

World Goodwill

NEWSLETTER

UNIVERSAL ETHICS

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 1: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Our view of life is undergoing radical change as ideas of inclusiveness and universality increasingly condition human consciousness. The outer world mirrors that change for, to quote Vaclav Havel, “consciousness precedes physical being – not the other way around”.

The key to safe passage through this turbulent phase in human affairs lies in the ethics that motivate choice and govern action. For the trend to universality not only greatly enhances the work of the forces for good, but it also increases the dangers we face. The environment movement demonstrates the former, with right motives inspiring planet-wide efforts for the benefit of all life on earth. Drug trafficking, corruption and terrorism are examples of the latter, with wrong motives at the root of the fluid international networks that make these problems so difficult to counter.

Ethics have been defined as “a discipline dealing with good and evil and with moral duty”.¹ As individuals, our ethics and our moral code shape the private process whereby we seek to live by our ideals and fulfil our duty. For humanity as a whole, in the changing and interdependent world of today, there is urgent need for public consensus on a global ethic of common rights and shared responsibilities to safeguard the future and to invest our duties to each other and to the planet with a new degree of moral authority.

“The most important change that

people can make is to change their way of looking at the world” wrote the visionary economist, Barbara Ward. She recognised that when we change “our fundamental angle of vision” everything else changes as a result: “our priorities, our values, our judgements, our pursuits”. From this *metanoia*, this “turning of the heart”, human beings are able to “see with new eyes and understand with new minds and turn their energies to new ways of living”.

The Ageless Wisdom in its many forms traces the source of the turmoil in the world to such a *metanoia*. People of goodwill are seeing with “new eyes” and trying to live by that new reality. They are realising that disciplined ethical living by human beings, individually and globally, is the only way to bridge between the uncertainty of today and a future in which humanity is at peace with itself.

¹ Noel J. Brown & Pierre Quiblier (eds.), *Ethics & Agenda 21: Moral Implications of a Global Consensus*. New York, UNEP, 1994. p.5

1996 N°4

INTERVIEW: SHRIDATH RAMPHAL	2
ETHICS FOR A NEW ERA	5
UNIVERSAL ETHIC PROJECT	6
FORMULA FOR WORLD PEACE & PROGRESS	7
VALUES TO LIVE BY	8
REFLECTIONS	8



INTERVIEW: SHRIDATH RAMPHAL

For over twenty years Sir Shridath Ramphal has been a leading figure in international affairs. Together with the Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, he is Co-Chairman of the Commission on Global Governance and he is one of the few individuals who has been a member of each of the five independent international commissions of the 1980s. He was Chairman of the West Indian Commission which issued its report in 1992. From 1975 to 1990 Sir Shridath Ramphal was Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, and before that (from 1972 to 1975), Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice of Guyana. From 1991 to 1993 he was President of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). He is currently Chairman of LEAD International, the International Leadership in Environment and Development Program, Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Future Generations Alliance Foundation, and Chancellor of the University of West Indies and the University of Warwick in Britain. He is the author of numerous publications, including the books *One World to Share* and *Our Country, the Planet*, which was written for the Earth Summit.

Sir Shridath kindly agreed to speak with World Goodwill about the topic of universal ethics and the significance attached to ethics in *Our Global Neighbourhood*, the report of the Commission on Global Governance. The Commission is an independent group of 28 leaders with diverse experience and responsibilities. *Our Global Neighbourhood* was reviewed in the 1995, No.2 issue of the World Goodwill Newsletter. It offers wide-ranging proposals for reform of the way in which the global community can better manage its affairs in an interdependent world.

World Goodwill: *Our Global Neighbourhood* focuses on moral and ethical values and principles. Why was this your central message?

Shridath Ramphal: We came to this message in a very practical way. All of us who served on the Commission had a clear awareness that arrangements for managing human affairs at the international level were flawed. They were not working. Radical restructuring and institutional change at the national and international levels were needed. What change? The deeper we probed in our efforts to answer that question the more convinced we became among ourselves (and this recognition was the outcome of the Commission's celebration if you like) that it was a question you could not answer unless you first developed a perspective on the world, on the international community and on the basic values that change was going to be designed to fulfil. If you don't have these values, if you don't have an ethical framework and a vision of the world, then how are you going to begin to change it? To suit what notion? Even if it is just for efficiency, then efficiency for what?

