

To what degree are contemporary American social values compatible with “universal” human rights and with my own ethical principles?

Since the question is not clear as to whether the comparison is between “actual” American social values or “ideal” social values, I will take the position of answering the question as though it were asking for the latter. How are the “ideal” American social values compatible with “universal” human rights and with my own ethical and moral principles?

Ideal American values are stipulated in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Broadly speaking, it can be said that America values, above all else, life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness and, further, that all human beings (although the Constitution only explicitly stipulated the *male* gender to have them) have an inalienable and inviolable right to live, to live as free persons and to live in such a manner as to pursue happiness, as long as these do not infringe upon the *equal right* of “others” to have these as well. This is understood to mean that I have these rights no more and no less than do other Americans such that we exercise these rights only to the extent that no harm is caused to another by doing so. American values are freedom of speech, religion, freedom to peaceful protest, freedom from warrantless searches of property and from arbitrary arrest or conviction, freedom from unwanted intrusion. Other rights are a fair judicial process such as a trial by jury when accused of wrongdoing and a trial by a jury of my peers. The law also grants me the right to an education and freedom from discrimination based upon gender, race, ethnicity, color or place of origin. While these are not exhaustive, they are the most salient ones guaranteed by our forefathers over 200 years ago.

Rokeach (1973) tells us that values are effects that arise out of cultural, institutional and personal forces rather than ideals existing independently, absolutely and immutably as in Platonic philosophy. Values are enduring, refer to a mode of conduct or end-state of existence and stipulate a preference for something that is desirable (Rokeach, 1973). Ideals, values and rights certainly intersect and overlap, but are generally considered to be distinct from one another. It is the distinction between values (or preferences) and rights that lies at the forefront of much of contemporary ethics.

At the practical level, there are three tensions existing in America today between the deontological religious fundamentalists who espouse a divine, theistic duty to narrow, exact biblical interpretations of morality; the liberal, secularist utilitarian ideal of what is best for the common good; and ethical egoists who have a Hobbesian, individualistic vision of morality. The first and third have manifested as unhealthy extremes in America whereas the 'middle way' of the second seems to be burgeoning, particularly in light of our most recent political foreign policy mandates. Interestingly, until the recent mid-term elections in America, it appeared that American foreign and domestic policy was dominated, and being decided by, the first and third extremes. As a psychotherapist, I see the rise of psychotherapy as a projection of the will of the Collective Psyche in America to begin to rid itself of the shackles of religious fundamentalism that was so prevalent in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. However, as pendulums most oftentimes do, the swing from the far right to the far left had its favorable and unfavorable consequences in the psyche of the American people. Americans have largely sought a moral life within the framework of some external locus of control, namely religion, and that pendulum shifted for a substantial number with the advent of an atheistic psychotherapy at the turn

of the 20th century which perceived the religious sentiment as a projection of the internalized desire to be taken care of by an omnipotent father figure. In the 60s and 70s, with humanistic and transpersonal theories and therapies advocating a return to spiritual aspects of human ontology, examinations and critiques of psychotherapy and its relevance to ethical and moral issues were written (Lakin, 1988; Doherty, 1995; Singer, 1995). I see this as the Collective Psyche of America still fettered to an external locus of control, albeit one in which it is now tied to the authority of the psychotherapist as either a mediator between the patient and God, or to replace God as the paternal authority figure who is omniscient.

I perceive the fabric of American values under egregious assault and at extreme risk for vulnerability and erosion under the current political administration as I perceive it as a slow, but steady progression to fascist, totalitarian oppression which is antithetical to the founding values that the United States forefathers wrote about in our Constitution and Bill of Rights. The continuing merging of corporate, political, military, media and religious factions is, to be blunt, frightening beyond anything I could have ever perceived in my lifetime and, if left unchecked, will be the complete undoing of American values as I have come to know them. It would be the absolute acquiescence to an external locus of control as all dictatorships are.

