

THE WILL TO SIMPLIFY

As we approach the Copenhagen conference, what do we see in the media? On the one hand, there is a picture of complex negotiations about a range of technological and economic solutions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. This process is motivated by complex climate change models. Complex arguments are made for or against various lines of action. On the other hand, simple headline figures emerge from this mass of complexity: 6 degree rise in global temperature; 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide; 1 metre rise in sea level. But this apparent simplicity only masks the underlying complexity – for it is very difficult for the average person to work out how these figures have been derived from the models and arguments. So it is no wonder that the general public remains confused and conflicted about the whole issue.

Yet at heart, the issue *is* simple, if only we could exert the will to see it.

What it boils down to is whether humanity has the will to simplify – to simplify the discussions, recognising that at their core is the question: can we share the planet fairly with each other and the other kingdoms of nature? Can we restrain our thirst for energy and resources? Can we move away from an obsession with material growth, recognising instead the centrality of growth in consciousness? In a nutshell, can we transform our culture and simplify our whole way of life?

Such a planetary change amounts to a fundamental shift in direction, which is only possible through the use of the will-to-good of the whole. As our global society has materially evolved from simplicity to complexity, it risks losing sight of the simplicity of the underlying principles of right relationship that lie at the heart of all healthy communities. Trust, reciprocity, and mutual respect have been formalised into legal terms, and in the process, have been turned into complicated, devitalised husks. The creation of a “legally binding” treaty at Copenhagen will mean little, unless the spirit of cooperation that powers it is genuine. So in our Earth Stewardship work, let us seek to help those who are directly involved to get back in touch with the simplicity of the underlying principles, that they too may connect with the simplifying will-to-good.