This was not a commission of philosophers. It was a group of very hard-headed people from public and national life, from universities etc. And we all became absolutely convinced that the first, and the central issue, was going to be: What is the set of values by which the world needs to be reshaped? Values, therefore, became a dominant theme in the work of the Commission. Values became the subject of the second chapter of our report, and for all of the rest of the report – whether dealing with peace and security, the

reform of the UN, poverty and the world economy, the role of law worldwide or whatever – we had a benchmark in values by which we could recommend changes to be made.

We were satisfied that there are certain universal values which have evolved out of the whole rich history of moral thinking. They are core values of universal acceptance and found in all religions, fundamental values you will find in all political philosophies. What we felt was needed was to identify these values and to give them life, give them meaning. For, sadly, we have been very good at defining values but not at living by them: yet it is living by them that has become so important.

Curiously enough, they are not strange values, they are pretty ordinary, they are values that so many people have lived with in interpersonal relations and in communities, but they are not values that have characterised international life. They are not values that have characterised global living.

For us on the Commission, a fundamental element of these values was caring. That sounds very simple – simplistic almost. But caring is the antithesis of the values on which the nation-state has developed and therefore the values by which the world has lived. The world that produced empires was not a world of caring. The world that produced wars was not a world of caring, save for yourself. And yet caring has always been a human quality, as in caring within the family. The challenge is to see ourselves as a larger family and apply these same values to the larger family.

We have evolved from family, to tribe, to community, to a world of nations. And now we have passed into a new time in which this world of nations has developed into a world of people – a community. What else is it but a global neighbourhood? And like all neighbourhoods it isn't all good. It isn't a white-picket fence neighbourhood, it's a rugged neighbourhood. It's a neighbourhood in the sense that everything that happens *in* the neighbourhood happens *to* the neighbourhood. Everything that happens around the corner happens to you. Now is this sense of neighbourhood not a value? I would say that it is. But maybe it is more a perception of the world.

World Goodwill: The Commission also focused on leadership.

Shridath Ramphal: We grappled with the notion of values and came to it out of our need to answer the question: What kind of change? In the same way we came to the recognition of leadership out of another line of questioning. When we had satisfied ourselves that there were basic values that should shape how we try to survive over the next millennium we had to ask ourselves how are we going to bring about these changes? How are we going to persuade those who have the power, and are therefore the most responsible, to exercise that power in the way we saw was needed? As you explore these questions you come to the absolute conviction that it has to come through more enlightened leadership than the world has had to date. We must have enlightened leadership and we must have it at all levels, not just at the level of government. I saw 200 Prime Ministers and Presidents at the Earth Summit in Rio, and heard them each talk for seven minutes and I don't think I could name more than ten who I would say exuded enlightened leadership. For me that is a sad commentary, because I come out of that world of government.

We must have enlightened leadership in government, of course, but we must also have it in business and in all other areas. Most of all we must have it at the level of people. Sometimes, when we think about leadership, we think of leaders and the led. Quite often when good things happen in the world it is when these roles are reversed: the leaders are led. When enlightenment comes from people – as it has in the environment movement, in de-nuclearisation, with civil rights in the United States, in the women's movement – this was leadership. Have no doubt, this was leadership from people, compelling leaders to act. This, of course, is the great value of democracy. True democracy is the empowerment of the people. Many things fly under the flag of democracy that don't really give people that empowerment, but that is what democracy at its best should give, and that is why we must try so hard for it. True democracy allows people to help formal leaders to move in the right direction, to develop and accept

the values I am talking about and to apply them to global affairs.

World Goodwill: To what extent do you think that the ethic of 'one world: one humanity' is manifesting in world affairs?

Shridath Ramphal: If I didn't believe that this awareness of the one world, in the deepest sense, was not evolving I would despair. But I don't despair because I see it happening. I can see the differences already between the generations. Some of my generation have come gropingly to this awareness. The younger generation has come more naturally to an awareness that they are part of one world, that everyone is their neighbour. The concept of a global neighbourhood is no problem for them. They are not hung up as my generation has been on borders, sovereignty, states, flags and anthems.