America could be understood as having suffered birth pangs mostly because of the desire to be free from oppression and tyranny. All of her subsequent moral dilemmas could be seen from that primary lens. Hinman (1996) segregates three areas of moral dilemmas into: 1. issues of life and death, 2. questions of diversity and equality, and 3. the demarcations and boundaries of morality. The issue of what are “rights” versus what

are “preferences” or “privileges” is the subject of contemporary morality and Hinman (1995) has us contemplate them from different viewpoints in an attempt to have us face this dilemma that is so crucial in a world of swelling violence, murder, rape and the unthinkable—nuclear threat. For myself, I still rely on an Indian concept of the ideal goal of realizing that Absolute Reality (Sharma, 1965) which carries with it a transformed and transcendent view of ethics and morality much like that of Guatama Buddha, Mohandas Gandhi (Mayer, 1966), Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharishi. Non-violence and universal love for all people, all animals, all of nature are inevitable outcomes when the epistemological consciousness of Absolute Truth is attained. To these individuals, this noetic truth is not metaphysical in the sense that it is some pie-in-the-sky, utopian unattainable consciousness. It is real from a phenomenological and epistemological standpoint just as the person who experiences falling in love for the first time can say that the subjective truth of that experience is both a cognitive knowingness and an affective reality. Is it measurable or quantifiable or empirically valid? No, but no person in their right mind would deny it is real when it is experienced.

The older I get and the more I seek the Truth of “the Good,” in a Platonic metaphysical sense and in a practical, earthly sense, the more difficulty I have in keeping my feet planted on solid ground. In a bodhisattvic sense, I desire that others (Americans and non-Americans) can have the same awakening because it is truly *moksa*, a liberating moment where the Truth, indeed, sets one free from dogma and doctrines which constrict, bind and divide. Paradoxically, the older I get, the more I see how incongruent my Eastern values and ethics are with the general, mainstream American person. The American ideal of individualism seems well intentioned, but pathetically partial and

unwhole. And then I am reminded of the evolution of consciousness and have a ray of hope for America and the world. At least America, unlike some third world countries, has come so far as to establish life and liberty and the pursuit of individual happiness as “rights” and has a genuine desire, even if on paper, to see that other people come to know these as rights as well. In practice, however, America seems highly egoistic as the people in power continue to exhibit avarice in pillaging and plundering other countries for their natural and mineral resources all under a superficial façade presented to the American people of wanting others to experience the blessings of democracy that we do. Were it not for the fact that American political leaders have a historical pattern of being the forces behind assassinations of foreign democratically elected leaders and placing dictators in positions of power in foreign countries who will engage in business with a handful of very wealthy elite Americans, American values would be laudable. The shadow psyche of America, with its egregiously avaricious black market, covert operations and corporate/political/media trysts is incongruent with my own personal values of altruism.

Gender:

What do I see as the ideal role of sex and gender in society? What do I think are the greatest liabilities associated with my view? The greatest assets?

There is a distinction between a person's biological gender based on anatomical distinctions and their gender consciousness. The role of gender consciousness is, in my opinion, the next major evolutionary shift for humankind as a species. The future of the human species, no less, is predicated on this shift. The domination of the narcissistic male with obsession with control and power was, in my view, an evolutionary necessity whose outcome was saving the human species from extinction. We owe the male gender thanks for that. It was only through the desire to be in control and to have power over the harmful effects of nature and threats from wild beasts that has brought us to a state of civilized existence. Throughout history, this warranted a separation of labor between genders for survival purposes. The man performed the exterior labor and the woman conducted all domestic labor; however, in roughly the eighteenth century and increasingly in the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution brought new technologies which no longer necessitated a division of gender labor. Certainly by the twentieth century, divisions were no longer *de facto* necessary as machines overtook much of hard labor. At the end of the 20th century with the proliferation of computer technology, division of labor is virtually anachronistic and is now a detriment. What once was necessary has now become a handicap for human advancement.

The ideal is for the integration of anima/animus within the individual, what Jung considered to be the mature ideal. This necessitates females to integrate the masculine animus into their psyches and for the males to integrate the feminine anima into their psyches. Historically, females have been considered inferior based upon a masculine

worldview that places the value of intellect over compassion and physical strength over benevolence and altruism. Since females were denied the right to read for so many centuries, they had no way to evolve intellectually, to develop sophisticated theories or to create form in the external world. It can be argued that, for the most part, females in the West began their evolution of intellectual strength and creative force on an external level in the past 100 years compared to 5,000 years of experience for males. What can we deduce for the outcome of females if given the same unfettered opportunities that males have been privilege to for so many millennia?

I believe it is a planetary necessity that both males and females share equally in leadership roles in all spheres of life including business, politics, academia, medicine, law, science, religion and the family. Perhaps it is nowhere more important than in business, politics and law since these have the largest impact on social transformation.

