THE INTIMATE INTERTWINING OF BUSINESS, RELIGION AND DIALOGUE

by
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1. Religion Is at the Core of Every Civilization

Since the beginning of civilization religion has been at its very heart. A creative religion promotes a creative civilization; a fragmented religion results in a fragmented civilization. This is just as true now at the edge of the third millennium as it was six thousand years ago at the dawn of the first civilization at Sumer in the Fertile Crescent.

First a few words recalling how the term religion is understood here:

"Religion is an explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly, based on some notion of the Transcendent." Normally all religions contain the four "C's": Creed, Code, Cult, and Community-structure. When the "explanation" is not based on some idea of the Transcendent it is usually called an ideology and functions in individuals' and groups' lives like religions.[1] *2. Economic Activity and Religion*

To sustain life, humans had to gather and produce the fundamental necessities; as life became more fully human, men and women banded together to make their efforts more efficient through differentiation of labor. Eventually this human coalescing became so layered that it produced cities (whence the name *civi*-lization, from the Latin *civis*, the stem for the English cognate "city"), built on the now increasingly complex human work, economic activity.

If human work, economic activity, is at the foundation of the development of civilization, the broadest context within which this foundation is understood, explained and significantly shaped is the religion of the civilization. Without the overarching vision, motivation and direction of religion, human work becomes increasingly meaningless and consequently drifts into ineffectiveness and ultimately collapses into chaos -- witness the resultant economic and other chaos in the former USSR when its functional religion, the ideology of Marxism, proved intellectually, morally and spiritually bankrupt. Or on the "other side": the danger of the utter collapse and destruction of all human civilization if a "mindless," "spiritless" world-wide economic activity runs rampant without an inner spiritual vision, motivation and direction, and thus drives the earth to ecological self-destruction. *3. A Pluralist World and the Separation of Religion and State*

As noted, in all past civilizations religion has been an integral, a constitutive element. Among other things, religion supplied the ethical basis on which the authority of the state and law was built. As a result, in all past civilizations there has been a very intimate relationship between religion and state. Very often that relationship was so close that one could speak of the union of religion and state. In that close relationship, at times religion tended to dominate the state, and at other times the state tended to dominate religion. We have seen both in recent times and still even today. The Soviet state's domination of Orthodox Christianity was an example of the former and the Ayatollahs' and Mullahs' domination of the state in Iran is an example of the latter. The relationship of the separation of religion and state is a unique phenomenon in human history, which occurred in the modern West -- more about that below.

Union of religion and state? Separation of religion and state? These are two clear positions, each claiming to be the best for the creative welfare of humankind. At least in the contemporary mind of the masses, the union of religion and state position appears to be represented by Islam, the separation position by Christianity, and an ambiguous in-between by Judaism in the example of Israel. As with all popular perceptions, there is a substantial element of reality, of truth to it, but at the same time the reality is much more complex than is

perceived by the masses -- and by masses of intellectuals. Hence, it is important to look at least briefly at the complexity of the relationship between the state and religion in order to address the fundamental question about which relationship between religion and state is the most beneficial to humanity. This will be looked at with Christianity and Islam as the two prime examples, though Judaism with Israel as a modern experiment will also be kept in view.

In the early centuries of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world Christian writers were strongly in favor of religious liberty. After the Constantinian embrace of the Christian religion in the fourth century they quickly switched to the position that the state had the responsibility to see that the truth was protected and favored -- and of course Christianity had the truth. In theory of course no one was to be forced to accept Christianity, but not infrequently the theory was not translated into practice. With the development of medieval Christendom in the western half of the former Roman Empire, almost everyone became Christian, with the exception of the Jews, who for the most part were allowed to continue a separate existence, often in ghettos.

The history of Islam was not very different: in theory no individual or community was to be forced to embrace Islam. But in practice the *Jihad*, in the sense of a Holy War against non-Muslim states, not infrequently was in fact launched aggressively. Although the *millet* system allowed non-Muslims within a Muslim-conquered state to practice their religion, the non-Muslims were clearly second-class citizens -- which fact doubtless encouraged conversion to Islam, and surely not the contrary (under threat of the death penalty for apostasy).

At various times during the intertwined history of Christianity and Islam one side or the other pointed, usually with justification, an accusing finger at the other as a brutal aggressor. In fact, neither Christianity nor Islam can claim to have been predominantly the victim and the other the aggressor; the acid of history dissolves any such claim from either side. *Jihad* and the Crusades easily match each other in gratuitous aggressiveness. *4. Development of the Separation of Religion and State*

Something unique in human history, however, began to take place in Western Christianity, in Christendom: the gradual, painful move toward the separation of religion and state. Some might trace its beginnings to the Gregorian Reforms when Pope Gregory VII (1021-1085 A.D.) attempted dramatically and substantially to separate the Church from the power of the Holy Roman Empire and other civil powers. Of course no one at the time promoted the notion of the separation of church and state. Rather, each side attempted to wrest power to his side; witness the thirteenth-century "imperial interregnum" manipulated by the popes (when for fifty years the popes effectively prevented the election of a Holy Roman Emperor), followed soon by the imprisonment of that most authoritarian of all popes, Boniface VIII, by the king of France, Phillip the Fair, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

But it was precisely this mammoth power struggle that encouraged a weariness with the unquestioned assumption of the union of church and state. The Renaissance with its shifting of interest from the divine to the human provided a further basis for the gradual questioning of the wisdom of the union of church and state. This questioning manifested itself visibly in the so-called left-wing of the sixteenth-century Reformation: the Anabaptists and related sects clearly and vigorously rejected the idea of the union of church and state, for which, of course, there were viciously persecuted by Catholics and mainline Protestants.

In the end it was the pitting of Catholics and Protestants against each other that magnified the incipient weariness with the consequences of the union of church and state -- induced by the earlier struggle between the pope and civil rulers -- to the point of the full embrace of the principle of the separation of religion and state during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The 1789 U.S. Constitution gave for the first time a formal national articulation of the idea of separation of church and state. From that time it spread throughout the West in various juridical expressions, and from there increasingly around the globe. *5. Developments in Islam*

Like all previous civilizations, Islam (speaking now of Islam as a civilization which has the religion Islam as its vital source) initially grew vigorously, plateaued for a time and then, as many Muslim scholars themselves have

descried, went into decline. The decline became increasingly apparent from the eighteenth century onwards. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries much of the Islamic world fell under Western colonialism and was increasingly dominated by Christendom, now largely become the secularizing "West".

The observation of the decline and present inferiority of Islamic countries is not merely a reflection of Christian prejudice. Doubtless many Christians unwarrantedly attribute the unprecedented advances of Western civilization mainly to Christianity, not recognizing that it is more the dis-engaging of Christianity (and all religions and ideologies) from the power of the state that is the main source of those ongoing advances.

In fact, Muslim scholars have increasingly been articulate about the depressed state of Islamic countries. For example, in Dr. Seyed Othman Alhabshi's book[2] explaining the background of the newly founded Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia we find the following strong statement: "The Muslim world is currently plagued with almost nothing but negative attributes of a civilization." He then goes on to list some of the "plagues": underdevelopment, backwardness, poverty, inequitable income and wealth distribution, high inflation, acute illiteracy and serious unemployment, economic and political instability (p. 8)." If possible, even clearer is the comment: "Although eight hundred years was long enough to accumulate a wealth of experience to ward off various human ills, the Muslims declined almost without any rebound till this day." (p. 12)

Then recently several Muslim nations, e.g., Iran, Sudan, have tried to regain their former Islamic glory by reuniting religion and state through the embrace of "Islamism," (the term Muslim scholars use rather than the perhaps less accurate Western term, "fundamentalism"); the same goal is being sought by radical Islamists within other Muslim countries, e.g., Egypt and Algeria. This development took a quantum leap forward in the wake of the disastrous defeat of the anti-Israel Islamic nations in the 1967 Six-Day-War with Israel. "An international theological debate was convened in Cairo's Al-Azhar University in the autumn of 1968, where the participants pathetically discovered that their failure was due not to Israel's superiority but to their neglect of Islam. A return to the faith was urged not only as a source of solace and comfort in time of adversity and loss of orientation, in view of the mounting disillusionment with the West and modernity, but also as a source of inspiration for restoring the old glory."[3]

Unfortunately, rather than regaining former "Islamic Glory" the Islamists are thereby insuring that their nations will remain no more than third-class societies. That fact seems to be dawning slowly even on that bastion of Muslim religious conservatism, Saudi Arabia -- judging from its recent tentative moves to suppress Islamism and to start down the path toward "secular" democracy. *6. The Unique Quality of Western Civilization*

When historians like Arnold J. Toynbe survey the total history of humankind they find that there have been a number of civilizations which have come into existence, flourished and then declined (Toynbe discerns twenty-six civilizations in human history). Many of them achieved admirable accomplishments, the Greco-Roman civilization being the one best known to Westerners. Its achievements were indeed great, so much so that during the late Renaissance there was a lively debate about whether the Ancients (meaning the Greeks and Romans) or the then moderns had attained greater cultural heights. But doubtless the Greco-Roman accomplishments were in many regards matched, and in some surpassed, by the Chinese, Indian and Islamic civilizations.