For the greater part human beings are moving to an acceptance of our interdependence and that is a wonderful thing. It is also now an absolutely necessary awareness. It might have been the case even 100 years ago, certainly it was 1000 years ago, that the fact that people were not aware of their oneness, or even of each other's existence, did not impinge on their survival. It might have impinged on the quality of their lives, the breadth of their knowledge and so on but it didn't necessarily impinge on survival. Today I would argue that we are one world, that we are very rapidly running out of resources and using up the planet's capacity to sustain us. All that flows from this understanding of our oneness is absolutely critical to our survival. For the first time in human history survival of the human species is now on the agenda.

When we were coming up to the 20th century we weren't facing dangers of survival as a species. We were facing lots of dangers, military and economic especially, and the 20th century fulfilled those promises of disaster. We look back on the 20th century with self-congratulation and much complacency. We say: "Didn't it see the flourishing of human genius?" Yet as we come up to the 21st century, we face the danger to human survival – for the first time. So what have we used this genius for? Why haven't we used it better? Why? Because we have used it in a mechanistic way, without relating it to values. The exercise of this genius was in a context that placed little or no importance on global values. A relationship to a global civic ethic was not at the heart of human behaviour and without that ethic conditioning our actions the result could well be disaster.

World Goodwill: Are you optimistic about the future?

Shridath Ramphal: I am optimistic and mostly because of what I call global civic society. I see a lot of people all over the world who live and interact by this sense of oneness. And I see how international civil society is beginning to influence decisions. I was involved in the

major UN Conferences in Rio, Cairo, Beijing and Istanbul. What was the dominant factor in these gatherings? It wasn't that they were all great assemblies of governments. It was that they were great occasions on which anything good that emerged did so because of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Civil society, NGOs, the people, are now forcing governments to make compromises and agreements based on human values, both on the national and global level.

World Goodwill: What is the relationship between global ethics and the diversity of human cultures?

Shridath Ramphal: I am talking of the governance of variety and not of sameness. Particularly in the context of values it is vital that we see that the variety of cultures is not a problem to be overcome or to be tolerated. Difference is not a downside. Difference is an enrichment. Variety is a treasure. The right analogy for the world is not the melting pot. I don't see the global neighbourhood as a melting pot. I see the global neighbourhood as a bouquet of flowers. Each flower brings something special to that bouquet, but what is critical is the harmonising of the flowers. It is the harmony of the variety that produces the glory of the bouquet – that is how I see the global neighbourhood.

World Goodwill: What influences in particular have inspired your life of service?

Shridath Ramphal: I haven't actually given a great deal of thought to this. Certainly I don't think that there was any blinding light on the road to Damascus. My life and thoughts have evolved out of living. First of all from living in the multi-racial society in Guyana. Then, more importantly, being convinced at a very early age that we had to bring the Caribbean together as a region – the West Indies. I moved from the West Indies to become Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. And I took with me the same conception of community, only I was dealing with a community that was 30 countries when I started, and when I ended my time as Secretary-General had grown to 50 countries. In the Commonwealth in particular, I found that the only safe touch-

stone was principle. There were many conflicts we had to deal with, some big such as in Southern Africa. When I had my quarrels with the British Government, for example, we were arguing over values and principles. On behalf of most Commonwealth leaders, I was saying that there were human values at stake in Southern Africa that had to be in the ascendant over the short-term commercial and kinship values for which the British Government was contending. This, and other experiences, reinforced my conviction that it is the pursuit and propagation of human, global values that matter.

At that time, I became involved in a set of independent commissions and ended up by being a part of them all: the Brandt, Palme, Brundtland, Nyerere, the Humanitarian and, ultimately, the Global Governance Commission which brought them all together. The Brandt Commission had told us what needs to be done on development, the Palme Commission on security, the Brundtland Commission what needs to be done on environment and so on. How do we do it? How do we get these things done? Those were the questions the Commission on Global Governance sought to answer.

Along the way my work and convictions have grown and deepened. I have also met and worked with many very great people. Willy Brandt played a big part in the evolution of my thinking. Today what Nelson Mandela stands for plays a very big part. As Chancellor of Warwick University, I took part in the ceremony in which many degrees were conferred upon him on his recent triumphant visit to London. I told him, in the oration I made on that occasion: "You have become the most powerful person in the world" (he raised his eyebrows at that) and I said that this was not in the conventional sense, not because South Africa is the greatest country or he is its President, not because of the normal things which describe power, but because of his unique, towering, moral authority. To me that is real power.