After 5,000 years of male domination and female subjugation, the world is headed toward annihilation and I am persuaded that it is directly related to the immature masculine consciousness which is bifurcated. This is the immature, dominating “power over,” exploitative, aggressive, narcissistic consciousness which is, ironically and sadly, responsible for keeping himself and others from realizing our fullest and highest potentials. The sooner it is transformed the better, but it is going to take decades of the older paradigm to die out and a simultaneous attention to instilling this new paradigm in our children. If the immature masculine consciousness which is pandemic in leadership today is left in power---particularly in business, politics and law---the human species and the planet will be extinct. Kofi Annan, Secretary General for the United Nations, has essentially stated that women in leadership is the answer to saving the planet. Wilber has

stated a similar message in *Up from Eden*. Several months ago, the Dalai Lama was a guest at a California convention for females in leadership and he stated that the female is the one that is endowed with compassion. The question is now: Will females rise to leadership roles in business, politics and law in sufficient numbers such that we can avert annihilation and extinction?

Overall, I agree with Okin's argument and her intentions; however, I would word some of her language differently and would disagree with some of her details as it pertains to policy. I do not believe the goal should be to eliminate gender, as she has suggested, rather I believe the goal should be the manifestation of androgynous consciousness. William Pollack's (1998) fifteen years of research with adolescent boys has led him to the conclusion that the dis-identification of the feminine that is the expected genesis for what we have historically defined as masculine gender identity is, in fact, "normative trauma." In other words, what we have socially constructed as masculine gender identity is, in fact, not the apogee of mental health for males, rather it is churning out "the immature masculine" consciousness or, said another way, is one *cause* of narcissistic pathology. Jungian analysts such as Bly and Woodman (1998) agree that the psychologically evolved and healthy individual is one in which the feminine and masculine psychological traits are integrated within the person. It is the implicit consciousness, the *Bodhicitta*, the Intelligent Heart, as understood in Mahayana Buddhism. The Eastern philosophy of Advaita Vedanta where the realization of the mature Self, Atman realized as Brahman, results in the mind falling into the heart which is a metaphor for the intrapsychic integration of the masculine and feminine. This is the essential bedrock of my theoretical model of the Transcendent Psyche in *The Anatomy of*

the Soul: An Authentic Psychology and I have the unstinted conviction that this is *the most important intrapsychic event* to occur in this century if we are to survive.

Okin's ideal of having both the father and the mother participate equally, on balance, in the childrearing has been advocated earlier by Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976) and is one likely manifest practical precursor in the evolution of androgynous consciousness. When the male parent begins to psychologically internalize the emotional bonding process with the newborn and, later, the toddler that the female parent has been doing for 10,000 years, it seems predictable that males will begin to develop an appreciation for the "feminine" nuances of the psyche, i.e., intuition, emotional bonding, caring, compassion, nurturance, interdependence, vulnerability, gentleness, kindness, etc. It also seems likely that males would develop a far greater attunement to nonverbal communication. In being situationally placed so as to engage in those psychic exchanges between parent and child, the male parent will evolve to have not only the left brain/analytic, but also the right brain/intuitive capacities and expressions of the psyche. Additionally, as Okin notes, the children will observe and model their own parent's parenting style, thus, creating generations of individuals who do not grow up identifying schisms between "gender roles." The domino effect would be decreased gender idealization and devaluation, discrimination and prejudice.

I am in agreement with Okin that children must be exposed to explicit educational curricula that includes writings and statistics presenting the facts about gender inequalities, discrimination and their individual, familial, psychological, social and global consequences. Research indicates when a male child is exposed to his father's abuse of his mother creates a situation where the male child is 10 times more likely to grow up and

abuse his spouse so it seems intuitive that the child's exposure to their parent's egalitarian relationship would have a parallel positive effect.

Continuing to work toward equal pay for comparable jobs, eliminating the glass ceiling and eliminating discrimination against women for what has historically been considered "male jobs" is non-intrusive and will go more in the long run toward creating a society where females no longer psychologically or financially must tolerate abuse from males.

One liability of this integration of feminine/masculine consciousness is that there will always be those who disagree vehemently, particularly the religious fundamentalists in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim populations, and these are currently very large numbers. That is why the process has to be on a familial level, but also transformed through political and legal institutional changes, a sort of "bottom and top" simultaneous effort. Another liability is that with larger numbers of this consciousness, it leaves less and less people who have sufficient levels of aggressiveness to militarily defend a people or a nation, however, it seems that without taking the transformational risk of this psychological event, the species is doomed anyway. So this would not be a sufficient argument to delay or negate the transformation. There must be another way for mankind to act than as his current aggressive, warring self.

The asset of this transformation has already been stated. I believe it is the salvation of our species and the planet. I see no other alternative than, as Einstein once stated, to operate at a different level of consciousness to solve our problems than the consciousness which has existed in the onset of our problems.

