

Human Values, Social Change, and the Future

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Introduction: The Passing of Traditional Society?

Is there much left of purely traditional cultures in the world today untouched by the rise of global society and culture? Nearly everywhere, some people wear Levis or some form of blue jeans, eat Big Macs or Kentucky Fried Chicken, drink Coca-Cola or Pepsi, are bombarded with advertisements for Marlboros or Camels, wear Nike or Reebok running shoes, sit through Hollywood motion pictures, and watch CNN and reruns of American television programs. If that sounds like mostly Western—even American—bias, consider also that, nearly everywhere, some people drive in their Hondas, Mazdas, Mitsubishiis, Nissans, Subarus, or Toyotas; they listen to their Yamaha radios or their Sony Walkman; they watch their Mitsubishi or Toshiba television sets and record some programs for later viewing with their Sanyo, Sony, or Toshiba VCRs; they take pictures with their Fuji, Minolta, Nikon, or Ricoh cameras or make motion pictures with their Sony camcorders; they cool their homes with their Sanyo air conditioners; they talk to other people using their Sony cellular telephones; they send and receive messages on their Sanyo fax machines; and, more recently, a growing number of people access e-mail, the Internet, and the World Wide Web using their Fujitsu, Hitachi, or Toshiba personal computers.

This is not to say that the emerging global culture is limited to such obvious elements. It contains, actually, contributions from nearly all the peoples of the world, from the African rhythms of much modern music and dance to foods, spices, and philosophies from Asia to coffee, art, and literature from Latin America. The result has been less a clash of civilizations than a dynamic interaction that has produced a growing cosmopolitan culture.

Nor is it to say that traditions no longer exist (Shils, 1981). Both sacred and secular beliefs and attitudes, many legends and customs continue to be handed down from generation to generation. Our temples, mosques, and churches; our historical shrines and cultural heroes; our architectural and cultural heritage; the enduring symbols of our people's pasts; and the respect that many of us still show for deceased social thinkers and past learning—these and many other things attest to the continuing and sometimes powerful influence that traditions, including premodern traditions, have on the lives of contemporary peoples.

Yet, as we all know, there have been significant social changes that have altered traditional cultures. The modernization writers of the 1960s and 1970s got much of it right. Modernization, "which began in Italy in the fifteenth century and spread to most of the West over the following five hundred years, is now world-wide" (LaPalombara, 1966: 218). The rapidity of change has accelerated, as the school, the factory, the mass media and other communications technologies, new modes of transportation, and global commerce along with other modern social institutions became universal. They transformed the time-space horizons of ordinary people, even among the poorest and least educated classes and among formerly isolated groups. They promoted social interaction and mutual knowledge among peoples formerly remote and isolated from one another. Modern institutions expanded the vision of the possible in people's minds, creating images of the future for people and their children that had been seldom dreamed of before (Inkeles and Smith, 1974; Lerner, 1958).

No longer do people expect that their own future will be like the past lives of their mothers and fathers, much less like those of their grandparents. No longer do people learn all—or even most—of their work skills from their parents or other family members. No longer can people teach a child a set of skills that will be adequate throughout his or her lifetime. Today, children must be prepared for a largely unknown and as yet nonexistent future that will differ from the past, learning not only present knowledge but also learning how to learn (Levy, 1972).

There are few societies left on Earth that contain socially isolated tribal villages, where people live out their lives solely within the enduring relationships of family, kin, and neighbors. Nowhere are memory and anticipation so similar that they merge into one. Where ancient traditions remain, they co-exist with modern culture traits and are an ever-smaller proportion of all social life. Although kith and kin remain part of our lives, today's world has added numerous contacts with strangers, relationships of limited obligations that take place in new organizational settings, never ending technological innovations, new occupations demanding new skills and attitudes, impersonal interdependencies that link different peoples throughout the globe, and justifications for doing things less and less based on age-old customs and more and more based on giving reasons, on an objective analysis of ends and means.

