

## An Olive Agenda: First thoughts on a metaphorical theology of development

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### ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a theological engagement with a metaphor that could transcend the duality between the 'green' environmental agenda and the 'brown' poverty agenda that has disabled development discourse for the past twenty years. The mix of green and brown suggests *an olive agenda*; which in turn provides a remarkably rich metaphor – the olive – that holds together that which religious and political discourse rends apart: earth, land, climate, labour, time, family, food, nutrition, health, hunger, poverty, power and violence.

An attentiveness to current debates in the field of social development would suggest that any 'development' programme – at local, national or global levels - is likely to collapse into the wide chasm that currently divides economy from ecology, if we fail to find an integrating vision and agenda.<sup>1</sup> At heart, economy and ecology should cohere; after all they are both about the earth, our *oikos*, or home. Ecology, as *oikos-logos* concerns the wisdom of how our home functions; and economy, as *oikos-nomos* is about the rules that should govern the way we run our home.<sup>2</sup>

Given that we inhabit only one earth as our home, our economy or household-rules should be rooted in ecology, our household-wisdom; and this was in fact the case for millennia as people in diverse times and places sought to build their economic life in some kind of respectful relationship to the ecological boundaries they experienced. It is clear, however, that the material and ideological forces that gave rise to the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not only failed to see the relationship between economy and ecology, but were in fact predicated upon the divorce. The whole point of the Industrial Revolution was to take our home, the earth, dissect it into natural resources, and then - with new forms of power – pummel it into shape as

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<sup>1</sup> See Andrew Warmback, *Constructing an oikothology: the environment, poverty and the church in South Africa* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)

<sup>2</sup> See the Oikos Journey, published by the Diakonia Council of Churches, Durban South Africa. Available at <http://www.diakonia.org.za/dmdocuments/OikosA5e.pdf>

commodities to serve the market for such goods. We should not be surprised then, that this divide is coterminous with the intellectual split between nature and history, and the emergence of the natural sciences and 'economics' as a discrete discipline; together with the colonial conquest of the whole earth by the industrialised nations as they searched for more nature to conquer and wider markets to supply.

The Industrial Revolution has given birth to our modern global economy. We are its heirs whether we like it or not, and it has enriched our lives in many ways. From the internal combustion engines that offer us mobility, to the cell phones that keep us in contact with home; from the computer upon which I have written this essay to the insulin that my daughter injects daily via a digital pump; from the fridge which keeps our food fresh, to the micro-wave oven that warms it up for us – our lives are inconceivable without the assumptions, mechanisms and achievements of the modern economy. Owing to its size and reach, Larry Rasmussen has quite properly named it the *Big* economy.<sup>3</sup> But for all its contribution to modern life, Rasmussen notes the convincing data that indicates that there is a major problem with this economy: its logic works against the *Great* economy, a term he borrows from Wendell Berry<sup>4</sup>. This latter economy is the *oikos-nomos* that sustains the earth, and has done so for thousands upon thousands of years. Both Berry and Rasmussen thus point out the absolute necessity for our daily economic life to function in harmony with the Great Economy. Rasmussen writes:

Economic production and consumption, as well as human reproduction, are unsustainable when they no longer fall within the borders of nature's regeneration. So the Bottom Line below the Bottom Line is that if we don't recognize that the laws of economics and the laws of ecology are finally the same laws, we are in deep doo-doo. Eco/nomics is the only way possible.<sup>5</sup>

With an ear attentive to the issues, it would seem evident that this lesson has yet to be widely learnt and taken to heart in debates about social development, in the church and in wider circles, specifically in South Africa but also beyond our borders. What seems to be

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<sup>3</sup> See the chapter, "The Big Economy and the Great Economy" in Larry Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996) 111 – 126.

<sup>4</sup> See Wendell Berry's essay "Two Economies" first published in *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987) 54 – 75. The reference here is to the reprint in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (Washington DC: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2002) 219 – 235.

<sup>5</sup> Rasmussen, "The Big Economy", 112. The use of the term Bottom Line is borrowed from Thomas Berry, and the neologism *eco/nomics* from William Ashworth.

happening is a polarising around two autonomous sets of assumptions, goals and politics, which have been labelled the *brown agenda* and the *green agenda*.