Environmental Ethics:
In Merchant's article, what are the limitations to the
egocentric, homocentric and ecocentric environmental models?
What limitations do I see in the ecocentric approach?
Which approach resembles my own?

Merchant states that the egocentric model is "grounded in the self," however, "does not derive from selfishness or narcissism." This contradicts the very notion of egocentric and Hobbes' philosophy which is what she claims the model is based on. Narcissism is a disorder which is marked by obsession with control and power. In Hobbes' *Leviathan*, he purports that man's nature is ruled by self-interest, competitive and constantly striving to attain something for the "self." The very concepts of sharing, collaborating and empowering others is antithetical to an egocentric model, therefore, I am in strong disagreement with Merchant's claim that the egocentric model is not rooted in selfishness. Limitations to this model seem palpably apparent in that the environment is treated in an anti-Kantian fashion---it is a "thing," an object, an "it," a means to an end to satisfy man's lower passions. The environment serves man and there is no consideration of reciprocal relationship between nature such that man gives nature her carbon dioxide and nature gives man his oxygen and food supply, not to mention the splendor and beauty. Merchant's Darwinian example of developing nations only providing food assistance to countries who voluntarily submit to population control is a Master/Slave relationship. The mechanistic model upon which this environmental ethic is based parallels that of the workings of a clock. In other words, it is all about reason and usefulness while kindness, generosity and compassion play no role. This anti-utilitarian environmental ethic which ignores the good of the whole and idealizes the individual *is* narcissistic because it is all about "power over" other. Its limitations are

obvious in that there is a bias toward corporations' interests and other special interests over the good of society. Additionally, Merchant notes that the competitiveness of capitalism is in parallel with the competitive nature of man, thus, the market needs, i.e., the desires of corporations to make a profit, always supersede the needs of society. The effects of pollution, for example, would not be considered because this would interfere with the primacy of the rights of the corporations.

The homocentric environmental model is utilitarian in that its focus is on societal interests, i.e., what is the highest good for the greatest number. The greatest drawback to this model, according to Merchant, is that neither the homocentric or the egocentric models posit an inherent "right" to Nature herself. In other words, neither of these models bestows upon Nature an equal value with sentient beings such as animals and human beings. There is no inherent right for Nature to simply live and be. Additionally, when decisions are made for the "good of the whole," aspects within Nature are not delineated, rather only the cumulative effect that an environmental decision has upon a community or social group. Again, like egocentric ethics, the environment is used as a "thing," a means to an end, however, unlike egocentric, consideration is given to a much broader number of people. Whatever environmental decision positively impacts the greatest number of people will be chosen, regardless of whether the consequences of that decision result in some negative outcome for some aspect of Nature, such as a species of animal or plant.

In the ecocentric model, Nature herself is perceived as an organic whole, a living entity that has a right to exist simply because of her splendor and beauty, in addition to its value that is provided to humankind. This is an ethos that more closely resembles the

Native American devotion to Nature and the Eastern philosophical branches such as Zen Buddhists who perceive Nature as sacred and having parallel subtle qualities of the human species.

One limitation posed by Merchant for the ecocentric model is that it is difficult to argue--through logic and reason---for the inherent value of Nature. Since Western culture places a premium on masculine reason and logic over feminine ways of knowing that include care and compassion, this poses a difficulty for Western moral philosophy to justify ecocentrism.

A second limitation is the difficulty that science places between scientific facts versus subjective human values. Since empiricism is supreme in Western culture, how could one argue for the factual validity of the inherent value of a plant? How can this hurdle be overcome?

The third limitation Merchant exposes is the question of whether it is factual, according to ecocentrist ethics, that ethics evolves in parallel with the evolution and advancement of civilization. As she pointed out, Native Americans and other indigenous cultures dispute this theory since they are amongst the earliest peoples and they have always had an ecocentric environmental ethic. Further, in 20th century America, in our culture of entitlement and narcissism, we are an “advanced culture,” yet are far from adopting an ecocentric ethic.

My personal ethic is based on a combination of an Eastern ethic of karma and what I perceive to be a sane, rational and common sense view of doing good for self, other and nature. From a karmic standpoint, I believe that whatever an individual does always comes back in the form of some equal payback. This is such a ubiquitous given

in Eastern ethics that little discussion is necessary. In the West, however, few seem to adopt or understand it since it is predicated on an equally metaphysical belief in reincarnation.

