

Developing a truly compassionate society

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Opinion

This article is included as Appendix K of a book entitled, *Deepening Your Personal Relationships: Developing Emotional Intimacy and Good Communication*, by authors Max Hammer, Barry Hammer, and Alan C. Butler (Houston, Texas: Strategic Books, 2014, ISBN: 978-1-61897-590-4), pages 325-379, with reference notes on pages 396-398. That Appendix, from which this present article is taken, is entitled, "Extending Principles of Fulfilling Dyadic Relationships to Our Whole Society"

Now we will discuss how principles of caring human relationship and effective interpersonal communication discussed earlier in this book are applicable to transforming society for the better. Since society is comprised of its individual members, as individual people develop greater levels of unselfish caring, empathic sensitivity, compassion, and ethical responsibility, that naturally begins to ripple out from dyadic relationships, nuclear families, and close, familiar, social circles to produce greater levels of good will, harmony, and constructive functioning, in society as a whole. As individuals mature psychologically by surrendering egocentric self-preoccupation in self-forgetful caring communion with other people who are especially near and dear to them, their heart gradually develops greater levels of love and good will, which gradually expand beyond the confines of their immediate close social circle to increasingly embrace a compassionate concern for strangers, and eventually encompasses all human beings and, indeed, all living beings. In addition to caring dyadic, family, and local neighborly relationships gradually expanding the heart so that individuals then express greater levels of compassionate good will and less antagonistic negativity or destructiveness, even to those outside of their inner social circle, the energy of loving warmth that they gradually develop through their caring relationships also gradually transforms the collective heart or psyche of humanity from the inside, making it less fearful, selfish, brutal, neglectful of the suffering of others, and more compassionate, empathic, warmhearted, tolerant, and ethically responsible. Thus, caring human relationships and the energy of loving warmth or caring that flows between individuals are like the individual bricks and mortar from which the edifice of a stable society or local, national, and global community "house" is constructed, metaphorically speaking.

The best or most psychologically fulfilling kind of human society, residential neighborhood, or intentional community not only provides individuals with the opportunity to nourish their physical body, or outer "shell" with paid employment, financial security, and affluent means to purchase material abundance, but also provides ample opportunities to nourish their inner being with relational love-life energy, for enhanced happiness, regenerative vitality, and sublime peak experiences.¹ as well as creative actualization of individual and relational potentials, through the development of truly, deeply, unselfishly, caring personal relationships and emotionally close, cohesive, social networks in which individuals experience a substantial sense of inner existential connection and empathic attunement to one another, as well as co-creative/synergistic functioning, as a relational "we"- partnership, viewing themselves and functioning as related "parts" of one another and of the seamless, whole, united community. Such a cohesive

human community would be a "seamless whole" in the sense of its members viewing themselves and functioning as related individuals, like a big extended family or "tribe," rather than associating with one another in a mostly detached, uncaring, superficial manner. However, this inclusive, united, sense of human community should not be permitted to suppress the natural diversity and freedom of the individual members to constructively express and develop their fullest range of particular natural inclinations, preferences, and capabilities.

This vision of society as a true sense of community or a community of warmly caring/loving hearts differs from other forms of human association where individuals primarily view themselves and function as existentially separate, totally self-serving, autonomous units, not having much interest in deeply connecting to others and unselfishly serving their well-being, and the well-being of the whole society, as an expression of genuine caring and acknowledged relatedness of being. Instead, egocentric forms of human association primarily focus on I-It relationships in which other individuals and the whole society are mostly viewed as a means to gratify our own self-interested needs, rather than being valued as ends in themselves, as in Martin Buber's notion of the I-Thou relationship.² Therefore, ego-oriented human relationships and sectors of society tend to be rather superficial, detached, manipulative, exploitative, and mechanical, or programmed and habitual, in the way that they interact with one another. Furthermore, ego-oriented human associations often tend to be involved in high levels of internal and external conflicts, grounded in the ego's tendency to try to manipulate, exploit, and control others in order to obtain gratification of its selfish deficiency needs, as well as the ego's need to frequently assert an overly competitive sense

of superiority to others (sometimes even to the point of antagonism and ruthlessness), and a chronic, oppositional, Resistive, sense of willfulness as part of its sense of exclusively separate identity. In addition to supporting the natural human hunger to experience a deeply satisfying sense of existential relatedness to other individuals and to a cohesive sense of community, the best or most psychologically mature and constructive kind of society also encourages and supports individuals to develop or actualize their fullest range of natural human potentials, capabilities, and natural inclinations, and, thereby, reach significantly greater levels of functioning, meaningful fulfillment, and self-understanding than would otherwise be possible. Individuals, dyadic relationships, sectors of society, and intentional communities that exemplify this psychologically mature, fulfilling, way of relating to one another can serve as a kind of paradigmatic model for what society as a whole, human relationships, and individual functioning can be at their best.

When individuals and social groups relate to one another with heartfelt empathic attunement; open, honest, good communication; mutual respect; genuine compassion, and good will, then they often bring about the best in one another, and also in themselves, as a process of co-creative synergy or vibratory sympathetic resonance. Co-creative synergy involves a combined productive and transformational effect qualitatively greater than can be produced by the combined contributions of each of the individuals or social groups functioning separately from one another, or engaged in a more superficial mode of interaction and ego-serving pragmatic cooperation. The much deeper level of empathic communion, energetic attunement, and good communication involved in the process of co-creative synergy is, basically, what enables participants to tap into the relational source level of creative intelligence, producing qualitatively, exponentially accelerating, enhanced levels of insightful new breakthroughs and greater productivity, far beyond the level of creative intelligence that can be accessed from the standpoint of egocentric or relatively superficial ways of individual functioning and interpersonal interactions.

The selfish ego's divisive sense of existential detachment or experiential disconnection from others is the underlying primary root cause of various kinds of violence, oppressive social injustice, intolerant bigotry, and lack of compassionate ethical responsibility, as well as impaired productivity caused by the ego's addictive dependence on various unhealthy narcotic substances as substitutes for love, as the only genuine source of happiness, vitality, security, and well-being. The relational energy of warmhearted unselfish caring or loving warmth flowing between individuals in constructive personal relationships produces a genuine experience of inner goodness that naturally flows or overflows outward as expressions of compassionate good will to others in society, beyond your immediate circle of familiar social relationships, including the inclination to help relatively disadvantaged or needy people. The ability of truly loving or caring interpersonal relationships to transform individual hearts and minds, and, thereby, gradually transform society and the collective psyche of humanity for the better, reflects a widening rippling effect of the energy of "love in action" or co-created loving warmth.

Unless people's hearts are substantively transformed from selfish, divisive, fearful egotism to unselfish, warmhearted, compassionate love, various kinds of well-intentioned humanitarian social activism and charitable philanthropy are likely to be relatively ineffectual, producing at most only rather superficial, ephemeral, limited, changes for the better. Attempts to change people's minds and behaviors to be more ethically and socially responsible will likely not be enduringly

and substantially effective unless their hearts, their inner feeling-tone or experiential states are also transformed through inspirational example, like one burning candle igniting another candle with the living flame of warmhearted compassion and empathic caring.

Enduring social harmony and cohesion involves the same kind of empathic understanding, existential relatedness, and compassionate ethical responsibility that exists in caring dyadic relationships. The anthropologist Victor Turner referred to group cohesion as an "I-We" relationship, involving Martin Buber's I-Thou dyadic relationship of caring communion extended to the group level.³ and similarly, the psychologist Alfred Adler used the term "gemeinschaftsgefühl" to refer to a caring sense of relatedness or fellow feeling between individuals that can exist at the dyadic or group levels.⁴

In contrast to the development of an inclusive sense of caring community where our sense of compassion, respect, empathic understanding, and existential relatedness is not exclusively confined to the bounds of our own particular social circle, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, or restrictively exclusive identification only with any other particular group identity, there is another kind of group cohesion in which relatively psychologically immature individuals identify with the collective ego of the group, seeking a comparative, competitive, chauvinistic, sometimes even antagonistic and combative sense of superiority over members of other groups, who are often demonized, scapegoat, viewed as totally unrelated strangers or "wholly other" than ourselves and our own distinctive group identity. This kind of egocentric group chauvinism is the "us versus them" mentality, whereas individuals with a greater developed level of psychological maturity and loving warmth-heart development can more readily see the merits of societal, ethnic, national, religious, etc., groups other than one's own. Ego-oriented groups tend to antagonistically compete and fight for a comparative, chauvinistic, sense of superiority over members of other groups, whereas love-oriented groups have an attitude of genuine good will, respect, and empathic appreciation for members of other groups.

Whereas ego-oriented individuals tend to relate in a rather manipulative, exploitative, controlling, even abusive manner to those within and/or outside of their own particular social and ethnic groups, as win-lose power struggles (which can involve devious cunning instead of overt aggression), relatively psychologically mature, love-oriented individuals tend to seek win-win solutions in which all parties receive true justice, legitimate rights and freedoms, as well as opportunities for success or benefit, rather than seeking to deprive, oppress, humiliate, subjugate, or psychologically and/or physically destroy members of other groups. Both at the dyadic and group levels, true caring or true love tends to function as a principle of co-creative synergy, in which various individuals and groups seek ways to cooperatively work together for the mutual benefit, success, and empowerment of all participants, in contrast to the egocentric predatory paradigm of competing or fighting over scarce material and/or psychological resources, seeking to conquer, subjugate, or destroy others, physically, psychologically, or financially, epitomized in Darwinian notions such as "survival of the fittest," "the law of the jungle," or "might makes right." The ego hoards material, financial, and psychological resources in order to feel superior to others with less, and because it fears being depleted by giving to others, whereas love manifests ever greater qualitative as well as quantitative levels of its limitless abundance by generously giving of its energy, caring, and resources to other individuals and groups. In a psychologically mature society, individual freedom and individual rights need to be balanced with ethical responsibility to respect the legitimate rights and freedoms

of others, and unselfishly serve the well-being of others; otherwise, freedom becomes irresponsible, reckless license. Egocentric license makes us a veritable “slave” to unbridled, insatiable, addictive, often psychologically and socially unhealthy appetites, which is antithetical to true inner and outer freedom.