However, it is no cultural hubris to be aware that the rising arc of Western civilization, which is formed largely as a synthesis of:

- 1) the Judeo-Christian tradition,
- 2) the Greco-Roman tradition,
- 3) the Germanic tradition,
- 4) with a significant influence of medieval Islam, and
- 5) modern science and thought,

has reached far beyond where any of the other twenty-five civilizations have gone, whether in culture, science, politics, economic prosperity, or technology, etc. Moreover, Western civilization has now become a global civilization in a way that had never occurred before, and the process of globalization is intensifying in exponential fashion. This is not to discount Western-now-becoming-Global civilization's defects, blind spots and seething problems, some of the most critical of which are largely a result of its very accomplishments, e.g., the population explosion (because of, *inter alia*, medical and agricultural advances), the ecological crisis (because of, *inter alia*, technological advances and the population explosion). But even that illustrates the main point: Western civilization's greatest problems flow not from its weaknesses, but from its even more awesome, unparalleled achievements.

7. The Separation of Religion and State a Vital Key

One of the *essential* elements in the advances of Western civilization in culture, science, politics, economic prosperity and technology, the like of which, as said -- for all of its problems, which are correspondingly massive -- were never before experienced in human history, is *the separation of state and religion*. And religion here includes any "ideology" that functions like a religion, as, for example, atheistic Marxism (it is clear to see today in Eastern Europe and the former USSR what disaster the union of state and the "religion" of Marxism led to).

Western civilization, Christendom, in the Late Middle Ages began reaching the cultural level of the earlier Egyptian, Greek and Roman, and the then contemporary Islamic, Indian and Chinese, civilizations. All historical data strongly suggest that Christendom would have plateaued at approximately that level for a longer or shorter period of time, and then gone into decline -- *as had all other civilizations before then*, and as eventually the Islamic, Indian and Chinese civilizations did as well.

That did not happen, however. Why? One very fundamental reason was that -- starting with the Gregorian Reforms, through the Renaissance, the Reformation and on into the Enlightenment and beyond -- religion and the state slowly and very painfully began to be separated. This separation broke the forced quality of religion-ideology and consequently freed the human spirit and mind to pursue its limitless urge to know ever more, to meet imaginatively and successfully the always arising human problems. This resulted in a series of what historians call revolutions in the West: the Commercial Revolution (16-17th centuries), Scientific Revolution (17th century), Industrial Revolution (18th century), Political Revolution (epitomized in the 18th-century American and French Revolutions), and on into the 19th and 20th centuries with myriads of revolutions of all sorts occurring at geometrically increasing speed and magnitude. Hence the Western civilization break-throughs far beyond all previous human achievements in areas like physical science, medicine, food production, technology and manufacturing, transportation, communications, social sciences, politics (popular democracy, human rights), popular education.

With these "exponential" advances in capabilities, of course, the possibilities of destructiveness increased correspondingly -- as the medieval philosophers said: The corruption of the best becomes the worst, *(corruptio optimae pessima)*. Nevertheless, because freedom is of the *essence* of being human, even though we may well destroy ourselves if we do not learn wisdom and live virtuously, we can never turn back to an unfree stage of human development.

Hence, those societies which try to reunite religion-ideology with the power of the state are doomed to always be third-class societies. New problems and challenges will always arise in human societies. Humans, however, have a virtually limitless capability of intellect, imagination and spirit (which is another way of saying what the book of Genesis in the Bible meant by recording that God made humans in "God's image," the *imago Dei*) with which to address and overcome those problems and challenges ever anew. Unfortunately, when that innate human creative spirit is imprisoned in a doctrinal strait-jacket ("ortho-doxy," "straight-doctrine," becomes in fact "strait-doctrine") imposed from above by the power of the state it will die from spiritual circulation-

strangulation. Then that society will fall behind, and perhaps even succumb to, those societies which retain their creativity.

There is a negative proof of the validity of this thesis in the above-mentioned total collapse of the "Marxist Civilization." The collapse from within, of its own weight, as it were, resulted from the choking off of the creative human spirit in the Communist world because the state forced the human spirit into the strait-jacket of the functional religion of Marxism. Some have suggested that the arms race bankrupted the USSR and caused its demise. Doubtless the arms race accelerated the collapse, but it was inevitable even without it. Anyone who went behind the Iron Curtain before 1989 realized that the worst disaster was not that Communism "produced junk," but that it "junked people." **That** is what led to its disappearance.

That is also why the present attempt of Islamists to reestablish the Muslim law, the *shar'ia*, in the Muslim world will condemn those countries to *always* be behind the "West." And, given the Islamists' memory of the past medieval cultural glory and superiority of Islam over the West, it is precisely the present inferiority in almost every way of all Islamic countries vis-à-vis the West that infuriates them.

One finds an acknowledgment of the present decline of Islamic civilization, and a determination to do something positive about it, not just from a few isolated Muslim scholars like Dr. Seyed Othman Alhabshi mentioned above, but also in leading Muslim circles. When Dr. Alhabshi, for example, in noting that "None of the Muslim countries are considered to be developed or advanced, despite about ten are among the rich nations of the world," adding perceptively that the Muslim countries "are so weak politically, economically, socially and even educationally .... Muslims have become so weak and dependent on others in almost every field,"[4] he then quoted Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad: "We Muslims are backward in many fields."[5]

Of course, the same disastrous consequences would also result, e.g., in India if the resurgent Hindu "fundamentalists" were to have their way -- and China, North Korea and Vietnam will likewise always remain relatively "backward" as long as they maintain a union of ideology and state.

Many Islamist apologists argue, however, that Islam is different from the West and its major religion, Christianity, because, unlike Christianity, Islam is a holistic religion which includes politics as well as all other aspects of life. In this, unfortunately, they are forgetting that Christendom was exactly the same for well over a millennium -- the Constantinian Era. It is only when Christendom, the West, began to break out of that mischievous marriage of religion-ideology and state (only allegedly virtuously "holistic") that it embarked on the path of human freedom with its limitless possibilities of creativity (and destruction). *8. Israel: An Example of Religion and State Impoverished*

Not infrequently one also hears from some Western Jews -- afflicted by the same unconsciousness of the history of Christen*dom* as most Muslims -- in dialogue with Christianity an argument similar to that of many Muslims, namely, that, unlike Christianity, this time Judaism is a holistic religion which includes all aspects of like. In the West this line of argument does not extend so far as to include politics in the form of a union of religion and state. However, it does expand to include a type of union of religion and state in the "Jewish State" of Israel -- greatly to the detriment of both religion and state.

The sad fact is that the vast majority of Israelis are unconnected with any institutional form of Judaism; the forced choices are between an observant Orthodoxy, which more than eighty percent of Jews the world over find unacceptable, and a completely secular lifestyle. Modern versions of Judaism, i.e., Reform, Conservative and Reconstructive Judaism -- all vibrant in the world's largest Jewish community, U.S. Jewry -- are restricted by Orthodox political maneuvering to a minuscule portion of the Israeli population. In brief, Israeli Jewish religious life as a result of the union of state and Orthodox Judaism is gravely impoverished.

Judaism, of course, is not the only religion in Israel. Even though religious liberty is proclaimed by Israeli law, there are many restrictions on religions other than Orthodox Judaism and numerous privileges granted only to

Orthodox Judaism. Partly as a consequence, the other religions are also impoverished. For example, both Christianity and Islam in Israel tend to be highly traditional, largely opposed to any serious grappling with modernity. In so many ways, observing religious life in Israel, especially in Jerusalem, is like stepping back into a medieval time-warp.

For example, one can read of murders because of "family honor," which are more or less accepted by the Arab population and met with a shoulder shrug by much of the Jewish population. As an instance (*Jerusalem Post*, July 15, 1994), a twenty-one year old Druze (an eleventh-century religion derived from Islam) shot twenty times (!) his thirty-eight year old sister, who had returned from New York for a visit, because she had bleached her hair and wore a short skirt, thus sullying the family and community honor. The Druze religious community registered no condemnation whatsoever, and the Israeli police were mainly at pains to explain why the brother had gotten so angry.

That such horrible crimes happen in Israel is not the point (this occurred while O.J. Simpson was on trial for the first time for the killing of his former wife). Rather, it is the reaction, or lack thereof, by the specific religious community and the "well, what can you expect?" attitude by much of the larger community. To say it in other words, the point is this: The union of religion and state, with its Israeli continuation of the Turkish *millet* system whereby each religious institution is given the legal power to control matters of "personal status," has doubtless contributed to the Druze community's remaining "medieval" in its acceptance of killings because of "family honor." To say the least, this is an impoverishment of religion. It also seriously cripples the state, for as a consequence many of its citizens are restricted and oppressed in ways that make them less effective, contributing citizens -- and a state will flourish only to the extent that its citizens flourish.

