

ARTICLE #2 DEEP VALUES AND PRINCIPLES AS THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

The first article in the series provided us with what thoughtful researchers worldwide have seen as some of the most important roots of our present dilemma, in our whole economic, ecological and social existence. We have also seen a brief outline of how these 3 major areas of our lives and organizations are interlinked. Through this we begin to understand that we as human beings are at the centre of responsibility for the problems we experience today. Therefore, the next step seems to be obvious:

We need to look at our own behavior and what we understand as the root values and principles that form the foundation of man-made organizations and all human activities.

This article highlights some of the most important values and principles which control our actions and how these relate directly to our attitudes and actions, both in our personal and working lives. The United Nations studies in many countries and sectors has been a valuable source, as well as hundreds of other studies of visionaries from many countries.

This article includes a number of interlinked human based values and principles, where readers will agree with some and disagree with others. To have an idea of the areas which are touched upon, they include:

- a. A brief Profile of a conventional Thinker
- b. Emerging deep (universal) human values (values that we humans have in common worldwide)
- c. Emerging Principles (coming out of the above values which have produced positive outcomes).
- d. A brief Profile of a sustainable Thinker.

PROFILE: CONVENTIONAL THINKER

Today, based on the society in which we live, a personal profile has been outlined which indicates some important personal and societal values we see every day. Some readers will agree with some aspects and not others. It is intended as food for thought concerning the most common values to which we are exposed.

The conventional thinker firstly believes that our objective mind and rational intellectual thinking is paramount in life and work, and the rational mind is capable of eventually solving all our problems. (This ,leaves the concepts of intuition, inner fulfillment, and meaning in life as almost irrelevant if it does not satisfy the rational mind).

Hence the concepts of happiness in life and work depends on acquiring “things”. The motivation in work is largely to earn money in order to buy more things , whether we need them or not. This in turn provides us with status, power, control and happiness. Happiness and success is interpreted in financial

terms. Life involves pride in one's capacity to earn as much money as possible and show this through owning things and have associations with others who have done the same.

Humans are considered by nature competitive, greedy and jealous of others who have more things or better paid positions. There is always pressure "to get there first" no matter what the consequences are for others. Strong individualism is a natural and valued personal attribute. We are considered completely "architects" of our own success and lives in general. We live in a world of winners and losers and we naturally feel anger and sometimes fear if and when we are the losers.

Nature is separate from humans , is free for us to manipulate according to our needs and desires, and has predictable laws which we eventually will understand through science and the rational mind.

This is a brief overview of the values and accepted "truths" that underpin our conventional world in which we live today.

VALUES

Basic human values are many , but a few key "universal" values have been identified as applicable to all humanity. These are some of the most important that affect our everyday thinking and daily attitudes and actions.

We can think of deeply held human values in many groups. For simplicity, we will divide some key values into 2 groups: a) Values related to the "self", and relationships with families, community and work, and b) values related to Nature and the outer world (cosmos , higher consciousness, spirituality).

a) Values and the Self

Love: This refers to love in its broadest sense. This includes both love of others as well as love of self.

Love forms the foundation for most of our positive human values . It includes a number of other values such as joy, kindness , generosity , and forgiveness, amongst many others.

Self Respect: For us to respect ourselves we must basically feel that we are worthy people , and that we are basically good, have intrinsic values as a person and fulfill a valuable purpose in life.

Trust and Truthfulness:

To trust ourselves and others and be truthful in our relationships depends first on how we view ourselves. Are we , in our actions and attitudes true to ourselves, or are we fearful that someone will see us as we really are, resulting in distrust and untruthfulness.

Trust and truthfulness two of the most highly valued aspects of everyday working life. As many thoughtful researchers have indicated : "Know thyself". The indicate clearly that this is essential for inner tranquility , and positive meaningful relationships in work.

Non Violence and Cooperation:

These human values often create confusion as many interpret nonviolence for instance as just the absence of war, or dislike for war.

Nonviolence begins with how we approach life every day. Do we see life as a constant competition for survival, in a win-lose battle? Or do we believe in cooperation, dialogue and willingness to listen to other ideas and resolve differences?

Probably the best known advocate of nonviolence was Mahatma Gandhi, followed by Martin Luther King in the US. As Ela Gandhi has written of her grandfather: "The Gandhian way is gaining ever more support as people find it gives guidance to both how to resist destructive processes and how to build constructive ones from a position of inner moral strength".