### Green agenda/brown agenda

The brown agenda is concerned with poverty. It is the agenda of many, many people in South Africa, and in the global south. It is the public agenda of the government, of business, of civil society, of the churches, and of the vast majority of our citizens, as well as being the agenda of a whole host of global players - from World Vision to the World Bank. Given the absurdly high levels of poverty in this country, and throughout the globe, and given the dehumanisation that poverty entails, the brown agenda needs no further legitimisation. Certainly from a Christian perspective we are correct in speaking of God taking sides with the poor and the oppressed in Jesus Christ; and therefore of the moral obligation of Christians to join with others in the quest to overcome poverty. The brown agenda drives us to deal with *economics*, for the solution lies in structuring the economy – globally, nationally and locally – so as to ‘make poverty history’.

The green agenda is concerned with the environment. It too is the agenda of many people in South Africa and throughout the world; but it is characteristically the agenda of people who are not poor. Greens are concerned with saving the whale or the rhino, protecting endemic flowers, removing alien species and preventing urbanization. But beyond the fads of suburban elites, we must acknowledge that the mature green agenda focuses on such things as climate change, access to water, reliance on fossil fuels, erosion of top soil, dumping of toxic waste and deforestation. While we may hold that such concerns are born of the privilege that the non-poor have for thinking about things other than poverty, that in itself does not make these concerns any less correct. Any reading of the environmental data will make it unquestionably clear that these are fundamental issues that also strike at the heart of social regeneration, for they are precisely concerned with the sustainability of society into the next generation. And for those who believe that God has created the earth good, and that we human beings hold it in stewardship for the next generations, the green agenda is also of deep significance for Christian believers.

In our search for social regeneration, then, Christians and others are confronted with these two agendas – the brown agenda with its focus on poverty, and the green agenda with its focus on the environment. What will be clear upon deeper reflection, however, is that while both are fundamentally right, taken in isolation from the other, each is tragically wrong –and thus we must restate our earlier concern to integrate economy as *oikos-nomos*, and ecology as *oikos-logos* in search of sustainable life on earth, the *oikos* that is our only home. With William Ashworth we must speak of eco/nomics.

In the first instance, then, those who focus on environmental concerns have correctly placed the ecological crisis on the public agenda. They are absolutely right. But any enchantment with the environment to the detriment of people's lives and livelihoods is ethically questionable, and theologically indefensible. A myopic green agenda, in which the needs of vulnerable people are, or are perceived to be, less important than the needs of vulnerable plants or animals in our political and economic climate is likely to provoke an adverse reaction, and probably undermine any good intentions. The contribution of people from the south to the global environmental debate is to provide a wake-up call to those from the rich nations who would further marginalize the livelihoods of the poor for the sake of nature conservation. We have urgently to blend the green agenda with the brown agenda.

Likewise, those who focus on poverty issues have correctly placed the economic crisis on the public agenda. They are absolutely right. But any expectations that the current *Big Economy* will 'make poverty history', while creating a secure future for the earth is both ethically questionable and theologically indefensible. A myopic brown agenda in which economic solutions are proposed without regard to ecological limits, or the carrying capacity of the earth, is simply doomed to failure. For, the dominant assumption that underlies the proposed solution to poverty, namely more and more 'growth', implies the expansion of the fundamentally unsustainable industrial economy. Klaus Nürnberger has pointed this out in his book *Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution* which specifically puts economics and ecology in relationship with one another:

Since the advent of the industrial era this impact has begun to assume frightening proportions. Industrial growth leads to accelerating depletion of non-renewable resources, over-exploitation of renewable resources and pollution of nature in

general. Population growth increases the pressure on the land, overgrazing, erosion, deforestation, slum settlements, and so on. When the periphery begins to develop in the direction of industrialisation and urbanisation its ecological impact increases. Accelerating growth cannot continue indefinitely in a limited world. Sooner or later a peak must be reached; the only question is how close we are to this peak.<sup>6</sup>

Given that the earth simply cannot cope with the current levels of North Atlantic consumption and waste, it is naïve to imagine that Africa's salvation lies in becoming 'developed' in this way. The Big Economy has to function within the limits of the Great Economy, or as Rasmussen has it, we are in deep "doo-doo".

