

FOR THE NEED FOR NEW THINKING

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Abstract

Credible commentators have argued that humanity stands before a major challenge: learning to live together. This paper expands on this theme, suggesting several dimensions of “new thinking” about world affairs that the authors feel are central to any effort to move from conflict and war toward a meaningful model of peace. The discussion looks at the role of belief systems and suggests another starting point for reflection on international relations; one that is universalist and incorporates a new pattern of belief. The nature of transformation in ways of knowing is explored, and dialogue promoted as praxis toward transformation on a collective level. The paper concludes with suggested directions to be explored by both peace educators and peace activists.

“So let us not talk falsely now, the hour is getting late.”
Bob Dylan, “All Along the Watchtower”

The Problem

Our “globalizing” era has both creative and destructive modes: the planet is both coming together and falling apart. New discoveries vastly increase our capabilities to improve the human condition, and terrible tragedies make us despair of our fate. Many ask: “How can this be? What is the way forward?” The answer is simple to state, but difficult to apply: face up to the contradictory forces and try to understand their message. Each situation of discontent and pain indicates the direction of a solution, if we are not too afraid or blind to follow where it leads.

One can see a parallel between current global trends and the experience of an individual striving to overcome personal challenges. With the individual, the first stage is a growing sense that something is not right. An introspective quest for more appropriate values and behavior follows, which may involve a systematic re-examination of old beliefs and habits, and a search for new ones. Once new value commitments are made, a constant effort is required to bring action into agreement with these values. From this perspective,

we can discover, amidst the crises of world affairs, a search for those values upon which a viable future for our planet can be built.

In this regard, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1997) observed that:

In our world of unprecedented levels of destructive weaponry and increased geographic and social proximity, competition between groups has become extremely dangerous. In the century to come, human survival may well depend on our ability to learn a new form of adaptation, one in which intergroup competition is largely replaced by mutual understanding and human cooperation. *Curiously, a vital part of human experience—learning to live together—has been badly neglected throughout the world* (emphasis added).

The “century to come” referred to here is now, and effort to adequately address this shortcoming is overdue. Let us be clear: this is not an expression of utopian idealism. Rather, this “blue ribbon” Commission of scholars and analysts concluded that finding and implementing a more effective approach to cooperation—in effect, a model of proactive, positive peace—is a critical evolutionary threshold for our species.

Consciousness and Belief Systems

How to approach this challenge? First, one needs to be very careful when choosing a point of view. There have been in the not so distant past ways of reasoning that rationalized murdering millions of people, and there are contemporary outlooks that validate exploiting whole populations, or denying them their human rights—all in the name of order, progress, or even Divine Will. It is important, therefore, that we accept ideas only because they truly improve our understanding—and not because they make us feel superior, distract us from fear and uncertainty, or help us to avoid difficult questions. In fact, it is precisely the difficult questions we have to ask if we want to find some way forward. In addition, the accelerating pace of events indicates that the past is a poor guide to the future. Rather, there is a pressing need to reflect upon and reappraise received worldviews, and to develop ways of thinking that are fundamentally new. Though these new ways of thinking may be deeply compatible with the most essential insights of the world’s great wisdom traditions, genuinely creative efforts to meet contemporary challenges must necessarily part with forms of thinking that limit human capacities to identify with “outsiders” and to act with accountability to an emergent global community. This is often not welcome; particularly in those areas where powerful groups have vested interests in maintaining a status quo which new thinking may undermine and eventually change.