This same point is made by a loyal Israeli Druze who has long been a member of the Israeli Foreign Service and a Knesset Member: "The minute I live in a state which defines itself religiously or nationally as a Jewish state, as an Islamic state, or as a Christian state, then other communities should not expect any priorities or equality in that state. Once the State of Israel was defined as a Jewish state, the non-Jews in that Jewish state cannot expect equality."[6] This is not the view only of an Israeli minority. The former Rector of Haifa University and the Chairman of the Governmental Advisory Commission on Druze Affairs wrote the following concerning certain minorities: "In fact there is no real equality of rights even though Israel is a democracy and genuinely tries to treat its citizens equally.... There are different classes of citizens which unfortunately is not exactly the ideal of universal citizenship."[7] *9. The Challenge to Jews, Christians and Muslims Together*

As we know, however, at its best, the separation of religion and state did not, and does not, mean hostility between religion and state. Rather, it frees each, religion and state, to fulfill its respective function untrammeled by, but closely related to, the other. For the state that function can be briefly described as the responsibility "to organize society so as to protect the rights of all, and promote the common good," and for religion, "to provide an explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly."

Clearly the West does not have the perfect solution to the question of the relation between religion and the state; it has many different imperfect solutions. The quite "anaemic" condition of a Christianity not completely separated from the state in Germany, Scandinavia, England, and other European countries, vis a vis its turbulent but comparatively vital condition in the U.S. with its quite completely separate relationship of religion and state further bears out the thesis that the separate but creative relationship of religion and state is good for both religion and state, and hence, for humankind.

The validity of this insight can also be seen in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world. With 90% of its 190 million population being Muslim, Indonesia has more Muslims than all the Arab countries combined! In Indonesia there is a solid commitment to the "Five Principles," (*Pancasila*), which include both of the key "Western" notions of democracy and religious liberty -- Islam is not designated as the State Religion. A visit to Indonesia reveals a country that is rapidly moving out of the ranks of developing countries with a booming economy, rapidly rising educational standards and harmonious, actively creative relations with the other

religious communities in and outside the country. For example, there are cooperative ties between some of the Islamic theological institutes and Christian and Buddhist universities; several non-governmental organizations which promote interreligious dialogue are active, as e.g., "Interfidei: Institute for Inter-Faith Dialogue in Indonesia," "International Forum Indonesia," and "Paramadina."

The "perfect" solution of the relationship of religion and state lies only in "infinity," toward which humans are always striving. But also clearly, the West -- and countries such as Indonesia, Japan, etc., inspired by the principles of democracy and religious liberty -- has shown that separation of religion and state is *essential* to the true full functioning of both religion and state, and to human progress to "Infinity." Said in other words: The separation of religion and the state is a necessary, though not sufficient, cause of the unending creative development of humanity.

To be sure, not all Muslim thinkers and leaders are Islamists, despite the great show of force released by the radical Khomeinis of Iran and Turabis of the Sudan. Contemporary critical-thinking Muslim scholars and leaders -- and not just in Indonesia and Turkey, but elsewhere as well -- are fully aware of the dangers of Islamism, of the history of the results of the union of religion and state, and of the need to move to a relationship of a creatively cooperative, pluralistic separation of religion and state.

Because Christianity and Islam are the two most populous, geographically widespread, and powerful religions today (also have been for centuries and will be for the foreseeable future), they, along with Judaism, must lead the way in developing and spreading a creative relationship between religion (ideology) ethics and the power of the state. Though small in numbers today, the significance of Judaism in the past -- it comprised almost a tenth of the population of the Roman Empire (eight to ten million out of 100 million) at the time of Jesus -- was immense through its decisive influence in the shaping of Western civilization; in an almost baffling way it has today once again become immensely significant through the tiny state of Israel, and particularly in its relationship to the West (former Christendom) and Islam.

Thus Judaism, Christianity and Islam have a special responsibility to take the lead in developing and furthering a creative relationship between religion, ethics and the state. Said in other words: The great challenge to Jewish and Christian thinkers and leaders is to work together with open-minded Muslims, and men and women of other religions and ideologies, to develop jointly relationships between religion and the state which will maintain both the essential separation between the two and the needed cooperative spirit. ***10. A Pluralist World and the Emerging Global Civilization***

No society can flourish without having a cohesive basic ethic at its foundation. As noted above, the foundation of this essential societal ethic has in the past been provided by various religions. This was and is true for Western civilization as well, in that at its ethical basis there lies the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, though increasingly "rationalized" and "secularized" in recent centuries. Indeed, even in the most powerful nation of Western civilization, the United States of America, there is at its core a "civil religion," which is precisely this "quasi-Deist-ized," partially secularized Judeo-Christian tradition.

Each society will have to develop, maintain and constantly update for itself such a fundamental ethic if it is to survive and flourish. However, in the coming millennium it will increasingly have to do so within the context of "modernity" with its growing focus on freedom, human rights, religious-cultural pluralism, and separation of religion and state. Each of these foci, of course, have their necessary correlatives, i.e., responsibility, human obligations, religious-cultural mutual respect and dialogue, and respect and cooperation between religion and state.

Underlying all of these and other elements of modernity which each society will have to come to terms with in conjunction with their own traditions and in their own creative way is the global fact that no society can live in even relative isolation today and on into the third millennium. Ours is already "one world": global communications, global transportation, global economics....and holding it all together will have to be a global

ethic -- with freedom/responsibility, human rights/obligations, religious pluralism/dialogue and separation/respect between religion and state. This global ethic must, and can, be arrived at, and constantly be extended, by consensus through unending dialogue among women and men of all religious and ethical persuasions.

Thus, the spread of Western Civilization (containing positive and negative elements, as all human endeavors do) throughout the world is now also leading to a unique-in-history *Global Civilization*. But this Global Civilization is different from all previous civilizations in that it is not envisioned, motivated, and directed by a single religion at its heart, as were all other civilizations of the past, including Western Civilization. Rather, the emerging Global Civilization is envisioned, motivated, and directed by a plurality of religions. Global Civilization is characterized by religious pluralism.

This pluralism, however, will quickly lead to enmity, disintegration and chaos (see, e.g., the polarization of Islam and the West), for as such it resembles a collection of spokes without the hub and has no unity with which to inspire and direct the emerging Global Civilization. How can not only this incipient chaos be avoided, but still more, how can the emerging Global Civilization be provided with the spiritual heart it desperately needs? Indeed, it was precisely this kind of question that led the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing to plan in 1988 an international conference on "What Christianity Has to Offer for the Future Soul of China." But this question of a spiritual heart of a civilization must be faced for the incipient *Global Civilization*. **11. Interreligious Dialogue the Heart of the Emerging Global Civilization**

One of the profound insights that more and more humans have been gaining in recent decades is that all knowledge, all "truth," i.e., all perceptions of and statements about reality, are necessarily limited, for all my "statements about reality" are always answers to *my* questions, are always posed in *my* thought categories and language, are always built on *my* prior assumptions, etc. My perceptions of and statements about reality might well be true, but they will always be limited, will not be the whole story, because they come from *my* perspective. This "de-absolutized" understanding of truth (the word "ab-solute" comes from the Latin *ab-solvere*, meaning to be "loosed-from all limitations") is valid not only in general, but also with special intensity in the "truth" about the "ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly" -- in religion.

Now, even if my religious view of reality is "true," that is, even if it accurately describes things the way they really are, I increasingly realize that it cannot be the "whole" truth, the "ab-solute," un-limited truth. Whereas in the past I would simply have said to those who differed from me in religion that they were clearly mistaken, I now have to ask myself whether they might not also be describing aspects of reality, about "the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly," from a perspective other than mine that allows them to perceive and describe aspects of reality which I do not perceive and describe from my perspective -- and that consequently I might learn more about reality and the ultimate meaning of life from my religiously other. Consequently, and briefly put, for the sake of an ever fuller grasp of the meaning of life, I need to be *in dialogue* with those who differ from me religiously.

Dialogue in general, and especially interreligious dialogue, then, is the way forward to an increasingly complete, but never fully complete, grasp of reality, of the ultimate meaning of life and how to live accordingly. Thus, interreligious dialogue must be -- and in fact is becoming -- the new religious heart at the core of the emerging pluralistic Global Civilization.

If dialogue among the religions, and ideologies, is the heart of the emerging Global Civilization, providing it with the vision, motivation and direction every civilization needs to flourish, then this core spirit of dialogue is fundamentally *democratic, egalitarian, person-in-community-and-context oriented*. For dialogue can occur only among free, reflective persons. If there is no freedom or no reflectiveness, there will be no dialogue. Further, dialogue can take place only among equals. Also, dialogue happens only in community and in the environment of the wider common context. **12. The Intertwining of Businessdialogue, Religion and Dialogue**

a) Business Ethics and Spirituality Movement

Recently a radically changing attitude toward ethics among business men and women has been growing, first in the West and now is beginning to spread throughout the world. In the past two decades there has developed what can be called a "Business Ethics and Spirituality Movement." Before then, and still in many places in the world, the reaction to the term "business ethics" would be to laugh and say that business and ethics are two contradictory terms.

There are of course vast numbers of businesses in the West as well as elsewhere where this is still true. However, those business men and women who think first, last and always of profit, and are willing, indeed eager, to make the "end justify the means," however unethical those means may be, are like the dinosaurs of past ages: They are powerfully destructive now, but they are on the way to being extinct. Radical as it may sound, many observers are completely convinced that in the future the "robber barons" type will not be able to compete with the ethically concerned and socially committed companies.