Our Global Neighbourhood – The Report of the Commission on Global Governance. London & New York, Oxford University Press,

We need to move on from the "sound bite" mentality and slogans of our media age to deeper reflection, and replace the "ethic" of success and materialism with an ethic of responsibility and care.

The potential for such a global ethic is inherent in our common humanity and the values shared by our faiths – the avoidance of harm to others, compassion and neighbourly love. Together with the values on which human rights are based – recognition of equal human dignity and worth, mutual respect, tolerance and justice – we have firm foundations for that ethic based on an *inclusive* approach, one which brings women and men into equal partnership and listens to the voices of the young and others too frequently ignored.

H.R.H Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal, of Jordan

ETHICS FOR A NEW ERA

Human history tells of a ceaseless tension between a higher vision and the process of manifesting that vision in the behaviour of individuals and the organisation of society. As Alice Bailey writes: "Humanity has never really lived up to the teaching given it. Spiritual impression, whether conveyed by the Christ, by Krishna or by Buddha (and passed on to the masses by Their disciples) has not yet been expressed as it was hoped." By not living up to the higher vision, and failing to act on what we understand to be right and just, we "short circuit the light".

In our time the tension between vision and action is particularly acute. Since the two world wars we have emerged into the era of the one humanity. Science is increasingly replacing the mechanistic world-view with an understanding of the interdependent nature of reality. Democracy is on the ascendant. The old colonial order has gone, replaced by an emerging global neighbourhood that is rooted in a sense of interdependence. The doctrine of human rights now plays a key role in national and international affairs. In their introduction to the report, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, the Co-Chairmen of the influential Commission on Global Governance, Shridath Ramphal and Ingvar Carlsson, write of the changes that have taken place in the last fifty years in terms of the emancipation and empowerment of people and the fact that the "interdependence of nations is wider and deeper.... Important choices must be made now, because we are at the threshold of a new era. That newness is self-evident; people everywhere know it, as do governments, though not all admit to it."

Ethics are the critical issue governing our movement into the new era. Ideas of what was good and right in the pre-war era are being reinterpreted in the light of the one world reality and the new choices we face. This pivotal exercise is occupying the minds of some of the leading servers in the human family and we can expect it to occupy increasing attention in the years to come.

The media is full of the anguish that many of the choices represent. Issues of euthanasia, genetic engineering and fertilisation of the human embryo, for example, present society with the need to find a common ethical framework to govern the actions of medical technology. Enormous numbers of people are passionately concerned. Yet there is no consensus, and clearly there are no easy answers. In our rapidly changing world we know that the number of such contentious issues can only increase.

Bioethics

There are numerous attempts to evolve universal principles and common legal structures that will guarantee protection of fundamental human rights. Unesco's International Bioethics Committee (IBC) is one example of an effort to reach a global consensus on ethical principles. It consists of fifty key thinkers from a diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds and, among other things, is preparing a draft Universal Declaration on the Human

Genome and Human Rights. The Committee's newsletter, *Spotlight on Ethics*, includes details of 'ethics networks' from every continent of the world. The difficulty in reaching a consensus is highlighted by Jean Bernard of the Académie Française:

"I consider that a significant part of the activities of a committee like the IBC should be exchanging views and pooling ideas, which is what is happening, in fact. In 1983, when the French National Consultative Committee on Ethics held its first meetings, I found it very difficult, since the stands taken by a professor of theology and a specialist in molecular biology were so far apart. Yet that Committee's members were all French. When it comes to meetings of representatives from different continents, the differences are bound to be greater. However, one thing I learned was that progress could come of such differences. On two conditions: accepting that the process is a lengthy one and taking all the time necessary, and not trying to steer the debate from the centre but drawing out the best everyone has to offer."

Economics

Every area of life is today faced with contentious ethical choices as the human species seeks to grapple with the tensions of living in one world in a way that fosters well-being and security and does not threaten the species and the planet. There is, for example, widespread agreement on the need to regulate economic behaviour so that it serves human development and environmental sustainability. Yet, as Brazilian President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, writes in the Human Development Report 1996: "The economy reigns supreme, determining political choices and the limits of social action. And the free market emerges as a leading ideology, fostering competition and an exaggerated, narcissistic individualism that equate the realm of values with the dictates of efficiency".