Thus, beyond the objective world of public affairs, the *subjective* dimension is in transition. In fact, the biggest changes may well be in values and ideas, the realm of consciousness itself—how we feel about and evaluate world events and our role in them. World affairs are less played out on the horizontal axis of Right vs. Left. Today it is more

the “vertical” axis of materialist consumption/exploitation vs. ecological, feminist, spiritual values that matters (Clark, 1989). The central struggle for the next generation, or more, will likely focus on who controls the *belief system*, including, inter alia, our beliefs about our inner beings, the purpose of our lives, our identity, and such “big questions” as social justice, war and peace. If the world is a creation of the mind, then we are, in important ways, our ideas; and world affairs are not something that is simply happening to us, or that we are discovering through observation. Rather, we are creating our world (Harman, 2004; Havel 1993). If we possess such a power of creation, it would be wise to exercise it consciously, to ask what sort of world we want, to think carefully about how we can build what Martin Luther King called a “beloved community,” reflecting a vision of human solidarity, cooperativeness, supportiveness, commitment and joy, a world of true peace (Smith and Zepp, 1974). There are many possible roads to global community; and, though none of them is easy, the first step is to envision such a possibility.

Our beliefs are, in fact, the “language” for our experience. This language is made up of symbols that we use to interpret sensory data; and each symbol contains not only the conscious characteristics we choose to examine, but also unconscious associations (Lakoff, 1980). As consciousness changes, old symbols and beliefs are questioned and fragmented; however, we are still attached to them and their loss is experienced as the loss of an aspect of ourselves, a loss of wholeness. We cling to those most important to our sense of self, and may end up dominated by fragmented symbols torn loose from their original psychic and social moorings. They are no longer an integrative system, having deteriorated into a mythology—which, unfortunately, still suffices many people. With the collapse of this old value order individuals fall prey to single, isolated symbols such as “work,” “power,” “wealth,” and “tradition.”

Many contemporary belief systems have the “unicist” view that there is one and only one truth, and all others are false and should be eliminated. This is the ground of religious fanaticism and remains the official belief of authoritarian political regimes and leaders. Dealing with such intractable attitudes is not easy, especially in a world with more weaponry than consensus on the need for peace. Each of the remaining unicist systems—despite their clear inability to provide their adherents with what they truly want—continues to insist on primacy and superiority, not parity. But, the integrated belief systems of the past, even if they were “true” at one time, are no longer operationally true, even to their remaining adherents. It is the discrepancy between what people say they want to believe and what they presently experience as real that feeds their anger and alienation.

Here again, new thinking is required. Each age has its appropriate metaphors, and our task is to discover the symbols that are appropriate to, and creative for, our era. In calling for the construction of new symbols, it is important for us to know that new symbols cannot be created, only discovered. We must now begin to look deeply into our societies, our cultures, and ourselves to identify those forms, those abstractions that truly speak to our contemporary global experience. We need, for instance, to look beyond a world constructed around a narrow conception of nationalism and national sovereignty, toward a world where all share key principles and priorities and key policies can be implemented in a coordinated way across borders and continents (Kung, 1998). Otherwise, independent

individual actions will only lead to further frustration, competition, and conflict. What this means in concrete terms is rather stark. There may be many opportunities for peace in our world, but we fail to realize them because of our involvement in and commitment to old fears and divisions. A lack of perspective and imagination prevents us from finding and implementing new solutions to old problems. Such shortcomings are both illogical and morally unacceptable.

What should be considered normal and what deviant in world affairs? This question has usually been framed in terms of a debate between "realists" and "idealists": i.e. those who give primacy to narrow national interest and coercion, and those who believe in principles and collective action. This debate is outmoded: neither war nor peace is predestined. World affairs, and human behavior generally, reflect both coercive/violent modes and cooperative/exchange modes. The real issue is how we think this "mix" can and should evolve; what values we bring to bear on the global problematique (Holbrook et al., 2006). Here, we come to the heart of the matter. As pointed out by the Carnegie Commission and others, much more time, effort and intellectual capital has been expended to date in analyzing and explicating the use of force in human affairs, than in examining the nature and dynamics of cooperation and peace. However, it is no longer reasonable to present these two policy modes as morally and practically equal, as two neutral categories of instrumental action. Such a mainstream view should be countered with the dramatically simple premise that "peace is life and war is death."