The choice between the brown and green agendas is thus not an either/or, but very definitely a both/and, and it is this blending of the two that we bring to the foreground when we speak of the need for an *olive* agenda. Yet in blending these colours together we are intentionally doing more than that - we are opening the door for a *metaphorical theology*; and so before we proceed with some of the contours of this olive agenda, we need to pause for a moment and consider what such a theology might mean.

### A metaphorical theology

A metaphorical theology recognises, in the first instance, everything that we have learnt from narrative theology, namely, that our possibilities for love, health and regeneration are rooted in stories, pictures and symbols rather than in analytic categories and abstract thought.<sup>7</sup> It is in narrative that we are connected to ourselves, to other people, and to life in the past, present and future. Narrative transcends the binary opposition between spirit and matter, and it roots us in our present context. Secondly, however, a metaphorical theology – as the name would suggest - raises up one significant event, image or symbol as a defining metaphor around which the stories of life are spun. In this sense, Christian

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<sup>6</sup> Klaus Nürnberger, *Prosperity, Poverty, Pollution: Managing the Approaching Crisis*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1999) 72

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Dan P McAdams, *The Stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self* (New York: the Guildford Press, 1993); Terrence Tilley. *Story Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Slazier Inc. 1985); Michael Goodman, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (eds), *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); Anthony Balcomb, "The Power of Narrative: Constituting Reality through Storytelling" in Philippe Denis (ed) *Orality, Memory and the Past*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2000) and Anthony Balcomb, "Narrative: Exploring an alternative way of doing theology in the new South Africa" in *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 101 (July 1998) 11-21

theology is almost by definition metaphorical theology, when one considers the way in which the Scriptures resonate with metaphors like exodus, exile, Zion, Cross and Kingdom.

Third, reference to the Biblical text suggests that a metaphorical theology draws upon the allegorical method – that great hermeneutical tradition of the Church Fathers - which saw in the words of the Bible other deeper meanings and connections to broader themes. But metaphor is not allegory in that meaning does not have to be imputed by wise or saintly scholars – rather the metaphor carries with it its meaning in ways that are suggestive for the ordinary reader, or it simply fails to work as a metaphor. Fourth, a metaphorical theology in the sense that is being suggested here, is seeking to speak a language beyond specifically Biblical metaphors. In a world rent by religious and ideological orthodoxies, let alone fundamentalisms, we desperately need metaphors that are common to humanity and that speak to the *oikou-mene*, the whole inhabited earth. As we shall see this does not mean a disavowal of Christian orientation, but is in fact – in obedience to the *missio Dei* - an orientation toward the world rather than the church.

This concerns leads to our fifth characteristic, namely, that a metaphorical theology is a post-modern theology. Unlike fundamentalism, it does not seek to critique modernity with the grammar of modernity; but desires rather to work in circles and pictures, suggestive connections, and hesitant leaps of cognitive imagination. It does not want to avoid intelligible and coherent expression, but will irritate those who are looking for legal-technical rationality, straight lines and clear conclusions. If, as we shall see, much of our eco/nomic problem is rooted in such enlightenment rationality, it seems disingenuous to seek our solution in that quarter. Sixth, a metaphorical theology is a fun theology, because it recognises that if we can't be happy when we do theology, then we have an even more serious credibility problem than we thought! This is a dialogical theology that should happen in earnest discussions in tea rooms; or more possibly as John the Evangelist acknowledged where water is turned into wine (John 2:9), women gather to do their work (4:7), bread is eaten (6:13) and fish is cooked over charcoal fires (21:9). A metaphorical theology should make us want to smile, to laugh, to sing, to write poetry, to dance. It should empower us want to leave the discussion and go and change something not

because we are forced to, but because we want to: a fun theology is a theology of grace rather than of works. And of course, all of this means that while it will always take the questions of life with utmost seriousness, it will never take itself too seriously.