In addition to not seeking to unfairly dominate and oppress other individuals and groups, psychologically mature self-responsibility also involves not viewing yourself, and/or your own ethnic group, in a perpetual “victimized” role, going beyond seeking reasonable redress of actual grievances, so that you unrealistically and unfairly blame other individuals and groups for your own shortcomings and presumptively label them as exclusive “oppressors,” not acknowledging and not taking responsibility for your own oppressive or self-defeating attitudes and behaviors. This absolutist, exclusive way of thinking is related to what some social scientists such as Theodor Adorno call the “authoritarian personality,” which is basically intolerant and controlling.⁵

Those who take a viewpoint of absolutism, exclusivity, and intolerance of others tend to seek an absolute superiority over other individuals and groups, thinking in presumptive absolutist terms or categories, such as, “I/we are exclusively right, exclusively superior, whereas you/they are exclusively wrong/exclusively inferior.” Psychologically mature individuals do not habitually think and function in absolutist, exclusive terms, but instead recognize some degree of relatedness of being with everyone, including individuals and groups that differ from their own viewpoint and social and/or ethnic background. Along these lines, psychologically mature individuals do not habitually make absolute value judgments of themselves and other individuals and groups (except for holding malicious or irresponsible people accountable), because they recognize that relative polarities such as right and wrong, winner and loser, dominant and submissive, advantaged and disadvantaged, oppressor and victim are usually relative polarity degrees of each other, and often a matter of degree, dynamically changing, not absolutely exclusive and statically unchanging.

The ego is like a two-sided coin, often defining us and other individuals and groups in dichotomous, exclusive, absolutist, value judged categories, such as absolutely superior or inferior, absolute winner or loser, absolutely dominant or submissive, absolutely right or wrong, absolutely acceptable or unacceptable, predator or prey, victim or oppressor. This dichotomous absolutist view obscures awareness of the natural, intrinsic, existential relatedness of all living beings, all abiding together within the same seamlessly indivisible, inclusive, wholeness nature of reality intelligence as love life energy. By denying our natural existential relatedness to other individuals and groups, the divisive ego produces lack of empathy, compassion, and ethical responsibility, or what some religiously oriented people might describe as “evil” or “sin.” The ego’s basic need to feel superior to others, as an affirmation of being an inwardly substantial psychological “something” rather than an inwardly empty, deficient, insubstantial, psychological “nothing,” also produces various kinds of intolerance, scrape gloating, persecuting, bullying, and ridiculing others, as an expression of chauvinistic attitudes. This typically involves trying to humiliate and injure other individuals and groups in order to elevate our own competitive, comparative sense of worth/value as an individual and/or as an ethnic or social group, because if the ego does not feel absolutely superior, it feels inferior, which is equated with being absolutely psychologically non-existent, inwardly empty and insubstantial, producing psychological death anxiety, and fearful insecurity. Such egocentric individuals and groups feel insecure that their absolute positive self-concepts will be disaffirmed

by absolute negative self-concepts if they cannot feel clearly superior to other individuals and groups by subjugating, ridiculing, abusing, or even destroying them.

Individuals and groups who are strongly identified with the divisive ego tend to function in a predatory manner, subtly or overtly, physically, psychologically, financially, and/ or sexually. This typically involves trying to deprive others of rights, freedoms, resources, and opportunities, in order to feel psychologically secure and comparatively superior in the competitive arena, and selfishly seek unilateral benefits or non-reciprocal advantages for themselves to the detriment of others, as a “zero sum game” (“I win/you lose-we win/they lose” paradigms). However, individuals who are more psychologically and spiritually mature in the conscious awakening of their intrinsic real being as love do not typically feel a need to lower, disparage, humiliate, abuse, oppress, or destroy others in order to enhance their own comparative, competitive, sense of worth, security, power, and well-being, because they have developed an unconditional, inherent sense of worth, security, and well-being that comes from unselfishly loving and serving others. Psychologically mature individuals do not seek an absolute sense of superiority over others, as if to say, “I am absolutely better than you, and you are absolutely worse than or completely inferior to me in various ways.” Much of the ruthlessness that characterizes many sectors of society is basically grounded in the psychologically immature ego’s seeking to abuse, oppress, and/or destroy others, psychologically, physically, and/ or financially, often involving related societal and cultural marginalization, devaluation, and stigmatizing, in order to generate a presumptive, comparative/competitive sense of absolutely superior worth, identity, power, security, and control, for more dominant groups or individuals.

Constructive competition or friendly competition can be an important motivational incentive to enhance performance in various endeavors, such as free market (free enterprise) competition, competitive athletic sporting events, and candidates for elected public office presenting the public with different political platforms, but when the primary goal of competition becomes to injure one’s opponents, physically, psychologically, financially, or in other ways, then it becomes detrimental to the cause of compassionate, good-natured functioning. That predatory attempt to win at all costs is epitomized in the famous slogan, “Winning is not the most important thing; it is the only thing”⁶ (that really matters, to the exclusion of seriously upholding compassionate, honorable, fair-play oriented, ethical values, including the value of maintaining genuine friendship and good-will with our opponents, trying not to harm our opponents, and genuinely trying to do what is in the best interests of the public and of the sport or other field of endeavor in which we are competing). That kind of unscrupulous attitude is also detrimental to the values of developing genuinely caring, trusting, human relationships, truthful interpersonal communication, and harmonious, cohesive, productive societal functioning.

The authoritarian ego typically tries to control others and deprive them of their freedom in order to force others to gratify the ego’s selfish needs and punish others for not living up to the ego’s superego ideal values.⁷ as a way of scapegoating others and thereby expiating the ego’s failure to perfectly live up to those ideals, as a process of psychological projection, scapegoating, or transfer of blame from self to others. Spiritually and psychologically relatively mature individuals feel free to unconditionally accept their own natural inclinations and real feelings, without absolute positive and negative value judgments. Therefore, they also feel free to accept the natural spontaneity and experiential reality of other individuals

and groups without imposing absolute positive and negative value judgments and unnatural, unrealistic, controlling, authoritarian superego ideal expectations upon themselves and others. Because the psychologically immature ego feels inwardly insubstantial, insecure, and fragile, like a collapsible house of cards, it typically takes on paranoid attitudes, and assumes that it must function as a psychological or physical predator to avoid becoming prey to others. Those who have developed greater levels of psychological maturity, involving greater conscious awakening of their love-being, feel more inwardly substantial and secure, so they typically do not view others' freedom, success, and well-being as a threat to themselves, but as potentially contributing to their own further development and enhanced capacity for successful productive functioning. This psychologically mature recognition that helping others do better can also enable us to do better is metaphorically epitomized in the idiom, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man (or woman) sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). Just as individuals can both compete and cooperate in a friendly, constructive, way, working together to bring out the best in one another and in themselves at the dyadic level, the same process can also contribute to enhancing productive functioning, pioneering innovative breakthroughs, well-being, and harmonious, constructive, good relations, within and between particular families, ethnic groups, sectors of society, communities, and religious faiths.

Thus, encouraging individuals to develop greater levels of psychological maturity by recognizing the illusory nature of absolutist positive and negative value judgments of ourselves and others, as well as at least temporarily relinquishing ego-personality self-awareness in self-forgetful, genuinely caring, empathic communion with other individuals is the key to undoing various kinds of societal disorders and injustices that are essentially rooted in the psychologically immature ego's need to feel better about itself by behaving in antagonistic ways to other individuals and groups. In addition to the process of psychological maturation alleviating the toxic effects of egocentric negativity in society, the greater levels of compassion, empathy, and ethical responsibility engendered by psychologically mature, constructive, relationships also ripple outward to affect the larger society in more positive, transformational ways.

The ego's psychological need to escape from feelings of insecurity through control of self and others often produces absolutist, authoritarian, totalitarian, or "Procrustean" ideologies in which everyone is coercively forced to conform to the same inflexible, standardized, idealized model, or "mold" as a value judged, presumptive, standard of "truth," "virtue," religious or political orthodoxy, etc. The psychologically immature ego may adopt such controlling, intolerant, totalitarian ideologies in order to deny and escape from deeper underlying fears of uncertainty, which is often falsely equated with insecurity, confusion, and chaotic disorder. Confusion and uncertainty makes you feel that you cannot predict and control what kind of experience may arise, and the psychologically immature, insecure ego typically equates security with an absolute sense of control and destructive power over others, psychologically and/or physically. Other ego- personalities tend to be devoted to permissive libertarian or libertine values, an "anything goes" attitude, giving other individuals and groups the license to indulge in all kinds of selfish, recklessly irresponsible impulses in exchange for being granted the license to do the same themselves, even to the point of excess, inappropriateness, addiction, unwholesome vulgarity, or impulsively, recklessly courting danger to themselves and others.

Psychologically mature individuals, groups, and societies tend to find a constructively appropriate, dynamically flexible, harmonious balance between self-discipline and spontaneity. They

have greater tolerance for ambiguity, confusion, mistakes, lack of perfection, lack of absolute positive and negative value judgments (exclusive, overly extreme, approval or disapproval) of themselves, others, and situations or circumstances that they encounter in life. The psychologically immature ego typically seeks absolutist self-evaluations and presumptive certainties as the basis of achieving a clearly defined sense of identity, as a consistent, rigid, unchanging self-definition, as well as seeking a sense of security by expecting predictable, guaranteed outcomes to controlled, predetermined ways of functioning. However, relatively psychologically mature individuals, groups, and societies tend to be more accepting of their own changing natural spontaneity or constructive natural inclinations, (without indulging in reckless, irresponsible, impulsivity); therefore, they tend to have more tolerance for the natural spontaneity of others. Thus, relatively psychologically mature individuals tend to have more tolerance for diversity, constructive dissent, lack of premature closure, or lack of rigid conformity.