The following characteristics are more and more abroad in the world in general -- and very much in the areas of religion and business:

- 1. a search for a "meaning in life," even a search for "spirituality," including in work,
- 2. a pressing for increasing freedom and democracy everywhere, including in religion and in the workplace,
- 3. a concern for more equality,
- 4. a focus on persons,
- 5. on community, and
- 6. on the environment.

There have now sprung up a number of private organizations whose aim is to promote ethics or even spirituality in business in one way or another. Let me mention just a few:

- 1. *International Society for Business, Economics and Ethics* -- briefly known as ISBEE. Its "First World Congress on Business, Economics and Ethics" held in Tokyo July 25-28, 1996.
- 2. At that Tokyo Congress there was also formed a regional society related to ISBEE called the: *Asian Society for Business, Economics and Ethics*.
- 3. *Business for Social Responsibility*, which now has nearly a thousand members, mostly corporate.
- 4. The *World Business Academy*, which among other activities publishes an excellent periodical, *Perspectives*. (There are at least two other scholarly and practical journals devoted entirely to Business Ethics published in North America.)
- 5. The *Council for Ethics in Economics*, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. It works with large and small businesses to develop strategies for ethical behavior.
- 6. The *Ethics Officers' Association*, headquarters at Bentley College, Waltham, MA, which helps such "ethics" executives with further training and problem-solving.

- 7. The *Caux Round Table*, headquartered in Minneapolis, The Hague, and Tokyo, an international group of business executives from Japan, Europe, and the U.S. which promotes wide-ranging business ethical standards.
- 8. The *Global Dialogue Consortium (GDC)*, which focuses on linking together the creativity generated by religions-in-dialogue with the "opinion-shapers" of society, of which business is a very important one.

Indeed, the basic goal of such organizations is precisely the promotion of the characteristics above in business around the world -- as is reflected in the journals listed, especially *Perspectives* (founded in 1987) -- just as it similarly is reflected on the religion side in the *GDC* and the quarterly of its parent organization, the *Global Dialogue Institute (GDI)*: the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (founded in 1964).

In recent years almost every American school or college of business has included business ethics in its curriculum. An increasing number is even making business ethics a required course. More and more corporations have been appointing "ethics officers" at the top level of their corporate structure to help the company develop its ethics policy and oversee its being carried out, leading to the *Ethics Officers' Association* mentioned above.

CEOs with foresight have been putting in place ethical principles which reflect these and other ethical concerns, and have learned that even "doing the right thing" also in the long run is financially rewarding. A recent study has shown that the companies formally committed to the ethical principles of *Business for Social Responsibility* out-scored Wall Street.

b) The Stakeholder Concept

In the past, and still for many business men and women today, there is only one group of persons the business managers have an obligation toward: the Stockholders. However, several years ago Professor Daniel Freeman in the U.S. gave clever expression to the concerns of those business men and women and business professors who argued that there were other groups besides the stockholders who also had a serious interest in the decisions and activity of a business.

In English we could say that these people had an interest in, or "had a STAKE in" the activity of a company. Freeman then referred to them as not "STOCKholders," but "STAKEholders." This terminology and concept of stakeholders has gained wide acceptance not only in the U.S. but also world wide.

Who are these stakeholders? They include the:

- 1. stockholders
- 2. management
- 3. employees
- 4. suppliers
- 5. customers
- 6. community
- 7. competitors
- 8. environment

All these groups of persons have a serious interest in, have a stake in, the activity of the company -- and the company in turn has appropriate obligations toward each of them. Number 8, the environment, of course is not a group of persons, but the very home which all the stakeholders share.

c) The Role of Religion in Business

Dr. Robert Holland (Senior Fellow in Business Ethics, The Wharton School Business of the University of Pennsylvania) on March 1, 1996, told the Atlanta Association of Financial Analysts:

Every CEO I have talked with who has made such a major step-up in the firm's ethics program is convinced that the firm will be better in the long run because of its improved ethical environment. Of course, such CEOs are not unbiased witnesses; but I have usually found them quite realistic in their approach to judgment in these matters. When I press them to be more specific, they cite such changes as improved employee morale, better trust within the company, higher quality output, fewer mistakes, a greater degree of responsible teamwork, better relations with suppliers, more courteous treatment of customers, and happier customers who come back more often.

It is encouraging to find such an expanding commitment to business ethics -- and that it also has such manifold positive results, including in the financial area. However, again, there was throughout Prof. Holland's remarks no mention of the traditional religions. Their great constructive and destructive energies were completely avoided -- much to the potential danger and massive missing of creative resources for the corporations involved and the people, communities and environment they impact.

Let us look for a moment specifically at the American scene to begin to see why this ostrich-like behavior. One of the fears in American culture in general, and especially in the business world, is speaking of the traditional religions, that is, of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. Judging from the articles appearing in *Perspectives*, other business periodicals, business-oriented radio and television programs, and ethics programs in business schools, it is becoming permissible to speak publicly of ethics, values and spirituality -- but almost always without reference to God or any traditional religion.

This reflects a long-standing tendency in the American public domain to shy away from the mention of religion, fearing it as a divisive and even explosive force. This can be seen clearly, for example, in public education's wont to interpret the First Amendment of the Constitution as forbidding any mention of specific religions in schools -- despite the U.S. Supreme Court's clarification in the 1950s (Shemp vs. Abingdon) that it is permissible to teach *about* religion in public schools. This tendency to avoid taking religion seriously unfortunately too often also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, elsewhere in the world as well.

But for enlightened business leaders -- now embarked on a path of bringing social ethics, spirituality, and concern for the environment into the center of their goals along with financial profitability -- to eschew directly encountering and engaging both the worst and the best the traditional religions have to offer is a vain attempt to hide from massively destructive global forces of the first magnitude (recall the Middle East, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, etc.). Perhaps even more importantly, such avoidance of the traditional religions is also to miss benefitting from the most incredibly creative force ever generated in human history.

As a human activity, religion is inherently ambivalent; hence it can be used destructively as well as constructively. Business leaders need to learn about these hidden dangers to keep from foundering on those jagged rocks. This is true not only on the obvious international level, but also closer to home. What tensions are generated in the work-place by religious ignorance and disrespect on and among all the levels of a business: the stockholders, management, labor, suppliers, customers, competitors, the communities of all six? How might they be helpfully brought out into the open, defused, remedied, turned into positive characteristics of dialogue and cooperation? These and related questions need to be raised to the conscious level and addressed knowledgeably, sensitively. To do this, however, enlightened business leaders need the collaboration of the

creative, dialogic thinkers and practioners in the various religions. Precisely because they must be willing to engage in genuine and open-minded dialogue these thinkers and practitioners tend often not to be members of the respective Establishments; hence the search for religious "dialogists" must cast a wide net in the various pools of the different religions.

On the positive side of religion, business leaders also need to learn about the powerful creative currents that religion generates so they can ride those waves to the betterment of their businesses and those portions of humankind and the earth they impact. To change the image, religion is like a huge dynamo which needs to be plugged into so that its almost limitless energy can be transformed into a variety of creative forms -- just as electricity in the dynamo is transformed and produces now heat, then locomotion, and again light, etc. Here too, business leaders need to inform themselves deeply of the vast resources religion presents.

d) Particular Examples

We can see the hugely beneficial influence religion can have on all the stakeholders in three individual examples that have recently come to light. One came in the person of the "deeply observant Orthodox Jew" -- he begins his 5:30 AM day with an hour memorizing passages from Scripture and Shakespeare[9] -- Aaron Feuerstein, the owner and CEO of the textile company Malden Mills in Massachusetts, whose mill burned almost completely in late fall, 1995. Cognizant that most of his hundreds of workers were Christians and what Christmas meant to them, he immediately pledged to continue their regular pay beyond Christmas, although most of them would have nothing to do until the mill was rebuilt. He also promised to hire all his workers back when the mill was rebuilt.

d.1 Two Titans

In March, 1996, he was on the Jim Lehrer News Hour of Public Television along with Al "Chainsaw" Dunlap, former CEO of Scott Paper Co., with the central theme on downsizing and related ethical issues.[10] The contrast is most instructive:

AL DUNLAP: A corporation is in business to make money for its shareholders. That's the essence of the free enterprise system. Business is not a social experiment.

AARON FEUERSTEIN: Corporate responsibility to me means yes, you must take care of the shareholder, but that is not your exclusive responsibility. The CEO has responsibility to his workers, both white collar and blue collar, as well, and he has responsibility to his community and city. And he has to be wise enough to balance out these various responsibilities and to act justly for the shareholder as well as the worker.

PAUL SOLMAN: But it cost a shareholder money in the case of you as shareholder having to pay to keep these people employed even when the mills were shut down and there was nothing for them to do, right? I mean, it cost it the shareholder?

MR. FEUERSTEIN: Yes, it did cost the shareholder. Nonetheless, the quality and the efficiency that we get in our factories is critical to the health of our company. And so I make it my personal business to see to it that I have loyalty and goodwill amongst my people. And that's what we enjoy at Malden Mills; they're the valued asset. They're not just a cuttable expense. They're the people who make the quality for us, and our products, our polar tech products in the performance outer wear market is the best in the marketplace, and only because I have very good workers. I'm not about to tear that apart and break that down for some short-term gain.