Humility:

Humility flourishes in an environment where love exists.

This value is often viewed as a weakness in organizations, as people in conventionally thinking organizations may use this "advantage" to become "successful" economically in the short term. This thinking tends to trap us in a whole web of negative human characteristics, such as greed, fear, jealousy and pride. Humility, on the other hand, does not mean acting without intelligence, but to learn to listen carefully to consider other points of view, and belief in the inherent goodness and honesty of deep human nature. We should remember that many of the most respected visionaries have been and are very humble people.

b) VALUES, NATURE AND HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

As one thoughtful visionary has said: "Whether we like to accept it or not, our existence depends on Earth systems combined with complex elements located in space. The very air we breathe as we read this page is part of a complex and little-understood natural system that links us and our survival inextricably to the Earth and the cosmos."

However, it is still through the scientific approach and mindset that we try today to understand Nature and its systems.

Another visionary, Thomas Berry provides a summary of what we are discovering:

"Science is discovering a new version of the "enchanted" world that was part of the natural mind for most of human history. Since the loss of this worldview in the last 300 years is arguably at the heart of our current environmental crisis, its rediscovery may be the key to an eventual solution -----this missing link between scientific breakthrough and the general consciousness."

This change in approach transforms how we perceive the total realities of Earth and cosmos systems, and as a consequence how we approach our responsibilities as being part of a whole system and not just a spectator. A current is clearly bubbling throughout the scientific community, such as is found in the Union of Concerned Scientists.

These universal values, summarized above, are all positive human values we all possess, even though some have perhaps been hidden or forgotten for a long time. We as humans of course also possess negative values (which are now being found at the root of many negative activities and attitudes, and in reality many of the problems we see worldwide). These include such values as have recently been recognized at the root of our global economic crisis: GREED AND FEAR.

Why do we allow our most negative human characteristics become the dominant ones in society? Why do we not allow our most positive values form the very basis of our thinking, attitudes and actions?

EMERGING PRINCIPLES

Now we have summarized some key universal human values which are emerging and showing signs of positive outcomes in thinking, attitudes and actions. The next step is to see how these values translate into principles which we need to understand the foundation of our organizations as well as everyday life attitudes and activities.

Principles as such we are often not conscious of, but considered “understood” truths that everyone around us accepts as the normal way to think . Especially in our working world policies are often adjusted, but there is an assumption that the basic principles on which policies are seated are basic truths that should not be touched.

Today, in the middle of our worldwide economic, ecological and social crisis, many are beginning to realize that our problems as humans decision makers are far deeper than we realized.

This section examines a few emerging principles which are different from those we have mostly accepted as truths. For simplicity, these emerging principles are divided into social, ecological and economic groups, even though they are all interconnected.

EMERGING SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

- a. All human beings basically good, and have an inherent dignity.
This is quite different from conventional thinking in which we are all considered self-centered competitive individuals in place of a cooperative person concerned about other humans.
- b. We all have equal rights to natural resources and it is our duty to prevent ecological harm while protecting these rights of humans.
- c. Diversity of cultures, languages, ideas and tastes are natural and healthy.
This means diversity in its full spectrum is the natural way humans fit into the whole spectrum of Nature. In this way, we all have universal values in common, but diversify in culture and other aspects.
- d. Social and economic justice is essential for all humans.

The poor countries , as well as poor sectors of rich countries have much work ahead.

- e. All actions, and decisions must take into account long-term consequences and responsibility for future generations. We as humans need to be in step with Nature which is long term.

EMERGING ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- a. The Earth is a complex interconnected living system, of which we humans are a part.
- b. Social and ecological limitations control all economic development. This concept is a total change from our conventional thinking, where economic aspects have been priority.
- c. The Precautionary Principles must be respected in all human activity. We need to fully understand the meaning for this principle when Nature is involved as essential for human existence on Earth.
- d. Renewable natural resources should be used only at the rate at which Nature can regenerate them and contaminants can be fully absorbed.
- e. Understanding Nature and its systems requires integrated “systems thinking” , as opposed to present day priority on linear, rational thinking.