An Increase in the Scale of Society

Well-recognized, long-term trends contributing to these changes are the growth of economic interdependencies and technological developments. Less well understood is the related long-term trend toward an increase in the scale of society, in the scope and intensity of social interaction, in social interdependency, and in complexity. In the past, people's memberships in relatively small groups defined the limits of their duties to others. What was valued was owed to particular other people within one's in-groups, specific members of one's family, extended kin group, village, neighbors, and to a lesser extent one's trading groups (Bell, 1996: 10).

Today, as we all know, the situation is quite different. Many aspects of social interaction are worldwide and a few extend even beyond the surface of the Earth into near space (e.g., orbiting satellites and space vehicles). We now live in interdependent social networks that are supranational and often global, linked by technologies of rapid communication, transportation, exchange, and destruction, a world in which environmental disasters may no longer be merely local but may be common and global, affecting the life-sustaining capacities of the planet itself. Moreover, today, violence against other groups can threaten the well-being of us all.

Whether we like it or not, in many ways the increase in the scale of modern society is making most of us humans into de facto members of a single global collectivity. Moreover, current technological developments are rapidly increasing the frequency of social contact and, thus, the web of life is growing more dense and dynamic and is pulling us toward a common human fate (Bell, 1996: 10-11).

It is easy to see how modern institutions such as multinational corporations, transnational voluntary associations, labor unions, farmer's cooperatives, schools and universities, military organizations, government agencies, the mass media, the nation-state, and the international system have contributed to the increase in the scale of society. But so, too, have some institutions that some writers, at least until recently, regard as being primordial, such as religion, race, and ethnicity. For they, too, are modern ways of creating and maintaining social boundaries. They are large-scale systems that define more or less organized collectivities. They, too, are systems of symbols or clusters of meaning that are emblematic, giving a consciousness to self-and-other identities that are wide in range. They, too, expect the loyalty of their members and they, too, reinforce it with systems of rewards and punishments.

In the case of religion, many of the world's major organized faiths constitute transnational social institutions. The Catholics, major Protestant denominations, the Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, and others have their fulltime specialized practitioners who receive formal training, their sources of revenue and expenditures, their part-time participants, their ordinary mem-

bers, their social boundaries, and their symbols of identity—all of which transcend small-scale locality groups and aspire toward universality. They link together many peoples of more or less different regions, nationalities, races, languages, and subcultures.

Of course, small religious cults spring up from time to time and sects may break off from their parent churches. But even when they aim to turn back the clock and reconnect with the presumed roots of their traditions, they cannot escape the modern world that penetrates their lives. The beast is out of the bottle and it will not go back in. In the United States, for example, the thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult who killed themselves in southern California in 1997 expected to find escape from this earthly world on a spaceship that they believed was trailing the Hale-Bopp comet, and the "Unabomber" in the United States aimed to force us all to return to the past and to give up modern technology by killing and maiming people using, ironically, buses, bombs, and the modern postal service, among other examples of twentieth-century technology.

In the case of race, the inadequacy of the categories notwithstanding, the major divisions now being used are large-scale orderings containing a heterogeneous mix of peoples. Think of the diversity of peoples included in the classification of "white" or "Caucasian." It might contain Australians, Europeans, North Americans, South Americans, and many others. It encompasses many groups in conflict, such as the Protestants and Catholics of Northern Ireland or the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims of Bosnia.

What of the effort to organize social boundaries and identities according to the idea of *negritude* that was popular some decades ago? Organizing by blackness unites people having hundreds of diverse languages, cultures, and local and national identities. In Nigeria alone, for example, there are the Yoruba, the Edo, the Ibo, the Hausa, the Fulani, the Kanuri, the Nupe, the Tiv, and others. *Negritude*, too, unites warring groups, such as the Tutsis and Hutus of Rwanda and Burundi and the different clans of Somalia, to mention only two cases.