In contrast to the psychologically immature ego's often dichotomous, divisive, exclusive, absolutist value judgments and way of thinking, the psychologically mature view includes all constructively and appropriately functioning relative polarities and diverse individualities abiding together within the unifying relational wholeness of love, life, or reality, like a web or network of responsive ontic relationships, as epitomized by the concept of "Indra's Net" in some streams of Buddhist philosophy.⁸ That psychologically mature principle of "unity in diversity" and "diversity in unity" is also epitomized by the Latin phrase "E Pluribus Unum" ("in the many, one"), and is the basis of cohesion, harmony, peace, empathic understanding, true freedom, justice, and beauty within and between individuals, groups, and societies. The principle of "E Pluribus Unum" should also involve psychologically mature individuals coming together to actively promote values and qualities that psychologically mature, healthy, people of diverse ethnicities, nationalities, religions, genders, professions, and socioeconomic backgrounds naturally share in common, such as compassion, empathy, tolerance, fairness/equity/justice, freedom of opportunity, self-responsibility, sincerity, integrity, courage, cooperation, etc.⁹ A psychologically mature and constructive society should also encourage the similar African concept of Ubuntu, involving a sense of existential interconnection, commonly shared relational identity and purpose, as well as mutual ethical responsibility, between individual people, feeling that all human beings, indeed all living beings, are part of one extended family, united by the same spiritual reality of life, as love, in which they abide like an indivisible relational hologram.¹⁰

All sectors of society that cater to relatively psychologically mature values should help people actualize their fullest range of individual and relationship potentials, including talents, capabilities, and contributions that reflect a high quality or caliber of excellence or what the ancient Greeks called *Arête*. This involves society providing significant opportunities for individuals to actualize or fulfill what the psychologist Abraham Maslow called "Being needs," "growth choices," or the need to give deeply of our caring energies, and to develop enhanced levels of constructive, productive, transformational, insightful functioning, in contrast to basically selfish, shallow, materialistic, escapist, "deficiency needs" or "regression choices".¹¹

Sectors of society that truly wish to contribute to constructive individual and societal transformation, such as public and private education, public information, and entertainment media, as well as various kinds of social groups, should provide useful resources and warmly caring encouragement to consumers who wish to enhance their individual transformational development and personal

relationships, while consumers who prefer more escapist, hedonistic, superficial forms of activity and entertainment should also have that made readily available to them, so that society provides everyone with the freedom and opportunity to pursue whatever lifestyle and goals that they prefer, as long as they do not infringe on the legitimate human rights and freedoms of others. Unfortunately, it seems that many sectors of public broadcast media, entertainment, and popular culture are currently dominated by somewhat monopolistic corporate interests that pander almost exclusively to the public's basest instincts, shaping a rather vulgar majority consciousness, while the smaller minority of people who have developed a more psychologically mature ability to appreciate profounder aspects of reality often find themselves hard-put to find media programming and other resources that cater to their distinctive preferences and needs. A psychologically mature and constructive society should preserve genuine freedom of information and expression by providing opportunities for people of diverse viewpoints to have their voices heard, including those who espouse truly wholesome, ennobling, values or "being needs" rather than permitting public media discourse and public policy to be almost exclusively monopolized by the most narrowly partisan, divisive, vulgar, hedonistic, shallow, greedy sectors of society, pandering to what Maslow described as psychologically unhealthy "regression choices".¹²

Development of a true and optimal sense of community need not necessarily involve frequent physical proximity, nor always be confined to a specific residential area, but, more essentially, involves true neighborliness, with heartfelt experiential intimacy (or energetic connection), mutual empathic understanding, and genuine expressions of unselfish caring for one another. In a true and deep sense of community, individuals view themselves as having the opportunity to retain their own distinctive particularity, and to be constructively challenged and enriched by encountering people of diverse views, values, and lifestyles, while also having the option to experience a sense of existential connection or experiential relatedness to others, as a "we," an "us," an "our," in contrast to the psychologically immature ego's emphasis upon an exclusively dichotomous sense of "me versus you" or "us versus them." That resistance to, even occasionally, connecting to others in a deeply caring way serves to preserve the psychologically immature ego's foundational sense of separate self-awareness, self-will, and self-gratification.

Psychologically mature individuals, groups, and societies, should encourage the development of "community spirit," involving a sense of civic responsibility to significantly contribute to enhancing the quality of life for others. As part of community spirit and civic responsibility, individuals should be encouraged to take pride or derive meaningful existential satisfaction in contributing to the enhanced well-being and functioning of other individuals and of the society in which they live. Community spirit should also involve feeling an empathic sense of existential relatedness to others, while also retaining the distinctiveness of our own individual particularity and constructive psychosocial boundaries. In such a psychologically healthy and mature community, opportunities for relational connection, cooperation, constructive friendly competition, individual freedom, and diversity are viewed as interdependent, mutually enhancing processes, rather than mutually exclusive. Words such as "community," "communication," and "communion" imply two or more individuals experientially coming together "as one," as in the French phrase "commeune" and the Latin concept of "E Pluribus Unum" mentioned earlier, as well as the similar African concept of Ubuntu, roughly translated as, "I am, because we are."

In the commercial sphere, community spirit should involve intentionally producing merchandise and services of good quality as an expression of genuine caring for the well-being of consumers, employees, society, and the natural environment. Producing shoddy or hazardous merchandise reflects lack of self-respect, lack of respect for others, as well as lack of respect for the quality that life can be at its best, all grounded in lack of integrity and psychological maturity. Pride in good workmanship and/or skilled craftsmanship could involve producing (possibly custom-made) merchandise and services that have a truly soulful, beautiful quality, as well as having practical usefulness, thereby nourishing the inner being as well as the practical material needs of consumers and producers, consistent with Maslow's notion of "being needs." Those kinds of soulful, custom-made merchandise and services would provide consumers with a meaningful alternative to the often soulless, lifeless, sterile, mass-produced merchandise and services that currently dominate the economies of many affluent, technologically advanced nations.

As has occurred in medieval and contemporary craft guilds and apprenticeships, craftsmen and entrepreneurs who truly wish to offer the public inspirational, transformational, "living" products and services should exchange ideas with one another about possible ways to do that, possibly forming social networks online, in print, and/or in person for that purpose. Community spirit could involve producing customized commercial products, creative arts and crafts, and entertainment media, attempting to reveal some of the most inspiring, insightful, transformational, experiences and capabilities of the human spirit, as well as the distinctive values and experience of various ethnic groups, religious faiths, spiritual traditions, or human communities, and so on, through their creative work. Furthermore, community spirit should involve inhabitants of a particular residential community or intentional community working together to make their habitat a better place, such as, by beautifying commons (commonly shared public spaces), providing warmly caring compassionate comfort to individuals in crisis or distress, providing opportunities for relatively disadvantaged members of society to actively work to improve their situation, occasionally sharing activities and meals together on a consensual basis, and so on. As part of developing community spirit, public broadcast media, internet websites, and civic organizations should be highly responsive to local needs and concerns and should encourage residents of particular places to exchange ideas and explore avenues of possible cooperation in matters of common concern.

A psychologically mature, sustainable, society should also encourage the development of worker owned-and-operated partnership businesses, as well as small self-employed private businesses, so that workers have greater motivation to put their heart and soul, their full caring investment, into the productive process by having an active role in the grassroots decision making and management process, rather than merely being pawns in a basically authoritarian, top-heavy management system. In at least some businesses, but by no means all, "economic democracy" or elements of democratic governance in the workplace could facilitate creative revitalization of commercial enterprises with innovative new ideas and greater levels of productive cooperation, or true teamwork. Just as cooperative teamwork and enthusiastic fellowship often enhance successful performance in sports teams, principles of participatory or even democratic governance may enhance the performance of some, but not all, commercial enterprises. For such ventures to be successful, workers would need to be held rigorously accountable for their level of performance, motivation, and attitudes by their peers, their management, and their consumers who financially sustain their enterprise. Successful productivity

would depend on managers, owners, workers, and consumers each respecting one another's special areas of expertise and taking one another's legitimate needs and concerns into account, in a responsive, genuinely caring manner. Privately-owned businesses could give their employees elected representation or advisory status in the halls of management, whereas employee-owned and operated partnership businesses could elect from their own ranks or hire from the outside managers they view as having the necessary expertise, leadership skills, and character traits to lead the whole workplace team to success and to develop optimal team spirit. In addition to achieving financial success and optimal productivity, under psychologically mature management, the workplace could become like an extended family or a deeply caring true community, nurturing the inner being of its members with warmhearted fellowship as well as a supportive environment that encourages individual transformational development and creative self-actualization.

The citizens of democratic free nations should elect or select leaders for public office and leadership in the private sector on the basis of the criteria of psychological maturity, involving being relatively maturely developed in warmhearted, compassionate, empathically responsive, good-naturalness; sincerity, integrity, courageous strength of character, as well as true wisdom and experiential insight into how to change society and individual life for the better. This is similar to the philosopher Plato's book, *The Republic*, suggesting that leaders should be selected on the basis of earned merit, true virtue, as a kind of non-hereditary aristocracy of character.

Our own view is that citizens of democratic free nations should elect or select government leaders, as well as influential leaders in other public and private sectors, who have developed a substantial true vision of where to lead other individuals and society, grounded in having a more highly developed consciousness of the spiritual reality of love, life, and goodness than their constituents. Such psychologically mature and constructive "servant leaders" are people of true virtue and true wisdom.¹³ Otherwise, if the public chooses leaders who represent the prevalent divisive, selfish, prideful, shortsighted, egocentric mentality that pervades much of contemporary popular culture, then it will be a matter of "the blind leading the blind into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39) of confusion and decline caused by lack of effective adaptation to the true requirements of reality. That kind of leadership may, at least sometimes, facilitate and require a purposeful process of transformational psychological development and spiritual insight for individual people, dyadic relationships, social groups, and society as a whole. It is important to elect government leaders and support leaders in the private sector who have developed a psychologically mature, perhaps spiritually based, inspirational, true vision of what direction society needs to move in order to be in harmonious conformity to where life itself is moving and purposively needs to move in order to function in a constructive, regenerative manner.

Transformational leaders should also have a vision for what life can be at its best for individual persons, dyadic relationships, and society, grounded in self-actualization of human potentials. Psychologically immature, opportunistic, manipulative, Machiavellian "leaders" are apt to insidiously move society in a relatively non-constructive, degenerative, possibly even destructive direction especially by bringing society out of conformity or alignment with the relational reality of life as compassionate love, empathic understanding, and productive cooperation, as well as recognition of existential interrelatedness and interdependence between all living beings. Optimal effective leadership involves the ability to intuitively discern what kinds of policies or options would be truly sustainable, life-affirming, life-enhancing, or life-negating, life-degenerative, life-

degrading, not just in general, but, more specifically and flexibly in any particular situation or circumstance; not just in the short term, but also in the long term, as in the Native American (indigenous First Nations) principle of taking the sustainability, survival, and well-being of the next seven generations of humans and non-human life into account when making significant tribal decisions.¹⁴ Effective leaders are open to recognizing the holistic, relational, nature of reality, which gives them the flexibility to consider various viewpoints that may each have partial validity, usefulness, or appropriateness in particular situations and circumstances, rather than being rigidly, exclusively locked into particular narrow, doctrinaire, one-sided, basically static viewpoints, that may not include other important aspects of reality. Various perspectives need to be viewed and integrated within a greater, inclusive, more holistic vision of reality and a flexible way of functioning in conformity to the true nature of reality, life, or core integrity, and its optimal ongoing/continuing development.