Finally, and for this reason, a metaphorical theology seeks to engage with poets, artists, musicians and actors in the stuff of life. Such people are comfortable with narrative, symbol and leaps of imagination, and are a potent source of social dynamism that rises in protest against the industrial economy. While they were once nurtured in the bosom of the church, now they are often estranged from our linear rationality. It is a relationship that needs rebuilding, and it is possible that our ability to work with metaphor might aid such a task.

### Olive as metaphor

We have suggested that the colour olive provides us with a blending of the brown and green that characterise the two dominant trends of social regeneration, namely, poverty and environment. Olive then becomes more than a colour, and becomes the defining metaphor of a missiological agenda. Having laid out some of the methodological foundations of this metaphorical theology, let us now weave together the emerging elements of an olive agenda. We propose an initial set of ten ways in which olive can serve as a creative metaphor.

*1. As a colour it helps us integrate the brown and green agendas.* Olive functions first as a colour to blend together the brown poverty agenda and the green environment agenda. It reminds us that both are indispensable, but that neither is sufficient – and that the point is the integration of the two. We need eco/nomics, in which our human economy is rooted in the Great economy. This concern is at the heart of the AGAPE process – Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth that will be introduced at the Porto Alegre Assembly of the World Council of Churches:

Any viable alternative for the future must fulfil the criteria of social and ecological justice, enabling life in dignity in just and sustainable communities for generations to come.<sup>8</sup>

2. *As a texture it draws us to our earthly context.* Olive is a particular Southern African texture. The sub-continent is characterised by both the green of sub-tropical forests and the brown of thornbush plains, but in many ways so much of the colour of the earth here is a shade of olive: khaki is of course our very own South African colour. So there is a contextual element rooted in the metaphor one that draws us to our earth, our land, our country. Such a metaphorical theology is not an escapist theology.

3. *The olive points us to issues of food sovereignty.* With this etymological link, the metaphor makes one of its cognitive leaps and jumps from a texture to a fruit – the olive – and this enables us to speak about food security and food sovereignty. Confirming this jump is the recognition that issues of food sovereignty are, like the colour olive, integrative of poverty and the environment.<sup>9</sup> The deepest crisis of poverty is not a lack of money, but hunger caused by a lack of control of food; and likewise the deepest crisis of the environment is the loss of the earth's fertility to produce food. The olive as a natural food, grown in diverse cultures holds this element before us.

4. *The olive branch is a symbol of peace.* This is such a fundamental aspect of an olive agenda that we need not dwell too long on it, save to articulate two further ways in which the integrative power of the metaphor has disclosive power. In the first instance, the biblical reference to the dove returning to Noah with the olive branch (Gen 8:11) points us to the way in which human evil and injustice (Gen 6:5,12,13) are held together with the ecological crisis of the flood (Gen 6:17); and of course it is the Noahic covenant that is so explicitly an ecological covenant – one that is not just with humans, but with all living things (9:10,12,15). That the olive branch is interpreted to symbolise *peace*, is a reminder secondly that peace – *shalom* in the Hebrew tradition - is deeply woven into the eco/nomic

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<sup>8</sup> Justice, Peace and Creation Team, *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE) A Background Document*. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005), 42.

<sup>9</sup> See the numerous essays in Andrew Kimbrell (ed) the *Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*. (Washington: Island Press, 2002)

fabric. Not for nothing did the World Council of Churches speak of the three-fold concern, 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation' (Vancouver, 1984), and these three themes constitute the three main chapters of the Millennium Report of the United Nations sixteen years later. The Big economy is rooted in violence, to the earth and to other people. The Great economy is intrinsically an economy of shalom.

5. *The olive draws us into a plurality of cultures and religions.* As the olive branch symbolises peace, so the olive itself transcends the divides of the Mediterranean cultures and religions. The olive is native to Asia Minor, and then about 6,000 years ago it spread from Iran, Syria and Palestine throughout the Mediterranean via Egyptian, Grecian and Roman civilisations and trade routes. It is revered in cultures that are Jewish, Christian and Muslim, but it also unites the wisdom of Antiquity. Some Jewish traditions suggest that the Tree of Life in the garden of Eden was the olive, and certainly the Romans held it to be 'the first of all trees'. Athens is so named because Athena gave the Greeks an olive tree, the offspring of which is said to still be growing in the Acropolis.