"Race" is a modern social invention for organizing social life on a large scale and it competes with other forms of defining large-scale collectivities such as social class, nationality, religion, and even the corporation. In his studies in Canada, to take one final example, Menno Boldt (1980, 1982) shows how native Indian leaders worked to create the collective power and structural changes necessary for native Canadian Indians to control their own future. The leaders used the past to create pan-Indian unity despite the historical facts of fragmented, quarreling, and warring tribal groups with different languages and subcultures. Canada's Constitution Act of 1982, for example, defined aboriginal peoples of Canada as divided into different segments: Inuit, Metis, and Indian, with registered Indians alone being members of 577 bands scattered across Canada (Boldt et al., 1985). Native Indian

leaders drew selectively on their history, emphasizing the common bonds inherent in the traditional egalitarian values of all Indian tribes, their similar ways of relating to nature, and, perhaps most important, their "shared historical experience of oppression, deprivation and exclusion at the hands of the dominant society" (Boldt 1980: 19). All of these unifying facts can be documented and they were used to create a pan-Indian political and cultural identity that was clearly large-scale, secular, and modern, but that did not so much replace the many different tribal identities and traditions as co-exist with them.

The Need for a Global Ethic

The trends toward increasing social scale are clear. If—and it may be a big if—we humans can avoid blowing ourselves up in a nuclear holocaust, fatally damaging ourselves and our environment either through mindless greed or ignorance, or destroying each other in national, race, ethnic, or religious wars, then all roads lead to the same destination: the emergence of a global society and an increase in human awareness that all human beings do indeed share a common fate. This *de facto* emerging global society calls out, obviously, for effective guidance. Fortunately, some progress has been made in providing it. A variety of formal instruments of social control to answer the call are already in place. Elise Boulding (1993), for example, describes three aspects of the modern international system: (1) the international order based upon the interactions of the 185 or so existing states, including, by the early 1990s, about 2,000 intergovernmental organizations and nearly 62,000 bilateral and multilateral treaties that are in force; (2) the United Nations and its many agencies, ranging from the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization to the International Court of Justice and the World Health Organization, including fifty worldwide information systems; and (3) transnational nongovernmental organizations, which have grown from only 176 in 1909 to more than 18,000 by the early 1990s and which involve nearly every field of human endeavor from business, industry, science, and the arts to religion, education, culture, and sports. These exist, of course, in addition to the many transnational corporate entities that make up supranational and frequently worldwide financial and economic systems. Although they primarily pursue their private interests rather than those of the public, they help to create a universal society that includes the whole human race (Bell, 1996).

These formal organizational initiatives are made up of social structures and delimited spheres of social control. Yet they also rest on a, sometimes implicit, set of universal moral codes that, if explicitly elaborated, could form the basis of a world moral community. Proper governance, of course, is enhanced not only by formal social controls that are embodied and enforced in institutional and organizational arrangements, but also by informal controls

that rest on shared values and norms which people want to uphold because they have internalized them and sincerely believe that they are morally right.

As we struggle to deal with globalizing political, economic, and social relationships, can we also create a single overarching global ethic to govern them? Can we construct a worldwide common public culture to guide the social interactions among peoples of different nationalities, socio-economic circumstances, religions, races, languages, and historical backgrounds? Can the global society, in other words, also become a world moral community?

Universal Human Values

For the last three generations or so, social scientists have exaggerated the cultural diversity in the world and often failed to see what was universal. Today, we know that cultural universals do exist (Brown, 1991); that cultural and ethical relativism, however beneficial they may have been in combating ethnocentric bias, have been discredited (Edgerton, 1992; Washburn, 1997); that post-modernism, despite its beneficial corrections of the arrogant certitudes of positivism, ultimately leads to the dead-end of nihilism (Rosenau, 1992); and we know that objective methods exist by which to warrant or refute value judgments (Bell, 1997, vol. 2; Lee, 1985). We know that in human societies that have flourished, people have developed basically similar core values. And we know, finally, that where people have not developed the right moral values, they have created more or less sick societies that failed in important ways to satisfy the biological and social needs of their members.

