due to dependence on imported oil” (Pollard, 2001–2002). The environmental consequences are similarly foreboding, and affect virtually every environmental problem, including air and water pollution, habitat destruction, loss of wetlands, global climate change, and water disposal (Benfield, Raimi, & Chen, 1999). In the United States, on-road vehicles emit 56% of total carbon monoxide, 32% of nitrogen oxides, and 29% of volatile organic compounds (U.S. EPA, 2000).

Finally, lest you wonder how I missed the exciting trend toward low-emission and even zero-emission electric-powered vehicles, all substantive analyses dispel the promise of these advances as they are more than offset by the exploding growth in driving worldwide (Ewing, 1995; U.S. DOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2001), or were we thinking, from the *chosen people* perspective, that one or two billion vehicles would be a sustainable limit in a world that now has seven billion inhabitants and is targeting over nine billion by year 2050 (USA Today, 2011)? After all, why would we expect that the seven billion “lower classes” in year 2050 would want to join us on the road?

Could Everyone Live in a Free-Standing, Single-Family Residence?

No. For many of the same reasons that we cannot all commute to and from work in single-occupancy vehicles, the earth cannot support a universal lifestyle that includes living in a free-standing, single-family house. Sustainable urban planning demands both housing and transportation solutions that dramatically reduce energy consumption, particulate contamination, and land waste; indeed, sustainable transportation and housing solutions are interdependent (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999). When it comes to environmental stewardship and social justice, population density is not the problem; it is a significant part of the solution (Weis & Arnesen, 2011).

Population density means multiple-family residential buildings, clustered in a planned milieu that integrates with public transportation options. In other words, we must aspire to living in energy efficient, space-economic buildings that accommodate multiple families—even if this spectacle may seem like something our ancestors once faced before

the era of prosperity. “The traditional urban pattern was a cluster of activities that people do together (city downtowns and neighborhood centers) surrounded by residences in a density gradient. That remains the most sustainable pattern” (Shore, 2005). The problem is especially acute in the United States, where post-World War II infatuation with the automobile gave ready access to inexpensive, expansive building lots located far from city centers, creating the ensuing suburban and rural blight that now pockmarks the American landscape (Benfield et al., 1999). “Most other countries resisted the spread and scattered pattern, though without complete success; the US has only begun to recentralize” (Shore, 2005).

“The pattern of urban and rural development that has fostered the growth of single-family houses strongly affects sustainability—energy and water use, food production, waste generation and disposal, biodiversity and equal opportunity” (Shore, 2005). Single-family houses consume exponentially more energy to provide comfortable living-space temperatures, as well as to transport residents to ever-more-distant suburban and rural housing developments (Benfield et al., 1999). Water consumption is greater for single-family homes, owing to lawn maintenance requirements and the demands of more spacious living spaces (Postel, 2005). Finally, looked upon from a global perspective, the spread of low-density, single-family homes throughout the world subverts all efforts to provide a sustainable source of food to feed the nine billion people who may inhabit the globe by year 2050—even if all nine billion were vegetarians.

Instead of thinking about the issues of sustainability and social justice from the veranda of a 500-square-meter mansion, sitting on a 2000-square-meter estate, imagine contemplating the earth’s and its inhabitants’ survival from a cozy, three-room apartment.

Could Everyone Take a Shower Every Day?

No. Scarcity of fresh water is already affecting over one third of the world’s population and this number is expected to double by 2025. The United Nations labels countries as moderate or high stress areas if water consumption exceeds ten percent of renewable fresh water resources. By the year 2000, over 80 countries were already considered water stress areas (Gleick, 2003). A large portion of the earth’s surface is covered by water, but only about 2.5% of it is freshwater and about 66% of that is in the form of ice and frozen glaciers (Postel, 2005). If natural watersheds are not well managed, human over-consumption will lead to serious or irreversible damage to the local ecosystems such that food production and water for basic human needs are not adequate to sustain life (Gleick & Palaniappan, 2010).

Indeed, the lack of potable water is already a global crisis. Clean, safe water is the exception, not the rule. We do not have sufficient clean water today to sustain healthy populations. We obviously cannot waste water on over-washing our bodies and preach social justice with straight faces.

Could Everyone in the World Consume a Diet Comprising Animal Products?

