

Cosmic Humanism and World Unity

by

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"The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.
I came out on the chariot of the first gleem of light, and
pursued my voyage through the wilderness of worlds leaving
my track on many a star and planet.
It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself,
and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter
simplicity of a tune.
The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his
own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to
reach the innermost shirine at the end".

Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, No. 12

I. From Homo Habilis to Cosmic Man:

Over the last several decades the philosophy of Cosmic Humanism has sought to find the solutions to a number of problems, all interrelated-even if not obviously so at first sight. Here are the central questions:

1. Why must man now develop a planetary society in which to survive and evolve?
2. Why must this planetary society-the coming world civilization-create and disseminate the philosophy of Cosmic Humanism?
3. Why must the world federation of nations have a universal involvement in cosmecology?
4. Why must humankind soon participate in the awesome and reverential task of generating man's new image of man?
5. Why must the World Brain (H.G. Wells and others), the Noosphere (Teilhard de Chardin), or the World Sensorium of a cosmic humanism, provide the seminal concept and field of embryogenesis that will shape the world of the future?

How is it possible to twist Julius Stulman's Fields Within Fields...Within Fields into the global spiral of a time-binding synthesis?

Before our work is complete, we should have made considerable headway toward the solution of the above and related problems. In achieving this, we should also have furthered the drive towards man's self-evolution to a new level of existence-the "New Humanity." We have always pointed out that the development of this coming philosophical sysnthesis is not a one-man enterprise. In a general way, and for many years, a number of pioneers in human thought in various parts of the world have urged the necessity

for a globally oriented philosophy. These "avatars of synthesis" agree that a schizoid society needs desperately to create or discover its inner selfhood-to formulate the patterns for a constructive integration of Eastern and Western religions, philosophies and science, a synthesis that transcends regional, racial, religious provincialisms and political ideologies.

This is the motivation of Cosmic Humanism. The practical and dramatic focus of our immediate positions, as here conceived, is to present the opportunity to thoughtful individuals to participate in the development of an organic brain-mind, in which each individual functions as a voluntary and conscious neuroblast, a germinal or embryonic cell that can become a part of the emerging planetary nervous system. In Cosmic Humanism we envision Eastern mysticism and Western science as two complementary lobes of the world brain, two halves of the earth-armature which in rotation will in time generate the current that supplies the light, warmth and power for our evolving planetary society.

The major thesis of this "search for synthesis" is that the world requires a vast "integration of knowledge" program to unify the globe spiritually and socially and give meaning and purpose to human existence. There are great difficulties facing this program of social synthesis to be proliferated by way of a world philosophy-a "universal belief-system," as Sir Julian Huxley has termed it. I have dealt with most of these problems in various contexts in the past, the most systematic treatments being in two previous volumes, "The Integration of Human Knowledge" (1958) and "Cosmic Humanism" (1966).

One of the most challenging undertakings facing our vast enterprise is the over-riding need to create a synthesis of the religions and arts of the ancient East and the sciences and technologies of the modern West. Let us glance at this project.

II. The Ancient East and the Modern West:

Another way to put the issue is to say that the time has come to resynthesize the subjective and the objective, introvert and extrovert civilizations, and achieve a higher harmony of viewpoints. We need to remember that even Japan was not aggressive until it learned the trick from the West. The art of Japan, before the forcing of the doors, was in tune with the oriental tradition. And what happened in Japan and China is becoming Westernized is a warning to us of what may happen if the Orient takes over the principles of Occidental culture without synthesis with its own native intuitions. When Japan took on Western technology, she threw overboard much of her own culture. And heaven help the West if China and India, and other Oriental nations decide to do the same thing.

If this new synthesis which is to restore cultural and spiritual unity is to be achieved, it will have to be the Occidentals who in some degree turn in humility to the East. This we are now doing. We Westerners went to the East in search of markets-outlets for the products of our mechanical power-but we now must return from that excursion magnetized with the essence of the religions of the East. Our main hope of survival in this highly polarized world lies in a prodigious effort at synthesis of the two cultures while there is still time. If the Orient decides that the only way to meet the West is on its own ground, this may write finis to the story for all of us, East and West.