Even the language used by Mr. Dunlap reflects his contrasting attitude toward the thousands of "devoted" workers he "got rid of":

PAUL SOLMAN: Well, do you like what Mr. Feuerstein did, for example? I mean, he says it's in the interest of his company, of his shareholders and so forth, the long-term interest, to have really devoted workers.

MR. DUNLAP: Theirs -- our workers were very devoted. He had a factory that burnt down, and, therefore, he had to keep his workers on. I had a corporation where every person stood the chance of losing their job, so I got rid of 35 percent of the people....

PAUL SOLMAN: Mr. Feuerstein, can you see yourself doing what Mr. Dunlap has done?

MR. FEUERSTEIN: Never, never. I can't imagine that his workers are satisfied with what he did. What Malden Mills always did in the past -- we understand as well as Mr. Dunlap does that there is a legitimate necessary downsizing as a result of computerization and better machinery. Technological advance requires the reduction of people. If you have a machine that once needed 20 people and now you have one that only needs 10 people, so you have to cut back. We understand that, but we at Malden, because we were sensitive to the human equation and worried about our people, we always tried -- not always successfully -- but we always tried to take the cutback at the same time that we were expanding some part of our business, and in that way we're able to alleviate the pain. And we concentrate less on -- and I don't know what their situation was; I can only talk for myself -- we concentrate less on the cuttable expense of labor and more on research and development to make better quality products and to innovate and to differentiate ourselves from our competitors in the market place. And that's where the real profit can be made, and we couple that with marketing and merchandising and branding so that we are able to have a profit, together with our workers enjoying prosperity. We pay more than the average mill. That's fine, because we don't concentrate on the pay; we concentrate on where the real profit is -- in making the product better.

One last element of contrast between the religiously ethical CEO with sensitivity for all the stakeholders and the one who was concerned only with the shareholders -- including himself:

-PAUL SOLMAN: ... Mr. Dunlap, you've also gotten a lot of flak...about your pay package -- it was like $100 million... -- do you have any misgivings in the sense that...people feel that that's unfair, that people were laid off while you came away doing extremely well?

MR. DUNLAP: As I said before, I created $6 1/2 billion of value [for the shareholders]. I received less than 2 percent of the value I created....

PAUL SOLMAN: Mr. Feuerstein, do you as a CEO -- how do you as a CEO feel about CEO pay these days?...

MR. FEUERSTEIN: I really think it's unconscionable that at the very time you have so much suffering amongst the workers as a direct result of the downsizing that the CEO would take so many times more than ever was heard of before. And I also would like to add that I said that technological downsizing was something that we have to do. There are other kinds of downsizing. There's the downsizing where you close up one company and open up in a foreign country at very low rates. There's the business of outsourcing, contracting downsizing, where you get rid of your own workers and hire in contractors at half the pay.

The workers of America can understand the technological downsizing, but they cannot understand the other, and it breaks their spirit and their feeling that the American dream is for them as well.

Aaron Feuerstein has followed through on his promises, so much so that *The New York Times* ran a huge full-length photo of him on the front page of the Business section on none other than the Birthday of America, July

4, 1996. Feuerstein has laid out a huge sum ($300 million for a company with $450 million gross and $30 million annual net income) to quickly rebuild with the best machinery. Of his 3,200 employees 2,700 had already been called back to work. One, Adelina Santiago, a single mother, said "Aaron did not have an obligation to reopen here, but he did. We felt pleased that he paid us while we were out [Feuerstein paid out $20 million! to 1,380 laid-off workers for periods of up to 90 days], but that was not as important as knowing we would get our jobs back." (Feuerstein pays "$2 more than what is required to hire and hold dedicated workers" in his area.)

"The reason Mr. Feuerstein feels so strongly about loyalty is that he views his workers as the company's creative force and its saving grace." This investment in workers pays off, as is exemplified in what Ms. Santiago, who keeps a critical eye on the fabric-producing machinery, remarked: "I give to catching imperfections the same importance that I would give if this were my own business."

What is perhaps most interesting is that Feuerstein's decisions and actions have catapulted him into being a "hero of corporate responsibility, insisting that his loyalty to his workers should be the model for all chief executives." At first he said that he had simply done the decent, the ethical thing; he was, as *People* magazine put it, just trying to be "a Mensch" -- Yiddish for a very decent human being. But then by March, 1996, television appearances, honorary doctorates, invitations to the White House, and the like had led Feuerstein increasingly to argue that his commitment to his staff and his community should be a "prototype for the behavior of all chief executives." He stated that "I feel that I am a symbol of the movement against downsizing and layoffs that will ultimately produce an answer. People see me as a turning of the tide." He has in fact become an "icon of the nascent corporate responsibility movement....a national spokesman for worker loyalty, trying to save jobs."

d.2. "Capitalism with a human face"

The second is a Christian example: Mr. S. Truett Cathy, owner and CEO of Chick-fil-A, a fast-food restaurant chain, worth perhaps a billion dollars. Mr. Cathy is said to "personify capitalism with a human face. Deeply Christian, he draws his management credo from the Bible" (the story and quotations are found in *The New York Times*, April 3, 1996, pp. 18ff.).

Cathy says his success comes from corporate loyalty, resulting from "an unusual social contract that shares the wealth with operators while providing extra benefits like scholarships for long-term hourly workers." Benefits also include a pension and health benefits for salaried workers and operators, and a health plan for hourly workers who wish to pay. He is convinced that "one can do right by employees and still do well, indeed that the one leads to the other." As a consequence he has a remarkably low turnover rate among restaurant operators -- 5% a year compared to 35% for the fast-food industry.

"The people are more important than the food," states Cathy. "We want a person to be as successful as he can be, and it works the other way around, too."

d.3. A stakeholder company

The third example is of a company (RPM) which is consciously "a team dedicated to the purpose of operating a business based on the practical application of Judeo-Christian values for the mutual benefit of co-workers and their families, customers, shareholders, suppliers, and community."[11] The RPM ethics statement says: "We recognize that profitability is necessary to continue the business, reach our full potential and fulfill our responsibilities to shareholders," and then adds, "but our commitments to co-workers and customers come before short-term profits."

A St. Paul business commentator, Dick Youngblood, remarked[12]:

Translated, that means there's never been an economic layoff, said Wahlstedt, RPM's president -- and there won't be, short of a catastrophe that threatens the company's survival. "It is company policy that, before there's a layoff, we'll take profits down to zero," he said.

And if more sacrifice is required beyond that, then everyone -- including founders and other officers -- will be asked to accept short-term pay cuts. That happened twice in the 1970s, when 10 to 20 percent cuts were ordered for three to six months.

Or consider the stance on corporate ethics: "We are committed to do what is right even when it does not seem to be profitable, expedient or conventional," the RPM statement says. Thus, when a routine product-endurance test uncovered a problem with one of RPM's products last year, the customer was notified immediately and asked wo return the offending items. The recall wound up costing the company upwards of $50,000, Wahlstedt remarked.

What's more, "I don't believe senior management was consulted on that one," Wahlstedt said approvingly. In short, the company's ethical stance is so well instilled that the middle manager who handled the problem felt no need to cover his derriere with a superior's blessing.

Youngblood later commented on RPM's ethics statement on fostering harmony between work and family responsibilities:

Wahlstedt interprets that section in remarkable fashion: "If there's a conflict between the job and the family, we expect the employee to resolve the matter in favor of the family."

Because of that commitment, RPM eschews the common practice of asking employees to travel on weekends to take advantage of lower air fares. "They belong at home with their families on weekends." Wahlstedt said.

For the same reason, the company also has a generous sick-leave policy, which offers employees eight annual sick days that can be taken for such nonmedical purposes as "watching your kid's baseball game," Wahlstedt said. What's more, the number of unused sick days each year is doubled and placed in a bank that can build to a maximum of 60 days for use in emergencies.

Few employees take unfair advantage of the company's good will, he said. Indeed, there have been only a half-dozen dismissals in 20 years, none in the last five.[13]

e) Practical Reflections on the Use of Dialogue in Business

As I have argued earlier, that dialogue is a whole new consciousness, a new way of thinking, so also there are techniques, practical guide-lines on how to foster and apply this new consciousness, this new way of thinking. The following are some reflections in that direction:

Dialogue is about what we value and how we define it. It is about discovering what our true values are, about looking beyond the superficial and automatic answers to our questions. Dialogue is about expanding our capacity for attention, awareness and learning with and from each other. It is about exploring the frontiers of what it means to be human, in relationship to each other and our world.[14]

Dialogue is a foundational process leading directly to personal and organizational transformation. It is a process creating environments of high trust and openness, with reflective and generative capacities. One might think of dialogue as a revolutionary approach in the development of the following organizational disciplines: continuous

learning, diversity, conflict exploration, decision making and problem solving, leadership, self-managing teams, organizational planning and alignment, and culture change.[15]

e.1. Contrast Dialogue and discussion

It is often useful to contrast Dialogue with discussion. In Dialogue we are interested in creating a fuller picture of reality rather than breaking it down into fragments or parts, as happens in discussion. In Dialogue we do not try to convince others of our points of view. There is no emphasis on winning, but rather on learning, collaboration and the synthesis of points of view.