6. *As a tree, the olive is pointer to life itself.* We have spoken of the Tree of Life, but actually trees not only represent life, they are life itself – which is why they appear as a supreme religious symbol in almost all cultures.<sup>10</sup> That symbolism is rooted in deep material reality: trees mean food, shelter, tools, furniture, boats, paper, fuel, medicines, biodiversity, and water. As has been suggested, civilisation "begins with the felling of the first tree and ends with the felling of the last".<sup>11</sup> "Life cannot live without trees" (Rasmussen) which is why they appear at the end of time in John the Divine's vision of the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:2). Thus, like food sovereignty, deforestation is a cross-over theme between poverty and the environment, and a vital part of the olive agenda.

7. *The olive tree holds before us inter-generational sustainability.* We have already noted the antiquity of the olive, and by implication its longevity. The trees on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem are around 2000 years old, and even they are not the oldest specimens! Furthermore, it is not unusual to find olive trees over a thousand years old in the

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<sup>10</sup> For the reflection on trees in this section I am indebted to Larry Rasmussen's wonderful metaphorical theology in the chapters "Trees of Life" and "Or Bare Ruined Choirs" in *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* 195 – 207, 208 – 219.

<sup>11</sup> Rasmussen, *Earth Community*, 212

Mediterranean region, and while they are relative newcomers to other parts of the globe, even here they have a reputation for survival. Olive trees outlive us, our buildings, our economies, our empires, and our civilisations. They should keep us humble, and remind us that while the Big economy is driven by the desire to tame life for short-term gain, the Great economy works by sustaining life through the generations.

8. *The olive is rooted in popular struggles.* Given the significance of the olive tree and fruit, it should not surprise us that there are people whose livelihoods are rooted in the tending and harvesting of olives, and such is the case of the Palestinians of the occupied territories as this report captures:

In spite of all these difficulties, many of these people are implacable determined to remain on their land, due to the deep spiritual ties that they have to it. A symbol of this is the Tree of the Bedawi, the oldest olive tree in the area. Ancient, gnarled and massive, it has stood close to the natural mineral spring at Al Walaja for over 5,000 years. It is said to have been planted by a prophet, and legend surrounds its existence. Every year two thirds of its bumper crop are distributed to the poor, as an expression of community solidarity and goodwill, and to ensure a good harvest the following year. It stands as a symbol of hope and strength to the people of the area, its huge age signifying their long standing connection to this land, and its hardy persistence their absolute determination to remain.<sup>12</sup>

One of the key aspects of the Jewish occupation of Palestine is to destroy olive groves that are thousands of years old, and thus to break both the spirit and the economic livelihood of the Palestinian farmers. As part of the popular struggle of resistance the East Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine have embarked on the Good Earth Campaign, or *Al Ard Al-Taybeh*, the symbol of which is an olive branch. The Campaign plans to plant 50,000 olive trees and also to salvage trees that have been uprooted. Such popular struggles of resistance, struggles for life and livelihoods is integral to the olive agenda.

9. *Olive oil contributes to health.* The Great economy is a healthy economy, for all living things. The olive has been part of health and cleanliness for millennia, with olive oil contributing to the beneficial diet of the cultures of Asia Minor and the southern Mediterranean. We must also remember that for centuries olive oil served as a cleansing and cosmetic agent, and still today soap is made from the oil.

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<sup>12</sup> Alice Grey, "Injustice and Deceit in the Ahmad Valley" in *The East Jerusalem YMCA*, Vol 3, No 8, Summer 2004, 21

10. *The olive as a Biblical symbol.* The spirituality that surrounds the olive tree and its fruit has been hinted at throughout this paper, so here we need to simply remind us of the connections to the Biblical story. Descriptions of the Promised Land include references to a land of olive trees and honey (Deut 8:8), and they figure in Nehemiah's efforts at reconstruction (8:15); the olive tree symbolises life and new life (Ps 128:3, Jer 11:16, Zech 4:11), and is used by Paul to explain the relationship of the Gentiles to the chosen People of God in Romans 11; They appear dramatically with the Lord at the end of time (Rev 11:4), and of course the Mount of Olives figures powerfully in Jesus' life. Seen in a metaphorical way, there is rich biblical connection to the olive agenda.