The public should choose leaders who appeal to their unselfish instincts rather than pandering to their selfish, divisive agendas. Unselfish caring or loving compassion is like the adhesive or cohesive force that keeps all sectors of society functioning harmoniously, cooperatively, productively, for the benefit of everyone, whereas divisive, selfish attitudes insidiously set into motion a gradual process of social "disintegration" and chaotic breakdown, as the well-being of the whole society is neglected in favor of selfish individuals and special interest groups. A truly good leader is an unselfish servant leader, primarily motivated to benefit the public rather than seeking public office or influential status in the private sector for self-serving reasons, such as money, domineering power, and fame.¹⁵

However, promoting social cohesion, harmony, and stability should never be used as a pretext to suppress individual freedom and individual diversity, because if individuals and groups lack the opportunity to innovate and develop in their own special way, then they stagnate and the whole society stagnates, setting a life-degenerative process into motion for both of them. A truly healthy, constructive, psychologically mature society encourages a dynamic, flexible, natural balance between individual freedom and social responsibility. This involves a related balance between capitalist free enterprise/market competition and socialistic or more cooperative forms of economic, political, and cultural governance and organization. A psychologically mature and constructive society recognizes that optimal individual and community functioning involves balancing and integrating various complementary relative polarities that are intrinsic to the indivisible whole reality of life, such as, constructive market competition, consensual cooperation, and compassionate charitable public assistance to relatively disadvantaged members of society. This involves respect for diversity and respectful dissent or constructive disagreement, along with cooperative consensus and mutually beneficial consensual cooperation on matters of common concern, especially matters that affect the constructive functioning and well-being of society as a whole.

Thus, a psychologically mature, constructive, sustainable society should encourage a flexible balance between individual freedom and social and environmental responsibility, as well as between various other complementary relative polarities that are naturally interrelated and interdependent with one another within the greater indivisible wholeness of reality or life, which includes and integrates those diverse perspectives. One of the basic values of psychological maturity is the unselfish acceptance of social and environmental responsibility, which involves the related concept of trusteeship, guardianship, or "sacred stewardship." That is the principle that material, financial, and human resources are to be used not only for our own private benefit,

but also to enhance the functioning, harmony, and sustainable well-being of other individuals, the whole society, and the global whole ecological biosphere.¹⁶

Ecological consciousness involves recognizing that every aspect of the natural environment and human society affects one another in an indivisible, interrelated, interdependent manner, so various public policy issues and disciplinary fields of study should best be viewed in their relational context rather than approached separately, in order to arrive at optimal understanding of and effective solutions to challenging problems of the day. Social and environmental responsibility, sustainability, and altruistic management of public and private resources acknowledge that our own resources and talents belong only partially to ourselves alone, but also to the whole relational network of life and love, and that optimal happiness, security, and psychological well-being come from living in conformity to that relational reality through relatively unselfish functioning, rather than being overly devoted to selfish agendas that are ultimately toxic to everyone. Psychologically mature individuals are guided by their core integrity of empathic caring or heartfelt compassion for others who are suffering or in need of our assistance. Psychologically immature, selfish, prideful individuals tend to take exclusive personal sole credit for their own talents, abilities, accomplishments, material/financial resources, and selfishly use those resources only for their own benefit, in contrast to more psychologically mature individuals, who gratefully give credit to the relational reality of life or to some principle of unselfish true goodness beyond their own ego for providing them with those resources. They acknowledge a sense of responsibility to unselfishly, compassionately use those resources to serve and benefit other individuals and society as a whole, at least to some extent. Psychologically mature leaders recognize an important ethical responsibility to safeguard, preserve, and unselfishly serve the indivisible whole web of life, without biased favoritism, for the benefit not only of their current constituents, customers, or followers, but also for the benefit of future generations, such as the Native American precept of considering the impact of individual actions and community public policy decisions on “seven generations” following the current generation of human beings. For example, this involves the responsibility not to degrade the natural environment as a sustainable or livable habitat for future generations of human beings, as well as for nonhuman species cohabiting the same local and global biosphere. All human municipalities, including large cities, should plant and preserve trees, shrubs, and flowers in public areas, such as sidewalks, and construct indoor arboretums to provide people with fresh oxygen, as well as to absorb carbon dioxide and other gasses that can be toxic to humans and animals. The recognition that our individual and societal survival and well-being is interdependent with the preservation of the natural environment and our fellow living beings is epitomized in the following quote attributed to Chief Seattle: Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.¹⁷

To be truly sustainable for the long term, society must encourage equitable, renewable, clean (nontoxic, nonpolluting) production, management, distribution, and recycling of human, financial, technological, and natural resources. Any kind of monopoly, be it corporate, statist, theocratic, or other authoritarian systems prevents sustainable circulation of all kinds of resources, by restricting an excessive quantity and quality of resources to narrowly, selfishly, self-serving elites, preventing adequate resources and opportunities from being made available to relatively disadvantaged sectors of society, as well as enabling elites to avoid responsibility to replenish the natural

environment. In addition, any kind of monopoly produces stagnation and decline in society by stifling transformational innovation by excluded or marginalized sectors of society. For example, this may involve not providing adequate access to public media discourse, and other opportunities (such as financial means, educational resources, and social support structures) for relatively marginalized people to contribute their talents and insights to pioneering innovations. This is the basis of sustainably enhancing and replenishing, rather than degrading and diminishing, the level of natural, material, technological, financial, inspirational, experiential, educational, artistic, and transformational resources available to society as a whole, as well as to particular sectors of society whose sustainable development or deterioration vitally affects the sustainable progress or unsustainable deterioration of society as a whole, functioning either as a restrictive bottleneck or an expansive “engine” of social progress.

To ensure regenerative sustainability, equity, and compassion within society, influential leaders of the public and private sectors should do their utmost to allocate natural, financial, technological, human, and experiential resources in a manner that replenishes rather than degrades the natural environment, as well as providing start-up capital, access to public media discourse forums, and other resources that would enable pioneering innovators in various fields of endeavor and branches of study to develop productive, rewarding, new breakthroughs, exceeding what they could accomplish if not provided with extra resources beyond their own individual or group means. If narrowly-based elites are permitted to excessively, restrictively, monopolize access to natural/material, financial, and human resources, as well as monopolize or overly dominate access to public media, then society will not be replenished with productive new ideas and other pioneering breakthroughs by excluded individuals and sectors, and the natural and/or social environment will be degraded by withdrawing more and more material resources from circulation, and degrading the quality or renewability of remaining resources. A truly sustainable society is one in which natural/material, financial, technological, human, and experiential resources keep growing ever more abundantly or expansively in a renewable, clean manner, whereas an unsustainable society is one in which all kinds of resources keep contracting or diminishing and becoming ever more restrictive, degraded, because of greedy misuse, overuse, or restrictive monopolization of various kinds of resources. Sustainable, renewable use of natural resources must necessarily involve mandating individual and corporate responsibility to clean up, recycle, or dissolve, rather than discharge or bury various kinds of toxic waste material, so that discharged or buried polluting substances do not seep out into public spaces, endangering public health, safety, and the quality of life. In addition to zero waste or minimal waste approaches to stewardship of natural resources and hazardous waste substances, environmental sustainability must also involve replacing, and, if possible, further expanding, any natural resources that are consumed, so that the current quantity and quality of material resources is at least maintained, and, if possible, further expanded as the basis of ever-increasing levels of material abundance, rather than continuously diminishing and degrading the material base on which society depends for continued renewable sustainability. Burying or discharging hazardous waste, trash, and human remains continuously diminishes the amount of land that is available for human, animal, and plant habitat, as well as endangering the purity of water bodies and atmospheric spaces, all of which endanger society's physical sustainability.

Recycling manmade wastes can not only neutralize pollution but also generate beneficial new material resources. The process of recycling also reflects the circular rhythmic processes or oscillating

flow of energy that are intrinsic to the holistic relational nature of reality and the natural environment. Government and the private sector should subsidize the development of sustainable green chemistry, involving production of chemicals that are nonpolluting and not harmful to the natural environment and human habitat. Thus, all processes and materials of human productive, maintenance, and recreational activity should be harmonized with the structural patterns and rhythmic processes of the natural environment so that human economic production and other activities protect, replenish, and further enhance the natural environment rather than depleting it, as the material base on which humanity and other species depend for their survival and quality of life. Similarly, for society to be financially and economically sustainable, all kinds of material, financial, and human resources must circulate in an equitable, renewable, manner, rather than being withdrawn from circulation to be monopolized or overly dominated by greedy individuals, large corporations, governments, or special interest groups. Just as the health and survival of the human body is endangered if the circulation of blood, breath (fresh oxygen), and digestion is impaired, or if consumption of food and water is inadequate or excessive, similarly, the “body politic” can be truly, healthy only if an adequate level of resources are made available to everyone, especially to the most productive, talented individuals and sectors. On the other hand, excessive consumption and consumerism can exhaust and degrade natural, financial, and psychological resources, depleting the vitality and adaptive functioning of individual people, particular private and public sectors, as well as society as a whole, in an unsustainable, non-renewable manner.

Similarly, human relationships are truly sustainable only when one individual, sector, or party does not try to monopolize by exclusively imposing their own views and selfish demands, as well as hoarding too much dominance, attention, affection, and other emotional or psychosocial resources, so that others feel exploited, controlled, oppressed, ignored, neglected, and unfairly denied gratification of their own legitimate needs. In sustainable relationships, people are responsive to one another’s reasonable needs, wishes, and views as a reflection of sincere caring, empathy, and compassion for each other, without feeling obliged to gratify unreasonable demands, and without surrendering the right to seek satisfaction of their own reasonable needs and concerns, including the right to have their views constructively expressed and truly heard or genuinely understood by the other individual or party. Egoistic interpersonal relationships and social groups in which dominant individuals and sectors or classes basically treat others as possessions, commodities, or objects to be exploited, manipulated, controlled, even abused or destroyed, psychologically and/or physically, for their own selfish benefit or amusement, those kinds of personal relationships and social sectors are not likely to be psychologically sustainable, for the long term, including the victimizers as well as the victims. Of course, in many egoistic relationships and social networks, each party takes turns functioning as victim and victimizer, or even functions simultaneously as oppressor and oppressed, in some circumstances or situations. Hence, ideologies of “liberation” that do not liberate us from identification with the psychologically oppressive ego-personality, or that unfairly blame only one dominant social class or party for the existence of oppression, and fail to recognize how readily oppressed people can and do become oppressors themselves, those kinds of ideologies will not really liberate humanity from mean-spirited, predatory, attitudes, and will likely not put human relationships and society on a psychologically and ethically sustainable basis. Functioning under a basically predatory principle of the “law of the jungle,” “might makes right,” or “survival of the fittest,” an egoistic individual,

relationship, group, or society, tends to corrode and disintegrate from the inside, wasting much energy as well as physical and psychological resources in destructive, unproductive conflict, as well as stagnating for lack of cooperative functioning. That is why individuals, human relationships, social sectors, and society as a whole are unlikely to achieve genuine optimal sustainability as long as they are primarily identified with and under the influence of egoistic principles that waste energy, lives, and resources in destructive, unproductive, conflicts, causing resources to dwindle in a contracting, unsustainable manner. Individuals, relationships, groups, and societies that value reciprocal compassion, empathic responsiveness, and equitable circulation of resources are likely to generate a sustainable expansion of material and psychological resources by cooperating together in a synergistic/co-creative manner.