Many lists of basic or core human values about which there is wide agreement have been compiled over the years, going back well before the birth of Christ and reaching up to the present. Elsewhere, (Bell 1997, vol. 2) I have compared various lists of values and shown how similar they are. Moreover, I have explained how such similar values came to be shared by people nearly everywhere, because of similarities in human nature, the preconditions of social life, and certain aspects of nature (e.g., objects having length, height, width, and volume; gravity; etc.) that exist everywhere on Earth.

With an increase in the scale of society, people tend to expand their conceptions of who is worthy and who has legitimate claims on core values. Thus, when people begin to treat others with more respect and dignity, they do so not so much because their values have changed, but because they have redefined the range of applicability of their values, enlarging it to include more and more people, until, finally, it potentially includes all members of the human race.

Are Universal Values the Right Values?

Of course, to show that similar core human values exist, in and of themselves, does not necessarily prove that such values are the right values to ensure long and good lives for people now and indefinitely into the future. Yet human evolution may have led to the selection of fundamental value principles that contribute to individual and group survival and well-being. Moreover, many of these traditional values may remain appropriate today. But the world has changed and is continuing to change with increasing speed. Thus, some age-old human values may no longer make contributions to human well-being and may even have become detrimental. One such, for example, is the value placed on high rates of human reproduction; in times past it was necessary for group survival, but in times present it has become a threat to the future survival of all human groups.

Although universal human values give us a place to start, we can face the skeptical modern mind only by giving objective reasons for our support of particular values and then by submitting them to critical examination. Robert B. Edgerton (1992), for example, has shown the fruitfulness of asking whether or not a culture contributes to the survival and flourishing of its population, to the physical and mental health of its members by satisfying their needs, and to their life satisfaction and happiness.

Two attempts to reach worldwide consensus on global ethics are notable. The first is the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was reaffirmed by representatives of most of the Earth's states in June 1993 at a World Conference on Human Rights that met in Vienna. The U.N. Declaration is important as a statement of possible universal values because, being based on worldwide critical discussion, it carries the moral authority of a legitimate international organization and sets a consensual law-like standard for the rights of all people. There remains, of course, much to be discussed and agreed upon—for example, differences regarding the priorities that ought to be given to civil and political rights versus economic and social rights. Moreover, spurred on by China, Indonesia, Syria, and Iran, forty Asian countries diluted the global unity concerning standards of justice and fairness by insisting on allowing for regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds, in what some people believe could have been an attempt to disguise wrongdoing in a claim of exception.

Nonetheless, the U.N. Declaration is a promising step toward establishing a universal morality. It recognizes the inherent dignity of all people and invites everyone into a global moral community as full members, providing an international standard that defines the good as we ought to behave toward other people and the evil as we ought not.

A second notable event was a Parliament of the World's Religions that met in Chicago in 1993. More than 200 leaders representing more

than 100 of the world's religious faiths signed a declaration, "Towards a Global Ethic." The declaration was the result of two years of work by scholars and theologians (Küng, 1991). The religious leaders viewed their declaration as a beginning effort to create a global ethic for all humankind that can be "affirmed by all persons with ethical convictions, whether religiously grounded or not" (Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993: 3). It is less of a religious statement per se as it is a set of ethical or moral principles, not otherworldly or supernatural but similar to a Confucian moral system and a vocabulary for everyday, this-world ethics.

Among the values supported in "Towards a Global Ethic" are individual responsibility, treating others as we wish them to treat us, respect for life, treating all other people with dignity (without regard to distinctions of age, sex, race, skin color, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin), patience, understanding and acceptance of one another, forgiveness, solidarity and relatedness with other people of the world, kindness and generosity, caring for others, compassion, love for one another, equality between men and women, non-violence, economic and social justice, peace and global order, nature-friendly ways of life, respect for human rights, constancy and trustworthiness, truthfulness and honesty, moderation and modesty, loyalty, safety and security, freedom as long as no harm is done to others, tolerance, and sexuality that expresses a loving relationship lived by equal partners.

