

F 10. LIFE-ENHANCING VALUES

Are not all of the following life-enhancing: respect for others, empathy, sympathy, caring, friendship, love, cooperation, equity, the golden rule and promoting human well-being?

Could not all these also be called the primary human or humanistic values? Is it not true that their opposites degrade the quality of human life? Is it not true that most people know these things by their own life experiences? And is it not true that most people try, albeit not entirely successfully, to live accordingly in their own inter-personal relationships?

Between any two humans and between any two groups there are potentially many life-enhancing relationships and many potentially life-degrading relationships that could be developed. The only rational behavior would be to develop the former and avoid the latter whenever possible. All human social problems come from our failures to develop the former instead of the latter.

In general inter-group relations have developed without serious forethought and political leaders have seldom explored good potentialities. Neither politicians nor the general public seem to have any idea how to develop social processes and social institutions that embody life-enhancing values instead of being in some cases based upon fears of domination by other groups.

Life-enhancing values could lead both individuals and groups to try to harmonize their creativities within themselves, with all others, and with nature. Success in this would lead to the development of sustainable economies and to societies in which there would be fair and ample opportunities for every individual to develop fine potentialities.

As it is, power to act without life-enhancing values causes all human individual and social problems, and they can be reduced and prevented only by life-enhancing values embodied in social processes and structures and in human lives. It is subversive of all that to embody instead the "smart guy ethic" of seeking to get as much as possible of whatever any one or any group happens to want at the time without regard to the effects upon any other humans. Many consider this ethic to alone be rational, but it is naive and irrational because fundamentally destructive of all the best human potentialities. The question is how widely humans & groups can manage to apply the life-enhancing social values.

Even for those whose vision is restricted to economic well-being, history demonstrates that all remain hopelessly poor if we all try to be self-sufficient, and that humans have increased their well-being greatly by cooperation in producing things needed by others in return for their doing the same for the unknown humans who produced for them. Besides we are social animals and need one another in many different ways, & fairness (equity) instead of discrimination of any sort enhances all our lives.