Evidence of the West's turn toward the subjective world of inner riches is seen in the increasing importance attached to psychosomatic medicine, parapsychology, Chinese acupuncture, Carl Jung's analytical psychology, Zen meditations, and other inwardly oriented researches. To these must be added the growing interest in Eastern thought as illustrated by the expositions of Aldous Huxley, E.A. Burtt, F.S.C. Northrop, Alan Watts and others. This re-entry of the spiritual factor in life and education is something more than the rerudescence of some earlier form of Westernized religion, whether this be the non-orthodoxy of "crisis"

theologians like Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr or the "non-Thomism" of Jacques Maritain and Mortimer Adler.

In the education for the new age, the East-West philosophy will find its proper vehicle. Here we will have the components of a complete theory:

- (a) Subjective planning: a theory of the creative self-development of the human individual-Emergent Man.
- (b) Objective planning: a theory of the good society for the human person to inhabit-the World Sensorium.

What needs to be done, of course, is that the psychological and social implications of the education for the new age be stated as explicitly as possible, following which it will then be possible to test the validity of the principles in their applications. Clearly the testing must be done in terms of the operational techniques relevant to e.g., Hindu psychology, rather than by Western positivistic procedures. Until this program has been given a fair trial, it is a waste of time to prejudge the issue. It must always be remembered, however, that the ancient East and the modern West approaches an understanding of man are not mutually exclusive alternatives. In some instances, these two viewpoints give us two different "languages" for stating the truths about human nature, and we are not faced by an either-or antithesis.

That the research project we have here so briefly sketched-the quest for planetary transposable principles-is not some vague philosophical fantasy but an urgent need, is indicated by the document drawn up by the Department of Cultural Activities of UNESCO, which formulated the theme for discussion in these terms:

"The Conception of man and the Philosophy of Education in East and West.

UNESCO could not remain indifferent to this problem (of East and West); it was bound to face squarely in the present circumstances of the world, brought about by the rapid process of unification, the reduction of distances, the growing importance of technology, the gradual attainment by all peoples of political independence, and above all, the disquiet and perplexity prevailing among the two great civilizations of yesterday, ready to give birth to the one civilization of tomorrow, but cowering under the threat of a world crisis far beyond their capacity to control."

Lack of space prohibits further quotation from this excellent document, which formed the basis of the discussion of the American Philosophical Association (meeting in St. Louis, May, 1935). One must see from this that, slowly but surely, both civilizations, East and West, are converging toward a higher synthesis of views about man and the ideal society for man's further development.

III: The Challenge to Education

If the peoples of the world are to meet the challenges and the opportunities, they will need to enter the stream of world history and participate in time's movement toward the embryogenesis of the new humanity. And that brings us to the paramount role of education, at all levels, in the creation of the world of the future. Unfortunately, our contemporary educational systems are likely to fall short of the opportunity; they are in danger of becoming sterile because they are depriving youth of curiosity and the sense of wonder. Our advances in the sciences have frequently been made by thinkers who have won their freedom at the cost of precious time. In our world we humans are too often numbed by a varnish of factual information which keep out the vibrations of wonder. Would a renaissance of wonder, using the tools and methods of science in the freshness of a new enthusiasm, be possible today? Cosmic Humanism believes that this is feasible, and holds that if we can keep open the channels of creativity, it will be possible for human intelligence to provide a new focus of aspiration to replace the outmoded systems of thought and education which are rapidly losing their cohesive force. This social lens may well find its focus in the worship of the Unknown God-the Cosmic Imagination-whose nature man progressively discovers as he

increasingly penetrates the dimensions of the universe. Perhaps we should make a "religion" of this search for synthesis. The religion of science (knowledge) would embody a sense of awe, Pentacostal in its effect, for creative vision is never of that which is traditional and obsolete, but always of something in process and awaiting manifestation.