Among those things that are *devalued* are abuses of the Earth's ecosystems, prejudice, hatred, theft, greed, arrogance, mistrust, hostility, violence, envy, jealousy, resentment, terror, oppression, torture, mutilation, killing, ruthlessness and brutality, lies and deceit, swindling and hypocrisy, demagoguery, fanaticism and intolerance, opportunism, domination, and degradation.

This document is by no means the last word on what ought to constitute an ethic for a global society. Much more work remains to be done, for example, in giving reasons why people ought to make such value judgments and in putting such reasons to empirical test regarding their contributions to human well-being now and in the future. Yet "Towards a Global Ethic" shows us that, despite the apparent diversity of nationalities, cultural identities, languages, and religious faiths of its signatories, such critical discourse can be carried out on a global level with civility and can result in coherence and consensus in appraising human values (Bell, 1996).

One additional example is worthy of mention, because it appears to be mostly lost amidst the constant bad news that today's mass media unceasingly thrust upon us. There is an important experiment in human decency taking place, as I write, in South Africa. It is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and it aims to expose the truth of the cruelties, tortures, mutilations, and murders that were committed during the period of political repression under the system of apartheid.

Following a peaceful transfer of power to the majority black Africans, the Commission offers the possibility of amnesty to guilty individuals for the truth about their crimes. Although we do not yet know how this experiment will turn out, it is an effort that deserves our respect and support. It appears to be both a compassionate and effective attempt to establish the civility, peace, and cooperation that are necessary for the future well-being of all South Africans—white, brown, and black. The Commission seeks to remember the past and to react to it not with brutal revenge and retaliation, but with forgiveness. As survivors openly weep for the victims of the past, many reach out in reconciliation to their former oppressors, seeking the humanity in them and inviting them to walk together into a future common public culture of human dignity for all.

Have Human Values Changed?

The increase in the scale of society, then, has meant not only an expansion of the range of social space within which people interact on the basis of a basic equality of citizenship, but also an increase in the scope of application of existing human values. Have there also been any significant changes in human values themselves?

Several sets of studies indicate that, yes that may be the case. For example, Ronald Inglehart (1990) reports survey data for over twenty-five countries, including multiple data collections within the same countries from 1973 to 1988. In all, he analyzes over 200 separate studies involving more than a quarter-million respondents. His major contention is that in countries where material well-being and physical security have been the standard for decades, that is, in advanced industrial societies, traditional "materialist" values of physical sustenance and safety have been decreasing in importance while "postmaterialist" values such as individual autonomy, innovation, self-expression, beauty, and a tendency to challenge authority have been increasing. That is, top priority is shifting from the basic physical necessities of life to those things that will enhance the quality of life. Inglehart claims, further, that this new axis of polarization—materialism vs. postmaterialism—rather than traditional left-right differences now explain people's responses to such "new" issues as environmentalism, nuclear power, and women's rights.

But does this shift from materialist to postmaterialist values in advanced industrial societies really indicate a shift in basic values? Perhaps not. First, from Inglehart's data we note that many people, even in advanced industrial societies, continue to express materialist values. Thus, the change he documents is by no means a complete shift in values on the part of all people in industrial societies.

Second, as Wright (1991: 893) argues, even within many of the postmaterial values there is a materialist aspect. For example, a clean and pretty environment may be an aesthetic goal but it also has survival value. Additionally, as its true costs have become clear, nuclear power is rightly opposed partly by appealing to thoroughly materialist cost-benefit analysis.

Third, and most important, postmaterial values are at least partly contingent upon the adequate satisfaction of materialist values. When people have no food to eat or no place to live, they judge self-realization as of little immediate importance. As the old blues refrain puts it, "You don't care 'bout the water till the well runs dry" (Bell, 1997, vol.2).