EMERGING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PRINCIPLES

- a. Economic and political principles are focused on human and ecological well-being. Quality of life is related to quality of human relationships, quality of products needed for human health and well-being, and quality of human activities and communities.
- b. Economic principles promotes development that is equitable and long term, balancing social, ecological and economic factors.
- c. Democratic institutions guarantee transparency and accountability in governance, participation for all people, and equal access to justice for all.
- d. All economic development requires considerations of “size”. Human scale organizations as a priority are essential for sustainability.
This human scale development focus emphasizes the importance of community development , and is considered essential for long-term stability and genuine qualitative and quantitative progress for all countries.
- e. Each sector of society has a special role with distinct and interlinked responsibilities. The key sectors which are carefully balanced include government, private sector and civil society. The dominance of any one of these sectors does not lead to long term sustainable development of the region or country.
- f. The concept of progress is measured in quality of life and activities, and respect for Nature--- as opposed to quantity of economic gain. This questions directly our present system of measuring progress through GDP.
- g. Trade is important between communities, regions and countries, with a small sector of international trade.

As one well know visionary, Herman Daly has pointed out (related to the WTO), that we will eventually “lift” all trade into the international “free” arena, leaving countries without a base for national economic, social or economic development.

- h. Money is important as a vehicle of exchange in trade, not as a commodity to be traded.

We certainly understand our present crisis related to money.

As one international visionary has indicated on various occasions: We are now at the stage where money is the dominant trading commodity. Based on recent studies, if one takes into account all the financial activity that takes place around the world each day, only about 10% is involved in trade in products, and 90% is involved in trade in money.

This is clearly not a sustainable situation.

These principles are mostly in direct contrast to present –day conventional “truths” and usages. Therefore, we will need to utilize an expanded capacity of our human nature to come to grips with this major human crisis----that is, both our well developed objective knowledge as well as our human capacity for higher consciousness, and its inherent wisdom.

SUSTAINABLE THINKER : A brief emerging profile

To complete this brief article we will try to outline some of the characteristics of a person who has developed these values and principles outlined above. Some of these human attributes or values you will probably agree with and other not. However, it is meant as food for thought for all of us, as we struggle to make sense of where we are today, and search for a viable path forward for our personal lives as well as our communities and organizations , educational institutions and governments.

The sustainable thinker believes that our objective thinking is extremely important to our future, but it alone will not be enough to solve our problems. We must also develop our deeper level of understanding, our higher consciousness in order to draw from the wisdom we hold there , in order to really understand the depth of what has happened in our world.

The sustainable thinker believes that genuine happiness and fulfillment in life and work, inner sense of peace, and genuine good relations with other humans can only be achieved if we learn to access and use our higher consciousness, in addition to using our objective mind. This means in everyday life that “wants” change to “needs”, and the acquiring of things loses its importance as a measure of our worth and status. A certain amount of income is needed for basic needs, but is not a measurement of success or progress. Quality of life rather than quantity is the measurement of success and happiness.

Humans are cooperative by nature, and will try to use dialogue when differences occur. This means a total change in interpersonal relationships, that is, showing genuine concern for other human beings, in families, communities as well as in organizations.

For a sustainable thinker, success and happiness is measured in human relationships, protection of Nature, and being a citizen who takes responsibilities seriously. This person shows basic self respect, as well as a high respect for other humans and all living creatures .

The sustainable thinker also deeply believes that we are part of Nature and have a deep capacity for higher consciousness, which provides fulfillment in life and work, as well as peace of mind which is a huge help when problems arise, and we need a deep level of courage to live through them.

The sustainable thinker sees him(her)self as a responsible caretaker of our Earth, and is aware that if we do not look after the Earth, our time here can be limited. Nature will eventually get rid of us.

In total terms, the sustainable thinker possesses some deep values which involve both objective thinking as well as higher consciousness thinking and wisdom. Interestingly, these are many of the values we are seeing in projects which have had success in communities, as well as complete organizations. Here is also the place where the deep cultural values of Latin America are important, and need to be recognized.

These 2 articles have outlined a framework of thinking very different from our conventional thinking.

Article # 3 will be the last article in this series and deal with some helpful ways in which people and organizations have begun to deal with this transformation in thinking.

We hope that these articles are providing helpful food for thought, to recognize the depth of transformation in thinking needed to deal effectively for the long term with the dilemma, and also begin to act, each in his(her) own way, to implement a new depth of universal values in our society.