Dialogue slows down the speed at which most groups converse by employing deeper levels of listening and reflection. Another important aspect of Dialogue is its open-endedness. This means letting go of the need for specific results. This does not mean there are no results from Dialogue; in fact there are many. However, in releasing the need for certain predetermined outcomes, important issues can be allowed by surface which often go undiscovered in agenda-based meetings. The result is often a deeper level of understanding and new insight.

A final important aspect of Dialogue is that it creates a community-based culture of cooperation and shared leadership. It moves groups from the dependency, competition and exclusion often found in hierarchical cultures to increased collaboration, partnership and inclusion.

Discussion has the same Greek root as percussion and concussion, discus, meaning to throw, fragment, shatter. Discussion is an activity wherein we throw our opinions back and forth in an attempt to convince each other of the rightness of a particular point of view, and in the process the whole project is often fragmented and shattered into many pieces.

The purposes of dialogue and discussion are quite different, as are here contrasted.

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Dialogue                    Discussion


To inquire to learn         To tell, sell, persuade

To unfold shared meaning    To gain agreement on one meaning

To integrate multiple       To evaluate and select the best

perspectives                perspective

To uncover and examine      To justify/defend assumptions

assumptions
```

e.2. Four guide-lines of Dialogue

The guide-lines outlined below form a scaffolding for Dialogue. Like scaffolding used in the initial stages of building, they are to help provide an environment conducive to the dialogical process. Rather than a set of rules, they are reminders of the level of attention which lies at the core of Dialogue: 1) attention to our thinking, our feelings, our communication, assumptions and judgments; 2) attention to the unfolding meaning of the group, 3) the spirit of inquiry and 4) the pauses for reflection that lead to learning, understanding.

Held gently, these guidelines will facilitate Dialogue. Held too tightly, they will become a trap in one more structure. Dialogue is a living process and needs the willingness of all to be open to let go of the known to discover new perspectives and understanding.

a) Suspension of Judgment

Suspension of judgment is the foundation of Dialogue, and perhaps, the most challenging guideline. Our normal way of thinking divides, organizes and labels. Because our egos become identified with how we perceive and describe things, we often defend our positions against those of others. This makes it difficult for us to remain open to new and alternative views of reality. It is hard to listen when engaged in a heated battle about "who's right and who's wrong!"

When we learn to suspend judgment, to "hold our positions more gently," we open ourselves to see others' points of view. It is not that we eliminate our judgments and opinions - that would be impossible. Rather, we create a space between our judgment and our reaction to other views, thus opening a door for listening.

Suspending judgment is likewise key to building trust and providing a climate of safety. As we learn that we will not be "judged" wrong for our opinions, we feel freer to express ourselves. The atmosphere becomes more open and frank.

b) Uncover One's Assumptions

Assumptions are those judgments about reality that are like the lenses of our eyes which allow us to see. But of course everyone does not have identical lenses; some are far-sighted, some near-sighted, astigmatic, color blind and the like. Our mental lenses, our assumptions clearly play a large role in how we evaluate the world we encounter, and hence the decisions we make and how we behave. Yet, it is just this aspect of our thinking that we consistently overlook when we seek to solve problems, resolve conflicts, or create synergy among diverse people.

Why do we overlook the obvious? David Bohm would say because our "assumptions are transparent to us." Our mental lenses, like our optical lenses, are such a built-in part of our seeing apparatus that we do not even know they are there. We, necessarily, look right through them.

Our not looking at underlying belief systems can lead to disappointments. When we examine the underlying assumptions behind our decisions and actions, however, we reach to the causal level of problems; we are able to see where there are disconnects in our strategies and devise effective remedies.

By learning how to identify our assumptions, we can explore differences with others, understand core misunderstandings and then work to build common ground and consensus.

c) Listening: Key to Perception

We need to take a minute to ask ourselves what our definition of listening is. What activities do we associate with listening? Ask ourselves: How do we know we are being listened to? Conversely, how do we know we are listening? What does listening feel like? How can our listening be enhanced?

How we listen, has much to do with our ability to learn and build relationships. When we are able to suspend judgment and listen to other perspectives we expand, deepen and enrich our world view. It is listening that allows the integration and synthesis of new insights and possibilities. When we listen deeply we open ourselves to be influenced by and learn from others.

In Dialogue, listening allows us to perceive the meaning arising both at the individual and group levels. What assumptions do we hear? Which ones are shared? Listening for shared meaning informs us about the culture we live in, and allows us to make conscious choices about our decisions and actions, rather than choosing unconsciously.

d) Inquiry and Reflection

Inquiry and reflection mean learning how to ask questions so as to gain additional insight and perspective. With this process we dig deeply into that which concern us and create breakthroughs in our ability to solve problems.

Inquiry elicits information, reflection analyzes it. The combination of inquiry and reflection enables us to learn, to think creatively, and to build on past experience, rather than simply repeating the same patterns.

Learning to ask questions that lead to new levels of understanding accelerates our individual and collective learning. Such questions often begin with "I wonder...," "What if...," "What does X mean to you?" As we ask these questions and listen, we gain greater insight into our own and others' thinking and the views that unite and separate us.

By creating pauses for reflection, we learn to work with silence and slow down the rate of conversation. We become able to identify assumptions and reactive patterns and open the way for new ideas and possibilities.

e.3. Interlocking the guide-lines to Create the Dialogue

Each of these guiding lines is an integral part of the Dialogue. They are also like living organs of our bodies constantly work to support the whole of which they are part. In each moment, the guide-lines both shape the context within which the Dialogue unfolds and act as catalysts to support the unfolding Dialogue itself. The more consciously we use them, the more they help us to enter into and sustain the Dialogue.

All these skills are interrelated: 1) As we learn to hold our judgments, we develop the ability to listen and speak without the automatic coloring of past patterns; we become less reactive, more aware of the assumptions through which we filter our observations. 2) By choosing to suspend our assumptions, we expand the horizons of our perceptions, increase the points of view available to us. 3) By opening ourselves to listen deeply we discover and understand. 4) And by seeking the next level of inquiry we open up our senses and create space to reflect on what we perceive -- thus we enter into Dialogue.

e.4. Actions that foster Dialogue

a) Suspension of judgement when listening and speaking

When we listen and suspend judgment we open the way to expanded understanding. When we speak without judgment we open the way for others to listen to us. Respect for differences is generated, grounded in the belief that everyone has a significant contribution to make and is to be honored for the perspective which only s/he can bring.

b) Role and status suspension

Again, in dialogue, all participants and their contributions are absolutely essential to developing an integrated whole view. No perspective is exclusively important. Dialogue is about power *with*, versus power *over*.

c) Balancing inquiry and presentation

In dialogue we inquire to discover and understand others' perspectives and ideas and we present our own for consideration. We need to uncover assumptions and relationships, thereby gaining new insights and understanding. Since we often tend to try convince others of our positions, it is vital to focus primarily bringing inquiry into the Dialogue.

d) Focus on learning

What makes Dialogue different from all other kinds of human encounter is that we each come *primarily* to learn. Coming with the primary intention of teaching only generates resistance -- hence, no teaching occurs because no learning takes place. Of course, if we are to learn, our partner must teach us, and vice versa. But the primary intention is all important.

When we focus on learning we tend to ask more questions, try new things, are willing to disclose our thinking so that we can see both what is working for us and what we might want to change. **13. International Models of Interreligious Dialogue, Ethics and Business**

In only this last decade of the second millennium there have appeared several statements of international business ethics principles:

- (a) the *Interfaith Declaration: A Code of Ethics on International Business for Christians, Muslims and Jews*,
- (b) the *CERES Principles*, which deal extensively with concern for the environment,
- (c) the *Kyosei Principles*, and
- (d) *the Caux Round Table Principles*;
- (e) a *Declaration of a Global Ethic*

a) The Interfaith Declaration: A Code of Ethics on International Business for Christians, Muslims and Jews

The dialogue among religions, indeed even among those for the most part hostile toward each other, Jews, Christians and Muslims, has begun to focus its attention on issues of ethics, and specifically including business ethics. For example, under the patronage of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, and HRH Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan and Sir Evelyn de Rothschild, *An Interfaith Declaration: A Code of Ethics on International Business For Christians, Muslims and Jews* was "formulated in the light of the religious traditions of the three monotheistic faiths" and issued in 1994 (text found on the World Wide Web site of the "Center for Global Ethics": HTTP://ASTRO. TEMPLE.EDU/~DIALOGUE -- it offers a number of basic business-ethical principles and suggested means of implementation).

It claimed that, after a number of meetings of business leaders, scholars and religious leaders since 1988 (though in fact more general interreligious dialogues had begun already in 1984), it was clear that "people of very different cultures or beliefs often have more in common than is sometimes apparent." However, this simple but highly significant principle was arrived at only after a half dozen years in which the religious scholars and leaders as well as business people were *in dialogue*. This amply illustrates the vital point that all of the interacting with religion must take place *with a dialogic consciousness*. Otherwise the destructive forces of religion in its traditional absolutist consciousness will once again overwhelm business, and doom all of humankind.

b) The CERES Principles

The Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES) formed in 1989 out of the belief that a collaboration between institutional investors and environmental groups could have a significant positive impact on the environment. The founders wanted to design a far-reaching mechanism to open meaningful new dialogue with corporations about ways to protect the planet and give individuals concerned with both environmental and economic performance a way to make more informed investment decisions.