Thus, if we postulate different levels of values—for example, survival, comfort, and self-fulfillment—in a hierarchy similar to that suggested by Abraham Maslow (1968), we can understand how a growing proportion of people in societies with high levels of living come to exhibit self-fulfillment values. Many people in such societies have a relatively high and secure level of personal safety and economic well-being. Thus, their survival and comfort needs are largely satisfied. This does not mean that survival and comfort are not important to them. It simply means that for people with enough clean water to drink, food to eat, and decent homes to live in, self-fulfillment can become an *additional* goal of human endeavor. Moreover, good health (beyond mere survival) continues to place highly in value studies (Perkins and Spates, 1986), because people everywhere realize that it is not only a good thing in itself but is also a pre-condition for the achievement of other goals (Bell, 1997, vol. 2).

In the future, if generally high levels of living are achieved and maintained, then self-realization may become of great importance for the further development of human values and potential. But about two-thirds of the Earth's population today do not live in advanced industrial societies and for most of them the struggle for survival and a modicum of comfort takes precedence over self-fulfillment, not because they really have different values or different priorities of values but because the expression of postmaterial values is contingent on some necessary satisfaction of material needs.

Finally, the relatively high levels of living that have characterized many (but by no means all) people living in advanced industrial societies during the last few generations is in no way guaranteed in the future. It remains precarious and dependent on complex political, economic, and social structures that may or may not continue to function adequately. A worldwide crisis—political, economic, health, agricultural, climatic, or nuclear—might reduce all of the Earth's people to a struggle for survival. Without some minimal satisfaction of basic needs, the pursuit of higher order values—and in the extreme even life itself—ends (Bell, 1997, vol. 2).

Nevertheless, some basic human values no doubt have changed over the long period of evolution of human societies, and, given rapidly changing

conditions, some others probably *ought* to change, if human societies are to flourish in the future. Moreover, we must question and retain a reasonable doubt about what human values are the most appropriate for achieving the freedom and well-being of the human community in the future.

What Human Values Ought to be Changed?

The human future may depend on recognizing and living according to many traditional human values, but it may also depend on changing some values—perhaps holding some even more strongly than we now do—in response to changing conditions. Such conditions are well known and include resource depletion, pollution and environmental damage, the large and still growing human population, the increase in the destructive power of weapons of war, and the tremendous increase in communication and interaction throughout the globe. If we humans fail to change in some significant ways and continue to threaten the destruction of the life-sustaining capacities of the Earth, then the results may be devolution, anarchy, mass misery, and death (Laszlo, 1994).

Thus, I propose some specific changes in human values and practices. No doubt, there are others that ought to be considered as well. Also, my proposals are clearly contingent, not absolutes: We must constantly monitor and periodically review our goals and plans of action, being ready to revise them as necessary as we identify changes in relevant conditions. Given our present foresight, however, I offer the following nine recommendations.

1. We ought to reaffirm and strengthen the value of human life by placing even more value than at present on extending the length of individual human lives, because without life nothing is possible. Priority ought to be given, first, to applying existing knowledge to increase life expectancies where they are now low, so that all people everywhere will have a good chance of living out most of the human life span as we now understand it; and, second, to extending the human life span itself, making these new potentialities equally available to all peoples everywhere.
2. At the same time, reproductive values ought to be changed everywhere through voluntary choice and education toward valuing low birth rates, to no more than one child per person, because to do so would contribute to creating a sustainable future global society.
3. Also, in order to create a sustainable society, sufficiency ought to become highly valued while wasteful consumption and luxury ought to become devalued, especially in the more economically advanced societies, reinforcing the time-tested values of moderation and abstinence from indulgence.
4. The freedom of women ought to be valued as much as that of men, so that women will have equal opportunities with men to lead lives of

their own choosing, both because all individuals deserve to be treated with equal dignity and because of the important additional contributions that liberated women can make to human well-being.

5. Because they almost always result in net losses and human suffering for all concerned parties, the practices of aggression, violence, and warfare ought to be devalued and eliminated. They ought to be replaced by the value of peaceful cooperation. An exception should be made, though, for a corps of international peace soldiers that would be authorized to use force, limited to no more than what is necessary, to stop aggression and killing. Such force, however, ought to be legitimated and controlled by an international body organized by the community of nation-states and used fairly, compassionately, and competently.