In President Cardoso's words "we face a paradox: the demand for equity is on the increase, partly as a result of the globalisation of information, yet it is directed to a state that is reducing its functions and has less control over its economic policy options". For economic behaviour to change an ethical commitment to principles of equity and environmental justice is needed. As theologian Hans Küng writes: "The world market calls for a world ethic".

One hopeful sign for the future lies in the fact that ethics are emerging as a key factor in business and economics. The main yardsticks for measuring economic growth continue to be GNP or GDP. Yet these simply measure the money turnover in a national economy – they say nothing about productive activity that is unpaid and they ignore the environmental and human costs. GNP and GDP are not value free. As Clifford Cobb, Ted Halstead and Jonathan Rose argue, they make "the enormous value judgement that such things as family breakdown and crime, the destruction of farmland and entire species, underemployment and the loss of free time, count for nothing in the

economic balance”.

New yardsticks have now been developed to measure good and bad effects of money turnover – what has been achieved in terms of human development and environmental sustainability. The World Bank, for example, has developed an Index of Sustainable Welfare and the United Nations Development Programme a Human Development Index. These new criteria give an ethical view of the development of an economy and they represent a paradigm shift in economic thought. In the United States, for example, the GDP measurement suggests that the economy has steadily improved since the 1950s. However an ethical indicator gives a different picture: it shows an improvement from 1950 to 1970 followed by a decline of approximately 45% since then.

There are numerous other signs that ethics are becoming an important factor in economics. These include ethical investment portfolios which guarantee investors that their money will not be used in a way that is harmful to the environment or to human development; consumer movements that encourage people to use ethical criteria in the choice of the goods they buy; businesses submitting themselves to an independent ethical audit.

Fostering Universal Ethics

As consciousness changes, so is there a growing recognition that entry into the new era depends, more than anything else, on the application of common, shared ethics to every area of life. The question is, what can be done to stimulate the growth of universal ethics? There is no one answer. It is through a multitude of actions that a global ethic of responsibility is being engendered.

Clearly, as Shridath Ramphal points out earlier in this Newsletter, leadership is a significant factor. In every area of life those key individuals who direct attention to the

moral principles of serving the common good, acting with goodwill, and fostering human rights and responsibilities lift the atmosphere of debate and discussion. Local, national and international gatherings bringing together people from different cultures to reflect on the universal ethics that can be applied to every area of life also play a key role. Ethical commissions and codes of conduct in the professions help throw light on the moral dimension, as do university chairs in ethics.

Religions have a special responsibility to foster a global ethic. There is already a process of inter-faith dialogue taking place. Theologian Paul Knitter makes the point that: “Global responsibility – i.e. a responsibility to do something about the eco-human suffering that is causing global crises – can and must become the common ground, the common starting point and context, the global commons for inter-religious discourse.” As this happens, so is the inter-faith movement clarifying those universal ethics that are common to all religions.

Vaclav Havel reminds us that the reason we remain helpless before the global challenges which face us is because it is only the surface of our lives that has been globalised. “Our inner self continues to have a life of its own.” The fundamental values of modern democracy, of human rights, freedoms and responsibilities provide the core values for a truly global civilisation. But for these to reach deeper into hearts and minds than political opinions, convictions and sympathies they must “be rooted in self-transcendence”. The ethics of the new era will draw upon a shared sense of the sacred, a recognition that higher potencies, inevitably shrouded in mystery, are the source of love and light, and a common will to create an outer world that reflects our sense of inner unity. Hence the importance of meditation, of prayer, of ritual, of art, of spiritual teachings that focus on the oneness of life.

UNIVERSAL ETHIC PROJECT

Among the many groups who today are focusing on ethics and values is *Rights and Humanity*, an international movement for the promotion and realisation of human rights and responsibilities. Founded in 1986, the movement has made a significant contribution to the development of human rights law and public policy in such areas as discrimination against HIV/AIDS sufferers, women’s rights to health, and the protection and realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. *Rights and Humanity* is regularly called upon by government and international agencies to advise and assist in the development of human rights laws and public policies.

In 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, *Rights and Humanity* launched a Universal Ethic Project. HRH Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, a Patron of the movement, addressed the Conference on the need for

global agreement on the ethical principles which form the basis of human rights. During a brainstorming session at the Conference, which he hosted, representatives of NGOs, UN agencies and governments were enthusiastic in their support for a project which focused on such a global agreement.