Peace, properly understood, brings multiple life-enhancing benefits, creates positive synergies at many levels, stabilizes relationships and institutions, and is a prerequisite for any meaningful aspiration to individual or collective fulfillment. Violence except when applied under very specific and limited conditions, destroys all of this and fosters deep-seated alienation, hatred and passions for revenge. Over the longer term, violence validates its own increased use, and undermines the legitimacy of peaceful and cooperative social action. Therefore, a permanent institutionalized commitment to coercion on a large scale, rather than representing "security" as is conventionally argued, reflects a profound failure to develop and enhance peace and cooperation as the dominant mode of our collective life (Rogers, 2002).

A(nother) Starting Point

Consider these three observations, as an alternative starting point to think about our collective life.

(1) *The planet is small.* We inhabit one planet, in one stellar system, in one galaxy among countless others. So, the planet is small. It is also one interdependent system. No borders can be seen from space: just the blue and green "marble." The biosphere, that small layer of air that enables all that we think of as life to exist, is, in a cosmic perspective, an incredibly thin, fragile membrane that is found nowhere else in our solar system, as far as we can tell. Bluntly stated, it is all that stands between extinction and us. Seen from this

perspective, the human condition seems both very special and rather tenuous: we could cease to be and the universe would certainly endure without us.

(2) *There is only "us."* There might well be life elsewhere in the cosmos, but we haven't found it yet. So, for now "we" are it, as far as we are concerned. That alone gives us a lot in common, no matter what we look like; but we have to work harder at keeping this in mind (there are distractions). Humans have, in fact, evolved—or have been created—as a single species, formed from the same cosmic dust that makes up the rest of our planet, its solar system, the galaxy and beyond. Furthermore, genetically speaking we are a single people. There is no such thing as "race" as that term is commonly used; just biological diversity. This suggests there is more—literally, infinitely more—which unites us than divides us. At both a physical and an existential level, we are one.

(3) *The whole world needs the whole world.* If we exist in this world together, then we should work to make it easier for people to communicate, interact, and share what they know and who they are; to literally and figuratively open doors to mutual understanding. As a species we seem to be trying fitfully to emerge from a past of separation into a future of collective experience; from fragments of a whole into the awareness of the whole. This process marks the beginning of the first truly global civilization. It is, however, up to us to determine whether this civilization will be peaceful, united and long term or barbaric and short lived (Havel, 1995).

These premises, if taken seriously, provide a lens for viewing the world—from the local to the global; a lens that highlights other issues and leads to different conclusions and prescriptions than more nationally or ethnically informed views. Seen from this perspective, social life is an ongoing drama in which all people are protagonists, shaping their environment through decisions and actions. Every human being is a subjective participant in this process. No one is outside it, or has a truly objective viewpoint. Thus, public affairs are fundamentally about values and the effort people make to realize their values.

Some commentators (Gore, 1992: 213; Hammond, 1999: 43) have suggested that humanity is currently at an adolescent stage of development. This is a useful perspective, since it assists us to both make sense of our dark and tumultuous past and to envision the possibility of a brighter planetary future. Adolescents are physically adults, but emotionally still very much like children. As a species, too, we have the physical and technical means to create a global civilization, yet we still tend to see the world in terms of limited group identities derived from the past. Just as adolescence can be a dangerous time, with new powers being tested and sometimes misused for childish ends, the current global era is characterized by agitation, violence, and upheaval as new technical capacities are too often employed to pursue traditional rivalries.

Though only one example among many, the fact that humanity has used the power of the atom—the primordial energy infused into the physical creation at the time of the "big bang"—for weaponry, is particularly illustrative of this syndrome. The crucial question is, therefore, how does our species get beyond our dangerous adolescence to a more mature and rewarding adulthood? We must remember, however, that there is no guarantee that we will succeed. Through a lack of insight and maturity, we could quite conceivably select

ourselves out of the planetary evolutionary process; though the fact that we have not done so yet and are increasingly aware of this danger could be seen as hopeful signs.