### On the olive agenda

Following the first presentation of this paper, I was pointed to Thomas Friedman's best-seller about globalization, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, which I had not been aware of. I was fascinated to find someone else make use of the olive tree as a defining metaphor for the struggles thrown up by the modern economy. However, it should be clear that Friedman's use of the metaphor and mine diverge on a crucial issue, and this divergence helps to clarify what is meant by the olive agenda. Friedman places the olive tree as the symbol of tradition, family and nation over against the Lexus, (the luxury car made by Toyota) as the symbol of modernization, globalization and trade liberalization. What he calls the 'drama of the Lexus and the olive tree'<sup>13</sup> is for him the never-ending tension between material betterment and individual and community identity; and he is of the opinion that a stubborn clinging to the olive tree against the benefits of the Lexus, will negate what he sees as the unquestionable benefits of globalization:

Any society that wants to thrive economically today must constantly be trying to build a better Lexus and driving it out into the world. But no one should have any illusions that merely participating in the global economy will make a society healthy. If that participation comes at the price of a country's identity, if individuals feel their olive tree roots crushed, or washed out, by this global system, those olive tree roots will rebel. They will rise up and strangle the process. Therefore the survival of globalization as a system will depend, in part, on how well all of us strike this balance. A country without healthy olive trees will never feel rooted or secure enough to open up fully to the world and reach out into it. But a country

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 34

that is only olive trees, that is only roots, and has no Lexus, will never go, or grow, very far. Keeping the two in balance is a constant struggle.<sup>14</sup>

Friedman's book is an unapologetic promotion of globalization, and his symbol of the olive tree functions not as a fundamental critique of the industrial and global economic system, but as sideways glance at issues of communal and national identity, which opens the door for a jingoistic defence of US nationalism. Thus it feels that just five years after it was published the book seems hopelessly outdated due to the events of 9/11.

However, even more significantly in terms of the olive agenda, Friedman completely misses the fact that the olive tree *is a tree*, and thus does not primarily symbolise human identity, but the *earth* and all living, growing, fruitful things. His entire analysis of globalization misses complete the question that we have been grappling with in this paper, namely eco/nomics, or the relationship between *oikos-nomos* and *oikos-logos*. The symbol of the Lexus, as a motor vehicle that burns fossil-fuel and contributes to climate change, serves the dominant industrial economy very well. Yet, the thrust of the olive agenda is not to balance the Lexus and the Olive Tree; it is to point out that more and more motor vehicles will in all likelihood mean less and less olive trees, and that promoting the Big economy against the Great economy will not make life better for humanity.

The olive agenda is thus a way of struggling theologically with this tension and to conclude this first exploration, I want to briefly suggest a few contemporary struggles in social development that need to be on the olive agenda, and so to provide something of a feel for what it might mean for us. In the language of this essay, these go beyond Friedman's balancing act and point to the complex relationship of poverty with the environment, of eco/nomics and of the need to shape our human economy in harmony with the Great economy.

*Charcoal burning* is a key form of fuel for millions of poor people, and provides the means to a steady income for many; yet it is a prime contributor to deforestation.

*The patenting of life forms*, such as is promoted by the purveyors of Genetically Modified Organisms, pits the Big economy against the Great economy, threatening the food sovereignty of many people in the pursuit of greater profits.

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<sup>14</sup> Friedman, *The Lexus*, 42

Close to home, the proposed *Wild Coast Highway* in the Eastern Cape symbolises the conflict between the promoters of the brown agenda of jobs, tourism, and trade, against the green agenda of those concerned with indigenous forests.

*Low-cost housing* for many people living in informal settlements is needed on the outskirts of urban areas, often placing stress on wetlands, green lungs and farm land.

The *taxi industry* is crucial to the livelihoods of great numbers of South Africans, and yet it is built on the continuing consumption of fossil fuels.

These issues are real issues, but also suggestive of the items on the olive agenda. It is an agenda that calls for our attention because in so doing we can care for people and for the earth.