Man's inherent spiritual elan must come into the picture if he is to be galvanized into enthusiasm and action. This is partly a problem of the interpretation of the latest discoveries from specialized fields of science and partly a matter of educating the new generations into the appropriate mental attitudes for citizenship in the world of tomorrow. To these tasks Cosmic Humanism will devote some of its time and energy. It invites all who are interested in synthesis to join in the undertaking. Given the fundamental truths about man and his relation to nature and the Cosmic Imagination-though truths are not so much "given" as "found" by searching-one can use the techniques of communication to spread them abroad. The great human adventure can be rescued from disaster provided we can learn to achieve objectivity in truth judgements. That is the goal of a world philosophy.

Everything that man has created, which is not the result of accident, came into being first in his mind. Mental vision must come before action, if action is to be anything more than mere impulse or habit. But no idea can remain entirely on the plane of mental vision and have any effect on the world of steel and stone. There must be coordination of idea, faith and action.

One must experience, live out, what one believes in theory. One must create in embryo what one wishes to grow to maturity. Therefore, in a planetary democracy, we need thinkers all over the world and on all levels, thinkers who can strike below the surface and create new forms where all creation begins-in the subtle world of formative energies. Progress in the physical sciences in recent centuries arose out of the efforts to create a coherent theory of physical reality. When the same effort is made to match it with a unified theory of social science, we shall achieve the same progress. If the creation of this new philosophy and its ethos depends upon the availability of a scientific humanism to energize our social reforms, we must even now seek out this new synthesis and put it to work. The heart of Cosmic Humanism is the determination to regard truth as useful and put it to work. To apply knowledge for the purpose of guiding social change and individual self development-that is the goal of a scientific humanism.

IV. Creative Imagination: The Divinity in Man

In the present world-view the reader is offered the idea of imagination as the key-concept for interpreting man and nature. Imagination we have defined as the ""organizational factor which puts parts together in their right times and places to make products". It is the external world of evolving things we find this imagination manifested as guiding fields of influence, and in man's subjective world this organizing field is known as creative intelligence. According to this hypothesis, when the undifferentiated energy of the Cosmic Field is focused by the cosmic lens into "particles" in the manifest world, the story of creation is started on its way. It must be remembered, however, that this is "creation" in some region of a cosmos infinite in space and eternal in time, as a contemporary Giordano Bruno might picture it. Moreover, creation is never exnihilo, not making "something out of nothing"; but is a manifestation of the transformation of field energy into matter. From the level of "ultimate particles" to the highest reaches of reality, the spiral course of emergent evolution carries forward the story of what Professor A.N. Whitehead termed the "creative advance of nature", exploring its way through fields of unfolding possibilities until at long last, as we measure time, it culminates in man, the highest product of evolution-too date-here on the earth. Thus for the Cosmic Humanist, God is not the creator of cosmic energy-It is the form-producing field of influence which operates with the matter energy cycle to guide evolutionary integrations.

From this point of view, man is the exploratory tip of the creative advance; the god-in-man is the highest manifestation of the Cosmic Imagination that we are familiar with in this world. But to repeat, creation, whether cosmic or human, is never making something out of nothing; it is giving form to that which was without form. Human creativity is making incarnate man's visions of new possibilities.

To some individuals the term "imagination" has a derogatory connotation, suggesting fantasy and unreality. But as John Dewey pointed out in "A Common Faith". an ideal is not an illusion just because imagination is the organ through which it is envisaged. Creativity on the basis of past achievements, and constructiveness on the foundation of emerging possibilities- that is the surge of cosmic energy as it thunders up through biological evolution to emerge as integrated human consciousness and behavior. This cosmic energy is a non-moral force in the World, until it reaches up into human personality where it takes on moral qualities.