The Universal Ethic Project has developed links with a range of interested groups including the UN Secretariat, the World Bank, religious groups, trade unions, business communities and others. Existing international networks are being encouraged, initially, to reflect on the principles of equity and mutual respect as they apply to their professional and personal lives.

It is planned to hold a number of multi-faith, multi-disciplinary and multi-level workshops during the 18 month period from mid-1997 to December 1998. The aim of

these meetings will be to synthesise the conclusions of the various networks and compile them into a common statement. The statement will be issued in whichever form seems appropriate – a play, a poem or a book.

It is hoped that a wide variety of networks, including people from different cultures and faiths, will contribute to

this shared reflection on the ethical principles upon which local, national and international communities should be built. Networks, associations, or individuals who would like to participate are asked to write directly to: *Rights and Humanity*, Universal Ethic Project, 65A Swinton Street, London WC1X 9NT, UK.

A FORMULA FOR WORLD PEACE AND PROGRESS

An affirmation by men and women of goodwill around the world

Men and women of goodwill in their millions, convinced

- that there is potential for good in all mankind
- that the human family can live together in right relations and at peace
- that right relationship between peoples and nations is the key to unity and peace
- that practical goodwill is the key to right relationships
- that the energy of goodwill is the active principle of peace, justice and progress for all humanity;

affirm their intention

- to practice goodwill in all relationships, in all daily affairs and in all attitudes and actions towards those of other nations, races, religions and social backgrounds
- to support and co-operate with those in positions of influence and responsibility who use goodwill and reason instead of force and coercion
- to encourage, publicise and work for the adoption of goodwill-in-action by local and national groups and institutions.

Enough men and women of goodwill accepting responsibility for the establishing of right relationships among people and between nations, and working actively with the principles of unity and goodwill, guarantee a future of peace and progress for the whole human race.

VALUES TO LIVE BY

A Love of Truth – essential for a just, inclusive and progressive society

A Sense of Justice – recognition of the rights and needs of all

A Spirit of Co-operation – based on active goodwill and the principle of right human relationships

A Sense of Personal Responsibility – for group, community and national affairs

Serving the Common Good – through the sacrifice of selfishness. Only what is good for all is good for each one

These are spiritual values, inspiring the conscience and the consciousness of those who serve to create a better way of life.

Copies of the “Values to Live By” card are available from World Goodwill

REFLECTIONS

The message to be taught prior to any future peace consists of the following three clear and practical truths:

1. That the errors and mistakes of past centuries, culminating in the ... world war, are the joint errors and mistakes of humanity as a whole. This recognition will lead to the establishing of *the principle of sharing*, so needed in the world today.
2. That there are no problems and conditions which cannot be solved by the will-to-good. Goodwill nourishes the spirit of understanding and fosters the manifestation of *the principle of co-operation*. This co-operative spirit is the secret of all right human relations and the enemy of competition.
3. That there is a blood relationship between men which, when recognised, dissolves all barriers and ends the spirit of separativeness and hate. The peace and happiness of each is the concern, therefore, of all. This develops *the principle of responsibility* and lays the foundation of right corporate action.

These are the basic beliefs of the men and women of goodwill and provide the incentive to all service and action. These three practical and scientific truths embody the three basic facts and the initial acceptance of all world servers. They are contrary to no world position, subversive of no government or religious attitude and are innate in the consciousness of all ..., evoking immediate response. Their acceptance will “heal” international sores.

Alice Bailey

We find ourselves in a time in which extremely limited consciousness has the powers once accorded to the gods. Extremely limited consciousness can launch a nuclear holocaust with the single push of a button. Extremely limited consciousness can and does intervene directly in the genetic code, interferes with the complex

patterns of life in the sea, and pours its wastes into the protective ozone layers that encircle the earth. Extremely limited consciousness is about to create a whole new energy base linking together computers, electronics, new materials from outer space, biofacture, and genetic engineering, which in turn will release a flood of innovation and external power unlike anything seen before in human history. In short, extremely limited consciousness is accruing to itself the powers of Second Genesis. And this with an ethic that is more Faustian than godlike.

We must therefore begin to do what has never been done before. We must assume the *Imago Dei* and humbly but tenaciously educate ourselves for sacred stewardship, acquiring the inner capacities to match our outer powers. We must seek and find those physical, mental, and spiritual resources that will enable us to partner the planet.