New Patterns of Belief

The issues facing us demand a new set of answers, arising from new patterns of faith and belief. Not everything in the universe, our world, or human nature is fully accessible to positivist science. Many aspects of our inner reality and life, including consciousness itself, remain mysterious, and the age-old quest of the human spirit toward transcendence, toward an ultimate reality, continues unabated. Our inward, more mystic ways of knowing should not, therefore, be considered archaic. Rather we undoubtedly need to rediscover and develop them if our societies and the planet as a whole are to attain a sustainable equilibrium for the long term. Throughout history, though admittedly for limited periods, various civilizations have demonstrated how spiritual values can engender social harmony and progress (Sorokin, 2002). At the same time, one must acknowledge that these same values have often been corrupted and manipulated to justify actions that represent their antithesis. This in itself, however, should not prevent an appreciation of the historic association between the emergence of a truly moral social order and widespread commitment to spiritual values.

The naive materialism of the post-Renaissance centuries has proved wanting, and change has begun in the direction of a more inclusive epistemology. As we enter the twenty-first century, we are recognizing that the deeper we delve into the fundamentals of science, the closer we are to the fundamentals of many of the traditional mysticisms (Dalai Lama, 2005). We are now coming to recognize the reality of "the sacred," defined broadly as any process that explicitly links us to the largest possible context to which we belong. Gregory Bateson, when once asked to define sacrament, said, "The recognition of the pattern which connects." [For an elaboration on this conception of the sacred, see Bateson and Bateson (1987).] Buddha translates literally as "the one who woke up," and refers not just to the historical personage but also to any human being in a state of full awareness, i.e. a person dedicated to the support of the total patterning and harmony of our world (Chappell, 1999). Re-investment in the sacred means both the humanizing of that state of being and the consecration of the human. It is the recognition that sacred activity is not separate from immediate personal and interpersonal experience (Dear, 2004). Re-investment in the sacred acknowledges the presence of both human responsibility and Divine will in our activity.

This emphasis on transcendence, this quest for an ultimate reality, is one of the purest, oldest, and most mysterious dimensions of human experience, and has always been a source of strength for humanity by connecting us with a larger meaning and purpose. It refers to a broader human involvement that comes from the inner essence of a person. At the level of the individual, it refers to action borne of a commitment that is not necessarily informed by allegiance to a particular religion. As expressed by the Scottish Council of Churches in 1977: "Spirituality is an attempt to grow in sensitivity to self, to others, to non-

human creations and to God who is within and beyond this totality." The terms holistic and integrative express another metaphor for the spiritual: holding all directions in simultaneous connection, including both the horizontal and the vertical direction. The horizontal connects one person with another person, with all people, and with all things. Vertically, higher and lower levels of consciousness are joined. The creative organizing force of spirituality has been channeled into Indian, European, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Native American, and Mediterranean society in the past through such prophetic figures and visionaries as the Buddha, Krishna, Moses, Jesus, Lao Tzu, Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh, Black Elk, Saint Teresa, and Rumi; and it has also found expression in the altruistic work of social activists and reformers such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu, Martin Buber, and many others.

This inner commitment to a vision of humankind's place in the universe that gives priority to ethical thought and values over mere physical existence is a fundamental prerequisite for survival and, ultimately, prosperity on this planet. We should accept with confidence the testimony of saints, mystics, and millions of ordinary people down through the ages that there are inner/higher forces that can be drawn upon for inspiration, courage, and perseverance. Only this kind of inner strength and creative energy can sustain us in our quest for peace; and enable us to, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's (1971) classic phrase, "say yes to the twentieth [and in our case twenty-first] century." Religious and spiritual traditions, however, must themselves embrace self-criticism and renewal if they are to respond to contemporary spiritual needs.

Though most religious and ethical systems promote reciprocity and good will, their institutions and outlooks are too frequently identified with just those aspects of the past that contribute to current divisions and conflict. Put very simply, spiritual values for the present and future cannot be partisan; they should speak to the universal human need for transcendence, community, and justice. They should look beyond the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomies of old systems of power and ways of thinking, and reveal these as fictions sustained only through physical separation and deep existential anxiety. Spirituality has always meant a shift in consciousness; thus, an emerging global ethic of spirituality would embrace the unity we see in diversity, which finally gives us permission to celebrate both. In celebrating we find comfort in our individuality as one unique expression of a larger common reality. Only from this position do we possess the freedom to recognize that the parts reflect the whole.