V. The World Mystery

We have already observed the fact that nature appears to us under the guise of a relative dualism of energy and matter, waves and particles, fields and corpuscles. This complementarity appears on all levels of emergent evolution. Man likewise is a duality, and his two-fold nature of "soul" and "body" expresses the relative dualism of the invisible man of field-forces and the visible man of particles. Just as there is in man a super-particle field which guides the course of evolution. Sometimes this invisible reality is designated as the "real" world; yet this reality is not some other world, any more than the soul of man is some other man. Both worlds are one; both men are one. The visible and tangible world is fused in every atom of its substance with its guiding field of the formative world; every cell of man's body is fused with the wave-system which is a part of one's total being. The laws of the one are complementary to the laws of the other.

The world mystery is not something elsewhere in the universe of which "ones goes in search." Without the mystery, there would be no man, no world. We are in and of the mystery, the as-yet-unknown, and man's finite intelligence has the embryonic means and the urge to unravel the mystery and convert insights into working knowledge, thus transmuting faith into action.

The crisis that man faces today is deeply challenging-even rather frightening. But there is still time and inspiration for mankind to create the World Civilization, especially if we are able to generate the "supermind" of a transformed humanity. Guided by Sri Aurobindo's "The Ideal of Human Unity", the avatars of synthesis all over the globe are helping to elevate human consciousness to the realm of "supramental light" that will illuminate the pathway to the emergence of World Union, Planetary Democracy and Cosmic Man.

Humanist Manifesto I

Note: The first draft of this document was written by Roy Wood Sellars, and published in The New Humanist (May-June, 1933): 58-61. I have copied the material from a posting by the American Humanist Association, adding some stylistic changes and the names of those who signed it.

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism. In order that religious humanism may be better understood we, the undersigned, desire to make certain affirmations which we believe the facts of our contemporary life demonstrate.

There is great danger of a final, and we believe fatal, identification of the word religion with doctrines and methods which have lost their significance and which are powerless to solve the problem of human living in the Twentieth Century. Religions have always been means for realizing the highest values of life. Their end has been accomplished through the interpretation of the total environing situation (theology or world view), the sense of values resulting therefrom (goal or ideal), and the technique (cult), established for realizing the satisfactory life. A change in any of these factors results in alteration of the outward forms of religion. This fact explains the changefulness of religions through the centuries. But through all changes religion itself remains constant in its quest for abiding values, an inseparable feature of human life.

Today man's larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion. Such a vital, fearless, and frank religion capable of furnishing adequate social goals and personal satisfactions may appear to many people as a complete break with the past. While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation. We therefore affirm the following:

- First: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.
- Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.
- Third: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.
- Fourth: Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture.
- Fifth: Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. Obviously humanism does not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but it does insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relations to human needs. Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method.
- Sixth: We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and the several varieties of "new thought".

- Seventh: Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious. It includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation -- all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living. The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.
- Eight: Religious Humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion.
- Ninth: In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.
- Tenth: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.
- Eleventh: Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking.
- Twelfth: Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life.
- Thirteenth: Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life. The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism. Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern world.
- Fourteenth: The humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.
- Fifteenth and last: We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from them; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this positive morale and intention humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow.

So stand the theses of religious humanism. Though we consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement. He must set intelligence and will to the task.

Signed

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 Harry Elmer Barnes
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Eldred C. Joseph
Walker Vanderlaan
Jacob J. Weinstein
Frank S. C. Wicks
David Rhys Williams
Edwin H. Wilson

Note: The Manifesto is a product of many minds. It was designed to represent a developing point of view, not a new creed. The individuals whose signatures appear would, had they been writing individual statements, have stated the propositions in differing terms. The importance of the document is that more than thirty men have come to general agreement on matters of final concern and that these men are undoubtedly representative of a large number who are forging a new philosophy out of the materials of the modern world.

-- Raymond B. Bragg (1933)