Jean Houston

Whether we like it or not, we have all been born on this earth as part of one great human family. Rich or poor, educated or uneducated, belonging to one nation or another, to one religion or another, adhering to this ideology or that, ultimately each of us is just a human being like everyone else: we all desire happiness and do not want suffering. Furthermore, each of us has an equal right to pursue these goals.

Today's world requires that we accept the oneness of humanity. In the past, isolated communities could afford to think of one another as fundamentally separate and even existed in total isolation. Nowadays, however, events in one part of the world eventually affect the entire planet. Therefore we have to treat each major local problem as a global concern from the moment it begins. We can no longer invoke the national, racial or ideological barriers that separate us without destructive repercussion. In the

context of our new interdependence, considering the interests of others is clearly the best form of self-interest.

I view this fact as a source of hope. The necessity for co-operation can only strengthen mankind, because it helps us recognise that the most secure foundation for the new world order is not simply broader political and economic alliances, but rather each individual's genuine practice of love and compassion. For a better, happier, more stable and civilised future, each of us must develop a sincere, warm-hearted feeling of brother- and sister-hood....

H.H. The Dalai Lama

In a society in which the narrow pursuit of material self-interest is the norm, the shift to an ethical stance is more radical than many people realise. In comparison with the needs of people starving in Somalia, the desire to sample the wines of the leading French vineyards pales into insignificance. Judged against the sufferings of immobilised rabbits having shampoos dripped into their eyes, a better shampoo becomes an unworthy goal. The preservation of old-growth forests should override our desire to use disposable paper towels. An ethical approach to life does not forbid having fun or enjoying food and wine, but it changes our sense of priorities. The effort and expense put into buying fashionable clothes, the endless search for more and more refined gastronomic pleasures, the astonishing additional expense that marks out the prestige car market from the market in cars for people who just want a reliable means of getting from A to B – all these become disproportionate to people who can shift perspective long enough to take themselves, at least for a time, out of the spotlight. If a higher ethical consciousness spreads, it will utterly change the society in which we live....

We have to take the first step. We must reinstate the idea of living an ethical life as a realistic and viable alternative to the present dominance of materialist self-interest. If, over the next decade, a critical mass of people with new priorities were to emerge, and if these people were seen to do well, in every sense of the term – if their co-operation with each other brings reciprocal benefits, if they find joy and fulfilment in their lives – then the ethical attitude will spread, and the conflict between ethics and self-interest will have been shown to be overcome, not by abstract reasoning alone, but by adopting the ethical life as a practical way of living, and showing that it works, psychologically, socially and ecologically.

Anyone can become part of the critical mass that offers us a chance of improving the world before it is too late. You can rethink your goals, and question what you are doing with your life. If your present way of living does not stand up against an impartial standard of value, then you can change it. That might mean quitting your job, selling your house and going to work for a voluntary organisation in India. More often, the commitment to a more ethical way of living will be the first step of a gradual but far-reaching evolution in your lifestyle and in your thinking about your place in the world. You will take up new causes, and find your goals shifting. If you get involved in your work, money and status will become less important. From your new

perspective, the world will look different. One thing is certain: you will find plenty of worthwhile things to do. You will not be bored, or lack fulfilment in your life. Most important of all, you will know that you have not lived and died for nothing, because you will have become part of the great tradition of those who have responded to the amount of pain and suffering in the universe by trying to make the world a better place.

Peter Singer

Already since the two world wars humankind has been caught up in an epoch-making paradigm shift from modernity to post-modernity, in a change of overall constellation which has now also broken through into mass consciousness. At present we still do not even know what our new age will be called, what names (like 'Reformation', 'Enlightenment') or nicknames ('baroque', 'rococo') will be given to it....

The paradigm shift does not necessarily include a destruction of values, but rather a fundamental shift in values: from an ethic-free society to an ethically responsible society; from a technocracy which dominates people to a technology which serves the humanity of men and women; from an industry which destroys the environment to an industry which furthers the true interests and needs of men and women in accord with nature; from the legal form of a democracy to a democracy which is lived out and in which freedom and justice are reconciled.