The CERES umbrella brings together major U.S. environmental

groups -- including the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, Friends of the Earth, the National Audubon Society, and the Natural Resources Defense Council -- as well as a wide array of institutions representing more than $150 billion in invested capital, including the New York City Employees Retirement System, the California public pension system, and an assemblage of more than 200 Protestant denominations and Catholic orders called the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

In 1993, after lengthy negotiations, Sun Company, Inc., a petroleum refiner, became the first major industrial corporation to adopt the CERES Principles. Sun's leadership triggered a new round of conversations with other large companies, eventually leading to the participation of Polaroid, H.B. Fuller, General Motors, Bethlehem Steel, Arizona Public Service, Catholic Healthcare West, Bank of America, ITT Industries, and others. Each of these companies determined after intensive dialogue that participating in CERES -- entering into a partnership with the member groups, and working toward the goals implicit in the CERES Principles -- would help them expand or improve their environmental commitments.

Many firms adopting the CERES Principles have received positive responses from a variety of stakeholder groups. Employees feel empowered to ask different kinds of questions; new points of view and opportunities emerge. The resulting internal conversation can affect everything from product design to marketing, from recruiting to training. Also, consumers interesting in minimizing their own negative impact on the environment -- of whom there are tens of millions in the United States alone -- suddenly have an easy way to differentiate positively between firms which have committed to meaningful change and public accountability, and those which have not.

Implementation of the CERES Principles can help firms resolve the tension between coordination and autonomy in daily decision-making -- the problem of balancing the need for a firm to have well-coordinated policies with the need to push decision-making authority down the hierarchical ladder. Managers want employees to make more decisions, but they want those to be the right decisions. The conventional, elaborate managerial structure of command-and-control coupled with rigid rules is limited in its usefulness, particularly with regard to stimulating innovation and market response. The dialogic approach is in both the short and long term much more effective.

As a project initially of the U.S. social investment community, the CERES Principles naturally gained support first in the U.S. business community. The Principles can play an important role, however, in a global economy in which firms must operate in multiple regulatory and legal environments.

c) The Kyosei Principles

The *Kyosei Principles* were developed in the Japanese multinational corporation Canon, Inc., led especially by its Chairman of the Board, Mr. Ryuzaburo Kaku. A concise definition of *Kyosei* given by Mr. Kaku is: "Living and working together for the common good." Mr. Kaku said that it is his belief that the concept of *Kyosei* should:

- 1. occupy a central position in the personal ethics of each individual;
- 2. be a creed that all corporations and nations follow;
- 3. and that it should be the guiding principle for the new world order that is currently emerging.

Many companies that exist today can be classified into four types. Each type reflects a different stage in the development of companies and the evolution of socially responsible business. At each progressive stage a company becomes more socially responsible.

1. Four Stages

- a) The first type of company is the "purely capitalistic corporation." This kind of company is at the initial stage of corporate evolution. It stimulates the economy; however, management and owners alone share the benefits of the operation and care very little about their employees.
- b) The second type is the "company that shares a prosperous future." In this kind of company, managers and workers are united in working for the prosperity of the corporation and both share in the profits. This solves labor disputes, but it does little to solve problems in the local community and is often not concerned with environmental protection. For example, it is sometimes negligent in managing waste and noise, because its managers and workers are simply pursuing greater personal wealth.
- c) At this point, the third type of corporation emerges: the "company assuming local social responsibilities." These companies respect the interests of their own stakeholders: customers, staff, shareholders, suppliers, competitors and the local community. But while they accept social responsibilities, they are limited to those within their own national borders and local area. They are not concerned about global problems, such as the deterioration of the environment, global trade imbalance, and imbalances in development.
- d) The fourth type is the "corporation assuming global social responsibilities," a "truly global corporation." This type of company cares for all its direct stakeholders, including its local community -- but it goes beyond: it strives to fulfill its corporate obligations on a global scale. Its social responsibilities transcend national boundaries.

2. The Creation of Wealth -- And Ethics

These ideas, however, focus only on *Kyosei* and the distribution of wealth. Emphasis on *Kyosei* and distribution alone will surely create misunderstanding. To support this ideal, a corporation must naturally create wealth and fulfill its production role. To fulfill its role to create wealth companies must be:

- a) Innovative,
- b) Independent from government (a courageous, farsighted position for a Japanese business leader in the early 1990s),
- c) Engage in fair competition, and
- d) Often move on to cooperation.

A brief comment on these points: To create wealth, companies must be innovative. Innovation refers to:

- a) the creation of new technologies and products;
- b) its production technologies;
- c) marketing, merchandising and sales, as well as in
- d) its management and organization.

By creating new products and processes in each of these areas essential to any successful business, the company will not only succeed financially, but will also have made the world a better place to live. That is what it means to be an ethical business leader!

Competition is vital for efficiency, but it must be "fair" competition, based on innovation, quality and efficiency. Beyond that, Kaku notes:

Innovative corporations with specialties in different areas can also work together in the spirit of *kyosei* to produce outstanding products. In this way a synergy is created and products can be produced that either company alone could not develop.

3. Globally Responsible Companies

As far-reaching as these principles are, especially as put into action by the leader of multi-billion dollar global firm, Ryuzaburu Kaku pushes the challenge even further. In his latest (fall 1995) version of the *kyosei* principles, Kaku calls upon companies to move to develop networks of globally responsible firms which will work for the betterment of the globe. To the four stages above, he adds a fifth stage:

I have recently come to believe that a fifth category is needed in my analysis of companies as they evolve into ethical social institutions. This fifth type I see as a company that seeks to change the world for the better. Companies in the fifth stage also try to increase the number of like-minded partners that assume global social responsibilities and that are actively concerned with global problems.

Companies in the fifth stage realize it is not right for the enormous number of corporations existing in the world to remain apathetic about the various perplexing problems emerging on our planet. They know it is it not enough for a corporation to transform itself only into a fourth type of corporation and simply strive to correct imbalances -- it knows it must go further.

Kaku would have *kyosei* serve as a key principle in the new world order, which is needed after the end of the Cold War. He insists that democracy, human rights, peace are indeed indispensable values, but alone they are not adequate. Put other: they are necessary, but not sufficient causes of the common weal; *kyosei* needs to augment them.

This is indeed a high ideal and challenge issued by a world business leader. It is no surprise that he is deeply involved in the development of the world business network, the Caux Round Table.

d) The Caux Principles

The Caux Round Table, an international group of business executives, initially from Japan (Kaku of Canon was intimately involved), Europe, and the United States, and now increasingly from other parts of the world, began meeting in 1975 to discuss trade friction between Japan and other areas. The meetings took place in Caux, Switzerland, and were aimed at reducing international trade tensions and fostering the development of an improved international business climate. The atmosphere of trust reached such a point that in 1993 the Caux Round Table decided to draft its own principles for doing business. Jean-Loup Dherse, former Vice-President of the World Bank, after the completion of the Eurotunnel project, in which he was heavily involved, was asked to develop a statement of principles which reflected the thought and cultural background of the business executives from around the world.

He searched among five hundred statements of principles that had been issued by others and developed recommendations founded upon recognition of the common good, combining the Japanese notion of *kyosei* and the Western ideal of human dignity. Many of the specifics came from the "Minnesota Principles" developed by the Minnesota Center for Corporate Responsibility. The "Caux Round Table Principles for Business" were published in 1994 and made available throughout the world. They have been well received in the United States, Japan, and various European countries.

The development of the Caux Round Table Principles dramatically illustrates the global dialogue process which began with recognition of a need for business executives coming from very different cultural backgrounds to find common ground. Stories and accounts given by Caux Round Table members illustrated the difficulties and dilemmas they experienced in their organizations and businesses from different parts of the world. These stories and accounts were then organized in such a way that the common themes or issues became manifest. Dherse then researched the literature extensively to find principles that would address the needs expressed by the Round Table participants.

It was imperative that any recommendation fully respect the cultural frameworks in which each participant operated, and at the same time unify in a way that would both explain the problems and give guidance for their solutions. The uncovering of these unifying principles and their wide acceptance among Caux Round Table membership -- "top executives from the three developed areas who share a concept of world citizenship of corporations but whose own spiritual options are very scattered" -- demonstrates that the global dialogic process employed by Dherse and his colleagues captured the core values shared by this diverse group of business executives.