6. Millennia-old practices of social exclusivism and ethnocentrism ought to be discarded, because they are increasingly dysfunctional and counterproductive. Today and in the coming future, it is and will be contrary to our own freedom and welfare to create out-groups and dehumanize people as the alien Other. It is contrary to our personal interests to avoid community responsibility and not to care about the human rights of other people, both friends and strangers alike. It is contrary to our personal interest, also, to hate and to destroy, because to do so breeds more hate and destruction that may circle back to us or to our kin, neighbors, and friends. We and others will benefit from a win-win synergetic circle, *if* we can enlarge our community of concern to include all of living humanity and, thereby, help to create a world moral community.

7. We ought to enlarge our community of concern still more to include the future. As part of our present responsibility, we ought to care for the freedom and welfare of future generations. The moral choice is a balance between the interests of both present and future generations, striving both to create conditions for an equal and good chance of every living person to live a long and satisfying life *and* to leave future generations at least as well off as past generations left us of the present generation (Bell, 1997, vol. 2).

8. We ought to focus, additionally, on creating, spreading, and storing knowledge, teaching everyone to read and write, and providing opportunities for basic and specialized educations for all people, both men and women. Such knowledge ought to include both *foresight capability* so that people learn to plan more effectively to create desirable futures for themselves and *objective methods of moral reasoning* so that they have grounds for judging what is, in fact, a desirable future. Both foresight and reasoned moral judgment help prepare people to participate intelligently in critical discourse about what ought to be done to solve the common problems of all humanity. Moreover, they help to break the chains of ritual and convention by freeing people from the limitations of the past, allowing them to transcend the confines of the present, and encouraging them to shape their own future to their legitimate desires.

9. Finally, many of the above recommendations imply or require that we also strongly value and work to maintain the life-sustaining capacities of the Earth. The well-being of the human race, both now and in the future, is dependent, obviously, on the sustenance that is derived from the environment. Beyond that, humble recognition of massive human ignorance not only of the purposes of life and the nature of the universe but also of possible future human needs argue for prudence and conservation in how we humans treat other life forms, both animal and plant, and the Earth itself.

Although at first glance these proposals may sound impractical, there are literally thousands of groups and organizations throughout the planet already working for the attainment of one or another of them. Moreover, gains have already been made, for example, in extending life expectancies, in reducing the birth rate, in improving women's status, in protecting the environment, in creating socially inclusive participant societies with public liberties, and even in controlling human aggression and violence, although, granted, there is no cause for complacency and there remains a long way to go.

Conclusion

Although traditions, even some ancient ones, continue to influence contemporary peoples everywhere, there are few—if any—traditional peoples left who are free of the innovative changes of global society and culture. The long-term trends toward increases in the scale of society now impinge on everyday life nearly everywhere, just as everyday life nearly everywhere has its contributions and influences on the nature of emerging global society and culture themselves. Accompanying the enlarging boundaries of social interaction has been the addition of new identities expanding the self-definitions of people and incorporating them in larger clusters of meaning.

Such social changes have been promoted by the spread of worldwide telecommunications and mass media, by multinational corporations and economic interdependencies, international associations, schools and universities, military organizations, government agencies, and connections among nation-states themselves. Such changes include new technologies, beliefs, and practices. They contribute both to an increase in the density of social relationships and their spread over geographical space. Moreover, they are not limited to those institutions that seem inherently modern. Rather, they tend to incorporate also those bases of association that have been thought of as being based on past-oriented, traditional ties, such as religion, race, and ethnicity. Such groupings, although often claiming supernatural or primordial justifications, are modern conceptual constructs and are large-scale and transnational.

We now know that in recent decades cultural diversity has been greatly exaggerated, that cultural and ethical relativism are false doctrines, and that

some human values are widely shared. Such values include cooperation, education, fairness and justice, forgiveness, fraternity, freedom, knowledge, love, loyalty, moderation, peace, personal security, tolerance, giving and receiving respect and dignity, respect for life, responsibility for self and others, trust and trustworthiness, and truthfulness. Such values contribute to the biological survival of individuals and they permit people to live, work, and learn together; they help make social life possible.

