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## **Economy - the Common Denominator of Environmental Problems?**

It seems natural to think that economy is at the heart of environmental problems. This is because all environmental problems are, in a broad sense, related to the use of resources derived from nature. My purpose in this paper is to question this apparently self-evident conception. The main point is not that policy tools developed, for instance, within environmental economics would be at fault; in contrast, I believe they can be extremely valuable in addressing restricted problems within well-defined policy domains. Instead, the question I pursue is whether the most important environmental issues fall within the domain of economic thinking at all.

Some light on this question can be cast through a consideration of the nature of the "environmental awakening" of the late 1960s \_ early 1970s. I defend the thesis that the awakening was primarily a moral protest against an unquestioning belief in economic growth and social progress that was predominant in the decades following WW II. This moral dimension of the environmentalist protest has been reflected in the commonly held view that environmental problems form one unified "environmental question", that is, a total threat to the continuation of human culture or even life on the earth. The perception that the "environmental question" is one unified whole stems from the Enlightenment idea that social history is a unified, progressive process; environmentalism has been, partially, a mirror image of this belief in the inevitability of progress.

I think the moral pathos of the early stages of environmentalism demonstrates that other dimensions of value than the economic one obtain a central position in the constitution of environmental issues. This, of course, builds upon the view that all dimensions of valuation cannot be reduced to economy. I finish the paper by suggesting topics for future research concerning relationships between different dimensions of valuation, political decision making, and economic rationality.