In addition to the natural, financial, psychological, and human talent aspects of sustainability for individual people, relationships, groups, and society as a whole, sustainability at all of those levels must ultimately also involve connection or openness and receptivity to the spiritual “ground of being.” Just as trees and flowers wilt and die if plucked out of the soil that supports and nourishes them, similarly human beings tend to deteriorate physically, psychologically, and spiritually, when disconnected from the cohesive energy of love or caring warmth that keeps the corrosive force of division and disintegration in check, within and between individual People. In addition to the spiritual force of love providing a sustainable supply of regenerative life energy, rejuvenating renewal, creative insight, cohesive integrating order, self-organizing entelechy, and transformational breakthroughs in all fields of endeavor and branches of knowledge, those kinds of sustainable vital inner resources also come from being open to or tolerant of the great mystery ground of being, by tolerating periods of lack of knowledge, lack of continuous intensely exciting or stimulating sensation, as well as lack of clearly defined identity and habitual patterns of perception and behavior. As long as we are strongly identified with and exclusively or excessively devoted to the ego’s attempt to be a conceptually defined “something,” we tend to consciously or subconsciously avoid contact with a deeper mystery core level of our individual and relational being that is a source of sustainable or renewable vital inner resources, such as regenerative life energy, creative insight (or productive intelligence), integrity, intuition, empathy, inner peace, inspiration, and sensitivity to true inner and outer beauty.

Individuals, relationships, groups, and societies, that overly value accumulation of conceptual ideas; excessive, cumbersome, factual information; intensely exciting sensationalist stimulation; as well as predetermined, habitual, relatively inflexible modes of behavior and perception do not provide enough “vacant space” for the creative “ground of being” to replenish them with renewably sustainable fresh insights, energies, and previously unforeseen transformational options, because they are cluttered or clogged, with too much excessive “dead weight,” psychologically, physically, and/or spiritually speaking. Just as an overly cluttered, shuttered apartment collects excessive dust and germs and lacks adequate sunlight and ventilation, the “grabby,” self-enclosed ego pollutes itself in its own psychological waste products and cuts itself off from the fresh air and sunshine of the relational energy of love and the mystery ground of being, the source of refreshing regenerative energies. The narcissistically self-absorbed ego-personality is also psychologically comparable to a self-enclosed, self-polluted, stagnant pool of water, which becomes fetid because it does not release its waters or energies in relational contact with other bodies of water, or in responsive, caring, relationships with other individuals.

Just as one's psychological and physical health and wellbeing or sustainability depend on having sufficient sleep and rest, similarly, our conscious mind must be replenished by attunement to a vibratory energy pulse coming from non conscious or subliminal levels of our being if it is to be replenished with energies, creative insights, and other inner resources that the conscious mind cannot generate through its own analytical understanding, egoistic imagination, and intentional effort. The health, vitality, well-being, and functioning of the individual body, mind, and heart, as well as of relationships, groups, and society, gradually declines, physically and psychologically, when not harmoniously aligned or attuned with the regenerative vibratory energy pulse of integrity, intuition, inspiration, compassion, empathy, and other no etic faculties coming into the conscious mind but originating from the non-conscious great mystery ground of being. Lack of alignment with the vibratory pulse of regenerative energy gradually dissipates energy, as an increasingly corrosive, degenerating, disintegrating momentum, and produces maladaptive, inappropriate, erratic patterns of perception and behavior, whereas alignment, congruence, attunement, or coherence with the vibratory energy pulse of being or life energy-intelligence enhances cohesive regenerative life energy, for greater health and vitality, as well as making our perception and behavior more appropriate, adaptive, and sustainable. The fact that we are sustained by impartations coming from the spiritual "ground of being" as well as from food, water, and other material resources is epitomized by the Biblical maxim, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord does man live." ^{Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4}. Perhaps the "Lord" that guides and sustains us with its living "word" is not necessarily a God or savior outside of us or beyond us, but the deepest level of our own individual and relational being, "speaking" to us and "feeding" us with its own vibratory energy pulsations, like a spiritual heartbeat, or spiritual blueprint, unfolding our own distinctive spiritual "song" and "dance" from the core of our own being. In following the energy trail of our own core integrity, we are being true to ourselves, i.e., we are being true to what is experientially real and sound or sustainable in ourselves, whereas when we follow some purported divine, human, or other "authority" outside of ourselves, then we fall out of alignment with the energy of our own being, and its regenerative, sustainable, rightful quality. Thus, our own individual endeavors, as well as our relationships and all sectors of society, including any religious or spiritual affiliations that we have, should lead us home to our own real being, our natural core integrity, rather than urging us to imitate or follow any purported external authority, if we are to grow more developed in the potentials and capabilities of our own real being, as the basis for sustainability and authenticity. Any prescribed path, system, formula, or recipe for living that moves us in a predetermined direction, away from empathic attunement to the spontaneously unfolding energy of our own being and the real being or energy-experience of other individuals is basically severing us from the individual, relational, and universal source energy of life, which produces an unsustainable, toxic, degenerative momentum in our individuality, our relationships, and our whole society.

A healthy society, and healthy relationships, are devoted to helping individuals discover and develop what is genuinely real in themselves, consistent with their own rightful core integrity, rather than attempting to impose extraneous or alien expectations upon their individual members, which, metaphorically speaking, would be like stifling our individual and relational energy-integrity under the restrictive, rigid, dead weight of a psychosocial straitjacket, corset, preconceived mold, or procrustean bed. In such a psychologically healthy society, individual freedom and ethical responsibility to

others, as well as a sense of responsibility to the sustainable well-being and betterment or transformational advancement of society, are correctly viewed as being interrelated, interdependent, and mutually enhancing principles, rather than mutually exclusive alternatives. This balanced set of values, at least implicitly, if not explicitly, reflects the psychologically mature and healthy understanding that the indivisible integral wholeness of reality-intelligence, being, life, or love includes various complementary relative polarities, such as individual freedom and responsibility to others. These relative polarities are really non-dualistically inseparable, rather than being antithetical principles, as the divisively oriented ego's systems of thought tend to falsely presume.

Any kind of predetermined exclusivity, excess, or eschewing of any natural aspect of life or reality violates the intrinsic wholeness of our being, and therefore is basically unhealthy, unwholesome, unholy, and ultimately unsustainable, setting into motion an accelerating divisive momentum toward greater and greater levels of discord, division, and disintegration. This contrasts with the cohesive energy of love and mystery wholeness coming from the source integrity or integral level of our own being. Coherence, or attunement to the vibratory energy pulse of integrity is the supreme basic law or governing principle of reality intelligence, sustainability, harmony, rightful order, and genuine intelligence. Thus, the regulations, perception, and behavior of individual people, relationships, groups, and society should be aligned with the great law of integrity, true equity, or conformity to the cohesive energy coming from the core level of our own being, as the basis of generating a sustainable energy momentum, rather than falling into an egoistic, divisive, non-cohesive, disintegrating, energy momentum.

Moment-to-moment attunement to the "perfect pitch" of our individual and relational core integrity is what enables us to feel "true to ourselves," and experience an optimal sense of well-being and fulfillment. When individuals, relationships, groups, and society as a whole become overly identified with and committed to predetermined modes of viewing, behavior, and goals, they can become fixated in relatively rigid, inflexible, habitual patterns of functioning, and fall out of alignment with the spontaneous vibratory energy flow of true integrity, producing a deteriorating, degenerating, or entropic momentum. But when we are open to unforeseen new possibilities, then the energies of life or creative real intelligence can flow through us and work through us in unexpected new ways, producing enhanced functioning, transformational development, and flexible adaptation to changing circumstances.

Spiritual visionaries or mystics from diverse religious traditions, ethnicities, and regions of the world have suggested that individual human beings need to, at least at times, permit their sense of self-conceived identity, self-will, and desires to be surrendered to and effaced by the divine ground of being, if they wish to be rejuvenated, sustained, and creatively transformed by the spiritual source of life and genuine intelligence. We authors would suggest that not only individual people, but also relationships, groups, and society as a whole need to attune themselves to impartations arising intuitively from the spiritual ground of being if they are to be aligned with a sustainable energy pulse and be guided toward a sustainable manner of perception and behavior, congruent with how they and the energies of life need to develop in order to maintain a regenerative momentum and stay clear of degenerative influences.¹⁸

To encourage greater altruism in society, the prevalent public definition of personal success and prestige should be modified to give a higher social standing to individuals who unselfishly benefit other

individuals and society as well as themselves. For example, public media recognition should be given for people who unselfishly serve other individuals and society as a whole through good citizenship awards. Online and printed consumer ratings of businesses should alert consumers to how particular companies rate in terms of their overall and specific record of social, ethical, and environmental responsibility, or lack thereof. If consumers and voters select businesses and political candidates with a relatively good record of public responsibility, and avoid supporting those with a relatively bad record, that will be a powerful incentive for ethically responsible policies and behaviors on the part of those who aspire to attract customers for their businesses or voters for their campaign for elected public office. Like a civilized sports event, free enterprise capitalism needs honest referees or impartial umpires to ensure fair play and penalize unethical, illegal, or socially irresponsible activity.

A truly compassionate, caring society that recognizes the relational nature of reality should not isolate and marginalize people in nursing homes, prisons, medical hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, homeless shelters, and so on, but, instead, should provide confined individuals with the opportunity to engage in meaningful group activities and caring social contacts, because physical exercise, productive work activity, and caring relationships with other human beings and/or with animals has significant therapeutic value to heal various kinds of medical, psychological, and social disorders, especially those that are, at least in part, caused by excessive emotional and/or physical isolation, in violation of the intrinsically relational nature of the reality of life. Prolonged and total physical and social isolation of individuals produces the worst kind of psychological suffering and disorder. If you have no emotional and physical connection to others, the shadow force of negativity is automatically there to pull you deeper and deeper away from reality into fantasy, toxic addictions, and other forms of negativity. That is really “cruel and unusual punishment.” As a relational self, a relational life energy nature, we are each an individual life form abiding within the same unifying, universal, life energy substance, functioning as a relational web, network, or matrix of energy, in which we are all intrinsically embedded, and an even more essential universal mystery ground of being/source creator intelligence, so we are all naturally interrelated and interdependent life functions. Thus, love or relatedness of being is the fundamental reality of life, so excessive isolation is “sinful” or wrongful living, psychologically destructive, leading to a kind of autism or solipsism, involving disconnection from the relational core of our own being as well as from others, which produces psychological, societal, and related physical degeneration and eventual disintegration.