Again, the answer is unarguably “no.” The arable land of the world can only sustain human life if it produces vegetables, fruits and grains for direct human consumption. It cannot support the production of grain to feed enough livestock to provide meat and dairy products for even a minority of the earth’s population. If we all choose to eat meat and dairy—or all try to—we will perish and perish quickly. An animal product-based diet is absolutely unsustainable (Carus, 2010).

The world’s population recently eclipsed seven billion people (USA Today, 2011). Currently two billion of our global neighbors eat a meat-based diet while the other five billion are living on a plant-based diet (UN News Centre, 2006). Current shortages of energy, cropland, and available water are already severely limiting our capacity to expand, or even maintain, meat and dairy production. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) estimates that the average Italian diet (touted as a healthier and more plant-centered alternative to the typical western diet) provides 21% of calories from meat and dairy, and predicts that by 2050 we would need two earths to feed the population if everyone were to eat like Italians. Even if everyone were to eat like Malaysians, with just twelve percent of calories from meat and dairy, the WWF predicts we would need 1.3 earths by 2050 to feed everyone (Duncan, 2010). No one who is eating an animal product-based diet—which includes fish, poultry, beef, pork, and lamb, in addition to eggs, milk, cheese, butter, cream and yogurt—can still claim to care about social justice (Soares, 2009).

Finally, an animal product-based diet is *the primary contributor* to greenhouse gases and global warming, causing even more oil consumption and destructive vehicle emissions than are caused by human transportation choices (Hickman, 2009). Most of the arable land in cultures that favor the consumption of meat and dairy is used to produce grain to feed cows, pigs, chickens, and other livestock. Growing grain to feed large animals is energy-inefficient, as are the subsequent processes for rendering livestock and transporting meat and dairy products to market. Indeed, it bears repeating that the prevalence of meat and dairy diets constitutes a more deleterious threat to global warming than transportation choices (Eshel & Martin, 2006; Goodland & Anhang, 2009). Either

we all eat lower on the food chain, or most of us will go hungry—which is the current state of global nutrition.

WHEN IS IT TIME TO CHANGE? OR ARE WE THE CHOSEN PEOPLE?

What about my colleague's assertion that his eating meat and driving to work, on this very day, has no significant impact on either the just distribution of scarce resources or on the longevity of earth as an inhabitable planet? To that we must offer another uncomfortable question: when will it be time for him, and for me, to start behaving sustainably? At what stage in the critical mass of globally changing norms do we decide to get on board? At what point does it make a difference? Going back to our discussion on disparate classes, the answer may be in our willingness to bring into clear focus our implicit assumptions around class distinction and disparity. The "when" might be in the moment we acknowledge that any concept of social justice is empty if it presupposes the permanence of class disparity. For me to argue that my personal choices, in this and in every moment, are irrelevant under the law of insignificance, is to, in essence, argue that I am among God's *chosen people* and that *social justice* can adhere to a world where I am entitled to more than others. None of us admits to this conclusion openly, and perhaps not even consciously, yet that is where we stand while we are waiting for the right time to begin behaving sustainably and justly.

By now the word *hypocrite* may be rattling around in the recesses of your consciousness. You know who I'm talking about. That colleague who wants "sustainable" placed in every clause of your mission statements. The one who decries the seemingly irreversible and inevitable climate change that is melting the glaciers and ice caps, raising the water levels, and promising an end to life on earth in another generation or two. Yes, that one—who also commutes alone in her SUV, drinks cafe lattes, eats meat, showers daily (at least!), turns over her wardrobe every two months, and is comfortable in a sleeveless outfit because she heats her living space to a constant 22 degrees Celsius.

Indeed, it may not be enough to openly advocate for slightly better lives for those who currently live at subsistence, while we continue to enjoy lifestyles that are indefensibly wasteful, conspicuously affluent, and, yes, unarguably unsustainable. On a positive note, by beginning to engage in shared sacrifice, we have an opportunity to gain insights and perhaps a more compassionate connection with the earth's marginalized populations.