It also follows that this is a social shift not against, averse to, science, technology, industry and democracy, but a shift with, in alliance with, these social powers which formerly were absolutised but have now been relativised. The specific values of industrial modernity - diligence (*industria!*), rationality, order, thoroughness, punctuality, sobriety, achievement, efficiency – are not just to be done away with but to be reinterpreted in a new constellation and combined with the new values of post-modernity: with imagination, sensitivity, emotion, warmth, tenderness, humanity. So it is not a matter of repudiations and condemnations, but of counterbalances, counter-plans, counter-directions and counter-movements.

Hans Küng

How long will this modern world last? If a hundred species of life can disappear in a month, if tigers have only five years left at this rate of killing, how long do *we* have? What can I do with a big car or marble house if in the process of mining metals for that car and blasting mountains for that marble, my air and water become unusable? Eknath Easwaran says that a country should be measured, not by its gross national product, but by its grand national philosophy which keeps its citizens healthy and happy....

I turn my anger and grief into work, into daring to say that animal welfare is the key to human welfare, that compassion is an economic philosophy. I teach small lessons and big ones. This summer was a very hot one, and millions of birds dropped dead from the heat and from lack of water. This is also watermelon time. I told my son we wouldn't eat watermelons, we'd put them out for the birds.

We had hundreds of birds in our small garden. Watching them was a joy; they brought seeds of trees as gifts, which I put into pots and distributed to the neighbourhood. My garden is so full of trees that we are many degrees cooler than any other house I know. I just get my reward in the singing of the birds. I get it in seeing my son mature. Animal abuse and environmental degradation are not necessary evils. No evil is necessary. Evil is present only as long as we support it. The moment we make the connection between what we know and how we behave, evil collapses.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world, as in being able to remake ourselves." We need to remake ourselves as compassionate human beings. We need to learn and to teach the value of all life, because all life, not just human life, is sacred.

Maneka Gandhi

When I speak of a new synthesis, of the need for increasing unity and interdependence, I am not calling for a kind of universal levelling, sameness or uniformity. I do not accept a civilisation that would be like a huge historic steamroller, flattening out everything. Who would need such a new civilisation, and why even call it new? By no means do I want all countries and nations to become alike. *I think that the civilisation to which we all belong is one of great multiplicity. And that is a source of its strength*, the basis for the exchange of cultural values, for comparing methods of organisation and ways of living.

The philosophy of the twenty-first century must be grounded in a philosophy of diversity. If life as such is the highest value, then even more precious is the singular identity of every nation and every race as a unique creation of nature and human history.

At the same time, we must begin to define certain moral maxims or ethical commandments that constitute values common to all humankind. It is my view that the individual's attitude toward nature must become one of the principal

criteria for ensuring the maintenance of morality. Today it is not enough to say "Thou shalt not kill". Ecological education implies, above all, respect and love for every living being. It is here that ecological culture interfaces with religion.

The beauty and uniqueness of life lies in the unity of diversity. Self-identification – of every individual and of the many different nations, ethnic groups and nationalities – is the crucial condition for preserving life on Earth. Struggles and conflicts burn out the diversity of life, leaving a social wasteland in their wake. Honouring diversity and honouring the Earth create the basis for genuine unity.

Mikhail Gorbachev

The new web of global interdependencies that binds us together, and the tremendous stresses and complex moral choices before us, require a far deeper and more far reaching spirituality than at any time in previous history. We do not need a return to the external facades of religiosity. But we do need to resume the spiritual journey with a more penetrating vision, purpose and sense of direction and within new, global parameters.

Patricia Mische

Quotations in the 'Reflections' section of this Newsletter have been taken from the following publications: Alice A Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*. New York & London, Lucis, 1957. H.H. The Dalai Lama, *The Global Community and The Need for Universal Responsibility*. Boston, Wisdom, 1992. Maneka Gandhi in *Resurgence*, N° 175, March/April 1996. Mikhail Gorbachev, *The Search for a New Beginning: Developing a New Civilisation*. San Francisco, Harper, 1995. Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New Ethic*. London, SCM, 1991. Mark Macy (ed.) *Solutions for a Troubled World*. Earthview Press, Colorado USA. Eddie & Debbie Shapiro (eds.), *The Way Ahead: A Visionary Perspective for the New Millennium*. Longmead UK, Rockport USA & Brisbane Aust., Element, 1992. Peter Singer, *How Are We to Live: Ethics in an Age of Self-Interest*. Melbourne, Text Publishing, 1993 & London, Mandarin, 1995.

helping to build right human relations

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