Metaphorically speaking, as one’s consciousness of reality develops toward greater psychological maturity, it ascends from the outer circumference level of a circle, where individual points seem widely distant or separate from one another, up the radius, where they gradually converge together toward the unifying center, where they fully overlap in full unity, full congruence. Similarly, the body and discursive mind are like the outer circumference level of our being, where we feel experientially distant from others, whereas as our consciousness expands into deeper levels of our own being, we gradually begin to experience greater and greater experiential closeness or existential relatedness to others. As we have mentioned before, the basis of this existential interrelatedness of being is that all individual life forms share the same unifying life energy substance, like individual waves of water being joined together by the same underlying ocean water substance. Various prominent thinkers, such as Aldous Huxley,¹⁹ and Lynne McTaggart,²⁰ have suggested that individuals are naturally interrelated and interdependent with

one another because they abide within the same relational reality or universal ground of being.

Many individuals and sectors of society lack compassion for others who are needy, or those who seem useless, infirm, decrepit, or physically unattractive, and try to keep them “out of sight, out of mind” by confining them to homeless shelters, slums, prisons, nursing homes, and so on. There is too much rejection (physical and psychological isolation, abandonment, marginalizing, and stigmatizing) of relatively needy, disadvantaged, emotionally troubled, or impoverished individuals, instead of providing them with the warmly caring encouragement and material resources that can enable them to “get back on their feet” and lead more self-reliant, productive lives, if they are truly motivated to do so. To be harmoniously aligned with the true reality and current momentum of life as love, involving the requirement to function in an increasingly relational manner as life currently moves into a new level of more mature awakening of its relational nature, now is the time for society to increasingly move away from extreme selfish egotism, especially from financial, economic, military, psychological, and sexual predation, to a greater level of compassion, empathy, cooperation, and equitable allocation of material resources. Then, hardworking, self-disciplined, highly motivated individuals and groups that wish to achieve greater levels of prosperity and self-respect by engaging in productive work activities in a manner that would truly contribute to the betterment or advancement of society as a whole would not be prevented from doing so because of lack of available capital, educational opportunities, and other empowering resources.

Public education for children, teenagers, and adults should be made an enjoyable, practically useful, experiential process, and not be overly competitive, pressurized, stressful, dry, and theoretical, whenever that approach would enhance love of learning and not undermine the learning of important factual information, disciplined study habits, and critical reasoning skills. When the educational process has a significant experiential, practical, enjoyable, transformational aspect, that usually enhances motivation to learn as well as retention of learned information and critical reasoning skills. School children who cannot compete with more gifted children intellectually and academically have to be given other means of developing self-esteem, such as being praised for demonstrating good character and giving their best efforts to their school work. The most important thing is to reward the student’s best efforts, regardless of outcome or accomplishment. If you are afraid to fail, you cannot take constructive, reasonable risks to succeed. School teachers should praise and reward school children for good effort and progressing within their level of ability, even if not they are not successful according to objective standardized testing measurements such as not matching the level of performance of more naturally talented, capable students.

Schoolteachers, guidance counselors, extracurricular staff, and parents should help students develop a sense of intrinsic worth and self-esteem. In the educational system, as well as in other sectors of society, showing a good effort and trying our best has to be more important than outcome or accomplishments. If schoolteachers and individuals in other influential professional roles emphasize, praise, and reward only outcome in public schools and in other sectors of society, then they build fear of failure. People stop trying for fear of failing, not meeting some kind of idealized predetermined expectation. Educators and influential leaders in other sectors of society should eliminate the overly competitive attempt to obtain a sense of worth through superiority over others, and ridiculing others who are not as talented or successful as we are. Social approval by the student’s teachers and peers should be based on how much genuine effort the

student puts in, regardless of the results of their efforts. Rewarding good effort and every student's contributions to the learning process will eventually bring achievement, but rewarding only outcome or achievement will prevent achievement by discouraging students who do not initially perform as successfully as their peers. There is no permanent failure as long as we keep persistently trying and are open to learning from our mistakes. No one should ever be ridiculed or shamed in the classroom, except for intentional bad behavior. Instead, educators and values education courses, should teach that every student has something valuable to contribute to other students, teachers, and society. Life does not clone or Xerox identical individuals, so every individual life form is irreplaceably precious to the whole of life, as epitomized by the old song, "Everyone is beautiful in their own way."

It is especially important to prevent and penalize all forms of bullying (verbal abuse and/or physical violence) in public school systems. Bullying makes the school environment a frightening, predatory place, which detracts from the learning process and from the psychological development and well-being of students, especially nonaggressive students. Students should be encouraged to come together in study teams and class discussions so that they can learn and benefit from one another's insights and varied viewpoints.

Public and private education should also encourage the development of compassionate ethical character, good citizenship (civic responsibility), and self-disciplined, self-motivated, psychological maturity, as a basis of later success in life through humane values education. This involves alerting students to the natural, intrinsic, interrelatedness, and interdependence of all life forms, encouraging them to develop empathy, compassion, integrity, and ethical responsibility. Students should be encouraged to develop psychologically mature ethical and social responsibility by learning how to empathically intuit, insightfully reflect upon, and respond appropriately to what other individuals are feeling, experiencing, and needing. The best, most effective way to transform society for the better is to incorporate nonsectarian, nonpartisan, transformational values perspectives into the educational process, along with requiring, or at least encouraging, through extra credit and public recognition, significant public service activity. That would encourage a gradual transformation of students' hearts, minds, and behaviors, from a basically selfish, divisive, fearful, predatory manner of functioning to an unselfish, warmly caring, compassionate, empathic way of functioning. Unless most people's hearts are transformed, by whatever means, it seems likely that the whole society will continue to be inhumane, brutalized, and may eventually totally self-destruct, as many individuals lose control over and impulsively "act out" their misdirected energies in non-constructive ways.

Educators, clergy, and influential leaders in other sectors of society, as well as people without publicly recognized leadership roles should exemplify or model the happiness and sense of meaning in life that can come from unselfishly, compassionately serving and caring about others, which can have a much greater impact on transforming other individuals than can come from teaching ethical values in a more theoretical manner, without actually epitomizing those values. To be transformed from selfish egotism to compassionate ethical functioning, we must come to understand that the selfish ego is a principle of individual and collective negativity, a principle of relative insanity and destructiveness, as the antithetical shadow of pure love-life energy. The toxic momentum of the selfish ego occurs because it blocks and recoils the natural inclination of our energy to flow outward to others in a caring way. Like a self-enclosed seed or a stagnant, self-polluted pool of water, the selfish ego recoils, blocks, misdirects, and distorts our energy into a negativity inclination, because the selfish ego

or antithetical shadow of the relational reality of love-life energy lives totally, or at least mostly, within itself, whereas unselfishly loving and serving others is a principle of inherent, natural ecstatic joyfulness.

That psychologically mature recognition of the relational nature of reality is how we can gradually transform the individual and collective selfish, savage heart of fear, hate, toxic addiction, and predatory destructiveness into a heart of relational compassion and optimal sanity. That is how transformational education helps save society from individual and collective sadomasochistic destructiveness, which is essentially derived from blocked love-life energy expression, which basically twists or distorts the naturally benign, sane, harmonious, creatively productive quality of our energy into its opposite antagonistic, degenerative, momentum, inwardly and outwardly. This view that destructive negativity is, basically, the product of blocking the naturally productive, compassionate, unselfishly caring, expansive, relational nature of our energy, is epitomized in the prominent psychologist Erich Fromm's dictum that "destructiveness is the outcome of un-lived life": Life has an inner dynamism of its own, it tends to grow, to be expressed, to be lived. It seems that if this tendency is thwarted, the energy directed toward life undergoes a process of decomposition, and changes into energies directed toward destruction. In other words: the drive for life and the drive for destruction are not mutually independent factors, but are in a reversed interdependence. The more the drive toward life is thwarted, the stronger is the drive toward destruction; the more life is realized, the less is the strength of destructiveness. Destructiveness is the outcome of un-lived life. Those individual and social conditions that make for suppression of life produce the passion for destruction that forms, so to speak, the reservoir from which the particular hostile tendencies—either against others or against oneself—are nourished.²¹

Thus, public education should encourage students to make psychologically healthy "growth choices" by becoming aware of and developing or actualizing their fullest range of individual talents, potentials, interests, and natural inclinations, so that their energies are not blocked, producing psychologically and socially unhealthy effects, but instead produce an optimal sense of fulfillment in life. The narcissistic ego's blockage of love or unselfish caring as a way of preserving, reinforcing, and enhancing its sense of separate self-awareness, self-will, and self-gratification is one of the basic underlying causes of various psychological, interpersonal, societal, and, perhaps, related medical somatic disorders, involving a process of twisting, misdirecting, or distorting the naturally constructive, benign, regenerative, quality of love-life energy into an antithetical non-constructive, malevolent, degenerative orientation. Undoing that blockage of love-life energy by expressing love or deeply investing in empathic communion and unselfishly caring relationships with other individuals, as an acknowledgment of intrinsic relatedness of being or existential relatedness, would be the key to undoing at least some of that individual and societal pathology. That is, contraction of the energetic heart-center of our conscious attention and feeling-energy in extremely exaggerated, continuous, predetermined, narcissistic ego-awareness produces fear, tension, and related forms of individual and societal disorders, arising from the unnatural recoil and confinement of love-life energy within the ego's incessant inner mental-emotional monologue. But relinquishing egoistic self-preoccupation by engaging in deeply invested heartfelt empathic communion with other individuals releases our love-life energy to naturally flow outward to others, and that expansive, warmhearted, energetic momentum diminishes psycho-social negativity and enhances positivity, like undoing smothering of a flame undoes toxic smoke and enables the flame to provide warmth, light, and comfort. Perhaps the principle

that love, as the basis of happiness and life-regenerative well-being, versus fear-based negativity, are mutually exclusive principles is suggested by the following biblical passage: “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18, NIV version).

As part of the process of transforming individual human beings, interpersonal relationships, and society as a whole from a basically selfish, egoistic, conflicted, orientation, to a more relational, empathic, compassionate, orientation, high school students, college students, and parents should be encouraged to take courses in compassionate humane good parenting. In humane values education, educators should teach students that society should be viewed as a caring extended family. We unselfishly care about each other, and we especially care for those people who are suffering, or experiencing danger or hardship, physically/medically, psychologically/ experientially, or financially particularly those who cannot take good care of themselves. The educational process, government social programs, private social agencies, charitable organizations, and individual philanthropists should help needy people to regain self-sufficiency as soon and as much as possible, rather than encouraging prolonged dependency, which deprives people of human dignity, self-confidence, and freedom/ability to choose their own basic lifestyle and life’s goals for themselves.