From a purely common sensical perspective, it seems to make sense to me that when the highest good is done that benefits self, other and nature, this culminates in a reciprocal advantage for all. For example, if I destroy nature needlessly, the cumulative result is not only will there be a resulting decrease in the surrounding aesthetics of her beauty, but my own existence is in jeopardy since it is a scientific fact that there are compounds within nature or given off by nature (oxygen being one of her most important) upon which I am dependent. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin posited a model of nature which endowed her with an intrinsic pattern within, a primordial consciousness of sorts. To Teilhard de Chardin, the “within” and “without” were simply reciprocal reflections of each other. To Hegel, nature is the objectification of Absolute Spirit, a mirror or reflection of Spirit. In Eastern philosophy, matter is not Ultimately Real, but it does have relative value to be respected and honored for its relative importance to human existence. While Kantian ethics would argue for treating nature as an end, this is insufficient for me. And I find Hobbesian ethics offensive, narcissistic and immature from an evolutionary consciousness standpoint. While I find great value in Mills’ utilitarianism for the greater good of the whole, it still has an element of intellectual sterility and cognitive duty that does not mirror the compassion of the heart which is common to Eastern ethics.

Individuals who understand Ultimate Reality and Truth (which is the essential message of Eastern philosophy/religion/ethics) are imbued with an illuminating fullness of that Reality and of that Truth which, at the end of the day, speaks only in the language of the

Heart. All epistemologies fall into phenomenologies and, ultimately, into ontology. A knowingness translates into a compassion for all because the Platonic “All” is synonymous with the Hegelian Absolute Spirit and with the Eastern concept of *Saguna* Brahman. It is a consciousness imbued with the fullness of Heart and it surpasses all intellectual, Aristotelian understandings which most Western philosophers have tried in vain to understand through Aristotelian logic. This is the consciousness of the avatars, the Ascended Masters, who embody *ekatvam anupasyatah*, one who sees oneness everywhere. When this oneness is understood intuitively, the preciousness of “the All” translates into the sacredness and holiness of all that exists and that does not exist. Thus, nature, including minerals and plants, along with animals and other human beings are all equally honored because the consciousness which sees through the lens of this illuminated consciousness cannot but help to see the world through the eyes of love. This to me is the cause of the Supreme Ethic. Unless a sufficient number of people evolve to it, our fragile, sacred earth and all sentient life is vulnerable.

How am I to live the best and most meaningful life?

It was Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, who stated in his opening sentence: Life is difficult. While Singer (1995) denounces Peck's advice that people should seek answers to life's problems through psychotherapy, one can hardly argue with the fact that life is replete with vicissitudes. It took seeing an old man, sick man and dying man before Siddhartha Gautama awakened to the truth of life's harshest realities. For myself, it has been a slower process throughout my late thirties and early forties and through reading voluminous works by famous philosophers, mystics, psychologists, scientists and theologians, to find myself awake to the timeless and troubling issue of life's purpose and meaning.

The conclusion that I have reached on the purpose of life mirrors the Hindu belief that human existence was created for *lila*, play or sport. Out of the Divine Consciousness, matter was formed and humankind is but an extension of that beginning cell of life. The goal is to relish the process of life, the journey itself, with all its joys and despair. Since I know that matter is inherently empty, I believe that the soul is immortal and that God is a universal consciousness of Good, then I am not entangled in the writhing fear that holds sway of so many people who hold religious dogmatic beliefs in concepts such as "sin", "salvation" or "eternal damnation." Heaven is the eternal cosmos where our souls will exist without bodily form. Hell is actually what I am living on earth every day with its attenuating effects. The ego is responsible for "hell" on earth because the ego cannot perceive Ultimate Truth. I still grapple with the injustices that are so pervasive on this planet. So what do I do about it? How can I use my purpose to mirror that of the Divine? I believe having an overarching purpose of not harming others, wishing good to others,

praying for no more wars and violence, meditating on world peace, and working on my own Soul growth is continual. That is the bedrock of my purpose that is immutable. I don't call that "duty" in a Kantian sense, however, because it comes from my heart, not from my mind. To me, duty is mental and compassion comes from the heart. Beyond that, the details to execute these will likely change over my lifetime. I cannot say that I can do anything more about it than what Singer suggests, that is, to focus less on myself and to work more toward helping those around us, whether that be people, animals or the ecosystem.