This is not to say, however, that currently existing universal values are necessarily the right values to permit human life and society to flourish in today's world, much less for all time. Although such universal values are a good place to start a search for a global ethic, they ought to be questioned and objectively examined. We can ask: Do such values positively contribute to the survival and flourishing of a people and their society, to the physical and mental health of individual members by satisfying their needs, and to their life satisfaction and happiness? And we can expect objective answers.

The apparent shift from materialist to postmaterialist values in economically advanced societies reported by some researchers ought to be viewed with skepticism, because it may simply be contingent on a comfortable level of living in which materialist values, being largely satisfied for many people and therefore not salient on their consciousness, falsely appear to be less important than they in fact are.

Yet, certainly, some values have changed (e.g., reproductive values) and other values, perhaps, ought to change as well, if human society is to flourish in the future. For discussion, I propose the following changes: increased efforts to extend the length of individual lives; the reduction of births to no more than one child per person; a greater emphasis on acquiring sufficient rather than great wealth; the liberation of women everywhere so that they may have lives of their own choosing; a devaluation of aggression and violence along with an increase in caring for others, with more value than at present placed on peace and cooperation; an expansion of people's communion of concern to include all presently living people; a still further expansion of concern to include the well-being of future generations; increased effort to advance knowledge, especially including foresight capacity and objective moral reasoning; and, finally, increased concern for the life-sustaining capacities of the Earth.

These proposals may seem hopelessly utopian, especially in the face of the violently negative reactions to change among some groups who fear the global future that they see coming and who want to return to the small-scale mentality of the past. As a new millennium begins, there are some groups determined to turn back the clock at all costs. They include, among others, religious fundamentalists, political and ethnic zealots, maniacal believers in masculine supremacy, and paranoid American militia members. They have produced a wave of meanness and fanaticism, wanton aggression and de-

struction—including genocide—as they have preached resentment, hate, revenge, and violence.

Obviously, such groups should not be ignored. Their concerns need to be taken seriously and their voices brought to the table of negotiation. Patience and persistence are the only answers, carried out with empathy and compassion along with an open mind that considers “no change” a possibly desirable future outcome (just as the U.S. government decided in the 1970s *not* to support the development of the supersonic commercial air transport for environmental and economic reasons).

The challenge is to answer their unreasonable fears with rational arguments and open discourse. It includes trying to teach the empirical fact that revenge is counterproductive and leads to an endless cycle of retaliation. Even justice must be tempered with the principles of forgiveness, empathy, and cooperation in order to maximize the future freedom and well-being of all parties concerned. Also, the challenge includes making a determined effort to stay calm and to keep the peace so that all parties can participate and negotiate.

It will not be easy. It will not happen overnight. And, unfortunately, it probably will not happen without additional human pain and suffering. But such groups, I believe, are the last gasps of the past, not the fresh breath of the future. Already, there are hundreds of thousands of people and thousands of organizations working toward worldwide human rights and a global ethic, including working toward one or more of the changes in the human values and common practices that I have herein proposed.

For example, two recent experiments in worldwide dialogue aimed at the appraisal of values and practices are the reaffirmation of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Parliament of the World's Religions. Both events resulted in propositions to which all humans might be expected to agree and they invite a continuing global discourse on what values and what behavior are appropriate to guide people in their treatment of other people. Both, too, offer hope that we humans can reduce tragedy, terror, violence, suffering, and injustice by making common cause with each other, by giving mutual support as we struggle to create and sustain the conditions for long, good, and meaningful lives for all people everywhere on Earth, both now and in the future.

Note

In this paper, I draw on materials that I discuss more fully in *Foundations of Futures Studies*, vol. 1 “History, Purposes, and Knowledge” and, especially, vol. 2 “Values, Objectivity, and the Good Society.” I thank Professor Reimon Bachika for comments on a version of this paper presented at the International Seminar and Symposium, Bukkyo University, Kyoto, Japan, September 18-21, 1997.

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