Spirituality starts from the individual—from our very essence. But public affairs also have a spiritual dimension since our social life is a reflection of our most deeply held values. It was in this sense that Aristotle described politics as essentially a branch of ethics, and we believe that the re-connection of politics to our highest and most worthy values is now the most important task in political life. Furthermore, world events and trends will continue to expose the precariousness of a global politics based on separateness in what is an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. Rather, from a holistic spiritual perspective the integration of the personality at the individual level becomes the metaphor for the integration of humanity at the species level: the mind at peace reveals the possibility of a world at peace. This is, in its essence, the true road to peace: not the

negative imposed peace of unequal power relations, but an authentic peace in which everyone is a “victor.” As a UNESCO peace education training manual explains:

The peace we endeavour to promote has no boundaries. It is a global human outlook which seeks for others what one seeks for oneself. It is not a national issue but a universal one. Peace encompasses an inner feeling of empathy and compassion to which all religions subscribe. It underlies the continuous effort needed to foster equitable economic and cultural relations of a given society and between States. Peace rejects power as the primary arbiter of human relations. Peace accepts the inevitability of change but does not resort to violence to change the process of events and redress inequalities (International Peace Research Association, 1994).

Thus, we affirm that achieving a unifying global consensus as the basis for a humane, ecologically viable, new global system is possible. The essence of such a vision must, however, be felt as well as rationally argued, because it involves both the head and the heart. From this perspective, a new global system requires new political and social arrangements, a new (or renewed) vision of humankind's spiritual reality and purpose, and unrelenting effort to make the former truly reflect the latter. This is a goal for world affairs quite different from the prevailing one, but much more worthy of what we see as the best in human nature and experience.

Knowing and Transformation

The implication of what has been said thus far is that we need to learn to think differently about the issues on the global agenda, and which confront us in our personal lives. As we argued above, the world is not a set of facts to be discovered, but rather a set of experiences to be interpreted; and our interpretation depends on what perspectives and inner powers we bring to our experience. Therefore, to make a positive change in the world around us, we need to first make a positive change in our ways of knowing. Knowledge can be gained in different ways: by reflection, by rational consideration, by intuitive induction, by creative imagining and also as a gift without any precondition. Real knowledge, however, is knowledge of the unity of existence; it is *relational*, because it expresses a relationship between all of existence. The whole is reflected and replicated in the parts; and from the parts we gain the knowledge to construct the whole. The purpose of knowing, therefore, is *transformation*. In fact, to know is to be transformed (Hart, 2000; Kazanjian and Laurence, 2000). It is in this sense that true knowledge blends the heart and the head. The heart directs the head to its proper purpose, knowing the unity of existence, and the head focuses the heart's energies so the transformation process can occur.

Transformation is a process involving a change in our conscious beliefs and in the structure of underlying unconscious symbols that hold our world in place. Transformation is, most importantly, a shift in the locus of consciousness, a change in the quality of experience. As our awareness expands, we take responsibility for the symbols and

abstractions that dominate the content of our consciousness; distinguishing the rich and evocative from the negative and hurtful. The process of transformation enables us to take a big enough view of our world, and to integrate reason, feeling, sensing, and intuition—to experience an enlargement of consciousness in a fundamental sense. In the process of transformation we think with reason, making tight sequential connections. We think with wonder, making connections of the random kind. We think with images, making visual connections.

Since knowledge itself is a condition of being, of awareness, the search for it must start with our own deepest questions. “How can I find greater unity, integrity, and truthfulness—in myself and in my experiences?” “How can my outward actions begin to match my inward intentions, and how can I ground these intentions in something real?” “How can I not merely survive, but also truly *live*?” Because investigating such profound questions leads us beyond ourselves, an unwavering and non-dogmatic search for insight leads us to a deeper ground of unity—to real knowledge frees us from our illusions of separateness. It liberates us from our habitual and conditioned ways of perceiving ourselves, which do not reflect who we truly are.

