



TESS Newsletter

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“ Turning Possibilities into Realities ”

Building a Global Movement for Change [UNSG]: The Promise (part 54)

"Working Hard at Working Smart" (part LXX)

2015: Raising The Bar: Reconciling Secular Worldly And Selfless Spiritual Values



Picture source: denver-redcross.org

If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those precious values - that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leader African-American Civil Rights Movement. 1929 - 1968

The future we want: The Promise: The Force Beyond

Worldly and Spiritual Values: Humankind May Depend on Rediscovering a Natural Balance

By Larry Culliford

Worldly and spiritual values appear to pull people in different directions. Take a look at each in turn and this becomes clear. How may they be reconciled?

Worldly values primarily concern basic human needs to survive and flourish: food, clothing and shelter. This means not only making sure you can pay for what's required, but also having something extra for luxuries and for security. **The more anxious you are about life's risks and vicissitudes, the more you are likely to want to acquire and accumulate.**

It is a short step from this position to one fully embracing monetary values; giving them high, if not top, priority. **Everyone would like to be rich.**

In a materialist cultural environment, alongside wealth, power and celebrity are also given priority. The powerful need never go hungry. The famous need never go without. They have more than they require to survive and thrive. Those who are wealthy, powerful and famous can have more or less whatever they desire; and **this is not always healthy.**

Worldly values, driven by the profit motive and laws of supply and demand, come therefore to be essentially mercenary. They are divisive, result in the development of self-interest groups, and put people into competition with each other. Some say this is a benefit, but it can be destructive. There are both unworthy winners and innocent losers.

When capitalist consumerism flourishes, people are enticed and encouraged into buying what they do not really need. People also have a tendency to embark on sequences of short-term, opportunistic projects, rather than more carefully planned robust and enduring endeavours. Any sense of a **spiritual dimension** underpinning worldly values gets submerged. **They risk becoming wholeheartedly secular.**



Secular values are not themselves in any way reprehensible. They are good; but they easily decline towards being over-competitive, ego-driven and self-interested. **Initially need-driven, they readily become greed-driven.** The fear of threatened insufficiencies invests them with an urgency that ratchets up the pace of life, imbued with a kind of blindness for anything but the short-term goal.

Spiritual values, in contrast, have a calmer, eternal quality, arising from deep-seated inner connectedness to the divine or spiritual dimension of human experience. Spiritual awareness, when cultivated through regular prayer, meditation and other spiritual practices, keeps the true, spiritual self in touch and in tune with the source of spiritual values, characterised by mature and selfless love.

These values contrast steeply with the more worldly sort, and depend on people being intuitively aware and respectful of their seamless interconnection, through contact with the spiritual realm, with everyone else alive on the planet, with those who have gone before and those who are to follow. They therefore favour co-operation over competition. Such 'higher' or more mature values depend equally on awareness of a similarly close **bond to nature, to the planet itself and to the greater cosmos we inhabit.**

Such values thus irrevocably embody a combination of **compassion and wisdom**. The two are twinned, because wisdom without compassion is false, and compassion without wisdom ultimately leads to exhaustion. Combining compassion and wisdom produces an attitude of mature and selfless love, the actions of which are **based firmly on the golden rule of doing to others only what we would wish done to ourselves**.

To make a list, then spiritual values include:
**Honesty... Trust... Kindness... Generosity...
 Tolerance... Patience... Perseverance...
 Discernment... Humility... Courage... Beauty...
 and Hope.**

I am not sure if these are best thought of as values or the virtues on which they are based. Either way, it is worth going slowly through them, spending quality time reflecting on the true meaning and significance of each.

It is also worth reflecting on how these spiritual values may clash with, and be corrupted by, secular, materialist, worldly values. Complete honesty and unbounded generosity, for example, might well undermine the efforts of those interested in economic profit from the advertising and sale of goods.

People may argue that wealth creation benefits everyone, and this may be true when material benefits alone are considered. However, spiritual values are compromised whenever some are being exploited for the benefit of others. Think about low-paid workers in far-off places. Think too about consumers enticed into spending on what may not be essential for them, at the expense of more basic goods and services: not only food, clothing and shelter, but also healthcare and education.

There seems to be a dramatic clash, but it takes only a simple formula to reconcile worldly and spiritual values: give priority to the latter at all times.

Even in the pursuit of apparently secular, worldly goals, it is best that spiritual values predominate and prevail. **This is the true antidote to anxiety and despair.** Many of the problems besetting humanity - conflict, hardship, war and famine among them - arise when the opposite occurs, when worldly values override spiritual sensibilities. This can be corrected, as human beings - individually and eventually collectively - grow increasing compassionate, wise and mature.



Humanity can be said to be passing through a kind of extended adolescence, as we learn to take responsibility for the consequences of thoughts, words and actions governed by our personal and communal sets of values. This is the journey, the path and pilgrimage of spiritual development that we are each on, since birth and throughout life. It seems worth repeating that we are all on it together.

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Larry's books include *The Psychology of Spirituality, Love, Healing & Happiness* - *The Little Book of Happiness* - *Happiness: The 30 Day Guide*

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