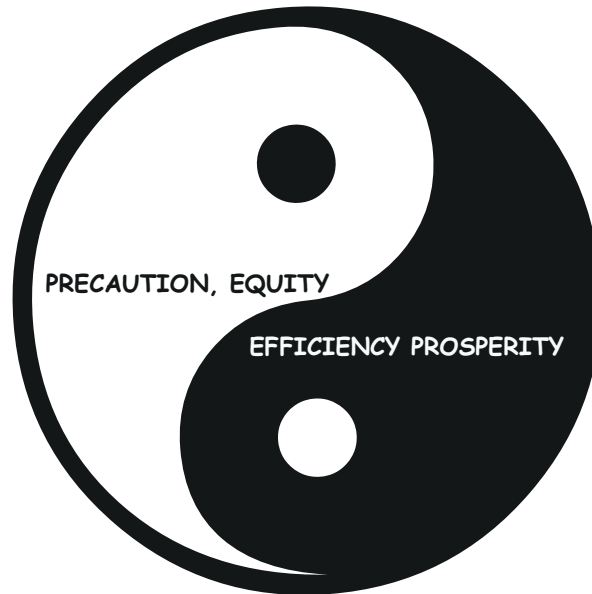


The Tao says: - *'from one comes two, from two comes three and from three come the ten thousand things.'*



The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism in the lights of climate change

1. **There is a problem**  
global climate change is a global problem.
2. **There is a cause of the problem**  
systemically driven over-consumption and inequality are the cause of the problem.
3. **The problem can be overcome**  
a global solution is needed to overcome the global problem.
4. **There is a way to overcome the problem**  
a global framework for "*Contraction and Convergence*" structured on: -
  - One: Precaution  
global contraction of carbon emissions,
  - Two: Equity  
global convergence to equal per capita shares of this contraction,
  - Three: Efficiency  
global emissions trading of these shares to ease transition costs to,
  - Four: Prosperity by other means  
zero-emissions life-style and techniques,

in this order, is 'equity and survival'.  
This is the way to overcome the problem.

## Author's Note

I've never been anything other than a musician. How I ended up devising a global policy concept at UN climate negotiations for the last ten years is still a bit of a mystery to me. But a clue is that both writing and playing music are largely about wholeness and the principled distribution of 'effort' or practice. Responding to the climate challenge seems much like writing or playing music, where balance on the axes of reason and feeling, time and space, can only come from internal consistency. If practice is unprincipled there is no coordination and there is discord. When it is principled, there is balance, harmony and union. Perhaps all life aspires to the condition of music.

Ten years ago, I was feeling crushed and frightened by the realisation that humanity's pollution was destroying the future by changing the global climate. A sympathetic friend told me I wasn't being 'Zen' enough. I didn't know what he meant, had a good laugh and then decided he must be right.

So I went to the UN just as the negotiations began to create the Climate Convention. There I discovered tensions between Taoists, Marxists, economists, musicians and other human beings. This was only just funny enough, often enough, to rescue me from the powerlessness and despair that otherwise captures those who are not being Zen enough at the UN, or anywhere else. 'Being Zen' probably means caring, but enough to grasp reality by letting go of 'duality'.

The 'equity and survival' case argued at the UN tries to express this through 'Contraction and Convergence'. This starts from the oneness of the global picture and creates a framework with subdivision by principle. The precautionary principle is about survival. It says we have to unite in order to try and prevent damages and death from dangerous climate changes. This recognises the singular purpose or 'one-ness'. That is the Convention's 'objective'. That is why humanity created it. The equity principle says this must be fair across time and space between people in very different situations. This recognises 'two-ness' and shows the need to keep the feedback between ourselves and the earth in balance. It also recognises that the practice that flows from these principles of responsibility must be flexible and responsive rather than rigid. This is the 'three-ness' but is only a product of the responsibilities and the rights created by oneness and twoness. And then, and only then, come the 'ten thousand things' of prosperity in the traditional goals of life, health and happiness with harmony in all these because we have united to prevent damages and do no harm.

So C&C is a globalisation of consciousness and creates an internally consistent view of what has happened and what needs to be done. So it is a framework for organising our efforts to prevent global death and damage costs from climate changes rising out of control. This reflects the UN Convention. However, when we have failed to unite around these principles and pursue instead analysis of the 'costs and benefits' amid the noise of the 'ten thousand things', a divisive almost paranoid picture emerges ending up with the randomness of unresolved quarrels and guesswork. Working this way is not illuminating and encourages people to see preventing the damages and death as less important than preventing the pollution that is causing them. Sadly the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention reflects this approach.

This global conflict between the one and the many is at the heart of the policy quarrel. The effort recalled here has been about resolving the tension between this one overriding purpose of damage prevention and the 'ten thousand' protests' this has raised. It has been about transforming the friction between framework and guesswork back to this purpose.

While I hope this Briefing will appeal to the hearts and minds of a wide range of people, writing about C&C for a potentially diverse readership has been difficult. This is because, although we are all in the same boat in relation to climate change, we live in and see very different parts of it. Try addressing an audience made up of the anxious, the agnostic, sybarites and over-worked mothers. Then there's academia, 'policy makers' and bureaucracy. How do you persuade them, and especially the economists among them, about anything, let alone the logic of global equity in climate policy or letting go of guesswork? With honourable exceptions, those in a position to develop a response to the threat have chosen to remain captive to the very forces that now threaten us. Rather than seeking to calm the global climate, they have sought to calm us instead with mere economic management dogma. And while some of these have preened and quibbled, islands are threatened by rising seas and more and more people die from droughts, floods and other extreme events.

If this makes you just want to run away, I do too. But where do we go? Al Gore says to solve the problem we have to 'step out of the box'. But once again, step out into what? If this Briefing succeeds in making the case for C&C, staying means joining the effort for equity and survival. Both morally and logically, equity simply won't be unglued from survival and survival from equity. As in a marriage, the two are one. In fact, you can look at the UN climate negotiations as just a little haggle over an ante-nuptial contract in the shot-gun marriage that climate change forces on us all.

We have seen the future. We have the idea. We have to make an effective deal. If the right framework is adopted there can be a new growth of economic opportunity where prosperity is achieved by greener means for greener ends. This will necessarily involve all sorts of guesswork . . . but within a framework that keeps us secure.

As another expression of Indian philosophy - the 'Yoga Sutras' of Patanjali - says, 'Heyam duhkam anagatam'.

The pain that has not yet come can be avoided.

**Aubrey Meyer, October 2000.**