Knowledge implies the capability of knowing. This in turn implies the use of all the senses and sensibilities we possess to “think” in new ways. In the process of new thinking, we shift from the truth of reason to the truth of images; from the truth of images to the truth of intuition; from the truth of intuition to the truth of feeling; and, from the truth of feeling to the truth of pattern. We shift from truth to truth. And, as each person possesses a small piece of the truth, total knowing requires an ingathering of all these pieces; an ingathering achieved through dialogue, not dominance.

Dialogue as Praxis

Understood broadly, *dialogue* can be the way forward called for by the Carnegie Commission. The need for dialogue among peoples arises from the burgeoning recognition that our changing reality requires a new global ethic and a new perception of one another. Historically, unequal power relations, leaving the West seemingly arrogant and insensitive and the rest of the world largely defensive and insecure have marred cultural contact among civilizations. All have much to gain from moving away from such postures. Attachment and commitment to these forms undermine the purpose of dialogue, keeping us estranged and unknown to one another. Today, such relationships and the images they were built upon are no longer sustainable. Only through a true dialogue among peoples can we create new perceptions of one another, and lay the foundations for a new global ethic. It is up to us, at this crucial time in our shared history, to ask three vital questions: How will we know and relate with each other? How will we define and benefit from our relationship? How will we cope *together* with the teeming diversity of our global community? Dialogue, as a new paradigm in global relations, is based on sharing knowledge to achieve new knowledge, to see each other with open and empathetic eyes under a different light, and to look together

toward a shared future in a global community that will make our world safe for diversity (Picco et al., 2001).

As each culture struggles to find its place and identity in a globalized world we are discovering that each has held many solutions to the questions others have long been asking. Dialogue is key to unearthing these “hidden treasures”; once we are able to unlock the secrets of effective communication and pierce through the walls of misperception and mistrust we can gather these valuable insights, lessons and opportunities that enrich us all. A new and mutually rewarding relationship has the potential to emerge where accumulated wisdom and insights for necessary progress provide the basis of a valued coexistence. Such a relationship would be premised not on ideas of cultural superiority, but on mutual respect and openness to cultural eclecticism and, ultimately, synthesis.

Developing this process of communication is key to transcending our historical accretion of deep subjectivity and ethnocentrism, and it requires active listening and a commitment to sustained dialogue: learning to understand how each communicates their shared concerns (Isaacs, 1999; LeBaron, 2003; Sutherland, 2005). In this way we can discover, as well as create, shared meanings and find our common ground, while better understanding our own values and ideals as we are challenged to share them in a new way. A framework for a dynamic and mutually rewarding dialogue is one where we bring to the table the best that our human civilizations have to offer the world and, in so doing, achieve a greater flourishing of our respective communities. Dialogue requires that we look upon one another as moral equals and partners in creating a global community. It is then that we may compete with one another only in good works and in our service to humanity. It is here that we show our truth, our essence, our beauty and our greatness, and it is in so doing that we—all of us—find our place in God’s greater plan.

Effective dialogue implies active engagement. As cultural symbolism assumes greater significance in the relations of cultures, active engagement through sustained dialogue permits each to understand the deeper meanings, associations, and implications of the “other’s” symbols, thus penetrating the “enigma” of the “other,” and defusing the dynamics of civilizational “clash.” Active engagement also permits us to understand and recognize the authentic expressions of human religiosity, and protects us from the politics of manipulated symbolism. It eliminates the need to defend or testify to what are now recognized as legitimate religious beliefs and institutions.

Healthy expressions of religiosity express a mature understanding of a faith tradition and a desire for correspondence between symbolism and substance. The system of confrontation we observe today is divorced from larger understandings of material circumstances and spiritual intents, and feeds on the need to address despair through actions predicated upon—and intended to spread—fear. An understanding derived from active engagement would allow us to avoid entrapment in the system of confrontation, moving beyond immediate negative reactions (for instance, between the West and Islam) to discover human commonality and shared experiences and needs.