A CALL TO DISARM

I will guess that some of you reading this article, despite your avowed commitment to social justice and global sustainability, will flush the toilet after your next pee. Some of you will commute in a single-occupancy vehicle on your next work day. Some will eat meat at your next meal. Some will get out of bed tomorrow morning and start the day with a shower—and may even follow that up with a trip to the gym later in the day and another shower. Some will work in temperature-controlled offices, choosing to waste energy rather than acclimatize. Some will reflexively turn on their office lights in broad daylight in the midst of ample natural lighting. Maybe none of this is true for you, but you know it is for many of your colleagues. I can attest that in the Albers School of Business and Economics at Seattle University, we still have colleagues who live every bit as unsustainably and every bit as indifferent to social justice as all of these aforementioned behaviors represent.

In a recent survey of my own Albers School business faculty colleagues, over 84% live in free-standing houses, one fourth occupying over 300 square meters of floor space. Nineteen percent live over 30 kilometers from the Seattle University campus, and 63% commute by single-occupancy vehicles. Nearly 80% shower or bathe daily; 16% do so more than once a day. Sixty percent flush their toilets after every use, and over 90% of my colleagues eat meat and/or dairy products; 75% do so daily. Despite these self-reported behavioral profiles, an inexplicable 27% believe that their lifestyles are sustainable, and despite this level of denial around unsustainable personal behaviors, we are offering a *Sustainability Specialization* in our MBA program that commenced in the summer of 2011 (Seattle University, 2011a). Let's hope that those teaching in the new program are not among the 27% who are so delusional, or are in such abject denial, that they truly believe their personal lifestyles are sustainable!

Modeling and practicing sustainable and socially just behaviors are not heroic acts. They are baby-steps toward demonstrating a true concern for social justice and environmental sustainability. If we do not, at this bare minimum, model our alleged commitment to these values, then perhaps we should stop pretending to be part of a community that concerns itself with social justice and global stewardship.

Let's begin with personal integrity, and let's recognize and accept what is true with who we are. Are we champions of social justice? Are we devotees of a sustainable earth? Are we living in ways that all others could live within the known limitations of scarce resources and environmental preservation? Or are we merely hypocrites preaching values

we do not embrace, while comfortably observing the stage of human misery and environmental degradation from our box seats?

NOW WHAT?

So where do we go from here? Every person who has commented on earlier drafts of this article told me there needs to be a positive “call to action,” and this journal’s review criteria includes the admonition that the article “offer ideas about how the reader can take valuable and constructive action to improve the situation” (Stoner, 2013).

I teach a highly experiential course on emotional intelligence that treats “self awareness” as the obligatory foundation for positive changes in human behavior (Weis & Arnesen, 2007). We spend days on self-awareness building exercises because we cannot move forward authentically and effectively without that foundation, and it is not easy. We are called upon to give a Stanislavskian-level effort to study who we really are before we can show up authentically, as our true selves, in relationship (Weis, Hanson, & Arnesen, 2009)—so it is with our behaviors and their relationship to global sustainability. Awareness is foundational.

My point is this: becoming aware of our behaviors and their congruence with a commitment to a sustainable, just future is foundational. We first must acknowledge what *is* and accept that fully. To initiate change demands that we know where we are—to know where we are coming from. Truth is not the enemy of change; truth is the essential precursor to positive change.

Acknowledging that we may fall far short of living sustainably does not mean that tomorrow we must sell all of our personal possessions and join a self-sufficient vegan commune. It does mean that we are aware of and accept where we are, and begin a process of self-reflection that will gradually move us toward “useful and constructive action to improve the situation” (Stoner, 2013). Awareness leads to change. Knowing that the earth cannot support meat production to feed seven billion mouths begins a reflective process that eventually leads to dietary change. Knowing that seven billion people cannot reside in single-family homes begins a reflective process that changes one’s orientation to housing. Knowing that seven billion people cannot move about in automobiles begins a reflective process that ultimately considers alternative transportation options. But first, acknowledge that what is, is. Then we move forward.

The personal lifestyle changes suggested in this article are each eminently doable by everyone reading this journal. None of the changes requires an outlay of scarce personal resources; on the contrary, they each entail a savings of resources currently consumed supporting lifestyles that are not sustainable. Eating lower on the food chain, living in smaller spaces contained in multi-family buildings, using less water, using less energy for transportation—these are changes that all of us can afford because they are lower-cost behaviors. What is missing are not personal resources. What is missing are personal resolve, personal commitment, and perhaps a personal proclivity for contemplating a simpler, more sustainable lifestyle that many see as less comfortable and less desirable.