Related to encouraging altruistic compassion as intrinsically beneficial to the giver as well as the recipient, humane ethical values education, or civics education, teaches that meaning and happiness in life come from unselfishly caring for and serving others, because that enables us to experience the inherent goodness of our own being, whereas selfishly not expressing goodness to others reflects and reinforces an experiential assumption that our own being is deficient and therefore self-seeking, without anything truly valuable to offer to others. This produces loneliness, isolation, and inner emptiness arising from removing ourselves from the relational energy of life as love and goodness. In addition to preparing students to earn a living, the educational process should also encourage students to reject an exclusively selfish attitude of “look out for number one,” but also develop unselfish caring for others, in addition to constructively, naturally seeking to further our own best interests. A maturely developed consciousness of reality is a consciousness of relatedness, compassionate loving-kindness, and good-naturedness. Helping students develop strength of character for success in life should involve encouraging them to develop values of discomfort tolerance, frustration tolerance, courage, resilience, perseverance, self-discipline, sincerity, integrity, and authenticity. Public broadcast, internet, and newspaper media should give favorable public recognition to individuals who engage in noteworthy, truly unselfish acts of compassionate public service, volunteer work, or risking their own safety to rescue people in danger, or who go out of their way to reach out in a genuinely caring way to others in some kind of need or distress, without having any obvious ulterior motives for engaging in that kind of altruistic behavior.

Another related way of developing a true and deep sense of caring community spirit would be to develop public spaces and forums where people can dialogue, share enjoyable collaborative recreational or public service activities, as well as befriend people who might otherwise be strangers to them. With the exception of residential intentional communities, contemporary mainstream society offers few if any public physical meeting places where people can dialogue with and befriend others of diverse outlooks, interests, and backgrounds; most existing social group have more restrictive religious, social,

therapeutic, commercial, or recreational orientations. For example, it is not usually considered to be socially acceptable to introduce ourselves to strangers at most restaurants, cafes, and gyms, while the “bar scene” would typically not be the best place to develop truly wholesome, caring, long-term friendships, free of alcoholic beverages and cheap sexual advances that might not appeal to psychologically mature individuals who are looking for the opportunity to connect with others in a more meaningful way. Physical public meeting places as well as online and public broadcast media could provide much more extensive opportunities for people to discuss new ideas and resources that could transform, enhance, and revitalize individuals, relationships, as well as contemporary society as a whole. Just as city-states of ancient Greek and Roman cities, as well as aboriginal tribal societies, had their own public meeting places where new ideas were discussed, contemporary neighborhood meeting places could serve as centers of creative dialogue where people can challenge one another to reflect on what individual and societal life can be at its best, reminiscent of the classical Hellenic notion of *Arête*, virtue, or excellence, developing within the context of a cohesive civic community or polis.

Developing a psychologically mature, constructive society would involve developing constructive, amicable, equitable conflict resolution processes as an alternative to unnecessary warfare and other kinds of adversarial conflicts, between those of diverse cultures, viewpoints, and socioeconomic backgrounds.²² Only as a last resort should warfare, adversarial conflict, or punitive measures be utilized to halt predatory aggressors when constructive conflict resolution attempts prove ineffective. Constructive conflict resolution involves each conflicting party expressing its position constructively with genuine good will, sincerity, integrity, transparency, as well as open-minded consideration, empathic understanding, and compassionate responsiveness to the views, reasonable needs, and legitimate human rights of the other parties. Furthermore, the process of constructive conflict resolution involves exploring possible areas of common ground between the parties’ seemingly opposing views, especially considering how each of the divergent positions contain aspects of truth and genuine value that may or may not be compatible, complementary, or reconcilable when flexibly viewed from various alternative good-natured perspectives. Attempting to reconcile divergent positions should also involve exploring, in an unbiased, open-minded, open-hearted manner, how my truth and your truth relates to the larger indivisible, seamless, holistic truth of the reality nature of life, and where life, humanity, and society as a whole needs to move or be transformed, in order to adaptively conform to life’s ongoing requirement to keep advancing its level of purposive/telic development, productive functioning, and transformational growth of consciousness of the true nature of life or reality. Thus, the process of constructive conflict resolution involves exploring how best to accommodate the legitimate human rights, needs, and concerns of each of the parties in a manner that moves each of them, human society as a whole, and the entire ecosystem (if applicable) into a basically sustainable, compassionate, growth-oriented, regenerative, healthy direction.

Conflict resolution dialogues, be they at the international, national, local, group, family, dyadic, or individual internal psychological, level, should explore how any proposed conflict resolution can best contribute to life’s continued transformational advancement in terms of developing greater consciousness of its reality nature, and greater actualization of its possibly limitless, purposive potentials, so that life as a whole, as well as each of the dialoguing parties, can progress into greater levels of productive, fulfilling, transformational development,

by co-creatively empowering and bringing out the best in one another, rather than stifling, tearing down, degrading, disparaging, blaming, and harming one another physically, psychologically, financially, socially, geopolitically, or spiritually. The relational win/win principle, in contrast to the egoistic, separatist, psychologically predatory, win/lose principle involves the dialoguing parties exploring how they can best help each other achieve the fulfillment of their constructive goals, cooperatively and on a reciprocal basis, if possible, rather than working against one another, trying to defeat, crush, and even destroy one another in the attempt to achieve unilateral advantages.

Each party involved in the reconciliation process should explore how they, individually and cooperating together, can better align themselves with the greater wholeness of reality or life that includes and integrates all constructive, genuinely well-intentioned perspectives within itself. This involves moving into greater alignment, conformity, or coherence with the constructive meeting point between our own truth, our own core integrity, and our empathic understanding of aspects of genuine truth and value that may possibly exist in the other party's position. This process of reconciliation also involves our openness to what the dialogue reveals about how best to function in harmony with, rather than in opposition to, the continued purposive advancement or "highest good" of life, reality, society, or humanity as a whole, so that everyone benefits from the continued advancement of the relational matrix in which we all abide. Psychologically mature, constructive, spiritually based, conflict resolution involves accountability, taking responsibility for facing our own inappropriate or non-constructive tendencies, and not demonizing, scapegoating, or blaming the other parties for our own shortcomings or failures.

Constructive conflict resolution should usually involve trying to find win-win solutions, in which all parties have the opportunity and freedom to continue their constructive transformational development, rather than opting for win-lose "zero sum" solutions, seeking to win at someone else's expense, in which the defeated party is deprived of access to necessary material resources and opportunities to continue to naturally develop in their own distinctive manner that constructively serves their own advancement, the advancement of the other party, and the advancement of life as a whole. Instead of disparaging and attacking one another, psychologically and/or physically, the objective of psychologically mature peacemaking is for all participating parties to work to bring out the best in one another, spiritually empowering one another, which brings out the best in ourselves, individually and in our own group/party, because whatever energy and motivational intention we express to others or share with others grows more substantially in ourselves, be it compassionate productivity or destructive negativity. That is to say, we either build ourselves up by helping others to build themselves up, or we tear ourselves down by trying to tear down the other.

Selfish greed and destructive conflict set into motion a downward spiraling momentum of inner and outer impoverishment, or increasing contraction of wealth, resources, and opportunities, because it reflects and reinforces the predatory notion of fighting over scarce, finite resources. However, unselfish, compassionate generosity and constructive cooperation sets into motion a limitlessly expanding, upward spiraling (ascending), momentum of ever growing abundance, because it reflects and reinforces the experiential conviction that the true good of life is limitless, and, therefore, grows rather than becomes depleted through the process of sharing it with others. Hence, peacemaking efforts at the dyadic, family, group, local community, ethnic, regional, national, and international levels, or between people of different viewpoints or socioeconomic classes, can be optimally and enduringly effective only if people truly understand

and function consistently with the principle of unselfish sharing of material and human resources. Sharing resources, opportunities, insights, and talents in a reciprocal, cooperative, compassionate, good-natured manner sets into motion an ever expanding process of abundance for everyone, whereas the egoistic principle of scarcity, fighting over presumptively limited resources, produces a contracting, restrictive, basically predatory process, seeking unilateral advantages for ourselves and/or our group identity at the expense of others.

Even those egoistic individuals and groups who seem to achieve "victory" or "success" at the expense of others may ultimately find, sooner or later, that no unilateral advantage is really worth the loss of their own true integrity, the natural compassionate goodness of their own inherent real being, as a relational self, epitomized in the biblical dictum, "How does it profit oneself, if one gains the whole world, but loses one's own soul?" (Mark 8:36). We authors have the intuited conviction that there is an intrinsic law of justice, which ensures that the good or evil that we intentionally send out to others must eventually return to us, sooner or later, possibly in other lifetimes to come, because we are all part of an indivisible relational energy matrix, so whatever we do to others, we ultimately do to our own individual form of the one Universal Self. This principle as a form of the relational web of life is consistent with the Hindu and Buddhist notion of karma, as well as the following famous quote attributed to the Native American Chief Seattle: "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect".²³

This fundamental difference in attitude between the relational approach of seeking to benefit others as related aspects of our own extended relational energy being, our natural relatives, in contrast to the separatist egoistic approach of seeking unilateral advantages at the expense of others, is metaphorically epitomized by the idea of working together to expand a pie or bake a bigger pie for everyone to share together, rather than fighting over small scraps of a small pie that is not growing in size, but shrinking ever smaller as various contenders break off their own private piece without renewing or replenishing the source of supply for everyone. The only way to keep expanding natural and manmade resources for everyone in a sustainable manner is for each party to unselfishly replenish one another's resources, as well as replenishing the resources of the natural environment and of the universal whole human community, so that with commonly shared greater resources becoming available to everyone, each party can benefit from the other's achievements and contributions, rather than setting an opposite contracting momentum into motion depriving or harming others by seeking unilateral advantages at their expense. Functioning in such a divisive, separatist, antagonistic manner, removes us from the natural relational flow of life energy, and ultimately sets into motion a toxic momentum for us and our social group, even if the unilateral advantages that we seek seem exclusively beneficial to us and our restrictive special interest group.

Through a process of co-creative synergy, involving cooperative functioning as well as opportunities for constructive independent functioning and friendly competition, both or all of the parties should work to generate greater, ever expanding material and experiential abundance for everyone, rather than greedily depriving other parties of needed resources and opportunities in the attempt to benefit themselves alone. This often involves perpetrating covert or overt predatory aggression and destructive strategies of trying to eliminate the other contending parties, physically, financially, socially, and/or psychologically. However, in the psychologically mature process of reconciliation or conflict resolution that we are proposing, all

participating parties being open to learning from and being transformed by the constructive contributions of one another, as an open-minded, open-hearted process of “give-and-take” rather than arrogantly claiming to possess a monopoly of truth and virtue and trying to suppress the constructive viewpoints and contributions of the other parties.