Dialogue as a tool for finding a desirable future demands the creation and development of a broad consensus of peoples and governments on an ever-wider range of issues. Consensus—the distinctive political tool in relations among equals—has already

gone far to replace armed force as the preferred instrument of national policy. First we need a basic global agreement on priorities. The development of an agreement on priorities contributes to building a global community because different peoples feel they have a stake in the success of programs. When people agree on priorities they experience a common purpose. Then through dialogue we can begin to reach binding international decisions in those areas where they are essential. This is still a new and largely uncharted path and mistakes will be made. But we have little choice: the emerging global order will either learn to consult with all its members or it will not survive. Trial and error—seasoned by patience—will teach the elements of an operational code to govern the new process, and consensus building will become a more efficient and predictable instrument.

Implications for Teaching and Practice

The shift in perspective required for successful navigation of the twenty-first century will not be easy to accomplish. The nationalism of states, the sectarianism of established religious communities, the ethnocentrism of diverse cultural groups, the competitive self-interest of corporate entities, and the consumption-oriented priorities of private citizens all stand in the way of transformation insofar as they narrow our ethical priorities and limit our capacities for identification with one another as moral agents. In a finite and increasingly fragile world, exclusive identities, loyalties, and truth claims threaten the human prospect every bit as much as faith in the “invisible hand” of economic and political competition, even when rooted in sincere aspirations to “protect one’s own” or remain faithful to received doctrines.

Past efforts to foster greater universality in the domains of ethics and politics have all too often been accompanied by coercive agendas or monocultural assumptions. Movement towards the construction of a functional, inclusive universalism cannot be achieved by simply opposing a “higher” set of values and beliefs to a “lower” counterpart, nor can it be accomplished through the methods that were used to build modern nation-states, replacing diversity with manufactured uniformity. Particularity and universality are not so much opposites as complements, hence our emphasis on fostering consensus through transformative dialogue rather than through inculcation of a “real” (but ultimately monocultural) cosmopolitan outlook. Broadly participatory, intensive dialogue is the only way to ensure that new norms are based on genuine commitment and a transformation of worldviews, through a process of discovery in which existing identities and loyalties are stretched to make space for ethical criteria that are both global and responsive to the needs of our day.

In the language of contemporary social theory, the ongoing quest for genuinely global visions and norms reflects something new in international affairs: the emergence of a new context for evaluating life’s purposes and ultimate values. The increasing density of global communications and interactions—globalization of human social life—is challenging us to “reconstruct” the normative criteria according to which human communities define their identities and loyalties. While some groups are seeking to shore

up traditional boundaries and authority structures, dynamic leaders are also emerging, inviting communities to embrace the opportunities presented by our new global social reality and thereby avert some of its worst potential consequences.

There are many opportunities to engage in acts of conscious moral and ethical reconstruction, not only in the domains of politics, economics, and religion, but also in the spheres of education and activism. To encourage (but not impose) changes in value priorities and deeply held belief systems, educators and activists will have to discover modes of practice that both affirm and nurture latent capacities for global citizenship.

For educators, efforts to meet these challenges can benefit from pedagogies that focus directly, dynamically, and creatively on contemporary global issues, and that provide young people with genuine experiences of cross-cultural encounter and dialogue. Efforts to implant information can be balanced with activities that create space for transformation, and that stimulate moral imagination through personal experiences of connectedness across boundaries (Hart, 2001; Kane, 1999; Kazanjian and Laurence, 2000). This requires humility and openness on the part of educators, along with willingness to define academic excellence in relation to creative imagination as well as more conventional criteria (Miller et al., 2005; O'Sullivan, Morrell, and O'Connor, 2002). It also requires a courageous willingness to affirm multiple pathways to educational "success," above and beyond the inculcation of a desire to please authority figures and a tendency to approach life instrumentally (Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm, 2006; Cranton, 1994).