A HINT OF OPTIMISM?

In a brief digression from the Eeyore voice (the dour donkey of *Winnie-the-Pooh* fame) that has dominated this discussion, I admit happily to being surprised, impressed, and grateful at some of today's university campus initiatives to raise awareness around the challenges of global sustainability. Several years ago, my own campus implemented a six-week *Sustainability Challenge* involving self-selected teams that competed on weekly behavioral criteria. We earned team and individual points for members going a week without using throw-away packaging, for using only non-motorized or mass transportation options, for eating only a plant-based diet, for avoiding the use of disposable containers and non-renewable bags for beverages, groceries, and other chattels, and so on. I remember eagerly joining the challenge, knowing that this was one competition I would surely win. But I was pleasantly wrong. A number of undergraduate teams fielded players that left me in the dust. This was my first and only experience feeling like a sustainability novice, even beginner, in my workplace.

Today a master plan awaits full implementation that may, if followed to the letter, make my personal lifestyle look normal (Schlessman & Bain, 2008; Seattle University, 2011b). However—if I may reclaim my Eeyore voice (Milne, 1926)—I worry that we may find ourselves doing a lot of little things that are relatively inconsequential in the big picture of global sustainability. The worst case scenario is that these small gestures may act as a palliative, as drugs inducing a sense of unwarranted accomplishment that is far disproportionate to the major changes that we must make. Eschewing plastic bottles and plastic bags, paper coffee cups, and unnecessary packaging, while recycling everything that we touch, are all admirable gestures that demonstrate sensitivity to sustainability issues. They do not, however, individually or in total, approach

the impact made by transportation, housing and dietary choices. I fear we may be swatting at gnats and letting the elephants pass through.

But, I must admit, I am reluctantly impressed by the multitude of campus initiatives being launched today, in my own country and in others, especially in the area of transportation (Balsas, 2003)—and reluctantly optimistic, at least as optimistic as Eeyore can be, in the face of these daunting challenges.

FINAL WORDS

I know this discussion will land on some as exaggerated, offensive, and opinionated. Indeed, one thoughtful reviewer of an early draft of this article suggested that it only be published as an opinion piece, not as a legitimate article, and his reasons were thoughtful, serious, sensitive, and compelling.

But I disagree. Yes—the tone of my discussion is provocative. But the fact that the essential points of the article *sound* like opinions dramatizes the wide expanse separating our behaviors from our words, because ...

Seven billion people cannot live in single family homes.

Seven billion people cannot use automobiles for their basic means of transportation.

Seven billion people cannot eat at the top of the food chain.

Seven billion people cannot greet each day with a five-minute shower.

These are not my opinions. These are truths—inconvenient truths, perhaps, but truths nonetheless.

There is a reasonable chance that you, the reader, live in ways that are “more unsustainable” than the way I live. I walk to work, live in a small apartment, eat only vegetation, eschew heating and air conditioning, and use water very sparingly. Yet my ways are, at best, “less unsustainable” than yours.

So, when I am tempted to enter into the volley of enthusiasm for all we are saying and doing at Seattle University to promote global sustainability, I usually hold back. When I weaken and join the chorus, my mind’s eye sees a mirror upon which is not the visage of a responsible global citizen, living in ways that are globally sustainable and socially just. I see the face of a hypocrite.

Finally, I have made repeated references in this article to a recent milestone—the population of Earth eclipsing seven billion inhabitants in October of 2011. In 1927, 84 years ago, when my father was ten years old, the earth's population reached two billion (Gomez & Sullivan, 2011). In one lifetime the population of planet Earth increased by 350%! Needless to say, that cannot happen again over the next 84 years—or maybe my colleague was right. Maybe it doesn't matter what he eats or what he drives or where he lives. Nothing we do will support a world population of 24.5 billion people, no matter how we choose to live.

Everybody crowds round so in this Forest. There's no Space. I never saw a more Spreading lot of animals in my life, and in all the wrong places.

—Eeyore the Donkey, *The House at Pooh Corner* (Milne, 1928)

The exponential phase of the industrial growth which has dominated human activities during the last couple of centuries is now drawing to a close. Yet during the last two centuries of unbroken industrial growth we have evolved what amounts to an exponential-growth culture.

—M. King Hubbert, Testimony to the United States Congress, 4 June 1974

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