Rather than monopolizing material and financial resources, all parties should try to share resources and opportunities for advancement in an equitable, flexible, manner. For example, in international disputes, contested land and water resources should be shared, if that seems more equitable, profitable, and compassionate than partitioning those territorial resources or allotting them to only one or some contending parties and not the others. The objective of compassionate peacemaking endeavors is for all participants to constructively, cooperatively help one another to generate greater material and experiential abundance, rather than destructively seeking to eliminate, subjugate, or deprive one another. This cooperative, synergistic/co-creative, tolerant, attitude of caring solidarity, or compassionate, empathic togetherness is grounded in the experiential realization that we are all part of the same global and local family, which includes all human beings and all living beings.

Another way to generate meaningful dialogue, productive cooperation, and mutual good will between people of diverse viewpoints and ethnic backgrounds is for public education, public broadcast media, creative arts, and literature to offer transformational messages, challenging the public to consider what individual human beings, human relationships, and society can be at their best, developing greater, perhaps limitless, potentials of powers of functioning that can be actualized. Multicultural media programs and publications should encourage friendly open dialogue between people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, on the basis of mutual respect and mutual empathic understanding, exploring together how the distinctive creative works and seminal insights from various ethnic cultures, historical periods, and viewpoints can best contribute to the continued advancement or uplifting of the human spirit, involving actualization of potentials related to true greatness for the individual human being, human relationships, and global society as a whole. However, only the truly compassionate and constructive aspects of various ethnic cultures should be celebrated and emulated, not their predatory, inhumane, psychologically unhealthy or regressive aspects.

Studying and reflecting deeply on great creative works of various cultures, religious faiths, nations, and regions of the world raises the question of defining the basic criteria by which a particular creative work can be viewed as being truly great, or having enduring existential significance and inspirational value. This involves examining the basic qualities that, most essentially, constitute true greatness, which could also be described by other related terms such as, *arête*, integrity, nobility, and maturity of character; “artistic” or “beautiful” living (such as the Native American sacred process of “walking in beauty”), or meaningful attunement to the root core level of reality, in contrast to more superficial, vulgar ways of viewing and functioning. True greatness involves seeing beyond the surface appearances of phenomena to insightfully discern what is of enduring intrinsic value and meaningful significance, grounded in the inherent reality nature of life, and its essential relational foundation as love-goodness, not only contacting one’s experience with the body senses and mundane mind, but also with deeper noetic faculties of the awakened heart and mind.

It is important to develop a holistic, integrative, relational, contextual way of thinking, feeling, and seeing which can enable

people of diverse ethnic cultures, outlooks, and fields of endeavor to recognize how various cultures, disciplines of study, and fields of endeavor can learn from one another, contribute to one another’s continued progress or purposeful development, and cooperatively work together for the benefit of one another, humanity as a whole, and all living species. The best solution to many conflicts and controversies is to discern the relational truth or energy abiding between and joining together in a potentially compatible, complementary manner, various differing viewpoints and positions that may seem to be diametrically opposed to one another at first glance. The relational nature of reality includes both polar opposite extremes of various relative contrasting elements, as well as all points of the indivisible whole continuum between them, as envisioned by Hegel’s dialectical process of thesis, antithesis, and the unifying synthesis that integrates together thesis and antithesis into a greater holistic view of reality, and a more balanced, flexible way of functioning.

Great creative works, along with individual maturity, nobility, and great stature of character, come, in part, from contacting one’s own life experience in deeply invested communion with keenly penetrating higher faculties of heart and mind, such as, intuition, inspiration, empathy, as well as aesthetic appreciation of inner and outer beauty. The development of these incisively “in-sight-full” higher noetic faculties is also derived from openness to encountering mystery, or aspects of experience beyond our current limits of knowledge and familiarity, by being tolerant of uncertainty, ambiguity, lack of closure, so that we do not jump to premature conclusions, often involving biased, superficial presumptions, but, instead, permit the great mystery of life experience to gradually unfold and reveal its own self-understanding through loving, empathic, non-dualistic communion with it. Openness to previously unknown or unclear aspects of experience is the basis of continued discovery, innovation, and creative transformation, whereas trying to force-fit our current experience and future possibilities into preconceived interpretive categories is likely to set into motion an opposite restrictive, contracting process of static inertia. The very words “transformation” and “metamorphosis” imply the development of a new form, i.e., a new view of reality, which require being willing to question and let go of old limiting presumptions and restrictive sense of identities in any branch of study or field of endeavor. Similarly, the word “sublime” implies contact with the immeasurable, limitless, subliminal, not fully known, or not fully knowable grandeur of the core of reality. Tuning into this subliminal level of reality requires openness to mystery, uncertainty, and unpredictability. Truly great creative works involve insight into the relational core of reality arising from deep empathic communion with our own life experience, other individuals, nature, and the sacred, in contrast to narcissistic egotism, seeing and functioning through the “eyes” (heart) of love, rather than viewing one’s experience through the distorting opaque filters of predetermined biased presumptions, and expectations. In Biblical terms, this is the difference between viewing one’s experience holistically, “face to face,” unmediated by any preconceived interpretive presumptions, as a psychologically mature “adult,” in contrast to filtering our experiences through the dark lens of egocentric partial conjectures, which St. Paul describes as a “child’s” less mature mode of reasoning and perception (I Corinthians 13:9-12). Thus, the true greatness of a particular individual, society, or creative work comes from deeply invested communion with inner, outer, and relational life experience, yielding appreciative insights into the intrinsic values or the essential truths, beauty, goodness, and grandeur of reality. True greatness, stature, or quality of character or workmanship should not be confused with egotistical self-aggrandizement or prideful grandiosity, such as trying to defeat others in the competitive arena in order to enhance the selfish ego’s

exclusive personal sense of comparative superiority in worth, public prestige, glory, fame, fortune, and power over others. True greatness involves expressing the unselfish humane qualities of true nobility of character or psychological maturity, such as empathic, compassionate, responsive sensitivity to the legitimate needs and concerns of others, considerateness, self-sacrificial devotion to unselfishly serving others, moral courage, or persevering strength of character even in the face of difficult challenges, integrity, and experiential wisdom of the heart, involving insight into the essential truths of the reality nature of life, derived from heartfelt direct experience rather than from factual information or speculative presumptive conceptual thought.

Public broadcast media and educational curriculums should highlight the great creative works of various ethnic cultures, viewpoints, and historical periods, as a way of helping the public and especially students reflect upon and gain insight about the creative process, transformational human potential, and the nature of reality. They can learn from critically considering the ethos or core values and paradigms epitomized by the great creative works produced by and reflecting the lived experience of various human communities. The proper role of transformational media is to reveal and evoke what is truly life-affirming, wholesome, constructive, compassionate, reflecting true integrity and maturity of character. It is also important for inspirational, insightful, public entertainment and information media to offer the public a meaningful alternative to the sensationalist, escapist, vulgar, degrading, exploitative content prevalent in much of public entertainment and news media.

As is well-known, edifying and transformational public broadcast programming usually receives much lower consumer ratings than sensationalistic, escapist programming does. That is why the relatively small percentage of psychologically mature, transformation-oriented, consumers should band together to support the usually smaller public broadcast companies and internet sites that cater to the best aspects of human nature, rather than pandering to the worst human instincts, as most commercially-oriented, larger companies and websites typically do. Unfortunately, many psychologically mature individuals with highly developed, deeply sensitive hearts and souls tend to be viewed as “misfits,” and are often marginalized, ostracized, and denied employment and financial rewards by mainstream society, because the mainstream’s significantly lower level of consciousness of the relational reality of life and love does not permit it to recognize the intrinsic value of what the more evolved “vanguard” of humanity potentially has to offer society. Some more evolved vanguard souls, or relatively psychologically mature individuals, conceal and betray much of their experiential insight, values, and core integrity in order to fit in to mainstream society, receive public approval and acceptance, as well as advance their professional careers and achieve financial security, whereas others lack the ability or inclination to adapt their inner vision and experience to society’s and employers’ expectations. The mainstream society’s bottom line of financial profit and pragmatic functioning often overlooks the importance of encouraging and rewarding the contributions of relatively evolved vanguard individuals who can infuse material products and public affairs with greater quality, depth of heart and soul, or “inner richness of being,” so that the mainstream society is no longer restricted to the most superficial aspects of reality, like a dry, sterile mask, rind, hollow shell, or false façade, lacking genuineness, inspiration, and true vitality, as meaningful, uplifting, inner content to fill that outer package. Instead, they pursue vulgar sensationalism as a false, basically meaningless sense of excitement and vitality.

Wealthy philanthropists and non-profit foundations would do well to fund various kinds of inspirational creative artists and insightful

visionaries who might not otherwise have the financial means and institutional support to contribute to the transformation and edification of society through their special gifts, which more pragmatic-minded, mechanically-oriented, mainstream influential “movers and shakers” may not necessarily be able to provide or even appreciate. The best way for society to advance in a truly healthy, holistic way is for the more qualitative, experiential, or soulful contributions of evolved vanguard individuals to be harmoniously integrated with the relatively more mechanistic, standardized, quantitative, contributions that pragmatic “go-getter” entrepreneurs, technicians, and other mainstream individuals can provide. Of course, individuals who are able to meaningfully and effectively combine both kinds of contributions should be encouraged to do so. Metaphorically speaking, the inspirational, visionary vanguard without the mainstream is like a heart and soul without a pragmatic mind and functional body, whereas the mainstream without the vanguard is like a lifeless machine or mind-body without an inner heart and soul. Creative artists, entertainers, and visionary leaders who have a highly developed consciousness of reality can reveal the essential beauty, wonder, and goodness of life and love through their work. The experiential wisdom of the heart and soul has a serious aspect and a playful, funny, spontaneous aspect, which are naturally, non-dualistically, not other than one another, as epitomized by traditional Native American Heyoka or Sacred Clowns.²⁴

These kinds of sensitive individuals typically like to express a deeper level of their being through their professional career, volunteer public service, and recreational activities, turning out products and providing services that have an inspirational quality, a “juicy” flow of regenerative life energy, reflecting or expressing a quality of “heart and soul” rather than turning out “alienated” products and providing services that are basically dead, lifeless, empty, mechanical, programmed, routine, stale, shallow/superficial, and without depth. This brings to mind Kahlil Gibran’s view that “Work is love made visible,”²⁵ as well as Karl Marx’s view of work as an expression of one’s essential inner human qualities and genuine caring for others, in contrast to work that is basically an expression of “alienation,” psycho-social “estrangement,” (*Entfremdung*) or overly commercialized, mechanized, and routinized, resulting in estrangement from other individuals, the natural world, and one’s own natural integrity and authenticity.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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