There are those who have chosen to live in caves or monasteries because they believe that isolating from the world and devoting themselves to meditation and/or prayer is their purpose. There are activists who donate money and use their name recognition to bring attention to worthy causes and there are those activists like Spira and Townend (Singer, 2004) who risk being ostracized, incarcerated or injured to stop unethical practices. I admire these people and, on some level, wish I could take on these roles. However, for me, I am still working toward a goal of owning a clinic that offers meditation, chromatherapy, music therapy and aromatherapy as my next purpose in life. In the interim, what I can do is continue to pursue my doctorate and work in the mental health field. I can be honest and fair with people that I come in contact with, contribute financially toward worthy causes such as NRDC and ACLU, stay politically engaged, stay abreast of socio-economic issues and meditate on peace.

With each passing year, there is a growing tension between the desire to withdraw from the profane world and hibernate versus working toward owning my clinic so that I can offer an alternative treatment modality to psychotherapy. As I have

mentioned in my previous writings, I have the unstinted conviction, like Singer, that the world has grown obsessed with psychotherapy, with pursuing answers by seeking answers through another person of perceived authority. While I value psychotherapy as a means whereby certain client populations are given an opportunity to voice their emotional pain such as those who have been silenced through violence or sexual and physical abuse or those who have lost a loved one, I believe that anywhere from 60% to 80% of the people who pursue psychotherapy would benefit more if they were to engage in a meditation practice.

I acknowledge that there are days when I am fighting tremendous despair about the injustices and ignorance in the world. I went through a three year period where I was not sure I wanted to stay on the planet because everything seemed so incredibly meaningless and for naught, much like the experience of Tolstoy (Grcic, 1989).

For Spinoza, life lacked meaning unless there was some essence which was cause of itself, some infinite and eternal essence whose nature is such that it *must* exist. The only essence this could be, according to Spinoza, was God. Only when contemplating God, when knowing this ineffable truth that is eternal, could one understand the meaning of life (Scruton, 1999). The eternal essence of God was imbued in Nature, thus, all of life in the material world, from nature up through humankind, was sacred. This pantheistic view was also shared by Einstein (2000) who said:

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle. It was the experience of mystery—even if mixed with fear—that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which are only accessible to our reason in their most elementary forms--- it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude; in

this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man....Enough for me the mystery of eternity of life, and the inkling of the marvelous structure of reality, together with the single-hearted endeavor to comprehend a portion, be it never so tiny, of the reason that manifests itself in nature (p. 5).

These two pantheists exemplify a consciousness that has a component of awe to it.

It is this sense of awe, wonder and reverence that is the common denominator of all mystics, seers, avatars and masters. This awe seems to fill their entire being and is projected outwardly toward all that exists. They are in love with Spirit, in love with the eternal transcendent qualities, in awe of the Good. It is as F.H. Bradley (in Singer, p. 185) states, that those who fail to love virtue simply for herself will degrade virtue into a means whereby we are simply seeking worldly pleasures.

I cannot separate living an ethical life from knowledge of Absolute Truth and Ultimate Reality. There are only two ways to respond to this. One can take Nietzsche's statement that "God is dead" or Dostoyevsky's statement that once God is dead, "everything is permissible" (in Singer, p. 187) and turn that into justification for a life of debauchery, chicanery and vices. Or one could understand that God, the *anthropomorphic* God, is dead, but there is a living force of Good which some call God that does exist and we could use this as a means whereby the interdependence of all existing things becomes the hallmark for goodness on the entire globe. We could use that force for goodness with ourselves and toward others. Virtue emanates with this understanding. For positivists and empiricists, to describe to these ineffable understandings is like trying to tell a person who has never been in love what that experience is like. I can no more separate Ultimate Truth from a moral or ethical stance, a religious sentiment, a philosophical worldview, a scientific understanding or a psychological knowingness than I could try to tear apart a cloud and separate it from the

air. All my thoughts as it pertains to the illumination of the Good for all of existence, both non-sentient and sentient beings, is predicated on my understanding of the Platonic “Good” and the Plotinian “All” or “the One.” As understood in Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism or Taoism, the transcendent Reality is something that cannot be thought, yet is intuitively known beyond all doubt. It is the emptiness of matter and the fullness of Spirit, of love that unites all things, which compels my Soul to desire goodness for minerals, plants, animals, humans and the entire ecological system upon which we all depend. It is the epistemological certainty of the eternality and self-luminosity of the consciousness of transcendent values which creates an awe and wonder in me which, when meditated upon for any length of time, engenders a sense of responsibility to somehow teach others of this wonderful truth that binds us all in love. St. John of the Cross said, “In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone.” Oh, that the world could understand this---that I and others could live it.

