
REFLECTIONS ON GLOBALIZATION AND GLOBAL STUDIES

THE CULTURE OF 'ONENESS IN DIVERSITY': A MANIFESTO¹

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Introduction

Human civilization on this planet is approaching a critical threshold. This 'bifurcation' in the evolutionary trajectory of civilization presents not only danger; it is also a unique opportunity. It is the opportunity to create a sustainable and peaceful co-civilization. The key to making effective use of this window in time is the rise of a new and more appropriate culture: a planetary culture of oneness in diversity.

A new phase is coming in the evolution of human civilization. It is driven on the one hand by the prospect of increasing crises with accompanying unrest and turbulence, and on the other by the openness created by the unsustainability of today's world: the ever more widely perceived need for fundamental change. The economic, social and political problems of today's world, and its current and impending crises lead to the realization that, as Einstein said, the significant problems of our time cannot be solved with the same kind of thinking that gave birth to them. This realization motivates the intensifying search for new ways of thinking and acting.

New ways of thinking and acting call for a new culture. Culture in this sense is not merely the icing on the cake of civilization: it is its fundamental woof and warp. It is the very essence of how we, humans, see the world and ourselves in the world; the ground of our values and the warrant for our aspirations.

A culture of oneness-in-diversity is needed to orient the unfolding of the next phase in the history of human civilization. This culture must offer an embracing view of the individual, society, and the web of life on the planet. It must offer a functional ethic for life in a globally extended, interacting and intercommunicating world, grounded in a view based on the best insights of science and spirituality.

A planetary oneness-in-diversity culture could empower today's generations to transcend the fragmented and now intrinsically unsustainable culture that dominates the contemporary world. The Manifesto presented on these pages outlines the contours of this urgently needed new culture.

THE MANIFESTO

The Call for a Planetary Culture of Responsibility²

A planetary culture of oneness in diversity is built on the recognition that we are conscious members of a globally interacting human family, and that, as conscious

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² This and the following segment are based partially on the *Manifesto on Planetary Consciousness* drafted by this writer with the Dalai Lama and adopted by the Club of Budapest in October of 1996.

members of the human family, we have multiple responsibilities. We have responsibilities as:

- individuals;
- citizens of our country;
- collaborators in a business and an economy;
- members of the world wide net of human communities;
- persons endowed with an evolved mind and consciousness.

As individuals, we are responsible for seeking our interests in harmony with the interests and wellbeing of others. We are responsible for condemning and averting any form of killing and brutality; responsible for not bringing more children into the world than we truly need and can support; and responsible for respecting the right to life, development, and equal status and dignity of all the children, women, and men who inhabit the Earth.

As citizens of our country, we are responsible for demanding that our leaders beat swords into ploughshares and relate to other nations peacefully and in a spirit of cooperation; that they recognize the legitimate aspirations of all communities in the human family; and that they do not abuse sovereign powers to manipulate people and the environment for shortsighted and selfish ends.

As collaborators in business and in an economy, we are responsible for ensuring that commercial objectives do not center uniquely on profit and growth but include a concern that products and services respond to human needs and demands without harming people and impairing nature; that they do not serve destructive ends and unscrupulous designs; and that they respect the rights of all entrepreneurs and enterprises who compete fairly in the global marketplace.

As members of the worldwide net of human communities, it is our responsibility to promote mutual understanding and respect among people and nations whether they are like us or different; and to demand that all people everywhere should be empowered to respond to the challenges that face them with the material as well as spiritual resources that are required for maintaining the excellence and the quality of life throughout the human communities of the planet.

And *as persons endowed with mind and consciousness*, our responsibility is to encourage comprehension and appreciation for the human spirit in all its manifestations, and to inspire awe and wonder for a cosmos that brought forth life and consciousness and holds out the possibility of its continued evolution towards higher and higher levels of insight, understanding, love, and compassion.

The Call for a Planetary Culture of Solidarity

In most parts of the world, the intrinsic potentials of people are repressed and underdeveloped. The way children are raised depresses their faculties for learning and creativity; the way young people experience the struggle for material survival results in frustration and resentment. In adults this leads to a variety of compensatory, addictive, and compulsive behaviors. The result is the persistence of social and political oppression, economic warfare, cultural intolerance, crime, and disregard for the environment.

Eliminating social and economic ills and frustrations calls for considerable socio-economic development, and that is not possible without better education, information, and communication. These, however, are blocked by the lack of an adequate level of socio-economic development, so that a vicious cycle is created: underdevelopment creates frustration, and frustration, giving rise to defective behaviors, blocks development. This cycle must be broken at its point of greatest flexibility – the development of the culture that inspires the mind and motivates the behavior of a critical mass of people in society. Achieving this objective does not pre-empt the need for socio-economic devel-

opment with all its financial and technical resources, but calls for a parallel mission in the cultural field. Unless human culture evolves to the planetary dimension, the processes that stress society and the environment will intensify and create a shockwave that could jeopardize the current transition towards a sustainable global society. This would be a setback for humanity and a danger for everyone. Evolving a planetary culture of solidarity is a vital cause shared by the whole of the human family.

The Call for a Planetary Culture of Oneness

The human organism is a cooperative assembly of more cells than there are stars in our galaxy. These cells are highly diverse among themselves, yet they create multiple organs and organ systems in the body, and obey the precise and remarkably coordinated flows of energy and information that sustain the living state. This entire multidimensional, enormously complex system is focused on the paramount task of maintaining the organism in its physically improbable state of dynamic balance, where life's irreversible processes can be sustained without reverting to the inert state of thermal and chemical equilibrium.

Living nature, in turn, is a complex assembly of myriad species and populations inserted in myriad environments, where the overall dynamic balance of the whole system is nonetheless maintained, there by enabling the presence and the persistence of life in the biosphere.

Human communities emerged in the womb of nature millions of years ago, and increasingly autonomous cultures and corresponding behaviors evolved already twenty to fifty thousand years before our time. With the advent of the Neolithic ten thousand years ago, a growing segment of human communities separated themselves from the encompassing balances of the web of life and began to create their own systems and environments, altering natural equilibrium to fit their needs and aspirations. In today's world concern with sustaining the system in which we live our lives has become overshadowed by concern with serving the perceived needs and wants of individuals, and individual communities.

This shift in focus has produced multiple gaps and divisions. On the one hand, it has encouraged the flourishing of diversity as individually powerful persons and communities created worlds to serve their own interests and aspirations. On the other, it has failed to maintain unity and coherence in the global community, fragmenting it into modern and traditional, rich and poor, developed and developing factions. The growing diversity of cultures without the parallel aspiration to oneness has made the global system that emerged on this planet intrinsically unsustainable.

The Next Development of Planetary Culture

There is now a need for a further development in human cultures – a development based on respect for the diversity of local cultures combined with due regard for their global unity and oneness. Particular cultures have always integrated their populations in some form of unity, and now that human populations have grown to the global level, these cultures need to expand their purview to embrace all people and all communities. The identity and unique excellence of local cultures and communities must be safeguarded, but it needs to be balanced by concern with the dynamic integrity of the web of life on the planet.

The need is for a planetary culture of oneness in diversity. Its purposive co-evolution by responsible individuals and their diverse nations and communities would empower the creation of a world eco-civilization capable of ensuring the thrift of humanity, and the persistence of all life on Earth.