The process began in an atmosphere of trust -- so essential for dialogue -- where the stories, issues, and problems (the data) were explored openly, free from inhibiting bias. The explanations for the data were then sought in an intelligent and rational way. There was no "reinventing the wheel," but rather a building upon the efforts of others in cultures around the world. The result was an affirmation -- combining, as noted, the Japanese principle *kyosei* and the Western principle of human dignity. These corresponded with the most central teachings of both Asian religion -- Taoist, Confucian, Buddhist (is it an accident that the name of Mr. Kaku's firm, "Canon, Inc.," is the same as one of the most popular Buddhist saints [*Bodhisattva*]: in Japanese, *Kannon*?) -- and the Judeo-Christian tradition. In fact, Dherse remarked that natural law and the principles of Catholic social thought as embodied in the Caux principles, "shine out as the best guide for action when presented to experienced businessmen who share universal values." The Principles state:

These principles are rooted in two basic ethical ideals: *kyosei* [already discussed] and human dignity.... Human dignity refers to the sacredness or value of each person as an end, not simply as a means to the fulfillment of others' purposes.

The process Dherse employed was a combination of careful research, critical analysis and dialogue: attention to the data; extensive effort to find explanations that account for the data and address the issues raised by the participants; reasoned analysis and conclusions taking the varying philosophies and cultures into account; responsible deliberation, decision, and action resulting in the publication of the principles; and invitations for comment and implementation. The Caux Principles, then, were developed, not by academics, but by business people themselves:

The Caux Round Table believes that the world business community should play an important role in improving economic and social conditions.... We seek to begin a process that identifies shared values, reconciles differing values, and thereby develops a shared perspective on business behavior acceptable to and honored by all.

I would like to briefly lift up a few of the enumerated principles. Note that the first principle concentrates on the stakeholder concept spoken of earlier: "Principle 1. The Responsibilities of Business: Beyond Shareholders Toward Stakeholders." (More about specific Stakeholders below.) The Principles also speak of that vital ingredient for dialogue, the need for trust in business, sometimes a commodity in short supply:

Principle 3. Business Behavior: Beyond the Letter of Law, Towards a Spirit of Trust. While accepting the legitimacy of trade secrets, businesses should recognize that sincerity, candor, truthfulness, the keeping of promises, and transparency contribute not only to their own credibility and stability but also to the smoothness and efficiency of business transactions.

The sixth principle is one which is universally critical today:

Principle 6. Respect for the Environment. A business should protect and, where possible, improve the environment, promote sustainable development, and prevent the wasteful use of natural resources.

The extensive stakeholder principles listed in Section 3 deserve detailed study, reflection, possible adaptation and then application. Let us here limit ourselves to looking only at a principle or two in a few of the categories of stakeholders.

- **1. Customers:**

There is a responsibility to "make every effort to ensure that the health and safety of our customers, as well as the quality of their environment, will be sustained or enhanced by our products and service." Again, notice here the importance placed on the environment.

- **2. Employees:**

Here we find a stress on democracy and participation in the workplace -- practices which are not only just but also can only improve the productivity of the company. "Listen to and, where possible, act on employee suggestions, ideas, requests and complaints." There is also a principle concerning that most serious problem in contemporary corporations, downsizing: "Be sensitive to the serious unemployment problems frequently associated with business decision, and work with governments, employee groups, other agencies and each other in addressing these dislocations."

- **3. Suppliers:**

Companies have ethical responsibilities beyond that of their own companies, including that of their suppliers: "Seek, encourage and prefer suppliers and subcontractors whose employment practices respect human dignity."

- **4. Competitors:**

Companies have ethical obligations even toward their competitors, such as to "Promote competitive behavior that is socially and environmentally beneficial and demonstrates mutual respect among competitors." Note once again, the stress here on the ethical importance of concern for the environment.

- **5. Communities:**

Companies cannot simply work and sell in communities and not be further concerned about their problems. Rather, as the Principles states: "We believe that as global corporate citizens we can contribute to such forces of reform and human rights as we are at work in the communities in which we operate." How is that to be done? "Through charitable donations, educational and cultural contributions, and employee participation in community and civic affairs."

Starting in 1997 the Caux Round Table is expanding and deepening the scope of its efforts and is investigating in a Position Paper the "critical role of the corporation in a global society," stating that it

believes that global business stands at the crossroads of the fundamental changes taking place around the world and that business has a critical role in helping to build a global society that is more prosperous, sustainable and equitable. We are heading into uncharted waters where global businesses that operate essentially in a borderless manner have enormous wealth and power to effect change while the role of nation states is drastically diminishing.

The Caux Round Table in it Position Paper on the role of the corporation argues that "the place of the corporation in a global society is pervasive and powerful," and consequently:

- A producer of goods and services, it supplies the needs of people of the world.
- A creator and manager of wealth, it presides over the investment and transfer of huge capital flows.
- An organizer of work, it determines the daily life experience for large numbers of people, both at home and abroad.
- Socially active, it works to shape and preserve the cultural values of host countries.
- Politically engaged, it works to shape and preserve governmental and legal systems.
- Ethically sensitive, it teaches and models fair business practices.
- A facilitator of science, it directs the creation, application and dissemination of technology.
- A patron of the arts, it creates a richer life for all of society.
- Having made those assertions, the Caux Position Paper then ask several key questions:
- Can business do more?
- Can it strike a new balance between the imperatives of short-term financial goals and long-term value creation?
- Can it add new meaning in the global sphere to older definitions of corporate responsibility?
- Can it help to find solutions to the key global issues?
- Decisive, innovative and results-oriented business leaders can move questioning to dialogue to decisions and actions. Should their goal be a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable world?
- The Caux Round Table says, yes.

The senior corporate business leaders from Caux Round Table then conclude:

The key global issues discussed in this Position Paper will not be resolved and the threats to world peace and stability that come from the volatile world situation will not be eliminated without the dedicated involvement of global businesses. Governmental power and policies are important but cannot succeed alone. What is needed is commitment and participation from respected business leaders from all parts of the world. Membership in the Caux Round Table offers an effective way to participate. We invite and urge you to join us.

e. Working Toward a Global Ethic

The most comprehensive attempt to forge a global ethic centers around the effort to arrive at a *Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic*, a major step toward which was the September 1993 "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic"[16] of the Parliament of the World's Religions, drawn up by Professor Hans Küng and signed by the over one hundred and fifty of the religious leaders who guided the Parliament (which over 6,000 attended). This is a statement of consensus, arrived at in dialogue, on the basic principles of ethics by the religions of the world (including those dealing with business and work), which is also designed to be acceptable to non-religious persons. In fact, a number of other groups and individuals are working on the development of Global Ethic, including the "Center for Global Ethics"[17] and UNESCO.[18]

It is precisely this huge source of human spiritual and ethical energy that needs to be brought into intense dialogue with the business leaders of the world so that both might learn from each other and together help to forge a more authentically humane world. *14. Conclusion*

The intertwining of business, religion, and dialogue is just beginning to become clear now. Once we perceive that inter-connection, however, we should not -- indeed, *as responsible persons, must not* -- simply let it proceed at its own haphazard pace and direction. The genius of humans is that when we become conscious of something, we can then turn to deterring or promoting it, and to directing it in more creative ways. The faster and more creatively we foster the inter-connecting of business, religion and dialogue, the more rapidly the world will become more humane in the context of respect for the planet.

We each can promote these characteristics by ourselves, but to remain isolated in these efforts would be a terrible waste and inefficiency. If we communicate with each other, if we join forces in this enterprise, we will be able to advance the betterment of the world not only arithmetically, but geometrically -- and what business person would not want to advance geometrically rather than arithmetically?

1. See the previous essay by Swidler in this volume for more detail on this understanding of religion.

2. Seyed Othman Alhabshi, *An Inspiration for the Future of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 1994).

3. Raphael Israeli, *Muslim Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Brassey's, 1993), p. 8.

4. Alhabshi, *An Inspiration for the Future of Islam*, pp. 14f.

5. Speech of Prime Minister, Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad at the opening of the International youth Camp, Morib, Selangor August 10, 1981, cited in ibid., p. 18.

6. Zeidan Atashi, "A View from within the Druze Community," *The Constitutional and Political Status of Minorities in Israel: The Druze Community* (New York: The Israel Colloquium, 1994), p. 23.

7. Gabriel Ben-Dor, "An Overview of Israeli-Druze Relations," in ibid., p. 16.

8. For an excellent overview of Islam in Indonesia, see Franz Magnis-Suseno, "Indonesischer Islam: Wohin?" *Asien*, October, 1993.

9. *The New York Times*, July 4, 1996.

10. Text found on the World Wide Web: HTTP://WWW.PBS.ORG.

11. "Direction Statement" of the Reell Precision Manufacturing Co. (RPM), in St. Paul, MN., issued and in force in the company since 1972. RPM has 100 employees.

12. Dick Youngblood, "A Firm that Means What It Says About Ethical Conduct," "Monday Business," *Star Tribune* (St. Paul, MN), December 28, 1992.

13. Professor Kenneth Goodpaster of St. Thomas University, St. Paul, MN, has prepared a case study of RPM's ethics Statement and its implementation.

14. Glenna Gerard, found on the world wide web: HTTP://WWW.DIALOGROUP.COM/DIALOGROUP/.

15. Linda Loomis Tuerfs, found on the world wide web, HTTP://WWW.DIALOGROUP.COM/DIALOGROUP/.

16. Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel, *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (New York: Continuum, 1993). See also Web site of the "Center for Global Ethics" HTTP://ASTRO.TEMPLE.EDU/~DIALOGUE.

17. See the web site in ibid, and the forthcoming book: Leonard Swidler, ed., *Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic: An Interreligious Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: White Cloud Press, 1997).

18. See the previous Swidler essay in this volume which details the work on a Global Ethic, including that by UNESCO.