It is this consciousness which caused Socrates to speak through his “daemon.” It is this sacred ebullience which flowed through Plotinus when he spoke of the One or the All or Beyond Being. Plato, through the voice and wisdom of Socrates, told us in a thousand different ways in his writings that virtue cannot be taught and it is not an exact science which humankind can set down in written laws. Rather, virtue can only be understood when one realizes the Good, the *summum bonum*, the intelligible world of Eternal and Noble Forms.

Attributed to the Oracle at Delphi, the saying which Carl Jung placed both above his door at his home in Bollingen and on his grave was a testimony to the inward focus that created a sense of awe: *vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit*, God and not called,

God will be present. To Jung, the human psyche is but the *imago dei*, the image of God, rising from the depths of the lower ego to the transcendent knowledge of Absolute Truth itself. Hegel (1977) wrote of how the Spirit puts itself over against itself, within matter, creating a subject and object dichotomy, which is only overcome when the self realizes Absolute Spirit, when the consciousness is understood as Being itself, the union of Being and Absolute Spirit as the apogee of the knowledge to which humankind is destined to aspire. Jung (1989) once wrote to a clergyman, "I find that all my thoughts circle around God like the planets around the sun." This seems strikingly similar to Empedocles who said, "the nature of God is like a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." It shares similarity with Plotinus who said the One is "That Which on all things depend" or Aristotle who stated that the One was "That to which all things aspire."

Emerson (1981), the great transcendental naturalist, believed that truth, justice and love were the attributes of the soul and wrote that:

the soul is the perceiver and revealer of truth. We know it when we see it, let sceptic and scoffer say what they choose....for the soul's communication of truth is the highest event in nature....for the soul is true to itself.....the world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty. This element I call an ultimate end. No reason can be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty. Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All.

To Emerson, "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit." When reading him, one cannot help but be caught up in his marvel and awe of the natural world, his deep respect for the beauty and fullness of Nature.

I can only live my life in accord with my Soul's deepest longings for it is the longings of my Soul----to know Truth, create Beauty, love Goodness and to be wise

about the union of the human and Divine Will—that give my life meaning. These, and only these, more and more as I grow older, imbue within me a meaning that allows me to make sense of a humanity seemingly gone mad with egoistic pleasures which divide us all from one another. Leibniz said that all realities belong only to unities and I believe the only way the world can finally live in a state of peace is through love which is the only thing that unites. While I agree with Singer in much of his book, *How are We to Live?*, particularly his stance on becoming active in some way toward a social ideal instead of spending year after year in psychotherapy, I cannot agree with him that we must abandon the utopian ideal. The unknown author and Christian mystic (1936) of *The Golden Fountain* stated that “every man can find, in his own soul, an exquisite and incomparable instrument of communication with God. To establish the working of this communication is the whole object and meaning of life in this world.” Dionysius the Areopagite (1946), considered by many to be the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, tells us that the substance of all perfection is naught else but a good will which can be attained when the contemplative allows the “spark of the soul” to touch upon transcendent realities, the world of “the Divine Darkness,” the “cloud of unknowing” that is between herself and God. It is where love has entered “the divine radiance of the Divine Dark, the inaccessible light wherein the Lord is said to dwell, and to which thought with all its struggles cannot attain.” Kierkegaard (1956) echoes a similar mantra when he tells us that the “purity of heart is to will one thing: the good.” For him, only when humankind moves through the aesthetic and ethical stages to reach what he called the “religious stage,” the transcendent state where we seek “a living feeling for the Good” can we attain the state where justice and peace reign. Humankind must move beyond the lower stages

of existence which come from a place of self-centeredness which emanates from the intellect, but *from the heart* which Kirkegaard says is “the source of all life.”

The wisdom of Simon Jacobson (2004), in his book, *Toward a Meaningful Life: The Wisdom of the Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson*, resonates with me. He said, “The key to meaning and happiness in your life lies within your own hands: understanding the symmetry and rhythm between your own body and soul.” Only when humankind can learn the interdependence between the world of matter, of nature, and of higher transcendent values, can we reach an externalized version of the world which is a mirror of our inner sanctum, our inner peace which is reflected and illuminated outwardly. Buber (1958) believed that the purpose of life was the experience of life itself. He believed that the “I” of the “I-Thou” relationship was the consciousness of subjectivity, where a deep union can be attained between self and other, rather than the individualistic “I” of the “I-It” relationship which sees others as objects. Only through the former can humankind develop a connection, a union of the mind and heart. We can then use this transcendent relationship to experience life in a deeper, fuller way.