At its best, education expands identities, fosters critical self-awareness ("reflexivity"), and facilitates new relationships and connections. In this respect, current thinking on learning communities, collaborative inquiry, and constructivist pedagogy may offer fertile seeds for innovative practice. When dialogue is viewed not only as a skill but also as an epistemological principle, "searching for common ground" becomes more than a conflict resolution exercise. It becomes a way of knowing that embraces the complexity of our world and enables learners to sift through multiple, competing truth claims to find patterns that connect them (Braud and Anderson, 1998). In higher education, creating space for transformation may mean balancing the existing emphasis on professional socialization with a concern for learners as "whole persons," and by more openly embracing epistemological and methodological pluralism. It is particularly important for scholars to share the full range of value commitments, experiences, methods, visions, and insights that animate their research and inspire their teaching, rather than hide behind presumptions of "objectivity" and "distance" that conceal as much as they reveal (Denton and Ashton, 2004).

Like teachers, activists and peace practitioners also have the opportunity to experiment with new modes of operation. It is particularly important at this time for protagonists of new thinking and global ethical frameworks to embody as fully as possible an ethos that integrates urgency with inclusiveness. In other words, activists must balance their social action in ways that invite dialogue as well as critical awareness, and that direct protagonists of conflict toward superordinate goals and values that derive their legitimacy from their relevance to felt needs for peace and ecological balance. Activists can benefit from becoming increasingly articulate about the relationship between the goods they advocate and values that are shared by diverse religious and cultural communities. When

they are able to embody this discourse of common values through the development of transnational solidarities and intercultural as well as interreligious alliances, their activism becomes even more compelling. Rather than juxtapose allegiance to “universal” values against loyalty to “particularistic” agendas, activists can encourage members of diverse identity groups to give their core values new meaning and fresh vitality through identification with emergent struggles to forge a more just and harmonious world community.

Conclusion

The ideas expressed here are not new, yet the call to earnestly engage the “subjective” dimension of global politics has all too often gone unanswered by thoughtful and committed academic commentators. In the absence of compelling intellectual visions that directly challenge key assumptions about the role of culture and consciousness in global change, we remain captive to popular—and often dangerous—mythologies. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been no shortage of worldviews for sale in airports as well as academic bookstores, yet readers seeking an overall vision of modern history’s grand trajectory have been far more likely to encounter claims about an impending “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1992), an imminent “clash of civilizations” (Huntington, 1996), or a “coming anarchy” (Kaplan, 2000) than an invitation to participate in a painful yet also liberating transformation of human identity and purpose.

We can no longer afford to marginalize visions of global responsibility and conscious change to the “self help” section of modern book collections. In our time these themes have passed from the realm of ideals and aspirations into the realm of evolutionary challenge and necessity. The world must become more peaceful to survive and we must become more deeply, and broadly, spiritual to bring about this change. A person can no longer accept mass death as rational or inevitable if she “sees” the victims as people just like herself, and if she can identify and empathize with their suffering. The emotional cry of “this has to stop,” would no longer be seen as a hopelessly idealistic outburst in a world driven by power and interest, but rather as an important insight into the contemporary human condition, arising from a heart becoming more attuned to the real pulse of our times. In effect, there is no meaningful distinction between the true interests of the person and the planet, between the micro and the macro level of human affairs, between ends and means. We cannot “save the planet” but “lose our souls,” or secure “our” way of life at the expense of “theirs.” In the long run, world order cannot be a “zero sum game”: either we find a path towards a world that works for everyone, or we will be consumed in the conflict, confusion and detritus of a world hopelessly out of balance. The foregoing suggests that, contrary to the prevalent post-modern critique, there may indeed be a “foundation” upon which a new global “social project” can, and in fact, must be “constructed.” However, precisely in light of this critique, it should be acknowledged that an open-ended dialogue on the future of the planet and its constituent parts—in which all “voices” will be heard, and each “subject” is

free to give and take according to privately defined values and priorities—is really the only viable form this project can take.

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