Hindus understand the meaning of our lives as being somewhat analogous to Buber’s distinction. The word “play” is more of a sense of delight and wonder of this thing we call life. Hindus use the phrase “hide and seek” to describe how Brahman brings matter into existence in order to hide from itSelf, but also to, ultimately, seek itSelf and know itSelf again.

As I entered my middle age years, I grew to despise violence of all kinds and have come to have immense respect for Gandhi’s belief in non-violence who said that “truth and non-violence are faces of the same coin” and “love is the supreme and only law of

life” (Gandhi, 1967). I find Ramsey’s (1983) and Walzer’s (1977) comments about a just war to be personally unconvincing although it is likely that for many more years, the next phase for the world will be, according to Walzer, that humankind will fight only “just wars,” or wars only as a “last resort” and where the aggregate cost of soldier’s and civilian’s lives will not be greater than the value of the goal of war. This would, thankfully, relegate the war hawk who engages in pre-emptive war as a war criminal. However, when I read that, I cringe when I consider the fact that innocent lives (especially children), are still allowed to be killed in Walzer’s “just war” scenario. War is, according to the Dalai Lama, anachronistic and I share that sentiment in my book, *The Anatomy of the Soul* (2004). All wars are fought either due to greed or religion or a mixture of these two. And how is it that so many humans have failed for millennia to understand the oxymoron of “holy war”? “Holy” implies sacred, good and whole, whereas “war” is profane, evil and it divides. How could these two words ever be used in connection to one another? The more I meditate on, and yearn for, transcendent values, the more my consciousness is filled with them. The more I seek spiritual values, the more I love them. That is the beauty of them and why Buddhists suggest meditating on words like “love” or “peace.” What we fill our minds with, that we are. The more I love Spirit, the greater my aversion toward all things divisive. Plotinus was right when he said that the Soul constellates around “the One.”

My life has meaning in whatever expressions I can give to the world of honoring God or “the One.” In Advaita Vedanta, as in Buddhism, the Highest Truth is neither this nor that. When I contemplate life in light of this Highest Truth which cannot be spoken because it cannot be thought with the intellect, I am torn between two courses of action.

The Buddha tells us that ignorance is not ultimately real. If that is so, then I can respond one of two ways: meditating on Ultimate Reality or dispelling something that has no Ultimate Reality. This has led some in the Zen or Buddhist or Vedanta tradition to seek a solitary and monastic life dwelling on Reality. For others, particularly the Bodhisattvas, this may lead to a life of helping sentient beings alleviate suffering through coming to their own realization of the emptiness of matter.

Sometimes I feel very small and insignificant and having little ability to influence world events. From 1950 to 1970, for every additional \$1.00 earned by the bottom 90% of wage earners, those in the top 0.01% earned an additional \$162.00. From 1990 to 2002, for every \$1.00 earned by those in the 90% income bracket, each taxpayer at the top 0.01% brought in an extra \$18,000 (Johnson, 2005). The World Wildlife Fund and the Global Footprint Network warns that we will need two planets' worth of natural resources every year by 2050 if current trends of consumption continue. WWF Director-General, James Leape, states that "If everyone around the world lived as those in America, we would need five planets to support us." As of 2003, the demand that people placed on the natural world was 25% greater than the planet's ability to provide everything from food to energy and recycle all human waste which means that we are making more waste at a faster rate than nature is able to turn waste back into resources. The "footprint of humanity" as tripled between 1961 and 2003 with population increasing from 3 billion in 1960 to 6.5 billion today. The rate at which humans are pumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere has more than doubled since the 1990s, according to Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. How can this ever be stopped when we have egregious displays of a lack of ethics in business

today? I categorically deny Larson's statement, "Top management is concerned about long-range strategy for corporate longevity rather than short-term returns" (Newton & Ford, 1994). After working 22 years in business environments and seeing the growing number of outrageous CEO compensation and retirement packages along with the growing schism between the rich and the poor, the reality of what is occurring in American business is so blatantly obvious that it makes Larson's argument comical. After the Enron debacle and the \$400 million CEO retirement package for an ExxonMobil executive, what person of common decency today would not be in favor of whistle blowing legislation to protect whistle blowers. As DeGeorge states, by the fact that we need moral heroes is more a testimony to the degeneration of corporate structures in general (in Newtown & Ford, 1994, p. 139).

What role can I play in this vast world of such great need? I do not know that my answer is sufficient. With every fibre of my being, I fight the tension between wanting to leave the planet (which is the easy way out) versus wanting to help (which generates a lot of hope and despair). I must settle for meditating on world peace, striving to live an honest life and continuing to work toward my next goal. Ah, life is difficult.

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